

# Report to the RAAC Corp Conference 2021

## By the Royal New South Wales Lancers' Association

2020/2021 has been a year of attempting to dodge COVID restrictions.

### The Museum

Our Museum was able to operate from 5 July 2020 'till 23 June 2021 in a "COVID safe" mode. Masks, touch free accounting and number restrictions. Things were not too bad, especially when the State Government introduced "Discover Vouchers" \$25 for every family paid by the government and being listed in a searchable database of those who offered subsidised entry.

In this lockdown hiatus, we were able to pilot our "Tank Days" program. On the last Sunday of each month at 1100 and 1400 we have run one of our A vehicles within the Barracks precinct. This has proven quite a visitor drawcard.

Our post-1945 displays have also been enhanced. We now have a showcase of the Regiment's support of the ADF on both active service and peace keeping missions, as well as the Civil Power, on bushfire and COVID relief and securing state borders. These aspects of the Regiment's post WWII story have been under represented in the Museum's display and not sufficiently understood by the public at large.

We have also found collectors across the nation have a great desire for Velcro-backed patches. We have been able to sell them at the Museum and over the web. In full lockdown, such sales have been the only source of Museum income.



When the COVID closure lifts we will be launching our new revised curriculum-based schools' history program; now amended from feedback received to be more inclusive for female pupils, particularly from certain cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Girls are now able to dress in wartime nurses' uniforms instead of either WWI Light Horse or WWII Tank crewman uniforms, and study WWI and WWII veteran Nurses, instead of WW1 or WW2 Regimental veterans. The nurses' uniforms have been cleverly designed to be worn over a girl's full school uniform. The Museum display also now includes a Queen Alexandra's nursing Corps WW2 uniform, worn in the earliest days of the war in Belgium and France, including the evacuation at Dunkirk.

Our restored WWII Matilda tank "ACE" continues to give us good service. The Centurion always needs maintenance. Our Staghound will soon be a prized static exhibit. The M113 looks good and in time will run, while the Ferrets and our 106 RCL vehicle all work. We are short an MRV, there are still some

at Bandiana, and a spare at Puckapunyal. All attempts to get hold of one to give it the attention such a part of our history deserves have been unsuccessful. If the RAAC Corp can help here it would be greatly appreciated. This vehicle could be important to the mental health of veterans of the 113 era in the greater Sydney. Lancers' is the only Museum to visit or volunteer for here; an MRV to go with our LRV would be a great draw card for corps veterans.

The next major project for us is the stabilisation and refurbishment of our WWII Covanter Bridgelayer. To this end Heritage NSW, Community Engagement, Department of Premier and Cabinet has given us a dollar for dollar "Caring for State Heritage" Grant to assist.

The hurdle beyond is constructing the necessary overhead protection to preserve our collection. The roadblocks here are of Department of Defence making. A decision for us to proceed (at no cost to Defence) appearing to be just too hard to make; better to delay in the hope that we will all die or lose interest.

### **The Regiment**

As an association, our work with the Regiment has also been curtailed by COVID restrictions.

The Regimental dinner did not take place this year.

The year 2020 saw 200 years since Lancer Barracks were first used as a Military Depot. The Regiment has called the barracks home since 1891, so a parade was planned for the streets of Parramatta with the population of Sydney invited to our barracks. This had to be scaled back due to COVID requirements only 100 to be on-site. The Regiment could not parade every soldier. Everyone who got to the parade at 1000 on 21 November 2020 apart from a very few dignitaries, had a job to do. The only Association members allowed to be present were those who manned the historic vehicles holding ground, gave the keynote address, and recorded the action. We were able to produce a video of the even and load it to YouTube for those unable to be present.



The Association was also invited to support the Regiment's 136<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration in May and the Regiment's Anzac Eve commemoration in late April.

After spending most of 2019/2020 on operations with the bushfires and guarding the border against infected Victorians, in 2021 the Regiment concentrated on honing warfighting skills with a focus on dismounted and mounted cavalry tasks, whilst remaining flexible and capable of supporting domestic operations and security. The year's training commenced in February with the Regiment delivering a number of driver courses to members of the Lancers as well as partner units in the 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade. These included Bushmaster PMV and G-Wagon courses which set the conditions for EX SUVLA STRIKE 21.

This saw a range of dismounted training as well as mounted training at Troop level with both Bushmaster PMV and the G-Wagon SRV.



At the end of the year 2021, we will see the CO LTCOL Andrew White and the RSM WO1 Wayne Chetcuti move on. The Association thanks them very much for the assistance they have given us, and the way both have allowed us to contribute to the unit. All the best for the future gentlemen.

We also note with some pride that Rob Lording, a greatly respected past CO and now president RAACA NSW was promoted brigadier and posted to command 5 Brigade on 26 July 2021.

### **Anzac Day**

As Anzac Day 2021 approached under COVID Safe protocols there was much confusion. Initially the Sydney march was cancelled. By mid- April it was back on again, but we didn't know who could march, what banners could be displayed etc, announcements seemed to change daily. We therefore decided to hold our Anzac Day service at Lancer Barracks. It was a great success.



At 1200 our service started, Len Koles was the MC, Rev Darren Jones handled the ecclesiastical side with other association members making the necessary speeches. We were fortunate also to have a

member of the Regimental Band play the Last Post. The keynote speech referred to our Regimental soldiers at Anzac. As our reunion in 2020 had to be cancelled, the occasion also served as such, 95 Lancers were present, just short of the barracks precinct covid limit of 100.



### **Member Assistance**

Sadly in COVID times some of our members have fallen on hard times. The association has taken steps to support them wherever possible.

We were also very pleased with the support the PWLH Association were able to provide when one of our few remaining WWII veterans Allen Chanter passed away in Victoria, and with COVID restrictions none from NSW could be there.

### **2021/2022**

Soon after the AGM NSW is projected to pass the 70% vaccination target that will return us to something like normal. Who knows, next year I may have to once again need to balance attendance at the RAAC Corp AGM with overseas battlefield guide assignments. Let us hope that next year we will again meet in person. Not that Zoom is bad thanks to Russ James and the 1AR Assn, but face to face, along with a unit visit adds a dimension cybernetic interaction cannot YET provide.

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John Howells  
Secretary  
Royal New South Wales Lancers' Association

26 September 2021