

Royal Australian Navy Band Association Magazine



Christmas Edition 2022

A magazine for association members and serving band members of the RAN.



Your Executive:**All Editorial to:**

Errol Hatch

RAN Band Association.

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Rear Admiral Mark Campbell (Rtd)

President:

Ralph Daines

Vice President:

Geoff Bunce

Secretary:

Roger Downton

Treasurer:

Errol Hatch

Committee:

Bill Farrell, Geoff Dawson, Doug Drysdale

State Representatives:**NSW:** Ralph Daines**VIC:** Terry Ekin**QLD:** John Lennon**SA:** Doug Drysdale**TAS:** David Hardstaff**WA:** Bill Farrell**RAN Veterans Band/Events Manager:**

Ralph Daines

Registered Address:

Royal Australian Navy Band Association Inc;

1 Howell Ave, Port Macquarie. NSW 2444

Web: www.ranbandassoc.net**ASSOCIATION MERCHANDISE—2022**

We currently have Polo Shirts and Caps available for purchasing. Orders are to be sent to Ralph at xranband@bigpond.net.au or ring him on 0405 380 751

Payments are made via direct deposit after you have contacted Ralph with final shipping pricing.

2022 Polo Shirt

Bank Details: BSB: 013232 Account No: 290164678
Bank: ANZ, Royal Australian Navy Band Association.
Include your name as a reference.



Latest T-Shirt design is a Blue & White easy wear fabric with Crest.

Sizes: Small, Medium, Large, X-Large, 2X-Large and 3X-Large.

\$30.00 plus \$12.50 Postage.

**Official Association Cap 2022**

Perfect for that Ballina sun. Great looking fit all size cap with Association Crest

One size fits all.

\$18.00 plus \$9.95 postage.

From The Editors Desk: Errol Hatch

AT LAST, I have the time to put our last magazine for 2022 together and get it out to you. The last 4 months for me has been to say the least frantic. From the reunion in August (more in the mag) I have not stopped until this week where I can now put pen to paper. A little personal update.

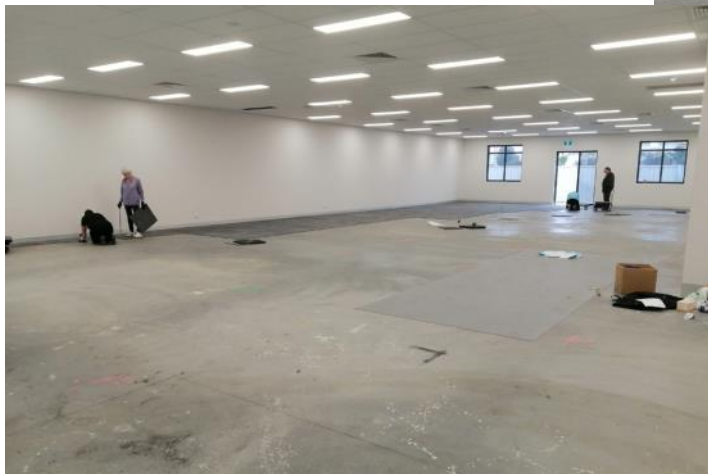
The reunion was sort of a get ready to go on a series of projects I had to be complete before years end. The first was our family music store which had to be relocated as our lease had completed its term and we had to make a big decision to move to larger premises for the long term.

After two and a half years of retail mayhem (Covid) that decision alone was a hard one to make, the second was where to go. Literally around the corner, a new building of double the current size had been sitting vacant for 4 years and on either side of this complex was a Vet and a Child minding centre. It never looked like it was another retail space, it lacked any presence but the owner was a ex musician of note and on negotiating a good deal we took the keys.

With new tenants taking our current shop we had only 4 weeks to build, move out, make good the old premises and still attempt to trade. In those weeks of September we went from an empty shell to a fully operating retail store, with October opening to our first customers. The photos show the transition of what we had done.



Above is the shell we took on and it's very bland appearance. Right, after a paint job and some great signage its come up well. The open out Café will be to the right of the door, Yes we are having a café in the music store.



Above: Sharon Hatch, Ingrid and the boys laying carpet tiles to 450 square metres of floor space. Sore knees by the end of it.

Right: the finished shop with walls and 50 metres of slatwall installed, 5 teaching studios and recording studio down the back. Should do us for the next 10 years. I won't be there to do it though.



As this was happening my other major project, building our house down at the lovely coast town of Coronet Bay (across from Phillip island) was not progressing as it should have been and the weather was not helping. As a owner builder I had to use tradies for certain parts and to lock them in was a nightmare. So through November I finished the framing and had the trusses and roof installed and basic plumbing done. Through December I have not been down there as much as I would have liked because project 3 was calling.



LEFT: Frame up on the and ready for the roof and Pergola to be completed. RIGHT: Roof and Pergola finished ready for windows in the new year. In by Easter 2023

In 2019 the shop launched our mobile sound stage that we built and held two Christmas carols before putting it in storage over the 2019/2020 Christmas break. We were looking forward to a very successful campaign with the stage for festivals and community events except we didn't predict Covid.

After almost 3 years in storage it was in a sorry state and with just on 3 weeks before a whole series of carols there was a lot of work to do. With the weather the canopy



had been ripped of so there was a fixed roof that had to be designed and installed and the floor completely re-done. Now with 5 Christmas carols and festival events behind us in the last 2 weeks we can sit in our car-park ready for the New Year.

So that's my excuse for the delay in getting this mag to you. I hope there is enough for you to read in this edition and as always I welcome content to make it a worthwhile magazine.

All the best for the festive season and a healthy 2023.

Errol.

Treasurers Report By Errol Hatch.

After a successful reunion and payments to the RSL the association has maintained a healthy bank balance. I have taken on the full role of Treasurer after sharing the responsibilities with Ralph and look forward to serving you until our next reunion where the chair will be open again.

Membership has been stable and receipts for association fees continued to come in.

The membership list in the last mag was a great way for you to see where we are at with our membership base and

to familiarize you with those that we have not seen for a long time.

The reunion was a great success and we picked up some new members which was encouraging.

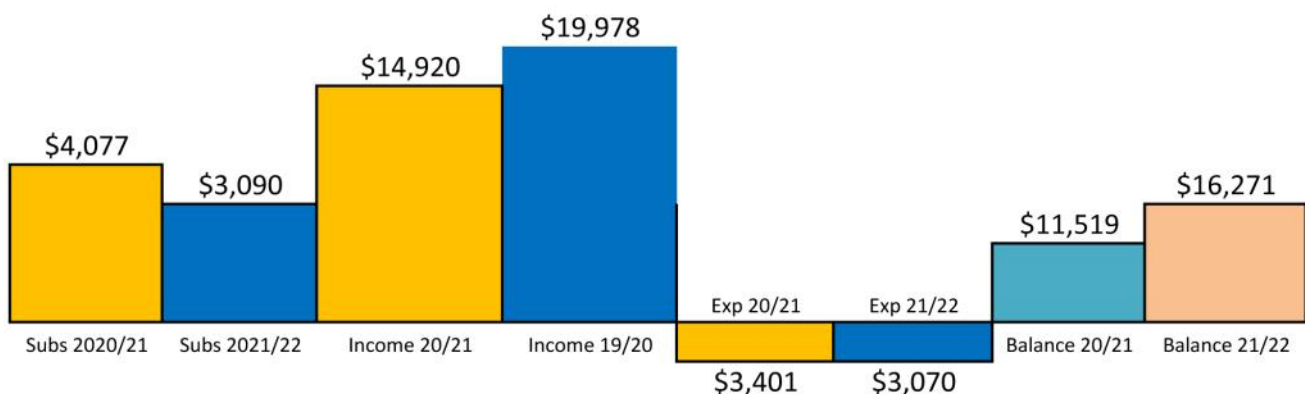
The following figures and graph shows our current state as of the 30th June 2022.

Errol.
Treasurer.



Royal Australian Navy Band Financials 2021/2022

Brought Forward:		2021/2022	2020/2021
	ANZ	\$11,519.19	\$8,449.47
<u>Income</u>			
Subscriptions		\$3,090.00	\$4,077.00
Donations		\$70.00	\$500.00
2020 Ballina Reunion Reunion		\$3,256.50	\$1,794.00
Merchandise		\$42.50	\$0.00
Vets Band (Inc Donations)		\$2,000.00	\$100.00
Sub Total		<u>\$8,459.00</u>	<u>\$6,471.00</u>
TOTAL		<u><u>\$19,978.19</u></u>	<u><u>\$14,920.47</u></u>
<u>Expenses</u>			
Fees/Admin Costs		\$432.90	\$682.83
Printing & Setup		\$435.00	\$1,715.70
Post		\$105.60	\$528.00
Stationery		\$80.00	\$24.75
Merch Purchases		\$0.00	\$0.00
Computer/Internet/Website		\$410.50	\$250.00
reunion reimbursements		\$2,243.00	\$0.00
TOTAL		<u>\$3,707.00</u>	<u>\$3,401.28</u>
Closing Bank Balance		\$16,271.19	\$11,519.19
(Veterans Band Contribution)		\$6,548.47	\$4,548.47
Balance as of 30/6/2022		<u><u>\$16,271.19</u></u>	<u><u>\$11,519.19</u></u>



PRESIDENTS REPORT Ralph Daines



“GOD BLESS QUEEN ELIZABETH, REST IN PEACE OUR QUEEN”

It sure was worth the wait for the Reunion, Concert and the RAN Band Sydney, all colliding for a massive, few days in Ballina (more inside). What we crammed into those three days was rewarding, exhausting and I want to sincerely thank all who helped to make this event one to remember.

The Ballina RSL Club staff were amazing, thank you Blue McNally for your assistance, but my biggest thank you is to my wife Cheryle who spent forever organizing, looking after the Elder Members and in the background keeping me going.

The members of the Veterans Band were FANTASTIC punching above their weight, the RAN Band Sydney were a delight to listen to and more important play with them. The Band Members were very friendly with the oldies and I am sure they went away with a different impression of what life is like out of the Service.

This Association is looked upon by Navy Office as a pathway for former members. The work of the Veterans Band has not gone unnoticed by Navy and we have some influential friends there. The Veterans Band is a very important part of this Association and it truly is a Tri Service Band, looked at by former Army and Air Force musicians as a fair dinkum Band, one that they want to play in.

This will be my last two years as President of the Association, but I am not going away yet. The New Committee elected for the next two years are;

Vice President: Geoff Bunce

Secretary: Roger Downton;

Treasurer: Errol Hatch;

Committee Members: Doug Drysdale, Geoff Dawson, Bill Farrell.

State Representatives: John Lennon QLD, Ralph Daines NSW, Terry Ekin VIC, David Hardstaff TAS, Doug Drysdale SA and Bill Farrell WA.

There are some new and young blood in our new Committee and I hope this will continue into the future.

A special General Meeting was held before the General Meeting in Ballina to discuss an amendment to the By Laws of the Association’s Constitution, but after a healthy discussion, it was decided to Rescind the Motion and have the wording altered. In this Newsletter is a Ballot Paper outlining the new Motion and I would ask you to read this notice and return Electronically or Post by the closing date.

It has been decided the next Reunion in 2024, will be in Launceston, Tasmania.

To all our members have a happy Christmas and a healthy 2023.

Cheers Ralph.





NOTICE OF AMENDMENT TO CONSTITUTION BY LAWS

BALLOT PAPER

A Special General Meeting was held prior to the Annual General Meeting, 19th August 2022 to discuss amendment to the following section of the RANBA Constitution By Laws.

The meeting was unable to agree on the wording of this motion, so the meeting was informed that an amended wording would be made and sent out to all members of Association to vote on electronically.

AMENDMENT IS PRINTED IN BLUE BELOW. SECTION b) ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP

1 MEMBERSHIP

Full Membership with voting rights is a former serving member of the Permanent Royal Australian Navy Band or the Royal Australian Navy Band Reserve

Associate Membership is available to Widows, family of full members and to former members of The Royal Marines and foreign Navy Bands. Associate Members may attend General Meetings and participate but have no voting rights

Associate Members who are a members of the RAN Veterans Band may attend General Meetings and have voting rights ONLY in relation to RAN Veterans Band matters.

Honorary Membership can be afforded to any person who has offered outstanding assistance to the RANBA and musicians who assist from time to time in the RAN Veterans Band but have no voting rights.

Serving Members of the Royal Australian Navy Band are invited to become members in the category of Honorary Members but if they wish to receive the Association Newsletter and the use of the Association Web Site, they would need to apply for Associate Membership or Full Membership if they want to vote.

As per changes to the Association Incorporation Regulation 2022, Schedule 2, 4(2)(a) and 5(3)(a); Schedule 2, 1(1) relating to postal voting, the Ballot Paper sets out details of the Amendment and voting can be now electronically sent to admin@ranbandassoc.net

Members can still return a this Ballot Paper via Post to PO BOX 69, LYNBROOK.VIC.3975 with a circle around YES of NO below.

PLEASE RETURN YOUR BALLOT PAPER OR EMAIL BY 31ST MARCH 2023

VOTE : YES OR NO.

RALPH DAINES : PUBLIC OFFICER

Editorial, Letters and Comments

An email from a Ballina resident to the Ballina RSL .

ATTENTION: Mr Bill Coulter.

I wish to express my thanks for the wonderful 2 concerts the Ballina RSL has recently held in the Auditorium.

The first was the Royal Australian Navy Veterans Band which performed with the Royal Australian Navy Band, Sydney, on Thursday, 18th August, 2022, preceded by the very moving Vietnam Veterans' Commemoration Service.

The second was the Lismore Symphony Orchestra & Soul'd, on Sunday, 21st August, 2022.

The music at both these concerts was very diverse, exciting, and enjoyable. It is wonderful that seniors are given the opportunity to attend these mid afternoon shows. Many, many thanks to you and the club, and the very courteous staff on both these afternoons.

Yours sincerely,

Carol Heyhorn.

From a facebook post by Gordon Jackson

This picture came from a postcard I bought in the US of the dixie band. A few things I noticed, the clarinet player and the guy looking through the window are different, the bass drum is very big. I have forgotten sizes but maybe 24 inch and a fat depth, the drummer has only 1 cymbal (for crashes) plus the obligatory wood block and cowbell.

There is a lot of stuff on the piano including hats, I guess this would have been taken in 40s or 50s in a small club with lots of enthusiastic listeners. I see a can of Tooheys New in arms reach of the tenor sax player, a great photo.



Jim Hawkins placed a post on our RANBA website.

I had a couple of beers today with Jim 'Bomber' Brown, ex Birdie who transferred from the RN to RAN in 1969 and sang with a group on board Melbourne. He wished to be remembered to Craig Dickman, John Lennon and any other Bandies on board at the time. He shared a flat with drummer Louis Burdett at one stage and remembers fondly how good Louis was on kit.

Bomber told me he was drafted to HMS Albion and spent several years wearing the fire suit on the flight deck, and his family came here in 1967 so he followed suit two years later, spending most of his time on board Melbourne and at the Tross. He attended last weeks Veteran Band concert and thoroughly enjoyed it along with others who were at the Ballina Fisho's Club today.

Jim,

Another important post from Jim

Information regarding the Dust Diseases Tribunal.

Any wife or widow of an ex-Navy sailor suffering from asbestosis (mesothelioma) should contact the lawyer listed below as soon as this disease is diagnosed. Please don't wait until the Veteran passes away if possible.

Greg Isolani
KCI Lawyers
488 Bourke St
Melbourne 3000
(Ph) (03)86735888

He is a specialist lawyer handling claims at the Dust Diseases Tribunal and any payout obtained is on and above anything received from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

I know of two widows whose claims have been successful through Greg who received in excess of \$500,000 each courtesy of the DDT.

I also know of another widow who had her husband's remains cremated before a biopsy could be taken resulting in no proof of the contracting of this disease.

There is no guarantee of a payout of this magnitude, but by contacting Greg you give yourself a high chance of success.

Jim Hawkins
0427400625



Editorial, Letters and Comments



PATRON: CMDR Rod Fayle OAM (Retd)
THE RETURNED SERVICES LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA
NEW SOUTH WALES
 The Price of Liberty is Eternal Vigilance

BALLINA SUB-BRANCH

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PRESIDENT
 Richard Wills BEM
VICE PRESIDENT
 Tony Tartaro
TREASURER
 Dr Colin Macdonald
SECRETARY
 Ben Haime
ADVOCACY
 'AJ' Walsh

23 August 2022

Mr Ralph Daines
 RAN Veterans Band
xranband@bigpond.net.au

Dear Ralph

On behalf of the President and members of the Ballina RSL sub-Branch, we take this opportunity to thank you for your outstanding support at our Ballina Vietnam Veterans' Day memorial services held on Thursday, 18 August 2022.

As one of the pivotal elements of Services on the day, we cannot thank you enough as we remember the sacrifice of men and women with the military service and those family and friends who supported their efforts.

Yours faithfully

Ben Haime

Secretary

Ballina RSL sub-Branch

Ph: 02 6686 0133

@ office@ballinasubbranch.org

 www.ballinarsslsubbranch.org.au



1 Grant Street Ballina NSW 2478

PLEASE ADDRESS ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO THE SECRETARY

Editorial, Letters and Comments

From Bill Farrell

HMAS Perth 1 Memorial

Please see attached, the latest photograph of the Memorial Wall complete with flags flying. It is intended to fly the flags 24/7, illuminated at night. The flags flying will be, the Australian National Flag, the Flag of the United States of America, the Union Jack, The Dutch National Flag and the flag of the State of Western Australia. Each of these flags has significance to the Battle of the Sunda Strait and HMAS PERTH (I) & USS HOUSTON.

On significant days such as 28th February to the 1st of March (Battle of Sunda Strait), ANZAC Day and Remembrance Day, and other days that may be authorised by the Government, the Australian White Ensign, the RAAF Ensign and the Dutch Naval Ensign will be flown in place of the WA State flag, the Union Jack and the Dutch National Flag.

These significant days will primarily remember those lost from HMAS PERTH & USS HOUSTON which included 6 members on detachment from RAAF No 9 Squadron who crewed and maintained PERTH's Walrus aircraft, and two civilian canteen staff members.

I ask those who might wish to join the Foundation, or indeed make a donation to the Foundation to utilize the membership form printable from the website.

Yours aye

Bill Farrell



South Australian Report: By Doug Drysdale.

Well, at long last we finally got together with old friends and mates to reminisce and catch up during the long and dreaded covid pandemic.

The reunion held in Ballina this year was very enjoyable and musically rewarding performing in combination with the RAN Band from Sydney. The venue was excellent at the Ballina RSL Club, however some of us had issues with the stage lighting as our eye sight is failing and with bifocal glasses and fluorescent lights above makes reading music somewhat difficult. There were also the usual issues with large combined bands on stage with cramped spaces for the musicians and complaints from a few woodwind players that the trumpets are too loud - (again). Well like "drums" trumpets are loud instruments, but both can be played softly when required and with control.

Friendships were renewed and many discussions took place while having a (few) beers together and over a meal. Important discussions and debates took place in the special AGM with good outcomes. It is important to hear what the members are saying and discuss and consider their ideas for future reunions and get together. There is always the discussion and debate about having the RANBA Band rehearse and play at reunions. Some members feel that a reunion should be just a reunion, get together with outings, sightseeing and dinners etc. Some say that the time taken up by members rehearsing and performing takes away the time for other member's opportunity to get together with mates and do other things.

Well, speaking for myself, I like to do both as I still enjoy trumpet playing or conducting. However, my wife has a

different opinion, like some, probably saying, what am I going to do while you are tied up with the band? My answer is always the same, go shopping. My answer didn't go over very well. I suppose we have to draw a balance. Do we make the band's performance a simple, easy to arrange gig, like play in the park for an hour or shopping centre? Or do we have a separate band reunion just for playing in the band somewhere. The RANBA Band has achieved a lot over the years and will continue to do so. The discussions will also continue.

There were also discussions on where the reunions should be held. Some say the National Reunion should be held in a different place, with different places to see and things to do. Somewhere where members have not been and the location should be a central location, rather than held on the other side of the country. Travelling expenses and health concerns are the biggest issues and concerns with any reunion, no matter where it is held.

A place to consider for maybe a future RANBA National Reunion and the Band could easily put on a short impromptu performance on the lawn outside the Darwin Military Museum. Darwin, a great place to visit.

Merry Christmas to all,

Douglas Drysdale

Adelaide, South Australia.



Veterans Band News

BY LAW 7 RAN VETERANS BAND

The Royal Australian Navy Veterans Band is the official and exclusive title of the musical combination that represents the Royal Australian Navy Band Association. All Full and Associate members of the Royal Australian Navy Band Association are eligible to be a member of the RANVB.

The RAN Veterans Band will be coordinated by a member appointed by the Management Committee.

The Veterans Band has proven to be an outstanding representative of the RAN Band Association and NAVY over the years, in Australia and overseas. The proof of the Band's acceptance as a "Real Band and Real Sailors" (a knock back from a retired Admiral who wanted Real Sailors and not the Veterans Band which was to play at the Anniversary of the Melbourne, Evans collision and included a number of the Melbourne's Band), was achieved in Ballina when the Band performed with RAN Band Sydney for Vietnam Veterans Day and Concert.



It was a delight to mix with these friendly young ones for the couple of days and to see the keen desire to be part of the Association's face book page is encouraging with keeping in touch.

It would be fantastic to have members of RAN Bands who are leaving the Service take a look at becoming members of the Veterans Band. At the moment we are relying on many former Army and Air Force musicians filling all the spare spots.

These former other service bandies are also members of the Association and it would be nice if they had a right to vote on matters concerning the Veterans Band.

Ralph.



Museum News

THE END OF AN ERA

It has been over 7 years since the association got involved in a serious way at the Cerberus museum and the opportunity to have a significant display of memorabilia and treasures from years past. I'm afraid to report that the museum as we know it will be no more.



With the significant changes to the Naval Heritage structure and their categorization of what is deemed of display worthiness, Cerberus museum will lose its unique displays of all things Navy. It now along with other museums will only display what fits into the categories A,B,C,D of their group displays.

These are very detailed groups but if an item has not originated in Cerberus or the heritage already has it at other locations it does not warrant displaying. It will either be off loaded to an associated group be it associations of that ship or RSL's for their displays. If no takers, it's gone.

This makes our current display very precarious as it, from what I see only has 6 items that I would possibly fit these categories. Is a RM uniform OK, do Record covers fit, does a B&H Cornet from the 40's fit, does a Parade Drum fit, does a Bass Drum ceremonial cover fit, do Drum Major slashes of various Bands fit. It has

been mentioned in passing that the Band/Cinema foyer at Cerberus could house some of what does not deem appropriate for display but until we return in 2023 I can't confirm.

The powers to be who ventured down from Sydney are apologetic to the museums fate but I and others

think that is a bit of a cop out. They freely admit future museums are not for the aging pusser reminiscing about the ship they were on and the significance of what they are looking at in the museum currently, as they are not the intended viewer, WHO IS IT THEN?

Here's an example of what is and will continue to happen. The walls of the museum and the school of music was ordained with ships crests of our Navy, the American and other navies col-



lected from ex's pussers over many years, since this current policy has been taken up, the disappearance of these crests has been significant. The explanation is that "Heritage already has more than enough of these crest held at Spec Island, So we don't need anymore" they go on, "as they are not associated with Cerberus they shouldn't be displayed anyway".

All the volunteers (pictured at our Christmas lunch) last week are totally distraught at the decisions being made and are not looking forward to seeing what is left when they return in 2023. Also what is a volunteers role, we no longer have the opportunity to create a display or suggest what stays or goes so our role



is to what again ?

A little side line in this saga, LCDR Eric Munchen (Rtd) is tasked with cataloging documentation of all of Navie's past ships and Branches from documents left by donors and Branches to the museum. It is everything from promo's, letters to love one's regarding conflicts etc, photo's. official transcripts, very interesting reading. All these are kept in individual ship labelled boxes and filing cabinets. How far in is he, Eric indicated to me that he is probably 60% done but they have al-



ready disposed of filing cabinets worth of history.

Am I being a bit dramatic over this. To walk around the museum to see items from WWI through to Af-

ghanistan, Ships that we did not know existed, History of the Branches of the Navy, Images on TV screens of everyday life of navy personnel and places we visited, this is interesting to those that had been or were involved in it. That is not they way of the future I'm afraid of the museum.

Before finishing up for the year I took the liberty of removing all the items you have donated to the association to display to the museum. The only remaining items are in the glass cabinets which have been accounted for and I will keep a close eye and follow their path to wherever they go.

I don't feel I've overstated the significance of the changes being put in place but one thing looks like happening, the Silver Drums will be part of the display at Cerber-

us in the future. There is also talk of a museum being built with a large repository on the outside of the west gate. All big picture stuff and a long way off.

I don't know if I'm looking forward to seeing what the museum will look like when we return there seems to be a case of get rid of it while us volunteers aren't around mentality. Yes we are only volunteers in the overall picture but we helped build what we have today, a collection that all can enjoy from all branches of the navy and whatever ship you served on.

More to come.

Errol.



Victorian Report: By Terry Ekin

Happy spring to all readers, although those on the east coast would hardly be thinking that with all the rain we've been experiencing lately. I am looking forward to the global warming that we have been promised

There's little I can write about in this edition. I was unable to attend the Ballina reunion due to other commitments but I'm sure there will be numerous articles and photos in this newsletter from those who attended, which, I'm sure, will make some interesting reading and those with a conspiracy penchant can look for anything to read between the lines.

As we Victorians emerge further from our dictatorial sanctioned and enforced imprisonment, many who are active musically are renewing their associations with small group, concert band and orchestral halls, and also returning to the "concert stage" with real, live people in the audience - versus the YouTube pieces that so many did during the imposed lockdowns that confined us to barracks.

Recently, the Victorian Band League held an all-day band festival at Federation Square in the city, where brass and concert bands from around the state performed a half hour bracket (apart from one brass band who took it upon themselves to do nearly double that performing numbers no-one has ever heard of) to passing foot traffic and others who chose to stay a while and listen. It was a sad and validating reflection of the impact of the lockdowns on Melbourne, that the audience was nowhere near the numbers in the pre-lockdown years. We can only hope that as the years pass and memories and feelings fade, people and families return to the city.

Gail "Gale" Codling celebrated a birthday milestone with friends and family recently with the theme apparently being Harry Potter, her (is that the correct pronoun?) favour-

ite movie collection. Etiquette dictates that you don't ask nor reveal a woman's age, therefore I can't tell you that it was Gail's 70th - I'm sure I'm going to pay for that.

Sadly, after many years of health problems, we hear that Bill Bekendam has received his final posting and joined the massed sky band. During the last half of the 70's and first half of the 80's there were 4 of us who's fate selected to ensure we were posted to the same bands. Many stories and just as many laughs, but as we all say - what happens at sea/tour/etc, stays there. In the words of Dan Andrews, I know nothing!

In closing, if you are affected by the rising waters, may you stay dry, safe and well. And to those, no pun intended, under the weather, may your road to recovery be short and swift. Finally, Timber - dust off that flute, oil the keys and break out that embouchure ready for the next Veterans Band.

Take care all, Merry Christmas and a safe 2023.

Terry.



VALE:

I have the sad duty to report the passing of more members of our association since our last magazine.

Bill Bekendam

Passed away resulting from a long fight with cancer. He was residing in Perth WA.

RIP

Bill

Les Tull

A senior member of our association passed away in July this year. Peter Martin informed us via our website. Unfortunately I don't have any other details.

RIP

Les

Josephine Gwynne

Wife of the late Nellie Gwynne, both were original members of our Victorian (Mexicans) membership. She was always involved in all our activities and will be missed dearly.

RIP

Josie



News from the Western Front By Bill Farrell

Your correspondent commences this edition from the Wild West with the celebration of KAMBARANG, the wildflower seas, and the season of birth, October-November. Another reunion has been and gone and is done and dusted, giving members a chance to visit another part of Australia and to stroll down memory lane for another time. Ballina certainly turned on some weather and “Blue” McNally and his organizing group, whoever they might have been, are certainly to be congratulated for a job well done in every respect. Your correspondent was the sole representative from the West and his visit was not without it’s problems.

The travel agent had gone to great lengths to organize the itinerary so that nothing would go wrong but from the departure things took a turn for the worst. Boarding the flight on time, we then spent 1 hour 45 minutes sitting the tarmac before take-off resulting in the connecting flight to Reunion City had departed before the Perth flight had even arrived in Sydney. This meant an overnight stop in the Harbour City and a change of airline next morning to Jetstar because QANTAS do not fly to Ballina on a Wednesday. It made me realize that the second airline was not for me in the future. However, I managed to pick up the afternoon rehearsal so the day was not completely written off.

The remainder of the program went along swimmingly, particularly the “Meet & Greet” where old faces and old stories mingled heartily. The Vietnam Day ceremony was excellent, and credit must be given to the RAN Sydney Band’s bugler who performed a great rendition of both The Last Post and The Reveille. The afternoon concert was extremely well attended, in fact that should read the afternoon concerts because there were three of them, The Veteran’s Band, The RAN Sydney Band and The Combined Band, which presented a staggering 8 French horns with yours truly possibly performing his swan song, having commencing on the horn in 1948, giving a total of 74 years, enough for anyone it is thought! But one never knows what Launceston will bring?

Before the concerts began, there was a miniature “reunion within a reunion,” because there were 8 members of the MELBOURNE’S 1969 “EVANS disaster Band” present and we spent an hour or so chewing the fat about the longest day of our Naval careers. That evening your correspondent received a very pleasant surprise when he met up with ex-Flight Sergeant Jack Sewell, formerly Drum Major of the RAAF Central Band which performed at the 1962 British and Commonwealth Games in Perth. The RAN Band was also present with Drum Majors, Petty Officers Ted Lincoln and Bill Farrell. Jack was as surprised as your correspondent to meet up and we reminisced for some time over past experiences. It was disappointing that your correspondent was this State’s only representative, but may be the Apple Isle will bring some more members out of the woodwork in 2024?

On the health front it can be said that Ted is well although he has had more problems with his feet. There is nothing else to report because as I have written many times, no-one rings me to report anything. All the best from The West!

VALE: It is with deep regret that the passing of former Warrant Officer Musician Bill Bekendam is announced. He passed in hospital on Friday 7th. October here in Perth. It is under stood that he had been in hospital for a month and was suffering from cancer. Sincere sympathy to Donna and her family.

RIP Bill as you go to join that ever growing heavenly-based Navy Band.

A very rare photograph of the late Here Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip on the quarter-deck of the then flagship of the RAN, the cruiser HMAS AUSTRALIA on 13th. March, 1954, reviewing the march past of the crew. The Fleet Admiral and Captain are on the podium with the Royal couple. The musician on the left hand side of the photo is Musician Neville Nixon, Your correspondent was playing French horn further into the Band ranks.



PROMOTIONAL ARTICLE FOR BALLINA CONCERT: By Ralph Daines

Supplied to the ECHO, a local news outlet for Ballina and districts.

Veteran Big Band Sounds coming to Ballina

The Royal Australian Navy Veterans Band is coming to Ballina RSL on Thursday, with a concert raising funds for the Northern Rivers Flood Relief Fund, by donation. They will be joined by the Royal Australian Navy Band, from Sydney, for what will be a big sound in a great cause.

Ralph Daines is one of the organisers of the concert, and has travelled up from Port Macquarie to prepare for the show. He will be joined by 80 musicians who are coming from far and wide to commemorate Vietnam Veterans Day, which is also on Thursday 18 August.

Mr Daines told *The Echo* the RAN Veterans Band began in 2000. 'A few guys from the Navy Band Association thought we'd see if enough people were interested to march on Anzac Day in Sydney,' he said. '73 people turned up at Victoria Barracks!' After rehearsing and then playing in the march that year, the new band was off and running, with a changing roster of members.

Mr Daines says they played at Anzac Day marches around Australia for the next few years, then began performing overseas. Transforming into a concert band, they played in Singapore, Noumea, Malaysia and Thursday Island, as well as cruise ships and cities across Australia.



Ralph Daines playing clarinet with the RAN Veterans Band. Photo supplied.

He explained that these days, not all the band members are ex-navy people, but members of the Royal Australian Navy Band Association still form the core group.

'They're entitled to a spot in the band, whether they're

one-legged or whatever, there's no standard of music required.

'If they were in the band, they can play in the band forever. But then what happens, I sit down with the players that I've got on paper and say, "Well, you know, I'm missing a trumpet player, or I'm missing a couple of clarinets. I need a tuba." 'And so we start asking around.' Mr Daines said. Many members are now drawn from old Army and RAAF bands. 'We've never had the same band twice.'

A self-funded proposition

Ralph Daines says the band receives no funding at all. 'The guys pay their own airfares, they pay their own everything, accommodation. I work with my wife chasing up businesses, trying to get some donations to help us out. That was okay in the early days, but then COVID came along and everything stopped.' With members geographically separated, Mr Daines said rehearsing and getting to shows was always complicated, but the band always found a way.

'The guys themselves just foot the bill,' he said. Mr Daines is a Vietnam veteran himself, and says he was part of the first Navy band ever to go to war on land. 'We were in Vietnam and we did concerts all over the place,' he remembers. There are five members of the current band who went to war in 1970. 'The oldest is our former band master who was then Director of Music, and he's 87. And he's still playing. Just one of the boys. We don't have rank. Everyone's equal.'

There will be two opportunities to see the Veterans Band in action on Thursday, in the morning at the Remembrance Service near Ballina RSL, and then inside the club at 3pm for the big concert.

Does role does music play in the lives of the band members?

Ralph Daines says, 'The thing about music is that you can play for ever and ever and ever.' He said that as band-members become older, in many cases the band becomes more important to them.



RAN Veterans Band, performing in PNG. Photo supplied.

‘On a number of occasions now, people that were dying of cancer, that knew it was their last effort to do something, have come along for the last hurrah,’ he said. ‘In Singapore, we had one chap who knew he was dying. He came over and did all the concerts with us and the Anzac service and came home. Then a few months later, he passed. We’ve had that happen a number of times.’

‘Also there was one guy that played trombone, and he had a stroke and couldn’t play the trombone anymore. So we put him on tambourine. We do things like that... we let people play the best they can, cover around them and let them enjoy themselves.’ This week Mr Daines will be playing clarinet in the band, with Tasmanian Chief Petty Officer Brian Ellis conducting. ‘He went with us to Malaysia in 2019. He did a great job.’

A very big band

Joining the veterans on stage this week will be the current Royal Australian Navy Band, who are coming up from Sydney, including musicians who were part of the flood relief and cleanup efforts in the Northern Rivers earlier this year.

Ralph Daines says the combined bands are going to rehearse all day on Wednesday, ready to sound magnificent on Thursday. The bands are going to be swapping repertoire, with a mixture of new and old favourites, including material from Jersey Boys and Elton John.



Ralph Daines and the RAN Veterans Band, performing in PNG. Photo supplied.

He said on Thursday afternoon the Veterans Band will play first, then the Navy Band will do a set, then there will be an interval, then the combined bands will perform together, with 80 players on stage.

‘The Director of Music of Navy has said she wants them to mix and mingle with my guys, and learn what we used to go through and what it was like back then,’ said Mr Daines. ‘It’s a great pathway for musicians to continue playing.’

Unlike the past, these days there are also women musicians in the Veterans Band, including players of the flute, oboe and French horn. Mr Daines says partners and wives are also a crucial part of keeping the band on the road.



Veterans Band. Photo supplied.

He says they are always on the lookout for new musicians.

Interested people can find out more at the [website for the Royal Australian Navy Band Association](#), and the [Veterans Band Facebook group](#).

THE 2022 BALLINA REUNION REPORT: By Errol Hatch

Usually at the end of these reports, personal acknowledgements follow but I need to at the outset thank the amazing hard work by Ralph and Cheryl to make this long awaited reunion work. I cannot write all the little things that they did, took care of and help avoid.

A big thankyou from everybody that took part.

Arriving in Ballina at about the bedtime hour of 9.00pm from a pleasant drive up from Melbourne, I find River street deserted but the lights still on a the RSL. Deciding to find my accommodation for the next few days, I pass up the invitation to drop in.

This reunion was to be a lot different to those of the past with the only comparison being the Sydney get together where the Veterans band had a significant role in the few days we were to be together.

WEDNESDAY THE 17TH AUGUST

Being woken up by the glaring sun (a rarity for us southerners) I made my way back to River Street to find endless cafes offering breakfast. It was great to catchup with familiar faces walking the streets doing the same thing before we made our way to our first full day of rehearsal.

The Ballina RSL was our base for all activities over the next 3 days and since I was there last it has had a significant upgrade. Remembering that only months earlier floods went through Ballina so their recovery has been remarkable.

The Veterans Band (VB) were joined by the RAN Sydney Band (SB) and we had to effectively fit both bands for the climax concert after the VB and SB performed individual performances on the Thursday.

Rehearsals started with us firstly trying to fit the VB on with all the SB gear that they were going to need for their portion of the concert. This took a fair bit of time and ate into our rehearsal time. The pressure was on our conductors, Brian Ellis and Roger Downton to basically rehearse a full program with only a couple of hours. It was a case of out went the new and the standard repertoire remained (felt sorry for Brian and Roger who put a lot of effort into the new pieces).





We were as usual familiar with this program and thankfully the audience hadn't heard it before (except for partners). It sounded full and I think it impressed the Sydney Band members that we were capable of producing a great sound.

I say this as one of the percussionists even commented how we sounded, they were assuming it would be another case of propping up a local band of little experience. A tick for us. This was to carry through the couple of days we were together.

Next up the SB were up doing a quick run through their program and it was significantly different to ours (thank heavens) and that word, Dynamics was in abundance in their rehearsal.

After a short lunch break we then we had the enormous task of getting both bands onto the stage. This required some members of the SB and VB to step down for this part of the performance which Ralph really appreciated because he was just not going fit us all on.

I applaud the SB percussionists for sitting it out as the kit and two tymps was all that would fit and even then the Ride Cymbal was in the left ear of a Tuba player and my stand sat under the arm of the guitar player.

This part of the concert was VB selections, was it loud, well yes it was, did it sound OK, couldn't tell as the sound didn't carry back past the Tuba and guitar player. Our conductor LT David Coit made a kind passing comment that we were "definitely playing them as if you knew them well"

The rehearsal finished and we were reasonably satisfied that it would be right on the day.

The evening was our traditional Meet & Greet and with the inclusion of the Sydney Band members it took on a

whole new meaning. There was plenty of vibrant conversation and they (the SB) provided a very lively small group that took us late into the evening. It was topped off with the SB members receiving our honorary association pin which they appreciatively accepted.

THURSDAY THE 18TH AUGUST

With a long day ahead of us the early morning coffee and light breakfast was a welcomed start. The Vietnam veterans service in the park opposite the RSL was well attended and a smaller band provided the music for the service. The navy bugler played a stirring Last Post. The setting and weather was perfect. On completion the attendees moved to the RSL for lunch and the afternoon concert.

The band packed up and took all the gear to the auditorium to finish setting up for the concert and have a light lunch. The anticipation was building well before the concert with locals taking seats guaranteeing they would not miss out.

The promotion for this concert was in the local paper, local radio and through the RSL website so it was not to be missed. (See the article in the mag from the ECHO)

THE CONCERT

The Veterans Band were first on to a capacity house and performed really well with I think a little bit of dynamics thrown in. All the pieces followed a popular theme which the audience recognized and enjoyed. Our conductors Brian and Roger were excellent and our set went very quickly I thought and then the SB were on. The transition was reasonably painless but with about 6 percussionists and more gear it was a tight fit. Their program was fantastic and all arrangements were done by band members. You really can't compare the two bands but our set lists were so opposite it worked well.

Our next transition was a little more complicated but we managed to fit over 50 players crammed onto the stage.

With Jersey Boys, Blues Brothers, Andrew Lloyd Webber and Benny Goodman selection in the final set it was a hard blow and the boys and girls were spent when we took the final bow. As a footnote, We were to have a Jim Henshaw as a vocalist in our program but he lost his voice so our program lost another couple of songs.

With the completion of our Veterans band duties the auditorium was cleared, the SB packed up all their gear and the rest of the evening was left to socialize in the bars and restaurants through town.



Above: The concert was well attended and the stage as you can see was packed to capacity. Brian and LT Coit conducting at different stages of the concert.

Right: John Widdicombe and Randall Kellas in full flight with the young Sydney band player providing a Bass Clarinet to keep them in time. This was what the concert was also about, seniors and permanent players enjoying the pleasures of playing together.



FRIDAY THE 19th AUGUST

Friday morning saw members partake in our AGM not held since the Gold Coast where Launceston was selected way back then. The AGM selected new executive members with Geoff Bunce picking up the Vice president's chair, Roger Downton, the Secretary Stool and yours truly the Treasurers bench. Committee members saw Geoff Dawson put his hand up (or was held up by someone else) and Ralph taking over the New South Wales representatives role. Discussion regarding voting rights for non Navy Band association members was rejected and an amendment since has been put forward. With the close of business it was off to change for the RANBA official lunch.

As I was on a tight schedule I was unable to attend the lunch but from all reports it was well attended and a more relaxed way to enjoy the end of a very busy few days.

It was a pleasure to meet today's navy band personnel and chat to them discussing what they do in today's band and what we did. In our percussion sections of the past, they were surprised that we spent all our time on the kit and produced as many variable sounds possible from that position. Also to know that we generally had only 2 or max 3 at the back of depot bands and best case 2 on the ships we served on. Of course the music was different then and you could get away with it. I hope this could be the start of a good working relationship with the two bands going forward.

Errol.



