



THE RETURNED & SERVICES LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA
(NEW SOUTH WALES BRANCH INCORPORATED)
"The Price of Liberty is Eternal Vigilance"

Combined Services RSL sub-Branch

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FEBRUARY 2024 NEWSLETTER

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ITEM 1 - THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING WILL BE ON
THURSDAY 21 MARCH 2024 TO BE HELD AT 11.00 AM
LEVEL 2, 5-7 BARRACK STREET, SYDNEY
(Light luncheon and refreshments served afterwards)

OUR GUEST SPEAKER IS KEITH PAYNE VC, AM (PROFILE BELOW)

As it is also the Annual General Meeting, annual reports will also be presented.



Keith is the surviving recipient of the Victoria Cross in the Vietnam War. Keith was a Warrant Officer in the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam. He currently lives in Queensland, but we are honoured that he is able to align a visit to Sydney to attend our Meeting in March.

Keith was born during the Great Depression in 1933. The middle child of a large family of 13, Payne grew up in the sugarcane growing area of Ingham, North Queensland.

During World War II, his father Henry joined the army. He was posted to the islands north of Australia. Taught by his father to hunt, fish and develop a sense of '...the lay of the land', Keith helped feed his family during his father's war service. Keith and his siblings also helped the family make ends meet by selling tropical fruit to American soldiers.

Keith left school at 14 and began a cabinetmaking apprenticeship. He also joined the Army Reserve. He didn't enjoy his apprenticeship 'one little bit' and applied to join the army as soon as he was old enough.



Keith's army career began in 1951. He was 18 years old when he was posted to the 2nd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (2RAR) in December 1951.

Keith was sent to Korea, via Japan, in September 1952. He joined the 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (1RAR). Payne also served in:

- Headquarters, 28th British Commonwealth Brigade, in 1953
- Malaysia between 1963 to 1965, with 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (3RAR)
- Scheyville Officer Training Unit as an instructor, June 1965
- Papua New Guinea, with 2nd Pacific Islands Regiment, 1967 to 1968.

Keith joined the [Australian Army Training Team Vietnam \(AATTV\)](#) in February 1969. The AATTV was a specialist team first raised in 1962. Its job was to train and advise local soldiers, including the South Vietnamese Army (ARVN), Montagnards, Territorial Forces (Regional Force and Popular Force) and Mobile Strike (Mike) Forces.

Although its role was to train and advise, AATTV members faced some of the most dangerous fighting during the conflict. Four Victoria Crosses were awarded to members of the AATTV during the Vietnam conflict and its members received 100 decorations in total.

Keith was the fourth Australian to receive an Imperial Victoria Cross in the Vietnam War. He was also the last Australian to receive the original VC and highest recognition of valour in the British honours system.

Keith commanded the 212 Company of the 1st Mobile Strike Force Battalion at Pleiku in Central Vietnam. He worked alongside Vietnamese Montagnards and American Special Forces.

On 24 May 1969, Keith and his company were attacked by a larger North Vietnamese force in Kontum Province. Surrounded and under heavy mortar and rocket fire:

'.. the indigenous soldiers began to fall back. Directly exposing himself to the enemy's fire, Warrant Officer Payne, through his own efforts, temporarily held off the assaults by alternately firing his weapon and running from position to position collecting grenades and throwing them at the assaulting enemy.

[Victoria Cross citation, The London Gazette, 1969]

Ignoring the pain from his wounded hand and arm, Keith continued hurling grenades and firing his gun, attempting to cover his troops.

Still under fire, he then ran across exposed ground to head off his own troops who were withdrawing in disorder. He successfully stopped them and organised the remnants of his and the second company into a temporary defensive perimeter by nightfall.

[Victoria Cross citation, The London Gazette, 1969]

That night, 'at great personal risk', Keith headed off into the darkness to find the men under his command who had scattered in panic during the fighting. Some were wounded.

Over 3 hours, amidst continuing enemy gunfire, Keith searched the area for his men. He organised the rescue of 40 wounded and stranded soldiers who had been separated from the rest of the unit. He also helped a seriously wounded United States Special Forces advisor. Several hours later, in the early hours of the morning, Payne and his men made it safely back to base after a long trek.

Keith received medals for his bravery from Britain, the United States and the Republic of Vietnam.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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He was presented with his VC by Queen Elizabeth II in Brisbane on 13 April 1970. His wife, Florence, and sons Ronald, Gregory, Colin, Ian and Derek all attended the ceremony aboard the Royal Yacht Britannia.

Speaking about the events of the night that led to his VC, Keith said:

You have a responsibility and my responsibility was, I was the company commander, and it was my responsibility to look after my soldiers. And, basically, that's all that happened, but it happened under very arduous circumstances. You either accept the responsibility or you bloody well don't.

[Keith Payne, interview with Michael Madden, 2017]

Keith left the Australian Army in 1975. Australia's war in Vietnam had ended with the new Whitlam government. But, in an interview at the time, Keith said that he thought, despite the new government's policy, the threat of communism remained. He flew to Oman to serve as a captain in the Army of the Sultan of Oman during the Dhofar War. He remained there until 1976.

Life after the war

Like many veterans, life after the war was difficult for Keith Payne and his family. The trauma of Keith's war service, particularly that of Vietnam, haunted his sleep and made his temper short. In a 2020 documentary by filmmaker Max Uechtritz, Keith and his family recalled his anger and drinking issues, in response to his war service. His sons learned how to avoid their father's quick change of mood. Flo, his wife, told him he needed to get help or risk losing his family.

Keith remembers telling himself:

Get yourself together, Payne, yer bloody donkey! What are you doing?

[Keith Payne, in *An Australian Hero: Keith Payne VC*, 2020]

From that point, Keith turned his life around, for his family and other 'diggers'. He worked tirelessly on behalf veterans and service personnel. He lobbied for the recognition of Indigenous service personnel. He asked the Australian Government, along with others, to recognise [Edward Sheean](#) with a VC. Keith also pushed for better health and mental care services for veterans. In 2020, he auctioned his slouch hat [ABC] to raise money for charity.

In 2006, Keith was recognised with a Medal of the Order of Australia. In 2015, he was made a Member of the Order of Australia for his services to veterans and their families.

(Acknowledgement Dept of Veteran Affairs: [Biographies \(dva.gov.au\)](#))

Decorations/ commendations:

Victoria Cross (VC), Distinguished Service Cross (DSC), Member of the Order of Australia (AM), Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM), Distinguished Service Cross (DSC), Silver Star (United States), Cross of Gallantry with Bronze Star (Republic of Vietnam), Service medals, Queen Elizabeth Jubilee medals

ITEM 2 - VALE: NEVILLE JAMES NOLAN

was born on the 13th of August 1933 at 205 Trafalgar Street Annandale. Neville was a long term member of our sub-Branch. We recently received notice that he passed away last month and we have sent consolations to his family.

His parents were Stanley and Edna Nolan. Neville had an older brother and sister, Mick, June, and a younger brother Jack.

At this time in his young life, the depression had made life difficult for many families so Dad and his brothers ran errands for neighbours and his brothers would also sell timber offcuts and horse manure. Neville attended Balmain public school and secondary school till he was 14 years old. At this time, he started to work as an



apprentice butcher, he didn't enjoy butchering much, so he left his apprenticeship and began truck driving for the next thirteen years. It was around this time that Neville started National Service, 1st being based at Ingleburn Army Camp & then for two years driving trucks at Leichhardt Signal Branch.

Neville started to attend the Saturday night dances at Petersham Town Hall, it is here that he met his wife to be, Yvonne Brooks. They married in November 1958 & recently celebrated 65 years married! Yvonne & Neville purchased a new home in Sutherland just after they were married, raising three children. Not long after they married Neville started work on the NSW Railways which retired after 30 + years of service. Neville was also a part time on call fireman based at Sutherland Fire Station and was an active member of the Masonic Lodge at Sutherland. When Neville retired, he volunteered in his local community driving for Activus & was also a driver for many teams during the Sydney 2000 Olympics. Neville and Yvonne also have a growing family of six grandchildren and

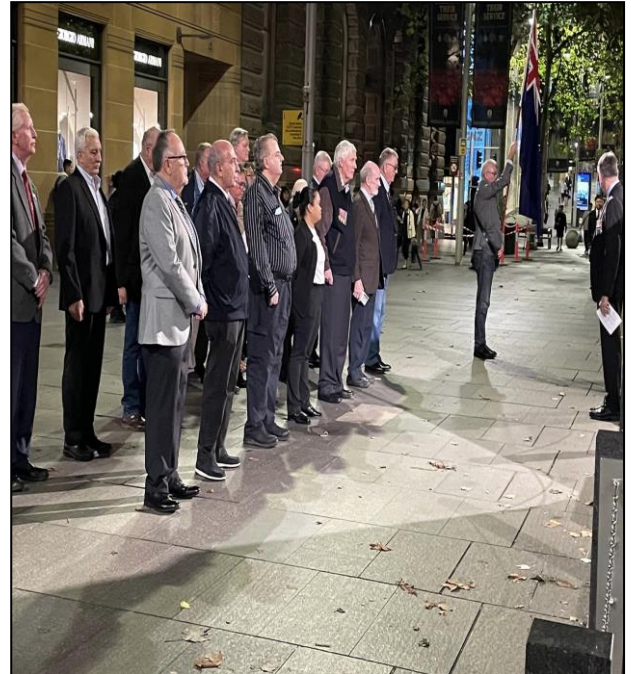
two great grandsons. Right up until Neville became ill and was unable to do the things in life, he enjoyed doing they had the opportunity to travel the world and enjoy Lawn Bowls and Golf.

Lest We Forget

ITEM 3 – ANZAC REUNION COMMEMORATION ANNUAL MARCH
FOR THE SUB-BRANCH AND CLUB
TO BE ON FRIDAY EVENING 19th APRIL 2024 (FORM UP AT 6.20 PM)

Sub-Branch, Club Members, and other participants are welcome. This is also an opportunity for others (including city workers) to participate in a commemoration at the Cenotaph in Sydney at the time. Bring your friends. Medals may be worn.

We will form up in Barrack Street on the eastern side of York Street (Barracks on Barrack) at 6.20 pm. We will be supported by the Burwood RSL sub-Branch Pipes and Drums with their magnificent bagpipe music.



We will march down Barrack Street to the Cenotaph in Martin Place for a short commemoration service, placing of wreaths, and then march back to the Club premises in Barrack Street. There will be refreshments in the Barrack Street Restaurant afterwards around 7 pm.

ITEM 4 – PRESENTATION OF CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION OF FLORENCE ANGELA VALENTINE FLINT

During our last General Meeting on November 16th, the sub-Branch presented Certificates of Appreciation to Angie for her dedicated service to the sub-Branch from 2000 to 2023 including as Secretary and Treasurer.

A Certificate of Appreciation from RSL NSW and one issued by our sub-Branch.



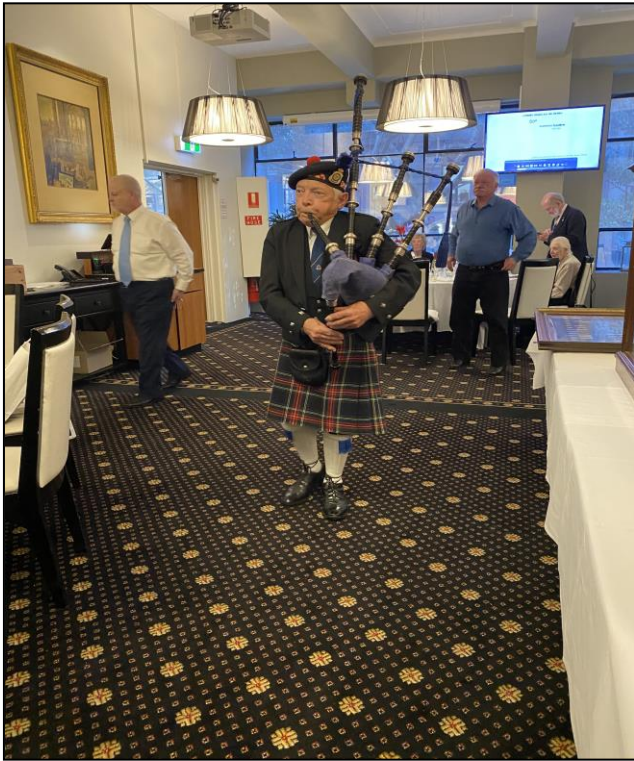
Also, the presentation of James Warrand
“THE JAPANESE ATTACK ON SYDNEY
HARBOUR in World War 2”.



ITEM 5 - MEDAL OF THE ORDER OF AUSTRALIA

On Australia Day CAPT (Doc) Ian Cameron (retd) (our favourite Bag Piper) was awarded the OAM. Congratulations Ian!

The citation reads that it was for service to medicine, and to community music.



Ian has been mainly a General Practitioner for most of his career but has specialised in a number of areas and in recent years has focussed on aged care including vaccination management.

He was a medical officer in the Army Reserve (1963-2001) and was my Medical Officer in my Regiment (1974-1982 Ron Hack). On retiring he joined the Burwood RSL Pipes and Drums and has served at ANZAC sub Branch reunions for many years. Ian was at one time the Honorary Piper to Her Excellency the NSW Governor. Ian currently lives on the Gold Coast but flies down to Sydney for special events such as our 80th Anniversary Lunch last year.

ITEM 6 - BARRACKS ON BARRACK UPDATE

You may be aware that the Barracks on Barrack Club as well as the Castlereagh Club are part of the City Tattersalls Group. Opening hours and details of services are available on the City Tats website: [Home - City Tattersalls Club \(citytatts.com.au\)](http://citytatts.com.au)

They currently have a special on Club membership where one year's membership is complimentary for new members and reduced fees for existing members. See the website. New membership is available at the Ground Floor lounge at Barracks on Barrack.

On ANZAC Day Barracks on Barrack will be open early for coffee and breakfast to align with the Dawn Service. However, pre bookings during the lunch period will be limited as in 2023 it was fully booked. Check the website for further details closer to ANZAC Day.

ITEM 7 – PRESENTATION OF THE LEGACY TORCHES

These torches have travelled more than 50,000km from Pozieres to London and every one of the 44 Legacy Australia clubs across the nation as part of the Legacy Centenary Torch Relay. Last December they reached their final destinations at Barracks on Barrack and The Castlereagh where they will be proudly displayed to remind members and guests about the sacrifices veterans made for the freedom we enjoy and the wonderful work of Legacy.

Graham Boyd, CEO of Legacy presented the torches to Combined Services RSL sub-Branch President Ron Hack, The Barracks President Carl Dumbrell and City Tatts Chief of Staff and veteran Julieanne Horsman.



Ron Hack, PRESIDENT

Kimberly Metra, BUSINESS SUPPORT MANAGER

28 February 2024