

SOUTHPORT RSL SUB BRANCH

Newsletter

Volume 12 Issue 3

August 2026



From the President's Desk

The highlight of the quarter was defiantly the State Congress that Ken and I attended in Brisbane. Friday was registration followed by meet and greet and in bed by 1030. Saturday morning was the Opening Ceremony followed by the AGM and Business sessions that lasted all day and wound up about 1630 during the day between food breaks there was plenty of time for a catch up with old friends and to make new ones. (a lot of networking was achieved in this time). The day was finished with a Gala Dinner and yes, more food and in bed by 0100. All the reports and documentation are available in the office, and I am waiting for some videos of interest to arrive from State to show you.

State President GEN Steven Day DSC AM announced that he had been working on a special project for the last couple of years with the Australian War Memorial in the form of a Sculpture. The Recognizing Families Sculpture will honour the more than one million families who have stood behind the one million Australians who have served in wars, conflicts and peacekeeping missions, including the more than 103,000 who died as a result of service. To bring this tribute to life support is being sought to raise \$500,000 to commission, create and install the sculpture as part of the Australian War Memorial's national collection. I am pleased to announce that as a Sub Branch we donated most of the takings from ANZAC Day profits with \$ 10.000 going to the appeal.

The State Deputy President Wendy Taylor has stood down after five years in the chair with her replacement being Cherisa (CJ) Pearce who is from the Gold Coast District. Now we have the State Deputy President and the State Vice President (Arran Hassell CSC) from our District.

The Tee Shirts and puff jackets have sold well with numbers slowing down a little however they are still selling. I gave the State President a shirt on behalf of the Sub Branch and he has already informed us that he has worn it doing a Pack March the day following the State Congress.

Long Tan/Vietnam Veterans Day bus trip with Runaway Bay to The Canungra Vietnam Veterans Memorial was a great trip the day was well planned and well represented from the district. Canungra Sub Branch is looking great with a lot of work going on mostly by volunteers. Aside from that they put on a great spread after the service.

We now have our new accounting firm "Quill" on line. Harry, Michael and I have spoken to Rachel Seath their Relationship Manager and all parties are happy. Harry will expand more on their performance so far.

The new online Memberships has been causing some concern within the office as it seems that State believe we have no say in who joins our Sub Branch. I intend to speak to someone from State and get some answers.

There has been an increasing number of requests that fall outside our jurisdiction. I have

spoken to our new district representative; Mr. Darren Tomlinson and he is enquiring on these and other matters that I have brought to his attention.

On a positive note, Christmas in July was a great success, with strong attendance. The District Half Yearly Lunch at Currumbin RSL was also well supported. It was good to see Ken's number one fan come down from Beenleigh, although she was disappointed that he was not there.

Looking ahead, HMAS Diamantina will hold a Sunset Ceremony on Saturday 5th September at 1800 on the Mega Yacht Berth, as part of the Blessing of the Fleet and SYC's 80th Birthday. The Members of the Sub Branch and the wider public are invited. Remembrance Day is fast approaching, and planning has started, Carmal is getting the roster together more on that in the near future.

There are a couple of matters requiring attention. The first is office security; however, I will let Michael report on that, along with a few other important matters.

Duty First
Craig Thomas
President

From the Secretary's Desk

The past four months have been a busy period for the Sub Branch. Board members have attended training courses and responded to numerous enquiries for assistance from RSL State and District, other Sub Branches, members and their families, and the wider community. While many requests have been outside our scope of support, we have assisted wherever possible and directed people to the appropriate services.

John Riebeling, together with Sandy, has conducted a number of Poppy Services during this period, many for people who were not Sub Branch members.

We continue to work alongside Ignite Projects on the establishment of the new Naval Park, which we hope will commence shortly. The Sub Branch has also made a significant donation towards the establishment of a statue representing families at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.

Craig and I have both had periods away from the office for various reasons. We thank Geoff Young and the other Board members for stepping in and ensuring the office continued to operate during our absences.

We have received a number of offers from businesses providing services to Sub Branch members. These offers are displayed on the Sub Branch noticeboard and in the clip board below it. Members are encouraged to regularly check these notices for updates. There has been a request for our WW2 veterans to have lives recorded for history if anyone know of anyone interested please contact me and I can pass on the details. We have also been advised that a documentary on the bombing of Darwin is coming out next year and will be call "Darwin 1942".

We have also been offered the contents of a two-bedroom unit, with the owner wishing for the items to go to the RSL rather than an op shop. If anyone is interested, please see me at the office. If members are looking for a good second-hand car or boat, please also contact me.

A reminder to all members to keep the Sub Branch informed of any changes to their contact details, including addresses, email addresses and telephone numbers. If you hear of a member passing away, please let the Sub Branch know so we can offer support to the family and keep our records up to date. Please also encourage your families to contact the Sub Branch when the time comes.

Remembrance Day Appeal

We are approaching the Remembrance Day Appeal. This year we are trialling a change to the selling times at the shopping centres. Rather than having two shifts each day, we will have one shift from 10.00 am to 2.00 pm. This will reduce the number of volunteers required.

We are looking at having stalls at **Australia Fair and Southport Park from 6–10 November**. For further information, or to put your name down as a volunteer, please contact **Carmal Hartwig on 0423 083 114**.

Members wishing to have jackets or other clothing embroidered with the RSL Southport logo, or who would like to purchase Sub Branch Army, Navy, Air Force T-shirts, should see me at the office.

Veterans Support Centre

Our Veterans Support Centre advocate, **Mark Anderson**, is currently undertaking training for the new award arrangements that commenced in July. This is taking up a considerable amount of his time as he becomes familiar with the new requirements for veterans' claims.

Mark is currently assisting Sub Branch members with their claims and has asked **that non-Sub Branch members be referred to the Veterans' Access Network (VAN) or to one of the other VSC officers.**

Thank you to all Board members, volunteers and members who continue to support the Sub Branch and the wider veteran community.

Michael Burg
Secretary



A Plea from John Riebeling (Immediate Past President)

This is not just a plea for volunteers to sell badges but a plea for younger, more capable members, to begin to take an interest in the operation of the Sub Branch.

As you all are probably aware, the existence of the Sub Branch is contingent on it following the rules in its Constitution. The Constitution requires the conducting of General Meeting where all members have a chance to have a say in how the Sub Branch operates. The holding of these Quarterly Meetings is becoming more and more difficult because of the lack of members attending the meeting. At the Quarterly Meeting held in May, we had only twelve (12) members attend. The constitution requires the attendance for such a meeting to be the number of Board Members plus one. We currently have nine members on the Board, so we had a quorum by just three. If we had the

full complement of Board Members—ten—then the margin for the quorum would only have been **one**.

This lack of interest in the operation of the Sub Branch is symptomatic of the lack of volunteers. Over the past several years whenever a vacancy occurs in the Board, it has been very difficult indeed to attract a replacement. So, ladies and gentlemen, if you want this Sub Branch to continue to live, come to our meeting and for goodness' sake, hold up your hand to help keep the organisation viable.

"I told my wife she should embrace her mistakes. She gave me a hug!"

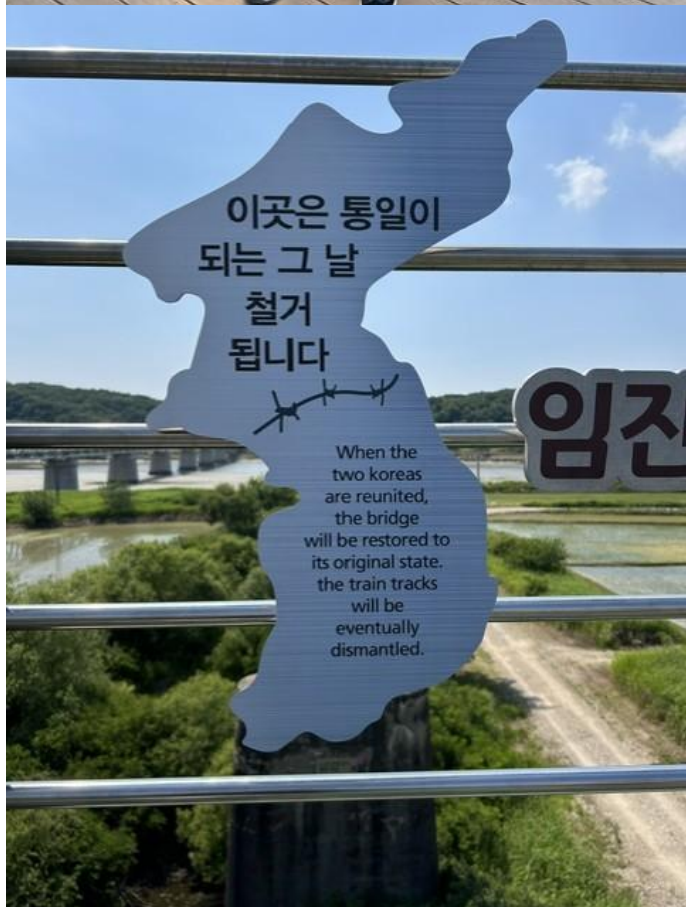
"Small steps still leave footprints."

Echoes of the Past:

An In-Depth Journey
into South Korea's DMZ

By Heath Mason

Standing at the edge of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), the quiet stillness of the landscape belies the sheer weight of historical conflict that defines it. For any traveller, stepping onto these grounds goes far beyond a typical holiday excursion; it is a profound encounter with a living, breathing scar left by the Cold War. Spanning 250 kilometres in length and roughly 4 kilometres in width, this heavily fortified buffer zone has bisected the Korean Peninsula since the signing of the Korean Armistice Agreement on July 27, 1953. Created to halt active combat and establish a physical separation between the forces of North and South Korea, the zone remains a fragile theatre of geopolitical tension, frozen in time for over seven decades. Today, it stands as a paradox—a highly militarized boundary that has unintentionally transformed into an untouched nature sanctuary and a deeply moving repository of human memory.



The journey begins at Imjingak Park, located in the city of Paju, just a few kilometres south of

the Military Demarcation Line. Built in 1972, this complex was initially constructed to comfort and console the millions of displaced North Koreans and fragmented families separated by the sudden, brutal partition of the peninsula. Walking through the manicured grounds of the park, visitors are immediately met with monuments designed to anchor the grief of a fractured nation. Among these, the striking Manghyang-ui Noraebi (Song of Longing for One's Homeland) monument serves as a central focal point. Its granite reliefs tell a poignant story of separation and sorrow, dedicated to the memory of displaced families and the enduring hope for peaceful unification.

The emotional landscape of Imjingak is further emphasized by its explicit proximity to the border. Nearby, a stark, weathered signpost acts as a harsh geographical reminder of the peninsula's current reality. Nestled among the overgrowth and framed by defensive security fences, the sign points silently toward Gaeseong, noting that the North Korean city is a mere 22 kilometres away. It underscores just how short the physical distance is between these two entirely different worlds, making the division feel incredibly immediate.



Moving deeper into the historical artifacts preserved at the park brings you face-to-face with the war's material devastation. The most striking and physically arresting relic of the conflict is the Steam Locomotive at Jangdan Station. Known historically as the "Iron Horse," this Mountain-type freight locomotive was operated during the height of the Korean War to transport vital military supplies. Its journey came to a definitive, violent halt on December 31, 1950. As United Nations and South Korean forces retreated southward under pressure from advancing Chinese troops, the train was intentionally derailed and targeted by Allied forces to prevent its valuable mechanics and cargo from falling into enemy hands.



For more than half a century, this massive steel machine sat completely abandoned, rusting silently in the tall grass of the DMZ's restricted zone until it was retrieved in 2004 and carefully preserved as a National Registered Cultural Heritage artifact. When you step onto the viewing platform today, the body of the train is an industrial shell, torn open and completely hollowed out by explosives. Examining the steel plates up close reveals the intense violence of the engagement; the train's surface is pockmarked with more than 1,020 distinct

bullet holes and shrapnel scars, leaving the heavy metal warped, twisted, and shredded. The front boiler assembly is completely torn away, exposing the internal piping like fractured bone and making the chaos of that fateful December night incredibly real.

Tracing the perimeter of the visitor area reveals how modern generations interact with this unresolved history. The boundary lines are reinforced by towering security fences wrapped in coils of razor-sharp barbed wire—a stark reminder of the active military stance maintained just beyond the tree line. Yet, these fences have been repurposed by the public into a canvas for peace. Thousands of visitors have tied colourful ribbons, handwritten notes, and prayers for reunification to the wire mesh, softening the harsh steel infrastructure with human warmth.

The juxtaposition between the natural overgrowth of the DMZ ecosystem and the rigid infrastructure of the border defense creates a hauntingly beautiful scene. White wildflowers bloom right at the base of the anti-climb fencing, showcasing nature's complete indifference to human borders. To provide deeper historical context, archival black-and-white photographs are displayed throughout the site, illustrating the wartime destruction of the original Gyeongui Line rail bridges spanning the Imjin River during the retreats.

As the path transitions toward modern observational platforms, the artistic choices reflect a deep yearning for a peaceful resolution. Underneath heavy, protective glass viewing panels built directly into the walking decks, contemporary installations catch the eye. In one section, spent military brass bullet casings have been meticulously collected and arranged to spell out the letters "DMZ" over a bed of river gravel, turning the literal detritus of war into an artistic statement on the current state of the peninsula.

Right beside this installation, another glass panel houses geographic distance markers embedded in granite gravel. These plaques display the exact distances to major global destinations, including Berlin (11,065 km), Beijing (1,572 km), and the North Korean city of Sinuiju (444.4 km). This display serves to remind visitors that the division of Korea is not merely a localized issue, but a lasting piece of global history interconnected with the broader

narrative of international relations and post-Cold War reconciliation.

Ultimately, a visit to the DMZ is not an ordinary tourist excursion; it is a sobering lesson in political volatility, human resilience, and the unresolved trauma of a nation divided. Looking through the wire mesh at a landscape frozen in 1953, the overwhelming takeaway is not just a fascination with military history, but a profound, lingering hope that this border will one day be defined by unity rather than barbed wire.

A Veteran's Tale

Corporal AT Dean

2/3 Ordinance 22nd Brigade, 8th Division AIF

Part 6

In saying there was no machinery — imagine large rocks blown out of the cuttings and then manhandled to a place where they could be broken into small pieces to be used as ballast on the railway. The amount of broken arms, fingers etc when men who had never done this sort of work in their lives and were expected to put out a heap one meter square every day. It was an impossible task but the Nip managed to procure carbide lights to give more working time to the job.

The bridgework had a lot to do with the stress etc attached to the job. Firstly, big long poles were stood in the river and set at the correct angle, then a stockade of logs was formed around the base at a height of six feet or more and then all hands filled the area with big rocks to make a solid foundation and then scaffolding of bamboo is erected and a Jap engineer (how you know he is an engineer — he has a spirit level and hammer and pencil and by sign language he tells you that you have to cut the black line he has made round the top of the log out with a Jap saw which is very different to any saw you have ever seen. The handle is a round stick and the teeth of the saw are set back and the cutting procedure is made only by pulling back on the saw, not as our saws cut both forward and backward. And on top of that you have a Jap guard with a bamboo stick to make sure you only cut the pencilled line out and then proceeds to show you what happens if you waiver. The system of work is so different to what you have been used to. For example, put the rail line down first and then put the ballast and sleepers down next. After some sections were finished another chap and I were detailed

to go and level and line and make sure that the two rails were the correct distance apart. He handled the spirit level (the Jap engineer I mean) and if it was high or low you took out a rock and put one under the sleeper whichever the case. I'd hate to maintain the line after it was completed. As to the distance apart, you belted one rail with a big hammer to make the adjustments. We Australians had a lot to learn about building a railroad. I might mention I was speaking to a chap recently who had just made a memory trip up there and he said there was a beautiful bitumen road and lots of dams (?) etc up there now but no railway except for a small section in the region of Hellfire Pass for the sole reason of the tourists and making a dollar.

I have previously tried to keep this in sequence but I keep remembering incidents that have happened earlier, so from now on I will write them down as I think of them. Firstly, I know this writing is terrible but after I write for a while the arthritis in the hands is unbelievable so, please bear with me. When we were at Bukit Timah our perimeter fence of donnert wire and barbed wire was about twenty feet behind our accommodation and there were Chinese and Malay kampongs near the fence and their poultry used to come up to the fence to scratch and feed. One day a duck and her brood came up and three small ducklings came through the fence into our compound (they did not get back) and just as my luck ran out, a Jap guard walked into the back area where I had three ducklings in a pot (seven-pound syrup time) and the result was twelve hours outside the guard house with a big rock held above my head. No hat, only a G-string, no bending the elbow and no consideration of the natural function of the body. That was also putting up with every one of my mates that passed asking how I liked duck soup that I would have to get enough money to pay the Chinese chap who owned the wandering ducks. Although we only got ten cents a day, the boys came to the party with enough money and of course, humorous jibes to fit the occasion.

Another episode was we had to parade every evening to be counted and on one occasion had a Lieutenant Wright in charge (who previously had deserted, got to Sumatra, got picked up by the Japs and sent back to Singapore). I was in the front row and as he said "eyes front, march" a voice behind me said "Two bob he gets out of step." Lt Wright swung round and put the chap

next to me on a charge. After the march I approached the Lt and said "Could you and I have a quiet chat with just the two of us?" So, we walked away on our own and I told him the voice came from behind me and he had got the wrong man. He got very upset and let me know I was only a corporal and he was a Lt and knew what he was doing, that was that. I told him that if he explained the circumstances of how he came to be in Sumatra he would get a bit more respect from the men than the way he went about putting them on a charge for some small misdemeanour and walked away. About half an hour later the orderly officer stopped (?) me with the news that I had to parade to one Major Wright (no relation) and be prepared for a court martial for insubordination and insulting a superior officer. The case was thrown out for lack of witnesses.

How I Got My Name

by John Riebeling

The following is a copy of an article that appeared in **The Collie Mail** on Thursday 11 September 1941. It resulted in me being named Edwyn John, instead of just simply John.

WOUNDED IN ACTION. LUCKY ESCAPE

Lance Corporal Edwyn Riebeling, a son of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Riebeling of Collie, was wounded in action recently. He was struck by fragments of either a hand grenade or a mortar bomb, but his wounds are not serious. Mr. and Mrs. Riebeling received official notification three weeks ago and they have since received a letter from their son in which he makes known the nature of his wounds and how they were received. He writes:

"Well, here I am again, none the worse for wear, enjoying a nice little spell in hospital, miles from the fighting. I hope you got my cable as soon as, if not sooner than, the official one, so that you will not be caused a lot of unnecessary worry. I could not send one earlier.

"I was wounded on Saturday night, or at least Sunday morning. Things were pretty hot and I can tell you I am remarkably lucky to get out of it so light. I never expected to see the sun come up on Sunday morning. Nevertheless, I got through with hardly a scratch and am now more than ever convinced that they can't get me.

"What got me was either a hand grenade or a small mortar bomb. Three or four small pieces went into my loin, just above and behind my right hip and travelled three or four inches across my back about a quarter of an inch under the skin. Another very small fragment went in just above the right elbow and has lodged somewhere in the muscle. The pieces have been removed from my back and apart from a bit of stiffness, it is OK. They tell me the piece in my arm is too small to bother about.

"You always said I was lucky. You don't know just how lucky I was. The air was just thick with lead, but they are horrible shots. The nearest miss was an explosive bullet that hit the handguard of my rifle no more than half-an-inch from my left thumb. I thought it had blown my hand off, but it was only the jar. All I got out of it were a couple of very small blisters and a burn you could hardly see. The chap who fired it was only a couple of yards away too. Just as well I am not such a rotten shot, or you would not have been seeing little Edwyn any more.

"I got your letter on Saturday night, but didn't get a chance to read it. God knows where it is now. I am in the Australian General Hospital No 11. It's a great place, staffed by Australians. The food is excellent and it is lovely eating poultry, fish, brains, etc., after mouths of bully beef."



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"You getting athlete's foot is about as ridiculous as a coal miner with sunstroke!"

2026-2027 General Meeting Dates

Quarterly General	Sunday, 22 Nov 26
AGM	Sunday, 21 Feb 27
Quarterly General	Sunday, 23 May 27
Quarterly General	Sunday, 22 Aug 27
All meetings commence at 10:30 am	

Position	Year of AGM		
	2028	2029	2027
President			
Deputy President			
Secretary			
Treasurer			
Director 1			
Director 2			
Director 3			
Director 4			
Director 5			
Director 6			

Current Board Members

Craig Thomas	President
Ken Orr	Deputy President
Harold Hansen	Treasurer
Michael Burg	Secretary
vacant	Director 1
John Riebeling	Director 2
Geoff Young	Director 3
Kevin Lloyd-Thomas	Director 4
Sandra Riebeling	Director 5
Heath Mason	Director 6

Southport RSL Sub-Branch Inc.
Corner Marine Parade & Queen Street
PO Box 31
SOUTHPORT BC QLD 4215
T 0484 280 750
E secretary@southport.rslqld.net.au
W www.southport.rsl.com.au

Editor: John Riebeling
Contributors: Heath Mason
Corporal AT Dean

Sponsors: Ms Angie Bell MP, Federal Member for Moncrieff (**Printing**)
Mr Rob Molhoek MP, State Member for Southport (**Mail**)