

September 2019



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**Special Points of
Interest**

- Read how 1 RSL commemorated Vietnam Veterans Day
- SGT Mark Blondell's report on Talisman Sabre 2019
- The Lady Plumber of Warsaw. An amazing story.

"Sitrep, Over!"

To Perpetuate the Regiment

November 11th. What does it mean?

Every year the majority of this great nation comes to a stand still at 11 o'clock on the 11th November. In 1918 on that day the guns on the Western Front fell silent after more than four years of continuous warfare. The allied armies had driven the German invaders back, having inflicted heavy defeats upon them over the preceding four months. In November the Germans called for an armistice (suspension of fighting) in order to secure a peace settlement. They accepted allied terms that amounted to unconditional surrender.

The 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month attained a special significance in the post-war years. The moment when hostilities ceased on the Western Front became universally associated with the remembrance of those who had died in the war. This first modern world conflict had brought about the mobilisation of over 70 million people and left between 9 and 13 million dead, perhaps as many as one-third of them with no known grave. The allied nations chose this day and time for the commemoration of their war dead.

On the first anniversary of the armistice in 1919 two minutes' silence was instituted as part of the main commemorative ceremony at the new Cenotaph in London. The silence was proposed by Australian journalist Edward Honey, who was working in Fleet Street. At about the same time, a South African statesman made a similar proposal to the British Cabinet, which endorsed it. King George V personally requested all the people of the British Empire to suspend normal activities for two minutes on the hour of the armistice "which stayed the world-wide carnage of the four preceding years and marked the victory of Right and Freedom". The two minutes' silence was popularly adopted and it became a central feature of commemorations on Armistice Day.

This year I shall commemorate those who fought and those who died, at a special service to be conducted at the Murray Bridge RSL. The service is usually conducted at the Murray Bridge Soldiers Memorial Hospital, but due to a multi million dollar redevelopment, the RSL has then honour of being the venue.

LEST WE FORGET.

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Vietnam Veterans Day @ the Murray Bridge RSL

The 18th August each year reminds us of the horror and heroics of the Battle of Long Tan, fought in SVN on this day in 1966, by members of D Coy, 6 RAR in a rubber plantation against an estimated 2,000 Viet Cong and North Vietnamese soldiers. At the end of the 4 hour battle, 17 Australian soldiers lay dead, with another to die from his wounds soon after. Over 250 enemy dead lay where they fell, with many more dead and wounded having been dragged away from the battlefield during the night.

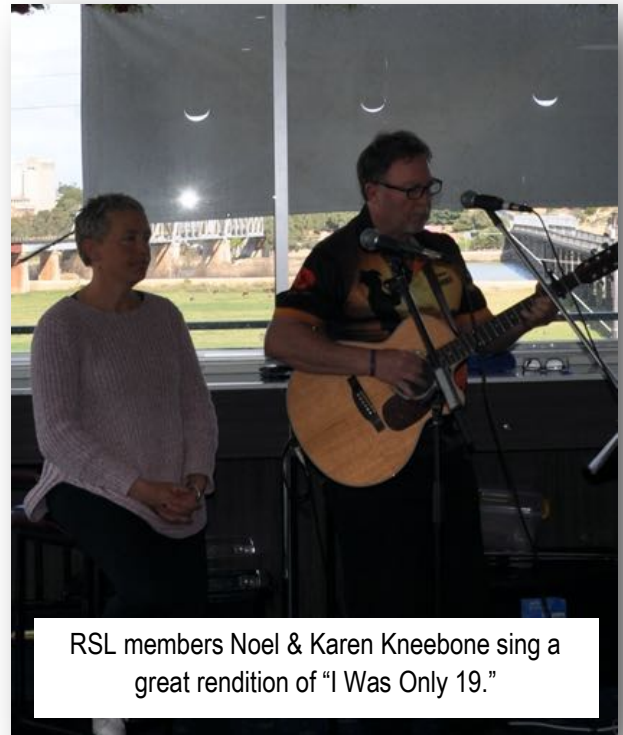
The 18th August has now been set down in our calendars as Vietnam Veterans Day, and is used to commemorate all those who fought and especially those who died during that war.

Services were held throughout Australia at various RSLs and community locations, and below are some photos of the service held at the Murray Bridge RSL and conducted by yours truly.

LEST WE FORGET.



MC David Laing conducting the service



RSL members Noel & Karen Kneebone sing a great rendition of "I Was Only 19."



Veterans enjoy a chat and a coffee before the commemorative service at the Murray Bridge RSL

Vietnam Veterans Day @ the Murray Bridge RSL



LEFT:

RSL Bugler, Ben Wohlfeil played The Last Post and Reveille on a bugle that was found alongside the body of an enemy soldier after the Battle of Long Tan. The last time it was played was to rally Viet Cong and NVA soldiers to fight and charge.

BELOW: 24 members of various chapters of the Veterans Motorcycle Club travelled to Murray Bridge to pay their respects at the service, amongst them many Iraq, East Timor and Afghanistan veterans. They all enjoyed a sumptuous lunch provided by the Murray Bridge RSL after the service.





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AND WE'LL MAKE YOU FAMOUS.

COME ON BLONDIE, MAKE IT HAPPEN!

Why don't they come?

It amazes me that so many people are now flocking to ANZAC Day Dawn Services around the country than ever before. More and more young people are braving the cold to listen to stories about the horrors of Gallipoli and Tobruk, and this heartens me immensely.

The same can't be said about Vietnam Veterans Day, which commemorates all those who served and those who died during that conflict.

The Murray Bridge RSL advertised their service on local radio, plus gave an interview, and saturated the local paper and Facebook pages with details of the service, and yet 70 plus people attended, of who about 60 were veterans. There were a couple of RSL Affiliate members, 5 children who came with their grand dads, and nobody else from the community.

The Mayor of Murray Bridge Brenton Lewis, the State Member for Hammond Adrian Pederick MP and the Federal Member for Barker Tony Pasin MP all responded to invitations, and all spoke of the effect that war had on the community, and yet the community was not very well represented.

Do people know it's Vietnam Veterans Day on August 18th each year? Is that date taught in our schools? Is that date disseminated to our serving Army Reserve units? Did any of these conduct their own services? I'd be very interested to know.

RSL's all over the country go out of their way to remember the fallen of that South East Asian War, and I even had a phone call from an RSL President of the Kangaroo Island RSL sub branch, asking for hints to conduct their service, and although they only expected about 30 or 40 people, at least they gave it a go!

The Korean War is largely known as "The Forgotten War," because it came so close after the Second World War, but regardless, 340 Australian soldiers were killed, as well as 40,000 US soldiers and airmen. That figure is enough reason to remember Korea, but the majority of our population wouldn't know that we commemorate that war the day before ANZAC Day, 24th April each year.

The Korean War may be called the "Forgotten War," but PLEASE don't let the Vietnam War go the same way.

LEST WE FORGET

David Laing Editor

Vietnam Veterans Day @ Murray Bridge RSL



Past Murray Bridge RSL President Mr Bob Channon, a WW2 veteran , talks with Mr Alan Massingham, a former member of the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam, who did 2 tours of Vietnam as an advisor.



Vietnam Veteran Rod Harris lays a wreath on the Long Tan replica cross to commemorate the 17 Infantry and 1 Armoured Corps soldiers who died during the Battle of Long Tan

Talisman Sabre 2019

by Sgt Mark Blondell

Talisman Sabre 19 is designed to practise our respective military services and associated agencies in planning and conducting Combined and Joint Task Force operations, and improve the combat readiness and interoperability between Australian and US forces.

Occurring every two years, Talisman Sabre is a major exercise reflecting the closeness of our alliance and strength of the enduring military relationship.

TS19 was the eighth iteration of the exercise and consisted of a Field Training Exercise incorporating force preparation (logistic) activities, amphibious landings, land force manoeuvre, urban operations, air operations, maritime operations and Special Forces activities.

The 10/27 Bn Battle Group took part in this exercise, and RSARA member Sergeant Mark Blondell has provided his memories below.

13 July 2019 started at 0600h with WO2 Boag calling the first of many roll calls. By 0700h the coaches had arrived at Keswick Barracks and when loaded with packs and soldiers they headed to Adelaide Airport. Service Air was laid on and a smooth transition through security was then halted by a 2 hour wait to board the plane.

A few hours later the Battalion was at Rockhampton Airport waiting for more buses to take us to the camp and join approximately 39,000 troops already in Shoalwater Bay for Talisman Sabre 19.

Day One began straight away with safety briefs and the issue of weapons and equipment. With body armour, helmets and new weapon systems, this gave each soldier about 18kgs extra to carry. By 1900h our members, now under the call sign JULIET 31 were a part of Battlegroup JACKA and were ready to deploy. All that was needed was the final set of orders for the day.

Day Two arrived and we linked up with the Uniform C/S - Victorian manned Bushmaster PMVs from 4/19 Prince of Wales Light Horse. After another few hour's delay we finally moved to the Exercise area. Our first task was to Secure an area to enable other Battlegroups to deploy, the final one being Battle Group BOAR (7RAR). Security was set, shell scrapes were dug and a daily routine begun. During the first few days, sections moved to different Tactical Areas of Responsibility (TAOR) with tasks ranging from Blocking a Tactical Crossing Point (TCP) to providing Security for CHQ.



C/S J33 Blocking TCP2

C/S J31A were located 50m from an American Anti-Aircraft Radar Team. A liaison between the two forces brought about conversation from Australian forces and fresh fruit from the US.

One night caused some concern when a shot rang out from the US. Had the enemy broken through our lines and were starting to probe? ...No. A kangaroo had bounced towards a US Marine who thought it was a Dingo attacking so he fired towards it.

Later that same night a safety move was called due to some APCs driving through our positions. Our PL Sig had some trouble removing his light weight antenna and was hit in the eye with a lead sink weight. A NO DUFF casualty was called. The PL reacted with professionalism and speed, the Sig was treated and removed from the Ex, returning with a black eye two days later.

Talisman Sabre 2019

by Sgt Mark Blondell

The main battle continued to move with Battlegroup JACKA securing the rear. We did however have a four man recce team led by CPL Findlay who were at one point 10km forward of the front line clearing features.

During the final days J31 were tasked with supporting BG BOAR and 1st Armoured Regiment.

This was going to involve another move at dark o'clock. The afternoon before the move a shout came down the hill that enemy APCs were approaching and to move all the 66mm (M 72 LAW to you old mates) up to the road. With two pairs of 66s ready to go we then heard what did not sound like an APC. Around the bend came a column of M1 Abrams Main Battle tanks. Luckily the vehicles turned out to be friendly,

The next task was to secure LZ Honeyeater to enable Blackhawk helicopters to land and extract casualties from the battle. Once this was complete J31 returned to the BG to then secure two buildings in the Urban Area Training Facility (UATOF) where some war crimes (Exercise only) had allegedly been committed.



LZ Honeyeater



During our last night on the Ex the silence was broken around 03:30 with an enemy attack in the UATOF. Charlie Coy, BG BOAR, had sustained large casualties and J33 (Anti-Armour Section) led by SGT Majewski was tasked to reinforce them by setting a VCP to the west of the town.

The Battle was over and the Ex was now coming to an end and all that was needed was the return of stores and a well-deserved shower.

We moved back to Rockhampton and attended to more roll calls. Timings were given for the buses, and it was no surprise we were moving at 0200h. Finally on date at 0430h all seats had been allocated (some people lucky enough to get business class seats) and the Qantas jet took off and headed back to Adelaide. On landing the troops were then sent to the cargo area to collect bags. This movement confused us all but at least we were close to home. Then it was back to Keswick and home to family.

In closing I would like to say that even though we were not in the thick of the fight and some of our tasks seemed menial, members of 10/27 RSAR worked hard and showed both Reserve and Full-Time units that we have what it takes and are professional at what we do.

Pro Patria

SGT Mark Blondell

PL SGT

J31

BATTLE GROUP JACKA

Editors note: Sgt Mark Blondell is a member of the RSAR Association Committee of Management, and has written 2 previous articles for "Sitrep, Over!" We welcome any article which outlines the way our current battalion carries out their operations, particularly if photos are included. Please be aware that all items for publication must first go through your Platoon Commander for verification by Army PR Section.

The Lady Plumber from the Warsaw Ghetto



Irena Sender
Died: May 12, 2008 (aged 98)
Warsaw , Poland



During WWII, Irena, got permission to work in the Warsaw ghetto, as a Plumbing/Sewer specialist. She had an ulterior motive. Irena smuggled Jewish infants out in the bottom of the tool box she carried.

She also carried a burlap sack in the back of her truck, for larger kids. Irena kept a dog in the back that she trained to bark when the Nazi soldiers let her in and out of the ghetto.

The soldiers, of course, wanted nothing to do with the dog, and the barking covered the kids/infants noises.

During her time of doing this, she managed to smuggle out and save 2500 kids/infants.

Ultimately, she was caught, however, and the Nazis broke both of her legs and arms and beat her severely.

Irena kept a record of the names of all the kids she had smuggled out in a glass jar that she buried under a tree in her back yard.

After the war, she tried to locate any parents that may have survived and tried to reunite the family.

Most had been gassed. Those kids she helped got placed into foster family homes or adopted.

In 2007 Irena was up for the Nobel Peace Prize .

She was not selected.

Al Gore won, for a slide show on Global Warming.

Later another politician, Barack Obama, won for SIMPLY BEING THE FIRST BLACK PRESIDENT .

It is now more than 72 years since the Second World War in Europe ended.

This article is being posted as a memorial chain, In memory of the six million Jews, 20 million Russian 10 million Christians and 1,900 Catholic priests who were murdered.

Now, more than ever, with Iran, and others, claiming the HOLOCAUST to be 'a myth', it's imperative to make sure the world never forgets, because there are others who would like to do it again.

Please send this article to people you know and ask them to continue the memorial chain.

CPL DAVE'S PAGE

Technically, Moses



was the first person
with a tablet
downloading data
from the cloud



BEING CREMATED
IS MY LAST HOPE
FOR A SMOKING
HOT BODY

The doctor asked me to
spend at least one hour
per day on the treadmill.



I ordered a chicken and an
egg from Amazon. I'll let you
know.

Not to brag, but I just
went into another
room and actually
remembered why I
went in there.

It was the
bathroom, but still....

Thanks to member Max Hill for these charmers!

Behind the Anzac myth of John Simpson Kirkpatrick and his donkey at Gallipoli

It's a bracing September morning in the northern English seaside town of South Shields where the mighty River Tyne meets the forbidding North Sea.

There are no donkeys on South Beach today, but donkey rides were once a feature here. A century ago, Jack Kirkpatrick supplemented his family's meagre income by leading donkeys, laden with giggling children, along the wide sands.

Jack always loved animals. When he left Australia for war in 1914, he carried a baby possum he had adopted in his shirt, showing it to fellow Anzacs when they arrived in Egypt.

Twice a year – on Remembrance Day and on Anzac Day – the people of South Shields gather in Ocean Road outside a grand-looking pub, The Kirkpatrick, renamed in honour of one of the town's favourite sons, to lay wreaths in front of a sculptor of Jack.



In Australia we know Jack Kirkpatrick better by the pseudonym he adopted when he signed up in Fremantle to fight in the Great War: John Simpson – using his mother's maiden name for fear his real surname might flag he had deserted the merchant navy.

John Simpson was also the name he died under – 100 years ago, on May 19, 1915, aged just 22.

He had never fired a single shot in war, had never been ordered to leave the Gallipoli trenches in one of senseless attacks across No Man's Land, had never killed a single enemy soldier.

Yet "Simpson And His Donkey" have become the epitome of the Anzac spirit. Nine Australians won the Victoria Cross during the Gallipoli campaign. Yet Simpson Kirkpatrick – who was never nominated for any kind of military award – is more famous than all of them put together.

Was there ever more unlikely heroic material? He was a deserter, twice over; someone who, after a night on the turps, loved a bar room brawl. If he volunteered early – on August 23, 1914, just 19 days after Britain and Australia entered the Great War – it was because he saw it as a cheap way of getting back "home" to South Shields.

Like every other Anzac who set off on that first troop armada from Albany, he expected to arrive in Britain for further training before being sent to the Western Front. Instead, the Anzacs gathered in Egypt before being dispatched to the new front at Gallipoli. He'd have known little about Turkey, still less about the peninsula where his legend would be carved.

As for being an Australian war hero, he never saw himself as anything other than an Englishman.

So who was the real John Simpson Kirkpatrick, as he became known, only in death?

Legend

Historians have long argued over how much of the Simpson legend was accurate.

Award-winning journalist Les Carlyon devotes just six pages to the donkey handler who died at Shrapnel Valley in his magisterial 600-page history, *Gallipoli*.

"No-one had feted him when he was alive," Carlyon writes. "He was gritty, but hundreds of men had surprised themselves at Anzac. This man was another battler, cheery and a bit of a character, but still a nobody. He never expected much from life, least of all fame. Life had mostly just pushed him around."

That morning, Carlyon reports, Simpson Kirkpatrick planned to have breakfast as usual on the way up the valley to collect injured soldiers with leg wounds. Breakfast wasn't ready. According to Carlyon, Simpson's last recorded words were: "Never mind. Get me a good dinner when I get back."

As Carlyon points out "we don't know for sure what killed him, except that he was hit in the heart. And now it began, a process that defies easy explanation. Simpson was beatified, then canonised. In death, he found a grace he never enjoyed in life."

Historian Peter Cochrane – whose forensic analysis, *Simpson and the Donkey: The Making of a Legend*, took the religious symbolism of "The Man With The Donkey" story further, pointing out its echoes of a story of a more famous martyr whose heavily pregnant mother was carried to a stable in Bethlehem on a donkey.

He was Everyman, Cochrane implies: "Militarists and pacifists, imperial patriots and socialists alike could appreciate his deeds, agreeing he was a selfless hero. Both Christians and secular humanists could see their reflection in his image."

Simpson Kirkpatrick was never on the front line, as stretcher bearers were meant to be, carrying the most seriously wounded soldiers from where they had fallen to the beach. Only the less seriously injured – people with eye, arm or leg wounds – could make the journey, sitting upright, on a donkey.

So why did he never carry a stretcher on the peninsula?

According to some reports, both men either side of him were killed. Without a partner to carry the other end of the stretcher, he carried the injured on his back that first day.

The official version has him finding his donkey on April 26, the second day of the campaign. Where that donkey came from has been the subject of ridiculous speculation – including that he smuggled it ashore in the landing boat. The most likely explanation is that it belonged to a local farmer and he just took it.

According to legend, Simpson Kirkpatrick and his donkey saved the lives of 300 men at Gallipoli. Yet he was only there for 24 days, an average of 12 rescues a day. Is that likely?

Some critics believe Simpson Kirkpatrick was a charlatan: that his donkey ruse was to escape being in the front line, where stretcher bearers were killed every day. Yet he too was killed by an enemy bullet while the donkey he was leading carried a Red Cross brassard signalling both man and animal were unarmed and non combatants.

Naming

"Jack" was the name his family called him. But Anzacs who wrote letters home referred to Simpson Kirkpatrick by a bewildering range of names: "Scotty", "Simmy", "Duffy", "Abdul" or "Murphy".

Why? It seems the Anzacs, with far more pressing things to worry about than historical accuracy, apparently confused the man with his donkeys.

There were at least two donkeys, possibly more. He appears to have named the first Duffy, and the last (the one with him when he died) Murphy. In between, there are mentions of other donkeys: Duffy II, Queen Elizabeth, Jenny and Little Jenny. Each time one was killed, Simpson Kirkpatrick apparently found a replacement.

So what do we know of Simpson Kirkpatrick before he became one of the original Anzacs?

Battler

Jack Kirkpatrick was born on July 6, 1892, one of eight children. His was a tough upbringing. His father, Robert, had been badly injured at sea in 1904 and was bedridden until he died in 1909.

Only his Scots-born mother, Sarah Simpson, kept the family intact. Mother and son look incredibly alike in their photos: plain,

square-faced, salt of the earth battlers.

At 11, Jack left school. Unlike others of his generation, Jack was literate. His letters home from Australia were strongly worded, well-argued critiques in an easily legible hand.

Sarah was determined Jack wouldn't go down the pit. She wanted him to take an engineering apprenticeship, but none were available. Instead, the future war hero became a milkman, delivering bottles from a horse and cart.

Whatever Jack's love of his family and his home town South Shields, he left Britain just two days after his father's funeral. He didn't even have time to say goodbye to Annie, his closest sister – and, perhaps more than anyone, responsible for preserving his legend.

He joined the merchant navy. His letters home are instantly apologetic.

Jack was just 17 when he arrived on Australian soil, in Newcastle NSW. Clearly conditions aboard the SS Yeddo must have been pretty appalling because he was just one of 14 crew who jumped ship. It was an action that changed his life forever. From now on, Jack was a deserter.

Opportunity

The four years Simpson Kirkpatrick spent in Australia were the making of him. He travelled the country, far more than most Australians of his generation would have done, opportunistically exploring the newly-declared nation as work opportunities offered themselves.

At one point he wrote home from Queensland to his mother and Annie to tell them he'd become a swag-man.

Robyn van Dyke – who curated last year's Australian War Memorial's exhibition of the letters Simpson Kirkpatrick sent home to his mother and favourite sister – says those letters would be of immense interest to historians even if he hadn't become a heroic celebrity.

Read them and you'll find a bitter young man. If Simpson Kirkpatrick was ever a hero, he was most positively a working class hero.

At times he is harsh on Australia, like the letter imploring his mother to open a boarding house in Sydney or Melbourne because no-one in Australia could cook "good grub". The letter complaining about the conditions in Coledale, NSW, when "a gang of us were sacked for slackness". Or lamenting that he was unemployed for three weeks after that, before he got a job down the pit at South Bulli.

And there were so many other hard occupations. Cane cutting in Queensland. Gold mining in Western Australia.

No wonder "joining up" for a war that was supposed to be "over by Christmas" might have seemed a doddle.

Yet Simpson Kirkpatrick was overwhelmingly appreciative about Australia. Easily the most astute and complimentary letter he sent home was the one which described his native land as "a louse bound country".

"It's not like Australia," he wrote. "We have not any House of Lords where a lot of empty headed fools have the right to throw out any Bill, no matter how much benefit it would do to the working class."

For all his bravado, Simpson Kirkpatrick was a dutiful son. Virtually every letter contains a postal order. Most weeks, that was a third of the wages he earned.



The grave of John Simpson Kirkpatrick at Anzac Cove: "Australians have adopted Kirkpatrick as part of the mythology of Gallipoli," says Councillor Ed Malcolm

On Christmas Day, 1914, Simpson Kirkpatrick wrote one of his final letters home to his mother and sister. Van Dyke points out he clearly felt cheated to be in Egypt with the Anzacs rather than home in Blighty.

"It is Christmas day today. I was looking forward to spending today in Shields but I was doomed to be disappointed. I would not have joined this contingent if I had known they were not going to England.

"I would have taken the trip home and had a holiday at home then joined the [British] army and went to the front."

At Gallipoli, the legend has Simpson Kirkpatrick being constantly cheerful and stoic. But in Egypt, the letters reveal him to be, well, a whinging Pom.

On December 20, he told his mother "we [are] camped about 10 miles out of Cairo at the entrance of the desert. You can see nothing but sand, sand, sand. We have got two pyramids about 300 yards from our tents. It is a terrible long climb to the top."

The "grub", he wrote, "is very bad ... you would think that they were feeding a lot of sparrows instead of hungry men."

If he wrote any letters from Gallipoli, they weren't received. Presumably he was too busy.

Ten days before the Gallipoli invasion, Simpson Kirkpatrick and the other stretcher bearers members of the 3 Field Ambulance were transferred to the troopship *Devanha*.

Remembrance

One hundred years later, South Shields, is preparing for a huge day on May 19, the centenary of Simpson Kirkpatrick's death. Yet, as a local points out, Simpson was just one of 2000 men from South Shields who died in WWI including many who were killed at Gallipoli: "Australians seem to believe only Anzacs served at Gallipoli."

A delegation from the Australian High Commission will join the town's civic leaders for a service of remembrance at his statue. One of those civic leaders, Councillor Ed Malcolm told Fairfax Media: "People in South Shields have always known the history of The Man with the Donkey."

"As a boy, I went to the museum in South Shields and read the story about him, and it fascinated me. But in Australia, he is much more revered than probably in his home town.

"Australians have adopted Kirkpatrick as part of the mythology of Gallipoli."



Mural of Simpson and his donkey at the Dapto Ribbonwood Centre: "In death, he found a grace he never enjoyed in life," says journalist Les Carlyon.