

Important September Dates The Battle of Nui Le - South Vietnam

The **Battle of Núi Lé** (21 September 1971) was the last major battle fought by Australian and New Zealand forces in South Vietnam. The battle was fought in the former Phước Tuy Province between elements of the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) 33rd Regiment and 4RAR/NZ (ANZAC) Battalion during *Operation Ivanhoe*. Núi Lé, a small hill within Quang Thanh commune in Chau Duc District, is today in Ba Ria-Vung Tau Province.



The decision for the Australian withdrawal from Vietnam, was made by the Australian Government and commenced in November 1970 and forces combat were to be reduced gradually

during 1971. Intelligence pointed towards a major build up of Vietcong (VC) and People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) forces in the north of Phước Tuy Province and abductions and assassinations had increased in the adjacent Long Khanh Province. The VC/PAVN were preparing for the withdrawal of the 1st Australian Task Force from Phước Tuy Province, which was gradually being withdrawn from August 1971, and were hoping to defeat the Australians and reclaim the Province. In June 1971 Australians had fought the 33rd Regiment and D445 Battalion in the Battle of Long Khanh during *Operation Overlord* and the New Zealanders from 4 RAR/NZ had fought D445 Battalion immediately after in *Operation Hermit Park*. The well-trained, well-armed forces of the 33rd Regiment would pose the greatest threat to 1 ATF during their withdrawal.

Things I've learned!

Todays 4 year olds can switch on laptops and open their favourite apps. When I was 4, I ate mud.

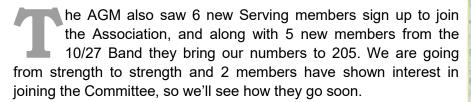
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EDITORIAL

fter the success of our 2024 Annual General Meeting last month come two timely reminders. 1. If you have paid your yearly fees, thank you. If you haven't, you are now due. Ordinary Members can forward their \$30 via EFT to the account at the right. Serving members can forward their \$10 to the same account. 2. The 2nd reminder is for our End Of Year Luncheon. The details are Page 10.

entioned in last months newsletter we have a new Merchandise Officer in Corporal Selina Laing, who joined the committee at the AGM. All Merchandise can be ordered by contacting Selina on the means provided in the right hand column. Selina also specialises in Court Mounting of medals and additions to medal racks. Discounts for Emergency Services and ADF.



wrote last year (or the year before) about the British soldiers who joined the Nazi war effort during WW11 in a misguided effort to end their war with Germany and to fight the Russians. They were members of the British Free Corps, but they weren't the only Allied soldiers to join this elite group. From the Virtual War Memorial—Australia comes the story of some Australians who also strayed. You can read about them on Pages 11 to 13.

he 2024 AGM Minutes and Reports are now on our website and can be viewed by going to www.rsara.asn.au/notice-board For those of you unlucky not to attend the AGM, you can read all about how we manage the Association, and where your money goes.

lease don't forget the 10/27 Battalion Band Concert on September 15th at St Peters Girls School Stonyfell. The details are on the poster attached to this newsletter. Hopefully see you there.

ur Padre has once again excelled in his monthly contribution to our newsletter, and this month he deals with a subject close to my heart, mental and physical health amongst our former and serving soldiers. Page 9 is a must to read.

That's it from me. Stay safe and we'll talk soon!

David Laing

0407 791 822



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Visit us on the web at

www.rsara.asn.au

All Merchandise Orders to: Selina Laing on 0418 822 874 or <u>lebanonsel@live.com</u>

Fees and Merchandise can be paid by EFT through the following Bendigo Bank account

RSAR Association Inc

BSB 633 000

Acc. 1616 585 88

Cheques etc can be mailed to

The Treasurer

Christian Bennett RSAR Association PO Box 1133

Kensington Gardens

SA 5068

christianbennett95@gmail.com

More pics from the AGM



LEFT: Secretary David Laing reads his Annual Report, with President Rodney Beames to his right and CO LTCOL Aaron Jackson to his left.

BELOW: Band Master WO1 David Portakiewicz presents his Annual Report.





LEFT: Brigadier Peter Moore (Chair Regimental Council), MAJGEN Neil Wilson (Association Patron) LTCOL Paul Rijken (former CO 10/27 Bn) Lindsay & Kate Gibson, David Hope, Ray Burton, CJ and COL Trent Burnard (former CO 10/27 Bn)

More pics from the AGM



LEFT: David Thomas (from Casino NSW) Tony Demosani, Des & Lynn Hawkins, Julie & Graham Elliott and Mick Hudson

BELOW: June Laing, CPL Selina Laing and WO2 Mark Blondell

BELOW: RSARA Past President Alan Hook conducts the Election of Office Bearers





More pics from the AGM



LEFT: Margaret & Barry Johnson, Alan Hook, Howard Parslow, Hank Ramm, Lyndon Gaborit, Philippa Hook, Heather Phillips and Shirley Field.

BELOW: The Boys from the Battalion, including SGT Michael Abraham, WO2 Mark Blondell, CO LTCOL Aaron Jackson and RSM WO1 Scott Hannan



Digger Wombats Humour



So, you drive across town to a gym to walk on a treadmill?



AFTER 50,000 CALLONS OF WHISKY LEAKED INTO THE SEA, NO TERN WAS LEFT UNSTONED

YOU DRINK
REGULARLY OR
OCCASIONALLY?

I DRINK OCCASIONALLY, BUT THE OCCASION COMES REGULARLY.







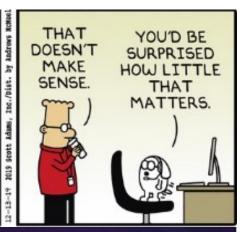
WE HAVE
AN EGG
SHORTAGE AT
THE MOMENT,
BECAUSE ONE
OF OUR HENS IS
IDENTIFYING AS
A ROOSTER!



Last year I joined a support group for procrastinators. We haven't met yet.







FINALLY FIGURED OUT WHY I LOOK SO BAD IN PICTURES.

IT'S MY FACE

THERE IS NO SUCH THING
AS A GROUCHY OLD
PERSON. THE TRUTH IS,
ONCE YOU GET OLD, YOU
STOP BEING POLITE AND
START BEING HONEST.



"Anybody that can do at 65 what he was doin' at 25 wasn't doin much at 25!"

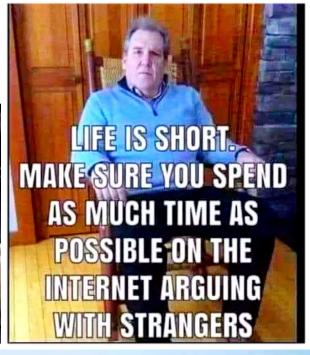
My boss calls me "the computer".

Nothing to do with intelligence, I go to sleep if left unattended for 15 minutes.



Even duct tape can't fix stupid, but it sure does muffle the sound.













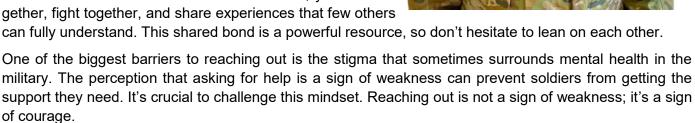
From Padre Stephen Albrecht - Chaplain 10/27 Battalion RSAR

In the Army, no one should fight alone!

Serving in defence is a unique and demanding experience, often marked by intense training, deployments, and the weight of responsibility. In such an environment, it's easy to feel isolated or overwhelmed, even when surrounded by others facing similar challenges. That's why 'reaching out' to fellow soldiers, command, or support services is not just important; it's essential for maintaining mental and emotional well-being.

The army prides itself on mateship and teamwork, which are vital both on and off the battlefield, as mentioned in the August edition of "Sitrep, Over!" However, the pressure to maintain a tough exterior can sometimes discourage soldiers from seeking help when they need it most. Strength is not just about physical endurance or resilience in combat; it's also about knowing when to seek support.

Reaching out can take many forms. It might mean confiding in a trusted friend or a fellow soldier. After all, you train together, fight together, and share experiences that few others



And this is why defence provides a range of support services designed to help soldiers and their families navigate the complexities of military life. These include counselling services, mental health professionals, chaplaincy services, and peer support programs. It's important to be aware of these resources and to use them when they are needed. For in the army, no one should fight alone.

Defence All-hours Support Line - 1800 628 036

Defence Member and Family Helpline - 1800 467 425

Open Arms - 1800 011 046

Chaplain Sexton - 0437 216 095, Chaplain Albrecht - 0410 423 545

Lifeline - 13 11 14

EDITORS NOTE:

I had a short stint in hospital a few months ago, and while it's nice to have some peace and quiet, it's even better to have valued visitors. Padre Albrecht arrived one night after normal visiting hours (he can do that, God says so!) and sat with me for over an hour, just chatting and making me feel so much better than before. Like he says ".,...in the Army no one should fight alone," and even 50 years after leaving the ADF, the mateship and care is still there. Don't lose it....use it!



Letters to the Editor

Dear Rod and David,

It wasn't appropriate for me raise this personally during the formal AGM proceedings, but I would like to thank you both (and in writing) for the sterling work you have done and continue to do. I went to the meeting thinking that you may both tender your resignations due to well-known health issues and that this could well be the last meeting of any substance - because, without you both, the whole enterprise could well flounder and eventually disappear. I was pleasantly surprised with the large turnout (compared to the dismal numbers at the half yearly meeting), and the fact that the higher echelon all appeared.

Since I returned from London, initially for parts of 2013 & 2014, and then permanently in 2017, the reconnection with pals who served in the regiment half a century ago was something unexpected and most welcome. My professional life has been largely in specialised forms of corporate finance where everyone is out for what they can get – the "greed-is-good" mentality. So even though I have a large number of contacts, former colleagues and clients, there are only a few from that life who remain good friends. I've found that since joining the RSARA it doesn't matter what your social status is, whether you're a former CEO or a cleaner, everyone is treated equally. No one expects anything of you, just enjoy good fellowship, and camaraderie. That even applies to whatever our former rank, no one cares whether you were a general or a private. It's rare in any form of society and should be treasured.

Most of the success of the Association is down to the two of you. Certainly, Alan Hook and past committee members are to be appreciated (that was before my time and so can't really comment), but the obvious current success can be laid at your collective doors. I thank you and salute you both, and even though the future is uncertain, your legacy will endure, I'm sure. The presence and active participation of the current CO, RSM and serving troops was a very encouraging sign that the younger generation will ensure it continues.

Best regards and keep up the good work!

Lyndon Gaborít

Dear Dave.

What a joy it has been to read this Sitrep and to see the photo's on FaceBook. Des, June, Blondie, your good self and especially Rod looked great! I was so inspired that I paid my annual dues, so there's no need for me to put anything in the church plate this morning.

I've been laying low in order to give the new Padre space. I hear that he's doing great.

Go gently, keep well.

Paul Ghanem

Padre 3 HSB

G'day David,

Thanks for your hard work organising the venue and catering for the AGM. It was good to see you recovered from your recent health ordeal.

Cheers

Colin Phillips

Australian members of the Waffen SS



Within every conflict, there are topics that we find difficult to discuss. One such topic is that of people turning against their country and taking up arms in aid of the enemy. It is the reality that during the Second World War, a number of allied soldiers, including Australians, became assets of Nazi Germany by joining what was known as the British Free Corps.

During the German occupation of Europe, it became common for the SS, the armed wing of the Nazi Party, to set up units in the occupied countries to invite Aryan locals to join up and help fight against the Russians in the east. These units drew in recruits of many different backgrounds, whether they were anti-communist, anti-Semitic, merely trying to get ahead in a difficult situation. They were especially prominent in Western and Northern European countries such France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Norway. Those set up in "Germanic Countries" were collectively referred to as the "Germanic SS". There was also the "Kaminski Brigade" set up for collaborationist Russians and even Muslim SS units made up of recruits from the Balkans.

The foreign units that the SS set up during the German occupation served a number of priorities, including propaganda as well as the

German need to fill a manpower gap. It was important for the Germans to try and present themselves as working with the locals as willing partners, and these SS units helped display that image. There was also a genuine feeling amongst the SS leadership that the war against the Soviet Union should be presented as a struggle between a Western European civilisation and a dangerous Eastern Communism.

One lesser-known foreign SS unit that was set up along with these other collaborationist units was the British Free Corps. which was designed for those of British or Commonwealth origin. As the United Kingdom remained unoccupied throughout the war, the vast majority of recruitment for this unit was amongst those who had been taken as prisoners of war by the Germans. Amongst prisoners, the Corps was sold as a way to get out of prison as well as assist the Germans in creating a "New Europe".

In a newspaper article written after the war, these recruits were described as "weak types" who were identified by the German guards and often threatened with tougher prison conditions if they did not join.[i]

Members of the British Free Corps were given standard grey SS uniforms but with a badge that contained a Union Jack on its sleeve.

Australian members of the Waffen SS



Fascist with a long history of support for the causes of Mussolini and Spanish dictator Franco in the years before the war. He was also the son of prominent Tory MP and wartime cabinet minister Leo Amery. In 1942, living in Germany as a guest of the Führer, John Amery began to recruit for the British Free Corps from British prisoners of war. After the war, he was tried for treason, pleaded guilty, and was hanged.

John Amery, the founder of the British Free Corps, was a British

The most prominent recruit to the unit was Thomas Haller Cooper, a former member of the British Union of Fascists who moved to Germany in the summer of 1939 with the explicit intention of helping the Nazis. After the war, he was sentenced to death, but this was commuted to life imprisonment.

Other serious offenders who joined the Free Corps received lengthy prison sentences, with one receiving a life sentence and others spending up to 25 years in prison.

In this group there were, regrettably, a small number of Australians who joined up for the British Free Corps.

Australians involved in the British Free Corps include Robert Chipchase, Lionel Wood and Albert Stokes, all prisoners from the 2/32nd Battalion, and Ronald Barker, a member of the Merchant Navy who was from Goulburn, New South Wales.



Australian members of the Waffen SS





ROBERT CHIPCHASE

ALBERT STOKES

Privates Chipchase and Wood only stayed in the organisation for a limited period of time, claiming that they only joined in order to try and escape. When they realised that escape was not going to be possible, they requested to be sent back to a prisoner of war camp. These two largely avoided punishment, with their records stating that they were "Dealt with summarily by their commanding officer and discharged".

Acting Corporal Albert Stokes, on the other hand, also tried to argue that he had only joined the British Free Corps in a plan to either escape or to sabotage the Germans. After the war, this was thoroughly examined at his court martial, but the facts that he remained as part of the unit for a whole year, enjoying his relative freedom in Germany, without escaping and later, in the dying days of the war, served in a Panzer Regiment counted against Stokes. Although he had fully confessed to what he had done in his time with the Free Corps, he was sentenced to a year in prison.

Ronald Barker, who also used the last name Voysey or Voisey, the Australian member of the Merchant Navy from Goulburn, New South Wales, gave no such explanation and was a willing and active member of the British Free Corps. He was captured on his ship, by the German pocket battleship Admiral Scheer in the Indian Ocean in 1941. He was described as being, 'a man of very inferior intelligence'. 'Finally realizing that the British Free Corps was going to have to fight, Barker lost all of his former enthusiasm for anti-Communism and made himself ill by smoking aspirins; he was sent back to Berlin by a gullible medical officer.' After the war, he served a 2-year prison sentence for treason.

Although those allied soldiers, including the handful of Australians, who did sign up for the British Free Corps, did indeed commit treason, it is important to understand that in the majority of cases, these were prisoners of war who were only seeking a degree of freedom and relief from their prison conditions and most, when they realised that escape was not going to be possible, quickly requested to be sent back to a prisoner of war camp. When considering what they may have done, we need to take this important context into consideration.

Story from Virtual War Memorial—Australia



The is a <u>FREE</u> event for all members and their partners.

Wine, Beer, and Soft drinks available at generous bar prices.

Lunch @ midday.

RSVP required for catering purposes to the Secretary David Laing on davidlaing49@bigpond.com NLT Sunday 1st December

If you were one of the 62 who enjoyed the AGM, you'll love this event! All pleasure with no business, and the last chance in 2024 to catch up with old mates and make some new ones.

MERCHANDISE AVAILABLE



- B. Stubby Holders \$6 each or 6 for \$30
- C. RSARA Nameplate \$30
- D. RSARA Lapel Badge \$15
- E. Laser-engraved timber shield w/brass look plaque \$55
- F. **NEW** Vinyl RSAR Sticker **70mm x 100mm Only** \$2 or **6 for \$10** FREE Postage.
- G. Hoodie w/- LOGO \$50
- H. Wine Cooler Bag \$25 plus postage

Allow \$15 postage for each item
Unless collected by member





2024 RSARA Merchandise Order Form

Each <u>large</u> item attracts a MINIMUM of \$10 postage. This is due to increases by Australia Post and is beyond our control. Please ensure you include this in your total.

I WISH TO ORDER THE FOLLOWING:- (Please insert quantity)

	NAME PLATE \$30 - POSTAGE \$10					
RSARA LAPEL BADGE \$15 - POSTAGE \$10						
	RSARA TIE \$25 - POSTAGE \$10					
	STUBBY HOLDER \$6 - POSTAGE \$10					
	ENGRAVED SHIELD \$55 - POSTAGE \$15					
	RSARA POLO TOP \$45 - POSTAGE \$15 (Include size)					
	RSARA HOODIE \$50 - POSTAGE \$15 (Include size)					
	RSARA CAP \$15 - POSTAGE \$10					
	RSAR WINE COOLER BAG \$25 - POSTAGE \$10					
	RSAR VINYL STICKERS 6 FOR \$10. FREE POSTAGE					
NAME	(TO BE PLACED ON NAME PLATE)					
ADDRES	SS					
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	s can order Association Merchandise by the following means. s form to:					
Selina	Laing—Merchandise Officer					
lebano	nsel@live.com.au					
0418 8	22 874					
And pay	via EFT to:-					
	ssociation Inc					
BSB 633	3 000 16 585 88					
(Include your name as an identifier)						

Please note the price changes in some items. If you require more than 1 item or multiple items, please contact the Secretary who will be more than happy to work out a favourable price.

CPL Charles Mene MM



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL P00969.013

Corporal Charles Mene (third from left) on board SS Devonshire bound for Korea, c. 1952

Born on Mabuiag Island in the Torres Strait, Charles Mene was 24 years old when he enlisted for service in the Militia at the outbreak of the Second World War. Until February 1942 members of the Militia were allowed to serve only in Australian territory, while a separate Australian force was raised for service overseas.

In December 1939 Mene transferred to the newly formed Second Australian Imperial Force and travelled to Brisbane for training. This was the first time he had been outside the Torres Strait, but he quickly adapted, and was soon fighting in the rugged mountains of Syria as part of the 2/33rd Battalion.

By early 1942 the Australian government was forced to turn its attention to the Pacific and the heightened threat posed in the region following Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941. Mene's unit was sent to reinforce the battered and tired troops in New Guinea on the Kokoda Trail, and was later involved in the desperate battles at Gona, Ramu Valley, and Shaggy Ridge, before travelling to Balikpapan in Borneo.

In 1946 Mene was sent to Japan as part of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF). More than 16,000 Australians served in BCOF, and at the peak of its involvement was responsible for more than 20 million Japanese citizens in an area exceeding 57,000 square kilometres. Australian troops worked alongside British, Indian, and New Zealand troops to enforce the unconditional surrender of Japan, maintain military control, and supervise the demilitarisation of the country.

While Mene was in Japan he fell in love with a local woman, and they later married. In 1950 he enlisted for

Charles Mene M

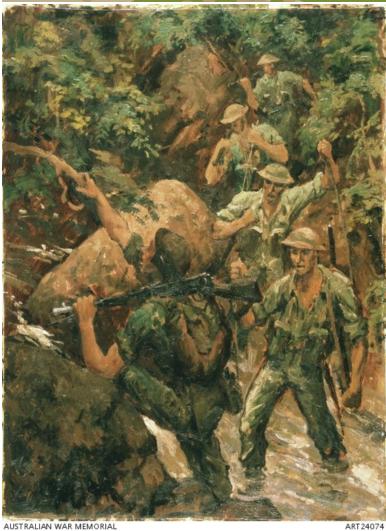


AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

HAL/57/0100/MC

Corporal Charles Mene receives the Military Medal from British High Commissioner Sir Douglas MacGillivray

les Mene



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

Charles Mene had fought in the Middle East and New Guinea during the war, and would go on to be awarded the Military Medal for bravery in Korea.

He had enlisted in September 1939 to "fight for Country and family", hoping that he and his family and friends could live and work in a post-war Australia, free from any restrictions imposed on them because of the colour of their skin.

"Like anyone, I thought I should fight for the country," he said later. "I had brothers and sisters involved and I thought I should join too."

He had explained his reasoning to

service in Korea with the 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment. There, his extensive combat experience saw him serve in a machine-gun platoon while occasionally leading less-experienced rifle companies in battle. On one occasion his section came under heavy artillery and mortar fire, during which Mene carried the wounded back to safety until all were out of harm's way. In 1952 he was awarded the Military Medal for the "courage and devotion to duty" displayed during his ser-

Mene went on to serve in the Malayan Emergency, where Australians fought with British Commonwealth Forces against communist guerrillas hidden deep in the Malayan jungle. In 1961, after two years in Malaya and some 22 years in the Australian armed forces, Mene was discharged and returned home to Australia. He settled in Brisbane with his wife, Michi, and daughter, Patricia, and died in 1999.

When Charles Mene returned to Australia at the end of the Second World War, he realised that, for him, the war wasn't really over.

He went to enjoy a beer with his mates in Brisbane; but he didn't even get to sit down.

Refused entry, he was told, "We don't serve black men here."



'I know that I am fighting for a new world in which my people will get a better deal'

the Tribune newspaper in June 1944 while serving with the 2/33rd Battalion and recovering from a bout of malaria.

Section	Life Members		Members	A - M	Members	N - Z
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Statemen Stat	Beckett					•
Societies Societies Angele Selection Orock Alam					•	
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Billot	Dart			Christian		Colin Rex
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