

WATT'S HAPPENINGS

JOURNAL OF THE UNITED SERVICE CLUB
NEWCASTLE

SPRING 2021

Issue 9



SINCE 1927

Bar

Lounge

Club Museum

Snooker & Darts



2021-2022 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President: Ernie Thirkell

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2021-2022 PATRONS

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MAJ Roland MILLBANK (Ret)

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

To Our Members,

Personally and on behalf of the board I wish you and your loved ones a safe path through this unimaginably difficult period.

These are unsettling times and COVID-19 is impacting all our lives to various degrees.

Despite this, please take care and try to stay positive.

I can report that Bar trade and functions had been going well until the recent COVID-19 restrictions limiting bar trade as well as my opportunity to personally welcome new members and introduce them around.

I'm looking forward to the time that this can be rectified, but with the uncertainty regarding the length of the lockdown that eventuated, I could be waiting a long time for the pleasure.

On a different note, USC Director, Property Manager David Thomas has presented the result of the June 2021 stocktake to the board.

Stocktaking of the bar has continued annually, but the last stocktake of our other assets was completed in 2013. As a result, this was a task of gargantuan proportions revealing a surprisingly low 2% of items unaccounted for.

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The stocktake was largely conducted by our Historical Committee members and our museum Consultant Bill Storer OA.

A100% stocktake with the final asset valuation to be included in the annual returns each year will be possible because of the newly created position of Property Manager.

Stay positive and be well

Ernie Thirkell

SECRETARY'S MEMO 'WATT'S HAPPENINGS'

Dear Members,

As you know, the doors of the United Service Club Newcastle are currently closed in accordance with the Premier's lockdown announcement. All going well this temporary closure will end soon.

The earlier restrictions on numbers caused the cancellation of many functions. We were particularly disappointed on behalf of one family whose birthday function was called off only hours before it was due to start.

The eventual lockdown, although necessary, has had the same negative effect on the USC as it has on other businesses. Because of this, your club will be relying on your continued patronage once the doors are open for business again.

Now more than ever, in the current situation, it is vital to stay digitally connected. Speaking of which, it's come to my attention that some of you haven't been getting club messages, so this is a gentle reminder to update any changed details with us. (See p8 for USC Secretary email or Bar Manager mobile.)

Recently it has been my sad duty to post emails informing you of the passing of both John Van Homrigh and of Phil Colyvas.

I'm sure we all collectively pass on our best wishes to the families of both club members during this difficult time.

I hope that you and your loved ones are safe and well and continue to be so.

It is challenging living under the current restrictions; however, I am confident we will get through this, together.

Jason Gladys

VALE

John Van Homrigh,

25 years USC member & past Director. John died 3 July 2021 aged 95.

P3 of 'Watt's Happenings' Winter edition features an article about him including a photo from earlier this year and his ADF service.

Phil Colyvas

Member of USC were regularly entertained by Phil's stories & jokes. He died 28 July 2021.

P4 of 'Watt's Happenings' April 2021 edition includes a photo of Phil sharing Jason's 2021 birthday cake & a beer. Phil served as a steward in the Australian Regular Army from Feb 1973 - Feb 1976.

Lest We Forget

THEY JOINED USC IN THE 1900'S



Introducing John Gillard
USC Member for 39 years

A Novocastrian, born, bred and educated, John Gillard joined the USC in 1982.

Left: John waiting for the 2019 AGM to start

Having graduated from the University of NSW, John worked for the BHP as a Maintenance Engineer in steel. As BHP expanded from open hearth production to BOS, he travelled on their behalf on a number of overseas training trips to a variety of places such as Tunisia and Thailand.

During 1982, while Manager of a BHP Dyke Ship Loader and responsible for draft surveys during loading of mineral concentrate, John met Ship's Captain Tony Guinnane. Tony, a long-standing member of the USC invited John to join him there for lunch that day.

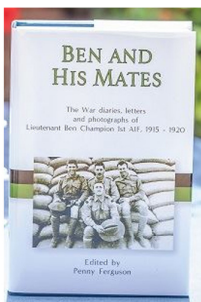
The meal was enjoyable and John discovered he knew many of the Club members present such as Martin Ramsay, Neil Watkins, Jack Elliott and Roland Millibank.

It was a logical progression to join the USC and to indulge in the regular Thursday lunches. These and the three formal military dinners held each year, were the main attraction for John and his wife Faye.

The reduced opening hours, steep stairs and lack of a lift have limited John and Faye to only occasional visits to their Club, including of course the AGMs. For the past few years they have relied on regular phone contact with fellow members and communication from the club via emails and his regular mailouts of 'Watt's Happenings'.

Ben and his Mates

Written by his granddaughter Penny Ferguson,



The war diaries, letters & photos of Lieutenant Ben Champion 1st AIF, 1915 – 1920 - a comprehensive and moving wartime account of the adopted Novocastrian, (and Founding Member of USC) who wrote devotedly to his sweetheart Francis Julia Niland (Frank).

Penny has donated a copy of this book to the USC in memory of her Grandfather, Dr Ben Champion.

FOUNDATION MEMBERS



Dr Benjamin Champion
USC Member for 51 years
1897 - 1978

Born at Stanmore, New South Wales, Ben spent 4 years as an army cadet and developed a career as a dental apprentice.

In May 1915, 18-year-old Ben enlisted with the A.I.F. departing Sydney with reinforcements for the 1st Infantry Battalion aboard HMAT Orsova that July

In November 1915, Ben was sent to Gallipoli to join the 1st Battalion soldiers already serving on the peninsula. He was evacuated at the end of the month after sustaining wounds to the face and thigh.

He re-joined his unit on the Western Front and was rapidly promoted through the ranks in 1916. Ben's final promotion was to the rank of lieutenant in 1917.

On 15 April 1918, while at Pradelles, he sustained a shell injury to his left leg that was consequently amputated. Having been wounded in action three times and with the loss of his left leg, he returned for Australia in June.

Ben Champion settled in the Newcastle area, where he established a dental practice & married Francis Niland (Frank) from Tarro. He joined the United Service Club as a foundation member in 1927 and remained in the Newcastle area.

1977 USC 50th anniversary book 'Ben quotes'. 'Never forget that in this Club, Newcastle Legacy was formed' 'The distressed Diggers' quarters in Hall Street was supplied with food during the depression and the Diggers were visited, encouraged and helped.' Lt. General Sir John Northcott, the Governor of NSW was a member'. 'We had visits from Field Marshal Sir William Slim, former Governor General of Australia, and Sir Dallas Brooks.'

ADF DAYS OF COMMEMORATION

2021 Royal Australian Air Force Centenary	September 3 Merchant Navy Day
September 1 Battle for Australia Day	October 31 Battle of Beersheba Day
	November 11 Remembrance Day

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Margaret Lees

How did you find out about us?

'The Thirkells Invited us for a drink. It's now a 6 pm weekly tradition.'



When and why did you join?

'We were warmly welcomed by other members and found the ambience very pleasing. We both joined that same night.'

When are we likely to see you in the club?



'Special functions like the Anniversary cocktail party.'



'Military Dinners. This one was Remembrance Day.'



'ANZAC Days: Dawn Service, Breakfast at USC; March to Civic Park; Back to USC - a great opportunity for us to host young members of the defence force.'

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'Special functions like Native flavours degustation dinner'

FUNCTIONS

The kitchen is available for functions:

- * in-house caterer;
- * cater for yourself;
- * order in.

USC does functions & can arrange catering



Above: NCYC Cruising Fleet ordered in pizzas (lots of them) for their March monthly meeting. Rod, Neil, Andrew, Paul and Paul.



Lynch's Hub is our preferred catering partner for USC functions.

Support your club by holding your next function or event with us.

Request menu or grazing platter options from the bar manager or direct from Lynch's Hub on (02) 4925 2926



MEET THE BOARD

This new regular feature of ‘Watt’s Happenings’ showcases the diverse backgrounds and range of life experiences of your elected representatives. This diversity has largely contributed to the giant steps forward in the past few years. Examples of these include rejuvenation and restoration of the premises, progress toward museum standards in our historical collection and, commitment to board transparency.

Simon Macks, Vice-President.

I was born at the St George Hospital in Sydney in 1965. Grew up in Sydney until I was 9 when we moved to the hills west of Perth. I went to Kalamunda SHS where I excelled at nothing in particular:



Hated school so much that I couldn’t bear the thought of university so, with my HSC under my belt, I joined the Army in 1983 and headed to basic training at IRTB Kapooka. This was a bit of a shock to my system but at 17 I pulled my head in and enjoyed my time there.

Apparently with my height, eyesight, HSC etc every single Army job was open to me. So I chose to be a helicopter crewman, a dog handler or a tank driver.

But because I was the only one in my Platoon with HSC I was sent to study electronics for 12 months in the Signal Corps. Did I mention I joined the Army to leave school? I asked for something else and my Platoon Sergeant considered it, then told me to pull my head in and enjoy the higher pay level.

Three years later I was a bored technician with no interest in electronics so I applied to go to RMC, Duntroon. Loved being a Cadet and it was with mixed emotions that I graduated in June 1988 as a Lieutenant posted to 72 Electronic Warfare Squadron in Toowoomba Queensland. I then enjoyed a series of regimental postings until my final job as Officer Commanding 136 Signal Squadron in Brisbane and then in 1999 was retired on medical grounds with a spinal injury.

I live in Hamilton with my family and dogs and spend much of my time sailing, both locally and taking our boat Mako away for regattas and offshore races.

I first attended the USC as a guest of a mate about ten years ago and popped in now and then. I successfully stood for the board as a director in 2019 and have enjoyed helping the board and the club through some challenging times.

I am in the club on the first Thursday of every month and you might see me on the odd Friday at the bar.

Phil Screen, Director.

Born in Newcastle and adopted by Eileen & Oswald (West’s League legend) Screen. I lucked out on both counts.

I left Tech High and started work but then I got worried. I probably need to mention about now that I was a long haired hippie.



I had visions of me in camo gear crawling about in the mud and getting shot at so I came up with a brilliant plan to dodge conscription. Everyone knows that you can join the Navy, see the world and get paid while you’re at it. Right? So I did! And I was only 19!

On the HMAS Sydney three tours of Vietnam later, I had missed out on the jungle, khaki and mud, but war as a swabbie on an aircraft carrier is no fun either! Maybe my plan hadn’t been so brilliant after all.

I’ve always been a muso. Before, during and after the Navy. When we weren’t in the war zone there was sometimes the opportunity to hang out with the Navy band.



Once more a civilian, I was drummer in a number of bands: ‘Swanee’, ‘Rabbit’ and ‘Heroes’. I became a long haired hippie again!

‘Rabbit’ was Jim Porteus, Mark Tinson, and me. Later Dave Evans (ex-AC/DC) joined us on lead vocals and we cut two albums.

‘Swanee’ (John Swan is the older brother of Jimmy Barnes), regularly played on ‘Countdown’.

The performance which has probably gotten the highest media coverage was when ‘Heroes’ was playing at the ‘Star Hotel’ on the night of the riot.

The USC is a great club to be part of and I’m happy that I can do my bit for it. I get to catch up with friends and meet new members on the night of the monthly Thursday board meetings and at special events like ANZAC Day.

‘Old rockers never die, they just cut their hair and nobody recognises them any more’.

‘Watt’s Happenings’ are on USC’s website:

<https://unitedserviceclub.wildapricot.org/news>

Like and follow the Club’s Facebook page,

<https://www.facebook.com/uscnewcastle>

WATT'S NOT TO ENJOY !!



Above: Tony Sullivan- David Dick - Sue Marshall - Lyn Snedden- Debbie Sullivan



Above: A quiet Friday night, beer, good company and foot tapping Irish music thanks to Luke & Glenn



Above: NCYC Cruising Fleet buddies.



Above: Ross, Wal, Jodi and Heather

THE FIVE SILVER FRAMES

Photos from our own member's albums of their military career & overseas deployments appear on quarterly rotation in the USC Bar.

Featured to date: Brett Hodgett, Keith Brennan, Peter Green and now Ernie Thirkell.



Above: Taking a break from snooker to pose with 'Mr & Mrs Styks', Geoff and Analee Isbister.

Janet Aisbett, Sue Britton, Vicki Hill, Gloria Thirkell

We have as usual, been extremely busy on your behalf and appreciate all of the positive comment about the recent displays for ADF Days of Commemoration.

These have included 'UN Peacekeeping', the 'Second Boer War' and 'Korean War'. Your feedback and interest in the displays fuels the enthusiasm to continue volunteering the hours to research and produce them. Thank you.

Prior to the Covid 19 Delta Strain lockdown, a tribute to the '100 years of RAAF' was set up. Because we couldn't acknowledge 'Vietnam Veteran's Day' on 18 August, our tribute will be put in place for a few weeks when the Club again opens for business.



Left: July 2018. USC Member Michael Eggleston presenting numbered prints of two of his paintings of the Vietnam War to then Club President Greg Tyler and Director Ernie Thirkell.

Below: Club President Ernie Thirkell accepted the book 'Emden's Last Voyage' from Alf Cantrell, Curator of the Yeoval Banjo Paterson Museum,

'Emden's Last Voyage' features Banjo Patterson's interviews with the skipper of HMAS Sydney.

A visitor to the Yeoval museum told Alf that USC has part of the 'Emden' in the form of a brass kangaroo. Alf came to look and to donate the book.



The result of Janet's tireless work in creating and updating our database with each change (and there have been many!) is a finely tuned cataloguing system. This includes library items, the museum collection and other club property as required by the board's Property Member.

Accessioning of items is a detailed process. We are well underway with items received after the previous audit, the current focus now being a number of new/recent acquisitions especially photos and books.

There remains much work in researching provenance and recording extra information relating to the original 2013 property list. This is in order to establish military standard data sheets with more comprehensive details than previously existed.

Consultant to the Historical Committee, Bill Storer OAM has not only been giving us professional standard training in collection management, he has acted on his initial observation:

'Some items in this intriguingly diverse collection need extensive conservative treatment and a great deal of TLC.'



Under Bill's guidance, all flags have been laundered (thanks Sue) and signed out preparatory to having them frozen for two weeks at Newcastle Museum. Two of the flags are very fragile and will need careful treatment and storage when they are returned.



Left: WW1 artefacts in the lounge. From 'HMAS Sydney':
* Wardroom Furniture;
* Wardroom Clock;
* Photo of the ship.
From the German Cruiser 'Emden':
* Kangaroo figurine cast from brass taken from the ship.

The kangaroo was presented to the USC by Mrs B.Lawrence, widow of Stoker I/C Herbert Lawrence who served on HMAS Sydney 1914-1918.

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Andrew Knight is a Partner at local Hunter law firm **Sparke Helmore** and is also a member of the USC.

He specialises in property law and estate planning and can help you with wills, trusts, powers of attorney and guardianships as well as assist you in preparing a comprehensive estate plan.

You can contact him on **andrew.knight@sparke.com.au** or call him on **(02) 4924 7606**

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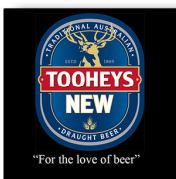
Above: *Jan and Lee Rowan*



Above: *Kyle Loades and Bradley Wilson*



*Middle Right:
Michele Rumph, Jesse McColl,
Jacob Cavill, Tim Leishman,
Scott Mackenzie, Sharon
Stephenson and Jackie Duff*



*Lower right: At the table,
Ernie, Dick, Phillip, Margaret
and Lyn.*

**UNITED SERVICE
CLUB
NEWCASTLE**

**FUN
BERFORE
LOCKDOWN**

**AND WILL BE
AGAIN**



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