



# Pittwater RSL Sub-Branch

## LIVING TREASURES SOUVENIR



Sunday 9 October 2016

### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The Pittwater RSL Sub-Branch is very pleased to host a "Living Treasures" Luncheon on Sunday 9 October 2016 for all our Members.

We wanted to take this opportunity to profile our World War 2 Sub-Branch Veterans. We are very proud of your Service and Sacrifice.

#### Lest We Forget

*Deborah Carter*

**Deborah Carter**  
President

### Living Treasures Birthdates

Ted Lindsay	22 May 1920
Bobby Squire	02 Apr 1922
William Nichols	13 Jul 1922
Wal Williams	10 Oct 1922
Gwenyth Sneesby	17 Jun 1924
Bill Mackay	18 Sep 1924
Tommy Knox	09 Feb 1925
Gwynneth Ross	27 May 1925
Kel Dwyer	18 Jun 1925
Bert Brownlie	11 Nov 1925
Mal Stapleton	26 Dec 1925
Julian Vanslambrouck	27 Jul 1926
Brian Sargeson	15 Dec 1930



### TED LINDSAY - 22 May 1920

**Service No. NX55346**  
**Australian Army - Sapper**  
**Battalion: 14 FLD COY R.A.E.**

**1939-1945 Star; Pacific Star; 1939-1945 War Medal; Australian Service Medal 1939-1945**

I enlisted in the Royal Australian Engineers in Paddington in 1942, age 22. I had basic training for 6 months at Tamworth NSW, becoming an Electrical Fitter by trade. Following training we took the train to Townsville via Greta and Brisbane. We flew from Townsville and deployed to New Guinea.

As Engineers we were expected to improvise constantly. I had a truck driver's license so I was tasked to work on building roads, and soon after I was sent to the Kokoda track to improve it for the infantry.

While on the Kokoda track I built a wireless station to improve morale and link the troops to information and supply requests.

I was also involved in two major construction projects, but first I had to fix the abandoned cement mixer and welding machines needed for the job. The cement mixer was used to lay the foundation for petrol storage tanks, and the welder was to build the actual tanks.

I was then tasked to build a deep water pier and wharf so we could open up a supply chain for our embattled troops. The major drawback was that every nut and bolt were delivered blank, so I had to go to the Port Moresby machine shop to cut the threads. We also received assistance from the US Forces who helped lay a 3 inch pipeline from the wharf to the airfield. This allowed fuel to be pumped directly, and rapidly, into my storage tanks and the aircraft that were needed in the Battle of the Coral Sea and defence of our troops. This was a game changer, as we no longer relied on the old, slow method of 44 gallon drums to fill the aircraft.

I was demobilised in Sydney in 1945.



### BOBBY SQUIRE - 02 April 1922

**Service No. VF346760**  
**Australian Women's Army Service - Driver**  
**Battalion: HQVLC**

**1939-1945 War Medal**  
**Australian Service Medal 1939-1945**

I was born Bobby Kirkpatrick. I joined the Australian Women's Army Service (AWAS) in 1941 in Melbourne, and I did my initial training at West Circus, which doesn't exist today. I became a qualified Driver/Mechanic and proudly graduated second in my class. Back then we had to be able to strip and reassemble our entire vehicle; we did a lot of this at Tischler's Garage on St. Kilda Road.

After two years as a Mechanic I got my Driver's licence and soon became one of the most proficient and reliable drivers. Whenever a visiting General was in Melbourne, I got the job of chauffeuring

them. I was also assigned to the US and British Force Headquarters in Melbourne for two months each. I had the pleasure of driving Generals Dewing and Vasey, and Lady Blamey. General Blamey declined my services, as he wanted a male driver and either a Bentley or Rolls Royce, and not my standard Staff Car.

It was not until much later that I learned that I played a minor role to highly successful clandestine operations. On numerous occasions I drove the Commandos of the "MV Krait". I didn't know where they came from or where they were going, but learned of their daring Z Force raid on Japanese ships in Singapore Harbour. The Krait is now displayed at the Australian National Maritime Museum.

I was demobilised at the end of 1943 when I gave birth to my children.





**WILLIAM NICHOLS - 13 July 1922**  
**Service No. NX121025**  
**Australian Army - WO II**  
**Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit**

**1939-1945 Star**  
**Pacific Star**  
**1939-1945 War Medal**  
**Australian Service Medal 1939 - 1945**

I joined the CMF from 5 Nov 1941 to 21 Sep 1942, and then the AIF from 22 Sep 1942 to my demobilisation in Marrickville on 11 Feb 1946.

I did my initial training South of Geraldton (WA). Because I could type and do short hand, I was promoted to Sergeant within two months of



joining the AIF. Fate intervened one day when my unit was at the rifle range; a mortar explosion at camp killed the remainder of my platoon.

Prior to overseas deployment I contracted Measles and was hospitalised. Upon recovery I was initially posted to Finschhafen PNG and then to Milne Bay as part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division relief.

I was assigned to the Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit (ANGAU) where I led a task force to secure local native loyalty by paying them to support Allied troops over the Japanese.

My last night in PNG was spent in Rabaul sleeping at the foot of an active volcano.



**WAL WILLIAMS - 10 October 1922**  
**Service No. NX57223**  
**Australian Army - Private**  
**Battalion: 2/19 Australian Imperial Force**

**1939-1945 Star**  
**Pacific Star**  
**1939-1945 War Medal**  
**Australian Service Medal 1939-1945**  
**Australian Service Medal 1945-1975**  
**S.W. Pacific Clasp**

I enlisted in the Permanent Army on 13 January 1940 in Northbridge, NSW, and then joined the AIF 21 November 1941. I served 118 Days in Australia and 1370 days overseas, most of these as a POW (J).

My Battalion fought in the defence of Singapore from 8-15 Feb 1942. Our sector was attacked by 50 barges of Japanese infantry on the West coast near the Murai River. After the fall of Singapore we became POWs and were held in Changi Prison.

On 15 May 1942 we were transported to Burma as labour on the infamous Burma-Thai railway, where I served with 'A' Force for two years. Initially, I was worked napping stone as road base for Mergui airfield. What followed was over a year of hard labour on the railway construction.

Due to labour shortages, a lot of the fittest POWs, were to be transported as "Number 1 Japan Party" to Japan. We travelled overland by rail through Cambodia, then by small boats to work at Saigon. We were then shipped overland again, back to Singapore, as boats couldn't depart Saigon due to Allied submarine activity.

On 6 Sep 1944, 1300 of us were loaded on the 'Rakuyo Maru' for the journey to Japan. However, on 12 Sep, our ship was torpedoed and sunk by a US Submarine, unaware that POWs were onboard. While in the water we were also depth charged. My Navy mates told me to lie on my back, cross my arms and absorb the shock through my back, which I did. We treaded water for 24 hours after which we made a makeshift life raft that we floated in. This saved us from being machine gunned like a lot of the POWs in the actual Rakuyo lifeboats.

Three days later we were picked up by a Japanese Corvette and ultimately taken to Hanen Island for processing. In addition to a year of barbaric hard labour in Japan, I also survived the firebombing of Tokyo and Yokohama by our Allied bombers.

Collectively, I was a POW at the hands of the Japanese for three and a half years. In 1945, I returned to Australia on my 23<sup>rd</sup> birthday, 10 October, and was discharged on 5 February 1946.



**GWENYTH SNEESBY - 17 June 1924**  
**Service No. WR379**  
**Women's Royal Australian Naval Service**  
**- Leading Writer**

**Served: HMAS "Kuttabul"**

**1939-1945 War Medal**  
**Australian Service Medal 1939 - 1945**

I was born Gwenyth Forster in 1924. My Father was in the Royal Navy during WW1, and then the Australian Navy, so the Navy was in my blood!

The recruiting office was in Loftus street, Circular Quay and I signed up there and went into the Navy. I was eighteen.

After basic training at HMAS Penguin, I spent the next three years at Bradley's Head Degaussing Range.

I was one of eight WRANS who operated the instruments used for the testing of the ship's Magnetic Field; essential for the Electrical Officers to calculate settings required to repel magnetic mines.

Fatefully, I happened to be off duty when my steam ferry, HMAS Kuttabul, was sunk while docked at Garden Island during the Japanese Midget Submarine attack on Sydney Harbour at 2:30am on 01 June 1942.





**BILL MACKAY - 18 September 1924**  
**Service No. 3065030**  
**British Army - Private**  
**Battalion: 5<sup>th</sup> Scottish Parachute Regiment**

**1939-1945 Star; Africa Star; Italy Star;  
 France and Germany Star; Defence Medal;  
 1939-1945 War Medal, GSM Palestine**

I joined the 5<sup>th</sup> Scottish Regiment in 1941, at the age of 16 and transferred to the Parachute Regiment in 1942. I had to get a letter of permission from my Mother so I could enlist. I was initially sent to North Africa, where I fought for about two and a half years.

About March 1943, we conducted Long Range Desert Patrols in Jeeps and did numerous jumps in preparation for the invasion of Sicily. The Sicilian campaign finished prior to us jumping so we partook in the Sea-borne invasion of Italy. We came ashore at the main port of Taranto and pushed through within a day with little opposition. I fought in Italy up to June 1944, when we jumped into France with the Americans one week after D-Day. Our stick of five were dropped well off course, and one of our troops broke his ankle on landing. Over three days we

made our way to rendezvous with the main Regiment, capturing German troops as we went, pushing our comrade in a wheel barrow.

After fighting in France for a month, the 5<sup>th</sup> Scottish were sent back to Italy to prepare for the invasion of Greece. After defeating the Germans, we became embroiled in a Greek civil war against the Communists in Athens. We were then sent back to Italy in support of the British 8<sup>th</sup> Army and the US 5<sup>th</sup> Army until the end of the war, being used as a rapid reaction force. Throughout my wartime service I made a total of 37 Parachute jumps, with 6 made into live combat situations in Italy, France and Greece.

I returned home at the end of the war for about two weeks of service leave. However, instead of being de-mobbed, our 5<sup>th</sup> Scottish was chosen to be sent to Palestine from 1946-1947, where we were caught up in the Arab War of Independence. Finally, in 1947 I was sent home to Scotland and demobilised. I immediately joined the Territorial Army in Glasgow where I served a further seven years, up to 1954.

In 1959, I immigrated to Australia.



**TOMMY KNOX - 09 February 1925**  
**Service No. 1823036**  
**Royal Air Force - Warrant Officer.**  
**Bomber Command, Parachute Instructor**

**1939-1945 Star with Bomber Command  
 Clasp; France and Germany Star;  
 1939-1945 War Medal; GSM Palestine;  
 Legion of Honour (France)**

I was born in Scotland, and at the age of 18 years, enlisted in the Air Force in 1943. I served in the UK and Palestine.

I trained as a flight engineer at 4 School of Technical training in South Wales. I joined the crew at 1657 Conversion Unit at Stradishall, Suffolk. The crew consisted of two Australians, two Canadians, two English and me. We moved to 149 Sqn Lakenheath, Suffolk on 15 March 1944.

We were flying Stirlings on special duties. First op was on 31 March 1944, mining Frisian Islands, subsequent ops included bombing, more mining and low level moonlit trips to supply the French Resistance fighters. I transferred to 199 Sqn in September 1944 when 149 converted to Lancasters. 199 did diversionary raids over Germany – we took on another crew member to operate the special radio jamming gear. We did our last op on 11 November 1944, having completed a tour of 40 trips. The crew split up. Posted to 30 M.U. at Sealand, Cheshire as a Draughtsman. The war in Europe finished when I was there and I decided to have a go at parachuting, so after doing a PTIS course, I did my first jump from a balloon in February 1946 and finished up training paratroopers in Palestine.

I demobilised on 23 February 1947.



**GWYNNETH ROSS - 27 May 1925**  
**Service No. NF445836**  
**Australian Women's Army Service**  
**Sergeant**

**1939-1945 Star; 1939-1945 War Medal;  
 Australian Service Medal 1939-1945**

I was born Gwynneth Munro. On 22 December 1942, I enlisted in the Australian Women's Army Service and served in the Finance Office in Sydney.

The war was going very badly for Australia against the Japanese, and I was determined to help. I changed my date of birth on the birth certificate to appear a year older. Now 17 years of age, I was called up and spent the usual 3 weeks of training at Ingleburn Camp. My age deception was soon discovered, and I was ordered to remain in

Sydney to be at home each night with my parents, and so I remained in the Finance Office for more than 4 years.

One memorable event was a week spent in 113 Australian General Hospital where I had an appendix operation. I remember people in the ward gathered around the wireless on 6 June 1944. This day forever remains special and very emotional date for me, and a date we all know as the day the Normandy landings commenced in France.

I was discharged on 11 September 1946. Doug came home May 1946, after 5½ years mostly in overseas campaigns (Matilda tanks). We married on 28 September 1946. My late husband and I visited Normandy several times over the years, always with the same emotions.





**KEL DWYER - 18 June 1925**  
**Service No. NX201877**  
**Australian Army - Private**  
**Battalion: 64<sup>th</sup> Infantry Gunner, 6 inch**  
**Howitzer**

**1939-1945 Star**

**Pacific Star**

**1939-1945 War Medal**

**Australian Service Medal 1939-1945**

**Australian Service Medal 1945-1975**

**Queen Wilhelmina Medal**

I served in Ambon and Morotai, Dutch East Indies (Indonesia).



I have two vivid recollections from my WW2 service. The first was that my Battalion was told we would be involved in the seaborne invasion of Japan. The US were prepared to sacrifice 1,000,000 casualties, but this didn't materialise due to Japan's surrender following the dropping of two Atomic bombs.

The second occurred post-war, while guarding Japanese POWs on Morotai. I asked an English speaking Japanese Officer if they ever considered invading Australia. He replied, "of course". I asked why, as our country is two thirds desert. He informed me that they intended to irrigate the country's interior with mountain tunnels, using all of the Australian population as "white coolies".



**BERT BROWNLIE - 11 November 1925**

**Service No. 138575**

**Royal Australian Air Force - Leading Air**  
**Craftsman**

**7 S.F.T.S. (Service Flying Training School).**

**7 O.T.U. (Operational Training Unit)**

**1939-1945 War Medal**

**Australian Service Medal 1939-1945**

In 1943, I enlisted in Chatswood on my birthday, 11 Nov. My air mechanic training occurred in Adelaide and Melbourne and covered Aircraft systems, engines, air screws and parachutes.

I was then posted to Tocumwal NSW, where I would serve for the duration of WW2 with 7 SFTS and 7 OTU. I serviced Gypsy Moths, Wirraways, B-24s and P-40 Kittyhawks, and I volunteered to deploy and assist the Dutch Air Force. This requirement was quashed, as was my chance to be posted overseas. While at 7 OTU, General



Macarthur inspected the base and decreed that we were to become a B-24 heavy Bomber base as the last line of defence after Townsville.

Some notable memories I have. We had a special base visit by Gracie Fields and I was dobbed in to sing for her, regrettably or thankfully, I only knew one song, "Annie Laurie". Our first three B-24s to see action were set on fire by sabotage in their hangars. I helped service General Blamey's B-24 which was fitted with arm chairs. After completing a test flight the pilot couldn't get the right main landing gear to extend. He tried every trick in the book, and just when it looked like we'd do a wheels up landing, it came down with a plane shuddering noise for a safe landing.

When the war in Europe ended a B-24 Liberator Squadron flew over the Melbourne parade and I was lucky to be one of the airborne crew-members; what an amazing formation. I was discharged at Bradfield Park on 12 March 1946.



**MAL STAPLETON - 26 December 1925**

**Service No. F6821**

**Royal Australian Navy - Able Seaman**

**Served: HMAS Wagga (Corvette J315)**

**Ship commissioned December 1942**

**1939-1945 Star; Pacific Star; 1939-1945 War**  
**Medal; Australian Service Medal 1939-1945;**  
**Australian Service Medal Pacific 1945-1975;**  
**Queen Wilhelmina Medal**

Our ship, HMAS Wagga, was in one of the biggest attacks on Milne Bay (New Guinea) where they reckoned there were over a thousand Japanese dive bombers attacking the bay and our ships. Many thought it was a turning point in the Pacific War.

Our Captain saved us with his experience and skill in manoeuvring the ship as he barked out orders to avoid the bombers "Hard to port", "Hard to starboard"- the right commands at the right time.



After the liberation of Hong Kong, our ship arrived to help those held in the Stanley Internment Camp. Three of us from the HMAS Wagga were sent onshore to investigate the "Red Light" district, to see if it was safe for people to go ashore and check that no Japanese were still there. Our ship's job was to take the captured civilians – men, women and children who had been imprisoned by the Japanese – out of camp and get them aboard two British Hospital ships.

In August 1945, I was on watch in the ship's "crow's nest" when we got the news that the war was over. Radio silence was broken and the news was amplified throughout the ship.

Later we got a message to tell us about the atomic bombs that had been dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, bringing about Japan's surrender. None of us knew what an atomic bomb was, but we were told that thousands of people had been killed.



**JULIAN VANSLAMBROUCK - 27 July 1926**  
**Service No. 46/23405**  
**Belgian Army - Private**

I was born near Passchendaele, Belgium, and I was 14 when WW2 started.

At 15, I went to a Mechanical Engineering school and graduated in 1944. However, as Germany occupied Belgium, I was summoned by the Gestapo and told that I would soon be sent to Germany as a labourer in an aircraft factory.

My Father knew that the invasion of Europe was about to happen so he told me not to show up for the Gestapo deportation. For their safety I did not tell any of my family, but I hid in a family friend's farm until we were liberated by Canadian troops at the end of 1944. If I had been found we would have all been shot.



At the end of the war, looking for work, I enlisted in the Belgian Army. Because I could understand a little German and was an Engineer, I was put in a special unit and sent to Cologne in the British sector. We were tasked to help rebuild the German service infrastructure. I worked on the logistics of truck transport from Cherbourg to Czechoslovakia, Railways and was harbour master at Wessel on the Rhine monitoring the loading of coal barges. This unit was disbanded in 1948.

I worked almost two years in Germany and was discharged in 1947. I wanted to get away from the Army and the possibility of being sent to the Belgian Congo, so I boarded the Italian boat 'Cyrenia' and made the 30 day trip to Melbourne in 1949.

I embarked on a new adventure, arriving in Australia not knowing any English.



**BRIAN SARGESON - 15 December 1930**  
**Service No: PX 853619**  
**Royal Navy - Leading Electrician's Mate**

**Defence Medal**  
**1939-1945 War Medal**  
**NGSM, Minesweeper Clasp**  
**1953 Coronation Medal**

I enlisted on 3 January 1945, at HMS St. George, on the Isle of Man. Following my initial training, I went to sea at age 15 as a Boy Seaman and subsequently became a qualified Leading Electrician's Mate.

My main WW2 area of operations was the Irish Sea. My Ship, HMS Ben Hallam, was a minesweeper and I remember that we blew up a mine 4 days before the end of the War. There was such a destructive force in the blast that the sea was covered in fish.

I was tasked to collect as many fish as possible to share with the other five "Sweepers" in our flotilla. It was quite a feast.

Our normal routine consisted of 3 day sea patrols, however, without shower facilities on board you can imagine the state of the crew on return to port. The routine was that six ship's crews would then avail themselves to a mass shower facility, and as a youngster, it was daunting amongst the crusty, hairy old salts. Needless to say, I never removed my 'Bonds' during this exercise.

On Christmas Day 1949 I was on Board the HMS "Illustrious". We were supporting the launch of the new Ark Royal at Birkenhead. To mark this significant occasion, we were inspected by Queen Elizabeth 1.

I was demobilised at Portsmouth in December 1955.

