



AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA BALLARAT BRANCH

Newsletter April/May 2021



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Social Luncheon Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month commencing at 11.45 am (December meeting held closer to Christmas) **Committee Meetings** are held on the third Thursday of each month at 1 pm followed by a **General Business Meeting** at approx 2 pm to which all financial members are welcome to attend to ratify or otherwise the actions of the committee on that day and raise other matters.



Well done to the Ballarat RSL for persisting, under difficulties, with Anzac Day arrangements which subsequently enabled full Anzac Day Services in Ballarat for 2021 including the Dawn Service, the March and Morning Service, followed by camaraderie at the Midland-Ballarat RSL Sports & Services Club. **Photo at right** : L to R : Rob Petty, Branch Secretary Peter Dowling RFD and Junior Vice-president Peter Schoutens. **Below** : "At Ease" in a side street prior to the march. Unfortunately our banner was a bit saggy at this stage but we are informed that it looked good during the march. It was a tough job for the young female Army Cadet coping with the breeze and the height of the poles. May need to look at shortening the poles just a little. As well as those that marched, members Peter Allen & Ernie and Margaret Chapman took part in motorised golf buggies. Thanks to Stephen Brown for the photos.





Left & Right:
Branch President Noel Hutchins laid a wreath on behalf of our Branch of the Air Force Association. Peter Schoutens laid a wreath to No 2 Squadron RAAF, with whom he served in Vietnam.



On Anzac Day 2021 we paid tribute, via our 1wags.org.au facebook page, to all trainees of No 1 Wireless Air Gunners School during WWII, those who perished and those who returned.

Our own Branch member Mr Jack Bell was one of those trainees.

Looking at just Course No 9; of the 99 trainees on that course alone, 44 lost their lives :
14 in the Pacific,
11 in the Middle East,
14 in Europe and
5 in aircraft accidents

LEST WE FORGET



Ballarat RSL President Alan Douglass and Noel Hutchins after the Anzac Day Services

NEWSLETTERS ARE NOW BI-MONTHLY : If you have a look at the heading at the top of page 1, you will see that this issue is the **April/May 2021** newsletter. From this issue, our newsletters will be published bi-monthly, i.e.: *every second month*, but they will generally be larger issues. Going forward, newsletters will be for **February/March, April/May, June/July, August/September, October/November, December/January**.

POSTPONED BUS TRIP : The Committee has discussed our much delayed bus trip to the B24 Hangar at Werribee and the Werribee Mansion and Gardens and, considering that as we are now entering the colder months has determined that the locations for this trip, especially the Werribee Mansion and Gardens would best be left until Spring with a date to be looked at from late September onwards.

Another factor taken into account with that decision is the upcoming Dedication Ceremony relating to the No13 Radar Station "Cape Otway RAAF interpretive Exhibition" to which members of our Branch have been invited to attend on Saturday 19th June info re this follows below.

No 13 RADAR STATION CAPE OTWAY, RAAF RADAR INTERPRETATIVE EXHIBITION~DEDICATION CEREMONY
A Dedication Ceremony for the 13RS Cape Otway RAAF Radar Interpretive Exhibition was delayed when it opened in June 2020 due to COVID 19 restrictions. We have now been advised that the Dedication Ceremony has been scheduled for Saturday 19 June 2021 at the Cape Otway Lightstation precinct. Although details are still being finalised, the actual ceremony will occur around 12.30 pm. June is the month that No 13 Radar Station Cape Otway became operational in 1942, but the Dedication Ceremony 79 years later will be the first formal celebration of its existence. This wonderful walk and exhibition has been a collaborative effort between AFA Radar Branch President Chris Harneth and his team and the Cape Otway Lightstation..... **yes, the lightstation is part of this exhibition.**

The interactive entrance board at the start of the walk acknowledges, at the bottom of the board, contributions made by individuals that made the project possible, including "the generous donation by Marg Bennett in memory of her father Wing Commander James Eric REYNOLDS".



This Marg Bennett is of course our own member Margaret Bennett. Her father, Wing Commander Reynolds, following his war-time top secret Radar Unit responsibilities, became the post-war Commanding Officer at RAAF Ballarat with the establishment of the RAAF Air and Ground Radio School, which later, on 1 Dec 52, became the RAAF School of Radio. At the time her father was posted to Ballarat to be the Commanding officer and to establish the RAAF Air and Ground Radio School, Margaret was an 18 year old and lived with her family in what was then the Commanding Officer's married quarters and which is now the hut housing the Ballarat Morris Minor Club beside our Airport Hut 48 rooms.

Margaret tells me that during the five years of the war while the family lived in Essendon, they were never aware of where her father was going or what he was doing, so secret was the establishment of the various RAAF Radar units around our shores.

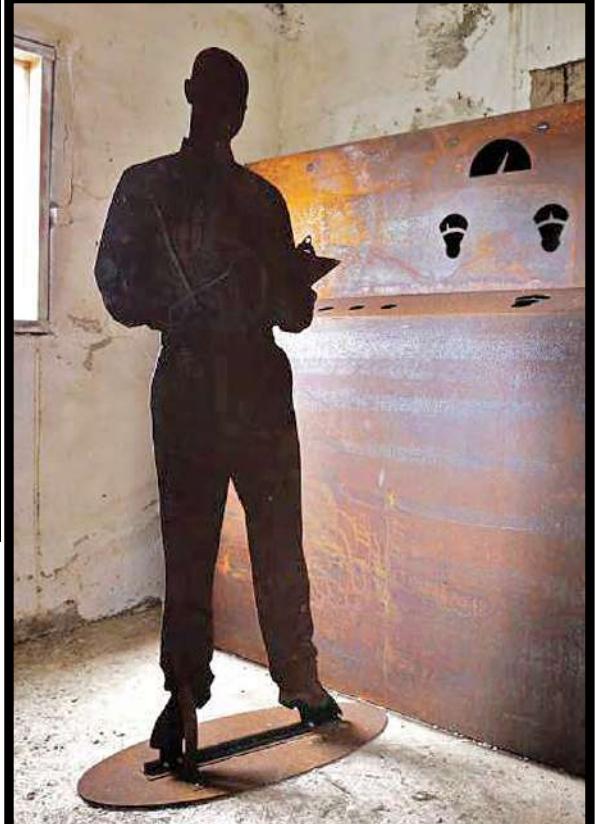


Cape Otway Radar Bunker

So there is a real connection between this Cape Otway exhibition and the former RAAF Ballarat. If you are in any way interested in RAAF history or Australian Military History, this is a "must go". The "Lightstation Precinct" houses a collection of historic buildings, from the 1850's Keeper's Quarters and 1859 Telegraph Station to the No 13 Radar Station Doover established in 1942. It is actually a tourist trail that also references local indigenous highlights.

The lightstation is open to the public from 10 am to 5 pm, 7 days a week. Visitors can climb the lighthouse, explore the buildings and attend local presentations and history talks given by local guides.

There is also a cafe located in the 1858 Keeper's Quarters. Now this generally costs \$20 per person; however, with the massive input by the AFA Radar Branch, all Air Force Association members and family, on producing proof of Air Force Association membership, the price is reduced to just \$10 per person. For our visit to attend the Dedication Ceremony, *it is expected that there will be no charge*.



The use of Corten Steel silhouettes to depict RAAF staff at work is an interesting concept.

WILL WE NEED A BUS? We need, without delay, for members to advise if they would like to attend so as we can look at numbers to decide whether we need to book a bus or if we will use car sharing in a number of members private cars. **Please advise Secretary Peter Dowling via call or text to 0418 281 775** or email to peterwdowling@bigpond.com if you wish to be listed to attend. We will be ensuring that Margaret Bennett will be transported to attend whether by bus or in private transport.

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#### **PRESIDENT'S UPCOMING ABSENCE ~ (17 May to 14 June Inclusive)**

**Branch President Noel Hutchins will be standing aside from all Air Force Association matters while going interstate on holidays. During the period from Monday 17th May and Monday 14th June 2021 inclusive, all matters relating to our Ballarat Branch should be directed to Branch Secretary Peter Dowling RFD. Peter will handle all Branch admin matters during this period as well as representing our Branch at the May 27th AFA Vic Presidents' Meeting, AGM and State Conference as well as organising and running our Monthly Social Luncheon Meeting on Tuesday 1st June and organising names and transport for the 19th June Cape Otway Radar Station visit, as above, for which the President will be back and will be attending. Peter's contact detail are listed in the box headings at top of page 1 and in the paragraph above.**



# BATTLE FOR AUSTRALIA/ AIR FORCE 100 BALLARAT 28/29 AUGUST 2021



The Ballarat Branch of the Air Force Association will be conducting a  
**BATTLE FOR AUSTRALIA/ AIR FORCE 100 WEEKEND**  
on Saturday 28th and Sunday 29th August 2021

This will consist of a formal Ball on the Saturday night 28th August, a full Commemorative Service at the Australian Ex-Prisoners of War Memorial at Lake Wendouree on the Sunday Morning 29th August and the opening to the public of the restored World War Two RAAF Officers' Mess building at the Ballarat Aerodrome on the Sunday afternoon.

Arrangements for the Saturday Night Ball are being handled by our 'Runways Dance' team of Ann and Rob Petty. This will be a formal (black Tie) event and ex-service attendees are encouraged to wear the miniatures of their Defence Service medals. Those wishing to wear Defence Force medals of a family member may wear miniatures of such medals on the right hand side of their formal attire.

Further details of the Sunday morning Commemorative Service and the Sunday afternoon arrangements will be released when finalised. For the Saturday Night Ball, advanced booking arrangements **MAY BE MADE NOW** by contacting **Ann Petty on 0414 441 149**.

**You do not have to dance to attend the Ball**, but there will be opportunities during the night for attendees to dance freestyle such as during the appearance of The Pacific Belles who will make a couple of appearances during the night, providing a bit of a WWII era military feel.

Dance music will be provided by Dance Band, "Mantel", providing great music for New Vogue and Sequence dances as well as Ballroom. So for just **\$30 per person** you are getting:



**GREAT DANCE MUSIC BY MANTEL**, some

**GREAT ENTERTAINMENT** with a couple of appearances by the **PACIFIC BELLES**.

**PLUS : SUPPER AND GREAT LUCKY DOOR PRIZES**

**WORTH EVERY CENT, EVEN IF YOU DON'T DANCE**

**This is an opportunity for Air Force Association members to get in first.. Give Ann a Call NOW**

**Ann Petty on 0414 441 149.**

**WE WELCOME TWO NEW MEMBERS : Ilona (Elana), FESCO** has joined us. Elena 'signed up' after attending, as a guest, our Thursday afternoon openings to take part in our "exercise" or dance practice to music. When seeing what we are about, Elena was eager to join us. **Welcome Elena.**

**Geoffrey BLOMELEY** was visiting Ballarat from his Western Victoria home town of Nathalia and decided to pop out to the aerodrome to have a look at the huts where his father trained as a Wireless Air Gunner during WWII. I just happened to be at the rooms so Geoffrey came in to enquire about records of his Dad's service.

I was able to show Geoffrey, via our 1wags.org.au website, details of his father, Pilot Officer William J. BLOMELEY, having been involved in both Course 14 and Course 17. Geoffrey readily accepted my invitation to join up with us. **Welcome Geoffrey.**

Geoffrey said that his father told a story of how he was given compassionate leave to go back home to help his father 'finish the shearing'. Maybe this explains why he was involved in two separate courses.

No 1 WAG William J. BLOMELEY was born at Moama NSW on 18 Jan 1920. He enlisted in the RAAF on 26 April 1941 at 21 years of age. At the time of his discharge on 26 September 1945 with the rank of Pilot Officer, he was serving with No 67 Squadron, a Maritime Patrol Squadron during WWII.

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UPCOMING DATES TO REMEMBER

Tuesday 4th May : **11.45 am. Monthly Social Luncheon Meeting.** This will be a 'Member presentation' where member Keith Pitman will talk about his Son's service involving the Australian Army's **Tiger ARH**. ARH standing for Armed Reconnaissance Helicopter.

Thursday 6th May: **Rooms and library open from 2.30 pm to 5 pm and dance music in** meeting/common room for exercise or dance practice. This will be the last

Thursday 13th May: of the dance music for exercise/dance until after the President returns from holidays.

Tuesday 1st June: **11.45 am Monthly Social Luncheon Meeting.** Presentation by Branch Secretary Peter Dowling RFD.

Sunday 6th June: **D Day. Lest We Forget.**

Saturday 19th June: Trip to No 13 Radar Station Cape Otway Dedication Ceremony.

Tuesday 6th July: **11.45 am Monthly Social Luncheon Meeting.** Guest Speaker will be Victorian Police Senior Sergeant Barry JENKS who will speak about his involvement with The Kokoda Track.

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## **SOME THANK YOU'S**

Thank you to Stephen Brown for acting as **Member Support Person** for the Anzac Day march, for assisting with wreaths and taking photographs. Thanks to Janet Bates for that great **Anzac Day Tribute to 1WAGS** via the 1wags.org.au facebook page. And thanks to those committee members who help with set-up, kitchen duties and pack/clean up, raffle etc at our Monthly Social Luncheon Meetings. Thanks to Peter Schoutens for his work in setting up and providing audio visual facilities at those meetings. (NH, Pres)

**NEXT NEWSLETTER WILL BE THE JUNE/JULY ISSUE  
around end June/early July**