

"Sitrep, Over!"



Official Newsletter of the Royal South Australia Regiment Association Inc

Editor - David Laing 0407 791

August 2017

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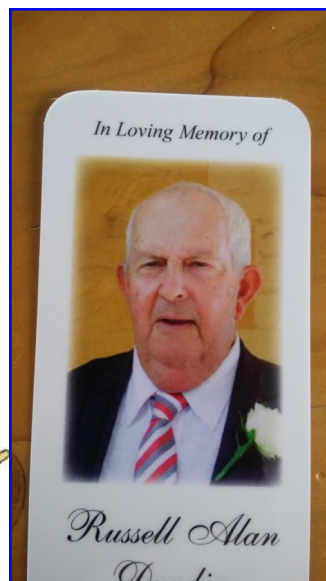
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VALE Russell "FERDS" Durdin - RIP Mate

In a small, well kept cemetery on a hill overlooking the rural township of Karoonda, on a cold, and rainy day, about 80 family and friends of "Ferds" lay him to rest on Wednesday 19th July. His coffin was lowered into his "own plot of dirt" as the rain started in earnest.

A service was conducted previously in Adelaide, and was attended by over 400 family and many friends. Russ Durdin had lots of those. I've attended quite a few funerals in my life, and some of them were sad, with much crying and grieving. "Ferds" funeral service at the Heysen Chapel was one of celebrating his life, with stories and memories shared by his family and friends. His daughters spoke of a loving dad who was also a larrikin and would not tolerate idiots, casting them aside with his usual comment of "Useless Bastards!"
Mate, you were one in 10 million and will be sadly missed!



Thank you

Hard copies of this newsletter are kindly printed by the office of Tony Pasin MP, Federal Member for Barker.

We appreciate your support

Thank you Tony

Russ Durdin in Vietnam.

L—R. Russ in Vung Tau near the 110 Sig Base HQ. 1969

Russ' Memorial card from his service 2017

Russell Durdin with one of the kids at the Dong Chau Roman Catholic Orphanage, Saigon. 1969

TRIBUTES ON
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5. Westerplatte

The city of Danzig was home to a lengthy territorial dispute between the Germans and Poles who inhabited it and had been declared a free city by the League of Nations. In late August 1939, the Schleswig-Holstein, a German World War I-era battleship, had entered Danzig on a goodwill visit. At 4:45 AM on September 1, it fired its first shots against the Polish garrison, consisting of just 88 men, at the peninsula of Westerplatte. Eight minutes later, the garrison came under attack from elite German commandos and marines, but they were forced to turn back following heavy casualties.

On September 3, 60 Luftwaffe dive bombers attacked the peninsula, wreaking such havoc that the German troops didn't think anyone would still be alive, yet only five Polish defenders were killed. After subsequent attacks were repelled, resulting in heavy casualties, two fire trains were sent the next day. Both of them failed, the first one resulting in heavy casualties for the Germans.

As the German Blitzkrieg pushed the valiant Polish army back everywhere else on the front, Westerplatte became a symbol of resistance. However, it wasn't to last. Despite the Poles' successful defense, the German army had almost reached Warsaw, and gangrene was starting to affect the wounded.

On September 7, the Polish garrison surrendered. While they may have lost the battle, they won the utmost respect of the German troops, who allowed Polish commander Major Sucharski to keep his sword and supposedly saluted the Polish defenders as they marched out. The fighting killed 15–20 Polish soldiers but a staggering 200–400 Germans.

4. Hobart's Funnies

In the days leading up to D-Day, a number of problems were evident to the men planning the invasion of occupied Europe. Chief among these was the "Atlantic Wall," a series of defences that stretched from Norway to the Franco-Spanish border. This presented a formidable obstacle to the Allied armies, who

would need to develop new specialist vehicles to combat the soft sand and other logistical difficulties. The task was assigned to Major General Sir Percy Hobart, who had been forced into retirement in 1940 while commanding the famous Desert Rats in Egypt and is often credited as the inventor of Blitzkrieg.

Most of these new vehicles, which came to be known as the "funnies," were based on the design of the Churchill tank, whose low centre of gravity and roomy interior made it ideal for modification. The most famous of the Churchill modifications was the flame-throwing crocodile, the mere sight of which was



often enough to compel German soldiers to surrender. Other ingenious features implemented were turrets that could be swapped out for bridges and rolling mats to allow armoured vehicles to drive on beaches with soft sand without getting stuck.

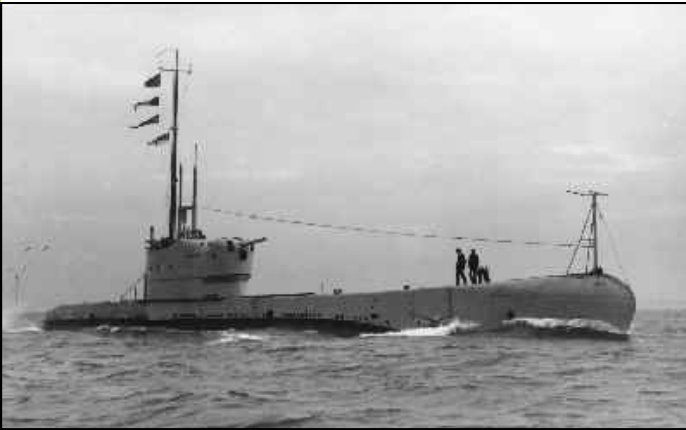
Variations of Sherman tanks were also used, including one that was designed to be launched from deep water and effectively "swim" in with the first assaults, after which a large waterproof screen would come down, allowing the tank to fight as normal. Another variant was a flail for mine clearance, which proved to be a vital asset.

The funnies saved many lives during attacks on British and Canadian occupied beaches. General Eisenhower even said it was "doubtful if the assault forces could have firmly established themselves without the assistance of these weapons." Many of the technologies Hobart developed are still in use today in modern specialist armoured vehicles, and many of the funnies served the British troops well into the 1950s and '60s.

3. The Narrow Escape from HMS Perseus

HMS Perseus, a Royal Navy submarine, left Malta for Alexandria, Egypt on October 26, 1941. On board was 31-year-old John Capes, a stoker fleeing the besieged island. During the

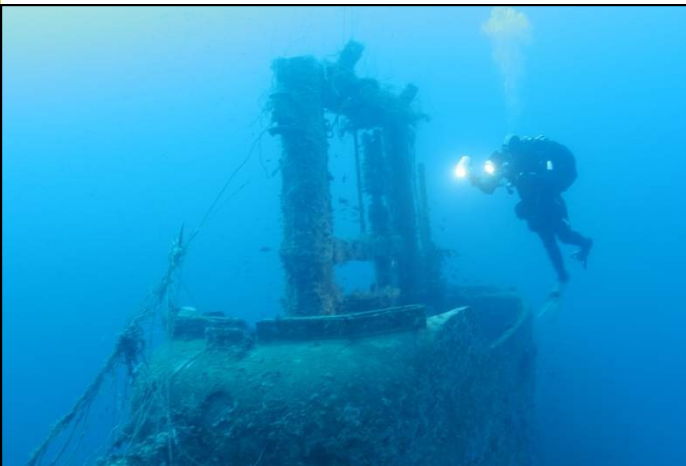
night of December 6, the submarine hit an Italian mine off the coast of the Greek island of Kefalonia, instantly killing most of its passengers. Luckily, Capes was drinking rum and reading letters in a converted torpedo rack at the time, which didn't start flooding until Perseus smashed into the ocean floor.



When he realized what was happening, he went searching for survivors and found three other stokers, all of whom were badly injured. Surrounded by rising water and bodies, they headed to the escape hatch, and after finishing off the rum and donning escape apparatus, they made their perilous escape into the sea.

When Capes surfaced, he saw that the three other submariners hadn't made it. Despite the pain in his lungs from the escape, he swam toward the Greek island of Cephalonia. After dragging himself ashore, he fell unconscious and was found by two fishermen.

For the next 18 months, he was given shelter and cared for by the locals, who hid him from the occupying Axis forces. He was then smuggled by boat to the then-neutral Turkey and eventu-



ally to Alexandria. Unsurprisingly, not many believed his incredible tale, especially since he wasn't on the crew list for the journey. His story wasn't proven true until the wreck of the Perseus was found in 1997, 15 years after his death.

2. The Saint Nazaire Raid

The German battleship Bismarck had been sunk by the Royal Navy in 1941, but that wasn't the end of its threat—the Bismarck had a sister ship called the Tirpitz. To neutralize the threat, the British planned a raid on the French dry dock of St. Nazaire, the only dock on the Atlantic coast which could hold the Tirpitz. Destroying the docks called for an unorthodox plan—an old US Navy destroyer, HMS Campbeltown, would have to be packed with explosives and rammed into the dock gates. Then, commandos would blow up the other buildings, including the U-boat pens.

HMS Campbeltown was stripped of all nonessential equipment to save room and weight for explosives, and two of her four funnels were removed so she bore a better resemblance to a German frigate. Extra steel was plated on at the front to protect the commandos on board. On March 26, 1942, the flotilla—made up of two destroyers, 16 motor launches, and HMS Campbeltown—set off from Falmouth, Cornwall, reaching the dock on March 28.



Flying the German naval ensign, HMS Campbeltown accelerated to full speed on the river leading to the docks. With the gates in sight, the Royal Navy flag was raised, and seven minutes later, the destroyer hit the gates and the commandos sprang into action.

Unfortunately, the commandos on board the motor launches didn't fare well. Of the 265 who landed, only five made it back to England. The rest were killed or captured after many of the motor launches were damaged or destroyed.

At 10:35 AM on the March 29, HMS Campbeltown exploded, killing 250 Germans on board and destroying the docks, rendering them out of service for six years. Five Victoria crosses were awarded in the aftermath, and even today, it is regarded as the greatest military raid of all time.

NEXT MONTH: The Man Who Won TWO Victoria Crosses



Ferds visiting the Pt Pirie RSL Museum in 2016 along with other RSARA members, Julie Elliott, Carol Perkins, President Rod Beames, **Ferds** and June Laing. Ferds said the Iroquois helicopter brought back lots of memories, not all of them good.



Members visited the Murray Bridge Army Range in 2013 at the invitation of then 10/27 Battalion CO LTCOL Graham Goodwin. Ferds eagerly showed us how well he could fire the Steyr, and proceeded to score 6 points out of 100!!

Rear L-R: Rod Beames, Brian Main, **Russ Durdin (aka Hawk Eye)** Lyndon Gaborit, Peter Salamon, David Hope and Nat Cooke.

Front L-R: Graham Elliott, Keith Eva, Chris Wheeler, Brian Kilford, Ray Burton and David Laing.

Dear Editor

I attended Ferd's funeral (as you would expect) along with over 400 others. One of the largest I've been to for some time. Held at the Heysen Chapel it was a capacity crowd. It included a very good roll up of RSARA members.

He sure left a lasting impression. The highlight (I think) was from Ferd's army mate in Vietnam, Jock, who, with his interpreter (or so he promised... he was such a broad accent Scotsman) told the story of how Ferd ate the Sergeant's pie in Saigon etc ... just how Ferd told it, only funnier and with accent. It was followed by the wake at the Henley RSL which was also well attended.

Today we put him in the ground at Karoonda in the small real estate he recently purchased. He was robbed. It was so sandy it almost caved in as they delivered the coffin but he had the last laugh cos we had to stand in the miserable weather (cold as and wet) for the "abridged version of dust to dust (or in this case...mud to mud).

The funeral director welcomed us all there and on behalf of Ferd, promised to investigate all "the useless bastards responsible for digging the grave etc" Finished up in the Karoonda pub but I was driving so stayed sober. Most didn't.

I'm glad its over. He's gone to a better battalion.

Rod Beames

From the Editor

I consider myself unfortunate, in only having known "Ferds" for about 5 years. He joined the RSAR Association on the urging of mate Rod Beames back then, and was a regular supporter of our many lunches, breakfasts and sausage sizzles. 10/27 Bn ran a Cabaret at the Unley Town Hall, and Rod enlisted Ferds to work behind the Bar. I had severe reservations about that move, but it worked out well in the end, and what drinks we didn't sell, Ferds gave away!

He joined us at the Army Range to have a shoot of the F88 Steyr, and after the Army instructor had finished his spiel about safety end the like, Ferds was heard to mutter "Useless bastard!" That was the first time I'd heard it, but it wasn't to be the last.

I guess we all have people who drift in and out of our lives, some of them make an impression when they entre, some when they leave! Ferds made a GREAT impression on everyone he met, and for that, he will be remembered.

David Laing - Editor

Dear Rod,

Ferds was a great mate –not just to us 4, but to many others as well.

He will be sadly missed.

Ian Waters & Anne Reid

XX

Afternoon David,

My thanks for the information on Russell's passing, he was one of my section commanders when I took 43 Company to Camp in the 70's and we usually caught up for a drink on Anzac Day, A Good Hand as they say.

Regards,

Don Hawking Major (Retd)



At the February 2012 43 RSAR Reunion, I had the pleasure of signing up both Ferds and current Treasurer David Hope into the RSAR Association.



Ferds showing how well he could land most of his hits on someone else's target!

A psychiatrist was conducting a group therapy session with four young mothers and their small children. "You all have obsessions," he observed. To the first mother, Mary, he said, "You are obsessed with eating. You've even named your daughter Candy."

He turned to the second Mom, Ann: "Your obsession is with money. Again, it manifests itself in your child's name, Penny."

He turned to the third Mom, Joyce. "Your obsession is alcohol. This too shows itself in your child's name, Brandy."

At this point, the fourth mother, Kathy, quietly got up, took her little boy by the hand, and whispered,

"Come on, Dick, this guy has no idea what he's talking about.

Let's pick up Peter and Willy from school and go get supper."



CPL Daves' Page



I talked to a homeless man in the park recently and asked him how he ended up that way.

He said, "Up until last week, I had it all. I had plenty to eat, my clothes were washed and pressed, I had a roof over my head, I had HD TV and internet, and I went to the gym and pool every 2nd day, and the library every other day. I was working on my Masters Degree online. I had no bills and no debts. I even had full medical and dental coverage.

I felt sorry for him, so I asked, "What happened, mate? Drugs? Alcohol? Divorce?"

"Oh no! Nothing like that," he said.

"I got paroled!"

The Royal Australian Navy is now assigning female sailors to separate "Off Limits" accommodation on all RAN bases.

Addressing all ships personnel in Garden Island Naval Base, the Admiral stated "Female Sleeping Quarters will be strictly Out Of Bounds for all male sailors. Anyone caught breaking this rule will be fined \$50 for a 1st offence.

He went on "Any male sailor caught breaking this rule a 2nd time, will be fined \$100!"

He continued "And any male sailor caught breaking this rule a 3rd time will be fined \$500! Are there any questions?"

A soldier assigned to carry out Guard Duty at Garden Island piped up "How much for a SEASON PASS, Sir?"

Don't you just love the Army?

CONTACT US!-

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We're on the Web

www.rsara.asn.au



**Find us on
Facebook**

line. We have one proviso though, they can't charge for their services, as it's not our place to pay someone when our financial support should be going to the members and the Regiment.

The next luncheon is on Sunday 29th October, at midday at the Hackney, so if you have any ideas, please let me know with plenty of notice before that time.

Cheers.

Editor davidlaing49@bigpond.com

Book it and they will come! Maybe NOT!

The RSAR Association conducts luncheons 3 to 4 times a year at the Hackney Hotel, and to date they have been a success with everyone who attends. Our numbers, however, are falling, to the point where our last gathering attracted only 9 members and their wives, plus some unaccompanied members.

The staff at the Hackney Hotel put on a great venue, outstanding service and very affordable meals, and we have provided some very interesting guest speakers, so the committee are at odds to find out where we're going wrong!

If we don't have guest speakers, will more members attend?

If we provide guest speakers, why haven't you come before?

We usually have the same members meeting at the luncheons for a bit of camaraderie and a drink or two, but we want to know from you, what we can do to get your attention, and your attendance.

If you have any ideas about an interesting guest speaker, please drop me a

Secretaries Report for 2017



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 Apostolides, Chris
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 Baldwin, Bob
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 Barnaart, Philip
 Bates, Allan
 Beames, Rod **CoM**
 Beckett, David **LM SM**
 Bennet, Graham
 Benveniste, Sam **SM**
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 Blake, Sam **SM**
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 Boscence, Bob
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 Broadbent, Robert **SM**
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 Brown, Harry
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 Buttars, Erik
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 Chittleborough, Jeff
 Clyne, Lachlan **SM**
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 Cram, Kevin
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 Davey, John (Jack)
 Davey, Trevor
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 Demosani, Tony
 Dew, Trevor
 Domanski, Glenn
 Dubsky, Eddie
 Dunn, Peter
 Dunn, Bob
 Dunn, Jeff
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 Elliott, Graham
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 Eva, Keith
 Ewens, Mimi **SM**
 Ferguson, Shane **BAND**
 Field, Don
 Flanagan, Ted

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 Moore, Terry **LM**

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 Ockenden, Marc
 Oswald, John
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 Portakiewicz, D **BAND CoM**
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 Ranger, Denis
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 Rathmann, Norm **CoM**
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 Ramm, Hank
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 #Warren, Chad **SM**
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 Weightman, Aidan **SM**
 Westover, Rhys
 Wheeler, Chris
 Williams, Darrian **SM**
 Wilson, Graham **LM**

Wilson, Neil
 Wood, George
 Woore, Phillip
 Yorke-Simpkin Reg **LM**
 Zurowski, Paul **SM**

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 Ayles, Denise
 Beames, Cheryl
 Carnachan, Dom
 Dart, Caroline
 Demosani, Gail
 Elliott, Julie
 Eva, Gail
 Field, Shirley
 Gatley, Graeme
 Gill, Maureen
 Gilmour, Helen
 Hawking, Lorraine
 Hook, Phillipa
 Hudson, Margaret
 Jolly, Sandra
 Klopff, Josie
 Laing, June
 Lampard, Kay
 Main, Raelene
 Marcus, Yvonne
 Lee, Anne
 Mitchell, Roma
 Parkin, Audrey
 Phillips, Heather
 Sanderson, Lorraine
 Tregenza, Lyn
 Winger, Kathleen

HONORARY MEMBERS

T. Burnard CO 10/27 RSAR
 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**

Our newest member is
Chad Warren, a Serving
 Member of 10/27 Bn
 RSAR.

Chad joins many other
 Serving members from
 the battalion to join us,
 and becomes our
 227th member.

Welcome Chad