The North-Western Ranger



8th/7th BATTALION – 2RVR ASSOCIATION Inc. VICTORIA'S OWN COUNTRY BATTALION

(Including the Ballarat Ranger Military Museum Newsletter)



Patron: The Commanding Officer, 8/7 RVR, Lieutenant Colonel Derek Sonogan

Vol 28 No 1

March 2024

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8/7 Battalion – 2 RVR Association Annual Activities:

ANZAC Day – Ballarat & Warrnambool Annual Dinner – Warrnambool, October Annual Dinner – Ballarat, November AGM – Ballarat, November

This newsletter was printed by the office of:



Monthly Activities:

Committee Meeting – Normally the First Tuesday of the Month

The Association's Newsletter Editor's email address is <u>87th2rvrassoc@gmail.</u>com For urgent newsletter matters please use <u>nkaleckie@outlook.com.au</u>

ANZAC DAY

The association will be participating as a group at two ANZAC Day activities – Ballarat and Warrnambool. **BALLARAT**

6.00am Ballarat Cenotaph, Sturt Street:

Dawn Service at the Ballarat Cenotaph, followed by Gunfire Breakfast at Ballarat RSL Midlands Golf Club. A transfer bus to and from the RSL will be provided.

7.00am: Cardigan and Windermere Fire Brigade: A short ceremony at the Fireman's Memorial in Remembrance Drive, corner Finch's Road, followed by the placing of a wreath.

8.00am: Arch of Victory: Service at the Ballarat Arch of Victory/Garden of the Grieving Mother

8.45am: Sebastopol: March from Sebastopol Post Office, Albert Street followed at:

9.00am: Commemorative Service at the Sebastopol Cenotaph

9.00am: Australian Ex-Prisoners of War Memorial: Wreath Laying service at the memorial. Please register via: <u>https://www.powmemorialballarat.com.au/</u>

10.00am: Miner's Rest: Service at the Miner's Rest Cenotaph.

10.15am: Buninyong: Service at Buninyong Memorial Park

10.30am: Ballarat Cenotaph, Sturt Street: ANZAC Day March from Lyons Street North to the Ballarat Cenotaph, followed by the Commemorative Service at the Ballarat Cenotaph.

1.00pm: Midlands Golf Club: Refreshments and Two-Up. Those attending the services in an official capacity will need to register their attendance with the RSL.

For more information about the ANZAC Day service in Sturt Street, or if you need a ride in the march in a vehicle, please contact the Ballarat RSL on (03) 5332 3300.

Dress: suit, or jacket and trousers, with association tie and cap and your full-size medals. **WARRNAMBOOL**

5.30am - 6.00am: The Dawn Service at the Warrnambool Soldiers Memorial near the RSL at the end of Liebig St followed a Gunfire Breakfast at the RSL

10.30am: Assembly in Liebig Street between Koroit and Lava Streets

10.45am: Step off.

11.00am: Ceremony at the War Memorial.

Dress: suit, or jacket and trousers, with association tie and cap and your full-size medals.

Those members who are physically **unable to march** can contact Colin Davies to see if there is access to a vehicle.

Lunch: Lyndon King has booked a table for 25 association members at the RSL from Noon for those who wish to join in for lunch. No bookings with Lyndon are required.

VALE:

Kevin Peter Rees was a long serving and much-loved member of the Shepparton Company of 2 RVR (and 8/7 RVR). In his younger days he was a keen bike rider and he and some mates were once 'pulled over' by a policeman who accused the riders of speeding down a hill!

While living in Melbourne he joined the newly raised 1 RVR, Citizen Military Forces, as 3171466 on 9 November 1960, around the same time as Dick Wilkie (3171912) enlisted in 2 RVR, Geelong. Moving back to Shepparton where he worked as a wood machinist, on 5 February 1962 he transferred to 2 RVR. Following in his father's footsteps as a 'tyre technician' Kevin returned to Melbourne and rejoined 1 RVR on 3 February 1965. When 5 RVR was raised, Kevin, citing his Scottish heritage, transferred there



on 5 May 1965. Returning to Shepparton and work with Beaurepaires in Wyndham St, Kevin transferred back to 2 RVR on 21 January 1967. At the time Beaurepaires served fuel and Kevin, ever the helpful, would run from changing tyres to serve at the fuel pump. Beaurepaires in Wyndham burnt down and they transferred to High St. The local Fruit Cockies thought the world of Kevin and would always ask for him to

do their work. The same could be said for Transport Operators. Renowned Phillips Transport being one. Kevin had the truck up on jacks and props, dealing with one side, when a local larrikin driver hopped in his ute, gunned the motor, lost it in the gravel, and rammed into the side of the truck. Kevin, fortunately, on hearing the noise, stepped back and was not injured.

From January 1973 until 2 July 1975, Kevin was a part of the 2 RVR Rifle Company that was attached to 22 RVR at Puckapunyal. During this time he transferred to the 'Q' Stream under the tutelage of Staff Sergeant Blue Mould. Returning to 2 RVR he was then attached to Echuca until 28 June 1976, before returning to Shepparton. Kevin was serving with 2 RVR when it was renamed 8/7 RVR in 1989.

There wasn't much that Kevin didn't attend during his period of service. One battalion bivouac he mistook a driver, 'Beatle' Bailey, for Major Bruce Hill, calling him Sir. 'Beatle' responded with, "I'm no Sir, I'm just a shitkicker!" Kevin was "lucky enough" to score a Composite Company trip to New Zealand. Given the task of Company Signaller he could not get used to the fact that he had a dangerous item on his back, with the long antenna. He persisted in bending over to pick things up. A frustrated CSM Alan Blackshaw, continually in the firing line, eventually shortened the antenna. Tremendously loyal to unit, friends and work, he would argue and alienate, while still being your mate. It seemed as though he had been around forever. Some members thought he had, as he told stories of the past. Reaching compulsory retirement age, he discharged on 15 January 1995. In all Kevin served for almost 35 years.

Kevin married Marianne Bult from Mooroopna and the couple had three daughters. Later in his life Kevin had an operation on his eyes and no longer needed his 'coke bottle' glasses - he was a new man! Kevin and Marianne separated in 1987 and Marianne moved to Melbourne. While undertaking a computer course in Shepparton in 1990 Kevin met Edna. They moved to Bendigo in 2012. Marianne died in 2018 and was buried in Mooroopna. Kevin passed away on 21 February 2024 in Bendigo. He was buried at the Mooroopna Cemetery on 6 March 2024. Kevin's funeral was attended by a good number of former members of 2 RVR (& 8/7 RVR). (See photos on the back page). (Article by Denis Scott and Neil Leckie)

Harold Stanley 'Ned' Heslop was born in Swan Hill, Victoria on 27 April 1945. He joined the Army as 3411670, serving in Vietnam as a Lance Corporal with 6 RAR from 4 June 1966 until 14 June 1967. After discharging from the ARA, Ned enlisted into the Citizen Military Forces on 28 November 1975, serving with 2 RVR in Echuca as a Lance Corporal from 21 February to 5 June 1976 and then as a Corporal at Shepparton until 24 March 1979 when he discharged. He then re-enlisted in Swan Hill on 10 March 1982, finally discharging on 29 June 1983. While at Swan Hill he trained some of the early recruits in the Swan Hill Platoon of A Company, 2 RVR that had been re-raised in 1981. The platoon was subsequently renamed as 9 Platoon, C Company, 8/7 RVR.



Left: January 1967, Private Harold Heslop of Swan Hill, Vic, leads a party of soldiers from B Company, 6th Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment (6RAR), aboard an M113 Armoured Personnel Carrier.

In 1968, following his service in Vietnam, Ned joined the RSL. He was the President of the Woorinen (10km



north-west of Swan Hill) Sub-Branch from 1981 to 2017 and was a dedicated member of the State Executive from 2004 to 2017. He was a tireless advocate for Veterans and War Widows and was a foundation member of both the Swan Hill and District Veterans Information Centre and the Swan Hill Sub-Branch of the Vietnam Veterans Association. For his RSL work, Ned was awarded an OAM in 2014 and

received the RSL Meritorious Service Medal in 2017. He was also a Justice of the Peace.

He was the loved brother of Pauline, Bruce (Dec), Brian, Robert (Dec), John (Dec) and Gerald (Dec), the husband of Darlene and the father of Rohan (Dec). Ned passed away peacefully on 10 March 2024. His funeral took place at The Grain Shed Church of Christ, Swan Hill, on Friday 22 March 2024.

FEATURES: NASHO DAY, MELBOURNE

The National Archives and Australian War Memorial refer to the 1950s as the 'First' National Service Scheme and the 1960s as the 'Second' National Service Scheme. The NAA lists four National Service eras: Fact Sheet 160 - Universal Military Training in Australia, 1911–29,

Fact Sheet 162 - National Service and war, 1939–45,

Fact Sheet 163 - National Service, 1951-59, and

Fact Sheet 164 - National Service, 1965-72.

However, there was a fifth era where there was a government run Cadet Scheme from 1905 - 09.

Robin Hunt, a Graduate from the National Service Officer Training Unit (OTU) attended the 2024 Nasho Day Service and reported: 'The NSAA Victorian Branch held its annual march and service of commemoration at the Melbourne Shrine on Sunday 11 February 2024, 'Nasho Day' being held as close to 14 February as possible each year. How many more years will they continue?

'A significant majority of members of NSAA are derived from the 'fourth NS Scheme' which was established in the 1950's during the Korean War, with few members from the 'fifth NS Scheme', which was created in the 1960's to support Australia's involvement in Malaysia and later in the Vietnam war. Thus, a significant majority are now in their late 80s/early 90s.



'Special guests on the day included various patrons of NSAA, National



President (Mr Ron Brandy), Victorian President (Mr Bob, McIvor, OAM), and Shrine of Remembrance Life Governor Lt Col (Ret'd) Adrian Lombardo (OTU Class 1/65).

'The parade marched off at 11:30 hours and there were about 35 'marchers' – some with Zimmer frames and a number with sticks, plus assorted family supporters. Neil Leckie and myself marched.'

'The RAAF Point Cook Museum undertook their flyover on time, however, the shortness of the march meant that most were seated inside the Shrine and heard but did not see it (the Parade Commander should have held us for a couple of minutes until the fly-over occurred before falling us out). The formalities took about 45 minutes with a Shrine Guard taking post, a Guest Speaker, The Last Post, wreath laying, National Anthem, plus sundry musical items – all supported by a RAN Band and a 5/6 RVR Piper.'



Above right: OTU Graduates Neil Leckie, Adrian Lombardo and Robin Hunt after the service.

NASHO DAY, PUCKAPUNYAL, 17 MARCH 2024

The annual Pilgrimage to Puckapunyal by Victorian Nashos took place on 17 March 2024. The day was supported with a Catafalque Party, the Army Band Melbourne and the 5/6 RVR Pipes and Drums. 44 members from the 1950s scheme and six from the 1960s Scheme who died in the last year were remembered. The Guest Speaker was Lieutenant Colonel Nivholas Cooper, CO, School of Artillery.After the service, lunch was held at the Sergeants Mess.

PUCKAPUNYAL'S MOST FAMOUS HILL

Lord Kitchener visited Australia in 1909/10 and made recommendations on how Australia should prepare its defences. His recommendations included 93 Infantry units (his name was 'Infantry' and not 'Battalion') starting with the 1st Infantry on the tip of Queensland down and across the country and ending with the 93rd Infantry in Tasmania. Not all 93 units were raised (including the 1st Infantry). Territorial Titles were added in 1913/14 with only one using 'Battalion' - 8th Infantry (Oxley Battalion). Many used Regiment – 70th Infantry (Ballarat Regiment) and some used a local name – 71st (City of Ballarat) Infantry. Many had no Territorial Title – 69th Infantry (based in the Geelong area).

Kitchener also recommended various areas around the country that should be acquired as training areas. One such area was Seymour in Victoria. The outbreak of War in 1914 saw the Seymour Military Camp come into existence. By 1918 there was some 320 Hectares (785 Acres) on the Trawool Road south-east of Seymour. Between 1937 and 1941 a further 32 Hectares (80 Acres) was acquired. In 1921 about 50 Hectares (120 Acres), known as the Mobilisation Siding (Mob Siding) was purchased. About a third was used as an ammunition depot. This land was disposed of by 1960.

Some 500 Hectares was purchased in 1940 at Mangalore, north of Seymour, principally for the storage of ammunition, followed by some 30 Hectares (77 Acres) at Dysart Siding, south of Seymour, between 1940 and 1942. In 1951, 2,200 Hectares (5,000 Acres) was purchased at Graytown, north-west of Puckapunyal, for a Proof and Experimental Establishment. The following year a further 666 Hectares (1,646 Acres) was purchased.

At the outbreak of World War Two 5,700 Hectares (14,119 Acres) was purchased from the well-known Tehan and Sullivan families to build the Puckapunyal Camp, west of Seymour. Between 1939 and 1968 the area was increased by a further 14,000 Hectares (34,000 Acres). Puckapunyal is known as 'Among the Hills' or 'Valley of the Winds'.

Puckapunyal's water supply comes from the area of the junction of Sunday Creek with the Goulburn River. This area has also been used for training by the Army.

The Puckapunyal Military Area (PMA) as it is now known, has a number of significant hills in it. The obvious hills are the highest, Mount Puckapunyal (413m), and Mount Kappe (382m) to its south. Lesser-known hills are Mount Certainty close-in to the north-west of the location of the 2nd Recruit Training Battalion, where in the days of National Service there were a number of 25m ranges, and Buckler Hill. Buckler Hill was named after Lieutenant Colonel Sydney 'Spin' Buckler (right), the Commanding Officer of the 14th National Service Training Battalion at Puckapunyal from June 1952 to July 1953. Buckler got his nickname of 'Spin' due to his habit of always fining his soldiers a 'Spin' or £5 for any charge that they were found guilty of.





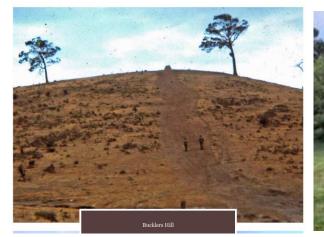
Coronation Cairn on Buckler Hill, 1954. Photo credit -Armu Tank Museum

Buckler Hill in the 1950s and 1960s was

almost devoid of trees. In June 1953 the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II was being celebrated around the world. The 14th National Training Battalion erected a rock cairn atop Buckler Hill as their part of the celebrations. The cairn was unveiled by the wife of Brigadier Kappe (Commander, National Service Training Brigade, Puckapunyal – 14th, 15th and 20th Battalions). With such a bare hill with a cairn on the top, it was affectionately known in its early years as 'Tit Hill'. There is a track leading to 'Tit Hill' and this track was used during cross-country runs, or as a punishment run for some defaulting soldiers. In the 1970s/80s there were large environmental works undertaken in the PMA. Hillsides were contour ploughed, to assist in water retention, but making walking on the hills difficult, and thousands of trees were planted. The cairn has slowly fallen

down and its plaque removed and placed in the Memorial Park on Blamey Avenue, the entry road to the PMA. The remnants of the cairn are now no longer visible, due to the trees, so the name 'Tit Hill' has lost its relevance. However, there is still a walking track to the top of 'Tit Hill'. Many Nashos who served at 2 RTB will remember the famous, or infamous, 'Tit Hill'

Note: Colonel 'Spin' Buckler would command the Pentropic 2 RVR from 1961 to 1963.





Left: Buckler Hill then and now

DEATH OF HARRY SMITH SG MC (From the ABC)

An extraordinary military "leader who never stopped fighting for his men" is being remembered as one of the "most significant men of Australia's war history." Lieutenant Colonel Harry Smith SG MC, who led his men through Australia's bloodiest battle of the Vietnam War, has died aged 90 on Queensland's Sunshine Coast on 20 August 2023, just two days after the 50th Anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan.

As Officer Commanding Delta Company, 6 RAR, it was his 108 men who on 18 August 1966, fought off Viet Cong (VC) forces as they advanced on the Task Force base at Nui Dat. Through mist, monsoonal rain, and rubber trees, the men held their ground against a three-sided attack from an estimated 2,500 VC and North Vietnamese Army troops. When it ended, 18 Australians were dead and 24 had been wounded. As the battlefield was cleared, the bodies of 245 enemy fighters were revealed along with 800 wounded.

In January of the following year on Luscombe Field at Nui Dat, then-Major Harry Smith was awarded a Military Cross for leadership and command



during the battle. The Australian Prime Minister presented the United States Presidential Unit Citation to Delta Company for Extraordinary Gallantry at a ceremony in Townsville two years after the battle.

'We did not have time for fear.' The war stayed with Smith. Author Toni McRae wrote that even 47 years after the battle — as they wrote *Long Tan: The Start of the Lifelong Battle* — he could still hear the gunfire and smell the blood spilled at Long Tan. In 2006, Lt Col Smith described the battle for Australian War Memorial's *Wartime* magazine. He remarked that in the years since, he had often been asked how frightened the soldiers were as they risked being overwhelmed by the enemy. "I reply: 'Not that I recall. We were all so busy methodically doing what we had to do we did not have time for fear — until it was over.""

In 2017, the Long Tan Cross memorial was installed in the Australian War Memorial after being gifted by the Vietnamese government. At the ceremony, Smith described how his troops had no idea they were overcoming the enemy until the battle was won. "We were the victors although we didn't know it until we went back in the next morning. Luckily, we were on a slight reverse slope ... and unless they got right up close to us, like 50 metres away from us, they couldn't actually fire at us, and most of their shots went over

our heads, thank goodness. "My soldiers fired over 10,500 rounds out of their rifles and machine guns, which certainly took a toll. "The enemy decided to leave because it suffered so many casualties. It was an extraordinary battle ... and an amazing victory for the Australian Army."

Smith kept fighting for his men. Kerry White, from the Vietnam Veterans Association of the Sunshine Coast, said: "Lt Col Smith was a well-known character and not just for his courage in battle. It was also for the enduring loyalty he showed to those who served with him. It was how he fought for his troops to get more recognition for them almost right up until he died," Mr White said. "He was most upset that some higher-up people in Vietnam received awards — they weren't even in the battle. "He did succeed a little but not as much as he would have liked to. "He did actually get an extra award himself, the Star of Gallantry, and he would have preferred that have gone to one of his men, I'm sure."

Lt Col Smith's long-time friend and journalist Bruce Atkinson expressed condolences on social media. "In my opinion, you were the most significant living figure in Australian military history and now in death you rank right up there with the great figures of our war history," Atkinson said. "I messaged one of his soldiers and said how he could now rest in peace. He replied, 'Nah. He'll just start making life hell for his next Commanding Officer', sums him up quite a lot."

Atkinson said the career military man was a "strong character" who did not suffer fools. "He butted heads with authority, whether it be his superiors in the Army or Prime Ministers who wouldn't review the awarding of the Long Tan Medals," he wrote on social media. "I sometimes thought he wished he could leave Long Tan in the past and simply get on with his life and go sailing, which he did plenty of. "However, his sense of duty to his men — both living and those who died in Vietnam — didn't allow him to do so."

Smith 'embarrassed' because his men deserved more: Lt Col Smith fully uncovered why his men were not given their proper recognition after 1996 when the Official Secrets Act expired after 30 years, and details of the event were revealed. Multiple reviews led to him and two of his soldiers receiving upgrades, but it was not a satisfying result. "I am bitter about what happened to my soldiers," Lt Col Smith told ABC in 2015. "I'm embarrassed that I was decorated with the Star of Gallantry, which in the current system is second to the Victoria Cross, but it didn't flow on to my soldiers. "Sure, I was a commander, I called the snap, as we say at the time, but the soldiers who were up front, eyeball-to-eyeball with the enemy ... they got nothing. It's a sad situation."



Lt Col Smith said he refused to withdraw at Long Tan, and he would never withdraw from the fight to have his men properly recognised.

Lt Col Smith's role in the battle was featured in the award-winning Battle of Long Tan documentary and in the feature film <u>Danger Close: The Battle of Long Tan in 2019</u>.

Left: Brigadier Jackson presenting Harry Smith with his MC in 1967.

Harry Smith's funeral was held in Buderim on 30 August 2023. Some 40 Long Tan Veterans attended the funeral. Among them was Bill 'Yank' Akell who had, two weeks earlier, attended the Townsville Vietnam Veterans Day service held by 6 RAR. Bill visited Harry Smith in hospital, being one of the last visitors to see Harry before his passing.

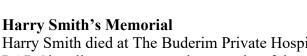
The 'Wake' was held at the Maroochydore RSL.



<image>

(Photos: Bill Akell, Ex-D Coy, 6 RAR)) Above left: Harry Smith is carried to the Gun Carriage by SNCOs from D Company, 6 RAR, to the tune of 'These Boots are Made for Walking'.

Right: Bill Akell 2nd from right and Graham Smith, his fellow D Company Signaller (in wheelchair). Harry Smith's widow, Felicia, is far at the left in the front seat.



Harry Smith died at The Buderim Private Hospital. Bill 'Yank' Akell, one of Harry Smith's D Company, 6 RAR Signallers, sent some photographs of the memorial at the hospital where Harry Smith now has a plaque.



BALLARAT RANGER MILITARY MUSEUM

The museum expansion project progresses, albeit slowly. The two 40' containers are connected into a 'U'

shape and the insulation has been fitted into the ceiling of each of the containers. Both containers now have the hessian ceilings covering fitted, giving it a look and feel of being in a underground bunker, and the lighting tracks are in place. New display cabinets will be ordered after Easter. The lining of the walls has begun. The aim is to have the new display in place for the Battalion Birthday on 9 August 2024.



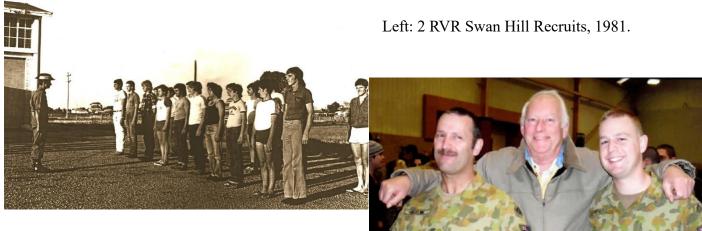
FROM EDITION 1 OF 2023: NAME THE BARRACKS!



The three barracks were built on the same design, with different bricks. The plan was to expand the offices to two stories, but this never happened in the 8/7 RVR depots. Salamaua Barracks, Cobram, was of the same design.

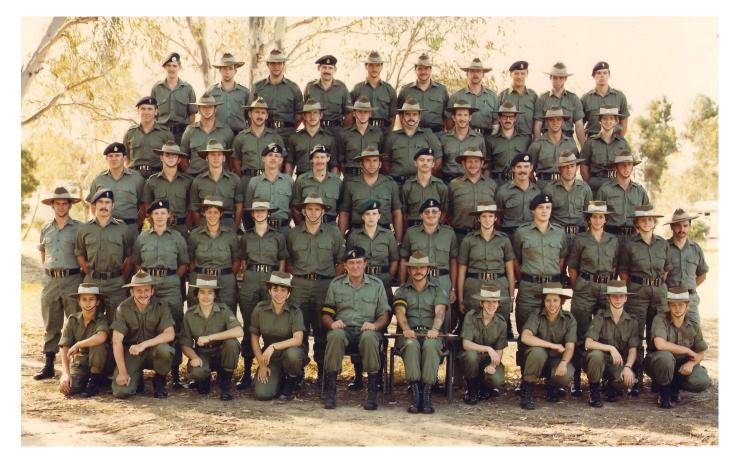
Left: Broodseinde Barracks, (once named Tobruk Barracks), Russell Street, Ballarat, Centre: Bob Dubi Barracks, Echuca, and Right: Messines Barracks, Swan Hill.

Some Photos from 2 RVR and 8/7 RVR Days



Right: 8/7 RVR: Beales, Beales and Beales. Sergeant Trevor Beales, Ex Sergeant Alan Beales and Corporal Wayne Beales

9



Are you in this photograph?

Subject 1 for Corporal. 3 Training Group, OR Training Wing, Puckapunyal, February, 1982. Rear Row, 2nd from left: Mark Broemmer. Middle Row: 2nd from left: Bruce Roberts, 3rd from left: George Brown, 2nd last on the right Neville Jones,

last on right: Peter Braybrook.



Above: Name the Association Members, the date and the occasion.



March 1983: Ballarat Long Distance March – rear of Russell Street Barracks.

Front row includes: Peter Braybrook, Rick van Berkel, Andy Stewart and Bill McMillan

MERCHANDISE: 8/7 Battalion-2 RVR Association Merchandise as at March 2024.



Item:	Price
Polo Top, Black	\$45
Polo Top, Green	\$45
Сар	\$20
Tie	\$30
Lapel Badge	\$10
Association Patch, Green	\$10 (one remaining)
Association Patch, Black	\$10 (one remaining)
RVR Emblem Patch	\$10 (one remaining)
Cold Weather Jacket	\$96 (One Size L only available)
Cold Weather Vest	Nil Stock

To order: contact Jason on email (preferred) at j_county@hotmail.com

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 Vol 28, No. 1, March 2024



After Kevin Rees burial:

Far left: Travis Rosenow & Shaun Hooker.

Left: Denis Scott, Frank Vivona, Mitch Kennedy, Mark Stephens, Glen Topp & Lorraine Gallagher.



Left: Ivan Glover