

2/3 A.H.S. CENTAUR ASSOCIATION (INC.)

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NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER 2016

Centaur Day at Caloundra

from Keith Clegg, s/o Pte Percy Clegg SMS

A beautiful autumn morning with a few non-threatening clouds was the backdrop for this year's Caloundra Service. Attendance was normal, and attendances could be considered as being stable over recent years. All the regular Centaur families were there with the exception of **Alice Thompson**. Her health did not permit her to attend but I am sure that she was there in spirit.

Guest Speaker, George Hatchman WOFF (Ret) RAAF Historian, spoke on the tragedy of Centaur and in particular the role of the Avro Anson from 71 Squadron in first sighting the oil slick from Centaur and then locating the Centaur survivors. Mr Colin Rose (ex RAAF) conducted the Prayers of Remembrance and the Prayers for the Families of Centaur.

The Wreath Laying was emotional for all present with local school students placing a single flower on each Centaur Walkway Plaque while the wreaths were being placed at the Memorial. The presence and participation of the students adds something special to the ceremony and has become a traditional part of the Caloundra Service.



The traditional group photo was taken in front of the Memorial at the conclusion of the Service and all present were invited to the Caloundra RSL for tea, coffee, and light refreshments.

This was **Erica Costigan's** last Centaur Day Service as a member of the organizing Caloundra RSL's Centaur Committee. Erica has retired!

Erica first became involved with Centaur Day at a Public Meeting in March of 1993. The purpose of the meeting was to form a Committee to plan and organize a Remembrance Service for the 50th Anniversary of the sinking of AHS Centaur. Erica became the Committee Publicity Officer.

The life of the committee was only ever intended to be for one Service, the 50th Anniversary, but it was decided that the committee should continue to organize annual Remembrance Services on the anniversary of the sinking and that the Committee should work under the banner of the Caloundra RSL. Erica continued as Publicity Officer, a position she has held for 23 years, and which she describes as most rewarding.

Erica remembers with great pride and satisfaction the mammoth task of locating Centaur families and organizing individual family plaques to be attached to the Caloundra Memorial Walkway.

Erica's legacy will undoubtedly relate to involving Caloundra school students (the next generation), in Centaur Day Services, and to ensuring that Centaur is always remembered on Centaur Day by engaging the local media.

Erica was awarded the Order of Australia Medal in 2013 for Services to Centaur and Centaur Families on the Sunshine Coast.

Thank you Erica for your dedication, and for a job well done!

Erica at her Investiture at Government House in 2013 with the then Governor of Queensland, Ms Penelope Anne Wensley AC.



OUR RATIONALE

To honour those who gave their lives on 2/3 AHS Centaur.

To provide a means of communication for Survivors, Descendants, Relatives, Friends & Organizations interested in 2/3 AHS Centaur

To help the healing process which for many still continues.

To ensure that the memory never fades, and the facts are not forgotten by succeeding generations.

To turn a tragedy into a triumph, and to foster a peaceful and forward-looking attitude.

Disclaimer:-

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Centaur Commemorations Concord Hospital

*From Richard Jones, n/o Major Gordon Jones, 2/12th FA, and
President of the 2/3 AHS Centaur Association Inc.*



Photo: Marketing & Community Relations, Concord Hospital

Centaur families with hospital staff and dignitaries. From left: Margaret Parry, s/o Pte Jack Moran, 2/12th FA, Joan Fisher, NMHS Oranje who lost 18 of her colleagues on Centaur, Malcolm Knight, gs/o Capt B. F. Hindmarsh, SMS, who also served at 113th AGH, (behind) Alan Curry, 5th FA Association, (front) Lucy Walton and Isabel Fitzgerald, ds/o Pte Clem Wood, 2/12th FA, (behind) LTCOL Christine Saunders, Derek Cannon, 5th FA Association, Tony Fitzgerald, (front) COL Bronwyn Wheeler, Margaret and Richard Jones, n/o Major Gordon Jones, 2/12th FA, Enid and Rod Blackman, s/o Pte R. McG. Blackman, 2/12th FA, Chaplain Rev. Paul Weaver, Reg Bonney, Ingleburn RSL, Chaplain Fr Graeme Malone.

Missing from the photo are Carol Miller and Susan Smith (Capt Stephen Foley, 2/12 FA), Les Fisher (Joan's son) Richard Parry, and Bob Wall (Pte Clem Wood, 2/12th FA).

The Concord service this year, which also marks International Nurses' Day, was very appropriate as always and ably led by the chaplains Rev. Paul Weaver and Fr Graeme Malone. The Meriden School Singers were a delight to listen to again this year when they sang twice during the service, "Here you Lie (Side by Side)" and followed later by "How Great Thou Art". Ms Jeanne Hope, was the bugler who faultlessly played the Last Post. LTCOL Christine Saunders from the Directorate of Army Health gave the sympathetic and interesting Centaur Address.

Centaur family numbers attending are declining but those able to make it were in good spirits. Health and age are taking their toll and some have moved and attended other Centaur Services. Great to see Joan Fisher there with her son Les. Centaur Family members are in the photograph with LTCOL Christine Saunders and the chaplains.

Don Kennedy represented the Merchant Navy RSL Sub Branch, and recited the maritime version of the Ode. The 2/5 Field Ambulance was well represented by Alan Curry and Derek Cannon. The Service was also attended by senior representatives of Veterans' Affairs, the Police, Parliament, Municipal Councils and RSL Sub-Branches.

After the Service all were invited into the adjoining Conference Rooms for refreshments and conversation. This was a new feature and was very relaxed and friendly.

Once again we very sincerely thank Alice Kang and her staff for the organisation of the Memorial Service and for their attention during the refreshments. We would particularly like to thank Peta Mcfarlane for looking after us so well on the day.



*Some of the Centaur families enjoying fellowship during the refreshments following the Service:
Enid Blackman, Carol Miller, Lucy Walton, Susan Smith,
Malcolm Knight, Margaret Jones.*

Noted in passing...

In **Frontline**, the official journal of 1/19 RNSWR Association and the 2/19 Battalion AIF Association, an article on the life and wartime service of Sr Winnie May Davis made brief reference to **Sr Florence Salmon, s/o Pte Len Salmon 2/12th FA.**

Sr Salmon is commemorated in the Nurses' Memorial Window at the War Memorial Hospital Waverley, NSW.

Sr Salmon, known as Poppy, a 26 year old nursing sister with the 2/10th AGH, escaped Singapore on the Vyner Brooke, and perished in the massacre by the Japanese at Banka Island, Malaya, on 16 February 1942.

Just over a year later, her brother, **Pte Len Salmon, 2/12th FA**, gave his life for his country on Centaur.

It was a dark and stormy night...

Jan Thomas

No, it wasn't, though that's how the doctor wrote it up in the clinical notes.

Let's start again. It was a braw bricht moonlicht night. It may well have been, I don't remember the moon, just the most magnificent starry sky I have ever seen. Mind you, I don't normally spend too many nights lying on my back in front of the shed looking at the stars. But when you are in that position, and not able to get up from it, there's really nothing much else to look at.

We had had a wind storm that day, and by 9 o'clock at night the wind was still gusting. The animals were all spooked though most of them were locked away. I had gone down to close the chook house for the night and met three terrified sheep. A sudden gust of wind, they took off in my direction, tossed me out of their way and disappeared into the darkness. I didn't see them again for another two months. But I did see a lot of stars as I waited for rescue which came courtesy of **VitalCall**. There was no one home, only me - and the dogs who were a bit nonplussed as to why I chose to lie on the hard ground when there were comfortable chairs in the house. When you're a dog there's no accounting for what humans will do, so when they decided I seemed to be where I wanted to be, they went back to their home comforts. However, when the ambulance arrived with strangers, they circled round me to protect me from the 'robbers'.

Two ambulances came in relatively short time, given that we live in the bush miles out of town, Four paramedics and much morphine and I was off to Coffs Harbour Base Hospital for some running repairs on a fractured femur and a shattered elbow.

One of the paramedics was **Michael Gregory**, grand nephew of Major Gordon Jones, 2/12th FA, discovered on ANZAC Day in Macksville! Two of the other three knew my son, **Malcolm Knight**, who is a paramedic in Sydney.

Two months later and another month confined to barracks at home, I emerged more or less intact, but with a long road to recovery and much hard work ahead of me. All is now progressing smoothly. With a walking stick I can walk as well as anyone, though perhaps not as fast. I can drive again, and have taken up all my usual activities except Scottish Country Dancing. I have to learn to walk before I can dance.

This story is a rather long-winded way of saying if your newsletter is a bit hit-and-miss, or your fees haven't been processed, or your donations haven't been acknowledged, don't blame me.

Blame those three sheep...

It wasn't really a hip replacement, just a few running repairs with pins, plates, screws and fencing wire, but it makes a good picture.



From the Captain's Log

18/5/2016



Centaur Primary School

Last Friday the school travelled to **Point Danger** to commemorate the tragedy of the Centaur. The personal stories of family and the specific details of the sinking continue to leave a very strong impression on all who attend. The day itself was spectacular and provided a breathtaking backdrop for this important ceremony. I want to congratulate our school leaders who spoke with confidence and set the tone for this solemn memorial. I would also like to single out Mrs Kay Wilson for her work in organising the event. Finally I thank our school community for your continued support. This day sets our school apart and is appreciated by all families connected to the tragedy.

Mark Downward R/Principal

Marine Rescue NSW Point Danger representatives with wreath. Since the death of Harry Pearce, who looked after the Memorial for many years, Marine Rescue NSW is now the custodian. They keep an eye on the condition of the Memorial, alerting Council as necessary, especially in relation to having the surroundings ready for the Commemorations.



L. Students with the Principal. These students are all wearing a community link badge, an initiative of the local RSL to honour those lost on Centaur.



Centaur families who meet every year at Point Danger.

Back row: Mark Downward, School Principal, Jack Bade, Leone Bade (Pte Lawson), Sr Frances Moran (Pte Moran, FA), Virginia Chamberlin, Carol Egan (ds/o the late Harry Pearce), Erica Whitworth (Sr Adams, SMS).

Front row: Margaret Ryan (S/Sgt Taylor, FA), Phyll Butcher (Pte Lawson, FA), Sr Mary Moran (Pte Moran, FA), Warren Keats (ex-President of the ex-Centaur Commemorative Committee), Pam Gilbert, (Ptes Alan & Fred Fortier, FA).

Centaur Primary School - providing opportunities for youth in the name of Centaur.

Remembering

Pte Frederick John Lynagh, QX23875 2/12th Field Ambulance

from an article written by Ross Peake, cousin of Pte Lynagh, in the Canberra Times 13 May 2016

The sinking of the [Australian Hospital Ship] Centaur, by a Japanese submarine, will be discussed in Australia long after nearly all other events of the Second World War have slipped from public knowledge.
– Professor Geoffrey Blainey, 1992

My family has been granted the rare honour and extraordinary privilege of having the life story of a relative read out at the Last Post Service at the Australian War Memorial.

It's going to be an emotional journey for us on Saturday, May 14, when the crowd at the memorial – and those watching the webcast – hear about the sudden death of my mother's cousin, Pte Frederick John Lynagh of the 2/12th Field Ambulance.



Jack, as he was known, died with several hundred other people when the Australian Hospital Ship *Centaur* was torpedoed by a Japanese submarine at 4.10am on May 14, 1943, near Brisbane.

Could it have been an accident? Not bloody likely.

"It was night and the ship was so brilliantly lit that she must have seemed like a floating Luna Park," Blainey says. "Spotlights were shining on the large crosses on the hull that denoted its mission, in accordance with Geneva Conventions."

I have written about *Centaur* previously so I was surprised to be moved when writing about the fate of a relative I never knew.

Frederick John Lynagh – Jack or Jacky to his family and friends – was born in Dalby in south-east Queensland on September 5, 1904. He joined an older sister in the growing family, and three more boys were born after Jack. Parents Larry and Jessie would later see all four sons go off to war.

Jack attended school at Bell, near Dalby, later becoming a provisional teacher at Bell State School in 1920. In 1931, he left teaching to work with his father and brothers, building houses and farm buildings in the local area.

The Second World War was barely three weeks' old when Jack presented for his Army medical and subsequently enlisted at Redbank near Brisbane. However, he was discharged on medical grounds in December 1939.

Not to be deterred, he tried again in August 1940 and was passed fit for service. He was attached to 6th Casualty Clearing Station as a nursing orderly and was posted to the small defence establishment of Fort Lytton at the mouth of the Brisbane River.

It was not enough for Jack. Finally, in September 1941, he was able to join the AIF. By December that year, he was with the Australian Army Medical Corps, attached to the 2/12th Field Ambulance, and on his way to Darwin.

He remained in Darwin until February 1943, surviving the carnage and confusion of the first bombings in February 1942 and all subsequent raids, and serving with his ambulance unit during the civilian evacuation and the rebuilding of the town. His skills as a builder and carpenter were put to good use during this time.

Australian Hospital Ship Centaur, the Myth of Immunity, a 340-page book about the vessel's demise, uses strong prose to describe the wartime sinking of the vessel, in a chapter titled, "Three Minutes of Horror".

"The effects of a well-aimed submarine projectile brutally terminated the very existence of a non-combatant merchant ship, an unsuspecting victim with but a singular role of bringing succour and comfort to the casualties of war," the authors write.

"At 0410 AHS *Centaur* was a proud, fine and well-found vessel. Most of the 332 people on board slumbered peacefully in presumed safety.

"By 0413, three minutes later, she has disappeared off the face of the earth: gone, destroyed; a shattered, fiery hulk plunging downwards through an unforgiving sea to a grave a thousand fathoms deep. With her went most of those 332 lives, cruelly snuffed out.

"Many, mercifully, died instantly, without realising what had happened; many others did not, and many perished in unbelievably cruel and agonising circumstances. What made the *Centaur* sink in such a short space of time - not longer than the time needed to boil an egg?"

The authors supply the answer, saying the torpedo penetrated the main oil bunker tanks.

"A sheet of flame burst like a fireball in all directions, skyrocketing high into the air and into the ship itself. The *Centaur* was doomed.

"The sea would not be denied," they say. "The human tragedy that accompanied those two to three brief minutes of horror is almost unimaginable.

"We know enough from contemporary interviews with survivors to take a guess at the unbridled terror and agony meted out to so many who never made it. Those who died instantly were the lucky ones."

I was stunned to read this extract from a survivor, describing the torpedo attack and subsequent explosion of the oil bunker:

"Pte Allan Pettiford woke to find himself on his feet, standing next to his lower bunk level. How he had got there mystified him. He woke to a ward in utter confusion but surprisingly little panic. His little pocket of bunks on the upper tween deck had somehow missed the worst of the blast, although when he tried to rouse his friend, Jack Lynagh, in the upper bunk, he failed. The shock wave must have killed him."

After decades of searching, the underwater grave of the vessel was discovered in December 2009. A National Memorial Service was held in Brisbane in 2010, attended by then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd.

Jack's family members were among the congregation of about 600 people who attended the Service to pay tribute to the victims of *Centaur*. Later, they were also among the 300 relatives who sailed on *HMAS Manoora* over the wreck site in September 2010 and placed about 100 wreaths on the ocean in memory of the victims.

For many years, the 2/3 AHS Centaur Association has been holding a commemorative event at the Australian War Memorial on May 14 each year, as well as in several other cities.

Last year, the Memorial decided it could no longer support the stand-alone event and offered to dedicate the Last Post Ceremony on May 14 each year to the *Centaur* victims. This allows relatives, many of whom are elderly and cannot be in Canberra, to watch the event on a webcast.

At last year's Last Post Service for *Centaur* victims, the life story of Army doctor Major Llundha Holland was told. He made several trips on the vessel to PNG to return wounded Diggers to Australia. At the time of the sinking, he was the senior physician on the vessel.

In January this year the Memorial held its 1000th Last Post Ceremony. Director Brendan Nelson had begun the event in April 2013 to personalise the Roll of Honour, which contains the names of more than 102,000 Australians killed in war and other operations.

The simple but sombre event regularly draws hundreds of people to the Memorial at dusk, to hear the mournful note of the bugle, the skirl of bagpipes – and occasionally sobs as the story of a dead Australian is told.

My younger daughter and I placed a poppy next to Pte Frederick John Lynagh's name on the Honour Roll, after the Anzac Day dawn service eight years ago.

Now Jack's niece, Elizabeth Lynagh, will have the same opportunity to honour his memory, when she visits the Memorial for the first time on Saturday.

"I never knew Uncle Jack – he was lost on *Centaur* some years before I was born," she said from Brisbane. "However, if he was anything like my father, he would have been a kind and gentle man, never one to push himself forward but always there for people when they needed him.

"My father and his two other brothers, Bill and Ray, known as Poss, were very private people, but I can't help but think that they would be quietly proud of the honouring of Uncle Jack's sacrifice and memory.

"I have never previously had the opportunity to visit the War Memorial but have watched a number of Last Post ceremonies online. The ceremony is an amazing and enduring tribute to those on the Roll of Honour and I am very privileged to not only be able to attend one, but have a family member remembered."

In accordance with the Hague Convention, *Centaur* was clearly identifiable as a hospital ship, being painted white and marked with large red crosses. She was fully lit and her hospital status had been communicated to and acknowledged by the Axis powers through neutral diplomatic channels, yet the precautions served only to make her an easier target when, at 4.10am on 14 May 1943, the Japanese torpedo struck her on the port side. The ship exploded, probably as a result of a hit on the fuel bunkers.

Centaur is a relatively well-known victim of Japanese submarines near the Australian coast but many other unarmed merchant marine vessels suffered the same fate. One way to gain some perspective on the toll is to visit the Walk of Remembrance at Point Danger, on the Queensland–NSW border. It was opened on May 14, 1993, conjointly with the *Centaur* Memorial, perched high on this headland, with a stunning view of the Pacific Ocean. The walk contains 41 plaques representing the vessels sunk by the wartime enemy in 1939–45.

The Tweed Heads Historical Society says few people are aware of the war at sea that raged along the Australian coastline, as Japanese submarines based in Guam prowled the eastern seaboard.

"This silent war was kept from the knowledge of the Australian public at the time to prevent panic and the loss of morale," writes Warren Keats in *Walk of Remembrance*. "The *Iron Crown*, a BHP ore carrier, sank in one minute after being struck by a torpedo off the south coast of Gippsland, Victoria, taking 37 seamen to the bottom with her. The *Wollongbar*, a North Coast Steam Navigation vessel, sunk off Coffs Harbour, took the lives of 32 merchant seamen."

Heidelberg Hospital, Melbourne

from Pat O'Brien, d/o Pte Michael O'Brien 2/12th FA

It was a small attendance this year but the highlight was the welcome and care the two great grand children of Michael O'Brien 2/12th Field Ambulance received from the mainly elderly attendees.



Left:

Tony Bracken, s/o Sgt Paul Bracken and n/o Pte John Bracken FA, with Audrey and Conor Evans, ggchn/o Pte Michael O'Brien FA.

Below:

Pat O'Brien d/o Pte Michael O'Brien FA, Judy Moore, f/o Harry Hall MN, Sam Evans, gs/o Pte Michael O'Brien FA, Billie Amey f/o Martin Pash MN, Anne and Tony Bracken, s/o Sgt Paul and Pte John Bracken FA.

The usual Centaur families were in attendance at the Service in the Centaur Chapel of Heidelberg Hospital. As well, **Billie Amey**, Martin Pash's friend, attended plus several of the Darebin (previously Preston) RSL members. For many years the RSL has invited Centaur families and friends to lunch after the Service.



The RSL has a room dedicated to the Centaur. There are images of the ship etched into the glass doors at the entrance, and Joe Zapp's painting of the three Heidelberg nurses with Martin Pash. MN, Robert Winther, DVA Liaison officer at the hospital was in attendance as usual.

The first Centaur Service was held in 1944 to commemorate three nurses, **Sr Ellen Rutherford, Sr Alice O'Donnell** and **Sr Wendy (Jenny) Walker**, who had enlisted from Heidelberg, and a Service has been held annually ever since. More recently at the Centaur Wing of the hospital, plaques have been laid to commemorate all those who died on Centaur, and the Service extended to include all sections of the Centaur personnel.



Conor Evans with Chaplains Sue Westthorp and Luke Bowen in the chapel at Heidelberg Hospital.

Earlier this year Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital celebrated its 75th anniversary, having been established in 1941 as a military hospital to treat wounded soldiers.

The Waterdale Rd hospital is the only one of its kind left in Victoria, and veterans, war widows, families and staff joined together to celebrate with a plaque unveiling on March 10.

Over the years the hospital has gone through three owners, from the Army in 1941-47, the Federal Government in 1947-1995, and the State Government from 1995 until now. On opening it was known as the 115th Heidelberg Military Hospital. When the Repatriation Department took it over in 1947 it became the Repatriation General Hospital Heidelberg.

In 1995 it amalgamated with the Austin Hospital to become Austin and Repatriation Medical Centre. A name variation in 2003 saw the facility renamed Austin Health, which now incorporates the Austin Hospital, Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital and Royal Talbot Rehabilitation Centre.

Mr Winther, DVA liaison officer said that during the 1940s, the hospital reached a peak of about 3000 patients at one time. "Where you had four-bed bays, they'd accommodate seven people and they also had patients on the balcony."

Recovering soldiers would often head down dressed in pyjamas and dressing gowns to one of the three Banyule watering holes, Mr Winther said. "They'd go down to the Old England, Henry Barkly or the Ryan Hotel, now the Ivanhoe," Mr Winther said. "They'd say they had an appointment with Doctor Ryan."

He said interesting patients included Victoria Cross recipient Edward Kenna who married his nurse, Margery Rushberry, and Sir John Gorton, who went on to be Australia's Prime Minister (1962-68). More recently, following his accident, Martin Pash, the Centaur's last known survivor was transferred to Heidelberg for palliative care where he could be in familiar surroundings with people he knew and loved, and who loved him.

Mr Winther said the hospital had a proud history which had not been forgotten. "There's a unique feel to this hospital that was created in a time of need."

Robert Winther has been the DVA Liaison Officer at Heidelberg Hospital since 1966, and has seen most of the changes. Centaur families owe him a big vote of thanks for his continuous work to maintain the story of the Centaur at the hospital.



Last Post Ceremony, AWM, Canberra.



Photo: AWM

After a couple of weeks of horrendous weather, Canberra put on a perfect (albeit 5 degrees) Autumn evening. Irrespective, the view when exiting the AWM entrance was spectacular. Unfortunately our photos didn't work out. 5pm at this time of the year in Canberra is dusk, and there isn't a lot of light about.

The Centaur casualty honoured this year was **Pte Jack Lynagh, 2/12th FA**, whose story, written by his cousin, Ross Peake, and published in the Canberra Times is featured on pp 4 & 5 of this newsletter.

Given the weather and the time of day, quite a large number of Centaur families was able to attend. **Judy and Ted Leask** (Ptes Alexander, Harold and Henry Leask, FA), **Sanya Ritchie** (Major Geoffrey Cooley, SMS), **Mary Sutton** (Sgt John and Pte Paul Bracken, FA), **Dale Liepins** (Pte James Thorpe, FA), **Lorraine Curtis** (Pte James Mansfield, FA), **Michael and Nerida Ockwell** (Pte George Ockwell, SMS), **Paul Stevens** (Pte John Stevens, FA), **Steve Evans, Andrew and Joanne Robinson** (Cpl William Evans, FA), **Ross Peake** (Pte Lynagh, FA), **Steve and Catherine McGrath** (Pte George McGrath, FA), **Gavin and Kath Robb** and **Susan Helyer** (Pte Fred Denne, FA), **Barbara Bailey** with her son **John**, daughter **Margaret** and her husband **Peter Russell**, **Cameron Knight** with **James** and **Charlotte**, and **Arthur Rich** (Capt Hindmarsh, SMS), **Richard and Margaret Jones** (Major Gordon Jones, FA). Leniss Freebody represented **Legacy**.

US Naval Attache Captain Stuart Holbrook was again an impressive addition to the Ceremony. Capt Holbrook was representing the **US Ambassador** on behalf of USS Mugford which rescued the Centaur survivors.

As usual, the Ceremony was attended also by several hundred visitors to the AWM. It is a very moving ceremony, particularly in hearing the story of someone who shared the experience of our own Centaur person, and knowing that all those visitors will go away with some knowledge of the Centaur and her story.

Anne Coultts d/o Sgt William Oscar McDougall, 2/12th FA, and her sons Wing Commander Jim Coultts, and Alistair Coultts, taken at last year's ceremony.



The Last Post Ceremony can be viewed at <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/AWM2016.2.135/> and the DVD can be ordered through esales@awm.gov.au

Centaur Commemorations at Dapto

From Geoff Chegwyn, n/o Pte Basil Douglas Colefax 2/12th FA

I attended the Dapto Service on 14 May - my wife, Doreen, missed it unfortunately, being unwell.

A lovely sunny day, and well attended including younger ones. The Wollongong Army cadets mounted the guard which was a nice touch. I later spoke with one of them at the afternoon tea - a very impressive young man of 16 or so, who seeks an Army career. Very opportune, as our grandson is deployed to Afghanistan. He is with 7RAR from Adelaide.

I spoke also with **Jack Gray**, the Centaur Representative at the Dapto RSL. Jack took a dental unit to NG on Centaur's first voyage; **Lucy Walton** and **Isabel Fitzgerald**, whose dad, **Pte Clem Woods, 2/12th FA**, was lost; and Anne Estreich - her dad, **Pte Jack Nichols**, also 2/12th FA, missed the fateful voyage due to illness.

Dapto is significant to the Centaur story as the 2/12th FA was stationed at nearby Corrimal for four months on their return from Darwin, while waiting to board the Centaur.

TS Centaur Australian Navy Cadets Best in Flotilla 2016

from L T Vann, LEUT ANC, C/O, TS Centaur



For the third year running TS Centaur has been awarded Best Unit in the Sunshine Coast Flotilla. Congratulations to Staff, Cadets, Parents and the Unit Support Committee all of whom have played a part in achieving this award. Thanks must go to the Maleny Community Groups and the Community in general for the generous support they give during the year that has assisted in providing this important youth forum and ultimately achieving this award. The award was received at the final parade of the Sunshine Coast Flotilla at NTS Sheean in Tewantin. From July 1st the Sunshine Coast Flotilla has combined with the Daring Flotilla to form the Central Queensland Flotilla consisting of 10 units from Bribie Island up to Rockhampton.

TS Centaur has been selected as one of five finalists for the Navy League's Most Efficient Training Ship in Australia Trophy. Director of Flotillas, CMDR Kerry Rayner, will be conducting a National Inspection of each of the finalists to determine the recipient of the Trophy. TS Centaur's National Inspection will take place on Sunday October 16th.

TS Centaur ACN - providing opportunities for youth in the name of Centaur.

Annual General Meeting

The AGM of 2/3 AHS Centaur Association was held as advertised on 1 August at Altona Meadows in Melbourne.

President Richard Jones gave an overview of the past year's activities. All members of the Executive and Committee stood for re-election and as there were no other nominations, all were elected unanimously.

The old guard is aging rapidly, and if the Association is to continue into the future we need younger members to be active in the administration. We understand that the next generation is in the busy time of life with families, businesses and professions to manage, but we would urge them to consider offering their services in an assistant role as they familiarise themselves with the workings of the Association.

Treasurer Tony Bracken presented the **Annual Financial Statement** which is available electronically to members on request. The full **Minutes** and the **President's Report** are also electronically available.

During the year the Association has continued to direct its efforts towards honouring those we lost and supporting those who lost them, continuing to tell their stories, and vigilantly guarding the good name of the Centaur.

75th Anniversary approaches... 2018

To co-incide with the 75th anniversary in 2018, Leanne Wicks is planning to compile a book which includes an interview with her great-uncle, survivor since deceased, **Pte Fred Chidgey, SMS**.

Leanne would like to include poems or songs written about the Centaur. If anyone has copies of such poetry, Leanne would like to see them in order to select some for the book. Please contact her on leannewicks.poet@gmail.com or PO Box 90, Kandos, NSW. 2848.

Last Post

John Gibney,
10 March 2015.

Patient from Port Moresby bound for
Brisbane on 13/4/43.



The printed edition of this Newsletter has been generously donated by Macksville (NSW) Public School as a community service. Captain Hindmarsh (lost) and the family of Pte Eric Taylor (saved) were residents of Macksville at the time of the sinking.

Macksville Commemorations

At the new War Memorial on the banks of the beautiful Nambucca River



Five mid-north coast Centaur families attended the Ceremony conducted by the Macksville sub-Branch of the RSL, including two families resident in Macksville and one family visiting from Hazlebrook in the Blue Mountains.

Melissa Pavey, MP for Oxley, joined Centaur Association supporters and long-term Macksville residents whose childhood memories and family stories include the loss of Macksville's Dr Hindmarsh on the Centaur.

Margaret Henshaw, d/o Pte John Victor Thomas 2/12th FA, came over from Kempsey, **Doug Hoare**, b/o Pte John Hoare 2/12th FA, came up from Wingham, and **Charles Brewer**, n/o Pte Bertie Brewer 2/12th FA, came down from Coffs Harbour. **Jan and Frank Dickson**, s/o Pte Alan Dickson, survivor since deceased, came all the way from Hazlebrook.

As a matter of interest to local historians, **Pte Alvan Kemp, 2/12th FA**, a Smithtown resident who died on the Centaur came from the family that gave Kempsey its name.

Macksville residents **Michael Gregory**, gn/o Major Gordon Jones, 2/12th FA, and Captain Hindmarsh's family, daughter **Jan Thomas**, granddaughter **Kirstin Knight**, great granddaughter **Abi Knight** who laid the Association wreath, nieces **Loas Haydec**, **June Willard** and **Aileen Unit** were all in attendance. **Glenyse Maher** laid a wreath on behalf of her grandmother, Sr Watt, a Macksville colleague of Dr Hindmarsh.

Alan Harris represented the Nambucca Valley Naval and Mariners' Association, and **Blew Manning** represented the Frank Partridge VC Military Museum in Bowraville.

Ian Flarrey bandmaster of the Nambucca Valley Band sounded the bugle calls.

Wendy Litchfield, Secretary of the sub-Branch, MC'd the ceremony and following the Service invited attendees to refreshments at the ex-Services Club where Centaur families and supporters were able to enjoy fellowship together over sandwiches and a cup of tea.

Let us remember the Centaur - a vessel of mercy on the turbulent waters of a world at war.