



# AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA BALLARAT BRANCH

Newsletter December 2018/January 2019



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## MONTHLY MEETINGS

Our monthly meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month, (**except January**), commencing at 1200 hours at the Lakers Football Club Rooms in Wendouree. Due to some redevelopment/construction works, entry is currently off Dowling Street through the previous car park.



## A Christmas/New Year Message from the President

The year through which we have just passed has been an eventful one, both trying and satisfying. Undermanned, it has proved a challenge. On the positive side we have had a variety of interesting guest speakers and some other developments, both in Ballarat and from the Divisional aspect which have been pleasing.

The loss of two veteran members in Bill Wilkie and Bruce Clifton has been balanced by new members in Michael Lake, Ken Marsh, Tom Nunn, Bob Petty, Brian Reasons, John Williams, David Plunkett, Barry Turner and Stephen Waddington, together with the return of Ivan Kerr.

After years of service and many interesting Graces, John Furness has retired. Keith Lanyon has been approached to return to an official role as our Chaplain.

We have been represented at all open Divisional functions and in return have been favoured by visits from National President, Carl Schiller and State President, Max McGregor, together with interchange visits from our firm friends of the Bendigo Branch.

Perhaps the highlight of the year was the visit of the Woodwind Quintet from the RAAF School of Music. However, those who attended the presentation by our traffic policemen will probably dispute this statement. We were also gratified to acknowledge the admission of Leigh Harvey to Life Membership and the acceptance of Jack Bell as a Centenarian and ongoing gratis Victorian member.

The development of Hut 48 (the Old Officers Mess of the School of Radio) has taken place and occupancy is on the probable horizon. Keith Pitman has been a long term catalyst in this process, recently abetted by Peter Schoutens with photographic assistance by Noel Hutchins. Nevertheless we have been privileged to enjoy the facilities in the Lakers Club Rooms.

Noel Hutchins has breathed new life into the Newsletter –surely the envy of other branches of the Division. At the same time from the genesis by Peter Schoutens of research into those members of the No1 Wireless Air Gunners School who paid the supreme penalty and eligible to be acknowledged in a permanent Memorial, has been carried out by a small group of dedicated researchers.

We have also been represented at functions commemorating the majority of major anniversaries during the year. However the every-day running of the Branch could not take place without a small group of dedicated individual members whom I shall acknowledge in my annual report. My heartfelt thanks is due to them.

My Best Wishes to you all for a traditional Merry Christmas and Happy and Successful New Year.

Best wishes, Tom

## Santa gate-crashed our December Meeting

What a joyous occasion was our December monthly meeting. A great turn-out of members including a long trip up from Hamilton by member Roy Bett, thanks to Roy's daughter Sally who brought him up and also gave us the pleasure of her company at the meeting.

There was lots of joyous laughter. Once again, our President Tom Roberts showed his adept hand as our Master of Ceremony. Well done and thank you Tom.

Member Tom Jobling had to make apologies as he needed to leave the meeting early. He only just missed the very loud gate-crashing arrival of Father Christmas who seemed even more exuberant than I have ever seen him. Pity Tom had to leave, but he did come back after Santa left. (NH, Ed)



## NO NORMAL MONTHLY MEETING IN JANUARY ~ But will be a BYO BBQ Gathering

While there isn't a normal monthly meeting in January there is an informal 'byo eats' to a BBQ gathering on the Eastern side of Lake Wendouree on Tuesday 8th. Going by the several members that I have spoken to, there will be quite a few unable to attend that get-together. At the present time, I am expecting to need to be in Brisbane around that time and will likely be unable to attend. (NH, Ed)



# HAPPY BIRTHDAY JACK BELL

## 101 years of age on 20th December 2018

For all you members who missed out hearing Ballarat Branch member Jack Bell speak at the Christmas function at the AFA Vic offices on 29th November, you all missed out on something very special.

What an honour for me to shake Jack's hand and have a chat with him. What a great inspirational talk he presented as the guest speaker for the function. I have to admit to tears running down my cheeks as I listened to Jack speak. What a wonderful compassionate man. Don't know how many times I had to remove my glasses to dry my eyes. Thank you Jack, wonderful to hear you speak and an absolute honour to be able to shake your hand.

I know that Jack's talk was being video'd so hopefully we might get a copy to show it at one of our monthly social meetings in the coming year.



No 1 WAGS RAAF Ballarat Course No 2 member, Mr Jack Bell and AFA Ballarat Branch member Noel Hutchins ~ AFA Vic 29 Nov 2018

From all of us at the AFA Vic Ballarat Branch  
Happy 101'st Birthday Jack

### LIKELY DELAYS TO CHRISTMAS DELIVERIES

Going by the look on the faces of airport security officials at Anchorage airport, this looks to be quiet serious.

I don't know what Santa has been up to but it doesn't look too good.



If any further news comes to hand I will let members know, but I think that we can assume there is most likely to be some delays with Christmas deliveries. (NH, Ed)

# ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 1200 hours Tuesday 6th February 2019

Our February meeting on Tuesday 6th February will also serve as our Annual General Meeting where elections for 2019 committee members will be held. It would be appreciated if members could make every effort to be at that meeting. Together with this newsletter will be a separate page of Committee Nomination Forms. Completed nomination forms need to reach President Tom Roberts at 11 Raglan Street Sth, Ballarat on or before Tuesday 15th January 2019.

Our Branch **needs** members who are able to spare some time to take on some responsibilities in respect of the running of our branch of AFA Vic to please give some thought to putting their hand up to fill a position on the AFA Ballarat committee for year 2019.

A couple of our newer members have indicated their preparedness to at least consider taking on a position on the 2019 committee, but we need some members with previous experience as committee members here to maybe consider coming back on and giving just one more year's service while newer members 'find their feet'. (NH, Ed)

## AFA Ballarat Branch Rooms at Ballarat Aerodrome

There has been some discussion around whether or not the upcoming new AFA Ballarat Branch rooms at the aerodrome would be the location for our future monthly social meetings. While our rooms are virtually fully restored in the building, the common area kitchen will remain as just an incomplete shell until such time as a contractor is arranged by the City Council to fit it out. It has been advised that this may not be completed in this current financial year. Until the kitchen is fully fitted out our rooms will be not suitable for our monthly social meetings. (NH, Ed)

## THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

I think that it was only in April this year that I first became involved with the AFA following medical and hospice care advice that I needed to 'get involved' with something to 'keep me occupied'. With 2018 coming to a close I would like to acknowledge the great help that the Association has been to me in handling the grief associated with the loss of my wife Janet on 13th December last year.

In particular, the support shown to me by both the President Tom Roberts and his wife Penny, our Care Person, has been much appreciated as has the general welcoming by members not only at our Ballarat Branch level but at the AFA Vic offices in Melbourne as well where one is always welcomed with a smile from Barb. My association with Carl Schiller, Max McGregor and Jacqui Rudd, and other members in Melbourne where Jacqui has been a ray of sunshine, has all contributed to helping me through my one year commitment to Janet of grieving and remembering.

I have just returned from Newcastle where I spent the first anniversary of Janet's passing at her grave side where I took her body back to, to where I met her when I was based at RAAF Williamstown with No 75 Squadron in the early 1960's. With this one year commitment to Janet now complete and with the aforementioned support from the Air Force Association, I have now, I think, been able to 'let go' of Janet a little bit, even to the extent that I am now about to allow a new love into my life.

I have thoroughly enjoyed doing the AFA Ballarat newsletter for our branch and the feedback of appreciation that I have received has been most gratifying. I wish all members a Very Merry and Safe Christmas and New Year. (NH, Ed)



An outing to the Ranger Barracks Military Museum was very much enjoyed by members of the newly formed Poppy Club on 6th December. Museum manager Major Neil Leckie gave a very detailed introduction to the museum which was followed by a tour of the museum which was in turn



followed an excellent and very informative presentation by Neil. Members then adjourned to the Arch View Cafe for refreshments and a social chat.

The Poppy Club is an initiative of the Ballarat RSL and Lynne Redman from Ballarat RSL and myself are working to grow it as a combined social club of all ex-service organisations in the Ballarat district. You will hear more about the Poppy Club in 2019. (NH, Ed)

## **Ballarat Branch RAAFA MEETING Stan White-Hall. December 4 2018**

Present: Peter Allen, Jennifer & Pat Askwith, Roy Bett with daughter, Sally Robertson, Dorothy Donaldson, John Furness, Heather Gardner, Shirley Gribble, John Harley, Leigh Harvey, Noel Hutchins, Gordon & Margaret Jarvis, Tom Jobling, Ivan Kerr, Michael Lake (welcome back) Keith Lanyon, Ken Marsh, Lachie McBean, Bob McDonald, Stan Pickford, Brian & Josie Reasons, Penny & Tom Roberts, Peter Schoutens, Stephen Waddington, Albie Watson, Stan White, Andrew Willox, Kath Wilson and Margaret Wood.

Apologies: Matthew Chester, Ron and Dot Douglas, Brian Drennan, Bill Mitchell, Dianna Peacock, Keith and Sue Pitman, Barry Turner and Glen Wesley.

It was particularly nice to be able to welcome back Roy Bett and daughter Sally who had made the long trip from Hamilton to join us. Also, Stan Pickford returned after a recent bout of illness, Andrew Willox, and Jenny and Pat Askwith, Dorothy Donaldson and Kath Wilson. The President had obtained a portrait of her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and an Australian National Ensign, which were displayed.

Following the opening, the President dedicated the Ode to our late Member and Past President Bruce Clifton.

He then acknowledged the contribution of surviving past and present senior members, Jack Bell, Roy Bett, Lachie McBean, Bill Mitchell, Jack Netherway and Stan White. Adopting a cautionary note without mention of age, he also included Pat Askwith, Dorothy Donaldson, Shirley Gribble, Norma Noske, Kath Wilson and Margaret Wood.

The following meal was interspersed with selections of Christmas Carols, the music being supplied as has been the custom by the always obliging and cheerful Margaret Jarvis.

An additional feature this year was the inclusion of brief runs of Christmas Trivia questions, each winner selecting an item for Santa's Sack. To the delight of all, Santa himself made a brief, noisy and entertaining visit.

Welfare Carer, Penny Roberts, presented a welfare report, with particular mention of the passing of Bruce Clifton and the current illness of Isobel, wife of stalwart Bill Mitchell.

Reports were made on the December Quarterly Meeting of the Victorian Branch at which OUR, and Victorian Senior Member, Jack Bell, was the Guest Speaker.

Jack presented me with two copies of his auto-biography, one for our Branch and one for the WAGS Branch – he having been a member of the No 2 Course.

Peter Schoutens recorded the completion of the renovation works of Hut 48, complete with photographs, but there has been no official notification from the Ballarat City Council at this stage.

There were many prizes won in the raffle, the major hamper (a gift from Catherine King) was won, with delight by Kath Wilson. The President and Welfare Carer are scheduled to represent Ballarat attending the Bendigo Christmas function on Thursday December 6.

The Ballarat planned functions are the BYO Picnic on the south-west side of Lake Wendouree at 12 MD on Tuesday January 8 and the Annual Meeting at Stan White-Hall at 12 MD on February 5.

Decisions will need to be made on the status of the facilities at Hut 48 after an offer is made by the Ballarat City Council. Access, equipment, facilities and availability shall all require consideration

Finally the Annual Meeting will be held as above at our current venue. Nominations for Office Bearers, signed and approved by them, together with a mover and seconder, must be in my hands by Tuesday January 15, 2019. Positions to be filled are those of President, Senior and Junior Vice-Presidents, Secretary, Treasurer, News Editor and Welfare Carer, to a total of four Committee Members. Voters must be currently registered financial members of the Victorian Division of (RA)AFA

*(Tom Roberts, Pres.)*

### **Christmas greeting from Catherine King MP**

As shown in the report of our December meeting above, our federal parliamentary representative Catherine King MP gifted to our Association a Christmas hamper. We have now received a Christmas card from Catherine with Christmas Greetings to us all.