PEACEKEEPING

Australia has performed peacekeeping operations for the United Nations continuously for more than 75 years. From 1947 in Indonesia, where Australians were part of the very first group of UN military observers anywhere in the world, to the present day we have stood proudly in the defence of peace and stability around the world.

Six multinational operations have been commanded by Australians including India and Pakistan from 1950 to 1966, Cambodia, 1992 to 1993, the Sinai from 1994 to 1997, Iraq from 1997 to 1999 and in East Timor from 1999 to 2000.

In the early years, Australia's peacekeepers were generally unarmed military observers, promoting peace indirectly by ensuring that neither side in a conflict could violate a ceasefire or commit atrocities without the United Nations and the world community knowing about it.

Observer missions help create stability, but do not necessarily help end the conflicts. Australian observers took part in a UN operation in Kashmir from 1950 to 1985. That mission continues today, without a resolution of the conflict in sight. Similarly, Australian observers have served with UN operations in the Middle East since 1956 and when the Iran-Iraq war ended in 1988, took part in a UN operation monitoring the ceasefire.

We have operations still going in South Sudan and a number engaged in the Middle East including a small group assisting Britain and the US in retaliating Houthi rebel attacks in the Red Sea.

Sixteen Australian peacekeepers have given their lives to service during missions.

ROSEMARY

The Ancient Greeks believed that rosemary made their memories stronger. This idea continues today as people wear sprigs of rosemary symbolising remembrance for those who have died in war.

ANZAC BISCUITS

ANZAC biscuit previously known as an ANZAC wafer or ANZAC tile, the ANZAC biscuit we know and love today is a far cry from what the ANZACs ate a hundred years ago. The ANZAC biscuit was originally intended as a bread substitute for soldiers fighting in hostile conditions. The biscuit was made to have long shelf life, meaning it was notoriously hard; in fact, they often adopted the affectionate nickname of 'bullet-proof' biscuits!

Ingredients:

- 1 cup of traditional rolled oats
- 1 cup of sifted plain flour
- 1 cup of caster sugar
- 3/4 cup of desiccated coconut
- 125 grams of butter
- 1 tablespoon of golden syrup
- 2 tablespoons of boiling water
- 1 teaspoon of bicarbonate soda

Directions:

- Combine rolled oats, sifted plain flour, caster sugar and desiccated coconut in a bowl.
- Heat butter and golden syrup over a low heat until butter is melted.
- Mix boiling water with bicarbonate soda and add to the butter mixture.
- Stir into the dry ingredients.
- Form the mixture into balls on a greased oven tray.
- Press the balls flat and bake in a slow oven (150°) for twenty minutes or until golden brown.
- Loosen the biscuits while still warm.
- Allow to cool on tray.

ANZAC DAY TRADITIONS AND SYMBOLS

The Ode

They shall grow not old,
as we that are left grow old

Age shall not weary them,
nor the years condemn,

At the going down of the sun

And in the morning,

We will remember them.

The Last Post

The Last Post historically has been used to signify the end of the day. It is played during commemorative ceremonies to serve as a tribute to the dead.

Minute's Silence

One (or two) minute's silence is held to respect on the significance of the day and as a sign of respect.

Reveille and Rouse

In major ceremonies, the Last Post is normally followed by Rouse except at the Dawn Service when Reveille is played. Historically Reveille woke the soldiers at dawn.

ANZAC Day Services

For information on ANZAC Day services in your area, ring your local council.

POPPIES

Red poppies were the first signs of life in the fields of northern France and Belgium after World War 1. Arising from the blood drenched ground, bright red poppies grew where four years of war led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of soldiers, including 45,000 Australians. The poppy has enabled Australians to show they have not forgotten the 102,911 Australian servicemen and women who have given their lives in wars and conflicts.

THE DAWN SERVICE

Dawn Service observed on ANZAC Day has its origins in an operational routine which is still performed by the Australian Army today. The half light of dawn can play tricks on one's eyes. The half hour before dawn, with its grey and misty shadows, became one of the most favoured times for an attack. Soldiers in defensive positions were therefore woken before dawn, so by the time first light crept across the battle field they were awake, alert, and manning their weapons. This was and is still known as stand-to. The operation was also repeated at sunset. After World War 1, returned soldiers sought the comradeship they felt in those quiet, peaceful moments before dawn. With symbolic links to the dawn landing at Gallipoli, a dawn stand-to or ceremony became a common form of ANZAC Day remembrance during the 1920s. The first official Dawn Service was held at the Sydney Cenotaph in 1927.

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LEST WE FORGET
ANZAC Day

2024 | A newsletter from Rowan Ramsey MP

Rowan attended the Remembrance Day Ceremony in Port Pirie last year.

A MESSAGE FROM ROWAN RAMSEY

ANZAC Day, as it should be, is a time of reflection and there is much to reflect on with 103,000 Australians losing their lives in service of our nation. Added to that are hundreds of thousands more damaged in battle, either physically or mentally. It is pleasing the military is now taking a stronger interest in those who have served and their ongoing welfare even though we know there is still more to do.

However, if we are to truly honour their contribution, we must also consider possible outcomes in an unsettled world. The Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Hamas invasion of Israel and its response, coupled with the growing confidence of the Chinese Communist Party, the expansion of its sphere of influence and sabre-rattling over Taiwan, mean that we cannot assume peace in our region will not face challenges.

George Washington is quoted as saying, "There is nothing so likely to produce peace as to be well prepared to meet an enemy."

Consequently, it is appropriate Australia assess our military strengths and weakness. Currently we are not meeting recruitment targets and are 4,500 or 6.9% below strength. Some equipment purchases have either failed to meet requirements or suffered unacceptably high cost blow-outs. That in this modern world we have no operating drones with attack capacity, is not acceptable. If delivered, the AUKUS deal will be a huge step forward, but there is much to do to meet our partner country requirements and decisive action needs to happen now.

Our military personnel have proven time and again they are up for the task, it is in times of peace that we need to capitalise on the opportunity and ensure the equipment and logistics they require is also up to the task.

Rowan Ramsey

D-DAY JUNE 6TH 1944

Eighty years on, D-Day, code named Operation Neptune, remains the biggest seaborne invasion in history.

By 1944 the Battle of Britain (1940-41) was passed, the capability of the Luftwaffe diminished, German industrial capacity had been heavily bombed, the US had entered the war, and the Allies were ready to re-engage head-to-head to clear the invaders from north-western Europe.

More than 12 months in the planning with the tides, wind and moonlight determining only a handful of days in summer months were suitable and following a 24 hour weather delay, the invasion was launched on June 6 along a fifty kilometre stretch of France's Normandy beaches, about 200km north-east of Paris.

Seven thousand ships with 195k navy personnel were used to land more than 130k men, mainly British, American and Canadian. More than 23k parachuted in. By June 11, 326k Allied troops had embarked accompanied by more than 100k ton of military equipment.

By 1944 the bulk of Australian troops and equipment had been recalled to the Pacific where Australia was in an existential battle against Japan, nonetheless about 3300 Australians still in the UK took their place during the invasion.

Largely our personnel were fighting in RAAF Lancaster and Halifax bombers, 453 Squadron's Spitfires and two squadrons of Mosquitos. Others were embedded in the British Airforce and, while Australian ships had returned to the Pacific, many sailors were serving in the British Navy. Thirteen Australians were killed on D-Day, two from the RAN and eleven from the RAAF. However, completing the liberation of the Normandy Peninsula took another three months and Australian lives lost for the entire campaign totalled 1177.

Total Allied losses on D-Day are estimated over 10k with about 4k being killed.

Australian's are fighting magnificently, and their training is much superior to ours." And at another time "If I had to take Hell, I would use Australians to take it and New Zealanders to hold it." The siege was recognised as a monumental achievement, but cost 749 lives, 1996 were wounded and another 604 taken prisoner. However, the battle for the Western Desert was far from over.

As a "Rat" once said, "Tobruk wasn't much fun, but it was a picnic compared with El Alamein."

WORLD WAR 2 THE SIEGE OF TOBRUK - 1941

Tobruk on the Mediterranean coast in far eastern Libya held vital strategic value for the Axis troops (German and Italian) to supply their eastern front in North Africa during WW2. Under attack from Germany's Field Marshal Rommel the allied forces retreated to the Egyptian border, but left a garrison, mostly from the Australian 9th Division to defend Tobruk. Supplied by British and Australian ships from the sea, but totally isolated by land, the garrison resisted for 241 days. Outnumbered two to one, the Australians constructed what their commander Lieutenant General Leslie Morshead dubbed "active defence" running nightly patrols into the desert harassing the German positions. When Rommel's tanks charged, recognising resistance was futile, they instead repelled the following ground troops, isolated the tanks and then attacked them. Having "dug-in" extensively, when the Luftwaffe dropped waves of bombs, they hid safely in the network of tunnels. Consequently, when German propagandist Lord Haw-Haw (William

Joyce) broadcast that they were caught "Like Rats in a Trap", they wore the label with pride and became "The Rats of Tobruk." The siege was the first time Rommel had been repelled and he wrote to his wife, "The Australian's are fighting magnificently, and their training is much superior to ours." And at another time "If I had to take Hell, I would use Australians to take it and New Zealanders to hold it." The siege was recognised as a monumental achievement, but cost 749 lives, 1996 were wounded and another 604 taken prisoner. However, the battle for the Western Desert was far from over.

AWM MEC0183 Tunisia 1943 Flight Sergeant F. Sanders of Jamestown- pilot with the Desert Harassers No. 450 Squadron RAAF, beside a Curtiss P40 Kittyhawk aircraft, wearing his flying gear.

WORLD WAR 1

AWM P05279.001 Lance Corporal Frank Watts Davis, a fisherman of Port Lincoln enlisted as a private on 3 December 1914 and embarked from Melbourne aboard HMAT Runic on 19 February 1915 with 3rd Reinforcements, 10th Battalion. On 2 February 1917 he was killed in action in France aged 23 years.

Most focus on Australia's WW1 involvement centres firstly on Gallipoli and the Western Front, however they were not the only places Australians saw action. When the main body of troops shifted to Europe the Light Horse units were left to defend Egypt and the Suez Canal from the German and Turkish armies and Arab tribes.

The three battles for Gaza took place from March to November 1917, including the Battle for Beersheba and the 4th Australian Light Horse Brigade's mounted charge, the last mounted charge recorded in history.

Preparing troops and horses for battle in the middle of the Negev Desert revolved around water supplies. The horses carried their masters and water for the last 50km as they positioned themselves for battle.

At 5.00pm the Australian brigade was ordered to commence a mounted attack. Their commander General William Grant gave the order personally: "Men you're fighting for water. There's no water between this side of Beersheba and Esani. Use your bayonets as swords. I wish you the best of luck".

With their rifles slung on their backs and using their bayonets as swords they charged across 6.4km of open ground to the Turkish trenches. It was completely unexpected, and the surprise resulted in the mounted troops completely overrunning the enemy positions. The battle was over in an hour. 31 Australians were killed, 32 injured and 80 horses died.

Casualties were heavy for their opponents, 500 killed and 1500 captured. The third battle for Gaza never lost momentum and the German and Turkish armies were cleared from Palestine.

PORT PIRIE VC RECIPIENT

Victoria Cross winner Private Joergen Jensen of Port Pirie.

World War One, bogged down in trench warfare on the Western Front for four long years, elicited countless occasions when soldiers risked their lives for others in acts of extreme bravery. The Commonwealth's highest honour the Victoria Cross was awarded to 628 of them, with 63 of these being Australians.

Private Joergen Christian Jensen from Port Pirie was one of them, awarded his VC for "most conspicuous bravery and initiative when, with five comrades, he attacked a barricade behind which were about forty-five of the enemy and a machine gun" on April 2nd, 1917 at Noreuil, France, one of the 'outpost villages' of the Hindenburg line.

Born in Denmark in 1891, Jensen emigrated to Australia at 17, eventually settling in Port Pirie. He enlisted at Keswick Barracks and embarked with the 10th Infantry Battalion for Egypt on March 23, 1915, on the HMAT A30 Borda arriving on June 23.

Pvt Jensen joined the action at Gallipoli on September 28 and following the December evacuation of Gallipoli he returned to Egypt and in June, 1916, departed Alexandria for Marseilles, France, arriving on the 12th. Two days later on August 14, he was wounded near Pozieres suffering a gunshot to the left shoulder and admitted to the 3rd Canadian General Hospital, near Etaples.

On January 16, 1917 he returned to active service, transferring to the 50th Infantry Battalion.

During the days leading up to his gallant act on April 2nd, the "50th" came under intensive fire from a German forward machine-gun post as they advanced on the village of Noreuil inflicting heavy casualties.

After rushing the enemy machine gun post and throwing in a bomb, Jensen threatened them with two live bombs telling them they were surrounded and inducing them to surrender. He then sent one of the prisoners to a nearby post to tell them to surrender, which they did. The second group of prisoners was then fired upon, prompting Joergen to stand on a barricade waving his helmet causing the firing to cease. Later that day, after a fierce fight, Noreuil was captured. It is not clear whether he received his VC for his action in capturing the machine gun site or for risking his life to protect the prisoners.

Jensen was promoted to Corporal on July 4, 1917 and spent three months, with the 13th Australian Training Battalion and the School of Musketry in the UK and appointed Temporary Sergeant on October 5. Returning to the front Jensen was seriously wounded by a gunshot to the head on patrol near Villers-Bretonneux on May 5, 1918, and invalided back to Australia in August.

Jensen died of war-related injuries in Adelaide Hospital on May 31, 1922 and his funeral was one of the biggest and grandest when he was buried in the AIF section of West Terrace Cemetery, Adelaide.

"His body was carried on a horse-drawn gun carriage...reported as one of the most impressive funerals...and probably one of the largest military funerals ever held in Adelaide".

Abridged from "For King and Empire- Port Pirie and the Great War"- Gary Fradd

GEORGE TONGERIE

George Tongerie who was born near Quorn in 1925, lived a long life of service.

Initially placed in the Oodnadatta Children's Home, then in Colebrook Home when it was re-located to Quorn after his mother died in child birth, George was raised by missionary sisters and worked on a station near Wilmington before joining the RAAF in 1943.

Initially based at Laverton as an Aircraftsman, in April 1944 he was posted to No 12 Squadron based at Merauke, Dutch New Guinea where they were flying air inception and ground attack missions.

Later in the year the squadron was withdrawn to Australia and George remained at Merauke with No 44 Operational Base Unit which maintained and operated the airfield. He remembered later that he was the only aboriginal with the RAAF at Merauke and was looked at unusually by local New Guineans.

Returning to Australia in 1945, George was discharged on July 27 and awarded four medals: the '39-45 Star, Pacific Star, Service Medal and Air Force Medal.

Returned to civilian life he was a keen and talented sportsman, a good jockey and talented footballer and maintained an enthusiasm for and involvement in sport throughout his life.

As a returned serviceman George was given a war service home in Adelaide and in a reflection of the times, a group of residents signed a petition to have him and his wife removed from their street. Thankfully, perhaps in a sign of the future the petition was not successful.

George became a leader in South Australia's Indigenous community and in 1985 named SA Aboriginal of the Year, and in 1988, awarded a Member of the Order of Australia, along with his wife Maude for their services to the Aboriginal community.

In 1980, he had returned to Oodnadatta with Maude as the Community Development Officer where he managed the General Store and was elected Chairman of Directors of the Oodnadatta Aboriginal Community Enterprises from 1987-2002.

He was one of the first Aboriginal Justices of the Peace and a member of the South Australian Parole Board.

George Tongerie passed away in 2013, leaving a remarkable legacy.

A display honouring the life of Indigenous airman stands at the RAAF Base Edinburgh Airmen's Mess to inspire future generations.

We know about 20 Indigenous South Australians served in the Air Force during World War 2 in various roles such as mechanics, general hands, nursing and cooks. There is probably many more, but knowledge and records of our aboriginals who served in the military in World War 2 are poor.

Courtesy Group Captain Greg Weller

Airman George Tongerie.

PORT PIRIE RAAF

Port Pirie played a vital role in Australia's military history as a pilot and aircrew training destination during WW2.

The Port Pirie RSL RAAF Mural was unveiled in November last year on the last surviving WWII hanger at the airport. Pictured from left- Port Pirie RSL President Michael Hopgood, Port Pirie RSL Secretary Gary Fradd, Port Pirie RSL Patron Ken Madigan AM, Mayor Port Pirie Regional Council Leon Stephens, Rowan, Member for Stuart Minister Geoff Brock and Wing Commander Matthew Stuckless.

Formed in 1941, Port Pirie was home to No.2 bombing and gunnery school and, later, No.3 air observers' school, making it SA's largest wartime RAAF base and advanced specialist school. Obvious advantages of the Port Pirie location were available space, good flying conditions year-round and adjacent coastal land suitable for bombing and gunnery ranges.

Inaugural commanding officer Wing Commander Peter Jeffrey, a fighter ace who had led No. 3 Squadron in North Africa had recently brought online Squadrons 75 and 76, two of the first three fighter units raised to help defend northern Australia as the Japanese advanced toward New Guinea.

From 1941-1943, No. 2 Bombing and Gunnery School (2BAGS) used Fairey Battle bombers as training aircraft, with 119 of them at the base.

More than three thousand aviators trained at the Port Pirie base during World War II and as if to underline the rawness of the fast-developing technologies, 22 men, 13 of them still teenagers, were killed in flying accidents during its tenure as a RAAF base.

The Port Pirie 2BAGS site was ideal for practice bombing and gunnery exercises with nine separate ranges ranged over 32 miles.

Training courses ran for eight weeks, with around 100 airmen graduating a month. The school specialised in bombing and gunnery with some training in wireless operations with the Fairey Battle Mark 1 the principal aircraft. The fuselage was large enough to accommodate three trainees who took turns in either the rear gun or bomb aimers position.

The Mark 1 Battles were ex-RAF machines, some having served during the Battle of France in 1940 but, slow and under-armed had proven to be highly vulnerable and withdrawn front-line service. They were re-located and dedicated to training used (in Port Pirie) to develop skills against targets on the water (air-ground gunnery) or towed aerial targets (air-air gunnery).

The Fairey Battle was regarded as a reliable and tough aircraft, well suited to training, but its Rolls Royce Merlin cooling couldn't cope with summer at Port Pirie, where the runway temperatures might be 50° Centigrade. Forced landings were common.

Training ended at Port Pirie in October 1945.