

"Sitrep, Over!"



Official Newsletter of the Royal South Australia Regiment Association Inc

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July 2017

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Guest Speaker Earns His Lunch

Lucky members of the Association and their partners were treated to a very informative and energetic presentation by Robert "Dogs" Kearney on "The Lost Soldiers of Celtic Wood." at the recent Association luncheon.

Held at the Hackney Hotel on 25th June, the event was attended by about 28 members, and was a highlight of the months events. A number of questions were asked and "Dogs" responded with theories never before heard. We wish to heartily thank "Dogs" for his attendance and presentation.



Arthur Drummond Verrier. His Service Continues



New member Jon Russack writes *"I joined 3rd/9th LH (SAMR) in 1963 and my original number was 41129. I re-enlisted in 1968 before transferring to the 27th Bn Band, which merged with the 10th Bn Band around 1972."*

My grandfather was Arthur Drummond Verrier, who enlisted into the AIF in 1915 as a Private and was posted as a reinforcement to the 10th Battalion. He was transferred to the 50th Battalion and was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for bravery.

He was wounded and returned to Australia in 1918. He joined the CMF and served between wars, re-enlisting in 1939 into the 2nd AIF. As a Lieutenant Colonel he was appointed Commanding Officer of the 2/10th Infantry Battalion, South Australia's first battalion raised for the Second World War. He was awarded a Mention in Despatches. His sons Bruce and Arthur also served in the 2/10th Battalion."

Jon Russack

10. The Soham Railway Explosion

On June 2, 1944, just before D-Day, driver Benjamin Gimbert and his fireman, James Nightall, were in charge of a freight train delivering bombs to the USAF in White Colne, Essex, UK. As they approached the village of Soham in Cambridgeshire, Benjamin realized that the wagon coupled directly behind the locomotive was on fire. That's never a good thing, but this fire was particularly dangerous, given that the train was carrying tons of explosives.

He stopped the train, and James came down from the footplate to uncouple the blazing wagon. Only 128 meters (420 ft) from the station in Soham, they attempted to ditch the wagon in the open countryside before the bombs exploded. They failed, and seven minutes after Benjamin originally saw the fire, the wagon exploded. It flattened the station building, damaged 600 others, threw Benjamin almost 200 meters (about 600 ft) away, and killed two other railway workers who had stayed to stop another train that was headed for the wagon's path of destruction.

Despite the crater the explosion created that was 6 meters (20 ft) deep, the track was up and running again by that evening. Both Benjamin and James were awarded the George Cross, the highest award for non-combat bravery in the British and Commonwealth. Their actions are commemorated with two different plaques in Soham.

9. The Ready-Made British Resistance

After the disastrous campaign in France in 1940, the remnants of the British Expeditionary Force and the Free French Forces found themselves critically short of vehicles, ammunition, and other equipment. This led to the formation of the well-known Home Guard, but Winston Churchill also ordered the creation of a secret, underground army that was known simply as the Auxiliary Units. They remained secret until the 1990s.

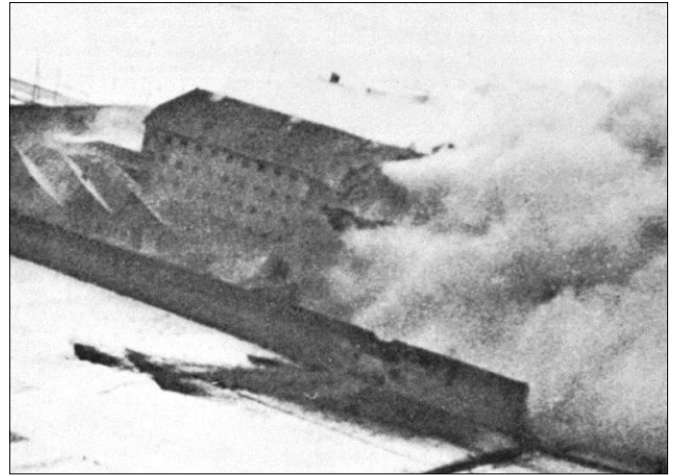
Its 3,500 members were recruited mainly from the civilian population and trained in a variety of tasks, including stealth killing, explosives, unarmed combat, and sabotage. To avoid suspicion, they were assigned to Home Guard units. Despite the shortage, they were equipped with the best weapons available, including Thompson submachine guns and PIAT anti-tank rockets. They were also given silenced pistols and rifles, sticky bombs, and single-shot cartridges that could penetrate steel at almost 100 meters (over 300 ft).

Their operation bases were built 4.5 meters (15 ft) underground and held 6–8 men each, plus all of their equipment and weeks' worth of supplies.

In the event of an invasion, the plan was to attack German communication lines, railways, airfields, fuel and supply dumps,

and senior German officers. Perhaps most chillingly of all, they had orders to kill any British person collaborating with the occupying German forces. One advantage of the units was that the German army would not expect organized resistance so soon after an invasion. The fatality of such a mission was certain, but luckily, the Auxiliary Units never went into action, although many of its men joined other units after it disbanded.

8. Operation Jericho



On February 18, 1944, 18 of the legendary Mosquito fighter bombers of the Royal Air Force, Royal New Zealand Air Force, and Royal Australian Air Force embarked on a plan to attack the Amiens Prison in northwest France to free the 700 French Resistance members imprisoned there.

The weather that day was so bad that one of the RNZAF pilots thought that it was "either some form of practice or some form of practical joke." Nevertheless, the group flew across the English Channel at just 15 meters (50 ft) above the waves, though five had to turn back due to radio and engine problems.

Now down to 13 planes, Group Captain Charles Pickard carried on with the raid.

At 12:01 PM, the bombers attacked the prison wall to allow the prisoners a route of escape. They went on to demolish the blocks where German officers were standing guard, many of whom were killed or wounded. Two Mosquitos also attacked the nearby train station, buying the prisoners time while the German garrison was distracted.

Only two aircraft were lost in the attack, including the one flown by Pickard. While 258 prisoners escaped, 102 were killed in the raid and another 155 were captured.

Even today, no one is sure who ordered the raid or why, but the sheer skill and courage shown by the Mosquitos is undeniable.

7. Hermann Goering's Anti-Nazi Brother



Albert Goering was the brother of infamous Nazi leader Hermann Goering, the man who famously vowed to destroy the RAF.

Unlike his older brother, Albert was not a Nazi and often risked his life to save those the Nazis hated. He moved to Austria after the Nazis rose to power and often spoke out against the Nazi party, but when Austria was annexed by Germany in 1938, Hermann kept the Gestapo away from Albert.

When the Nazis marched into Vienna, Albert rushed to distribute exit visas to Jewish residents and even went head-to-head with Nazis who were forcing elderly Jewish people to do degrading things, such as washing the street.

Albert managed to save hundreds of Jews as well as political dissidents during the war. He persuaded his brother to order the release of many prisoners of concentration camps, claiming they were "good Jews."

He was arrested on a number of occasions, but each time, his family connections ensured his freedom, even when a warrant for his death was issued in 1944.

Albert ran a Skoda factory in Czechoslovakia, whose employees were very grateful to him for how he treated them, even allowing passive resistance among the workforce.

When two Nazi officers gave him the Nazi salute while he was stationed in Bucharest, Romania, he invited them to "kiss [his] ass."

Ironically, Albert was imprisoned for two years after the war due to his association with his older brother. When he was released, he found himself unemployable.

He died penniless, but he was looked after by those he had helped during the war. Only recently has he received recognition for his bravery.

6. Bomber Plane Captures U-Boat

On August 27, 1941, U-boat U-570, captained by Kapitänleutnant Hans-Joachim Rahmlow, surfaced off the coast of Iceland. Almost immediately, it was spotted by James Thompson, the acting leader of a British squadron based in Iceland who was on an anti-submarine patrol. Immediately, Rahmlow ordered a crash dive, but it was too late. Thompson's Hudson bomber dropped four depth charges, one of which dealt a critical blow to U-570, knocking out the lighting system.



Being inexperienced in U-boats and commanding an inexperienced crew, Rahmlow panicked and surfaced again, fearing the release of deadly chlorine gas.

When a number of the crew came up on deck, Thompson attacked the U-boat with the plane's machine guns. The crew soon realized the futility of fighting the aircraft in rough seas and surrendered.

Amazed, Thompson flew in for a closer look, but no other attempt was made by the crew to defend their vessel, fearing more depth charge attacks.

Thompson then radioed for more planes and to alert the Navy to collect the U-boat.

In the time it took for the Royal Navy armed trawler to arrive, the U-boat crew destroyed the code books and Enigma machines on board. U-570 was then towed back to Iceland and beached to prevent it from sinking. The boat was repaired, and it was discovered that there was no evidence of chlorine gas. A more experienced crew would probably have escaped. U-570 was then placed into service with the Royal Navy as HMS Graph.

The surrender of U-570 remains the only time a submarine has surrendered to an aircraft.

CONTINUES NEXT MONTH

RSAR ASSOCIATION NEEDS YOU



Annual General Meeting

6th August 2017 (Sunday) 1100 hrs

SA SEA RESCUE SQUADRON HQ

BARCOO RD WEST BEACH



Royal South Australia Regiment Association Inc

- 1045 hrs - Pre AGM tea & coffee**
- 1100 hrs - AGM**
- 1200 hrs - Lunch**

Free tea and coffee
Bar facilities available

You are asked to contact the Secretary on 0407 791 822 or davidlaing49@bigpond.com **NOT LATER THAN Friday 29th July** to register your attendance (or apologies) for catering purposes.

ALL MEMBERS ARE URGED TO ATTEND



Member Lyndon Gaborit wrote and said.

Hi David,

I caught up with my old company commander and CSM today, plus a 10 Battalion hanger-on!

Photo attached.

All the best,

Note: Don has just had another stint in hospital, but is now home and recovering. "Wife Shirley says he's only after the attention! Get Well Soon Major!

From L—R: Lyndon Gaborit, Ian Carnachan, Don Field and "10 Bn Hanger On" Howard Parslow.

AGM - ALL INVITED, and BRING YOUR WIFE/PARTNER

The AGM on 6th August is one of the most important dates on our calendar, with the election of Office Bearers, and other important business governing the operation of the Association. Not only that, it gives members a chance to relax and have a drink together, and talk about issues important to all of us. We have over 200 members, with around 150 of those living in the Adelaide metropolitan area. If we had 50 of those, and their partners at the AGM, we would be very happy.

The SA Sea Rescue Squadron is putting on a fantastic alternate drop lunch of a Mixed Grill with Chips and salad or Beer Battered Flathead with Chips & Salad. Including a home made dessert, all for only \$17.50 per head, payable at the door. SEE YOU THERE.

A LITTLE THREE YEAR OLD BOY IS SITTING ON THE TOILET.

HIS MOTHER THINKS HE HAS BEEN IN THERE TOO LONG, SO SHE GOES IN TO SEE WHAT'S UP.

THE LITTLE BOY IS SITTING ON THE TOILET READING A BOOK.. BUT ABOUT EVERY 10 SECONDS OR SO HE PUTS THE BOOK DOWN, GRIPS ONTO THE TOILET SEAT WITH HIS LEFT HAND AND HITS HIMSELF ON TOP OF THE HEAD WITH HIS RIGHT HAND.

HIS MOTHER SAYS: "BILLY, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? YOU'VE BEEN IN HERE FOR A WHILE."

BILLY SAYS: "I'M FINE, MUMMY... I JUST HAVEN'T DONE IT YET."

MOTHER SAYS: "OK, YOU CAN STAY HERE A FEW MORE MINUTES. BUT, BILLY, WHY ARE YOU HITTING YOURSELF ON THE HEAD?"



**BILLY SAYS:
"IT WORKS ON THE
TOMATO SAUCE
BOTTLE!"**



CPL Daves'
Page

Whispering In The Library

A man was looking for a place to sit in a crowded university library.

He asked a girl, "Do you mind if I sit beside you?"

The girl replied, in a loud voice, "NO, I DON'T WANT TO SPEND THE NIGHT WITH YOU!"

All the people in the library started staring at the man, who was deeply embarrassed and moved to another table. After a couple of minutes, the girl walked quietly to the man's table and said with a laugh, "I study psychology and I know what a man is thinking. I bet you felt embarrassed, right?"

The man responded in a loud voice: "\$500 FOR ONE NIGHT? I'M NOT PAYING YOU THAT MUCH!"

All the people in the library looked at the girl in shock.

The man whispered to her, "I study law and I know how to screw people."

CONTACT US!-

The Secretary, David Laing,
 RSAR Association Inc
 Riverglen Marina, RSD 3152A
 White Sands SA 5253



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davidlaing49@bigpond.com

We're on the Web

www.rsara.asn.au



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Facebook

ONLY \$6 each



Stocks of the **NEW RSARA Stubby Holders** will
 be available at the **AGM**

For Postal Orders please see last months
 newsletter

RSAR ASSOCIATION OFFICE BEARERS

The Committee of Management of the RSAR Association is made up of the following members.

Executive

President	Rodney Beames
Vice President	Mick Standing
Secretary	David Laing Facebook Page and Newsletter "Sitrep, Over!"
Treasurer	David Hope

Committee

Norm Tregenza	Functions Officer
Jesse Humphrys	Webmaster www.rsara.asn.au
Norm Rathmann	
Nat Cooke	
David Portakiewicz	10/27 Bn Band members
Mark Blondell	10/27 Bn Serving Members

If you feel you have skills you can bring to the Association, we invite you to nominate for the Committee of Management. The future of our association depends on your support, as without it we will cease to exist. Please contact any of the committee if you have comments on this issue.

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 J. Moulton ADJT 10/27 RSAR
 B. Lipman RSM 10/27 RSAR

LM denotes LIFE MEMBER
SM denotes SERVING ADF MEMBER

BAND denotes serving 10/27 Band member

Denotes NEW MEMBER

228 members

as at 14/6/17

The roar and flash of the guns is no more; that easy Digger swagger and laughter in the streets and cafes is just a memory, but the town of Vignacourt has not forgotten those war weary men who spent just a brief time in its embrace. Many were broken, physically and mentally; it's the thousand-yard stare, soldiers only know, that gives away the inexplicable and unexplainable.

Vignacourt, 17 km from Amiens; out of artillery range during WW1, was not a place of epic battles or heroic actions, but a rest centre for battle worn allied soldiers, mostly Australians. The ghosts of those Australians still haunt the town. Is that the sharp click of the trench boots on the cobblestones we hear? The imagination stirs. We see a young Australian captain, bride in hand, guiding her down the steps of the ancient cathedral. What happened to them? An Australian Army band, slouch hats at a jaunty angle, quick march to the town square on Armistice Day. Peace at last. It was the war to end all wars you know.



Diggers pose in front of the Thuillier farmhouse, 1917

After the War, Vignacourt was just another town in the Somme; few Australians made the pilgrimage here until the recent discovery of the Thuillier, WW1 photographic plates and the story of the *Lost Diggers*.



Thuillier farmhouse, April 2017

One hundred years later, in April 2017, Marilyn and I followed in the footsteps of those *Lost Diggers*. Little has changed, but those warriors from the antipodes no longer have their photos taken at the Thuillier farm. The farm remains and we climbed the stairs to the dusty attic where most of the photographic plates were found. The place is being restored as a poignant and permanent re-

minder of the sacrifice of those Australians. The restoration will be completed by Anzac Day 2018.

We wandered the beautifully maintained Commonwealth War Cemetery, on the edge of the town. Five hundred and eighty-seven allied soldiers rest here, over 400 are Australian. It was the grave of Private J.M. Griffen, that caught my eye; 18 years old from Newcastle. He worked at the steelworks, swapping the benign and productive furnace of that place for the hellish, destructive fire of the Western Front. His distraught mother wrote plaintiff letters to the military authorities in Australia, searching for news of her dear son. She paid a heavy price for these grieving words at the foot of the military gravestone:

*In loving memory of
Our beloved son
Aged 18 years
He is not dead but sleeping*

Much is made of the sacrifice of soldiers, but Private Griffen's grieving parents continued to suffer their son's loss. They had to pay a parsimonious Australian government three pence halfpenny, over one dollar in today's money, per letter for the inscription.

We met Valerie Vasseur, the Vignacourt Anzac Coordinator, whose infectious passion is the driving force behind the Anzac project and the Thuillier farm restoration. We spent hours with her. Valerie's passion is matched by that spontaneous French gen-



Captain Harry Hartley on the steps of Vignacourt Cathedral, 5 January 1918, with his new bride, Simone Pecourt

erosity that is common in regional France. We lunched at her house; relaxing in the spring sunshine enjoying traditional French food, laughter and conversation. It was a simple affair; baguettes with salad, cold meats and cheese with the obligatory beer, as they do in northern France. An Australian slouch hat hung on the garden wall, a reminder of years past, of those Diggers relaxing in the sun with their convivial French hosts. Had a Digger joined us for lunch and hung his hat? We felt his presence.

The Vignacourt railway station no longer witnesses the exhausted platoons of soldiers seeking solace from the trenches; or the hospital trains disgorging the wounded. It is now a gallery commemorating the *Lost Diggers* where Thuillier photos cover the walls. The station is now *La Maison des Australiens*, in memory of those men.

It was meeting the mayor, Stephane Ducrotoy, that reinforced the bond between Australia and northern France. Stephane and Valerie are the driving force behind the Vignacourt Anzac project. We met Stephane at the Thuillier farm, not in his mayoral robes, but jeans and pullover, he is a farmer and leads the renovation project. We met him while he was clearing rubble from the renovation project with his tractor and huge towed skip. A man of great energy and passion he leapt from his John Deere tractor at the Thuillier farm to greet us.

Stephane explained that initially he found it difficult to understand the significance and respect Australians felt for Anzac Day; there was nothing similar in France. It wasn't until he visited Australia at the invitation of the

Australian Government that he understood, after attending Anzac Day ceremonies in Bundaberg. It was the central Queensland town that gave us the fiery rum, but sadly many of its sons to France. Bundaberg is now a sister city with Vignacourt, the link continues.

From our meeting in April our group of *Grocers and Gunners* will join other pilgrims on Anzac Day 2018 in Vignacourt for a simple remembrance to our *Lost Diggers*.

*We will toast them in Digger fashion
with a pannikin of Bundaberg's best
and place a sprig of wattle to those that lay at rest.*

Phil Brookes

July 2017

RSARA member Phil Brookes is a Tour Operator who takes Australians on tours of South Vietnam and the Battlefields of Europe. He has just returned from a "recce" of next years tour in April to France to commemorate the Centenary of the End of WW1.

As posted, the tour will be at Vignacourt on ANZAC Day 2018, a most significant milestone for all Australians. A couple of places are still available on the 21 day tour.

For info contact Phil on brookes1@bigpond.net.au



Private Griffen's grave

Restoration at the Thuillier farmhouse with Valerie Vasseur, Vignacourt Anzac Coordinator, Phil Brookes and Stephane Ducrotoy, Vignacourt Mayor

