



The North-Western Ranger

8th/7th BATTALION – 2RVR ASSOCIATION Inc.
VICTORIA'S OWN COUNTRY BATTALION
(Including the Ballarat Ranger Military Museum Newsletter)



If undeliverable, please return to:
8/7 Bn – 2 RVR Association
c/- 3/519 Peel St North
Ballarat, Vic, 3350
Post print approved pp: 100019194

Vol. 29 No. 3, September 2025

This newsletter was printed by the office of:

JULIANA ADDISON
MEMBER FOR WENDOUREE

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Patron: The Commanding Officer, 8/7 RVR, Lt Col Paul O'Donnell

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Vol. 29, No. 3, September 2025

Website:

87bn2rvr.asn.au

Facebook:

[8/7 battalion-2rvr association](https://www.facebook.com/87battalion-2rvr-association)

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	Rob Chatfield

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8/7 Battalion – 2 RVR Association

This newsletter was printed by the office of:

Annual Activities:

ANZAC Day – Ballarat, Warrnambool & Shepparton

Annual Dinner – Warrnambool, October

Annual Dinner – Ballarat, October/November

AGM – Ballarat, October/November

JULIANA ADDISON
MEMBER FOR WENDOUREE

Monthly Activities: Committee Meeting – normally the First Tuesday of the Month, Alfredton Sports Centre, Cuthberts Road, or Ranger Barracks, Ballarat.

The Association's Newsletter Editor's email address is 87th2rvrassoc@gmail.com

For urgent newsletter matters please use nkaleckie@outlook.com or call 0400 573 802.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Annual Dinners: Warrnambool: 11 October 2025, and Ballarat: 18 October 2025.

Annual General Meeting:

Ballarat, 19 October 2025, Alfredton Sports & Recreation Centre, Cuthberts Road.

Ex-22 RVR-A AGM Weekend: New date: **1st/2nd November 2025**, Rupanyup, Murtoa and Horsham!

UPCOMING EVENTS - Dinners and the AGM/Elections.

Warrnambool Dinner: This year's Warrnambool dinner will be held on 11 October 2025.

Date/Time: Saturday, 11 October 2025, 6.30pm for 7.00pm

Place: Warrnambool RSL.

Dress: Neat Casual. Miniature Medals may be worn.

Drinks/Meals: On arrival, report to the table set up for the association, to register. You may then proceed to the bar for your complimentary drink (beer, wine or soft – no 'top shelf drinks'). Meals can be ordered from the menu on the table. Choice from 4 mains and 2 sweets. The cost, as per previous years, is \$40 per person, *paid when booking*.

Payment: When booking, *payment by EFT is preferred*. When paying by EFT, use the 'Description' box for your name as the 'Reference' box is for your use and is not sent. Please email details of your payment to Barbara Birthisel at barbarabirthisel@bigpond.com While *EFT is preferred*, cash or cheque can be used on the night, but you still need to advise Lyndon of your proposed attendance! **8/7th Bn 2RVR Association Inc; BSB: 063 502 Acc No.: 1035 4333**

RSVP: By 4 October 2025, to Lyndon King on 0447 623 291.

Call or text with your name and number attending with you.

Association Membership of \$25 (cash/cheque only) can be paid on the night.

Ballarat Dinner: This year's Ballarat dinner will be held a week after the Warrnambool dinner, on 18 October 2025.

Date/Time: Saturday, 18 October 2025, 6.30pm for 7.00pm

Place: The Grand (Former Ballarat Club), 203 Dana Street, Ballarat.

Dress: Neat casual, but for gents coat, association tie with miniature medals is preferred!

Drinks: The first drink will be complementary (beer, wine or soft – no 'top shelf drinks'). Thereafter, other drinks will be at bar prices.

Meals: Two course meal - \$40 per person *paid when booking*.

Payment: When booking, *payment by EFT is preferred*. When paying by EFT, use the 'Description' box for your name as the 'Reference' box is for your use and is not sent. Please email details of your payment to Barbara Birthisel at barbarabirthisel@bigpond.com While *EFT is preferred*, cash or cheque can be used on the night, but you still need to advise Dick of your proposed attendance! **8/7th Bn 2RVR Association Inc; BSB: 063 502 Acc No.: 1035 4333**

RSVP: By 10 October 2025, to Dick Wilkie: 0413 530 537 or richardwilkie@outlook.com

Association Membership of \$25 (cash/cheque) can be paid on the night.

AGM: The association's AGM will be held on the same weekend as the Ballarat Dinner.

Date/Time: Sunday, 19 October 2025, 10.00am

Place: Alfredton Sports and Recreation Centre, Cuthberts Road, Alfredton.

Nibbles: Will be provided on the day.

Note: AGM Nomination and Proxy Forms are printed on the back page. To be sent to The Secretary, Jason County at j_county@hotmail.com or PO Box 543, Ballarat West, Vic, 3355, by 4 October 2025.

WEBSITE (Rob Chatfield)

The association website is up and running. If you have photos relevant to the old 8/7 Bn, 2 RVR or 8/7 RVR that are suitable for viewing on a website, the association would be willing to display them! They can be emailed to The Editor, or if you have too many to email, Rob can send you a 'Memory Stick' to send them to him. Make sure that you have as much detail as you can for your photos (date, place and names are preferred) and in jpeg format. All photos will be credited to the provider. You can also send stories of your time in the battalion. Each member is part of 8/7 Bn, 2 RVR and 8/7 RVR history – we all have a story!!! Rob advised at the September committee meeting that in the last 30 days there were 207 'hits' on the website. **8/7 Bn – 2 RVR-A Website: 87bn2rvr.asn.au**
The association is also Facebook: search **8/7 battalion-2rvr association**

REPORTS

2025 Mid-Winter Gathering!

Following this and last year's ANZAC Day Services at the games between Ballarat and Wendouree Football Clubs, the association was asked by the Ballarat Football Netball Club to join the club's



members for an afternoon tea during the Ballarat-Wendouree return match at Alfredton Recreation Reserve on 19 July 2025. The Ballarat Football Club hosted the visitors.

Members, friends and family as well as currently serving and former troops are most welcome. A great time was held by all who attended, which included twenty association members, 2 Committee Members from the RVR Association and four from Shepparton. The football club is hoping to make this an annual event!

Left: Dick Wilkie, Jason County, Des Saaghy (RVR-A) and Mary-Anne Rovers (RVR-A)



COMMITTEE MEETING AT RANGER BARRACKS

The August Committee Meeting was held at Ranger Barracks. One of the big issues for all Army units, whether they be on exercise or on a deployment, is what happens at home to the families of the members while they are away. To look at this matter, the battalion is developing a 'Welfare Plan' whereby the battalion, with help from such organisations as our association, the RSL, the RVR Association and so on, looks after the needs of the families at home, which takes some pressure off the deployed member. The Commanding Officer addressed the committee on this matter prior to the committee meeting.

VISIT TO PUCKAPUNYAL

The 8/7 Bn – 2 RVR and RVR Associations were invited by 8/7 RVR to a Range Day at Puckapunyal on 16 August 2025. Ten of our association members and three from the RVR Association took up the offer. Bob Hope drove from Warrnambool to Ballarat and then joined Neil Bailey and Lyn Birch, Ian Nunn and Robert Chatfield in the SixT 12-Seater Hi Ace Minibus driven by Neil Leckie. They met up with Dick Wilkie from Geelong who arrived with Jason County from Melbourne. At the Pucka Main Gate they met Rob Dowell and Leigh Coote from the Shepparton 'Olds and Bolds'. Representing the RVR Association were Vice President Garry McCluskey, Welfare Officer Des Saaghy and member Barry Dunham.

After obtaining their Visitor Passes, the group headed to the Static Mechanical Range (SMR) in two Army Hi Ace buses where they were briefed on the practices being run by OC B Company, Major



Anton Glushco and were allowed to move as far as the rear of the firing point (as long as they had the correct hearing protection). Shooting took place from all positions: lying, kneeling and standing, both supported and unsupported.

Immediate Actions (IAs) needed to be undertaken at the correct time so that a shooter did not run out of rounds. Each firer started with three 30-round magazines. Targets were at 100m, 200m and 300m, along with a sideways moving target at 100m. Left: When the moving target was hit it fell to the left.

The Commanding Officer, Lieutenant

Colonel Paul O'Donnell spoke with the visitors about the support that the families left at home needed when deployments occur. The associations can help the battalion with this task. Paul served with the battalion as a 'Digger' in Ballarat before gaining his commission and progressing rapidly through the ranks, arriving back to the battalion as CO.

Other members of the battalion that the attendees met at the shoot included the Battalion 2IC (the title has returned to 2IC from Executive Officer or XO) Major Francis Dignam, The Regimental Sergeant Major WO1 Aaron Roberts and WO1 Rob Dick of the 8/7 RVR Training Cell. Rob has been a great friend of our Association - he organised our visit to the ACP Course at Watsonia last year and our visit to the Rifleman's Course Range Shoot also held last year.

Representing A Company was the OC Major Nick Arundel, 2IC Lieutenant Trent Timmers and CSM WO2 Piotr Krupa. Nick is a long serving soldier and officer in the battalion and is a member of the 'Olds and Bolds' group. He was in the battalion at the same time as Rob Dowell, Rob Chatfield and Jason County and they know many of the same soldiers. Piotr was a Range Instructor on the 2019 shoot that both Associations attended.

C Company, which includes Ballarat, was represented by the OC, Maj Robert Powell and the outgoing CSM, WO2 Glenn Ludeman. Like the CO, Robert started life as a Digger with the battalion in Ballarat. Glenn is now the Unit Welfare Officer for 8/7 RVR, along with WO2 Stephanie Moncur, a full-timer, as admin support, and he will be in direct contact with the association on battalion welfare issues. Dick Wilkie and Jason County have previously met Glenn at the 2024 Warfighter Exercise and the 2025 Victorian Infantry Dinner.

The Army provided lunch – no-one went hungry, and it was surprisingly hot coming out of a ‘Hot Box’!!! After lunch the Armoured Corps were using the range for a short while before it returned to 8/7 RVR. So, mid-afternoon, after being taken back to the Main Gate Car Park, the attendees had a chat, bid farewell and returned home satisfied that they had been seen at the shoot, had spoken with some soldiers and learnt about the activities on the range and how the battalion was going!



With the CO, 8/7 RVR, Lt Col Paul O'Donnell, the RSM WO1 Aaron Roberts and Bn 2IC Major Francis Dignam. Lyn Birch and Neil Bailey, Leigh Coote, Neil Leckie, Garry McCluskey, Rob Chatfield, Dick Wilkie, Jason County, Bob Hope, Ian Nunn and Rob Dowell.

On the RVR Website, two of their members reported on the day:

On Saturday, 16 August, members from both the 8/7 Bn - 2 RVR and RVR Associations travelled to Puckapunyal Range, as invited by CO 8/7 RVR, to view live firing on the MTR range. Fortunately, the weather shined on us and despite it being a bit on the chilly side the mid-August sun shone through making for a pleasant day. The members viewed soldiers from 8/7 RVR using the EF 88 and Minimi engaging targets at ranges from 100 to 300 meters. The soldiers of all ranks demonstrated a good level of marksmanship engaging the various distance targets and from the various firing positions. The outing was another great opportunity for the battalion's officers, NCO's, OR's and association members to mix, meet and chat about various facets of today's soldiering and to pleasantly reminisce about those halcyon days of soldiering of our past.

On a personal level I found it a very rewarding and reassuring visit, and as usual when we have these Unit/Association interactions I come away very impressed with the commitment, quality and very high standard of the battalion's officers, NCO's & OR's.: all these people are doing a damn good job and clearly love their work. Thanks go out to the 8/7 Bn - 2 RVR Association for including the RVR Association in the day's events and also notable thanks to the officers, NCO's and OR's of 8/7 RVR for making us most welcome and even supplying us a decent lunch and refreshments ... to finish off, in short I'd say "...as you were, carry on..." Garry McCluskey, Vice President RVR-A

Postscript: To the day at Pucka with 8th/7th Battalion 16 August 2025: It never amazes me the bond between serving and past serving members. Suddenly older men stood a little straighter a little taller again. Times have changed however, yet they say the same. Pride is not a given these days but a sense of belonging to an organization that remains a vital part of who we are, our culture and values. These values go far beyond service life. A big Special thanks to all the officers, the RSM, NCO's and Diggers from 8th/7th for the effort to spend time with past serving members and the RVRA Association members, with the many questions we asked. To us retired ex-Army these events, as I call it, stay in our mind for many years to come. A quick reminder the Association is here to serve you all and look after your welfare, join us on this journey. Des Saaghy, RVR-A Welfare Officer

FEATURES:

Exercise Talisman Sabre is a biennial, multinational military exercise led by Australia and the United States. Talisman Sabre involves joint exercises performed by the Australian Defence Force and the United States Military across six locations in northern and central Australia, the Coral Sea, and in Honolulu, Denver, and Suffolk, Va., though the bulk of the exercises are concentrated at the Shoalwater Bay Military Training Area and other locations in northern and central Australia and Australia's territorial sea and exclusive economic zone.

To reflect its bilateral nature, the leadership of the exercise switches between Australia and the US every 2 years. The exercise focuses on crisis-action planning and contingency response, enhancing both nations' military capabilities to deal with regional contingencies and the war on terrorism. The exercise is historically held in odd-numbered years starting from 2005, with the tenth iteration taking place in 2023.

This year the exercise ran from 13 July to 4 August. At its peak, 43,000 personnel from Australia, Canada, Fiji, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, PNG, the Philippines, South Korea, Singapore, Thailand, Tonga and the United Kingdom trained with the United States were involved, while personnel from Malaysia and Vietnam attended as observers. 19 nations took part and it was held in Australia and Papua New Guinea.



8/7 RVR operated in defence of RAAF Curtin in North-western Western Australia.

Photo at left courtesy of 'Army', 7 August 2025.

80 Years Since the End of WW2 (Virtual War Memorial Australia, vwma.org.au)

It took three long, devastating, and cruel months, from Germany's surrender to the Allied forces in May 1945, for World War II to finally come to an end. Japan surrendered on 15 August 1945, bringing the global conflict to a close. In July 1945 the principal Allied leaders of the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union met in the Berlin suburb of Potsdam to determine the postwar settlement in both Europe and the Pacific. The day before the conference began on 17 July, the first nuclear bomb had been successfully tested by the United States in the New Mexico desert.

A key part of this conference was the issuing of a declaration demanding the unconditional surrender of the Japanese Empire. Among the defining clauses of the Potsdam Declaration was a

commitment to democratic reform: "The Japanese Government shall remove all obstacles to the revival and strengthening of democratic tendencies among the Japanese people. Freedom of speech, of religion, and of thought, as well as respect for the fundamental human rights shall be established." Despite clear warnings from the United States that horrific weapons would be used against civilian populations if Japan refused to surrender, not knowing what was coming, the country's militarist leaders formally rejected the terms offered to them by the Allied powers on the 26 July and instead chose to fight on.

The loss of life that would result from a full scale bombardment of Japan was offset by the determination to end the war quickly and decisively, resulting in the United States dropping the first [atomic bomb](#) on Hiroshima on 6 August 1945. The power of this weapon was unprecedented and shocking, resulting up to 166,000 deaths at Hiroshima in the year that followed. After the bombing, the US President issued a statement: "If they do not now accept our terms, they may expect a rain of ruin from the air, the like of which has never been seen on this earth."

Even after the destruction of Hiroshima, Japanese leaders wanted to fight on, but another bombing three days later, on 9 August, finally broke their spirit. Interestingly, Nagasaki was not the primary target, as the American bombers flew over the city of Kokura; their view was obscured by a factory intentionally creating smoke by burning black tar. The secondary target of Nagasaki was bombed instead, killing an estimated further 80,000 people. These horrific events mark the first, and hopefully last, use of devastating nuclear power. After much debate as the horror of the nuclear bombings became clear, Emperor Hirohito solemnly announced on radio to the Japanese public that his government had accepted the terms of surrender on 15 August - the first time most Japanese had heard their Emperor speak.

VP Day – Victory in the Pacific – marked the unconditional surrender of Japan after over three years of war starting with the bombing of Pearl Harbour on 7 December 1941. Because of the time zones, the US recognises VJ Day – Victory over Japan – a day earlier on 14 August but in Australia we celebrate the end of hostilities when peace was declared in Japan. The formal surrender documents were signed at a ceremony in Tokyo Bay on 2 September 1945.

For Australia, although the war was over, large numbers of Australians were freed from terrible Japanese captivity. Over 17,000 Australians died in the war against Japan, 8,000 of whom died as prisoners of war. We honour their memory and give thanks to those lucky enough to return, many of whom bore the physical and emotional scars of their ordeal for the rest of their lives.

For many, their service did not end with the ceasefire. Thousands went on to serve as part of the Occupation Force Japan - BCOF. We also remember and thank the civilians on the home front who sacrificed so much throughout the war. The impact of the conflict was profound, many families were forever changed, broken, or reshaped by its legacy.

Commemorations were held at the Second World War Memorial Forecourt at the Shrine of Remembrance, Melbourne, and a small ceremony was held at the Cenotaph in Sturt Street Ballarat on Friday 15 August 2025.

In Warrnambool, Carlyn and Ron Sproston have worked for six years to provide a memorial to locals who served in WW2. Their efforts now adorn the walls of the Warrnambool RSL Bistro and Function Room. The interactive resource contains the names of 8,000 service personnel from the district who served in WW2, with 1,400 of them buried in the local cemetery. The project grew from Ron putting together a record of those buried in the cemetery.

Vietnam Veterans Day, Ballarat

For years the Ballarat Sub-branch of the Vietnam Veterans have held their Vietnam Veterans Day in Ballarat on the Sunday before 18 August. This allows that who wish to, to attend the main service in Melbourne on the actual date. This year was no exception. The Master of Ceremonies was local identity, but now a resident of Wollongong, WIN TV Newsreader Bruce Roberts. Bruce gave a rousing introduction to the service (shown below). The Catafalque and Flag Parties were provided by the 300 Army Cadet Unit (based at Ranger Barracks). Addresses were given by the Mayor Cr Tracy Hargreaves, Federal MP Catherine King, Lt Col Paul O'Donnell (CO 8/7 RVR), and a student from Phoenix P-12 College. Prayers were given by RAAF Chaplain Rev. Keith Lanyon, The Ode by Kevin Scott (Sebastopol RSL) and the Last Post/Rouse by Bugler Craig Farrington. Music was provided by the Ballarat Brass Band.



Vietnam Veterans, Warrnambool



Vietnam Veterans from the Warrnambool District meet every Thursday morning at the Warrnambool RSL. Many of the veterans gathered at the RSL on Vietnam Veterans Day, 18 August 2025. They paused to remember their fallen mates at their memorial located in Artillery Crescent, just across the road from the main Warrnambool War Memorial, a short distance from the RSL.

Clarrie's Flag: The Seventh Battalion A.I.F. "Cede Nullis" (By David Laird, 7th Bn Association)

In Ballarat we tend to concentrate on the 8th Battalion and its history, but the battalion is named the 8th/7th Battalion, so its history includes both the 7th and 8th Battalions. The 8th Battalion's history, with its connection to Ballarat, is well-known. Not so the 7th Battalion!

The Seventh Battalion Banner has been carried by the battalion every year on ANZAC Day and at other official and private battalion ceremonies since 1925. The history we have is anecdotal and has been passed down through the families of the battalion. The flag was commissioned by Mrs Kate Blannin-Ferguson, in 1925. In 1914, a 16-year-old Clarrie Wignell, of Euroa, later Lance Corporal Wignell Regimental Number 20 - Military Medal and Bar, had enlisted in the AIF and was sent to Broadmeadows Army Camp for basic training. It was there he met and became firm friends with Lance and Daryl Blannin-Ferguson. On ANZAC Day 1915, Private Lance Blannin-Ferguson Reg. No. 687 was one of many men Killed in Action. Thirteen days later, his brother Private Daryl Gardner Blannin-Ferguson Reg. No. 688 was also Killed in Action. Their widowed mother was distraught at the news of the death of her only two sons. Their deaths had a lasting impact on her, from which she understandably had difficulty in overcoming throughout her life. Mrs Blannin-Ferguson was listed as Next of Kin on her sons' Service Records. At the end of the war, she was visited by Clarrie Wignell, who embodied the sense of kinship, loyalty and family that was the hallmark of the 7th Battalion and all other battalions of the Australian Imperial Forces. Clarrie kept in touch with Kate, who grew very fond of him. When the ANZAC Day marches became a more regular feature of life, Kate commissioned a seamstress create the Banner as a fitting tribute to the young men who had served.

Something more fitting, to her mind, than the official Battalion Colours, she gave it to Clarrie as a personal gift and it immediately took pride of place at the front of the battalion marches, memorial and church services, where it has been paraded ever since and continues to do so. It was always known as "Clarrie's Flag". It is embroidered with the names of famous battles that her sons never got to attend.

Before Clarrie's passing, he asked that the flag be taken care of by Fred Laird (son of Sergeant Fred Laird Reg. No. 2379). Fred took custody of the flag and promised Clarrie that it would make appearances at every engagement where it had always held pride of place. These include the Melbourne ANZAC Day March, the Camberwell RSL the Wattle Park ANZAC Day Ceremony and Lone Pine commemoration ceremony at The Shrine of Remembrance.

Attempts have been made with Trustees of the Shrine and the RSL to preserve it for posterity and display it to the public, however as it is a private item and not an official flag, there was no interest shown. The flag continues to grace ANZAC Day parades with a strong contingent of Seventh Battalion families to escort it and will continue to do so.

Fred Laird passed away in September 2010 and had entrusted his son David with the Flag. David was present when Clarrie made a gift of his flag to Fred and David was also asked by Clarrie to make sure the tradition carried on when Fred eventually passed away. David made a promise to Clarrie that day, and, by extension, the entire 7th Battalion.

As the 7th Battalion flag was created for two boys who perished at Gallipoli and one boy who survived the enduring horror that was The Great War, it represents the association's perennial memory of the men who did not return and of the men who did return, the benefits of whose deeds and sacrifice we continue to enjoy today.

During research into the Blannin-Ferguson boys, David discovered that they had an older brother who enlisted in a different battalion in Sydney and returned to Sydney at the end of the War. A simple White Pages enquiry on the surname Blannin-Ferguson allowed David to touch base with Anne Blannin-Ferguson, whose grandfather was the missing son. Anne is very familiar with the story of her great-uncles, but had no idea of the existence of Clarrie's Flag until David spoke with her in 2011. Anne is now a very welcome and regular attendee at the Melbourne ANZAC Day March. The Flag continues to unite the 7th Battalion family to this day.

As a final note of interest, the renowned military researcher Lambis Englezos, who discovered the mass Australian grave in Fromelles in 2008, is certain he has found the final resting place of approximately 148 Australian Soldiers at Krithia. The name Daryl Balnnin-Ferguson is inscribed on the memorial at Krithia, but he has no known grave.

By the bonds created through this flag, it is possible, when Lambis gets permission to recover the bodies, we will be able to DNA test a living relative, and potentially, give a young man a grave of his own and a refreshed memory, over 100 years after his demise. The flag also unites five other 7th Battalion families whose undiscovered remains are also at Krithia.

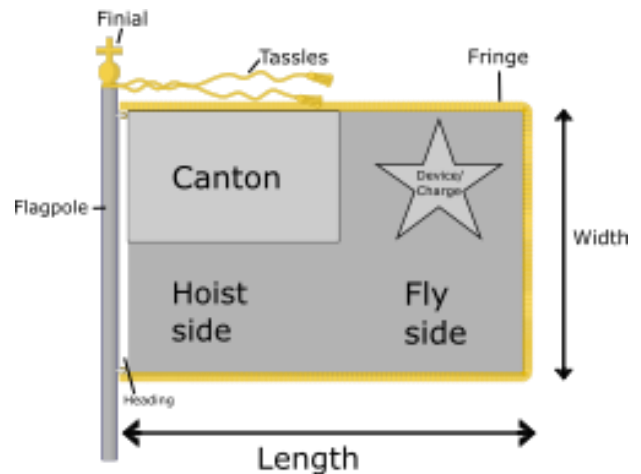


David Laird with the 7th Battalion Flag and Clarrie Wignall and 'his' flag.

Battle Flags (Australian National Flag Association)

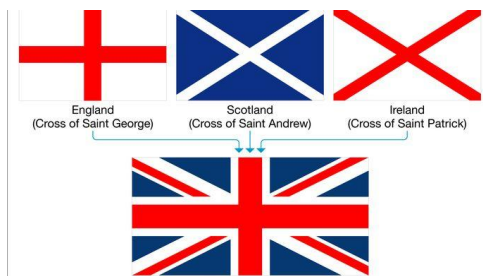
Not Army based, but interesting nevertheless! Battle Flags are large flags flown from various parts of a warship when in action. The reason for using two or more flags during battle was to ensure that at least one flag would still be conspicuously displayed if others were lost or damaged or could not be seen by the enemy because of smoke. The absence of a flag signalled that a ship had surrendered. When wooden masts were used, the flags were fixed to the mast with nails to prevent them from being easily removed and to show that a warship refused to surrender, hence the expression '*nauling the colours to the mast*'.

From Tudor times, the Royal Navy was divided into the red, blue and white squadrons in order of seniority with flags of the corresponding colour. In the canton or top left corner (the upper hoist) of each was the Cross of St George but following the union of England with Scotland in 1707, the Cross of St Andrew was added. The rest of each flag was wholly red, blue or white. The white squadron's flag posed a problem because it was difficult to distinguish it from the predominantly white flag of pre-revolutionary France. The white squadron's flag was altered to display the Cross of St George over the entire flag and ultimately, the Union Flag began in an enlarged canton.



The word 'Ensign' is used for a flag flown from a vessel to include nationality. It may be the national flag of the country or a modified version of it.

At the outbreak of The Great War, Admiralty instructions required British warships in action to conspicuously display the White and Blue Ensigns, but this order was quickly revoked to replace the Blue Ensign with the Union Flag and two months later with the Red Ensign, only to be reversed about a year later. These confusing changes resulted from the difficulty in differentiating the Royal Navy's White Ensign from the Imperial German Naval Ensign when visibility was poor.



One of the most famous examples of using the flags/ensigns was during the Battle of the Sunda Strait in February/March 1942, when *HMAS Perth* was in action with the *USS Houston* against superior Japanese forces. Lieutenant Hamlin, USN, a survivor of the *Houston*, described *Perth's* appearance in this action: 'there was *Perth*, a beautiful with bone in her teeth ... three battle flags streaming ... smoke pouring ... firing all the time ... rapid salvos ... shells falling all around her ... it was one of the finest sights I have ever seen!'

Battle of Sunda Strait

The two cruisers evaded the nine torpedoes launched by the destroyer *Fubuki*. At midnight, *Perth* attempted to force a way through the destroyers, but was hit by four torpedoes in the space of a few minutes, then subject to close-range gunfire until sinking early on 1 March. *Houston's* gunners had scored hits on three different destroyers and sunk a minesweeper, but she was struck by three torpedoes in quick succession. The ship came to a stop, Japanese destroyers moved in, machine-gunning the decks and men in the water. A few minutes later, *Houston* rolled over and sank.



Left: HMAS Perth

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO:

Chris Rantall was a well-liked member at the 8/7 RVR Warrnambool Depot and rose to the rank of Sergeant. He took up skydiving and after surviving what was described as a ‘freak’ accident while skydiving at Torquay, was told he would never walk again. But he is walking again and is now riding his bicycle. He has recovered so well that he is about to ride from Warrnambool to Box Hill.

As a result of his injuries Chris was possibly on a spiral into homelessness. However, he had support bases that prevented him from going down that path. His wife, Berni, saved him from disengaging from family and friends and living on the streets. Other veterans do not have the support Chris has and do ‘spiral’ into homelessness.

Vasey RSL Care support people who have made a significant difference for us all, by making a difference for them. Their services include home care and residential aged care, affordable housing and veteran support. As a not-for-profit organisation, they welcome all community members. They re-invest their revenue in their people, equipment, and accommodation. They embrace evidence-based advances in care while remaining true to their legacy of supporting veterans and their families. Vasey RSL Care have 300 units in ten locations across Victoria. Regional units are located in Wodonga and Geelong, and now there are six units in Warrnambool.

Vasey RSL Care, managed by veteran Chris Gray, runs ‘The V Centre’, a unique initiative in Australia providing transitional accommodation for up to 12 months combined with a tailored support program to enable veterans to address challenges and set themselves up for an independent life.

V Centre participants may be homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless, or in need of some support to overcome issues and live independently. The transition to civilian life is not easy for some: veterans may experience a loss of identity and camaraderie, or changes that can lead to mental health challenges, financial difficulties or relationship issues. For some, this leads to a downwards spiral

with one issue compounding another. The V Centre is a veteran-specific service that provides transitional accommodation and wraparound support to get you back on your feet. Strongly supported by ex-service organisations (ESOs) and veterans with lived experience of homelessness, the program empowers veterans to live their life of independence – a life to value.



Chris (left), and a fellow veteran, Adam Kent, who is transitioning from full-time Army to civilian life, will participate in the ‘Tour De V Centre’,

riding from Warrnambool to Ararat, Ballarat, Geelong and ending 460km later in Box Hill, leaving Warrnambool on 12 October 2025. The aim of the ride is to bring awareness to the plight of veteran homelessness and of the services that are available to veterans, such as V Centre.

Readers can support Chris and his fellow riders by attending functions in various towns along the route: <https://www.vaseyrslcare.org.au/tour-de-v-centre/>

VALE:

David George Bent. In the 4th Edition of the 2023 Newsletters we reported on association member David Bent, who was a CMF officer who served with the Australian Army Training Team in Vietnam (the AATTV). David and his wife Cheryl had retired in Glenroy, a suburb of Albury, NSW. Sadly, we were recently advised by Cheryl that David had passed away.

David George Bent was born in Geelong on 28 October 1944 to Lindsay and Minnie Bent, a brother to Gary and Judith. David was an Army Cadet at school and in 1963 was employed by Shell at the Geelong refinery. Not having shown enough skill to be listed by the Geelong Football Club, he fell back on the great times he had while serving in the school cadets and on 15 June 1963 enlisted as 3173096 in the CMF with A Company, 2 RVR, at Geelong in the Pentropic Division days. David was commissioned as a Lieutenant in 2 RVR on 1 September 1965. Promoted to Temporary Captain on 30 September 1968, he served with the AATTV from 1 October 1968 to 1 October 1969. In 1970 David transferred to HQ 4 Task Force and then to 8th/13th Victorian Mounted Rifles in 1973 after he had acquired North-Eastern Petroleum, a wholesale (Depots) and retail (Service Stations) business based in Albury, eventually covering North-East Victoria and the Southern Riverina of NSW. David retired from the Reserve on 16 July 1974.



David married Cheryl Henry in November 1969, and they would have a son, Cameron. Cameron married Josué Pierrette (a French style of name) pronounced as Josway. David's brother Gary married Judith (Jude) Wallis in the early 1960s. Their children are Lisa, Katrina and Mark and they would have 5 grandchildren. David was known to them as 'Unca D'. Gary died in 2018 and Jude in 2021. David's sister Judith (Judy) married Robert Delalande. Their children are Philip, Louise and Fiona and they have two grandchildren.

David joined the 8/7 Bn – 2 RVR Association on 22 December 1998 and can be seen proudly wearing his association tie in the photo at left. Aged 80 years, David died on 19 April 2025 at Mercy Health, Albury. His funeral was held on 5 May and his body was cremated. Family described David as 'an incredible man, as brave as a lion with a kindness and generosity of spirit that made him very special to so many', 'a generous man, larger than life' and 'a tower of strength'. RIP

David.

CATCH-UP VALES:

John 'Garth' Schepis was born to John and Isabel Schepis in Ballarat on 6 March 1933 the eldest brother to Frederick, Barry, Marlene, Noel, William (Bill), Stephen and Christine. John joined the Citizen Military Forces and on 11 July 1956 was commissioned as a Lieutenant in the 8th/7th Battalion, the North Western Victorian Regiment under Lieutenant Colonel Stuart McDonald CBE MC ED. He was promoted to Temporary Captain on 21 January 1959 when under command of Lieutenant Colonel John Trevenen ED. John had discharged from the CMF by 1966.

John died at Ballarat on 29 May 2019 and is buried with his mother, who died on 13 February 2002, in Ballarat. His father had died earlier on 31 May 1993 and is buried in the Northern Memorial Park in the Melbourne suburb of Glenroy.

Henry John ‘Hank’ Nolan was born on 5 October 1930, joined the Priesthood and was ordained in Ballarat on 22 July 1956 by the then Bishop James O’Collins. He went on to serve in the Parishes of Ballarat, Koroit, Bungaree, Charlton, Warrnambool, Mortlake, Edenhope, Sebastopol and Beaufort. On 9 February 1968 Hank was commissioned as a Chaplain 4th Class in the Royal Australian Army Chaplains Department (RAAChD), RC, in the Australian Regular Army and was posted to Headquarters, Mornington Peninsular Area. Shortly afterwards, on 31 January 1969, Hank was posted to the Southern Command Character Guidance Team and attached to Headquarters Puckapunyal Area. He then served in Vietnam from 14 May 1969 to 14 May 1970 as a Chaplain at Headquarters, 1st Australian Task Force. On return to Australia he was posted to Headquarters, 10th Task Force.

Hank transferred to the Army Reserve in 1973 and in the early 1980s was attached to 2 RVR, Ballarat. From 1982 until 1991 Hank served as Vicar General of the Ballarat Diocese.



Hank Nolan died of cancer on 31 October 2007 and was buried in Ballarat.

7 August 2004. Past Officers Dinner, Ranger Barracks. Barbara Birthisel, Hank Nolan and Roger Gale. Background: Tom Laffey, Don Dow and Ted Lynes on the right.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership of \$25 per annum is due prior to the AGM on 19 October 2025. EFT payment preferred! **8/7th Bn 2RVR Association Inc; BSB: 063 502 Acc No.: 1035 4333**

Please put your name and/or membership code in the ‘Description’ box.

Cash/cheque payment can be received on the dinner nights in October.

For those not attending either dinner, cheques can be forwarded to:

**The Membership Officer
8/7 Bn - 2 RVR Association
PO Box 543,
Ballarat West,
Vic, 3350**

Make sure you include your name!!!!

Right: Troop emplaning during Exercise Talisman Sabre ’25.



MERCHANDISE:

8/7 Battalion-2 RVR Association Merchandise as at September 2025. *Postage is extra!*



Item:	Price
Polo Top, Black	\$45
Polo Top, Green	\$45
Cap	\$20
Tie	\$30
Lapel Badge	\$10
Association Patch, Green	\$10
Association Patch, Black	\$10
RVR Emblem Patch	\$10
Cold Weather Jacket	\$96
Cold Weather Vest	\$55
Nametag	\$7



Winter is coming!

We'll not quite, but the cooler weather is. To help with this we have added a woolen jumper to our range of merchandise.

They are available for \$68 plus postage. If you are interested please send us a direct message or contact Jason via email at j_county@hotmail.com



New:

Beanie	\$15
Stubby Holder	\$12



For all orders: contact Jason on email (preferred) at j_county@hotmail.com or 0418 141 788

FROM THE COLLECTION

Recently received photos from Support Company 2 RVR days. Can you fill in the missing names?



1970 2 RVR CAMP, PUCKAPUNYAL, ASSAULT PIONEER PLATOON

Rear: Norm Cain, Eddie Hoy, Max Humphrys, Sgt Kie Tinker, Cpl Trevor Johnstone, Allan Kidd and Nick Clarke

Centre: Dennis Shanley, LCpl Bernie O'Keefe, Bernie Crimmins, [unknown](#), LCpl Paul Carney

Front: Arnold Sheedy, Ian Campbell, Clive Coomber, Ian Dusrton and Max Quarrell.



1970 2 RVR CAMP, PUCKAPUNYAL, SUPPORT COMPANY

Rear: Sgt Kie Tinker, Pat Dixon, Ron Bates, [unknown](#), Allan Kidd, Nick Clarke, Kevin Earney, WO2 Sam Baxter, Colin Davies, David O'Grady, Cpl Max Baudinette, Sgt Bob McLaren, Sgt Robert Brittain and Capt Rob Suggett.

Centre: Ian Mathieson, Ian (Curly) Ler, Nigel Thoas, John Verhoeven, Max Humphrys, [unknown](#), Arnold Sheedy, Clive Coomber, Cpl Trevor Johnstone, Dennis Shanley, LCpl Paul Carney, Sgt Doug McCarthy.

Front: Norm Cain, Eddie Hoy, Bernie Crimmins, Kevin McSwain, Max Quarrell, Gary McKenzie, Neil Swann, LCpl Bernie O'Keefe, Keith Wallace, Len Toohey, Ian Durston, Ian Campbell and Gary McCarthy.

BALLARAT RANGER MILITARY MUSEUM MATTERS (Neil Leckie, Manager)

Progress at the Ranger Museum

As readers are aware, the museum is undergoing a bit of redevelopment! The containers are lined, wired and fitted-out with new specially made display cases. The 1911 issued 7th Australian Infantry Regiment “King’s Banner”, the 1914 issued 71st (City of Ballarat) Infantry and 1915 issued 70th Infantry (Ballarat Regiment) “Regimental Colours” are now installed. Note that these Colours are green and not blue as the units were not named ‘Royal’ and are therefore the Colours are not blue. Memorabilia from the commencement in 1858, as the Ballarat Volunteer Rifle Regiment, up until today is slowly being installed into the display cases.



After a Workplace Health & Safety Audit earlier this year, the containers now have Exit Lights and ‘Push to Open’ door latches. The Army is also looking at what other upgrades we need to qualify for ‘Open to the Public’ standard.

By the end of this year there should be, as the Australian Army History Unit suggested, a ‘potted history’ of the Army in Ballarat available to view. ‘Watch this Space’ for further developments.

Iconic Ballarat Statue Reinstated (Sandra James, Ballarat Times)

After an eight-month hiatus, a replacement Boer War Statue has been installed in Sturt Street (at the Lydiard Street intersection). The newly cast bronze statue is a like-for-like replacement of the original 117-year-old sculpture depicting a soldier on horseback rescuing a fellow soldier.

The original statue was deemed unrepairable after investigations revealed severe internal corrosion. Every detail of the original was replicated by Meridan Sculpture (of Fitzroy, Vic) using the traditional 'lost wax' technique. The original statue was crafted from beaten copper with a hessian and plaster core, while the new statue is cast in bronze, which offers greater durability and resilience.



South African Soldiers' Monument, Ballarat.

STATE OF VICTORIA.

AUSTRALIA

City of Ballarat Mayor Ct Tracey Hargreaves said the project was a vital investment in preserving Ballarat's historical legacy. 'This memorial has stood as a powerful tribute to the courage and sacrifice of those who served in the Boer War and has been a landmark in Sturt Street for more than a century,' she said. 'We are proud to see it restored in a way that honours the original craftsmanship while ensuring it will endure for generations to come.'

Wendouree MP Julianna Addison said she was thrilled to see the Boer War Memorial return to the centre of the city. 'The reinstatement of the Boer War Memorial Statue is a testament to Ballarat's commitment to preserving history for future generations,' she said. Community members are invited to visit the newly reinstated statue and reflect on the legacy of those who served in the Boer War from 1899 to 1902.



8/7 Battalion – 2 RVR Association Inc. A0035094M:

NOMINATION FORM

We, being financial members of the association, hereby nominate ,
a financial member of the 8th/7th Battalion – Assoc’n Inc. for the position marked with a ‘X’ below:

☐ President ☐ Vice President ☐ Treasure ☐ Secretary ☐ Committee Member

Proposer’s Name: Signature

Secunder’s Name: Signature

I hereby accept the nomination (Name):

Signature of Nominee: Date/...../.....

8/7 Battalion – 2 RVR Association Inc. A0035094M:

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Proposer’s Name: Signature

Secunder’s Name: Signature

I hereby accept the nomination (Name):

Signature of Nominee: Date/...../.....

8/7 Battalion – 2 RVR Association Inc. A0035094M:

APPOINTMENT OF PROXY

I (Name):, being a financial member of the association,
hereby appoint (Name), also a financial member of the
association, as my proxy vote at the Annual General Meeting of the 8/7th Battalion – 2 RVR Assoc.
Inc.

Signature: Date/...../.....

8th/7th Battalion – 2RVR Association Inc A0035094M