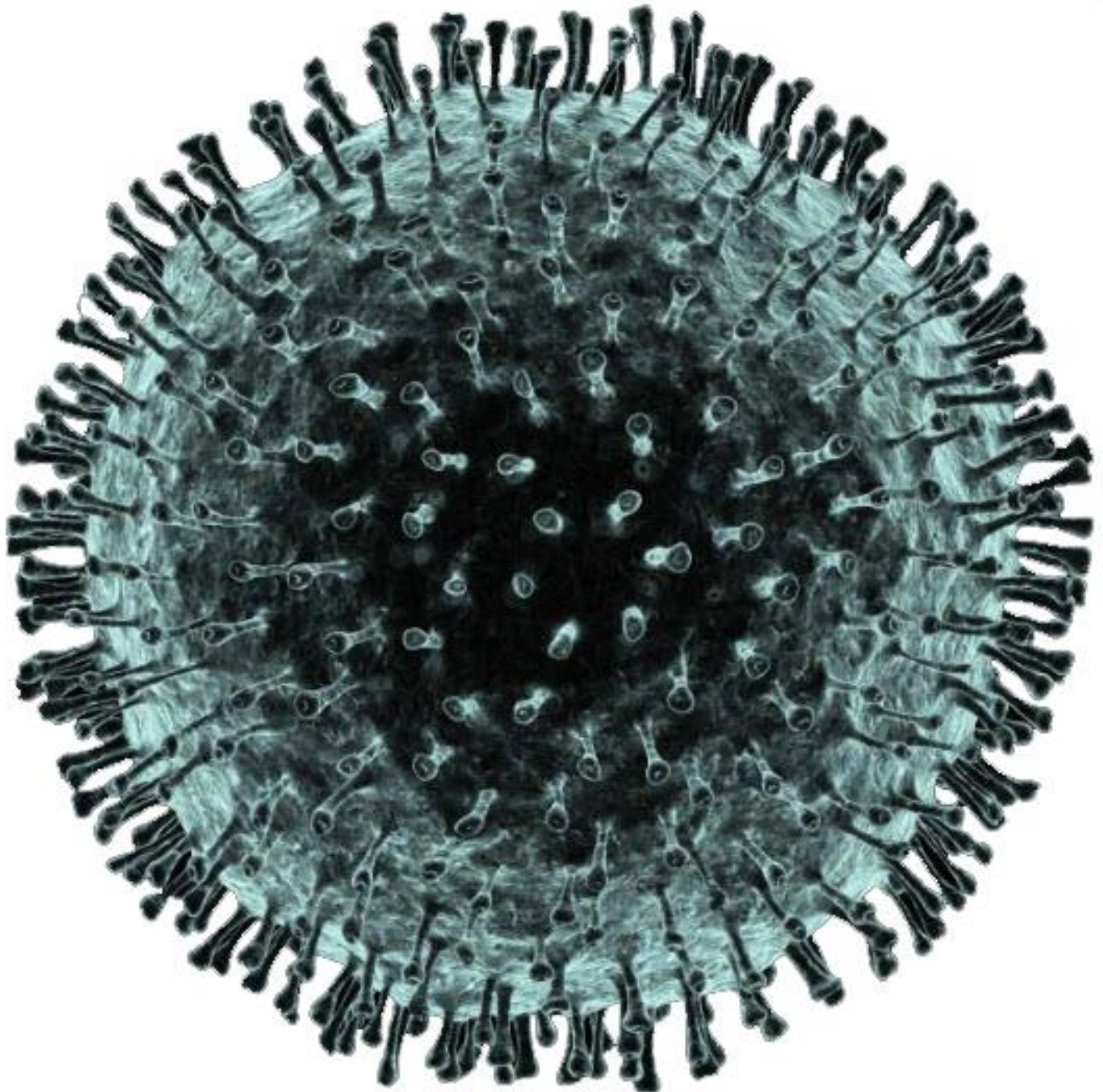




# Royal Australian Navy Band Association Magazine

Winter Edition 2020

[www.ranbandassoc.net](http://www.ranbandassoc.net)



*A Magazine for Association members and serving Band members of the RAN*

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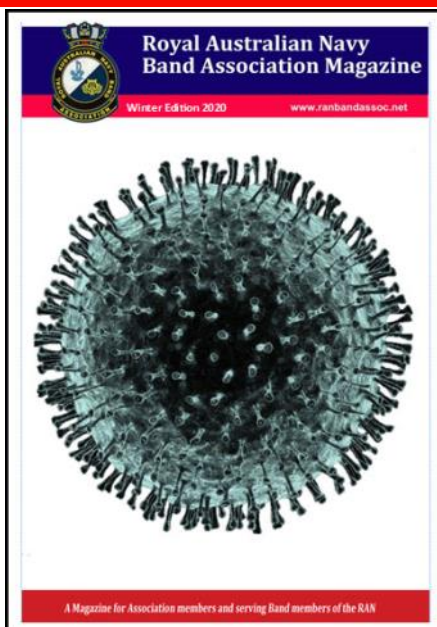
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**FRONT COVER WINTER 2020**

This image of the Covid-19 Virus will be on our minds for years to come. Each media outlet has their colour of this little guy but at the end of the day it has made 2020 a year to wish away.

I'm sure that we would all agree that as each week goes by we are hoping a vaccine is getting closer, but even that is being debated as something that might not be possible. With state border closures and Victorian's not being able to move out of the metro zone, this pandemic makes it even more confronting to the sanity of us all. I'm sure we southerners are looking forward to hitting the beaches of Queensland or jump on a plane to New Zealand.

Slight change to the format of our magazine to give the Editor a bit more space to vent his spleen.

Remember those B grade movies in the 50's and 60's and replayed in the 70's especially the Sci-Fi ones. There was one in particular (Can't remember the name) but it was about two parallel worlds where one was in chaos with little respect for authority and the other calm and organised but well controlled by a authoritative regime. The hero found a way to move between both but his dilemma was he wanted to instil a bit of world 2 to world 1 and visa versa. In the end he stuffed both and took off to Mars.

Does this sound familiar, I hope not because at the moment when you turn on the Box you get sceptics and deniers saying the virus is a hoax. It makes you not want to go outside and instead try and find the phone number of The TESLA boss and book a ticket on his next flight out to Mars.

Where are we.....

July and four months into the unknown and we are now either locking back down (if you are in Victoria) or opening back up (In Queensland or NSW) or can only fly to South Aussie (If you live in Tasmania) so we are no closer to any sort of normality and it looks like we could possibly be in this situation going forward into 2021 and beyond.

What it did do was put a halt to or reunion in Launceston and especially after all the hard work Brian and the team had put into it. It has also taken away our ability to play together with the Veterans Band and other ensembles we might play with but we still have our sanity and the executive is looking at the big picture and surveying possibilities in 2021 and beyond. But in the meantime the magazine is here to entertain you for a few minutes at least.

We have had some sad news since our last mag with the passing of Robert (Nellie) Gwynne finally succumbing to cancer and Phil Buckmaster losing his fight. Our condolences again go out to their families and loved ones as little could be done to celebrate their lives in these times.

I'm hoping you all are coping through this period and keeping yourselves active in some way, we have had a good response to requests of what you did on ANZAC Day so have an enjoyable read.

And, yes you Queenslanders, don't get too cocky, us Victorians will invade you soon, that was another great B grade movie I remember seeing.....or was it a dream.

Errol.

## RANBA | Secretaries Report

It has been turbulent times since the last newsletter as the country has been battling the Covid-19 pandemic. It appears that we have successfully bought the virus under control noting that Victoria is now battling a second wave. I think it would be fair to say that all levels of government and political parties have worked well together to combat the disease. It has been a breath of fresh air to see political parties put aside their differences to combat the outbreak. It is no surprise that as we come out the other side of the pandemic that political differences re-emerge. That is what makes this country what it is, a vibrant democracy. It is sad to see a country, and great ally, like the US tear itself apart the way it has. This demonstrates what poor leadership and uncompromising political differences can do to a country. When I wake up each morning, I think of how lucky I am to be an Australian living in this great country.

I would like to thank Brian & Kerry and the Tasmanian team for all the hard work that had gone into putting together the Tasmania reunion. The decision to cancel the reunion was the right one, especially in light of the recent outbreak in Victoria and the problems that this would of created for the Victorians and any other state members

wanting to travel to Tasmania via Victoria. Having said that, it does not lessen the disappointment for the Tasmanian team. I for one had planned to drive to Tasmania and spend a couple of months touring. All our plans had been cancelled earlier as I am sure most other members had.

I am not sure how our other members feel but I have an absolute commitment now to explore and holiday in Australia until such time as they find a vaccine for Covid-19, or I am totally comfortable holidaying outside of Australia.

On a brighter note our Big Band "ROCUS" had our first "social distancing" rehearsal. I could not wipe the smile off the band members faces as we got back into some serious playing. We also gave a big welcome to our new Bass Guitar player - our own Gary "Rocky" Searle. The local Pine Rivers Brass Band starts back on the 15<sup>th</sup> July with Gary Sander and hopefully "Rocky" joining our first rehearsal back. I hope that all our southern and western members get back to playing music again soon.

John Lennon Secretary.





Welcome to the winter edition of the Magazine and I would like to commend Errol on his work with the Magazine.

Year to date has been one of the worst experiences I have ever seen, bushfires to my front door and then in ISO for most of the six months. I have found ISO a new learning bubble, I have read over 20 books, completed 3 large jigsaw puzzles, realised that you don't have to go to a doctor, restaurant, supermarket, you just ring them.

My car has had a wonderful holiday, my garden hides whenever it sees me now, because it doesn't know where it may be moved to tomorrow. But gee I'm so glad ISO is nearly over and I can move from this cage and go on holidays, guess where Cheryle and I are going next week, the ZOO to sleep with animals, ISO made me do it.

The last few months the Association has seen the passing of "Nellie" Gwynne and Phil Buckmaster, may they rest in peace. Phil Buckmaster was a close friend of mine for a long time and was responsible for me going over to the RAAF and I served with him until 1973 when the Band was disbanded.

One of the hard things you have to do is make decisions in Committee and I had to convey the bad news to Brian Ellis that the Launceston reunion was to be cancelled, but the situation with the Corona virus has made it impossible to guess what was going to happen next year let alone October, thank you Brian and Kerry for the work you put in.

Brian has asked me to pass on to anyone who may be in Tassie on October 25<sup>th</sup> that the Navy Day Ceremony will still be going ahead and would love to see you in Launceston.

You will find somewhere in this edition of the Magazine there is a notice for all Members to read and act upon. The notice to vote on is in regards to having **annual** meetings/reunions/get togethers, rather than the two-yearly Reunions we have been used to. If anyone would like to speak to me about this, please contact in daylight hours 0265857767 or 0405 380751.

The month of June was an important month for the RAN Band with it's birthday on the 24<sup>th</sup> June, 107 years old this year.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> of June is important to those members of the Fleet Band who were on board HMAS Melbourne in 1969 in the collision with USS Frank E Evans. In discussions I have had with so many members who didn't realize just how close it was for the Band to be so close to the point of collision or what part in the aftermath the members filled.

The Band in 1969/70 lived in 2 Delta Starboard which was above the point of impact and fully felt the complete impact and were able to see from the gun sponson what was left of the Evans. Bill Farrell, Ron Carkeet and myself worked in HQ1 Damage Control being part of the team repairing the damage to the ship and Eric Cross and his team worked in sick bay were survivors were taken. The Band then at 0800 did what bands do, "entertain" the survivors on the Quarter Deck and in the afternoon a Memorial Service on the Fight Deck. There are quite a number of the Fleet Band that suffered severe trauma from this accident and PTSD up to this day. AND people ask 'what do bandies do on a ship'?

2020 is the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Royal Australian Navy Veterans Band. The Band started by Jim Hawkins in 2000 with the famous Band that turned up for Anzac Day in Sydney and the next six years paraded as a Marching Band all round Australia. After then I took over the Band in Adelaide for the reunion as a Marching Band but in 2010 the Band travelled to Singapore as a Concert Band.

2010 also saw the name change from Royal Australian Navy Band Association Band to the Royal Australian Navy Veterans Band and since then has travelled overseas and in Australia. Not bad for a bunch of old bandies.

See you all next edition

Ralph Daines



In Qld we have weathered the worst of the Coronavirus. We are aware how easy the virus can return as seen in Victoria. We have been in lockdown since the last newsletter and now enjoy the Stage 3 lifting of restrictions.

I recently visited John Swingler in rehab after he had a stroke which was caused by a fall from his bike after suffering a blackout. He suffered a number of physical injuries which he has been able to get on top of. He is still, however, suffering side effects of the stroke. He has full movement but is still suffering some slight slurring of speech, especially when he gets tired.

He rang me in the last few days to thank myself and the association for showing concern over his health. I asked John if he consented to me passing on details of his health challenges. He is happy to take any well wishers calls & can be contacted on 0402 780 147. I should note that I was alerted to John's condition by Peter Ashburner who had contacted John to see how he was going.

I have been in contact by phone with a few of our Qld members and it appears that most of our members are in good spirits and health. Both myself and Ken McCallum have been struggling with shoulder issues. Ken has had surgery which has had some success in overcoming movement issues. I recently had a rotor repair and removal of spurs. I am still in the early stages of a slow recovery process which is normal for that type of Surgery. The metal detectors at the airport are going to have a field day with the titanium pins in the shoulder and the new metal hip joint.

The community bands, which some of our members are involved with - including myself, are now back to rehearsals which is great news. This means unsticking valves and slowly clearing out the cobwebs. As far as concerts are con-

cerned there are still concerns in relations to audience numbers and participation.

Finally, we all need to be aware how dangerous this virus is so stay safe and practice social distancing. We in Qld are thinking of our Victorian members who have the worsening threat of a second wave of the virus, and fully understand that we could be in a similar situation if we let our guard down.

John Lennon.



John Lennon visiting the now recovering John Swingler at the Rehab centre in Brisbane.



I recently transferred from the Pine Rivers Sub Branch of the NAA to the Sandgate Sub Branch. At my first Sandgate meeting I was greeted by the friendly face of Rick Watson. Rick is looking great and has finally got on top of his health issues. I took the opportunity to snap a photo of Rick after receiving his Plaque celebrating the 100 anniversary of the Naval Association of Australia. I was pleasantly surprised to also be presented with the same Plaque. The home of the Sandgate Sub Branch is located at the sea cadets TS Paluma complex. The building is full of Naval artefacts and is situated next door to the Qld Cruising Yacht Club. It has direct access to Moreton Bay and is a great setting for both the Sea Cadets and the Old War horses from the Naval Association.

Regards

John Lennon

Its July and time for the winter edition of the Association newsletter. What a first half of the year that I'm sure everyone would agree I don't need to recount. As I write this, we Mexicans are living on an inland island as we start our 2nd lockdown - enough said about that.

Earlier this year we had planned and booked for our summer/autumn lunch but it unfortunately had to be cancelled out of concern for the potential health risks - lockdown #1 hadn't quite come into effect at that point but better to be safe considering so much was still basically unknown about the virus.

Mid year we normally have a Xmas in July lunch but not this year - we were getting close but SNAFU showed up. So may I suggest that on Sunday 25th July at 12:30PM, after you've been to church, charge your glass with whatever liquid refreshment is deserving of an introduction to your gullet, face in the direction of your nearest RSL and toast the health of the association and all its members.

There's really no news per se of musical activities for us apart from those who became Anzac buglers for their local street. I know it wasn't just trumpet/cornet players filling the role with brass players of all persuasions joining in the call for the Last Post and I've heard even some woodwinds (saxes) took part. Facebook pages, not just personal but also neighbours and bands/orchestras contains plenty of evidential footage.

Just recently, the local orchestra undertook a video of El-

gar's Nimrod with all the participants videoing themselves playing their part at home, then all the videos were synced and joined together to create a video performing the music as a group by proxy. The last I checked, it had been viewed nearly 4,000 times = which is quite a feat considering that the audience numbers at concerts are nowhere near this amount. Just goes to show the reach of social media in this digital world.

Hopefully soon we can venture outside into the world again and have the summer/xmas lunch in December, not just for the mateship and socialising of our members, but also to support local venues. Although I imagine that when we Mexicans are welcomed back into mainland Australia again, so many will head to every point of the compass, except east, to catch up with family and friends.

All I will say to the Tassie crew who were organising the Lawn-ceston reunion, I'm sure it would have been a great event and very memorable - and the caravan park will no doubt miss us too. With any luck, the cancelled Cerberus Open Day will go ahead some time next year but that's something I'm sure will be posted on the website and the band contacted by the committee when any word of any certainty is officially given by the Navy. Until then, all we can do is hurry up and wait - a bit like being an expectant parent, nothing we can do or say is going to speed it up or make it happen.

In closing, see you in spirit or spirits at 12:30PM on Sunday 25th July. Take care, stay safe and well.

## **RANBA | TREASURERS REPORT Errol Hatch (Assistant to the Treasurer)**

Another financial year is at an end and subs invoices have been sent out and I thank those that promptly paid for the 2020/21 year already. Outgoings have been minimal with the magazine (not many remaining in Australia) being the largest cost to our bottom line. With no reunion in the year just gone and Ipoh the year before our coffers have increased thanks to subs and donations. We don't really publicize donations as those that do give, don't want to be acknowledged but they are most welcomed by the association executive and this years donations are significant.

With nothing happening officially this year (not yet anyway) we will be quite healthy by 2021/22 (that's if we are) so my prediction is that the 2021/22 will be a big year for us to celebrate. The money is there for us to use so let's hang in there and get through the next 12 months. I will release the financials in the next magazine as usual and look forward to providing you with a healthy balance sheet (not unless Morrison wants to borrow some money). Costs to manage the website in its current state though not great are substantial when upgrades and registrations come into play and again like us it gets old very quickly and needs to be refreshed constantly to stay ahead of the hackers. I have more to say on this subject in my article "MEDIA, Our current state of play," so look out for it further into the magazine.

For now, Speak to you in the next edition.



What a time in history we going through with this covid-19. At times there seems to be relief and indication that we are slowly getting back to some sort of normality. But no, corona-virus is still with us and will be until there is a vaccine. So be vigilant and keep safe.

Because of this our reunion in Launceston Tasmania has been cancelled. Very disappointing for the organisers and very disappointing for those who had planned to travel to Tasmania. Of course with any cancellation comes the task of cancelling bookings and chasing refunds etc. Well with the uncertainty of Virgin Airlines and Virgin moving into administration I decided to cancel my flights with Virgin now including five nights of accommodation in various locations of Tasmania.

Cancelling my accommodation was no problem as I always book with Wotif and they offer free cancellation with bookings up until two or three days before the accommodation date. With Virgin Airlines, I had to spend 3 hours over two days on the phone waiting to get through to an agent in some call centre somewhere overseas to connect to Virgin Bookings Redemption. With patience's and refusing to give up I finally got onto an agent and received a full credit for the return flights. Here's hoping! If anybody else has bookings with Virgin I would advise to do the same thing as who knows what the future with Virgin will be when it is taken over by another company or who ever.

On brighter note, I would like to write a brief article about my parents. I would also encourage others to write articles about their family members and their achievements for Errol and future News Letters. Very interesting reading.

My mother was a very good painter and she painted many paintings for me and other family members. Born in New Zealand she along with her sister and brother were foster children after the family migrated to Melbourne Australia. My mother was very talented and as a young girl she learnt to play the violin. She met my father in Melbourne while he was in Army during the Second World War.

My father did some Commando training with the RAN and he served in New Guinea. My mother worked in the Defence Explosive Factory in Maribyrnong Victoria. After the war they moved to Broken Hill and my father worked on the Zinc Mine before working with his mother, our grandmother to help her run a local corner store in Broken Hill. (Another Story)

I have included oil paintings by my mother Kathleen Drysdale and a photo of my father.



Photo of my father (Second on the left) taken in New Guinea during the II World War. Arthur Nevins Drysdale Gunner Australian Imperial Forces 2/6 Field Regiment 16.2.42 – 8.4.46

Just for the record my Grandfather, who I never met was Douglas Devlin Edgar Drysdale. He was a Sapper with the 3rd Light Horse Regiment, Australian Imperial Forces 1.11.15 - 12.11.17



This painting of HMAS Melbourne has been donated to the RAN Band Museum at HMAS Cerberus through Errol Hatch.



Painting of the Band of the South Australia Police and the Australian Drill Team 1990 Edinburgh Military Tattoo

Cheers, Doug.

Hi Errol,

Anzac Day 2020, a very solemn day it was and one we will never forget. I hope you had a good day to remember.

See oil painting of HMAS Melbourne entering harbour. This painting was painted by my mother Kathleen Drysdale not long after I was honourably discharged from the RAN during 1976. The painting was painted from an old black and white photo.

I have many excellent paintings that my mother had done for me over the years. I'm in the process of painting out my office using up the time in these difficult times. My walls have been filled with paintings, plaques, certificates and commendations, but I feel it's time for a change and a new look.

If you would like this painting for the RAN Band Museum, I'd be very happy to send it to you at no cost to you or the RANB Association. That is of course you have room on one of the museum walls. (If you look closely, you can see me blasting away in the band on the flight deck.)

Doug Drysdale

Editor:

*Thanks Doug The painting will have a dominant place in the Band Museum when I replace the current window with "Ships we served on" when we are able to return to full volunteer duties at the museum.*



Hi Errol,

Thank you for your update. Apart from settling into my retirement, from just about everything for the last couple of years, I have nothing to help you with,

Although I did get dressed up in my full No 6's, I never did work out what officers called theirs, to parade in our street with our locals. I would have worn my more relaxed white shirt and trousers (whatever they called that rig) but, because of recent additional weight constrictions, I couldn't tuck my shirt into my trousers.

Cheers

Vic Knowles

Hi Errol,

These two photos were forwarded by a Lieutenant Commander friend who was once the 1st. Lieutenant of the Recruit School at Flinders Naval Depot/CERBERUS. On the saluting dais are Vice Admiral Dowling, RAN, the then Chief of Naval Staff and Commodore McKinnon, the Commodore of Training, FND/CERBERUS. Thought that it would make a nice page for the next edition of the Band Magazine.

If you want a write-up, just let me know.

Admiral

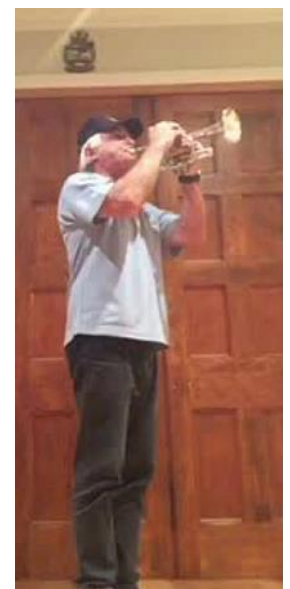
*Yes please Bill if you could that would be appreciated. Errol*



Hi Errol

Yes I did dig my old Besson Silver Cornet out for our own Anzac Day service.

Lloyd Page.





Hi Errol,

I have attached some pictures for you of the current band at Cerberus. You will see the drag rope dangling on the ground I was telling you about, a slight mishap. The photos are the models I have made and the band in tropical rig of 1976, I am next to the sousaphone player on the right side of the band that is facing you. My model of HMAS Melbourne band in both 1960 and 1974 plus the drum corps off the record cover taken in Hyde Park, Sydney.

I was hoping to get to Cerberus in October so I could bring over my 5 Navy model bands which includes the Cerberus band of 2020. The model bands could have been on display at the concert when the RAN Veterans band performed.

More to come.

Regards,

Ralph



The 1976 Cerberus Band which I based the my Model on.

SBLT Kevin Foale was the Bandmaster.



The HMAS Cerberus 2020 Navy Band.



Above: This is the 1974 Fleet Band Model.

Below: the Drum Corp taken from the First Navy Band LP taken at Hyde Park in Sydney.



The 1960 HMAS Melbourne Fleet Band






## Remembrance service for The Melbourne Evans collision.

Whilst cruising on **QUEEN VICTORIA** and attending a get together of former service men and women the Melbourne Evans collision was mentioned and as it was June and the ship was sailing from Brunei to Vietnam and in the South China Sea it would be nice to have a Remembrance Service at sea in the approximate area of the collision. As I was on Melbourne at the time, I was elected to organise it and this is the end result.

The Service attracted a very large number of the passengers and much to my surprise a lady came up to me and told me her nephew was killed on the ship and a gentleman fronted me and said "I am the present Captain of HMAS Melbourne", it certainly made it very emotional presenting the service.

I am still in contact with Randy Henderson a brother of one of those killed, he was made aware of the service from a friend who was on the cruise ship.

Ralph



### Remembrance Service

28 March 2016 – Queen Victoria

Remembering the 74 American sailors who died in the collision with HMAS Melbourne and USS Frank E Evans, and to all the ships and sailors lost at sea.



Welcome	Ralph Daines
Prayer	Reverend Dufresne
Prayer	Father Peter John Lynch
The Ode	Read by Ralph Daines

*They shall grow not old,  
As we that are left grow old,  
Age shall not weary them,  
Nor the years condemn,  
At the going down of the sun,  
And in the morning  
We will remember them.*

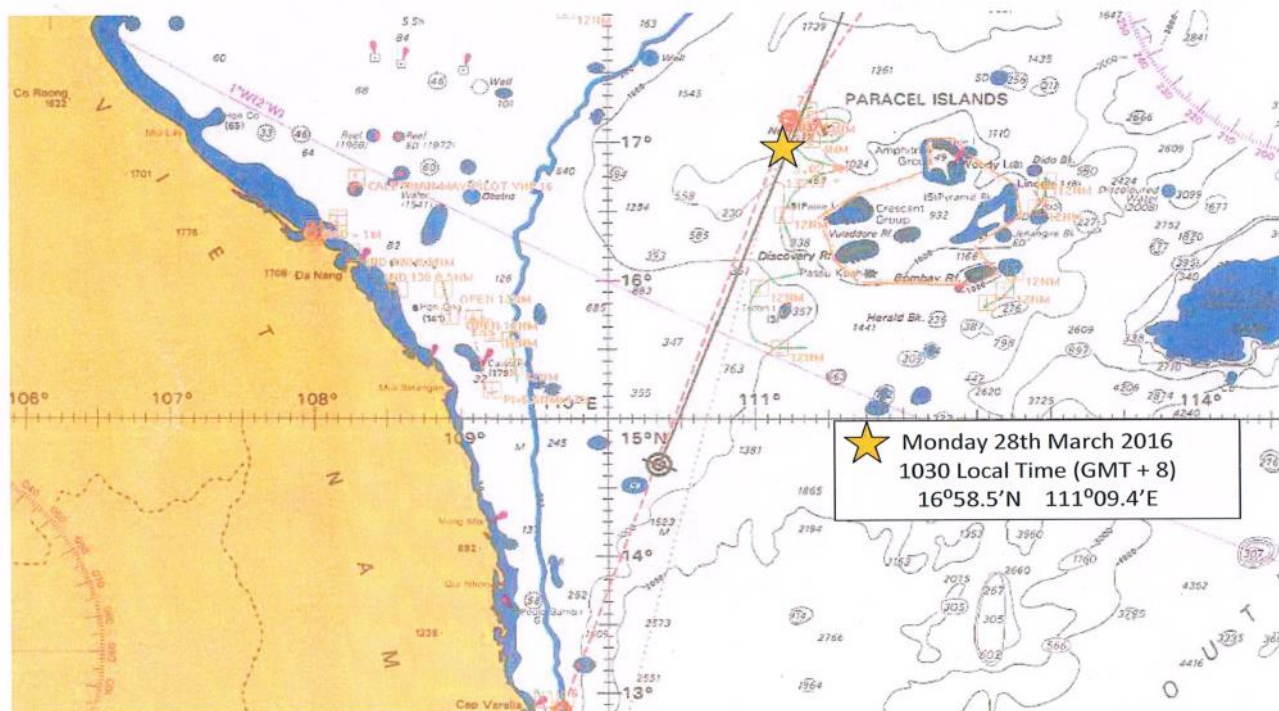
'The Last Post'

Reef offering over the side of Queen Victoria

Closing Prayer	Reverend Dufresne
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## VETERAN REMEMBRANCE SERVICE



*This service is to remember the 74 American sailors who died in the collision between HMAS Melbourne and USS Frank E Evans, and to all the ships and sailors lost at sea.*

## A welcomed Letter from one of our Senior members of the Association.

Dear Errol,

I've been promising myself to drop you a line for yonks, like I'm gunna, do this and that, (aka politician). Thank you for the magazine, they are interesting to read, even though 95% of the blokes mentioned are foreign to me, as there are not many of my vintage at right angles to the dirt. But, I was very saddened to read Gordon Crompton put his cue in the rack, I think back – it must have been 1951 – 2? When I first met him at F.N.D, and we hit it off early in the piece, and when I paid off late 1952, I didn't catch up with him until about 1963? as the first Trombone in Preston Band at that time, I was B/M of the R.A.A Regimental Band, and I happened to be on BB, as Ted Pollock couldn't get a BB player as some of the dots were in Bass Clef, even though it was a Brass Band, and very few, or none, Bass players in Brass Bands had no idea, and would you believe the first piece Ted put up -?? "By Land and Sea"

I recall saying to Ted before we started, "This looks good, I've never seen this before!" "Bloody Liar" says he. The funny thing later was, the bloke on the Side Drum couldn't play the 2 bars Drum Solo, just after the start of the march, so I was putting it in on the BB, until he got it right. I joined the Preston Band after Collingwood Citizen folded (all A grade) in 1985, my two younger brothers also played there, Don was on 1<sup>st</sup> Trombone and Robert was 2<sup>nd</sup> Baritone, and we did "3 South Street" contests in Ballarat in October – cold as a mother – in laws grin, eg: 1954, playing on a football ground under a canvas awning, raining like buggery, playing our choice "LIFE DIVINE" a poem by Cyril Jenkins, fly shit everywhere, a real gut buster, but good stuff to play, we won it!. But back a year prior, we played it, but got pipped by 2 points, so that entitled us to have another shot at it. So that Band folded, Robert gave it away, (waste of a good hand) but Don went to Brunswick City in 1958, he taught himself to read Bass Clef, so he bought a Bass Trombone, and played there until cancer got him in 2005.

While on that mongrel disease I got bowel cancer in 2010, and had part of my ascending colon removed, wore a colostomy bag for 7 months, then last year in August – you guessed it, back comes the Cancer, this time in the lower right lobe of my lung; so I'm back on chemo, the tablets were pretty strong . My first chemo cycle of 9 weeks, I was



taking +500mg a day – 2 weeks on and 1 off. The after effects, of which I was warned about, the trots, split nails on all of my digits – hand – knuckles - very painful, runny eyes and nose, cracked skin on my ankles and some toes, of which my feet are being dressed at the local clinic, originally 5 toes were affected, now I'm down to two, both on my right foot, twice a week for that lot.

I was an ambo for 23 years prior to retiring in 1985, back in the good old days as an ambo, everything was lifting no auto let down wheels, the gear we didn't have would fill a book, and I never lost a patient! I could go on for yonks but I haven't got enough pens! So I compo'ed out as my crook back played up in the finish. I did my last M.C.A (motor car accident) up in Wangaratta, I transferred there from Melbourne, (at the Ringwood Ambulance Station) in 1978. The reason I went up there from my war service house in North Balwyn I couldn't stand (WW111) any longer, my first mis-sus out a yelling, nit picking bad tempered sod, eg: every time I went to band practice, which was 3 times a week. I used to change my shifts a lot she would start raving before I went out the door. But one of the ensembles was the Cheltenham Light Opera Co. – pit gigs. My Fair Lady, Carousel etc all brought in a few bucks - which she always took, plus weddings, 21<sup>st</sup> birthdays, 50<sup>th</sup> anniversaries etc (on String Bass) it all went to put the 3 kids through school, all boys, who are now 67, 64 and 62, Graeme is a Sparkie, he now teaches in TAFE at Albany in WA, Neil was a copper for 40 years and Geoff, who I've seen 4 times in over 20 years is a building inspector. ie: carpenter, builder, you name it, he lives in Newcastle somewhere. Neil lives in Blackburn and I see Graeme more times (and phone calls) than Neil who has been up here -5 to 6 times in over 15 years. His missus, once. I have seen her 6 times in 20 – 25 years she's no loss. I've got good friends (or we have) that does us. Angela had a husband who treated her like a slave, 4 kids in 6 years then wouldn't go near her, she was a RN (registered nurse) worked full time, brought up her



kids did all the home duties, he never lifted a finger.

I met her in 1976 she was in charge of the Day Care Section of the M.S Centre in Camberwell, we use to take patients in and out for treatment, every time we took patients around morning tea time, and she'd have her scones and tea or coffee for the ambo crews. So I thought here's an opening for a bright young lad, and the rest is history. I bought a house in Wang about Easter and she moved up about 3 weeks later, that would be late March in 1978, so here we are 42 years later. We've had a good relationship, ambo's got leave every 6 months in those days 3 weeks, so she engineered her leave to fit in, (she was the sister in charge of a 30 bed nursing home at Benalla Hospital Complex), so we would finish work on the Friday and we were in Singapore on the Saturday night!

Graeme was in the R.A.A.F for 25 years when he learned his trade, and was posted to Butterworth Air Base in Penang for 2 ½ years so we use to fly over every leave. We met our Chinese "Daughter" Helen on one of those flights, so time went, and now she has been living in Australia since 1984, is married, no kids, to a Chinese Chef, got a nice house in Ballarat so she calls us Dad and Mum as she has never seen her mother, brought up by her Grandma.

There are 4 Chinese Cafe's in Ballarat, 1 Vietnamese and 2 Malaysian, but none cook as well as Lamm, he only works part time now, he's 67. Helen is 65 this year. Lammo's Sweet and Sour Pork?? Bloody marvellous, they come up here about every 6 week- also loaded up with food – terrible – I'll be glad when I've had enough.

### **Music History;**

7 1/3 years in pusses, Collingwood 3 years, Preston 24 years, Kew Philharmonic, all on Tuba 12 years, Victorian Concert Orchestra 12 years (Tuba) worked for a Muso agent for 12 years on String Bass, Cheltenham L.O.C 5 years, C.M.F Bands 5 years, while in Wangaratta Benella on BB Wodonga BB Albury SympH for 4 years, Ballarat City Band 10 years, BB and Bass Drum (on parade), Ballarat Vintage Brass 30 years, I'm the only original member left in the Band, it was formed by 6 oldies, brass players who finished contesting and decided to meet at Ballarat Band Room for a blow, but never had a Bass player.

So I got a phone call one day, we were living in Brunswick then, Les Max says Lee Wallis we've got a group meeting in Ballarat Band Room every Thursday, we need a BB pronto; so I was there before he put the phone down, so that year

word got around, and by June we had over 20, and I'd say by August, we had an A grade band, Sadly next year they all started dying, and a few moved North, now, we get 13 if we are lucky, but we all enjoy it, no hassles. 3 of us take turns on the rostrum, we all get along well, 2 come from Geelong, one from Bannockburn, Daylesford, Melton Beaufort (the entire Trombone Section) 3 of us, 2 tenors, and a bass.

Those few drive us around a lot, I stopped driving 6 years ago as I can't feel my feet. Angela had a T.I.A (Trans Ischemic Aneurism) a blood clot travelled from inside her heart (the doc said it had been there for years) and it settled in her Occipital Region (near the Skull), which controls her sight so she can't see left or right, Peripheral Vision impaired it may come back or may not, no-one knows so the Pulsar gets a run from Ron (1<sup>st</sup> Trom) every so often. But with this bug going round not so often, so I run the engine once a week.

So Errol to sum up, I'm still playing at 93. I started on Flute at East Coburg State School No 4260, in 1937, switched to Brass at Preston Tech in 1940, on an old E Flat Bass (high pitch) so the rest is history – this is year 83 reading the dots. Oh I'm on 150mg a day now ,progress is in the right direction if only adagio.

**Cheers Max Beeson**

PS Robert is still going he's 88



A lot has been written about Anzac Day 2020 and how the nation commemorated the day. The gathering of citizens in their driveways and gained momentum from the day it was mentioned and the mix of instruments that sounded Last Post were varied. Here are some of our members commemorating the day.

### KEVAN THOMAS

Hi Errol

Ask and you shall receive. It had been almost 40 years since I had played seriously so it was a long way back and I am convinced I never really got all the way back. I got some of the way and just enough to get me through.

At the allotted time I sounded the Last Post and Rouse ( I didn't attempt the appropriate Reveille) and recited the Ode at our make shift memorial at our village. Most of the residents made the effort to either come to the makeshift memorial or stood at their doorways at 6am on ANZAC Day.

We also encouraged the residents of Dingley to place a floral tribute on the local Memorial, which as it happened was well supported. I have attached a couple of photos for you to do whatever you like with.

All the best, Kevan

### BOB (Robbo) ROBINSON

Hi Errol,

Photo of me doing the Dawn Service [in the driveway] full service with Didgeridoo lament.

I also did Sunset at 1722 [sunset time that day].

Not bad for a PO PTI who was a "Bandie" for 8 of my 20 years.





## JOHN LENNON

I thought with the Coronavirus lockdown I would give my take on how I survived. One of the noticeable changes is the amount of weight I have put on. I also took the opportunity to have my torn rotor cuff repaired and removal of spurs. This surgery and inactivity also contributed to my weight increase.

Our street celebrated ANZAC day in the same way as many of our members. I performed the last Post & Reveille on the footpath (picture included) which was well attended by most of our residents. I had tremendous feedback and letters of thanks. The general feeling was, can we do it again next year. I would like to think by next year we have the virus under control. Leywah and our daughter Lisa worked from home during the lockdown. Lisa is still working from home mainly due to the need to look after our grandson Brandon.

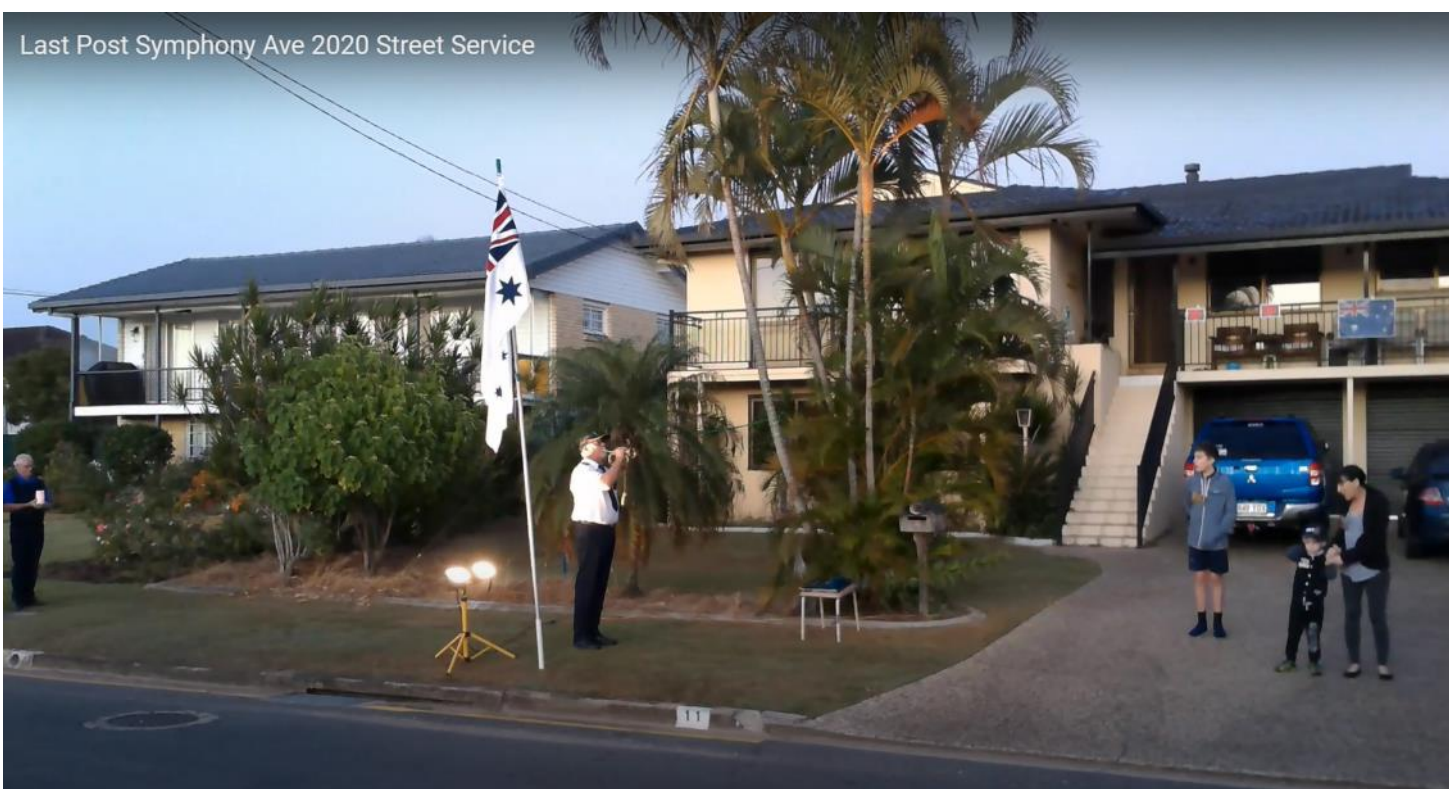
Leywah is now back at work in the city and is flat out dealing with client's tax returns. In a way I was glad she is now back at work as I became her secretary making tea, collating printing and acting as her IT person. After 32 years working for the same company (BDO Accountants) Leywah has now locked in her retirement date as 1st July next year.

During the lockdown I managed to get a bit of practice in with my greatest critic being our 4 year old grandson. I have enclosed a picture of his thumbs up approval. I have to embrace it as it is the only thumbs up I get these days for my playing. Before I had the surgery on my shoulder I was able to sort out a lot of house maintenance which was a plus. I am sure I am not alone in getting all those jobs completed around the house that needed doing.

Finally, I look forward to catching up at our next reunion wherever that may be.

Regards

John Lennon





## ATTENTION/PLEASE READ AND ACT UPON

### ALTERATION TO A BY-LAW

As per the Association's Constitution, By-Laws need members approval at a Special General Meeting to make alterations. As the present situation of holding general meetings is difficult to comply with, the Management Committee are asking Members to approve the following alteration to **By-Law number 5**, with approval via this Winter edition of the Association Magazine by the means of an email to the Secretary, [na\\_vy\\_muso@yahoo.com](mailto:na_vy_muso@yahoo.com) , President, [xranband@bigpond.net.au](mailto:xranband@bigpond.net.au) , or [admin@ranbandassociation.net](mailto:admin@ranbandassociation.net) .

The Management Committee feel that the current bi-annual reunions have become extremely costly for many number of reasons, falling numbers in various areas and generally too far to travel for many older regular attendees. I have been associated with running every reunion since 2008 and I can see a change must be made to make every get together attractive to our younger members and potential members.

The Management Committee agree that **ANNUAL** get togethers/ reunion/ general meeting, are the way of the future for the Association. We need to target areas where there is the practical presence of former Bandies which will give us a base number already there and reasonably closer by and the regulars will always make up the numbers and travel any-where.

The alteration that the Management Committee would ask you to vote on is, replace "reunions will be held bi-annually", to read '**REUNIONS WILL BE HELD ANNUALLY**'

#### 5 **FREQUENCY OF REUNIONS**

- A) Reunions will be held bi-annually on a State rotation basis and on a date approved by the Management Committee.
- B) The Management Committee will decide on the State allocation
- C) States can put forward a proposal to the Management Committee for an exception for a special occasion.
- D) Requests for a reunion outside the normal bi-annual reunion must provide specific exceptional details to support the application.
- E) The Management Committee's decision is final and no further correspondence will be entertained.

Your response is important and required for this Law to be altered, so please take a moment to approve or comment on this By-Law change.

As Editor I get to be creative when stories are thin on the ground and as the association ages so does the delivery of articles to include in this magazine.

As I speak to our Senior members they say they enjoy the mag but they don't recognise the names as they were of a different era. There lies the dilemma with Associations established over 26 years ago and longer. Members are leaving us in a number of ways, Death, Old age and not interested because we don't cater for that generation through our magazine which is their on source of information.

I remember well the anticipation of receiving Jims Newsletter that was packed with articles and comment and yes some of the names I did not recognise but I now know them and got an appreciation of what they did before us in the Band Branch. The photos were great and maybe you got a mention or an event someone was reminiscing of that you were involved in which brought back memories.

How did Jim find me and you, well it wasn't Facebook it was word of mouth or someone had found you through a band practice or just a bumping into you. It was that coincidental. But the Association grew. From that our reunions grew and became a meeting point, exciting to catch up with you didn't know who until you got there. Those were the days and it didn't seem to cost much, was it because it was less formal, I don't know, or a case I had more money in my pocket then, anyway. Thing to remember here was the communication was either a landline phone or Jims Newsletter. Forward to Townsville Reunion.

We went through a growth period not long after our Townsville reunion when we released our website. We had instant success and those that were already members enjoyed its growth and followed it closely. Again the senior brigade were hesitant but were to some degree involved. We found new members and the website was a new media that enabled us to display our heritage through pictures, comments from our growing member base.

Interaction was encouraged and we had the ability to leave messages and converse with individuals or groups of us. It was excellent and again the thing to remember was Facebook was only in its infancy so we were ahead of the times. The website even gave you the ability to flag members as friends (ahead of its time then) but this was a little concerning as, if a supposed friend didn't flag you (mostly by mistake) you were not part of his group. This was quickly turned off as we were all in the association for a cause, friendship.

The decline of growth can be clearly related to Facebook on one hand and deceased members on the other. In the

last 5 years we have stabilised numbers but the trend is still a decline.

The 50's generation are very few now, the 60's generation (the stalwarts of the association originally) are aging and I would have to say leaving us through non-interest rather than them passing to the band in the sky.

The 70's generation are our most active group now and continue to provide the base for the association. The 80's are still there but smaller numbers and are still working so there involvement in association events will not be felt until they retire. The 90's and beyond are not represented apart from a few that have joined us.

What does this all mean you say. The demise of the association as we know it. There I said it!!!!

The magazine has only continued because members still like the ability to open pages and put it with their other copies. We will continue to produce it until there comes a time when the last member that is on my mailing list says he's happy to have a electronic copy or passes on.

The website is a different issue. It no longer is it our go to site for information about some significant events or happenings. Its major hits is when I release the Magazine and the occasional member places an image. Why is it so?

Quite easy, we now have so many groups on Facebook devoted to RAN band, Service bands and other "Friends of" that we are overwhelmed with choices. That's the problem we encountered when we released the website. I'm a friend here but not there, so am I not welcomed or does the administrator not know me. On Facebook the information is sometimes questionable or it is commented on by someone who was not there or did not know the background or is just a sarcastic comment. There are so many inconsistencies, it needs an editor to filter the crap from the substance. I am not a Facebook fan even though I registered in the early days (like most others) and the less I pay attention to it the more I'm free to not indulge in comment.

### **In summary.**

We don't have the next generation to keep the association alive for the next 25 years, they are Facebook driven, don't need a magazine and what's a website but to buy your next pair of shoes or shirts.

### **What's the answer to keeping the Association Relevant.**

#### **ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY VETERANS BAND**

Read more.....

As I said, I'm happy and honoured to continue to produce the magazine up to the time it is not relevant. In reality most of the stories can be posted on our current website or a relevant Facebook page the day I get them and it is done. Stories of our Veterans Band escapades were posted while we were actually doing them. The only thing missing is the story of how we got to it or what happened after, this is where a magazine is or writer is important. But enough said about the magazine, time will dictate its final outcome.

I have been lucky enough to be involved in the Veterans Band for many years and Ralph has worked tirelessly to make it a success and for it to reach its stature with the Navy is an absolute credit.

Since the Reunion in Sydney where we had a mass band and a weekend never to forget, the Veterans band has gone from strength to strength. My view now is that it is the catalyst for future members to become involved in the association. The trips overseas were wonderful and an experience we will never forget for those that went. Yes we had a few ruff patches (musically) but the Band rose above it and now with performances within the reunions also, it is a draw card for members to be involved.

The amendment to the By-Law number 5 is I think the answer to the ongoing existence of our association. With that amendment, smaller events can be worked in with a smaller number of participants but regional locations will bring in those that normally couldn't make it to capital city reunions and give those ex-bandies an opportunity to attend.

The Veterans Band would also generate times where an event would be a mini-reunion, The HMAS Cerberus Open Day is an example. There would be an informal function and players and non players would enjoy the experience of meeting up plus playing.

Re-visiting the tours of the past could also be a possibility.

Remember the Benalla, Wangaratta, Albury tours. The Western NSW tours, The Southeast Queensland tours. All could be organised. Regional events where the Band would be welcomed again creates an instant reason to attend. This is not a hard sell either to ex-members that are still working ie: the 80's generation and beyond. We would have something to interest them in being apart of the "Association"

With all this said, our current situation makes this a wish list of the future and I don't see anything happening until late 2021. For the Victorians case I would put forward to the committee, "HMAS Cerberus, OCTOBER 2021" as a opportunity to have the Veterans Band along with an informal

function (Mini-reunion). Do I know something that others don't. No I don't but, March 2021 is definitely too early and there should be closure of this virus by October. I'm only speculating though.

State committees need to expand there ideas also and find a reason to get interstaters to visit possibly using the Veterans Band as the catalyst or a special event.

I feel, an executive committee assigning to a state the opportunity to have a reunion is now obsolete. And now is the opportune time to change.

The amendment says annually but if there were significant events happening at locations around the country that warrant the involvement of the Veterans Band or the Association generally the committee would seriously look at them.

So in summary what is our future outlook. We have currently 4 great assets.

### **Magazine:**

It has its place currently but is on a course of being more a electronic form of articles released as they come across the Editors Desk. Events, Reunions can be reported on immediately with comprehensive stories attached.

### **Website:**

Needs to be replaced now with a vibrant News Paper style interface where articles are at your fingertips with features like letters to the editor, Navy Band news, State updates and what's happening nation wide. The current site is now due for a revamp so the time is ripe for this to happen.

### **Veterans Band:**

It will go from strength to strength with the right occasions to look forward to. I'm sure Ralph has some interesting overseas ideas but the involvement of the band on Australian soil is the key to its success in involving more players.

### **Members:**

I hope this column prompts some discussion as there are plenty of opinions out there and the executive would welcome them. We still have a great member base but we have reached a peak and to prevent the demise we need to be creative .

Errol

Editor/Administrator



Hi Errol

I came across this article which was a lecture to the Naval Historical Society by former WW2 Bandsman Cedric Ashton MBE, DSCM on 5<sup>th</sup> September 1997.

The enclosed photo was taken at our 1996 Melbourne Reunion and shows L/R George Hooker speaking with Cedric (centre) and Frank Ward. (Shina Wright seated in the background.) Unfortunately the three WW2 Veterans are no longer with us.

Cedric was an accomplished conductor, and was Musical Director of the Rockdale Musical Society (Sydney) for many years. He had the foresight to put on paper what happened during his RAN career which, according to him years later, he cherished all his life.

Cheers Jim Hawkins



## **T.S. THE HEART OF GUNNERY**

### **An R.A.N. Bandsman's Experience in World War II (1930–1945)**

#### **ENLISTING-IN BARRACKS-CRIB POINT**

I have often been asked by members 'Ced what did the bandsmen do on board ship and what is the T.S? Therefore, I am going to try to give you a picture of a bandsman's wartime career in the Navy in World War II, with the T.S as the main theme.

In 1939, I was a cellist in the orchestra of the Monte Carlo Ballet. We had completed the Sydney Season and had commenced the Melbourne Season at the Princess Theatre. The Second World War had begun. After each performance I would emerge from the theatre pit, from a world of music and ballet nad make-believe and into a tide of people travelling to and fro in the busy traffic, noisy streets and billboards proclaiming the latest war bulletin.

#### **HITLER ENTERS POLAND; HITLER OCCUPIES CZECHOSLOVAKIA**

I remember well how this vast conflict of nations affected me. Here was I, pushing a cello bow back and forth in the fantasy world and, on the other side of the world, millions of people were being rendered homeless and being slaughtered. Australia declared war on Germany and within months recruiting was growing in the three services.

All my life I had lived close to the sea and have been in-



involved with boats, so the Navy was my instinctive choice. When the Monte Carlo season finished, I returned to Sydney. The next morning I presented myself at the Navy recruiting office at Rushcutters Bay. I waited in a short

queue, then a petty officer beckoned me in.

Before me at a desk sat two petty officers (PO) and a lieutenant. He gave me a friendly smile and gestured to the two PO's. Immediately they ran through a stereotyped formula; name, age, marital status, etc. Then the lieutenant spoke; -

"Which part of the Navy do you wish to join?"

"Submarines", I answered

He looked at the document and said "You're 29"

"Yes"

"I'm afraid you're too old. Twenty-eight is the age limit"

I shrugged my shoulders. "I'll go to the army. Perhaps they're not so finicky. I turned to go.

"Wait! Wait! There are other branches; what's your job?"

"I'm a musician"

The Lieutenant turned to the PO's. "They badly want bandsmen, don't they?"

"They certainly do" replied one.

I shook my head. "I've just left a professional orchestra to do active service, not to sit in some barracks somewhere playing in a band"

"Hold it, matey," said one of the PO's. "Then you join the band, you are under direct orders from the Gunnery Officer. You do a special fire control course and, when at sea, the band as a unit mans the TS –day and night. You're a vital part of the Gunnery Department".

"What's the TS", I asked.

"It's the transmitting station that assembles all the details needed for the guns to fire accurately".

I was sucked in. It sounded fascinating. "Okay"

The Lieutenant pushed a paper toward me. "Sign here sir – I don't think you'll regret it. You only serve on cruisers like AUSTRALIA, CANBERRA, PERTH, SYDNEY or HOBART.

A week later I received a letter instructing me to present myself at Flinders Naval Depot HMAS CERCERUS, Crib Point, Victoria. On 12 August 1940, I boarded a train at Flinders Street Station. The train journey follows the bay, round a series of decreasingly populated urban houses, until the town of Frankston, then it is intermittent market gardens and scrub land of tea trees and banksia. Crib Point

station is surrounded by bush land. A few hundred yards walk and I arrive at the barrack gates. A sentry in sailor's uniform, seeing my New Entry letter, waved me on to a nearby office. It was about 7.30pm and dark when I fronted up to a long desk. Two petty officers were yarning to each other when I entered.

"Hi matey." I nodded and pushed across the New Entry letter. He glanced quickly down the page.

"Mr Ashton?" I nodded. "And you want to join the band?"

"Yes".

"Okay". He pulled out a form under the desk and rapidly ran through the questionnaire; name, age, occupation, married/single, etc, until he came to Religion. There was a pause; he looked at me waiting. "I haven't got any orthodox religion – put me down as Agnostic"

The two petty officers looked at each other questioningly. They shook their heads. "Never heard of it". He went on "You've got to have a religion to join the Navy".

I thought for a moment and then said, "The nearest I ever came to being religious was when I was 10 and I went to Methodist Sunday School".

"That's it, matey! That's good enough", and he promptly wrote METHO on the form.

I was later given a metal identification disc with METHO and my official number stamped on it. Later, when I was at sea, I wore this all the time, draped around my neck, confident that if I fell overboard and was taken by a perceptive shark it would read my neck tag and appreciate the quality of my flesh much more. With the questions finished I moved along the desk to the second petty officer, who issued me with a hammock, ropes and two pieces of wood.

"The other bandsmen in your mess will show you how to rig it and sling it" Pussus will fit you out with your rig"

"Pussus – Rig"?

"Oh, that means pursers, the quarter master store. They'll fit you out with your cap, coat, trousers, boots, etc. Now you better hurry up to the mess. They know you're coming and will have kept you some scran". "Scran"?

"Tucker – dinner." I was learning Navy phrases and words in my first hour!

The second petty officer came with me to the doorway and pointed. "Up this road and third building on the right.

You'll see some lights, it's the only one. That's the bandsmen."

When I entered the band mess with my suitcase and hammock, there were six men seated at a trestle table eating their dinner. One was slinging a hammock between two 3-inch steel pipes, close to the ceiling. There were already five other hammocks slung. They all acknowledged me and one detached himself and came over to me.

"Hi, I'm Percy Page."

"Cedric Ashton."

"That's George Hooker."

I can even remember my first evening meal. Zeppelins in a cloud (sausage and mashed potato). Percy showed me how to rig my hammock. The next morning I was awakened with a bugle call. I had slept well. I hadn't expected a hammock to be so comfortable. After a shower and over a breakfast of burgoo (porridge), Percy Explained; -

"You'll be fitted out today and I'll take you to meet Warrant Bandmaster Coashay. His names spelled- Coxhead." He

grinned and winked. "Hard name to live with, eh? By the way, what instrument d'you play?"

"Cello and French Horn"

A bugle sounded. There was movement in the mess as the members of the band picked up trumpets, trombones, bass drum, flutes and clarinets and streamed off towards the nearby parade ground. At the same time, from the other direction, groups of sailors appeared and formed into squads on the parade ground. When they, and the band, were all assembled a bugle call rang out.

At 9:00am several officers appeared and stood in a row on a raised dais. At the same time the bandmaster, Mr Coxhead, appeared and stood facing the band.

The band uniform was navy blue coat and trousers (with a red stripe), together with the white belt and white topped cap with a red band that was adopted from the Royal Navy Marines. They made an attractive squad. A signal from Coxhead and the band started playing 'Our Director' and the marching began. The various sailor squads moved around the vast quadrangle. As they marched past the dais,



Illustration 1. New entry squad with instructor Petty Officer. The author in middle row, centre.



they turned eyes left at the shouted command then marched into their various departments. Seamen, stokers, artificers, cooks, signallers, etc were all dressed in standard navy bell-bottom trousers (blue and white striped collar and white jacket). Percy told me this was a dummy run for an early Vice Regal visit and inspection.

At 10 o'clock was wardroom band rehearsal. Each bandsman (with the exception of trumpet and trombone) had to be proficient on a second instrument (string). The tuba player doubled on the string bass, I doubled on the French horn and cello, saxophone and flute doubled on violin. Bill Burleigh was the band sergeant and conductor. The music for my first rehearsal was 'Webber's Oberon Overture'. It has some difficult passages for the strings, particularly the violins. As the music progressed, I could hear that the standard of violin playing was lamentable.

Suddenly I was occupied with four bars of a fast cello semi-quaver passage. Bill stopped the orchestra and said to me;-

"Play that again, will you."

I played it solo.

"Fantastic! We've never had a cellist who could play it

The passage was one that any professional cellist could execute with relative ease. However, I quickly discovered that most of the band had been in the Navy years before the war. They had signed up for 20 years. Many had no knowledge of music on joining the Navy and had learnt to play in an amateur fashion.

I was among the first of many professionals who joined for war service only. Alan Wood (trumpet) and Alan Rule (clarinet), both fine professional musicians, were yet to appear.

After the wardroom practice I was taken by Percy to the Quarter Master's Store (Pussus), where I received across the counter an officer cap with a white top and red band, coat, trousers, boots, two pair of black socks, numerous brass Navy buttons and insignias. When I was properly attired, Percy said "Coxhead wants to have a word with you. Come on". He led the way across the quadrangle. As I knocked on the door Percy whispered, "Don't forget to salute."

Warrant Officer Coxhead was neat, his grey hair, brilliantine and shining, pulled across a slightly balding head, grey be speckled eyes. I saluted and he returned it.

"Be seated Ashton. I believe you've already established yourself as a fine cellist". I made depreciating sounds.

"You've got a busy schedule ahead of you for the next three months. First Navy discipline and routine, then Fire Control instruction, which will come from the Gunnery Department, swimming and life saving, and of course a lot of parade band and wardroom orchestra playing".

This was indeed the pattern of my next three months. At intermittent periods during this time, one after another of the bandsmen would be drafted in and out. New draftees would come to CERBERUS and experienced bandsmen from HMAS AUSTRALIA, CANBERRA, PERTH, SYDNEY or HOBART, would return to CERBERUS briefly before being re-drafted.

After six months with this coming and going of my fellow bandsmen, I was getting restless and said to Percy.

He said "Ced, what's your hurry? You've got a cushy job here for as long as you like".

"What do you mean" I asked?

"Coxhead's not going to let you go to sea. He's never had a cellist so good. I heard this info on the grapevine.

I couldn't believe it. "Percy, I joined up to do fighting service, not to waste my time in barracks. What do I do to break this impasse"?

"Put a request in to the Gunnery Officer (Guns). I'll tell you, Coxhead will fight it all the way - but Guns has the final say."

I put my request in. A fortnight later I stood before the Gunnery Officer (Guns) and Coxhead, both seated at a desk. Guns looked at my request form.

"So Ashton, you want a draft to sea"?

"Sir" Guns looked at Coxhead for comment.

"I don't think he's ready for draft yet". Guns looked at my AS264 form. "Fire Control, drill, swimming, band, orchestra; all very satisfactory".

Coxhead: "I think he can be more useful to us here". I interrupted. "But sir, it's not what I joined up for. I joined for fighting service at sea".

Guns turned to Coxhead. "his request is valid; granted, Ashton".

"Thank you sir," I looked at Coxhead; his face was dark with anger.

## AFLOAT

On 1st February 1941, my draft to HMAS CANBERRA came. On the 7<sup>th</sup> February, I was on a train to Perth. On the 13<sup>th</sup> February I stood on the wharf at Fremantle. This was the moment I had looked forward for the last three months. I had a feeling of excitement when I first saw HMAS CANBERRA on that sunny summer's day, lying alongside the Fremantle wharf. She was refuelling and victualling and the decks were alive with sailors and officers. Painted grey she looked so impressive. Sleek lines, three funnels and for'ard gun turrets sporting four 12-foot long gun barrels. The next minute I was lugging my hammock and duffle bag up the gangway. A sailor ushered me down steel ladders and along a labyrinth of passageways.

The first person I met when I entered the bandsmen's mess was Frank Ward. What a surprise! Frank and I were both playing in the SSO in 1935 under Hamilton Harty, in the first celebrity series in Sydney Town Hall. Frank played the double bass. We maintained our friendship right up to the last year in August 1996 when he died.

Shortly after I joined this ship a runner appeared.

"Ashton, Bandmaster Blaskett wants to see you in his cabin".

We were still docked at Fremantle when I knocked at Harry Blaskett's cabin door. My first surprise, when Harry Blaskett opened the door, was to see an extremely attractive young woman seated at the table, holding a glass of sherry.

"Ashton?"

"Sir."

"Meet my niece, Angela." We both nodded and smiled.

There are many who may remember the World War 1 poster of the stern, square, handle-bar moustached face and piercing eyes of Lord Kitchener, with hand and fore-finger pointing and the caption;

### **YOUR COUNTRY NEEDS YOU!**

Harry Blaskett, without a moustache, was a replica of the poster. Straight eyebrows,

stern eyes and straight, thin lips that barked orders and brooked no queries.

"Welcome to the Grey Funnel Line, Ashton. Here, sit down". He indicated to a chair.

"Have you had your daily orders yet from band corporal Burleigh"? "No Sir"

"Well when at sea, it's four hours on watch, four hours off, with two for the doggies. Bells every hour and half-hour bugle calls from wakey onwards. In harbour – and when leaving – the band plays." He looked at his watch

"It's now 1400 hours, we weigh anchor at 1500. I've seen your 264 – good to have a first class musician on board. No playing at sea though. Get Ward to show you the TS when at sea. It's manned 24 hours by the band." He stood up; it was a sign the interview was finished. I stood, smiled at the niece, saluted and was on my way back to the mess.

Frank greeted me with a smile and a chuckle.

"Well, what's your impression"?

"Pompous"

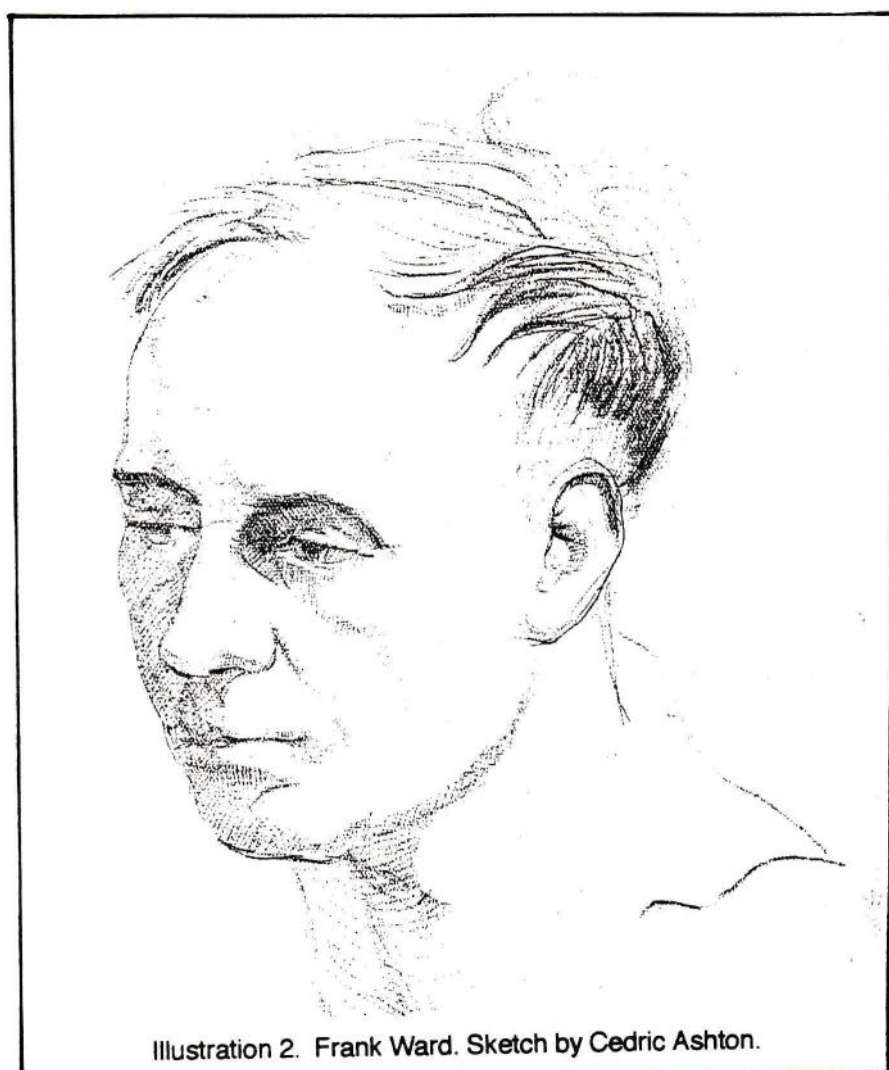


Illustration 2. Frank Ward. Sketch by Cedric Ashton.

Frank nodded.

“That’s an attractive niece,” I said.

“Niece!” he laughed, “that’s his Fremantle floozy. He’s got one in every port”.

A bugle sounded and five bells followed. A piped voice; “all hands prepare to leave harbour.” There was mild movement as the band donned jackets, caps and belts and we took our respective instruments. Frank kept his tuba in the band storeroom. I followed him along passageways and down steel ladders. Freak with his tuba and me with my French horn, we then made our way aft to the quarter-deck. This area was reserved for the captain and his officers; -and band, only when it had to perform on entering harbour, leaving harbour, Church service, colours, morning assembly, etc.

It was a lovely, sunny afternoon with the ‘Fremantle doctor’ blowing a gentle south westerly breeze. A scattered line of people watched and waved from the slowly receding wharf. The foredeck and afterdeck were busy with sailors working winches, as the ropes were thrown off the wharf bollards and winched aboard. The band played the ‘Colonel Bogey’ a few seagulls whirled above the ship and I felt a great happiness and satisfaction with the feel of the ship, gently rising and falling to the ocean swell, as we left harbour, bound, for where? This was resolved as soon as we left harbour; the speaker system crackled. Every member of the crew stopped what they were doing to listen;

“Hear ye. We will join in convoy with troopships, which will proceed to the Mediterranean. Leaving them, we will

proceed to Colombo; expected time of arrival 17<sup>th</sup> February at 0700 hours”.

It was early 1941; the war had not yet come close to Australia. Though we knew what was happening in the theatres of war in Europe, there was still a sense of adventure and anticipation for all Australian soldiers, sailors and airmen. Neither Japan nor America had joined the conflict. So far, no great sorrows or bereavement attended Australia as a nation.

I returned to the band mess. This part of the ship was to be my home for – how long? On one side was the inward sloping side of the ship, reinforced with steel ribs and round portholes, slightly bigger than a man’s head. Both ends of the mess and the fourth side were steel partitions. There was one doorway; the ceiling was a tangle of straight and twisted pipes carrying air ventilation, fuel and water and communication to the entire length of the ship. These were used at night to sling our hammocks. A long trestle table, firmly screwed to the deck, accommodated the 12 bandsmen at meal times.

The ship was at sea and rolling gently to the swell. Already six of the band had gone on watch to the TS. It was the first dogwatch from 4.00pm till 6.00pm. At six, Frank and I and four remaining bandsmen would take over for two hours.

I finally achieved what I had set out to do, Serve at Sea.

Cedric H. ASHTON MBE, DSCM

Lecture to the Society 5th September, 1997





We sadly lost 2 senior members of our Branch and a much loved wife of one of our longest serving Victorian members.



**ROBERT (NELLIE) GWYNNE**



Passed away on the 27th of May 2020.  
He joined the RAN on 7/8/1952 and DEE  
18/12/63 (a musical date!) He was 84 .

**RIP Nellie**



**PHIL BUCKMASTER**

Passed away on the 31st of May 2020  
Phil served 12 years with the RAN playing  
on Tuba and String Bass. He then trans-  
ferred to the RAAF band.

**RIP Phil**



**SHIRLEY HOGG**



Passed away on the 17th of May 2020. Loving  
wife of our long serving Victorian member, Alan  
Hogg. Shirley and Alan have always ben involved  
in all of the Victorian Association events.

**RIP Shirley**

