



THE BULLETIN

AUGUST 2022

**Newsletter of the Wellington
Returned & Services Association
Inc
Established 1916**



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Since our newsletter in early April, a great deal has happened, most significantly Poppy Day on 21 April, Anzac Day on Monday 25 April and the AGM held in the KRSA clubrooms on Saturday 18 June.



I am pleased to report that our welfare team of Michelle and Kay were able to maintain business as usual, despite visitation restrictions imposed by rest homes due to the continued community transmission of covid.

Poppy Day was held this year during the Term 1 school holidays and coupled with many public servants still working from home this has led to a predicted loss of income over previous years (except 2020 when no street appeal was held). Nevertheless, approximately \$45,000 was raised, so I extend a big thankyou to those of you who gave up your time to collect and the large number of NZDF collectors who once again did a sterling job covering the Wellington CBD.

The WRSA has sufficient funds in our welfare trust to enable comprehensive welfare services to continue to be delivered to members in the short to medium term.

ANZAC Day was a fine day which resulted in good attendance at the national and citizen services that fall in our catchment area; Pukeahu National War Memorial Park, Wellington Cenotaph, Karori and Makara. As Brooklyn's service was cancelled, a wreath was laid at the Brooklyn War Memorial. I was proud to deliver the ode and the ANZAC Dedication at the National Dawn Service at Pukeahu and for the first time in many years the WRSA laid a wreath at the 9.00 AM Citizens Service at the Cenotaph (adjacent to Parliament). For those of you who attended the Karori Citizens service at Karori Normal School you would have enjoyed listening to our patron - Robin Klitscher deliver a very pertinent ANZAC Day address and MC Bruce Johnston.

The 106th WRSA AGM, was well attended and the key outcome was the unopposed election of the WRSA executive. There were no notices of motion to be considered.

I want to thank my executive for all agreeing to remain on the executive and their continued support for me as President. Without them I would not have agreed to serve a further year (my 6th). While our 2021 financial accounts had not been audited at the time of the AGM, we nevertheless made the decision to submit them as a set of provisional accounts to the Charity Commission, pending auditor sign off.

I hope you enjoy the contents of the newsletter, in particularly the interviews undertaken by editor - Carey Clements, with two of our more illustrious veteran members.

I hope to see many of you at our monthly luncheons and of course our Xmas lunch. Stay well.

Regards

Theo Kuper



It must have been either good news or a good joke: Even the Wellington RSA Member & Treasurer Philip Bolton, is smiling at the AGM.

LAST POST

- Johnny John Mateo, Returned member, died 19 December 2021 aged 81
- Warren Charles 'Charlie' O'Donnell, Service member died 22 December 2021 aged 87
- Don Graham Gordon, Associate member, died 7 February 2022 aged 73
- Shirley Dorothy McKay, Returned widow, died 15 February 2022, aged 93
- Roy Struan 'Robbie' Robieson, Returned member died 13 March 2022, aged 89
- AM (Retired) David Manson Crooks, CB, OBE, Returned member died 9 March 2022, aged 90



The late (from left) 'Charlie' O'Donnell, Don Gordon and Shirley McKay



The late Karori and Wellington RSA committee member 'Robbie' Robieson (seen here on the right) with a fellow Korea War veteran, Gordon Sutherland.

OBITUARY AIR MARSHAL (RETIRED) DAVID CROOKS, CB, OBE



To reach the very pinnacle of the armed forces calls for a certain amount of sacrifice.

For former Chief of Defence Staff Air Marshall David Crooks and his family, that meant a life constantly on the move.

His wife Barbara says they shifted every two years, and moved house 26 times. "I called it sophisticated camping. You always knew you were not permanent, you went knowing you were going onto the next posting

AVM Crooks dies peacefully in Wellington and was farewelled at a military funeral on March 16.

Daughter, Helen Beaumont said her father touched many lives with his warmth, his generosity and his ability to draw people together – often for a jolly good party. Crooks was the son of Gladys and Jim Crooks, and big brother to Bob and Nancy. He grew up on a farm in Loburn, Canterbury. He attended the local primary school and went on to high school in Rangiora, where he was a keen sportsman playing rugby and cricket.

He fronted up to the Royal New Zealand Air Force recruiting office when he left school, and was turned down because he was too young. He took his ham radio skills to civil aviation in Awanui, north of Kaitaia.

He finally joined the air force in 1951, trained at Taieri, and met his future wife Barbara at a Victoria League dance in Dunedin. They were married in 1954 at the Caversham Presbyterian church. They had four children and later became a proud grandfather and great grandfather. Always fit, he played sport, ran marathons and in his later years continued to go camping with the extended family.

Friend and colleague, AVM (Retired) Peter Adamson said Crooks' extensive and varied flying career began in 1950 as a 19-year-old flying Tiger Moths with the Canterbury Aero Club. It continued with Compulsory Military Training flying at Taieri, followed by enlistment as a cadet pilot. " He took it in his stride, and I look on that as a real accomplishment and an indicator of his subsequent prowess with high-performance aircraft."

He completed the instructors' course in 1953 with a high rating and began training pilots at Wigram and the Central Flying School. He was seconded to England during this time, and had his first taste of flying in jet aircraft and helicopters.

In 1956 he completed the Vampire fighter conversion course at Ohakea, before returning to Taieri as the Territorial Air Force adjutant. Crooks was then posted to No 14 squadron in Singapore, where he was selected for training with the first course of RNZAF crews to convert to Canberra bombers at RAF Bassingbourn in England in 1958.

One young RNZAF Officer was future Air Vice Marshal and fellow Karori RSA member Robin Klitscher, who has a letter from early 1957 when he was an Acting Pilot Officer undergoing ab-initio pilot training. It was signed 'D.M. Crooks, Flight Lieutenant, Adjutant No 4 Squadron' and it commanded APO Klitscher to report to that Unit at RNZAF Station Taieri to continue his training between semesters at the Central Flying School in Wigram.

As AVM Klitscher noted, 'indeed I see my logbook that on 9 March 1957 he flew me as an instructor in Harvard 1086 for 45 minutes for practice in 'stalling, turning, takeoff, approach, landing and aerobatics'. I must have satisfied him since I was allowed to fly solo shortly thereafter.'

David Crooks returned to New Zealand in 1960 to instruct new crews at Ohakea before getting a posting to the newly established Defence Secretariat – the upper echelons of defence policy and planning. He was promoted to a role at operations group headquarters and spent three years as head of the New Zealand Defence Liaison Staff for Singapore and Malaysia. On his return to Ohakea, he was in charge of all flying operations, studied at the Royal College of Defence Studies in London in 1975, and became the director of policy development in New Zealand's defence headquarters.



In the early 80s, he rose through the ranks as senior air staff officer, Air Commodore, Air Officer commanding, Deputy Chief of Air Staff and Air Vice-Marshal, before becoming Chief of Air staff. In the 1985 New Year Honours list he was appointed to be a Companion of the Order of the Bath. The following year saw him appointed as Chief of Defence Staff as the commander of all three-armed services. It is the highest appointment of all the Armed Services.

After retirement, he continued his services as chairman of the Museum Trust Board, president of the Air Force Association, president of the Air Training Corps Association and a keen supporter of the Brevet Club.

"I count myself fortunate to have served under David's command several times," Adamson says. "In all his dealings he was highly principled and professional. He was calm, scrupulously, fair, would listen attentively and invariably come to reasoned conclusions."

Crooks had a special interest in Antarctica and did many trips there during his time in the air force.

After almost 70 years of marriage, Barbara Crooks will cherish the memories.

"David was very loving. He was always calm, cool and collected. You couldn't ever have a fight with him – he would just smile at me. He was marvellous, we were very lucky"

Credit: Dominion Post and Carey Clements



AVM Crooks (2nd from the right) after flying an A4 Skyhawk jet with three fellow RNZAF pilots in the 1970's.

MICHELLE'S MESSAGE



With the widespread emergence of Omicron at the start of the year, many things were again disrupted. It seems like things are more settled now and we are learning to live with Covid in our community. Kay and I continue to support many members both in their own homes and those who are now in rest homes or retirement villages. Support varies from regular visiting to assistance with welfare matters, transporting to health appointments or assisting with advocacy and liaising with other agencies to get the appropriate support needed.

I am happy to report I am back at the Hub at the Trentham Army camp fortnightly; this has taken some time with the traffic light setting and access to camp being restricted to essential personnel only for most of this year. I am keen to build on the momentum generated last year and continue to support those who need it and promote the services of the RSA.

Stephen Hunt has been recruited as a full-time employee of the RNZRSA to fill the position of District Support Manager for Wellington, West Coast and Taranaki regions. Steve comes with a wealth of experience in the private sector including delivering regional services, and Human Resources management, on top of several years volunteering as a local support advisor for the RSA, and a 26-year career in the Royal New Zealand Navy. Steve will be a great addition in the region overseeing welfare.

From 1st July if you are eligible, you can claim a rates rebate for 2022-2023 year. I am working my way through our membership database and contacting all those members who served prior to April 1974 to check eligibility for the Veterans Independence Programme, e.g., House cleaning, lawn and garden maintenance, podiatry, medical alarms, and home help can be accessed for free if needed through Veterans Affairs.

If I have not yet been in contact and you think you might be eligible, please contact me or call Veterans Affairs on 0800-483-8372. Please also contact me if you have any questions about welfare matters, medical claims, or general enquiries. You can email me on michelle@wrsa.org.nz or ring through the office on 04 3851191 or directly on my cell phone 0211936261. Zenetta is in the office Monday – Thursday from 10am until 2.30pm and can also assist with enquiries.

Lastly, I look forward to seeing many of you at our monthly member's luncheon.

Michelle Tebbutt
Support Advisor

2022 ANZAC DAY DAWN SERVICES IMAGES FROM PUKEAHU



Among the photos is an image of AVM (Retired) Robin Klitscher (left) talking to AM and Chief of Defence, Kevin Short and AVM (Retired) Peter Adamson. Wellington RSA Life Member Phil Wallace carried out his usual Anzac Day duties of being the Wellington RSA standard bearer, while another Korean War veteran and Wellington RSA Life Member, Chris Nevil, got to meet Willie Apiata VC, after the service.

2022 ANZAC DAY SERVICE IMAGES FROM MAKARA & KARORI



Joyce Foster

AVM (Rtd) Klitscher

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BOB DAVIES - LOOKING BACK

Although he is in delicate health these days, Bob Davies is still a fighter, much in the same ways he was during more than 20 years in the NZ Army. A proud Vietnam Vet from V3, Bob has achieved much in his life and spoke to the Bulletin Editor, Carey Clements, about some of this while wearing the Army uniform.

Q: What got you interested in wanting to join the Army

A: I went to high school in '61 before leaving at the end of '63 to join the RF cadets. I wasn't aware of the RF cadets even though I was keen on the military. I was at a school ball when I saw this cadet sergeant walk into the ballroom. His name was Peter Sullivan who some would still know. He was commissioned and served in the infantry in Borneo as a platoon commander alongside the likes of Jim Brown and Merv West.



Q: Did you get to use real rifles in the cadets

A: Oh yes. We were trained on .303s and Bren Guns. It was not like today where kids are not allowed to play with those weapons. We had Battle Dress (BD) shorts, shirts and air force style caps on the side of the head. One of the boys I got to know during school camps was Norm Fry. Norm went on to become the CO of 2/1 RNZIR before moving to Australia.

Q: As a Cadet were you always in leadership roles from a young age or were you quite shy to begin with

A: I was never shy. The badge I wore was the Cadet CSM with the rank of Cadet WO2.

Q: When you entered the cadets, you were only 16 years old. That's very young.

A: In those days the age of cadets was from 15 to 18 years. You had to do a minimum of a year but once you had done that, you graduated on your 18th birthday. In my second year they changed that so after turning 18, you had to stay on until the end of the term.

Q: Can you briefly run past me what you had to do and learn as a cadet

A: You went through a recruiting process to begin with where you had to give three choices of what you wanted to do. I just told them I wanted the infantry and if I didn't get that I wouldn't join up. I don't think there was as many people as silly as I was, so I got in easily. The first year they made me do school certificate which I was not keen to do as I just wanted to get out and go soldiering. I missed school certificate by two points which really annoyed my father. In the second year I started soldier training beginning with the 8-week recruit course. Following that was a corps training course and then advanced soldier training before attending the 12-week instructor's course. At the end of that year, 1965, I graduated as a 1 star Instructor Infantry.

Q: What appealed to you about the infantry

A: The New Zealand Army was a light infantry army, but even with other choices this corps always appealed to me.

Q: Prior to going into the RF cadets, were your parents quite concerned at you joining or did they give you a free hand

A: They never tried to talk me out of joining. They knew I was interested because of my involvement with school cadets. I tried to join when I was 15 but was discouraged by my parents. I entered the Army as a member of Parkinson, the Regular Force Cadet School in January 1964. The RF cadet schools were not an easy place and could be quite brutal for junior cadets. It was staffed during the working day by professional soldiers and officers, but after hours it was run by cadet NCO's. A lot of whom did not have the nous to lead properly and some were bullies. For example, you might be asleep at night and dragged from your bed, stood on a barrack box and made to sing. If they didn't like your performance, they smacked your feet with a rifle butt. In those days we had weapons in the barracks. In 1979 a senior class cadet NCO stole ammunition off the range (not difficult to do). Back in the barracks he loaded his rifle and trying to intimidate he inadvertently shot and killed one of his section. That ended the practice of rifles being allowed to be kept in the barracks.

Q: As this was the mid 1960's and fashions were changing, such as boys wearing longer hair because of the Beatles, do you feel you were somewhat out of place when you came home for holidays, due to the fact that you had old fashioned haircuts.

A: Exactly right. And of course, our haircuts were given by our fellow cadets so you can imagine they were not the tidiest. On graduation I, along with five others, was posted to the Waiouru National Service Training Unit as an acting LCpl instructor.

I did four intakes. From there we were posted to Burnham in April '67 and from there to Malaysia in November then to Vietnam in May '68. The Kiwi companies were attached to one of the Royal Australian Regiments. We were attached to 4 Royal Australian Regiment, the second Anzac Battalion.

Because there were two Kiwi companies in each of these Battalions, they had an extra rifle company from November '67 when W Company was despatched to Vietnam to join Victor company. I deployed with Victor 3, the first 12-month Victor Company.

Q: How difficult was your preparation going from a cold climate of Burnham into Malaysia and then Vietnam?

A: We had two major Battalion exercises in 1967 before deploying to Malaya. One was a close country exercise around the Southern Alps and an open country exercise in Tekapo.

We departed on C130s in November '67 for Changi airport. I can distinctly remember walking off and feeling like I had been hit in the face with a hot wet flannel.

Q: Your records shows that in February 1969 you had pieces of shrapnel in your face. Can you tell me what happened here

A: I had just returned to the Company from training the Vietnamese Army for a couple of months. I was detached from the taskforce and was sent to a place called Wah Long. It was in the dry season and we were the lead platoon. I was in the lead section. As the 2IC, part of my responsibilities concerned the deployment of the machine gun in contact. It was very hot and given the previous night's excesses we were not feeling too good. We were navigating by map to a creek. On arrival it thankfully was dry. Had it not been, I am sure there would have been four dead Kiwis. Getting to the creek bed I flopped down on the edge of the bank next to our M60 machine gunner. I remember looking down lamenting the lack of water when a number of rounds appeared around the section commander's feet. He had his M16 tucked on his pouch and I initially thought he had had an accidental discharge. The next thing an RPG came flying past between my gunner and me. Another detonated against a nearby tree and I ended up with small pieces of shrapnel in my face. One piece hit my nose which bled profusely. Situated above the creek bed was a well-camouflaged bunker complex manned by a small protection force. It was miraculous that no one was killed but once again we had escaped serious injury. Anyway, we quickly composed ourselves and successfully attacked the bunker complex killing one VC. The others scampered. I carried the SLR which was a very good weapon. Once hit by that, you stayed hit.

Q: Were there times when you may have thought you would never get out alive.

A: You kept your emotions intact but it was certainly not easy. It was stressful. We were on operations almost non-stop. Over 12 months I had a five-day break in Malaya and later a 4-day R and R in Taiwan. That along with three two-day breaks in Vung Tau that was it for the year. The constant operations and consequent threat forced one to come to terms with one's own mortality which has proved to be of great benefit now in later life.

Q: After Vietnam you were posted to the RF Cadet School. How long were you there for

A: Not long. I decided to try the police and so left the army in February 1970, but returned to the Army just six months later.

Q: What year did you finish up?

A: I retired from the Army in February 1995.

Q: Where were you when you became a Sergeant in the Army?

A: I was in 1 Bn Depot, Burnham, which was the reinforcement unit for 1 RNZIR in Singapore.

Q: Was it a big step up for you becoming a Warrant Officer?

A: Not really, just part of progression that I expected. I was lucky to have had a variety of jobs as a sergeant. I was promoted Sgt in 1973 and sent to a rifle platoon. I was next appointed as the Assault Pioneer Sergeant then after completing a mortar instructor's course I was sent to the mortar platoon. I was posted to Singapore in the mortar platoon and two years later posted into the school of infantry in the Support Weapons Wing upon promotion to SSgt. I did three years there and then was posted as CSM Support Coy in 2 Cants NMWC. I stayed there for a year replacing Bill Walker as a CSM in 2/1 RNZIR initially as CSM of Admin Coy and then to CSM A Company, the Corps Training Company. As a result, I spent a lot of 1981 in Tekapo. In April the following year I was promoted to WO1 as the RSM of 4 O South in Dunedin.

Q: Prior to being made Sergeant Major of the Army, did you have any other major highlights

A: I was fortunate to be the inaugural RSM of the Officer Cadet School. I was posted there from WTD in January 1985 to help establish the school. The current CA and previous CA along with now several other senior officers were cadets while I was there. I took great pride in seeing them achieving so well. It was the best posting I had. I left OCS (NZ) in December 1986 to another great posting, 1 RNZIR Singapore.

Q: When did you become the Sergeant Major of the Army?

A: It was in February 1992.

Q: Would you agree that position meant you were the RSM's RSM in this position

A: No. It is not an RSM's appointment. I do recall one of the earlier SMAs carrying a pace stick but what you actually are is a staff Officer. I did three years and was asked to stay on by Maj Gen Piers Reid on his appointment as CGS but I declined. My tour as SMA was largely through the penny-pinching era and I was frustrated in not being able to influence what was happening to soldiers' pay.

The then Secretary of Defence, Basil Walker, had directed that the army pay structure should reflect the now predominant neoliberal ideology. And that meant that technicians and other trades should be paid more than those in combat trades as combat trades had no utility in civvy street. We had people at this stage deploying to Bosnia and even though I argued forcefully about the ones at the sharp end should be receiving a bigger allowance than those in the rear to compensate for the disparity in pay, that never happened. Under the old pay structure regardless of what corps you were we all were paid the same. The military is about teams where every person's job is vital to success on the battlefield. If you pay a trade less, you're telling them they are not as worthy. In my opinion an unconscionable outcome of the OR pay restructure occurred.



Q: *What issues within the RSA can you still see addressing*

A: The RSA as I see it, has two functions. One is to look after its members and the other is to represent the Defence Force. In that I think they fail. I was involved with the repatriation of bodies back from overseas and getting Vietnam veterans with MIDs recognised at Government House. The RSA was slow in support. I was moved to do this when civvy band members were issued with operational medals and presented with them at Govt House. Our recipients got their MID awards for bravery and outstanding service at the Q store. They have only timorously become involved with the honours issue.

Q: *Why do you think current serving and even recently serving ex servicemen and women will not join the RSA to today. You seem to see why this is so. What do you think needs to be done*

A: People will join if they can see if there is a benefit to them and I think that's the problem young people don't. There is also the "your war was not as warry" mentality by older veterans. However, that's nothing new. After WW2 a large number formed the Tin Hat Club because they were getting it from their WW1 predecessors. We only have a few with qualifying operational service in comparison with what went before (after the two world wars), so there's not the same critical mass, and many RSA's are now to be found in the corner of other establishments such as bowling, cosmopolitan and working men's clubs.

GEOFFREY MOSS INTERVIEW



One of the few World War Two male servicemen still around is Wellington RSA member, Geoffrey Moss. Although now 96, Geoffrey still keeps remarkable health, drives a car and lives in his own house. He keeps busy by being an author of more than 25 published management and motivational guidelines, which turned into 95 editions in 18 countries and 11 languages. In addition, Geoffrey still writes daily blogs, while also attending the Wellington Toastmasters Club and RSA luncheons as well as collecting walking sticks as a hobby. The Bulletin Editor, Carey Clements, caught up with Geoffrey over a cup of tea.

Why did you join the Fleet Air Arm service in the first place

A: At the time I was a farm cadet at Waitotara and I was playing rugby for Waverley, which was part of the Wanganui competition. On one of those rugby train trips I met a sailor that changed my life. George Sargent had been my scout patrol leader in Hawera and was returning from final leave to go overseas in the Fleet Air Arm. He did a good sales job by telling me that 'one month in New Zealand and you are off overseas to train in England or North America'. That sounded like a good idea to me. and during that ride I made up my mind to join the Fleet Air Arm.

Q: *Did you have any expectations of where all this training would lead you to*

A: None whatsoever. Now when I read these days about the amount of people that were killed in training, I think what a mug I was. What happened was that the European war finished after our training. We were on final leave and trained pilots came over to the navy from the air force. Therefore we were recruited to take Japan as a backup, as no one had heard of the atomic bomb in those days.

Anyway, we were all transferred over to miscellaneous branches with mine being supply and accounting branch. Some of my mates went over as writers, which is the clerical side of the navy. I enjoyed it as we were trained to do a variety of tasks with one of mine being a rum boson. However, with very short notice as a matter of only a few hours I got sent down to the naval radio station base Cook 3, which was at Hihitahi near Waiouru. At the time the Chief Petty Officer was caught tickling kitty (pinching supplies) and I got shoved into his role. I enjoyed working there. It was nice and warm and there was around 150 crew. We intercepted Japanese messages and it was a complete radio station for the Pacific fleet.

From there I joined the Archilles and the first trip was on a cruise all around New Zealand. We visited every port and played rugby in most of them and had a lot of interesting experiences. After that we went to the UK and on the way there, stopped off in Darwin and saw all the damage that had been done by the Japanese invasion.

Q: Even though we are talking post V J Day here, did you require minesweepers to escort you on your trip? Were there still laid mines in the sea

A: There were, but we went without any support. We went up the Australian coast through a reef which very few ships have gone through. It was not a hurried ship so we had plenty of leisure. After dropping off our explosives, we went to Chatham barracks and there is where we did our decommissioning of the Archilles. I was one of the last four New Zealanders that was on the Archilles at the time.

Q: When did you finish up with the Navy

A: I stayed on to help the decommissioning and collecting their gear, clothes and that sort of thing. I came out prior to the 1947 mutiny.

Q: I heard that mutiny was all about wages...

A: That was only one reason. One of the main reasons was that everybody else was getting out and people did not want to stay on now that the war had finished. The Commodore came to Wellington to try and increase the wages, but at that stage the Government of the day was in no mood to pay extra money to the military. They were trying to wind them down, not wind them up.

Q: I heard because of the mutiny a lot of personnel files were destroyed.

A: Yes, it happened after the mutiny had been done to cover up for the people that had got out.

They were told there would no more jobs for them for the rest of their lives in government departments. I think it was called by the then Chief of Navy. What that meant was that the Navy and the Fleet Arm simply does not have records from the time it was in during World War Two. It was scandalous.

Q: Going back to the Archilles now and can you tell me about your role as rum boson...

A: It was on the trip around New Zealand and that was hard and stressful work as you only got the figures at the last minute because every day you had a different amount. You got one gill per person per day. Up spirits were served at 11.30am prior to lunch. Ratings tots were diluted with two parts water and one part rum making up about a cup of diluted rum each day. Petty Officers and Chief Petty Officers were served undiluted rum known as 'neaters', while Commissioned Officers were not entitled to a ration. If you did not draw your ration, you would get three pence in lieu of. If you were in sick bay or were underage, you were also not entitled to draw rum. As I say it was damn hard.

Q: Geoffrey you are now 96 and yet you seem to be just as busy as ever. What is your message to people getting close to or around your age

A: Never retire. I gave up international work at the age of 82 and only because of difficulties with flying. I was married to my late wife Joyce for 66 years and we had four children. I can't believe the sort of life I've had. I've got a goal of making 100 and if I do and she is still alive the present Queen will also celebrate it at the same time as we were both born in 1926. Overall, I cannot complain as I have enjoyed my long life so far.

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