The North-Western Ranger

8th/7th BATTALION – 2RVR ASSOCIATION Inc.

(Including the Ballarat Ranger Military Museum)

VICTORIA'S OWN COUNTRY BATTALION

Patron: The Commanding Officer, 8/7 RVR, Lt Col Paul O'Donnell

If undeliverable, please return to:
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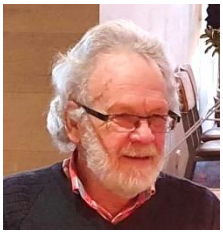
JULIANA ADDISON
MEMBER FOR WENDOUREE

STOP PRESS:



William John 'Bill' Whitfield 'Mr Vacuum' in Ballarat, was a supporter of the association newsletter in the association's early days. He was well-known around the Bridge Mall and also the Ballarat Football/Netball Club. Bill, the husband of Vivien, father of Annette, David, Carolyn, Naomi and their families, step-dad to Steven, Andrew, Timothy and families, grandfather and great-grandfather died peacefully at Gandarra on 13 March 2026. Bill was privately cremated and a Celebration of Life was held at the Alfredton Sport and Recreation Club on 20 March 2026.

William 'Clive' Coomber, born 26 November 1955. Clive was a sibling to Max, John, Ken, Suzie and Leanne. Clive made a lasting impact on so many students and colleagues in the North Tech/Warrnambool College community over many years. He was also on the committee of the Victorian Veterans Cycling Council. Clive died when struck by a vehicle during a bicycle ride near Cudgee, north-east of Warrnambool. Clive was the husband and best friend of Margaret, father and father-in-law of Daniel and Annalee, Kerri and Shannon. Pop to Alex, Isobel and Harvey and a former member of 2 RVR, Warrnambool. His brother Ken also served with 2 RVR. Family and friends of Clive attended a Memorial Service in Warrnambool on 30 March 2026.

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Vol. 30 No. 1, March 2026

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87bn2rvr.asn.au

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8/7 battalion-2rvr association

8/7 Battalion – 2 RVR

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	Barry & Heather Harris	
	Bob Anderson	
	Bob Hope	
	Greg Code	
Website and Facebook:	Rob Chatfield	

Association Annual Activities:

ANZAC Day – Ballarat, Warrnambool & Shepparton
Annual Dinner – Warrnambool, Saturday, 17 October 2026
Annual Dinner – Ballarat, October/November
AGM – Ballarat, October/November

Monthly Activities: Committee Meeting – normally the First Tuesday of the Month, Alfredton Sports and Community Club, Cuthberts Road, or Ranger Barracks, Ballarat.

This newsletter was printed by the office of:

JULIANA ADDISON
MEMBER FOR WENDOUREE

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FOR WEBSITE ENQUIRIES: Contact Rob Chatfield

UPCOMING EVENTS:

ANZAC Day Ballarat

6.00am: Dawn Service, Ballarat Cenotaph, Sturt Street, followed by a 'Gunfire Breakfast' at Midlands Golf Club, Home of the Ballarat RSL. A transfer bus will be provided for those attending the Gunfire Breakfast in an official capacity and have registered with the RSL on (03) 5332 3300.

7.00am: Cardigan & Windermere Fire Brigade service at the Fireman's Memorial at Finchs Road, Corner of Remembrance Drive.

8.00am: Service at the Ballarat Arch of Victory/Garden of the Grieving Mother.

8.30am: Service at Sebastopol Cenotaph.

9.00am: Wreath Laying service at the memoria. Please register your wreath laying via the The Australian Ex-Prisoners of War Memorial website

10.00am: Service at the Miners Rest Cenotaph.

10.15am: Service at Buninyong Memorial Park.

10.30am: ANZAC Day March, from Lyons Street North to Ballarat Cenotaph, followed by the Commemorative Service at the Ballarat Cenotaph.

1.00pm: Refreshments and Two-Up at Midlands Golf Club.

Road Closures: Sturt Street will be closed from Dawson Street to Raglan Street in both directions to all traffic from 4.00am. Lyons Street will be closed from Mair Street to Dana Street. East-west traffic will be diverted via Dana and Mair Streets. At the Arch, the Learmonth Road service road will be closed from Beaufort to Golf Streets between 7.30am and 9.am. **Please note** Ballarat Marathon events will be held on ANZAC Day and roads will remain closed post the ANZAC Day service.

After the Services: ANZAC Day at the Football, Ballarat v Wendouree at the Alfredton Sports and Community Centre, Cuthberts Road. Association members wearing medals will have free entry. Food is available. 2.30pm: ANZAC Service before the start of the Senior Game. Game starts at 3.00pm.

ANZAC Day Warrnambool

6.00am Dawn Service, muster at Smith Avenue area at 05.45am. March to the Cenotaph.

6.20am: A Gunfire breakfast at the RSL club on the conclusion of the service. Gold coin donation.

10.30am: Main Service: Muster, Liebig St (between Lava & Koroit Sts). Look for your unit placard.

11.45am: Parade steps off, to conclude at the Cenotaph at 12.00 noon.

12.00pm: Main Service commences. Allow 1hr 20min.

The focus this year will be on Vietnam. With family members assistance, a photographic memorial of the four men from the Western District who died in Vietnam will be unveiled.

After: Two tables booked for the association at the RSL.

Note: Special Guests at the 2026 **Annual Warrnambool Dinner** will be former ARA Staff member Mick Kinsella and his wife Helen.

Lost in Vietnam from South-Western Victoria:

37010 (ARA) Pte **William 'Bill' Thomas Carroll**, 5 June 1965 – Accidentally killed, Bien Hoa Province, 26 June 1965. C Company, 1 RAR (RAInf), affiliated with 173rd Airborne Brigade U. S. Army. Commemorated Warrnambool Cemetery.

3786978 (NS) Pte **Graham Francis Warburton (Nugget),** KIA Phuoc Tuy Province , 1 October 1966, D Company, 5 RAR. (RAInf). Commemorated Warrnambool Cemetery.

3791583 (NS) Gnr **Ian James Scott,** KIA FSB Coral, 13 May 1968. H.Q. Bty 12 Field Reg' (RAA). Commemorated Camperdown Cemetery.

3798081 (NS) Pte **Ralph James Niblett**, KIA Nui Le 21 September 1971, D Company, 4 RAR/NZ (RAInf). Commemorated Garden of Remembrance, Springvale Botanical Cemetery, Melbourne.

COLONEL GEOFF SKARDON AWARDED THE COMMENDATION FOR GALLANTRY
The Skardon Story: Geoffrey Charles Skardon was born in Bathurst, NSW, on 14 February 1939 to Charles William and Ida Daphne (nee Ison) Skardon, a brother to Pamela. He was educated at Bathurst Primary School and Parkes State High School.

Geoff enlisted into the Citizen Military Forces (CMF) as 212824 at the 59th Battalion's Deniliquin Depot. Shortly afterwards, on 23 March 1958, in an Australian first, the 59th Battalion was granted the Freedom of Entry to the City of Shepparton. Geoff was 'thrown in to the deep end' of drill! He then enlisted into the Australian Regular Army in January1959 and on completion of his Recruit Training at 1RTB Kapooka and three months Infantry Corps Training at Ingleburn he was selected for officer training at the Officer Cadet School, Portsea.

Graduating as a 2nd Lieutenant on 16 June 1960, Geoff joined the Australian Staff Corps (ASC). He was then posted to the 1st Recruit Training Battalion (1 RTB) at Kapooka, near Wagga, in NSW. On 3 January 1962 Geoff was posted to 1 Company, Special Air Service (1 SAS) located in Swanbourne, a Perth suburb. While there, on 30 June 1963, his promotion to Lieutenant came through.

Rear Row: C. G. Wotton, E. J. Lyneham, B. M. Kemp, M. J. Mortimer, G. L. Coat, J. R. Cattell, L. R. Streeting. Y. M. Campbell.
Middle Row: J. B. Earsman, E. L. Batterbury, J. A. Leggett, N. Sproles, R. A. Farrell, E. E. Coady, P. A. van Valan, L. H. Glanville, B. L. Campton.
Front Row: F. M. Kudnig, A. L. Schaschke, **G. C. Skardon**, W. B. P. Brady, J. A. Cope, J. D. Collinson, S. A. P. Davies, E. J. D. Smith.

In 1948, communist forces commenced a Guerilla War to turn the new Malaysia into a communist state and for it to be separated from the British Empire. The British Government called it an Emergency and not a war! The Malayan Emergency lasted until 1960.

There was tension between Indonesia and the new Malaysian State too, and in 1963 the Indonesian Confrontation broke out and lasted three years. On 30 March 1964 Geoff was attached to Far East Land Forces (FARELF). (See note below on FARELF). It was during this 'Confrontation' that Geoff arrived in Malaysia.

Geoff was attached to 40 Royal Marine Commando for jungle training at the Kota Tinji Jungle Warfare School and was then posted to 40 Royal Marines Commando and then to 42 Commando in Borneo where he participated in several patrols along the border with Indonesia. This was his first experience of 'active service'! On return to Singapore, he met the CO of 22 SASR, Lt Col John Woodhouse, who invited Geoff to join an SAS patrol in Sabah, Borneo, an invitation that was readily accepted.

From Peter Dickens, book 'SAS The Jungle Frontier' the following describes the situation Geoff found himself in, while on patrol in the region of Long Pasia.

The area known as 'The Long Pasia Bulge' in Sabah on the Island of Borneo was on the SAS agenda. Lieutenant Skardon had been with the patrol since arriving in country on 13 July. By early August he 'was fully integrated, enjoying the life and companionship.'

On 6 August Geoff was on a patrol with Trooper 'Chalky' White the Lead Scout, followed by Patrol Leader Lance Corporal Roger Blackman, Skardon and newcomer Trooper Jimmy Green. White came across an Indonesian soldier who was on his knees busy preparing a meal and didn't hear him approaching. White placed his rifle downwards into the man's shoulder and fired it, killing him instantly. Blackman ordered the patrol to 'Get Out!' and with Green he broke to the left, both dropping their 'Bergen' packs. White, however, remained in location and was firing at the thick jungle along the ridge that was ablaze with fire from at least a platoon of enemy. Skardon, broke right, dropped his 'Bergen' and thinking that they had the initiative, and should keep it, headed towards White. But there was little cover on the slope where White was, so Skardon changed his idea and tried to give covering fire for White to withdraw. But it was already too late as White cried out 'Geoff, Geoff, I'm hit!

'In an act of high and selfless gallantry', Skardon ran forward to White and dragged him behind a large tree., which gave them protection from the front, but not the sides (or 'flanks'). There was some undergrowth that gave them some 'concealment' and that, along no doubt with poor shooting, saved their lives, for the time being. White was bleeding profusely from a wound in the thigh, and Skardon knew he didn't have long if he was to save White, so, with all his strength, he grabbed White's collar and dragged him ten yards to a shallow depression that he thought might offer him further protection. It didn't!

The two exchanged a few words before Skardon noticed that the blood had stopped flowing and White's heart had stopped beating. Skardon then half picked up White and carried/dragged him further away towards a sunken creek.

Five enemy broke cover from the far-left flank heading down to the creek to become a cut-off.. Realising by now that White was dead, Skardon fired three aimed shots at the five enemy and sprinted for the cover of the creek. By a stroke of luck the cut-off group stopped short of the creek allowing Skardon to slip through to safety, by the narrowest of margins.

Unfortunately, when jumping in the creek he got caught by what soldiers call a 'wait a while bush', It tangled around his belt and it was impossible to free quickly. Skardon pulled the quick-release buckle and had to leave the belt containing his map, compass, emergency rations and reserve ammunition behind.

Separated from Blackman and Green, Skardon headed for the first rendezvous (RV) point, known as the 2-Hour RV, about 1,000 metres back up the ridge from which the patrol had come. As per the patrol orders, he waited, observing closely the RV, for two hours. Blackman and Green rightly considered the 2-Hour RV was too close to the enemy should they have followed up and instead headed for the second RV, a 24-Hour RV.

Skardon, without a map and compass, had no chance of finding the 24-hour RV. He decided that the best course of action was to get down from the mountain, find the river and follow it to Long Pasia, a distance across country of about 30 miles. After about 5 hours of walking Skardon stopped for the night. On the next morning he travelled on until he found the river. Shortly after he came across a creek junction which he recognized. He knew Landing Point 1 was about 1000 meters up a ridgeline. To his great surprise and relief Landing Point 1 was occupied by another SAS patrol from the adjoining area of operations (AO). Blackman and Green had already been flown out to Long Pasia and now they were followed by Skardon. After being debriefed and reequipped the three SAS men joined a Gurkha platoon and were inserted back into the AO. On reaching the contact area they found what was least expected. The Indonesian shot by White was still in the kneeling position! They found the three Bergen packs exactly where the description from the survivors put them. The only thing that they could not find was Skardon's belt, indicating that the enemy cleared the creek before 'hi-tailing' it back across the border. Geoff returned to FARELF on 10 August 1964.

Geoff left FARELF on 24 August 1964 and was returned to Australia. In November he was posted to Vietnam as a part of the Australian Army Training Team, Vietnam (AATTV) and promoted to Temporary Captain. His first Vietnam posting was to the Dong Da National Training Centre responsible for advising Vietnamese staff on training Recruits and Junior NCOs. In March 1965 he was transferred to the 5th Special Forces (SF) Detachment C1, Da Nang as a Staff Officer Grade 3 (SO3) Air. Responsibilities included arranging air transport to deliver 100,000 lbs of cargo to several Special Forces A Teams and to accompany Forward Air Controllers (FAC) in providing close air support to Special Forces Patrols.

On 28 August, Skardon led a predominantly Australian A Team in establishing the SF camp at Tra Bong. The team's mission was to protect the local population from Viet Cong (VC) harassment and to prevent VC using the Tra Bong Valley as a logistics corridor from Laos to the coastal area of Vietnam. Skardon returned to Australia on 8 October 1965.
Left: September 1965: Discussing training methods at the Tra Bong Training Camp' Captain George Dibble (Alabama, USA), 2Lt Quang (of Da Nang), Captain Geoff Skardon (AATTV Advisor) and Captain Joe Helms (Ozark, USA). AWM Photo

On 15 November Geoff was posted as the Intelligence Officer with 7 RAR at Puckapunyal. From there, on 19 December 1966 he was posted to the PNG Training Depot at Goldie River. While in PNG, on 30 June 1967, his rank of Temporary Captain was confirmed as Captain. Remaining in PNG, on 11 March 1968, Geoff was posted to 1 PIR at Port Moresby. A year later, on 8 March 1969, Geoff returned to 7 RAR, posted as Company Commander, C Coy. From 1 September 1969 until 26 February 1970, Geoff held the rank of Honorary Major. He returned to Vietnam with 7 RAR as Company Commander, C Coy, on 18 February 1970, with his rank changed to Temporary Major on 27 February. Geoff returned to Australia on 4 March 1971.

Geoff was posted to Army Headquarters, Canberra – AHQ (C) - on 1 February 1972 as a General Staff Officer Grade 2 (GSO2) at the Directorate of Training Policy and worked on the policies! In 1973 he was at Training Command in Sydney with Training Policy as a GSO2 and in 1974 was a Student at the Army Staff College, Queenscliff, Victoria, a requirement for promotion to Lieutenant Colonel.

From January 1975 until June 1977, he was an Instructor at The Royal Military College, Duntroon (RMC-D). Then from June 1977 until November 1978, he was a Student at the USMC&SC Quantico, USA. While in the USA, it was announced that Geoff was awarded the National Medal on 14 July 1977. That month he was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel. This promotion led to his next posting as Commanding Officer of 5/7 RAR at Holsworthy. From January 1981 Geoff returned to the Command and Staff College as an Instructor until February 1984 when he retired from the Army and transferred to the Army Reserve at HQ, 3rd Division. He was tasked with writing TEWTs.

On 17 August 1984 Geoff was given command, by Major General Kevin Cooke, of 'Country Victoria's Own' infantry battalion, The 2nd Battalion, The Royal Victoria Regiment (2 RVR). During his tenure as Commanding Officer, supported by General Cooke, Geoff was instrumental in the battalion being renumbered using its historical number as 8/7 RVR.

After 8/7 RVR, on 1 January 1988 Geoff became the Staff Officer Grade 1 (SO1) at Headquarters 3rd Division. He finished his time with the Reserve with a posting as Chief Instructor Reserve Command and Staff College (C&SC). When the 3rd Division disbanded on 30 June 1991, Geoff retired to a

farm, Murradoc Park, near Drysdale on the Bellarine Peninsular, and began breeding Vealers (young cows). Geoff and his wife Lorraine moved into their current home at Clifton Springs in 2019.

In early 1965, Major Richard Farrell, who was a classmate at Geoff's Portsea class, was posted as a SO2 in Army Headquarters. He saw a Recommendation from 22 SAS Regiment for an award recognising Skardon's gallantry. Because Australia was not committed to the Borneo Campaign at the time, the award was not progressed. However, in September 2024 Major Farrell, now retired, knowing the Defence Honours and Awards were reviewing some past recommendations, requested they review Skardon's action. A 'Commendation for Gallantry' in action in August 1964 by Geoffrey Skardon was gazetted on 28 October 2025. The award will be presented **in due course.**

Notes:
Following the end of World War 2, the FARELF was tasked to develop an infantry division made up of Gurkhas, as well as advise and oversee the re-establishment of volunteer forces and the Malay Regiment in consultation with the local colonial governments. In 1948, the slow pace of development of the Gurkha infantry division and other local defence forces meant that Malaya was undermanned and militarily unprepared for any but the smallest contingencies. Geoff Skardon's attachment during the period of the Indonesia-Malaysia confrontation of 1963-66 caused by the tensions between Indonesia and the new British backed Federation of Malaysia, was conceived in the aftermath of the Malayan Emergency 1948-1960.

The declaration of Emergency in Singapore and Malaya in June 1948, and the Malayan campaign to counter it, elevated the importance of the FARELF. From a strategic backwater, the FARELF was instrumental in leading the fight against communism during the Cold War.

Australian ground forces first joined the Malayan Emergency in 1955 with the deployment of the 2nd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (2 RAR). 2 RAR was later replaced by 3 RAR, which in turn was replaced by 1 RAR.

On 9 September 2024, Major Richard Farrell (Ret'd), an OCS classmate of Geoff Skardon, applied to Defence Honours and Awards seeking recognition for his acts of gallantry in contact with the enemy on 6 August 1964.

Awards: Awarded the National Medal, 14 July 1977, Commendation for Gallantry, awarded on 28 October 2025 for acts of gallantry in action in August 1964.

HUMOUR – WHAT IS IN AN ANCRONYM
The new Chief of Army (CA) got together all his unit Commanding Officers and said: 'If anything goes wrong in your unit, I will be on your doorstep the next day!'

One day, a new Commanding Officer (CO) was in his office getting dressed into his 'Polyesters' when his Quartermaster (QM) knocked on the door. The CO said: 'Come in!' while he was still pulling up his trousers. The QM said to the CO 'I just wanted to talk to you about tomorrow's visit by the CA! The CO dropped his trousers as he said: 'What? The CA is visiting tomorrow? My goodness, what has happened? Get the OPSO, The Adjutant, The RSM and The CC in here now!'

A little perplexed the QM called the others in to the CO's office. 'Now, why is the CA visiting tomorrow? What has happened?' The CO said. The QM then said 'Sir, I don't think anything has happened. It is only a visit from the Catering Adviser (also the CA)!

VALE:

Former CO 2 RVR (and 8/7 RVR), Geoff Skardon, advised of the passing of his Training Officer Geoff Campbell. **Geoffrey Graeme Campbell,** born Victoria, 1 Aug 1947.

Geoff joined the Army as 39160 and in January 1967 commenced officer training at OCS Portsea. On 9 December 1967, he graduated from Portsea as a 2Lt. He was allocated to RASigs and posted to 2 Sig Regt. However, on 18 February 1968 Geoff was posted to 2 RTB. He changed Corps and on 20 January 1969, he was posted to 3 RAR at Woodside in SA. While there, on 31 December 1970 Geoff was promoted to Lieutenant.

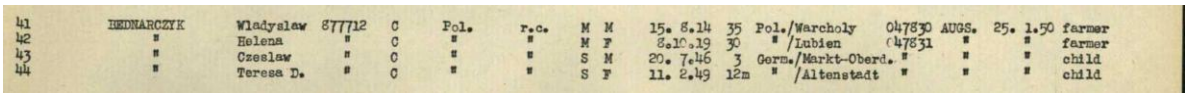
Geoff married Margie. They would have sons Shaun and Paul and later a granddaughter, Maria.

From 12 February to 16 Oct 1971, he was in Vietnam with 3 RAR on its second 'Tour'. Returning to Victoria, on 21 February 1972, Geoff found himself as the Quartermaster at HQ Watsonia Area/Sigs Depot. By now a Major, Geoff was posted to 2 RVR in the mid-1980s as the Training Officer. One of his activities was the Eildon Exercise of 12 to 20 October 1985. It rained from the moment of arrival until the last day of the exercise. It was remembered for rain, hail, sleet and even snow, with hypothermia a big issue. Leaving the now renumbered 8/7 RVR at the end of 1987, Geoff moved to Adelaide. He had an obvious laugh, which one battalion member recalled hearing on the radio one night during an Ashes cricket match lunch break.

Surrounded by his loving family, Geoff died in Adelaide on 14 November 2025 and his funeral was held at Berry's Funeral Home in Norwood, an Adelaide suburb.

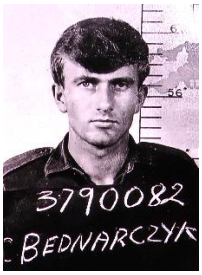
8/7 RVR Headquarters Officers on the change-over tour of the main battalion Victorian towns over 11 to 13 December 1987. Major Neil Leckie (OPSO), Captain Mark Harris (RMO), Major Douglas Ball (CO Elect), Major Geoff Campbell (Training Officer) and Lieutenant Colonel Geoff Skardon (CO).

Charles 'Charlie' Bednarczyk was born as Czeslaw Bednarczyk on 20 July 1946 in a refugee camp at Marktoberdorf, Gemany to Polish parents Wladyslaw, a miner/labourer, and Helena Bednarczyk, a farm worker. By 1950 the family had moved from Augsburg in the US Zone in Germany to a refugee camp at Bagnoli in Italy. With his parents and sister Teresa, Charles emigrated to Australia, sailing from Naples, Italy, on the SS Dundalk Bay on 4 March, arriving in Australia on 29 March 1950. (NAA Website Immigration Records).



41	BEDNARCZYK	Wladyslaw	877712	C	Pol.	r.c.	M	M	15. 8.14	35	Pol./Warcholy	047830	AUGS.	25. 1.50	farmer
42	"	Helena	"	C	"	"	M	F	8.10.19	30	" /Lubien	047831	"	"	farmer
43	"	Czeslaw	"	C	"	"	S	M	20. 7.46	3	Germ./Markt-Oberd.	"	"	"	child
44	"	Teresa D.	"	C	"	"	S	F	11. 2.49	12m	" /Altenstadt	"	"	"	child

Reaching Australia, the family went to the Bonegilla Migrant Camp from where Wladyslaw found work on the Glen Maggie Weir. After the weir was completed, the family moved to Heyfield and Wladyslaw found work in a timber mill. After attending the newly opened St Michael's Catholic School in Heyfield and Sale High School, where he found some part-time work delivering bread and the mail, on leaving School, Charlie found work at the National Bank. He also did part-time work driving busses and Land Rover 4-Wheel Drive tours, and in a bottle shop.



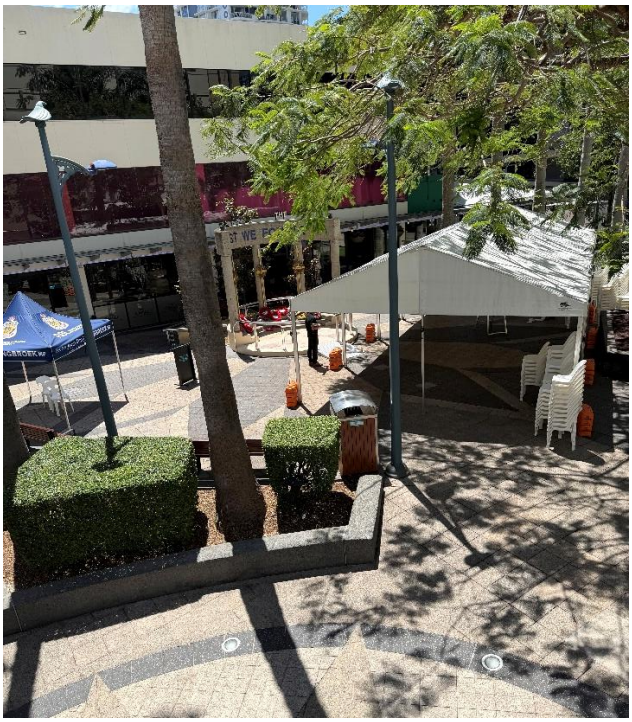
Before undertaking his 'Nasho', Charlie had met Sylvia Stoertbecker, known as 'Silky', a TV Weather Presenter. Charles was called up for National Service, commencing at 2 RTB as 3790082 on 1 February 1967. His follow-up training was with the Royal Australian Engineers. Charles served in Vietnam with the 30 Terminal Squadron Detachment from 9 April to 23 April 1968 and then with 11 Movement Control Group Detachment from 24 April 1968 until 29 November 1968. He returned to Australia with the rank of Temporary Corporal and after leave discharged from the Army on 31 January 1969. He went back to work with the bank and was transferred to Koroit, some 15 km north-west of Warrnambool. While living on Koroit, he enlisted in 2 RVR in the CMF on 10 May 1971. On return from Vietnam, Charlie 'chased' Silky and they married in The Church of St Vincent in Morewell in 1970. The couple would have a son, Michael. Sadly, Sylvia died in 1982 at Yallourn, aged just 32

A change of work location saw Charlie living in Mansfield and on 23 October 1973, he transferred to the 'Special Conditions' battalion, 22 RVR, at Puckapunyal. Corporal Charles Bednarczyk had settled in to 'A' Company, the 'trained soldiers' company at 22 RVR, when it was announced that, due to the drop off in numbers in the Army Reserve after National Service ended, 22 RVR would close on 1 July 1975. Charlie was transferred back to 2 RVR. He moved to Maffra and remained in the Army Reserve, serving in several Engineer units until discharging on 22 January 1986.

Post Army Reserve, Charlie was still with National Bank, now at Karingal, but was also working as a part-time taxi driver for Joan Morrison. Eventually Charles and Joan became a couple and they lived at Langwarrin, not far from Charles' son, Michael, his wife Caroline (Caz) and their son Alex, Charlie's great mate.

Charles and Joan were members of both the Monash and South-east (Dandenong) Sub-branches of the National Servicemen's Association, Australia (NSAA). On 15 June 2023, most likely at the instigation of Jim Oliver, Charles was presented a Quilt of Valour, made by Bev Young, at the Waverley R&SL. Charlie and Joan attended the National Serviceman's Day at the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne on 9 February 2025 where Charlie laid a wreath on behalf of his Vietnam Veteran mates. Charlie had survived cancer, but for the last 14 years of his life, Charlie had been suffering with Parkinson's Disease. Sadly, Charlie passed away on 21 January 2026. His funeral was held at the Tobin Brothers Chapel, Frankston, on 4 February 2026.

REMEMBRANCE DAY AT SURFERS PARADISE R.S.L. The ‘aftermath’! From Gerald East.



FROM THE ARCHIVES:
The Old – The Ballarat Courier: 5 July and 8 July 1965.

Page 4 THE COURIER, Ballarat, Monday, July 5, 1965

CHANCE FOR MEN TO SERVE IN VIETNAM

CANBERRA (AUP). Officers and non-commissioned officers of the Citizens Military Forces soon will be able to volunteer for full-time duty in Vietnam.

Announcing this yesterday, the Minister for the Army, Dr. Forbes, said a scheme to allow CMF volunteers to serve in Vietnam would be implemented from August 30.

Dr. Forbes said the present army re-organisation and expansion had placed a heavy burden on the regular army and had stretched present resources in officers and NCOs to the limit.

Since World War II the number of CMF officers and NCOs with operational experience had been drastically reduced as members reached retirement age.

MUST BE READY

"The CMF must be ready to take its place in the field at short notice in the event of a limited war," he said.

The CMF effectiveness would depend not only on the quality of its training but on the availability of officers and NCOs with operational experience.

For those reasons it had been decided to accept selected members of the CMF for full-time duty with the Australian Army force in Vietnam.

CMF volunteers would be accepted for initial training mainly from the Royal Australian Infantry.

Volunteers for duty with the army training team would have to be either captains, warrant officers or sergeants.

Volunteers with the rank of sergeant would have at least a year's service in that rank.

For duty with the 1st Battalion Royal Australian Regiment the CMF volunteers must be lieutenants.

To serve with other elements of the Australian Army force in Vietnam, the volunteers could be sergeants, warrant officers, lieutenants or captains.

All CMF volunteers must be between 22-35 years of age and meet the medical standards laid down for duty in an active service area.

Dr. Forbes said in Adelaide last night that the plan was that some of the replacements required for the Australian force in Vietnam would come from the CMF.

There was no intention to increase the size of the Australian force in Vietnam.

REINFORCEMENTS

BRISBANE (AUP). Soldiers of the Second Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, will begin leaving Brisbane this morning to join Australian forces already in Vietnam.

Nine soldiers will fly out of Brisbane to Sydney on the first leg of their trip to Vietnam.

Army authorities said yesterday the departures were normal reinforcements and had no significance.

TRAINEES COULD SERVE IN VIETNAM

MINISTER WARNS ON CASUALTIES

SYDNEY (AUP). The Minister for the Army, Dr Forbes, said yesterday that some National Servicemen now in training could find themselves fighting in Vietnam within six months.

Speaking at Sydney airport before leaving on a 10-day tour of operational areas in Vietnam, Dr Forbes also warned Australia had to expect more Vietnam casualties.

Recruits would be posted to Regular Army units, after finishing basic training, he stated.

On national servicemen, Dr Forbes said, "If these units are then sent to Vietnam the recruits will go too."

Asked whether he thought it were wise to send raw recruits into battle in Vietnam, Dr Forbes said:

"By the time they get into regular units they will be far from 'raw recruits'.

"Any soldier will have a minimum of six months' training before being sent overseas."

No plans

Dr Forbes said the Government had no plans to send more troops to Vietnam.

He said the size of Australia's commitments to Vietnam had been carefully judged and there was no reason at present to increase it.

"We keep a small pool of reinforcements for Vietnam, and another reinforcement holding unit in Australia, and these can be drawn from when required," he stated.

The Minister refused to reveal the size of the reinforcement units.

"I don't think it's in the best interests to quote figures," he stated.

Satisfied

Dr Forbes said he was satisfied that the Australian Army was not "playing second fiddle" to the Americans in Vietnam.

"We have gone to a great deal of trouble to work out our operational arrangements with the Americans and we are happy with them," he continued.

Dr Forbes warned that Australia had to expect more casualties in Vietnam.

"We have to face up to it," he said.

"In this type of warfare there is nothing more certain that there will be casualties."

Dr Forbes was asked whether the army had any response to its move to allow CMF members to volunteer for duty in Vietnam.

He said that to some extent that had got a little out of perspective.

"The primary purpose was to increase the number of officers and NCOs in CMF units with operational experience," he stated.

"We envisaged that 20 or 30 people in this category would be sent to Vietnam at any one time."

EMERGENCY ACTION IN SARAWAK

KUCHING, Wed. (AAP). About 5000 Chinese villagers were behind barbed wire today as a Government programme —officially called "Operation Hammer"—to stamp out Chinese-led communist terrorism in Sarawak, got underway.

The Chinese were grouped in five re-location centres, under 24-hour guard, along a ten-mile stretch of main road beginning 15 miles south of here.

More Chinese were expected.

Officials said the area involved in the crash re-settlement scheme covered 20 villages with up to 15,000 residents.

NO INCIDENTS

No incidents were reported during the first 24 hours of the emergency action, as Chinese responded quietly to Government orders to check in immediately at reception centres, bringing only the barest essentials with them.

The area was declared a "controlled" zone, marked by police roadblocks.

Temporary shelters and school buildings were used to house the Chinese inside the re-location centres.

Lookout posts were erected and manned by security forces.

A Government announcement said the entire zone was under a strict dusk-to-dawn curfew.

The stern measure was the Government's reaction to a terrorist attack on June 27 along the same section of highway.

The New – Army 2026

8/7RVR soldiers apply first aid to a 'wounded' comrade during a downed aircraft scenario at RAAF Base Curtin in Western Australia.
Photo: LAC Ryan Howell

National Servicemen in Papua New Guinea (Peter Norman, NSAA)

Papua New Guinea, PNG, celebrated 50 years of independence on 16 September 2025. What most Australians don't know is that many Australian Nashos helped that imminent nation to prepare them for sovereignty. Australian National Servicemen were deployed to the Territory of Papua and New Guinea (TPNG) from the mid-1960s until 1973, serving in support and advisory roles as part of the Australian Army. At any given time, some 500 Australians were serving in the TPNG. They were a vital part of the Australian force that helped prepare the territory for its independence in 1975.

Role and Duties: While many National Servicemen from the Vietnam era were deployed to Vietnam in combat roles, those in TPNG served in support units, administration, and it specialist roles such as Signals, Ordnance, Engineers, Education, Surveying and Medical/Dental. Around 600 qualified schoolteachers were conscripted and promoted to Sergeant to serve in the Royal Australian Army Educational Corps (RAAEC), educating local soldiers in various subjects, including civic studies and current affairs. Similarly, graduate doctors and dentists from the Medical Corps, undertook their Nasho obligations in TPNG.

Locations: Nashos were based at various barracks across PNG, including Murray Barracks, Taurama Barracks, and Goldie River Training Depot in Port Moresby, as well as Igam Barracks in Lae and Moem Barracks in Wewak.

Path to the PNG Defence Force: The Australian Army's educational program, largely staffed by these National Servicemen, was crucial in preparing the local force for independence. The PNG Defence Force was officially formed in 1973 from the existing structure.

Bandmaster Rasmussen under whom the Battalion Band recorded the Battalion March "I'm 95"
On 13 July 1915, Allendale born brothers Herbert and his younger brother Hans Rasmussen applied to join the AIF. **Herbert 'Bert' Ludwig Rasmussen** was a single Blacksmith and a musician, born at Allendale, just north of Creswick, on 1 April 1896. The brothers Next of Kin was their mother, Mrs Charlotte Louisa Rasmussen (nee Cook), of Castlemaine (born 1868, died 7 October 1923 in Castlemaine). Under the Compulsory Military Training Scheme, introduced in 1911, Bert had served for five years in Area 66 of the Citizen Forces (the 66th Infantry!)

Bert commenced his service with A Company, 25th Depot Battalion, at Castlemaine on 28 July He was the Band Sergeant until 25 November when both brothers were transferred to the 13th Reinforcements of the 5th Battalion, 2nd Brigade. Bert's Regimental Number was 4279. The 13th Reinforcements departed Melbourne on HMAT A64 Demosthenes on 29 December 1915. After some time in England, Bert transferred to the 8th Battalion on 7 August 1917. Bert was a bit naughty while in England, being AWOL for five days whilst posted to Durrington in October 1917 and again whilst posted to Warminster in November 1917. He was next attached to the Pioneer Training Battalion at Sutton Veny on 22 November 1917. Still in England, Bert was then attached to the 2nd Training Battalion, the 2nd Brigade's training unit, also at Sutton Veny. Bert finally went to France from Folkestone, England, on 23 April 1918 and the following day Marched In to the New Zealand Base Depot at Etaples. He was finally 'Taken on Strength' of the 8th Battalion on 9 May 1918.

On 13 August Bert was admitted to the 1st Australian Field Ambulance, then transferred two days later to the 4th Stationary Hospital at Rouen, diagnosed with 'Debility'. On 18 August he was further transferred to the 2nd Convalescent Hospital, also at Rouen. On 21 August he was discharged to the Australian Infantry Base Depot at Havre. With the war now over, on 12 February 1919, Bert went on Leave to England, returning to the Base Depot on 2 March. On 31 March he was admitted to the 40th Stationary Hospital suffering from a Hernia. On 7 April, now in England, he was admitted to King George Hospital, Stamford Street, still suffering with a Hernia. Four days later he was transferred to the 3rd Australian Auxiliary Hospital at Dartford. Bert was discharged on 15 May and reported to AIF Headquarters from where, on 29 May, he was transferred to the Overseas Training Battalion at Longbridge Deverill. On 16 June 1919 Bert embarked on His Majesty's Troopship Ormonde for 'Return to Australia'! He disembarked in Melbourne on 1 August 1919 and was discharged at the 'Termination of his Period of enlistment on 23 September 1919.

Bert fitted seamlessly back into life at Castlemaine. On Christmas Day 1920 it was announced that Bert had taken over as bandmaster of the Thompson's Foundry Band.

Then, in late 1921, he married Eillen Lucinda Vosti, from Guildford. The young couple moved to Newstead, where Bert began working as an orchardist. He also took over as bandmaster of the Newstead Brass Band and was also bandmaster for the Newstead State School.

In October 1922, at the request of the Victorian Director of Education, Bert Rasmussen, headmaster of the Newstead State School, Mr Frederick Walter Ellis, and the boys of the band played selections at the combined school district's concert as part of the Jubilee Exhibition held in Melbourne.

Soon after, on 12 November 1922, Eileen gave birth to their first child, Leslie Herbert, at Dr Kidd's Private Hospital in Castlemaine. Everything should have been perfect. Eileen developed double pneumonia a few weeks after Leslie's birth and died at her parent's home in Guildford on 13 December 1922. As a result, Bert was left a widower at 26, with a one-month-old baby. A year later, Bert married for a second time. His new wife was Hazel Bucknall from Majorca. Hazel had lost her first husband, Harold John Annand, during the war. She had two young children.

Bert left his home district for a brief stint as bandmaster of the Wonthaggi Boys' Band. Bert then moved the family to Ballarat where he found work as a linesman.. It was at this point that he began his association with the Ballarat Soldiers, Sailors and Airman's Memorial Band. When the Duke and Duchess of York (later King George VI and Queen Elizabeth) visited Ballarat in April 1927, the Soldiers' Memorial Band played them into the city. In 1928, after building the Soldiers' band to a good standard, they were just beaten for the B-Grade Championship at the State titles by Prahran City, then under the baton of the legendary Percy Code. The committee of the Kyneton Town Band made a concerted effort to secure his services and, in October 1928 Bert left the Memorial Band for Kyneton. Bert also took work in theatre orchestras to supplement his income. He and Hazel spent the next six years at Kyneton.

On 4 April 1935 a newspaper report stated: 'Before leaving Kyneton to take over the Position of bandmaster at Stawell Mr H L Rasmussen, who has been bandmaster at Kyneton for six years was bidden farewell by Bandsmen and committee men and presented with a travelling rug.'

When war broke out again in 1939, Bert was living in Stawell. On 27 December 1939, Bert signed up again. His Next of Kin was now his wife Hazel. His occupation was listed as a Bandmaster! He was Taken on Strength at the Showgrounds Depot in Melbourne as VX9772 and on 4 January 1940 transferred to the AIF 2/8th Battalion at Puckapunyal and given the rank of Temporary Sergeant. His rank was confirmed on 15 February. On 14 April Bert embarked with his battalion on the Troopship Y5 at Port Melbourne. The battalion disembarked at Kantara, Egypt, on 18 May. On 20 August Bert was admitted to the Camp Reception Station suffering with Sandfly Fever. He was discharged on 23 August.

Left: Kilo 89 Camp, Palestine. Sergeant Bert Rasmussen, Bandmaster, 2/8th Bn, and his son Les, a Bandsman under his father. (AWM Photo, Damien Parer).

The 2/8th Battalion embarked for Greece on 31 March 1941. On 9 May Bert was 'Mentioned in Despatches' in the AIF Middle East Orders, however, on 5 June, Bert was reported as 'Missing in Action' on Crete. On 20 October it was officially reported that Bert was a POW and being held in Stalag VIIa. He was then moved to Camp 3C then later to Stalag 383. On 28 April 1945, Bert deplaned in England and was listed as a 'Recovered POW'. He was in the No. 1 AIF Transit Camp. Hazel by this time had moved to Nhill. On 16 May Bert embarked at Liverpool for Australia, disembarking at Sydney on 17 June. The following day he arrived in Melbourne Marching In to the General Duties Depot. He was transferred to 107 Australian Convalescent Depot in Royal Park on 13 July and discharged on 26 July. Bert was discharged from the AIF on 28 July 1945 on the compassionate grounds, being a POW, at Royal Park, Melbourne 1945. Bert's connection with the Band scene in Ballarat is another story!

ROTARY RAFFLE – FUND RAISER – ONLINE TICKET PURCHASE

8/7th 2RVR Battalion Association

COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE RAFFLE

Major Sponsor: Ballarat Mazda

First Prize Mazda CX 5 MAXX Sport RRP: $46,346

Supplied by Ballarat Mazda

TOTAL PRIZE VALUE

$55,766.00

Ticket Price: $5 each

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2nd Prize

$5,000 travel voucher plus $550 (RRP) luggage set from Holiday and Cruise Centre Ballarat

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5th Prize

$500 voucher from Wilson's Ballarat

6th Prize

2 x $185 (RRP) vouchers to Ballarat Wildlife Park

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BALLARAT MAZDA

Hosted by the Rotary Club of Ballarat South

Permit Number: 10468-25 ABN: 69 344 808 301

Rotary Ballarat South

The Community Assistance Raffle is registered in Victoria. Tickets sold only to Victorian residents!!

1. A purchaser scans a QR code with their smartphone.

2. This takes the purchaser to RaffleTix RCBS web-form where Name and Contact Details are entered and number of tickets selected.

3. Payment is by Credit Card (includes a small Service Fee.)

4. The ticket purchaser receives a receipt and the tickets through email or SMS.

5. Sales information (number of tickets purchased) is recorded by RaffleTix and credited against the Seller Association's unique QR code / URL.

6. Ticket sale funds are credited to Rotary Club of Ballarat South (RCBS) Raffle Account.

7. At the conclusion of the Raffle, commission on ticket sales will be distributed from the RCBS Raffle Account to participating associations/clubs.

Note: The selling organisation receives $3.50 per ticket sold.

Awards:
From the RVR Association: The **Drum Major** of the Pipes and Drums, **WO2 Colin Hughes-Smith** was awarded an OAM in the Kings Birthday Honours List, 2025, which was a well-deserved reward for many years' service to the Battalion. The 5/6 RVR Pipes and Drums have been invited to the Basel Tattoo in Switzerland in July 2026 and are very busy practising for this event. The Basel Tattoo is the second largest outdoor Tattoo in the world, behind only the Edinburgh in Scotland. **Association Member Ian Wallace** was awarded the Moyne Shire "Citizen of the Year, 2025" **Association Editor, Major Neil Leckie RFD (Ret'd)** was awarded the Order of Australia Medal in the Australia Day Awards 2026, for service to Veterans and to other organisations. The medal will be awarded at Government House, Melbourne, in May.

WRAAC and Recruit Training at Puckapunyal
The Women's Royal Australian Army Corps (WRAAC) was established in April 1951 to help overcome a manpower shortage. During the late 1970s female soldiers began to be integrated into the Army at large and in early 1985 the WRAAC was disbanded. Female soldiers were then allocated to other Corps. Regular Army training for both WRAAC officers and Other Ranks was undertaken at George's Heights on Sydney's North Shore. The last Officers' Cadet School, Georges Heights, Graduation Parade was held on 6 December 1984 on the WRAAC School Parade Ground. It saw the Officer Cadets and the WRAAC contingent marching to the strains of "Soldiers of the Queen". Prior to the formal closing of the gates the WRAAC School flag was ceremoniously lowered and slow marched "off", to be folded and handed over to the Chief Instructor of the WRAAC School for safe keeping. The gates, which had been repainted for the occasion, were then closed by Major Diane McVicker of the WRAAC School and Mrs Gwen Ellis, sister of the late Colonel Kathleen Best, the first Commandant of the School.

The Citizen Military Forces also had WRAAC members integrated within them. Barbara Birthisel (nee Hutton) joined the battalion in 1973, with the plan for her to attend the Officer Cadet Training Unit (OCTU) and be commissioned. The Senior WRAAC Officer in Melbourne (known as "Madam WRAAC") insisted that Barbara undertake a Recruit Course first, which she did. Barbara believes that her 1974 Recruit Course was the last Recruit Course specifically run for, and by, the WRAAC in Victoria. Barbara had a Medical Board on 9 November 1974 and then officially joined 3 Company, WRAAC on 29 January 1975. She then attended OCTU and graduated in 1976. Due to some "politicing" about a female being commissioned into an Infantry unit, her Commission states graduation in 1977! Barbara was officially posted to 2 RVR on 2 September 1977.

In 1978, Kaylene Baird (nee Buchanan) was in the first recruitment of female 'Other Ranks' into 2 RVR. She and several other Recruits formed the initial female platoon, commanded by Barbara and based at Support Company, Warrnambool. The following year, another female platoon was established, this one in Ballarat, commanded by Bernadette Ackland, who had completed OCTU and was posted to 2 RVR in February 1978.

When 22 RVR moved into 'S' Block at Puckapunyal, across the creek from 2 RTB, in 1969, it ran the Recruit Courses for the 3rd Division. While the courses were set up and administered by 22 RVR, staffing came from all units within the Division, and some from interstate. Lt Reg Yates of 22 RVR, was the OC of the last Recruit Course run by 22 RVR in 1974. When 22 RVR closed on 1 July 1975, Reg transferred to Other Ranks Training Wing, 3 Training Group in the old C Company 2 RTB lines. While there, Reg ran Recruit Courses for both male and female platoons, the female Platoons being around 1977-78. Sergeant Dennis Turner, a 22 RVR Member from Tasmania recalled that in 1976 he was on staff of 3 Training Group in 1976 where a mixed gender Recruit Platoon was trained.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership for the association's financial year 2025/26 are now overdue - $25 per annum!

EFT payment preferred! **8/7th Bn 2RVR Association Inc; CBA BSB: 063 502 Acc No.: 1035 4333**
Please put your name and/or membership code in the 'Description' box.
Cash/cheque payment can be received on the dinner nights in October.

Cheques can be forwarded to: **The Membership Officer, 8/7 Bn - 2 RVR Association**
PO Box 543, Ballarat West, Vic, 3350 Make sure you include your name!!!!

MERCHANDISE:

8/7 Battalion-2 RVR Association Merchandise as at September 2025. ***Postage is extra!***

The Woolen Jumper is great for winter days
Contact Jason to order one. Cost is $95.

Item:	Price
Polo Top, Black	$45
Polo Top, Green	$45
Cap	$20
Tie	$30
Lapel Badge	$10
Association Patch, Green	$10
Association Patch, Black	$10
RVR Emblem Patch	$10
Cold Weather Jacket	$96
Cold Weather Vest	$55
Nametag	$7

New:

Beanie	$15
Stubby Holder	$12

For all orders: contact Jason on email (preferred) at j_county@hotmail.com or

BALLARAT RANGER MILITARY MUSEUM MATTERS (Neil Leckie, Manager)
Progress at the Ranger Museum

The container display continues to be added to. The museum is almost at the point now where the members can commence to produce display cards using the same font and size for all the items in the container display.

Apart from the container display that is set out in a chronological order of the history of 8/7 RVR and its predecessor units from 1858, the main hut has a library and other 'bits and pieces' that soldiers throughout the years have used.

The museum is open Thursday afternoon from 1.00 to 4.00pm and the Fourth Sunday from 9.00am to noon. It is also open 'By Appointment', especially for association members. Call 0400 573 802.

We found a Leak!
The original blue-coloured storage container at the museum had some damage on arrival many years ago and had been 'patched'. Unfortunately, the metal around the 'patch' rusted and some water leaked in. Most of the water ended up in a plastic tub containing some out-of-date webbing parts. Fortunately, not much damage. The new 'patch' is made with clear perspex, so we now have some light at the 'dark end' at the back of the container. The 'patch' is actually quite useful!!!

Left: Former Sec/Treas/Editor Tom Chambers visited the museum in January during a holiday back in Ballarat.
Below: Bill Akell's handiwork – remounted medal display.

Our newsletter is kindly printed in the office of Julia Addison, State Member for Wendouree.

JULIANA ADDISON
MEMBER FOR WENDOUREE