

WATT'S HAPPENINGS

JOURNAL OF THE UNITED SERVICE CLUB
NEWCASTLE

Issue 13, SPRING 2022



Since 1927

IN THIS ISSUE

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Remembering early members

- Lieut. Col. Frederick Street DSO

- Robert Wansbrough Henning

Watt's not to enjoy

Bar

Lounge

Club Museum

Snooker & Darts



2022-2023 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President: (Vice President Acting)

Vice President: MAJ Simon Macks (Ret)

Hon. Secretary: WO2 Jason Gladys (Ret)

Hon. Assistant Secretary: Andrew Hill

Hon. Treasurer: Joel N. Griffiths BCom CA

Director: CAP Lyn Van Homrigh (Ret)

Director: Phil Screen

Director: David Thomas

Director: James Wallace

2021-2022 PATRONS

BRIG Derek Sharp (Ret) OBE

MAJ Roland MILLBANK (Ret)

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Fellow members,

It is with a heavy heart that I am writing to advise you all of the retirement of Ernie Thirkell from his position as President of the United Service Club.

Ernie's health hasn't been the best this year and this has necessitated him re-evaluating his priorities and understandably turning his attention to his family and his own needs.

Ernie first joined the board in 2018 and was elected President last year. He has been a very willing board member and can take credit for much of the improvements to the Club that we have been enjoying in the recent times.

I'm sure I speak on behalf of all the members as I thank Ernie for all his work and look forward to continuing to see him around the Club.

As Vice President, his duties and responsibilities will transfer to myself until the next AGM where Club members will have the opportunity to elect a new President.

I'd like to remind you all that board meetings are conducted on the first Thursday of every month. Members are welcome to advise of any matters they wish to be considered by the board and should contact myself by email secretary@uscnewcastle.com. Please include Attention: President in the subject line.

Welcome to all new USC members. I am looking forward to meeting you in person at the club.

On behalf of all members of the Club I'd like to extend our fondest best wishes to both Ernie and Gloria.

Simon Macks
Acting President

SECRETARY'S MEMO

On behalf of the Board of Directors and members I would like to extend our welcome to those new members that have joined the United Service Club – Newcastle.

The building works continue next door at 45 Watt Street and in cooperation with the construction crew we are trying to minimise any disruption to our members and guests. Whilst they are working as quick as they can, they are running a little behind schedule and may be there until the end of September at this stage.

Please get in now to book any Christmas or end of year functions at the Club. Spaces are filling up fast.

I would like to thank all our members both new and old for supporting your Club over the last few months. Without your patronage the Club will find it difficult to continue, so please keep it going.

Lastly, I would also like to echo the Acting President's comments and thank our out-going President Mr Ernie Thirkell for his tireless work and commitment to the Club.

Every time I have conducted maintenance or infrastructure work, Ernie has always been there to assist. From painting, fixing roof leaks, installing our new cool room, Ernie has always been there.

During Covid restricted trading Ernie was always at the Club to act as a covid-marshall at least one night per week plus the many other duties he has performed both in front of and behind the scenes. Thanks Pop, I'll have to find a new apprentice.

Jason Gladys

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Jason Gladys

VALE

Vittoreo Cattaneo

Vit/Vic, born in 1927, the same year as his club was formed, died 13 July 2022.

A remarkable man, Vit's teenage years were under German Occupation & as a member of the Italian resistance. (Check USC website / "Watt's Happenings issue 5/ p3 article).

Lest we forget.

NEW MEMBERS

June - August 2022

Erin Baxter Peter Howes
Robert Campbell Paul Myers
Shane Douglas Beverley Southern
Sue Henning Barbara Welsh



The USC
For your best Christmas
Function ever

BOOK NOW

THEY JOINED IN THE 1900's

USC Past President, Flight Officer (F/O) Robert Wansbrough Henning

Born in Dungog, Rob grew up and was educated in Newcastle then Sydney.

Right: Rob enlisted in the RAAF in April 1943



His first job was as a rent collector for Creer & Berkeley (on his pushbike). After WWII he returned to this company, obtained his Real Estate license and became a licensed valuer and auctioneer.

On the home front, Rob married Joan Hill and together they had 6 children. He was passionate about sport and played both tennis and golf until the age of 89, only 4 years before his death.



A member of the USC for 65 years, Rob served a term as president and was awarded the honour of life membership.

Left: At the USC 's 86th AGM.

Rob's life in the RAAF

He joined the Air Force in 1943 & passed his wings test (Pilot Officer) as a single engine pilot having qualified to fly Tiger Moths and Wirraways at the air training school.

He transferred to wireless operator and was later promoted to flying officer. His first post was in New Guinea followed by W.A. where his squadron flew Australian-built Wirraways, in convoy protection and anti-submarine roles off the coast around Perth, Fremantle and Rottneest Island.

In January 1945 No. 25 Squadron, equipped with Liberator heavy bombers operating out of Cunderdin W.A., attacked Japanese shipping and flew 12-hour bombing missions to Java in the Dutch East Indies.



Above: No. 25 Squadron B-24-J bomber and its crew, wearing the RAAF's then khaki 'summer dress' uniform, at RAAF Base Cunderdin, April 1945. P/O Rob.W. Henning 4th from left.

In June 1945, the squadron relocated to Tarakan, Indonesia and assisted in the Allied landings at Brunei Bay in northern Borneo. Their major combat actions were largely restricted to Labuan and around Beaufort.

We thank current USC member Sue Henning for the recent donation of her father Rob's collection of his service mementoes.

Gloria Thirkell, History Committee

FOUNDATION MEMBERS 1927

Lieut. Col. Frederick Street DSO

Street was member Number 9 of the USC and on its inaugural Board.



When he enlisted in August 1915, Street was 30 years old and living with his mother and sisters in Cooks Hill. His father had been a carpenter, but he graduated from Sydney University to become a solicitor. His education and experience in the Army Reserve qualified him for the rank of Captain. He was given command of 'B' Company in the 8th Infantry Brigade, 30th Infantry Battalion. Many of the Battalion's recruits were from Newcastle.

The 8th Brigade sailed from Sydney in November 1915, then spent six months in Egypt while the AIF re-organised after Gallipoli. Eventually it was attached to the newly formed 5th Division and sent to the Western Front.

Street first saw action at Fromelles in July 1916. For the rest of the year the 30th Battalion played no major offensive role, and he was transferred to HQ as an acting major.

In early 1917 Street was sent to England for three months of officer training. His instructors declared him to be energetic, imaginative and good at handling troops. A later report described him as a meticulous planner and good tactical thinker.

From 13th September 1917 unto the end of the year Street was acting Lieutenant-Colonel in command of 54th Battalion. Almost immediately the Battalion was involved in the Battle of Polygon Wood. Street's official diaries from the front line describe barrages of shelling, gassing, enemy planes and wet weather that depleted troop strength through illness as well as casualty.

Street returned to 30th Battalion and his substantive rank as major. In August 1918 the Allies were on the offensive, and he was given command of the Battalion. He and his men captured a significant number of German soldiers and guns at Villiers-Bretonneux and Foucaourt. Street was recommended for a DSO for his 'conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty' and for showing 'cheerfulness and fortitude, which was a great incentive to the troops under his command'.

Street was made a full Lieutenant-Colonel in August 1919 and repatriated that October. He went back to the family home at 34 Bull Street and to his legal practice. He regularly appeared in the Newcastle Courts.

In 1928 Street married Dr Helen Braye. They had one son. Street died in 1959.

The USC's membership no. 10 was also held by someone who lived on Bull St, Cooks Hill. His story, however, is very different. Read about it in the next newsletter.

Janet Aisbett, History Committee.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Matthew Lee



How did you find out about the USC?
'Through another member, David Smith who told me about it.'

I came along to catch up with Jason Gladys to talk about affiliate stuff to do with Patriots MMC (Military Motor Bike Club).'



Above: USC Secretary Jason

Why did you join?

'The Club had the feel of an old Sergeants Mess. The camaraderie, homely and inviting.'



Above: Matthew with Adam Dwyer

When are we likely to see you?

'I'm happy to be here all the time.'

What are some of your favourite times in the Club?

'I only recently joined, after my 5th visit. So far the highlight has been Anzac Day this year. It was a great day with good atmosphere. Everyone was friendly. The bar staff were overworked but great. I had my small kids and mother-in-law here. The whole family loved it.'

Below: Law students from the University of Newcastle and guests enjoyed an evening of networking and a lively discussion on women lawyers and politics.



FUNCTIONS

- Cater for yourself
- Hire a caterer
- Our preferred In-house caterer. Lynch's HUB

See p8 for more function photos



We had a Winter of baby functions! A 'baby Shower' and a 'wetting the head'



Above: Celebrating Alex & Kurt's baby. Back row: Mark & Rosa Thompson, Peter & Joanne Moroney, Ryan Kenny. Middle row: Alex Thompson & USC Past Sec Kurt Moroney. Front: Scott Dellar



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



CHILLING OUT



Below: Dick, Margaret, Gloria, Damien and Ernie



Our unique collection of military artefacts. Club members are always pleased to show visitors around.
 Below: Renee, Rowena and Roxy were given a guided tour by club member Lee.



Above: Lyn & Phillip.

Left: Ross, Wal, Jodi and Heather

Below: Laurie and Mark. (Laurie's photos from the Vietnam war are featured in the bar this Spring).



Above: Stuart, Aaron, Campell



Above: Matt & Terry



Above: Janelle & Tanya



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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WATT'S NOT TO ENJOY!



Left: Sam, Mitch, Glenn



Above: Andrew, Anna, Club Director James



Right: David Gorton, Geoff Isbister, Aaron Radonich, Analee Isbister, Adam Singer, Ang Vee



Above: Mansell, Kim, Garry, Jacqui & Garth



Above: At the evening of networking and discussion on women lawyers and politics.



Above: Michelle, Paul (new Member), Sue and Wol

Below: Peter's daughter Steff brought his grandson Lachlan and a whole lot of family and friends to check out the frames.



THE FIVE SILVER FRAMES

Thank you to current members: Past Director Brett Hodges, Keith Brennan, Peter Green, Past President Ernie Thirkell, Sean Martin, Secretary Jason Gladys and Peter Sneesby.

Why? They have shared with us personal photos of their military career and overseas deployments.

These sets of 5 photos are replaced each quarter. We thank Laurie Tremenheere for the current set from the Vietnam war.



HISTORY COMMITTEE

Sue Britton (History Committee)

What an experience!

The members of the History committee spent a profitable session with our mentor Bill Storer AM last month. In his usual supportive style, he walked us through issues that arise from researching an item for addition to our collection. Bill shares his vast knowledge with generosity and a fabulous sense of humour.

Right: *The army trunk Bill used to show us the process of assessment, acquisition and cataloguing, donated by Board member Lyn Van Homrigh, granddaughter of the owner Charles Ernest Wassell.*



Providing excellent research data from NAA (National Archives of Australia) we discovered that Ernest Wassell was born in 1889 in Brisbane and served in World Wars I and II. We also found he served in the Medical Corp, starting as a dentist and ending as Commanding Officer in charge of the 9th Australian General Hospital. He was awarded the DSO.

Then we looked properly at the trunk, and everything changed! Suddenly we were REALLY looking at the item. What shape? How big? How many hinges? External colour? Had it been painted inside by non-army personnel (could we change it from the internal blue? No, it is still part of it's history). What markings were on the item and what did they mean?

We next needed to find the manufacturer, the style, type and material of the stickers and labels Any damage needed to be recorded as well. Bill explained the need to clearly describe it as separate to any other similar item.

Provenance is important to the extent we should not accept items with no provenance as the ownership/source of an item is paramount.

Some of Bill's handy hints for quicker research:

- *Possible use to the club* - Relevance, Archive, Resource, Prop, Display, Storage.
- *Place of manufacture* can lead to small differences.
- *The last page of defence personnel service records.* This is the most recent.
- *WWI personnel all got three stamps* on their papers that detail whether they were on Gallipoli or not and where they served.
- *Biggest problem for our museum* -human handling. Oils from the skin react with metal and humid conditions enhance corrosion activity.
- *All metals that need refurbishment have specific processes to be followed.* Thanks to Bill we now have a treatment for each different type of metal.

In the Winter edition David Thomas mentioned that donations from Assistant Secretary Andrew Hill and members Gavin Fry and Ray Blackburn would be detailed in this issue. We've run out of room, so will try again in issue 14, Summer 2022.

BOARD PROPERTY MEMBER

David Thomas, Director

Regular visitors to the Club will have noticed the recent upgrades to our assets. The working space behind the Southern end of the bar has been increased and shelving built on the adjacent wall for the new 'Cocktail Bar'.

Our regular snooker & darts players welcomed the new air conditioner in the games room.

The USC has a diverse collection of artefacts, some of which are on permanent display, some are displayed on rotation and others only to be displayed as part of a special exhibit.



Above: Another improvement to our assets thanks to the efforts of our Secretary Jason.

Preparing these exhibits for each of the Australian Defence Force dedicated days of commemoration is an ongoing project for our history committee.

These displays are generally multi-faceted, pointing the way to existing exhibits, bringing some out of archives, preparing posters, and putting together appropriate photo collections.

Upcoming ADF days of commemoration

The Battle for Australia Day on the first Wednesday in September; *Merchant Navy Day* on September; *Beersheba Day*, 31 October; and *Remembrance Day*, 11 November.

RAMSLAND LAIDLER Solicitors

Contact Mark Ramsland, Mansell Laidler, James Wallace, and the team at Ramsland Laidler Solicitors for all your legal needs.

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Chambers on Watt

Suite 1, Ground Floor, 57 Watt Street Newcastle NSW 2300
Ph: 4929 7979 Fax: 4915 0047 Email: admin@ramsland.com.au

30/07/2022

A retirement function for USC member John Smith

More Functions at the USC



02/08/2022
The Newcastle Chapter of the Women Lawyers' Association of NSW
Speaker & Networking Event

- Left: the Speakers Panel
- The Honourable Robyn Parker (GAICD)
 - Ms Sue Higginson, MLC
 - Ms Kate Washington BA, LLB MP. Member of the Legislative Assembly
 - Professor Catherine Renshaw
 - Ms Sally Davies, Partner at Jenkins Legal Services

USC member Kathryn McKenzie of Business Angel Services, organised the above event on behalf of the Women Lawyers Association of NSW.

20/08/2022
They've set the Date Party

- Below: Susan Jordan, Simon McKee, Claire Jordan, Bruce Jordan
- Below centre: Denis, Kaye & Simon McKee, Claire, Susanne & Mark Jordan
- Below right: Amy Jordan, Simon, Claire, Susan & Mark



Above: Aly, Albie, Claire, Simon, James, Courtney, Kate, Table and Nick



CONTACT US		
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