



JULY 2018

# "Sitrep, Over!"

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE ROYAL SOUTH AUSTRALIA REGIMENT ASSOCIATION INC

**"Sitrep, Over!"**

## 2018 AGM

The Royal South Australia Regiment Association Inc Annual General Meeting is to be conducted at the SA Sea Rescue Squadron HQ on SUNDAY 5th August at 1100 hrs.

All Committee positions will be declared vacant, and nominations will be taken to fill those positions. Should there be NO nominations for any positions, the President and Secretary will abscond from the meeting, taking all cheque books and banking details with them, to a place that is warmer than Adelaide.

At the conclusion of the AGM a luncheon will be served at the cost of \$20 per head and will consist of Mains & Dessert.

Members are urged to stay after the luncheon to enjoy the camaraderie and mateship we are so well renowned for. As we no longer hold quarterly lunches, this is a great time to catch up with your mates and their partners.

DATE: SUNDAY 5th August 2018

Timings: AGM 1100m hrs. Lunch 1200 hrs. Concludes 1400 hrs.

Location: SA Sea Rescue Sqdn HQ. Barcoo Rd West Beach.

Please advise the Secretary at [davidlaing49@bigpond.com](mailto:davidlaing49@bigpond.com) or 0407 791 822 of your intention to attend, for catering purposes.

## 100 years since the Armistice

This year marks a significant date in our history. November 11th will be 100 years since the guns fell silent on the Western Front, and elsewhere around the globe.

To reflect this, the newsletter will feature stories from the WW1 era, up until the end of the year. It's probably fair to mention, that without wars, we wouldn't need armies, and without armies, we wouldn't need ex-services organisations like ours, and we wouldn't be the mates we are today.

This month we start with 2 stories about WW1. The first is "The Digger who Stayed." A story about soldier from Adelaide, Charles Atkin, who fell in love in France and returned after the war to live in Villers-Bretonneux.

The second story is also based during WW1 titled "Change of Command." Enjoy.

### Inside this issue:

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### Special points of interest:

- New Merchandise is now available on Page 2
- CPL Dave's humour on Page 5
- Details of the next Regimental Dining In Night. These occur rarely, and are great fun. Page 6
- Stories from WW1 and beyond. Pages 7/8/9 & 10
- ENJOY

## NEW MERCHANDISE

**NEW POLO  
TOPS**

**ONLY \$40 PLUS  
\$5 POSTAGE**



New polo tops are dark blue with golden piping to match the Association logo, and grey accent strip on sleeves. Marked BIZ-COOL, breathable Biz Cool fabric wicks moisture off the skin using Moisture Management Technology. Fabric allows maximum airflow to maintain comfort in any situation. Quick Dry. Available in sizes S, M, L and up to 4XL. Contact Rod Beames for orders.

## NEW REGIMENTAL SHIELDS



These new shields are proudly manufactured by veterans from the Murraylands Men's Shed at Murray Bridge.

Computer routed image on varnished timber, they will add memories of your service to your collection.

They come complete with a BUSINESS CARD sized brass plate, which can be engraved with your service details. Or you can present it to someone as a gift, with their details on the plate

The cost of the engraved plate with your choice of wording is \$12. (Includes engraving) Postage is \$8 within Australia, and the shield costs you \$30. Total \$50.

**All that for ONLY \$50!**

Contact the RSARA President Rod Beames on [rocher2@bigpond.com](mailto:rocher2@bigpond.com) with your order. Be precise with wording. There are no returns.

# **VALE Graham Sanders From an old friend.**

*Last month we posted tributes to one of our own who had joined that “Regiment in the sky.” Nick Williams email was caught up in the “internet black hole,” so here it is. Editor.*

Sad, sad news!

Adrian Horan phoned me an hour or so ago about the sudden passing of our Board member, Graham Sanders (The colonel!)

Graham passed away suddenly in hospital yesterday after being diagnosed with cancer some 4 months ago. He was currently undergoing cancer therapy and sent me a note apologising for his absence from our Board meeting a fortnight ago due to his treatment.

Adrian advised me that he had visited Graham and Kerry at their home in Unley yesterday afternoon and Graham appeared OK with his treatment and illness. A sudden downturn and hospitalisation resulting in his sudden passing yesterday afternoon.

I first met Graham as an Officer Cadet who transferred from OCTU to complete the ‘Tactics’ phase of his First appointment Course with AUR on Kangaroo Island in about January 1973.

Later in his and my military career Graham appeared again as the Platoon Commander at the Berri Depot in charge of the Sustained Fire Machine Gun Platoon. I was his Company commander, Support company 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion, RSAR. He was the local Sergeant in the Berri Police Station and was well regarded as a ‘helping hand’ to soldiers arranging their trip home after Monday night’s parade. Mainly after their sips of the local ‘Rough River Port’ and some Red wine from the local wineries!

Graham was posted in his civilian career in the SAPOL back to Adelaide and became a senior Sergeant in charge of the Police Weapons area.

Graham joined the Board of the AUR Association and was responsible for recommending and resourcing a supplier for the AUR lapel badges. A small miniature of the AUR hat badge. We subsequently ordered of 200 badges which are sold through the AUR Association to AURA and Regimental members.

Graham was a happy person who enjoyed an occasional glass of red wine, a good meal and soldier conversations. Kerry has always been a strong supporter to Graham and almost unbelievably drove him to and from numerous Regimental and Corps Dinners to avoid any chance of this Police and Army officer being stopped for a breathalyser test. Nick Williams was a passenger of Kerry and Graham’s after a few of those dinners!

Thanks Graham for your service and commitment to the military and the support of the AUR Association. We enjoyed your company, your quirky humour and your ‘can do’ attitude. We will miss your face and humour at our Board meetings and Cocktail Parties with the Regiment.

Farewell old friend and God bless your family!

Brig. *Nick Williams* AM RFD (Retd)

President  
AUR Association Inc





# Life in the Deep, Deep South of the ole US of A

## Georgia

The owner of a golf course in Georgia was confused about paying an invoice, so he decided to ask his secretary for some mathematical help.

He called her into his office and said, “Y’all graduated from the University of Georgia and I need some help. If I wuz to give yew \$20,000, minus 14%, how much would you take off?”

The secretary thought a moment, and then replied, “Everthang but my earrings.”

## Louisiana

A senior citizen in Louisiana was overheard saying, “When the end of the world comes, I hope to be in Louisiana .”

When asked why, he replied, “I’d rather be in Louisiana ‘cause everythang happens in Louisiana 20 years later than in the rest of the world.”

## Mississippi

The young man from Mississippi came running into the store and said to his buddy, “Bubba, somebody just stole your pickup truck from the parking lot!”

Bubba replied, “Did y’all see who it was?”

The young man answered, “I couldn’t tell, but I got the license number.”

## North Carolina

A man in North Carolina had a flat tire, pulled off on the side of the road, and proceeded to put a bouquet of flowers in front of the car and one behind it. Then he got back in the car to wait.

A passerby studied the scene as he drove by, and was so curious he turned around and went back. He asked the fellow what the problem was.

The man replied, “I got a flat tahr.”

The passer-by asked, “But what’s with the flowers?”

The man responded, “When you break down they tell you to put flares in the front and flares in the back. I never did understand it neither.”

## Tennessee

A Tennessee State trooper pulled over a pickup on I-65. The trooper asked, “Got any ID?”

The driver replied, “Bout whut?”

## Florida

The Sheriff pulled up next to the guy unloading garbage out of his pick-up into the ditch. The Sheriff asked, “Why are you dumping garbage in the ditch? Don’t you see that sign on that pole in front of you.”

“Yep,” he replied. “That’s why I’m dumpin’ it here, ‘cause it says: ‘Fine For Dumping Garbage.’”

Y’all kin say whut y’all want ‘about the South, but y’all never heard o’ nobody retirin’ an’ movin’ North, did ya?

*Thanks to member Max Hill for this insight into Trumps territory.*

*If you have any humour that is fit for these pages, please forward it to the secretary on his email of [davidlaing49@bigpond.com](mailto:davidlaing49@bigpond.com)*

*We pay very handsomely for articles. For instance, Max will be receiving, completely free of charge a 12 month subscription to the classic novel “How to get rich in Nigeria, and make your first \$100,000,000,000,000,000,000.”*

## CPL Dave's Page



*I just read an article on the dangers of drinking!  
Scared the shit out of me!  
So that's it! No more reading!*

### **Growing old.**

First you forget names; then you forget faces; then you forget to zip up your fly; and then you forget to unzip your fly.



**Do you ever wake up, kiss the person sleeping beside you, and feel glad that you are alive?  
I just did and apparently will not be allowed on this airline again....**



**ROYAL SOUTH  
AUSTRALIA REGIMENT  
ASSOCIATION INC**

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FACEBOOK**

## **WHY JOIN THE RSAR ASSOCIATION?**

Folks ask me "Why should I join the RSAR Association?" My simple answer is "If you have to ask, then you shouldn't!"

Our Association is made up of men and women from all over the world who share two things in common. 1. They have either served in the Regiment, or can identify with the ethos of the Association, and 2. They all wish to continue the mateship gained through service. And there you have it in a sentence.

I worked for 30 years in the security industry, interacting with thousands of people every month, but I see only 2 or 3 on a semi regular basis. I spent 7 years in the Army and communicate with my former Section Commanders, Platoon Commanders, Company Commanders, Battalion Commanders and higher on a regular basis. The camaraderie and mateship formed during that service will be with me forever, and hardly a day goes past without one of them either emailing or phoning me, and vice versa.

One of our goals is "To Perpetuate the Regiment" and we do this in many ways, by providing support to the Battalion through a number of means. Rations, Catering, Awards, Physical Assistance and many more.

If you have any mates (or partners) who served or have served, ask them if they'd like to be part of one of the largest ex-services associations in Australia. Membership Applications are available on request, and it's only \$20 per year.

Give it a go, and join us. You'll never look back!

## **REGIMENTAL DINING IN NIGHT**

The 2017 Dining In Night was a great success, and because we no longer hold regular luncheons, this is another reason why we are conducting a DIN again.

Once again to be held at the Colonel Light Gardens RSL, the cost is only \$45 per head, which includes your 3 course meal, beer, wines and soft drinks. You won't get value like that anywhere else!

Enquiries to the Secretary in the first instance please, on [davidlaing49@bigpond.com](mailto:davidlaing49@bigpond.com) or 0407 791 822. Limited seats.



# The Digger who stayed



When the Armistice was declared, most Australian service men and women couldn't wait to get home. One exception was a gunner from Adelaide, Charles Atkin, who fell in love in France and returned after the war to live in Villers-Bretonneux.

Atkin was a Yorkshire boy who went to war with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Light Horse Regiment and became a driver with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division Artillery in France.

In Villers-Bretonneux, according to his local newspaper, he 'fell victim to the charms of a French girl', possibly while he was convalescing from a mild gunshot wound to the head. After the war he came back, married his sweetheart, Alix, and they had a daughter, Elise.

His first job was digging up shells from the war. Then, walking over the fields where thousands of his comrades had fallen, Atkins laid out the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial Cemetery and tended the beginnings of the gardens.

The ex-digger was formally employed by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission as a labourer and gardener, and then custodian of the Australian National Memorial.

Announcing the appointment, Colonel Walter Dollman said: "He was so interested in everything. He is a splendid chap, and gave us a lot of information about the war graves and what is being done."

Construction on Australia's memorial did not begin until 1936, but the former dairy farmer had plenty to keep him busy.

The 'lean and lanky Australian', known as 'Sharley' to the locals, was a popular figure Villers-Bretonneux. He also remained a member of the Returned Services League in Unley, South Australia, and wrote to them about his life in France.

When the Australian National Memorial was officially opened by King George in 1938, Atkin was the last to leave the ceremony.

Along with French workmen and families who had built the monument in the countryside, he sat and watched as Australia's Deputy Prime Minister Earle Page walked among the graves, as the sun set over the Amiens plateau, the white stone turning pink.

According to records at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, Charles Atkin fulfilled his duties with 'every satisfaction ... taking great interest in the work at the Memorial and being very attentive to visitors'.

Two years later, as another world war swept through the Somme and German bombers were again strafing overhead, he took his family to Gentelles on bicycles with their belongings in two suitcases.

The next day he returned and met with the Deputy Mayor, Dr Jules Vendeville, who was evacuating the remaining townspeople to Cherbourg.

## The Digger who stayed.....continued

“There was nothing to do but lock the memorial tower and main gate,” Atkin said.

“It was a terrible heartbreak to go. I had never seen the garden looking more beautiful.

“I did not even have time to bury the official papers or retrieve any of my own, my medals from the last war or my uniform.”

He joined seven refugees who had only a loaf and a half of bread, and slept in ditches and cowsheds, as they walked the harrowing 390km trek to Cherbourg on the English Channel.

The family escaped to London and the British Refugee Committee found Atkin a job in Fulham New Cemetery, which he supplemented with factory work. His daughter, Elise, joined the Auxiliary Territorial Service, the women’s branch of the British Army.



Meanwhile, the Royal Air Force sent a reconnaissance flight over Villers-Bretonneux to determine the fate of the Australian National Memorial.

It had been damaged by shell and mortar fire, as the tower was being used as an observation post by the French. This damage was repaired but other holes were left as honourable battle scars.

Charles Atkin and his family returned to Villers-Bretonneux in 1946. He resumed his post at the Memorial and worked there until his retirement in 1961, at the age of 65. He died in 1972 and Alix lived until 1989.

## Change of Command

### CHANGE OF COMMAND

Three days after Australian troops took Villers-Bretonneux, on the 28<sup>th</sup> of April, a young man died of tuberculosis in a prison hospital in what was then Austria-Hungary. Gavrilo Princip was the Bosnian Serb who four years earlier, as a 19 year old, had shot and killed Archduke Franz Ferdinand continuing a succession of events that would lead to the outbreak of the war. In his book *The Great War*, Les Carlyon describes a haunting coincidence: the doctor attending Princip in his final days was Dr Jan Levit who, 24 years later in 1942 would find himself back in the same prison: as a prisoner. The prison had been turned into a concentration camp for Jews. Levit was sent to Auschwitz and killed – the author of the laws that led to Levit’s death was in 1918 a corporal on the western front.



The end of April had seen the Australian forces seize Villers-Bretonneux in a counter attack at night by 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Brigades. In a letter to his wife on 2 May Major General Monash, then Commander, 3<sup>rd</sup> Division, wrote:

*In my opinion this counter-attack at night, without artillery support, is the finest thing yet done in the war by Australians or any other troops.*

For Australian forces on the western front, the early days of May 1918 were marked by consolidation following the seizure of Villers-Bretonneux – except for Monash’s 3<sup>rd</sup> Division. He wrote:

*... the Third Division had had enough of stationary warfare, and the troops were athirst for adventure. They were tired of raids, which meant a mere incursion into enemy territory, and a subsequent withdrawal, after doing as much damage as possible.*

*Accordingly, I resolved to embark upon a series of minor battles, designed not merely to capture prisoners and machine guns, but also to hold on to the ground gained.*



## Change of Command.....continued

Monash's Division conducted a series of these miniature battles on 30 April, and on 3, 6, and 7 May with successful results that yielded several hundred prisoners and advanced the allied front line by about one mile, depriving the Germans of valuable observation of the allied lines and forcing the redeployment of its artillery assets.



Charles Bean was not an admirer.

As early as the Sari Bair offensive on the Gallipoli Peninsula in August 1915 that involved the Allies failed attempt to take Chunuk Bair (NZ objective), Lone Pine (Australian 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade objective), and the Nek, (Australian 3<sup>rd</sup> Light Horse Brigade objective), Bean was sceptical of then Brigadier John Monash's abilities. In his own diaries as recounted in *Bean's Gallipoli – The Diaries of Australia's Official war Correspondent* edited by Kevin Fewster, Bean wrote of Monash's 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade:

*Shrapnel was pouring on them going up valley – men were deadly tired, and so Monash did not push on but dug in on*

*the ridge nearer this way than [Hill] 971...*

*It seems to me a decision which many weak commanders would make but utterly unjustifiable. That is to say – instead of pushing on in spite of fatigue till he was actually stopped by the enemy, he stopped short of his objective without being stopped.*

Yet in May 1918, less than three years later, Monash was about to be promoted to Lieutenant General and appointed as Commander, Australian Army Corps. Monash's recommendation for the appointment was made by General Birdwood and Prime Minister Hughes approved it on 18 May 1918.

Bean was so concerned by these developments that he left France for London the same day to meet Keith Murdoch in an attempt to prevent the appointment. Following a series of meetings with Hughes and even British Prime Minister Lloyd George, and suffering rebukes from Birdwood and Major General Brudenell White (Bean's preferred candidate for the appointment), who both refused to support the anti-Monash campaign, Bean and Murdoch relented and Monash's appointment was announced effective 1 June.

Monash penned a farewell order to his 3<sup>rd</sup> Division on 30 May 1918 on his departure for the Australian Corps Headquarters:

*As I am about to take up other duties the time has come when I must relinquish the command of the Division.*

*Closely associated with you as I have been, since the days of your first assembly and War Training in England, and, later, throughout all your magnificent work during the past nineteen months in the war zone, it is naturally a severe wrench for me to part from you.*

*I find it quite impossible to give adequate expression to my feelings of gratitude towards all ranks for the splendid and loyal support which you have, at all times, accorded to me.*

*In formally wishing the Division goodbye and good luck, I wish simply, but none the less sincerely, to thank each and all of you, for all that you have done.*

In Bean's Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918, written some years after war's end, his view of Monash had clearly changed. He wrote:

*From the time of Monash's advent the corps had at its head a very great mind – certainly one of the greatest that has ever controlled a British military force.*

For his part Monash wrote a friend:

*...it did not take me long to learn that the only ways to carry out the responsibilities of command were, firstly, to erect optimism into a creed for myself and for all my brigades, arms, and depots, and secondly, to try and deal with every task and every situation on the basis of simple business propositions, differing in no way from the problems of civil life except that they are governed*

## Change of Command.....continued

*by a special technique. The main thing is always to have a plan...*

While the political wrangling surrounding Monash's appointment monopolised the upper echelons of Australian authorities in Europe in May of 1918 the crisis on the western front in March, resulting from the German offensive to take Amiens, had a significant impact on the Middle East campaign.

The British government withdrew more than 60,000 troops from Palestine to reinforce its western front forces. The Australian and New Zealand divisions remained untouched in the Middle East, but the remainder of the allied forces were decimated.

May 1918 brought oppressive conditions of heat and dust described by official historian Henry Gullett as '...this threshold of hell'. Lance Corporal Robert Fell wrote:

*Eating, living and sleeping in dust and dirt, eaten alive with mosquitoes every night. Men going away with Malaria every day... Jordan Valley an absolute nightmare'.*

Despite the conditions and the troop reductions the Commander of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force, General Allenby, was keen to launch an offensive to cross the Jordan River to open the way to Amman. On 30 April the Australian Mounted Division, reinforced by 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Light Horse Brigades pushed north along the eastern bank of the Jordan River while 3<sup>rd</sup> Light Horse Brigade, with a train of 360 camels dragging six artillery pieces, moved to seize Es Salt.

The result? A near disaster.



4<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Brigade had been positioned to hold any enemy west of the River but was unaware that the Ottomans had constructed a crossing of the river to their north and had reinforced the area with extra divisions, including German forces. On the morning of 1 May, 4,000 Ottoman troops attacked 4<sup>th</sup> Light Horse forcing the Australians to withdraw and to abandon nine of their 12 guns. The Australian Commander, Chauvel, rushed reinforcements to the area to establish a defensive line north of the only track connecting Es Salt to Jordan – had this been cut, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> Light Horse Brigades, the Australian

Mounted Division headquarters and British troops would have had to conduct a fighting withdrawal or face annihilation or capture.

Allenby claimed the assault was a great success writing to a friend:

*Nothing much doing here, for the moment, but my big raids beyond the Jordan have drawn Turks against me, and have eased pressure on the Arabs further south.*

While it did result in 2,000 Ottoman casualties and nearly 1,000 Ottoman prisoners for the loss of 1649 allied troops, it was described by Lieutenant General Chetwode, the commander of the Desert Column under whose command the Australian Mounted Division fell, called it and the earlier Amman offensive '... the stupidest things [Allenby] ever did'.

