



Royal Australian Armoured
Corps Association Inc.
(Victorian Branch)

Web: <https://raacavic.weebly.com>

TRACK

December 2022



AdvanceAustralia

PATRON:	Brig P.A. Acutt (Retd)
PRESIDENT:	Peter Branagan, OAM
VICE PRESIDENT:	
SECRETARY:	Peter Axton 0428 335 406
TREASURER:	Andy Clark
WEB MASTER:	Peter Axton
EDITOR:	Peter Branagan, OAM

Another Successful Cambrai Luncheon



*Due to the unavoidable absence of the scheduled guest speaker Mick O'Brien AM,
President Peter Branagan delivered this year's Cambrai address.*

The move of the Cambrai celebration from Puckapunyal to Greensborough RSL has again proved to be an outstanding success with 65 members and guests sitting down to a great lunch and availing themselves of the sub branch's first class facilities and hospitality. Many thanks to President Lee Webb for his support.

The President and committee would like to take this opportunity to wish all members, families and friends our very best wishes for the Festive Season and the New Year.

The following members and guests enjoyed the 2022 Cambrai Luncheon:

Ted Acutt
 Dal Crocker
 John Belfield
 Jan Belfield
 Elizabeth Branagan
 Peter Branagan, OAM
 Ray Tuskin
 Rita Tuskin
 Barry Taylor
 Chris Morris
 Lindsay Bourke
 Bill Houston
 Marina Houston
 Will Anderson
 Bill Anderson
 Jimmy Peile
 Doug Caulfield, OAM, RFD
 Mary Hornsby
 Allan Sedgewick
 Peter Axton
 Ian Smith
 Alleyne Walsh

Bryce Phillips, AO
 Trevor Watts
 Richard Hermon
 Susan Helmore
 Maggie McGeever
 Tyrrell McGeever
 John Howard
 Wayne Ford
 David Owen
 Fred Coucher
 Graeme Perkins
 John Baines, RFD
 Diane Baines
 Rod Westgarth
 Trudie Pratt
 Jenny Clark
 Andy Clark
 Peter Farrugia
 Peter Coutts, CSM
 Shireen Wold
 Dot Brennan
 Vin Brennan

Iain Reynolds
 John Paterson
 Josh Gay, RFD
 Godfrey Camenzuli
 Kerri Marshall
 John Hopkins
 Sue Hopkins
 Nola Frankhauser
 Karl Liffman
 Graham Wright
 Graham Winn
 Pat O'Hanlon
 Graham Douglas
 Mike Fogarty
 Benny Lonnborn
 Rob Toy
 Linda Boleche
 Peter Wold
 Peter Swinfield
 Peter Duncombe
 Glenniss Duncombe

The winners of the raffle were:

Elizabeth Branagan, Peter Coutts, Peter Duncombe, Rob Toy, Alan Sedgewick, Doug Caulfield, Camel, John Hopkins, Mike Fogarty, Jimmy Peile and Linda Boleche. **Thank you all for your very generous support.** All Cambrai Luncheon images are courtesy of **Andy Clark**.



Young Jimmy Peile was impressed with his prize.



Mike Fogarty and Bryce Phillips, AO



Former executive committee members Godfrey Camenzuli and John Paterson with current Secretary Peter Axton.



Graham Wright, Diesel Perkins, Barry Taylor and Fred Coucher enjoying each others company. Pat O'Hanlon at the bar.



*Tyrrell and Maggie McGeever, Elizabeth Branagan, Dot Brennan, Alleyne Walsh, Vin Brennan and Josh Gay.
Rod Westgarth (behind right) and Peter Axton with King Charles III.*



Peter Coutts, Benny Lonnborn, Peter Duncombe, Chris Morris, Iain Reynolds, Peter Swinfield and Trevor Watts.



Peter Farrugia, Andy and Jenny Clark.

Patron's Christmas Message



Brigadier Ted Acutt (Retd)
Patron RAACA – Victorian Branch

This was a better year for us all and got us back to doing the events we have traditionally done. Although we have another wave of COVID coming through I am sure the impact and restrictions will not prevent us from a full calendar of events next year. These gatherings of our comrades and mates are so important. We have a shared experience no others have, and we sometimes need to be with people who understand.

It was great to return to the Greensborough RSL for the Cambrai lunch which was again excellent. Peter Branagan took on the role of guest speaker at short notice and did a splendid job with his story of “Deborah” the tank. It was a great pity that Mick O’Brien could not make it, but our thoughts and prayers are with him and I am sure we will see him in the new year.

This year, in my role as the Honorary Colonel of 1st Armoured Regiment, I have had the opportunity to attend the RAAC Corps Conference conducted in April; I visited the unit in the field at Cultana in May and spent two and a half weeks with the unit on exercise in the Northern Territory in August. I can report that the officers and soldiers of the RAAC have not changed and are just like us. They enjoy being in the field and exercising and just want to do more of it. My final visit to the unit this year was for the Cambrai Day Parade conducted on 11 Nov 22. This was very special as for the first-time veterans of the unit marched in the ranks with their old squadrons. This parade also included the 3rd/9th Lancers (South Australian Mounted Rifles) coming under command 1st Armoured Regiment. The Standard and Guidons were on the mounted parade and it was a great spectacle. The Lancers will continue to wear their cap badge and maintain the strong traditions that unit has.

It has been a better year and we have had the opportunity to come together more often. I think we have also taken the opportunity to re-establish our links with current serving units and schools. It is clear that the current serving generation want to hear our stories and learn. They have not had the opportunity to do some of the things we have done. This is a special time of year. It is a time for family and friends and the joy memories bring. We can all take a break, but look forward and prepare for the next year. My thoughts and prayers are with you, and I hope to see you all next Cambrai Day. Merry Christmas.

Ted Acutt

Following a number of requests, the Guest Speaker has included his presentation for publication

Aspects of Cambrai: 24 Hours with Deborah

Good afternoon members and guests, please don't be put off by the title of my presentation; '24 Hours with Deborah', it's not some lurid tale from my distant past! *Deborah* in fact is 105 years old and she is with us today, on your placemats. She of course is an Mk IV female tank. Male tanks were armed with two 6pdr cannons, whilst female tanks were fitted with machine guns. I guess like me, many of you have been exposed to the Cambrai story over many years through your service, from many historic presentations of varying quality or attendance at social functions like this. Having experienced this phenomenon for over 40 years, it was back in 2016 during a trip to France and Belgium that I realised what the whole saga meant to me. Three members who were present on that trip – Chris Morris and Peter and Glenniss Duncombe are with us today.

On this day, 105 years ago the tanks were brought up to the starting line. This careful manoeuvre of course took many hours. They were on the 1000 yd line, really very close to the German Line when you think about the noise that over 400 tanks made even travelling slowly, in first gear covering about 900 yards per hour. The tank force frontage stretched from Havrincourt to Gonnellieu, a distance of some 11,000 yds, the dispositions of the nine Tank Battalions from left to right were G, D, E, H, B, A, I, F, C.

Each Tank Battalion consisted of 42 fighting tanks which totalled 378. In addition there were 54 Supply Tanks, 32 Wire Pulling Tanks 2 Bridging Tanks, 9 Wireless Tanks and 1 Transport Tank giving an overall total of 476, which is the number most often quoted.

Each section of tanks was in position just behind the British front line, after a final greasing and re-fuelling, they were ready. The tank engines were started every two hours during that long night and moved a distance twice their length to prevent the tracks from freezing.

Then the fateful Special Order No. 6 was given to all crews. This order is probably the most iconic in the history of armoured warfare.

Special Order No. 6

1. *Tomorrow the Tank Corps will have the chance for which it has been waiting for many months, to operate on good ground in the van of the battle*
2. *All that hard work and ingenuity can achieve has been done in the way of preparation*
3. *It remains for Unit Commanders and tank crews to complete the work by judgement and pluck in the battle itself*
4. *In the light of past experience, I leave the good name of the Corps with great confidence in their hands*
5. *I propose leading the attack of the centre Division*

*Hugh Elles
Brigadier General
19th Nov 1917*

At 0300 hrs everything was ready and the waiting began.

At 0605 hrs in H Battalion's area, a lithe figure unaccompanied by any escorts and carrying an ash stick under his arm strode up to H1 *Hilda* and informed the startled commander 2Lt Leach, that he was going to command the tank battle from his tank. Shaking out his stick he disclosed the soon to be famous brown, red and green flag. This was of course Brigadier General Hugh Elles.

At 0610 hrs all the tanks were moving; at 0620 hrs, accompanied by the thunder of 1,003 guns, the infantry advanced. The Battle of Cambrai had begun.

For reasons that will become obvious later, we are going to follow the fortunes of just one battalion "D". Our destination is the small village of Flesquieres. At the agreed hour, six Wire Crusher tanks set off, followed four minutes later by 18 fighting tanks accompanied by infantry from the Gordon Highlanders and the Black Watch. As the tanks appeared, the few Germans who were holding the outposts surrendered. The tanks reached the first part of the Hindenburg Line at 0715 hrs and immediately struck trouble. The trenches were so wide and deep that despite their fascines, four tanks became stuck, two became ditched, three ran short of supplies and had to return. Seven other tanks developed mechanical problems and only one tank succeeded in crossing the second trench of the 1st Hindenburg Line. The advance continued, and by 0945 hrs the railway line which was a rallying point, was reached. Following a reorganisation and more tanks coming forward, they now found themselves in a difficult situation, being within range of the German artillery installed on Flesquieres Ridge. The slow moving tanks were easy targets for gunners who had been trained for this sort of combat and their guns had been moved out of their dug in positions to get a full view of their targets. At the top of the slope, ten tanks were badly damaged three were stopped by hand-grenades and four were burned out. Further to the left of the Brigade, advancing with difficulty along Cemetery Alley, the tanks met a single German field gun. They were knocked out one after another except for one which succeeded in reaching the village. When this tank, D51, emerged from the shelter of the houses, it too received a direct hit which knocked it out, killing five of the crew. The commander of D51, 2Lt Frank Heap was to receive a Military Cross for his actions on this day which included the safe withdrawal of his remaining crewmen. D51 was not discovered until the next day when Scottish infantry found it. The five crewmen who had been killed were buried next to the tank. The village was not retaken by the Germans until March 1918. Until then the wrecked tank remained in British hands, before being abandoned.

The battle of 20 November was a disaster for "D" Battalion. Human losses reached 105: 16 killed, 9 missing and 80 wounded. Of the 35 tanks involved, 14 were abandoned, 10 of them struck by artillery fire.

The epic battle ebbed and flowed for another three weeks with each side suffering more than 40,000 casualties until the Germans executed a surprise counter attack on 30 November and which by 7 December found them almost back in their original positions. Cambrai will be remembered for the application of a new method of fighting in a combined way which was to be successfully employed in 1918 in the battles of Hamel and Amiens.

We now roll forward 81 years to early November 1998 when, following extensive research by Mr Phillippe Gorczynski and others, a WW1 tank was discovered completely buried in a field in the village of Flesquieres. On 18 November work began to uncover the tank and by 20 November, the 81st anniversary of

the battle, it was completely visible. With technical assistance from the RTR, a local contractor lifted the tank onto a trailer and transported it to the courtyard of the village Mayor. In 2000, Phillipe purchased a large barn and set up the tank under cover as a memorial as illustrated on your placemat.

In July 2016 I had the good fortune to visit that barn along with some fellow tankies Tim Whitford, Chris Morris and Peter Duncombe. I will freely admit that as I approached D51 *Deborah*, I was temporarily overcome by emotion and a feeling of fulfilment in that I had finally discovered the spirit that I had banged on about over many years to young soldiers and officers or anyone that would listen. Indeed, the 24 hours that I spent with *Deborah* was a most profound experience.

In more recent times, a museum has been built in Flesquieres and *Deborah* is now displayed and preserved in a far more dignified location befitting a fighting lady.

In closing I would like to leave you with the words of Phillipe Gorczynski, the discoverer and uncoverer of D51: “*Deborah* was for a time a terrible war machine, but now she is an amazing ‘weapon’ of friendship. You can understand why I am eternally indebted to her for what she has given to me, and what she continues to give to all of us.”

Thank you and Bon Chance



Peter Duncombe, Tim Whitford

Peter Branagan, Chris Morris

July 2016 at Flesquieres France, with D51 Deborah

Mark Your Diary.....

2022 Kid's Christmas Party Sunday 18 December 2022

1030 hrs

Rod Westgarth has booked **Meadmore Junction** again for this year's party at the **Diamond Valley Miniature Railway**. Come along and enjoy the fun and the bar-b-que at **this premier location in Eltham**.

Victorian Branch Birthday

Sunday 12 February 2023

1400 hrs

The **77th birthday** of the Victorian Branch will be celebrated at the **Shrine of Remembrance on Sunday 12 February 2023**. We will assemble near Reception in the Shrine Visitor Centre before moving up to the Shrine Sanctuary for a short commemorative service and afterwards the usual sumptuous afternoon tea will be enjoyed in the western annex where the Shrine shop is located.

Our association flag, first flown in February 2014 will be flying from the flagpole in the Shrine forecourt. It is flown there on appropriate days during the year including **7 February (association birthday 1946) and 9 July (official Australian Armoured Corps birthday 1941)**.

All members and spouses are strongly urged to support this significant activity. The setting, adjacent to Melbourne's most famous landmark is outstanding and the opportunity to **renew your acquaintance with this significant Melbourne precinct is strongly encouraged.** To assist the organisers with afternoon tea catering, please contact the Secretary Peter Axton by email secretary.raacavic@gmail.com or 0428 335 406 to warn in for rations. **RSVP 3 February 2023.**



Wreath laying in the Shrine Sanctuary

We Gratefully Acknowledge the Following Donors

Gerald McCormack, Doug Caulfield, Jenny Clark, Ted Acutt, Tim Costa, Graeme Douglas, Brian Cook, Paul Manning, Stephen Bird, Karl Liffman, Rob Toy, Alan Spenceley, Alleyne Walsh, Mike Fogarty, Ian Smith, Peter Jarratt, William Gillis

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Sunday 19th February 2023

1130 hrs

Greensborough RSL Sub Branch

111 Main Street

GREENSBOROUGH VIC 3088

Agenda

Apologies
Minutes of previous AGM
Business Arising
Correspondence
Reports

Election of Office-Bearers
Supper

Election of Office-Bearers

President
Vice President
Secretary
Treasurer
Membership Officer
Webmaster
Editor - Track
General Committee
Honorary Legal Officer

Nomination and Proxy Voting forms are available on the RAACA (Vic) website. All nominations to the

Secretary RAACA Vic Branch
1 Ambleside Link
DOREEN VIC 3754

NOTE: You need to be financial to vote. The financial year begins on 1 January and fees for the year are due from that date. Many members have already paid but if you are in doubt, please contact the treasurer to confirm your financial status. Payment details are on the website.

RAACA SCHOLARSHIPS

One of the benefits your Association provides are the scholarships available to eligible children, and in some cases grandchildren, **commencing or completing** their Secondary education. **Applicants must be the children** of a financial member.

The Victorian Branch Scholarship is \$150.00 per year and paid to assist with the cost of the first two years of secondary school. Applications should be forwarded to the Secretary by **28 February in the first year of qualification** in the form of a letter setting out the child's details and with proof of attendance. **A follow up application is required for the second year.** To apply, **applicants must be the children or grandchildren** of someone who has been a financial member of the RAACA for a **minimum of five years.**

The Brigadier F.B. Hinton, MC Scholarship which was a Federal Executive Scholarship is also administered by the Victorian Branch and currently provides **\$500:00 for each of the final two years of Secondary School.** Please send application including proof of intent to complete years 11 and 12 to our secretary by **30 September in the applicant's year 10.**

There are no scholastic results required, however proof of attendance must be provided on the relevant School's letterhead paper. **Applicants must be financial members** for a minimum of 5 years.

The Arch Finlayson Memorial Scholarship

Application Form

Applicants for the Arch Finlayson Memorial Scholarship must complete this form and mail to the address detailed below. **The Scholarship is available to children and grandchildren of financial members. They must be 1st year apprentices and the scholarship is valued at \$500.00.**

Name.....
(Christian name/names) (Surname)

Address.....
.....Post Code.....

Telephone.....

What is your apprenticeship?

Employer.....

Employer's Address

Contact Phone Number

Registered Training Institute or TAFE.....

Name of Financial RAACA Victorian Member

Address

Contact Phone Number.....

You will need to enclose copies of the following:

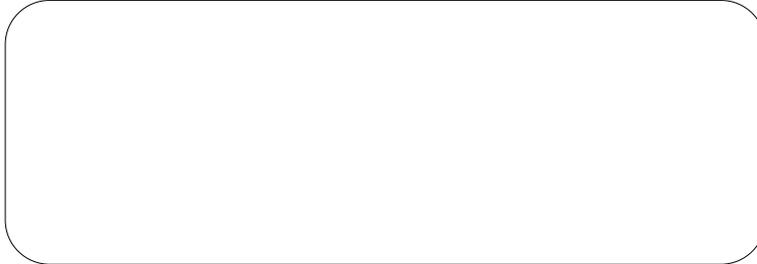
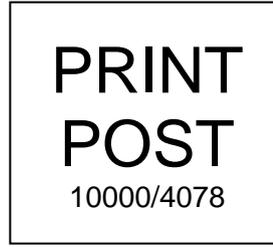
1. A brief supportive resume.
2. A copy of signed training agreement.
3. A copy of your enrolment at a registered training institute or TAFE.
4. A supporting letter from your employer.

After your application has been received, the three trustees of the fund may require you to attend an interview at a time, date and location to be advised.

Return this form together with all supporting documents to:

The Trustees
Arch Finlayson Memorial Scholarship Fund
RAACA – Victorian Branch
2 Marie Street
NAGAMBIE VIC 3608

If undeliverable, return to:
Royal Australian Armoured Corps Association Inc.
(Victorian Branch)
1 Ambleside Link
DOREEN VIC 3754
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Change of address

To change your mailing and/or contact details, please fill in the new information below,

and return THE COMPLETED PAGE to:

Secretary RAACA (Vic Branch) 1 Ambleside Link DOREEN VIC 3754

Name:

Address:

..... Post Code:

Mobile No:

Phone No.: E-mail:

PLEASE USE BLOCK LETTERS (EXCEPT FOR E-MAIL)