

Veterans Support Centre



CONTACT FRONT

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Vietnam Veterans Peacekeepers & Peacemakers Association (NSW)
Hastings Manning Macleay Branch Inc.



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2021



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Committee Meetings:

President and Committee may determine a date and time for these meetings

Annual General Meeting Minutes and Financial Statements are available at the office.

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THURSDAYS -

Join us on Thursday mornings at the Veterans Support Centre from about 10am for an informal get - together. Find out what's happening with veteran's issues, catch up with old and new friends or just have a chat over a cup of coffee or tea.

These informal mornings are followed by **OUR FAMOUS \$7 LUNCH**



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Hello again,

First of all, I would like to apologise for any distress to the person that complained about the Chuckle Page in the last Contact Front.

Chuckle pages are just meant to make you chuckle, finish off the magazine with a smile. They are, as is this magazine, for adult consumption and aimed at military veteran humour. If you find those 2 pages at the end not to your liking, please feel free to ignore them and don't read. To everyone else, thank you for your support and especially to those who send in items for print. This issue has very tame Chuckle pages. I would love to hear any other opinions, email the address on the left of this page please.

I also wish to apologise to the President and committee for the complaint received about the magazine. Our President, the National Secretary, Granville and I have discussed the matter and the way forward. This is the first complaint that I have received in my years as Editor so I am not overly worried but if anyone wants my job, that's OK too. I will always support this Centre and its veterans and I know that without you all, the many veterans in our area would be worse off in so many ways.

I am delighted to add pages to this issue for the NAMBUS, a great source of information to schools, both for teachers and students. I was pleased to accompany the teams again to local schools here in Port Macquarie and share their photographs with you. Sadly, this year was missing Lyndsay Thomson and, more recently, Ian Johnson. Both of these gents will be missed by all members of the NAMBUS crew.

Like you, I have been reading my copy of The Vietnam Veterans' Newsletter, July 2022 edition and, probably also like you, I have read the excellent article "What the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide has been digging up". I am saddened by the failure of DVA to sort out their poor performance record despite being given more resources and funding. If anything, delays are getting longer. I know our veterans deserve better and I truly believe that, in many cases, suicide, homelessness, relationship breakups and all kinds of mental difficulties are firmly tied into the failure of government and DVA to deal with the veterans in a timely manner. These are men and women who are willing to put their lives on the line for their country, whatever is asked of them and I know they deserve better.

I am continuing to publish the Contact Front quarterly and my quest to find interesting, accurate and relevant items to include gives me a personal satisfaction. I hope that most of our veterans and readers find it both informative and interesting.

Also to those among you who reported that our title "Contact Front" has been missing from a couple of issues, thank you. I use a template and had not noticed that the title had "slipped" and I am sorry for that. It is now rectified.

I hope that you enjoy reading this quarter's Contact Front,

Stay safe and well, Jill

The opinions expressed above are mine alone and may not be the opinions of Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia, VPPAA Inc, or contributors to Contact Front and its readers.



Jill Opie, Editor

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If you need help accessing DVA's website, call the VSC for help



The **VPPAA** is dedicated to the welfare of all Veterans, Peacekeepers and Peacemakers, ex-service and serving personnel and their families. If you, or someone you know, is ill and you suspect the illness may be a result of military service, please do not hesitate to consult one of our trained volunteers.

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"We don't take your safety lightly"

Lives turned upside down

'FORGOTTEN' NASHOS

FIFTY years is not enough to erase the anger and sense of injustice felt by "forgotten" Nashos like Geoff Parkes.

Geoff is the president of Nasho Fair Go, a group established to campaign on behalf of the thousands of men who were called up to fight in Vietnam but never sent.

Its chief aim is to obtain Department of Veterans' Affairs Gold Health Cards for all national servicemen who served between 1965 and 1972.

The Gold Card is sent to those who fought in a designated war zone. It covers the full range of health care services at the DVA's expense for the rest of their lives.

Former conscripts receive DVA White Health Cards, which provide a pension of \$6.40 a fortnight, mental health care and fewer services. It is available to all who served, if only for a day.

Geoff, 71, who was conscripted in 1971, said the white card's existence came almost as a surprise. He found out by accident and many men like him were unaware they were entitled to it.



THEY SERVED TOO: Geoff Parkes, left, on a training exercise at Uranquinty, near Wagga Wagga, NSW, in 1971.

life when 93 per cent of the people he grew up with didn't have to go in the army, that's what rankles with us."

Medical care is sorely needed by some Nasho Fair Go members. Geoff said one fell from a helicopter during training, landing on his back. Despite continuing pain and several operations since, he's still awaiting compensation.

Some of the scars the Nashos still bear are less physical than emotional.

"Some blokes were embarrassed for years that they didn't go to Vietnam. When asked whether they'd gone into Nashos, they just say no, they missed out, their number didn't come up."

Then there's survivor guilt. "There were other guys who were training with a company, a platoon, and for some reason - physically or different circumstances - their mates went to Vietnam, and they didn't."

"And they've suffered survivor guilt for the last 50-odd years as well. And I'm not talking about just feeling guilty. I've had men crying on the phone. It happens often."

Geoff said although basic

training was brutal, after a few weeks it was "like water off a duck's back. The problems came after we got out."

He was happily living and working in the NSW town of Deniliquin when he was called up.

Over time, however, he lost his girlfriend, friends and community connections. After finishing up he lost his career with the CSIRO, another job went belly-up and he had what he now recognises as a nervous breakdown.

He then spent three years wandering Australia and overseas. He also became a severe alcoholic. "It started in the army, which has a very heavy drinking culture anyway. I was a functional alcoholic for 50 years. I'm a year sober now."

"National service completely turned my life upside down."

At the time of writing, Geoff said Nasho Fair Go had about 350 members. Its goal is 2000 by the end of May. "By that stage we should be big enough to get a seat at the table."

■ nashofairgo.com.au

As children, Steve and Noel weren't counted as citizens, but that didn't stop them joining the army and heading to Vietnam

The steady click of clapsticks echoes around Anzac Square.

On a crisp, autumn morning, hundreds of veterans, dignitaries and school children stand silent at the state war memorial — a quiet haven in the heart of Brisbane's bustling CBD — to observe a ceremony that has been a decade in the making.

Queensland is unveiling its first monument dedicated to Indigenous servicemen and women, many of whom fought for a country that did not recognise them as citizens.

The ceremony is a fusion of cultural and military tradition and was organised by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Dedicated Memorial Committee Queensland. The anthem is sung, first in the Yugambeh language, then in English, accompanied by the yidaki (didgeridoo) and a military brass band. Serving Indigenous defence personnel perform traditional dances, wearing white ochre and military uniform.

In the second row of the audience, Vietnam veteran and Gurang Gurang man Steve Collins watches in awe. "I come from a time when there was no dancing or anything," he says. "We were told that our culture was no good, and to see those young people dance ... it was so good, and I'm very proud of those young fellas." He and his brother, Wulli Wulli and Gurang Gurang man Noel Pope — also a Vietnam veteran — drove six hours from central Queensland to attend the service. "Never in my wildest dreams did I think something like that would take place," Noel says.



Left - Noel Pope attends the unveiling of a new memorial dedicated to First Nations servicemen and women at Brisbane's Anzac Square. (ABC News: Chris Gillette) Right - Serving Indigenous defence personnel took part in the ceremony, paying tribute to cultural and military traditions.(ABC News: Chris Gillette)

A time of division

The brothers grew up in the 1950s in Eidsvold, three hours inland from Bundaberg, during an era when the town was segregated under discriminatory laws that governed the lives of most Indigenous people across the country. Raised by their grandparents after their mother's untimely death, the pair recall spending their early childhood in tents or makeshift camps on the outskirts of town.

Harkness Boundary Creek marks the threshold Aboriginal people were not permitted to cross after 6pm. As children visiting the local cinema, the brothers would sit on one side of the theatre while their non-Aboriginal friends sat on the other. "We were nothing," Steve says.

Aboriginal people were not counted in the census until the 1967 referendum. Prior to 1949, Indigenous people were not allowed to join the military, but many enlisted nevertheless, often lying about their ancestry to do so. Steve and Noel were inspired to join the army by an uncle who served in the Korean War. Noel says he felt compelled to defend the nation, but also his ancestors' country. "Our traditional people, they protected their boundary," he says. "So the military gave me the chance to serve, protect and defend, the same as my traditional mob. It was born into me."



Left - Noel Pope says the military gave him a chance to serve, protect and defend the country like his ancestors. (ABC News: Chris Gillette)

Right - Steve Collins and his brother, Noel, grew up during an era of racial segregation.(ABC News: Chris Gillette)



As children, Steve and Noel weren't counted as citizens, but that didn't stop them joining the army and heading to Vietnam

An equal playing field

Steve was deployed to Vietnam in 1971. He found that his upbringing in the scrub put him in good stead during long treks through the jungles of Vietnam. "We used to stay out for about four weeks at a time, but I was used to that from staying out in the bush all the time," he says. "Some blokes did it hard, and I just took it in my stride."

Noel soon followed in his brother's footsteps, landing in Vietnam the following year. His military training took him by surprise, not because it was physically and mentally gruelling, but because for the first time in his life, he was treated as an equal.



Left - Steve Collins (right) was offered a choice to finish his education or join the army. He chose the latter. (Supplied: Steve Collins) Centre - Noel Pope (second row from top, fifth from left) joined the army when he was 19 years old. (Supplied: Noel Pope) Right - Noel Pope (second from right) says his experience in the army changed him forever. (Supplied: Noel Pope)

"I soon learnt that, if you performed the best that you could, you were in the clique, so I worked really hard," he says. "The first thing that hit me was, 'I'm as good as anyone'. And that same feeling has carried me nearly all my life. "It changed me forever, as far as being accepted in society."

Returning from the war

Steve spent seven months in Vietnam, returning in November 1971.

Noel remained longer than most, staying on as part of a guard and escort platoon until April 1973, despite assurances from then-prime minister Gough Whitlam that all Australian troops would be home by the previous Christmas.

Both brothers struggled to reintegrate upon their return to Eidsvold.

"At least in Vietnam, I knew where I fitted ... but, at home, it wasn't like that," Noel says.

For Steve, everyday sounds — such as a helicopter passing overhead — could transport him back to the Vietnamese jungle, to the pop of gunfire, the scratching of scrub hens, the cock-a-doodle-doo of roosters, and the smell of the rain during wet season. It was only in the bushland surrounding Eidsvold that he and his brother found solace. "Over here, it was a clean smell," Steve says. "The noises were different — the birds, the kookaburras, would be singing out ... it was peaceful and, over time, it healed me."

Noel says the community of Eidsvold has come a long way since the 1950s. In recent years, he and Steve have held leadership roles at their local RSL, and he says people are "more accepting" of each other.

The brothers hope their military legacy, and that of so many other Indigenous veterans, will inspire future generations to overcome divisions. "We're all custodians of Australia," Noel says. "Regardless of whether you're Indigenous or non-Indigenous, we all have a heritage. "We all have a part to play in protecting this land."



Left - Noel Pope says he struggled to reintegrate after returning from Vietnam. (ABC News: Chris Gillette) Right - Having grown up in the bush, the sounds of nature were comforting to Steve Collins. (ABC News: Chris Gillette)



Sources - Article by Ella Archibald Binge, photos by Chris Gillette, ABC News and by Noel Pope



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The Battle of the Scheldt

The Battle of the Scheldt was a series of military operations that took place in northern Belgium and the province of Zeeland in the southwest of Holland in the Autumn of 1944. After the liberation of the port of Antwerp, Allied forces were tasked with clearing the occupying Germans from the Scheldt estuary to open the supply lines to the Allied front. Fierce fighting took place in thick mud, heavy fog and pouring rain around dykes and dams, flooded polders, and villages and towns heavily fortified by German defences. It was another key period in the liberation of Holland, helping to end the war, but with huge losses of life.

Antwerp and the beginning of the Battle of the Scheldt

British tanks entered the city of Antwerp on 4 September 1944. After a few short fights, by the end of the day the British controlled the city. This victory was important for the Allies who needed a large port to help supply its army – at that point about two million strong – in Western Europe and continue its advance towards Germany.

Although the Allies controlled Antwerp, the Germans had heavily fortified Walcheren island – today a part of mainland Zeeland – at the mouth of the Western Scheldt estuary, partly burying their heavy guns to make them impervious to air attacks. Due to supply problems and the Allies prioritizing Operation Market Garden, the German army had managed to retreat the bulk of their forces across the estuary, transporting around 86,000 men, 600 guns and 6,000 vehicles to the island. As the Germans controlled both banks of the river, it was impossible for Allied minesweepers to clear the heavily mined waterway, meaning supply ships couldn't safely pass through it.

A dreadful period for the Dutch residents

The first part of the Allies' plan for opening the Scheldt Estuary involved clearing the area north of Antwerp and securing access to the Zuid-Beveland peninsula. On 28 September 1944, the Canadian 2nd Division began its advance north from the Belgium city to capture the Dutch town of Woensdrecht. On 2 October 1944, pamphlets fell on to the island of Walcheren advising Dutch residents to flee. The next day the Allies bombed Westkapelle. As well as creating a hole in the seawall, the explosions killed 152 civilians and destroyed almost the entire city. Other attacks pierced the dykes at Veere, Vlissingen and Fort Rammekens. 80% of Walcheren was flooded, and thousands of Dutch residents had to leave their possessions behind and escape to the few areas of dry land that remained. You can discover more about Westkapelle's role in the war, and the experiences of its residents, at the city's Dijk- en oorlogsmuseum (Dyke and War Museum).

Black Friday in Woensdrecht

Driving rain, traps and landmines made the Canadian advance difficult, and a major assault on Woensdrecht only began on 7 October. The fighting was fierce, and the Canadian troops were relatively inexperienced compared to the German veterans defending the town. One of the bloodiest engagements of the battle to take Woensdrecht came on Friday, 13 October, when 56 Canadian Black Watch Regiment soldiers were killed while making an attack across an open field against well-prepared German positions. This day is now known as Black Friday by Canadian forces. Despite the heavy losses, and in large part thanks to artillery and air support, the Canadians secured Woensdrecht on 16 October, effectively cutting off the German forces in Zuid-Beveland and Walcheren.

Operation Switchback: Clearing the Breskens Pocket

The second part of the main operation, Operation Switchback, aimed to clear the Breskens Pocket, an area of land north of the Leopold Canal and south of the Western Scheldt. The German forces had blown up dykes to flood the ground, which was a maze of ditches and canals, making military manoeuvres impossible except on the narrow roads built on top of the dykes. What's more, the Germans had 10,000 men who were well supplied with machine guns, mortars and artillery. Despite the Germans' robust defences, the Canadians, with the support of amphibious vehicles and WASP flamethrower carriers, captured Breskens on 21 October. On 2 November, Canadian soldiers stormed a pillbox and captured the German commander Knut Eberding, who, despite his own orders to fight to the death for the Führer, surrendered without firing a shot. Operation Switchback ended successfully when the remaining German forces laid down their weapons the next day.

The success of Operation Switchback

While Operation Switchback was being carried out, Canadian forces also commenced Operation Vitality, which aimed to take back the Zuid-Beveland peninsula. Another battle fought on flooded terrain littered with mines and fortified German defences, Allied forces encountered little resistance until they reached the main German defence line on the Zuid-Beveland canal. With the help of the amphibious assault vehicles of the newly arrived Scottish 52nd Lowland Division, the Allies managed to capture Zuid-Beveland with little loss of life.

The Battle of the Scheldt

The final pieces of the puzzle

At the end of October 1944, most of the area around the Scheldt estuary was clear, with only the German coastal batteries on Walcheren still preventing the Allies from using the port of Antwerp. Liberating the island – now a heavily-fortified German fortress – was the final piece of the puzzle to open the supply lines to the Port of Antwerp. To accomplish this, Operation Infatuate was launched by the 2nd Canadian Infantry Division on 31 October.

Walcheren was connected to the Zuid-Beveland peninsula by the Sloedam, a 1,200-metre-long and 45-metre-wide road which was the scene of heavy fighting. Allied forces successfully carried out frontal attacks on the Sloedam, but soon after the offensive stalled. Knowing it was too dangerous to attack from the front, Scottish soldiers from the 6th battalion surprised the Germans with a night-time attack after crossing the muddy waters of the Sloe. This attack, codenamed Operation Mallard, was successful, and the flanked Germans withdrew. On 3 November, the Sloedam fell into Allied hands.

As part of Operation Infatuate, Allied forces also attacked the island from two other directions: across the Scheldt from the south and the west by sea, landing in the Dutch city of Vlissingen. Today you can visit 'Uncle Beach', the area where Allied forces disembarked to take the city, to learn more about its occupation, liberation and the experiences of Zeeland's citizens during WWII.

On 6 November, Walcheren's capital Middelburg fell, and the German resistance ended completely just two days later. The Battle of the Scheldt, one of the longest and fiercest battles ever fought on Dutch land, was over, and the crucial supply line secured. You can relive the battle at the Liberation Museum Zeeland, which features reconstructed bunkers, roadblocks and the Ellewoutsdijk Emergency Church, which was used during the war. The Canadian War Cemetery in Bergen op Zoom is home to the graves of 1,116 soldiers, including 968 Canadians.



Left, right and above - Scheldt Estuary



Above - Churchill tanks crossing a Bailey bridge over the Antwerp-Turnhout canal at Rijckevorsel during the attack north of Antwerp, 22 October 1944. IWM

Right - Oil being unloaded



Left - German POWs are massed by British troops in Walcheren, Netherlands, 1944.
Right - Siege of Walcheren Island



Unsung heroes of Vietnam War given a voice in unique opera by Maroochydore-based composer

The untold stories of the nurses of the Vietnam War have been brought to life in a way that has never been done before. A Maroochydore-based composer has spent the past 18 months writing the music for an opera, to honour the 43 incredible women who worked tirelessly to ensure their patients recovered and returned home to their families. The opera *The Nurses at Vung Tau* coincides with the 60th anniversary of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War.

Internationally-recognised composer, Dr Brenton Broadstock, who has been writing music for 40 years, told *Sunshine Coast News* he was intrigued when he was asked to work on the project. He said it was the first time, to his knowledge, an opera had been written on the Vietnam War. The opera is based off a series of poems and texts written by Brisbane soprano and performance artist Elizabeth Lewis. "Having been a composer for so long, I wasn't aware and I'm not aware of any other operas about the Vietnam War," Dr Broadstock said. "That really piqued my interest. Elizabeth contacted me some time ago through a mutual friend because she had some poems she had written after doing a lot of interviews with some of the former nurses of the Vietnam War. The texts were really moving and evocative and gave very interesting views on nurses who served. When I saw these, I was very taken with them."

Originally, Ms Lewis planned to create a song cycle, but Dr Broadstock suggested she transform the words into a libretto for what is now an 80-minute opera.

The story follows the journey of a nurse during her time in Vung Tau and the experiences of pain and joy, which occurred while she is there. In April 1967, four Royal Australian Army Nurses Corps (RAANC) nurses arrived in Vung Tau in Vietnam. They were the first Australian Army nurses to be sent to the conflict and over the course of the war, a total of 43 RAANC nurses served between 1967 and 1971.

Dr Broadstock said it was an important untold story that spoke of a side of war that was not often front of mind. "It was really good to write a story about women who went to war and did this fantastic job," he said. "I have met some of these nurses and spoken to them and it is incredibly moving to hear their stories about what they had to actually deal with. We are talking about the 60s when medicine was primitive by today's standards, and what they had to deal with, treating the incredibly wounded soldiers. And they had a 99 per cent success rate in getting them out alive, which is incredible."

The opera encompasses a range of emotions including pathos, anger and humour through the dramatic events of the story and Dr Broadstock said it was a challenging, but exciting, opera to compose during most of the pandemic.

"It's always challenging writing music and to find something new, original and creative that is engaging for people as well," he said. "For this particular opera, it was also about trying to find a real sense of on-stage drama as well. It needed to have a good story that reached a climax and told the beautiful, emotive stories for all the different characters. A has been a very exciting project and I am glad we are at a point now where it can come together."

A professor of music at the University of Melbourne for 30 years, Dr Broadstock moved to Maroochydore be closer to his children and grandchildren. He said the world of composing music had changed over the decades and it was important to keep opera relevant, original and exciting for audiences. "Being original in a world where we are so flooded with options and information is crucial," he said. "When I started out you didn't have everything at your fingertips and now you can listen to everything anywhere in the world. You have to be a bit of a camel with your head in the sand, so to speak, and not listen to too much because you have to keep that sense of originality."



Above - Lieutenant Terrie Elizabeth Roche of the Royal Australian Army Nursing Corps assists a wounded soldier at the 8th Field Ambulance Hospital.

Source - Sunshine Coast News May 2022 Caitlin Zerafa, pictures AWM

ADF senior leadership appointments



L TO R - Major General Simon Stuart, Rear Admiral Mark Hammond, Chief of the Defence Force General Angus Campbell, Deputy Prime Minister Richard Marles, Air Vice-Marshal Robert Chipman and Lieutenant General Greg Bilton.

Photo: Kym Smith



The Australian Government has today announced Australian Defence Force (ADF) senior leadership appointments.

The terms of the Chief of the Defence Force (CDF), General Angus Campbell, and the Vice Chief of the Defence Force (VCDF), Vice Admiral David Johnston, will be extended by two years.

Additionally, the Government has asked the Chief of the Defence Force to extend the term of the Chief of Joint Operations, Lieutenant General Greg Bilton, for two years.

The Acting Prime Minister and Minister for Defence, Richard Marles, also announced new Chiefs of Navy, Army and Air Force. Rear Admiral Mark Hammond will be promoted to Vice Admiral and will lead the Navy; Major General Simon Stuart, on promotion to Lieutenant General, will take command of the Army; and Air Vice-Marshal Robert Chipman, on promotion to Air Marshal, will become Chief of Air Force. All have been appointed for four-year terms.

It has been my great honour and privilege to serve as Chief of Navy for the past four years.

I sincerely thank the women and men of the Royal Australian Navy for their outstanding work and dedication during my term. They reflect the very best of Australian society; Australians who are ready to defend Australia and its national interests in the maritime domain.**not shown in full**

.....At this important and pivotal time, I am confident I leave Navy in great hands. **Rear Admiral Hammond** is an exceptional leader, and a submariner with experience in Australian and Dutch conventional submarines, and French, British and US nuclear attack submarines.

I congratulate him on being appointed as our next Chief of Navy.

Vice Admiral Michael Noonan

Incoming **Chief of Army Lieutenant General Stuart** said the Army was regenerating its readiness while undergoing a significant program of modernisation.

"I am most fortunate to assume command from Lieutenant General Rick Burr, who has led an enormous transformation within our Army," Lieutenant General Stuart said.

"General Burr's commitment to developing our people and our individual and collective cultural and ethical fitness through Good Soldiering is a hallmark of his stewardship of our Army.

"As the 41st officer privileged to lead our Army – a fighting and operational force, a national institution and profession – I am committed to, every day, building on General Burr's rich legacy."

Lieutenant General Burr formally handed over the Australian Army Banner to Lieutenant General Stuart during the parade.

Air Force has welcomed its new Chief of Air Force, **Air Marshal Robert Chipman**, and farewelled the outgoing Chief, Air Marshal Mel Hupfeld, in a fitting Change of Command ceremony in Canberra on July 1.

"To lead all aviators as your Chief was a great highlight, a privilege and an honour – and I thank you for your support. I have no doubt that Air Marshal Chipman will continue to shape and lead a capable and modern Air Force for all Australians."

Air Marshal Hupfeld is looking forward to spending more time with his wife Lou in the great outdoors and finding some time to fly his P-51 Mustang.

Source - Australian Govt, Defence, pictures as listed



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Brain waves control robot dog's moves



Left - Sergeant Rana Chandan operates a Ghost Robotics quadruped robot using a novel brain-computer interface during a demonstration at Majura training area.

Right - Australian Army soldier Sergeant Rana Chandan, right, from the 1st/15th Royal NSW Lancers during a novel brain-computer interface demonstration at Majura Training Area, Canberra. Photos: Sergeant Matthew Bickerton

While biological dogs respond to voice commands “sit”, “fetch” and “stay”, robotic dogs might soon take instruction via a person’s brain. This technology was demonstrated when Sergeant Damian Robinson, from 5th Combat Service Support Battalion, and Sergeant Chandan Rana, from 1st/15th Royal New South Wales Lancers, commanded a robot to go to several locations using their powers of concentration at Majura Training Area, Canberra, on May 11.

Several white squares corresponding to waypoints flickered on Sergeant Robinson’s augmented reality lens at varying frequencies. A biosensor at the back of Sergeant Robinson’s head was ready to detect brainwaves from his visual cortex. When Sergeant Robinson concentrated on a particular flicker, the biosensor detected corresponding brainwaves and signalled an amplification circuit. An artificial intelligence decoder translated the signal into commands, which the robot dog then followed.

Sergeant Robinson and another soldier operated the technology using a commercial HoloLens running technology developed by University of Technology Sydney (UTS) researchers to command a Ghost Robotics quadruped robot. “The whole process is not difficult to master. It’s very intuitive. It only took a couple of sessions,” Sergeant Robinson said. The robot is typically controlled with a hand-held console, but in this case, the operator’s brainwave initiates the commands. This allows the operator to maintain weapon readiness or use their hands for other tasks.

Sergeant Robinson joined the program in April and did eight, two-hour sessions with the system. During the demonstration, Sergeant Robinson could command the robot to visit six pre-determined locations based on one of six flickers that he could choose. “You don’t have to think anything specific to operate the robot, but you do need to focus on that flicker,” he said. “It’s more of a visual concentration thing.”

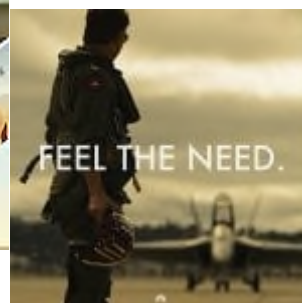
The purpose of the demonstration was to get soldiers thinking about how Army might integrate this technology into the tactical environment. Researchers at UTS and Army’s Robotic and Autonomous Implementation and Coordination Office (RICO) worked together since December 2020 to explore brain-computer interfaces and their tactical applications.

This exploration was a four-way collaboration between Defence Innovation Hub, RICO, UTS, and Defence Science and Technology Group. Distinguished Professor Chin-Teng Lin and Professor Francesca Iacopi, from UTS, have made several breakthroughs in brain-computer interfaces. Professor Lin figured out how to minimise noise from the body and environment to get a clearer signal from an operator’s brain. Another advancement was increasing the number of commands the decoder can deliver in a fixed period.

“We have nine different kinds of commands and the operator can select one from those nine within that time period,” Professor Lin said.

Professor Iacopi developed a replacement for older biosensors used to detect brainwaves, overcoming issues of corrosion, durability and skin contact resistance through cutting-edge graphene material. “We’ve been able to combine the best of graphene, which is very biocompatible and very conductive, with the best of silicon technology, which makes our biosensor very resilient and robust to use,” Professor Iacopi said. Defence has provided \$1.2 million in research funding to UTS through the Defence Innovation Hub.

Top Gun - Maverick



Above - Lieutenant Commander Matthew Schroder. Right - cinema posters

If you notice a bearded aviator in the bar scenes of *Top Gun: Maverick*, it's probably Lieutenant Commander Matthew Schroder. The MH-60R pilot was on US Navy exchange when he got a call from the film's casting agent looking for foreign aviators as extras. But a makeup artist was unimpressed by Lieutenant Commander Schroder's beard – something not allowed in the US Navy or in keeping with the original movie's aesthetic.

The beard was eventually allowed after the director gave his approval. "After a couple of days the beard had been seen too much, so I was worried I would be taken out to avoid becoming a reoccurring distraction," Lieutenant Commander Schroder said.

For 12 hours a day, over eight days, Lieutenant Commander Schroder and a group of US Navy pilots were filmed in a specially made set at US Naval Air Station North Island in San Diego. The set was inspired by an on-base pilots' hangout known as I-Bar, which was too small to film in. Each day, extras had hair and makeup done, then were taken to the set where production crew spent a number of hours setting up while actors rehearsed their lines.

But before Tom Cruise arrived, his security detail would paste stickers over the cameras on everyone's phone. "We'd be in the background drinking fake beer, then moved around by production guys who'd say 'Walk over here, create some action, have some fake conversations but don't make a noise'," Lieutenant Commander Schroder said. "It was very repetitive; you did your thing for 10 takes, then they'd do the same scene again with the same dialogue, but with the cameras and lights moved to get the other side of a conversation. The dialogue between the actors during filming sounded very wooden because you're used to watching a movie with music and background noise. We thought it was going to sound terrible."

Lieutenant Commander Schroder said the choice to use military personnel – not professional extras – caused some issues, as the pilots weren't concerned about landing future acting jobs. "Everyone was trying to get their head in to the back of a shot because they wanted to be that guy who got their face in the movie," Lieutenant Commander Schroder said. "The producers would repeatedly tell us 'Thank you so much for your service but could you please just keep the noise down'. You could tell we were testing their patience."

Filming became an emotional "rollercoaster" for Lieutenant Commander Schroder, who'd grown up watching the original movie and was hopeful to appear in the sequel. He would often see his head in shot on a monitor, only to realise the scene would be re-shot from the other side, diluting his chances of making the movie.

Lieutenant Commander Schroder lacked a US Social Security number and couldn't be paid by the studio, so he leveraged the fact he was working for free to get placed near Tom Cruise in the final bar scene.

"[In the scene] Tom Cruise keeps bumping past me and the camera is following him into the bar and I've got the White Ensign on my shoulder," Lieutenant Commander Schroder said. "After the sixth take they said 'Sorry, this is *Top Gun*, we're going to need an American flag'."

Although he was right next to Hollywood A-listers, Lieutenant Commander Schroder wasn't allowed to strike up conversations. He did, however, make friends with the Australian stunt double for Miles Teller who plays the character Rooster.

Lieutenant Commander Schroder said he enjoyed the movie after its eventual release, but couldn't see himself. "I knew it was going to be tenuous about whether I'd make it in," he said. "There were lots of scenes that were shot that didn't make it. If there are people with flying suits in the background of the bar, I'm in there somewhere."



Source - Defence News, pic left & top right - movie.insider.com

NAMBUS VISIT 2022

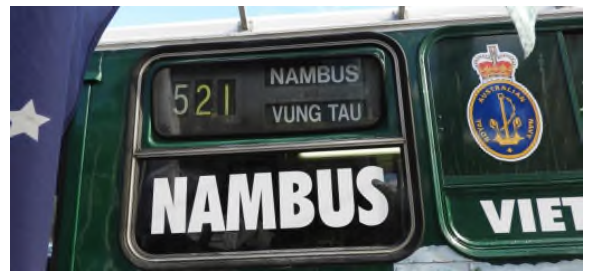


Above - Talks to students about the Vietnam War from Barry Lynch, Peter Page, Peter Goldsmith, Peter Kable, James Tejcek, Gordon Lawson, Bill Wagner, Kerrin Brown
Below - Kerrin Brown (bus crew) and Gary Sith (driver)

Below - NAMBUS visited schools in Taree, Kempsey, Camden Haven, Port Macquarie and 208 Army Cadets Port Macquarie



NAMBUS VISIT 2022



Talks to students about the Vietnam War from Barry Lynch, Peter Page, Peter Goldsmith, Peter Kable, James Tejcek, Gordon Lawson. NAMBUS driver Gary Smith, Crew Kerrin Brown, Observers Bill Wagner, Phil Dewhurst, Photographer Jill Opie



208 Army Cadet Unit, Port Macquarie



Sources - schools facebook pages, 208 cadets facebook pages, Jill Opie photos within school guidelines

INSIDE THE NAMBUS FOR THOSE WHO HAVE NOT SEEN IT



NAMBUS is filled with artefacts, armaments, uniforms, photographs and pictures, in hand built cabinets, trays and wall displays, all collected and assembled for the tours by Vietnam veterans and friends

The diorama (top right this page) was built to show the complex tunnel systems used by the Vietnamese soldiers

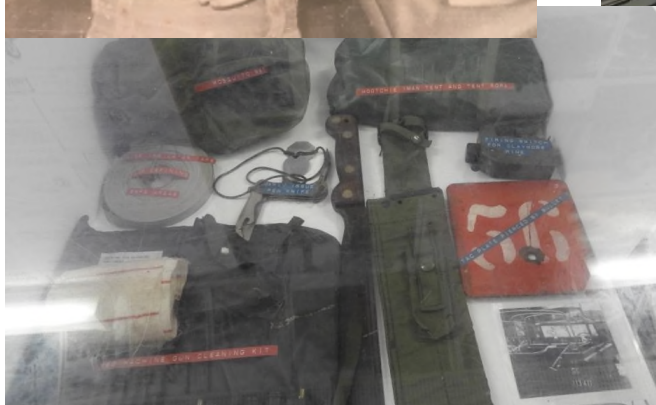
An original NAM-BUS circa 1989/90

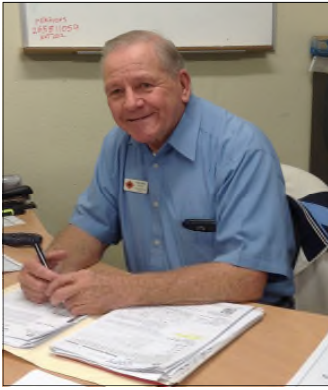


INSIDE THE NAMBUS FOR THOSE WHO HAVE NOT SEEN IT



Photo left - Peter Goldsmith in Vietnam (good looking guy on left)
Displays inside the NAMBUS (Perspex covers made photos less clear)





**Welfare Officer
Peter Millen**

Welfare Officer's Report

I continue to keep in touch with veterans who are in need of guidance and reassurance about their health and changing circumstances. I also provide assistance with medical transport bookings and treatment options.

I am travelling 2.5hrs each way to attend VSC so I am working by phone where possible but am in regular contact with Compensation Advocate and happy to attend the office when required.

Please call the office (open 1000-1400 week days) for an appointment on Tuesdays to talk directly to me.

Take care, **Peter**



**Compensation
Advocate
Mike Opie**

Compensation Advocate

It horrifies me that DVA publishes details about how far behind they are with processing claims for veterans, even further behind than they were when the last Royal Commission occurred 4 years ago. This is despite being allocated 274 more staff to help shorten claim processing times.

A non-urgent case is taking around 200 days to process, a large number of disability claims are taking over 300 days to process.

The "Vietnam Veterans Newsletter" from Granville makes for disturbing reading with the report on the progress (or lack of) DVA action to improve matters. Even the DVA Secretary freely admits that DVA is failing veterans in many significant ways. Since she shows no indication that things will get better (or that she will resign) it would appear that veterans are the ones who will continue to suffer and more suicides will happen directly linked to this failure.

I continue to fight for veterans and their families and just hope that the changes that DVA wants to impose on Compensation Advocates will not be the reason that I resign in disgust.

I am always happy to assist with your claim submission, the wording in many cases is vital to ensure the best outcome. There are 3 distinct compensation schemes, I can advise you on the best for your claim. I will help any veteran to get the best result possible, not only Vietnam Veterans.

Call Mon-Fri between 1000 & 1330 to make an appointment (appointments on Tuesdays between 1000 & 1400) and we can talk about your best options.

Mike

Membership Officer's Report

This is just a short report to bring you up to date regarding membership matters, so far, for 2022.

As at 6 July 2022 we have **82** financial members, which is quite comparable to this time last year.

NOTE that for every membership payment of \$30.00 made here at your local sub-branch, **\$12.50 is retained by your sub-branch for local use.**

To those who have renewed their membership for this year, thank you!

Please stay covid and flu safe.

Trevor Morrow, Membership Officer



**Membership Officer
Trevor Morrow**

President's Report

The Nambus has returned to our area visiting local schools and one in Taree. The students who were shown through the bus enjoyed the virtual tour and being able to handle various items on display. The ration pack received a number of horrified comments with questions asked by the students being direct and to the point. The teachers also were very impressed and were more than happy the way the whole program was organised. Many thanks to our organiser Barry Lynch.

You can read from our Newsletter that DVA is still very slow off the mark assessing claims which can be in the system for many months. This is very frustrating to the Pension and Welfare Team let alone the clients. No amount of phone calls from our Office can speed up these claims.

The returning service personnel nowadays have served two, three or more deployments. They have young families waiting at home, when returning they have a lot of mental and physical problems. Their families need immediate help. These problems cause a lot of disruptions within the family especially to the young children. These problems also lead to a large number of suicides. Most Veteran Veterans were not married when deployed overseas but when they returned a lot of these issues – PTSD, alcohol, drugs and suicides surfaced many years later when the body cannot cope mentally and physically. The returning members of the armed forces today are highly trained, multi-skilled in all areas and are expected to return to a normal civilian life which is impossible for anyone who has served in overseas deployment. All veterans young and old, both male and female need constant assistance from Pensions and Welfare Officers and DVA which is why we need offices like ours to remain open at all cost. This is the main reason I am trying very hard to keep our office functioning.

Our Chief Editor received a small criticism for one of the cartoons in the last newsletter. The person in question has fronted a full board of enquiry, punishment has been issued, loss of privileges, loss of rank, loss of pay and loss of personal key to the latrine.

Cheers for now

Bill Wagner

President

HONOUR THE DEAD BUT FIGHT LIKE HELL FOR THE LIVING

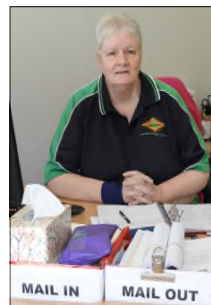


President - Bill Wagner

**Treasurer
Peter Dorman**



**Lyn Hancock
Office Manager**



VALE Ian Johnson

Ian was one of the driver crew for NAMBUS for many years until recently and was a highly valued member of the team.

You will be missed by all.

Our condolences to your family and friends

Rest in peace mate

MILITARY
WORKING
DOG DAY

7 JUNE



Ian Coate - Artist / Illustrator

Take a moment to remember our Military Working Dogs. Here's a poem I wrote to help remember them:

THE MILITARY WORKING DOG

We've lost another soldier – our firm and faithful friend.
So swift of feet and strong of heart – so loyal to the end.
He was a combat soldier – ideal in every way
In action he was fearless – the first into the fray.
He was my shield between our foes – my sword within a fight.
My ears within the stillness – my eyes within the night.
We bonded in our training – he had a trooper's soul.
If not for his protection – we couldn't do our role.
And now he has departed – he served his country true.
So don't forget my loyal mate – who died for me and you.

National Military Working Dog Day - Annually June 7th

Source - Ian Coates - <https://iancoate.art/>

Honouring our four-legged heroes

Since World War I, Australian Defence Force dogs have shown enormous courage, unwavering loyalty and commitment to hard work during training activities and on operations overseas. They've served in Korea, Borneo, Vietnam, Singapore, Somalia, Bougainville, East Timor, the Solomon Islands, Afghanistan and Malaysia.

On June 7, representatives from the Army and Air Force attended a commemorative service at the Military and Service Working Dog National Monument at the RSPCA Brisbane Animal Care Campus Wacol, Queensland, alongside other agencies that work with dogs, including the Queensland Police Service. ADF dogs serve in Army's Military Police, Combat Engineer Regiments, Special Operations Engineer Regiment, Special Air Service Regiment and the 2nd Commando Regiment as well as Air Force's Security Forces Squadrons.

Hosted by the Australian Defence Force Trackers and War Dog Association, which work tirelessly to honour the work of military dogs, the National Military Working Dog Day service commemorated the sacrifice of Sapper Darren Smith and Explosive Detection Dog Herbie who, along with Sapper Jacob Moerland, were killed in action in Afghanistan on June 7, 2010. Sapper Smith was the first ADF dog handler to be killed in action while working with a military dog.

A key driver behind the establishment of National Military Working Dog Day, Vice-President of the Australian Defence Force Trackers and War Dogs Association, Lieutenant Colonel (retd) George Hulse, said the inaugural day was commemorated 10 years ago at the Military and Service Working Dog National Monument. "After Sapper Smith and explosive detection dog Herbie were killed, the Australian Defence Force Trackers and War Dog Association felt obliged to ensure that their deaths, alongside Sapper Jacob Moerland, were commemorated each year," he said.

"The RSPCA gifted the parcel of land where the monument is located, and supplied designers for the monument itself, then we crowd-funded the construction before the inauguration in 2012." "Each year on the anniversary of their death, we hold a commemorative service and Graeme, Sapper Smith's father, and Mason, Sapper Smith's son, attend without fail."

As the Military Police Dog Capability Manager for 1st Military Police Battalion, Warrant Officer Class Two Dean Hedberg said attending the service at Wacol on National Military Working Dog Day each year was always an honour. "Today is a deeply meaningful day," Warrant Officer Class Two Dean Hedberg said. "It's a special day where we can remember the sacrifice, dedication and devotion of our fellow dog handlers and the canines that faithfully served alongside them both domestically and while on operations overseas."

June 7 is recognised as National Military Working Dog Day.



Left - Working Dog Handlers from the Australian Army's 2nd Combat Engineer Regiment and the Royal Australian Airforce at the National Military Working Dog Day commemorative service, Wacol, Queensland, on June 7
Right - Mr Mason Smith, son of Australian Army Soldier Sapper Darren Smith who was killed in action with his Explosive Detection Dog Herbie, lays a wreath at the National Military Working Dog Day commemorative service, Wacol, Queensland, on 7 June 2022.

Dogs in warfare have a very long history starting in ancient times. From being trained in combat, to their use as scouts, sentries, messengers, mercy dogs, and trackers, their uses have been varied and some continue to exist in modern military usage.

wikipedia



Above left -Wikipedia military dog, right - Puppies Radar and Roma, in their new Air Force Centenary 2021 jackets, play at the RAAF Security and Fire School. Photo: Corporal Nicci Freeman

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A Greek island has been given \$4.9 million to honour a little-known Australian war story

A Greek island has been given \$4.9 million to honour a little-known Australian war story. War relations between Greeks and Australians were cemented much earlier than most people think, with the story of what happened on the island of Lemnos now set to be told thanks to Australian government funding.

A barren, windswept Greek island, closer to Turkey than it is to the mainland, has finally been awarded funding to honour the suffering and survival that occurred in a war hospital there more than 100 years ago. Sydney resident Rosemary Dwyer travelled to Lemnos in 2015 to get a deeper understanding of her great aunt Grace Wilson's experience as a nurse caring for Australian soldiers often wounded in neighbouring Gallipoli. But when she arrived, she was surprised to see that without a guide, very little could be gained about the Lemnos story due to poor signage and services on the island. "When we got there, it was just sort of open areas - because the hospitals were tents so they had long blown away - but there were no markings, nothing to record what had happened there or where," Ms Dwyer said.

Lemnos - a 476 km² island now home to about 16,000 people - was the final departure point for the Australian landings at Gallipoli and also served as a major hospital base for injured soldiers. Between August and November 1915, more than 80,000 sick and wounded soldiers arrived there to be treated or evacuated to other hospitals. While the casualties were tremendous, the team there managed to save a lot of lives. Nevertheless, 148 Australians, 76 New Zealanders, and others are buried there in two Commonwealth war cemeteries.

Sydney's Lemnian community has played a key role in getting the Lemnos Hospital story recognised and funded, with some saying few Australians know of its significance. Much of Greek-Australian war relations centre on the Greek Campaign and Battle of Crete fought during World War II, but the cordial ties began much earlier with local Lemnians and Australians interacting at the hospital in World War I, which began in 1914.

Con Havas is the president of the Sydney Lemnian Club. His ancestors tended to the bodies of those who died, he said, making sure they had dignity. "Everyone would help them, when an Australian ... whoever was dead, they would have them buried, ensure all was in order, they would give them poppies ... the little flowers."

The graves on Lemnos are proudly maintained by the locals. While the island is dry and barren, the lawn around the graves is a bright shade of green. "The local Lemnians are proud that they are caretakers of these cemeteries and that they are immaculately looked after," said researcher Elizabeth Kaydos, who is of Lemnian descent. "The island is arid, but there is lawn... green lawn in the cemeteries and you walk through, it's a very emotional experience."

The locals also hold their own ANZAC Day service to commemorate the war effort, with some Australian dignitaries and families making the journey each year. But as it stands, the area only has the gravestones in the green. The rest holds no obvious evidence that the site was once a busy hospital.

A grant of \$4.9 million dollars in Australian government funding - with the support of the Greek government - now hopes to change that, with plans for a remembrance trail, signage and interactive tour to be developed on the island. Announced last month, the 2022-23 federal budget papers list "\$4.9 million over 2 years ... to construct the Lemnos Remembrance Trail on the former site of an Australian field hospital on the Greek island of Lemnos". The funding is included as part of "commemorations and activities to honour our veterans" alongside activities to acknowledge Australia's participation in the Vietnam War as well as upgrades to a memorial park in Malaysia.



Left to Right - A coffee stop in the village of Portianou on Lemnos during World War One. Source: Supplied / photolab
Credit: Photolab;

Soldiers arriving at Lemnos from Gallipoli during the war. Credit: Supplied;

Grace Wilson was known to be formidable, standing up for better working conditions



**Left - The main road of the Lemnos tent hospital. Credit: A.W Savage Collection, New South Wales State Library
Right - Lemnos then and now. Credit: AW Savage Cheryl Ward Bernard De Broglio. State Library of NSW**

Brad Manera is a senior historian at the Anzac War Memorial in Sydney's Hyde Park. He said the plans for Lemnos are a significant acknowledgment of a little-known part of Greek-Australian history. "Very rarely do we try and preserve and interpret a logistics base or a support base for a campaign. Lemnos ticks all those boxes." "[In a] space that was once a tented encampment, once the tents disappear, how do you understand how the island worked? An interpretive trail is going to be vital if we are going to understand just how important the logistics base on Lemnos was."

Adding to the long-lasting connection between Australia and the island, Elizabeth Kaydos' research has also uncovered evidence of a number of Australians named Lemnos, or a derivative of it. They include a Lemnos Arthur Kelly, a McIntosh John Lemnos (born in 1915), and a Vietnam War veteran named Corporal Lemnos Bertram Knight.

The nurses' accounts of life on Lemnos when it was a war hospital are grim. Among many commendations, matron Grace Wilson was the first woman to be made a lifetime member of the RSL. She attempted to make conditions bearable for the injured on Lemnos and for the nurses caring for them.

"In August 1915, when Grace and the third Australian General Hospital arrived, there was no equipment, no facilities were ready and they were trapped on the boat in the harbour until things were a little more organised," her great-niece Ms Dwyer said. "But there were 150 wounded just lying on pebbles and rocks in the open in the heat and no provisions. When the nurses finally did disembark, they used their uniforms for bandages. They tore up the uniforms and gave the soldiers a lot of their rations."

Ms Dwyer has learned that her great-aunt made a real impact on the island. "We were sort of astonished when we arrived there that the local people ... knew the history and knew who Grace was." "That's an important tradition and connection that will now be maintained forever."

While the island was the scene of much suffering and tragedy, other diary entries from the time describe the peace the island offered, with the queue to use thermal baths stretching for more than a kilometre. Often, it would be the first warm wash some soldiers would've had for months.

Even though some of the history can be painful, historian Mr Manera said it's important it gets acknowledged. "I hope that there are lessons in remembering past wars when we look at going to war in the future."

"When you walk those windswept hills of Lemnos, and you come across a Commonwealth war cemetery with line after line of headstones... is there a more poignant reminder of the tragedy of war?"

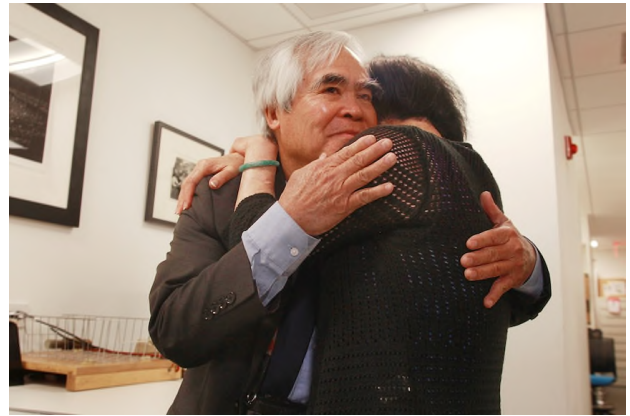


**Left to Right - Rosemary Dwyer has collected historical records of her highly decorated great aunt, matron Grace Wilson. Credit: Dijana Damjanovic;
Con Havas (far left) is the President of the Sydney Lemnian Club, which has played a key role in highlighting the story of what happened on Lemnos.;
Elizabeth Kaydos has researched the Lemnos story. Credit: Dijana Damjanovic**

50 years on, war photographer Nick Ut looks back on iconic photo with 'Napalm Girl' Kim Phuc



'Napalm girl' looks back at historic picture and advocates peace, Nine-year-old Kim Phuc ripped off her burning clothes, fleeing from napalm.(AP: Nick Ut, File)



'The events that day inspired a friendship that has endured for half a century.(AP: Chuck Zoeller)

Fifty years ago a young photojournalist covering the war in his native Vietnam took a photograph and saved the life of a young girl badly burned by a napalm attack. The photo won a Pulitzer Prize and the events that day inspired a friendship that has endured for half a century. The girl, naked and screaming, ran directly toward Nick Ut's camera — and into history.

Her name is Kim Phuc, and the instant the Associated Press photographer captured her image 50 years ago — on June 8, 1972 — she became more than a victim of a napalm strike on a Vietnamese hamlet. "Right now, I don't think it is 50 years ago. It just amazed me. I just think, like just yesterday," Ms Phuc said.

She was and is an international symbol of that unpopular war, and of the torment inflicted on innocent people in all wars. Mr Ut said he hopes the legacy of the image is that "you need to help the people". Mr Ut was inspired to become a photojournalist by his brother, who worked at the AP before him, and was killed covering a battle.

Now a grandmother, Ms Phuc emigrated to Canada where she lives with her husband. She was just nine years old when her village was attacked by South Vietnamese planes, dropping napalm on troops and civilians. Mr Ut heard Ms Phuc's screams as she ran to escape her burning village and snapped the photo. After taking the photos of her and others, he loaded Ms Phuc into his vehicle and took her to a hospital. They both agree that's what saved her life. She had burns on over 65 per cent of her body. "Not only taking the picture, but he did something extra work that he rushed me to the nearest hospital. He saved my life," Ms Phuc said. "I'm so thankful."

"When I took the picture, the boy, he died right in front of my camera. But my eye saw Kim running without clothes. I saw that she was on fire, burning," Mr Ut said. "I want to help her right away. If I take more pictures I think she die right there. There were a lot of journalists there, but everyone left."

He drove her to a small hospital, flashing his American press badge and demanding that doctors treat her. "I thought, oh my goodness, I got burned like that. I would be ugly girl, not normal anymore," Ms Phuc said. "I was so terrified and so scared, of course. And I thank God for that moment."

Since that day, Mr Ut tells young photographers to help, rather than stick to a non-interventionist code.

"If something happens, like with Kim, you need to help people. First you need to help people. Before you leave. Save people's lives first," he said. When he left, Mr Ut assured Ms Phuc that she would not be forgotten.

Mr Ut won a Pulitzer Prize for the chilling photograph that came to symbolise the horrors of the Vietnam War and arguably helped end it. The photograph is thought to be one of the most memorable pictures of the 20th century. While looking at the original negatives of the photo in New York, Ms Phuc thanked Mr Ut. "I'm so thankful that I'm still alive and I'm so thankful for him to be there at that moment, to do his job as a photographer," she said. "I came from that picture as the victim of war and it had a big impact all over the world, it touched people's hearts and but right now after 50 years I am no longer a victim of war."



Kim Phuc and Nick Ut holding the original negative of the iconic 'Napalm Girl' photo at The AP headquarters photo library. (AP: Chuck Zoeller)

Meet F.R.E.D - a soldier's best friend



Field Ration Eating Device - FRED



P38

The Field Ration Eating Device (FRED), a uniquely Australian innovation, has been copied by many, but never surpassed. What started as a simple tin opener, the FRED has been developed into a tool used by diggers for many applications over the decades.

During the Second World War, Australia produced the world's first 24-hour (three meal) combat ration pack. During this period the first 'spoon opener' was trialled. Further trials were conducted from the mid-50s, with full scale production starting in 1958. The bottle opener was added in 1966, and since conversion to metric in 1977.

From a sight adjustment tool, general purpose screw-driver and a survival multi-tool, as well as countless other applications for which it was never designed, but is apparently well-suited. It has outlasted the .303 rifle, the L1A1 SLR and the original F88, and we can't think of any other piece of modern kit that can claim the same longevity, or has captured the imagination quite like the humble FRED.

Introduced around 1943, the F.R.E.D., a combination can opener, bottle opener and spoon, was included in military ration packs. Officially a Field Ration Eating Device, it was familiarly known as the "F**king Ridiculous Eating Device".

It may have been based on a similar U.S. device called the P38, which lacked the refinements of spoon and bottle opener and was invented in 1942. Soldiers in both forces formed a fierce attachment to these devices, which were just as useful for cleaning your fingernails as opening a can, and protested at their removal from active service when new packaging was introduced.

In 2005, a Captain Brian Tuohy wrote to The Soldiers' Newspaper lamenting the loss of an old friend. "A nasty rumour is spreading far and wide throughout the ranks as to the demise of an old and faithful friend that has been both a saviour and an ally over the years," he wrote. The "friend" was the F.R.E.D. "As far back as World War II, the faithful Fred has been issued in one form or another to be utilised for whatever means it was required," the Captain continued. "From opening tin cans to cleaning fingernails or personal assault weapons to a makeshift screwdriver, the humble Fred has served well. It has never been decorated, mentioned in dispatches or given a Commanding Officers Commendation. It has gone about its business, serving the Australian soldier, sailor and airman in every conceivable country and operation in the world without the recognition it so rightly deserves."

Unfortunately, Captain Tuohy's lament fell on deaf ears. An acerbic reply from the ADF Logistics Manager citing the cost saving in using ring-pull cans drew several responses from other servicemen. "Shock, Fred has gone. On reading the letter I immediately went to the backyard and buried my current Fred. A few words were said and tears glistened in my eyes, as Fred had been my faithful companion for more than 30 years," wrote one.

It wasn't just the soldiers themselves who appreciated these handy devices. Many collected their P38s or Freds and brought them home, where they were seized on by appreciative spouses. "Of course my wife will never again look at me with that same loving look on return from the field - the crosses we bear for progress," one soldier wrote.

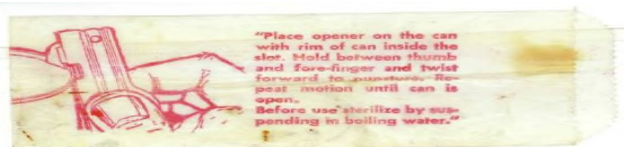
Another similar device was included with British Army "Operational Ration Pack, General Purpose" 24-hour ration pack and "Compo" Composite (14 man) Ration pack rations. At one stage they were manufactured by W.P. Warren Engineering Co. Ltd, Birmingham, England. The instructions printed on the miniature greaseproof paper bag they were supplied in read:

TO OPEN CAN:

Place opener on the can with rim of can inside the slot.

Hold between thumb and forefinger and twist forward to puncture.

Repeat motion until can is open.



Sources - P Dorman, Wikipedia, Australian War Memorial

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See bottom of opposite page



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The irony for mankind is that a computer program asks a human to prove that they're not a robot.



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Answer - a dead bird

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