

C-O-N-N-E-C-T-I-O-N-S

Newsletter of the Lower Hutt Memorial RSA — June 2019

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The Lower Hutt Memorial RSA meets on Friday from 4:30pm to 6:30pm upstairs in the Anzac Lounge at the Petone Workingmen's Club at 47 Udy Street, Petone

PRESIDENT'S UPDATE by Lars Millar

Warm greetings members! I get the distinct feeling that winter has finally arrived, hopefully it will pass us by without leaving much of mark.

June brings a couple of key items that I need to pass on, as these involve some work areas that are being discussed amongst the executive. These are: the possibility of an 'information board' in the vicinity of a 1943 RNZAF aircraft crash in the hills behind Wainuiomata. The crash involved a Curtiss P-40E Kittyhawk piloted by Sgt Thomas Marchant, who was killed in the crash. And, our 70th Birthday next year – yes, we will be 70 years young next year, that's still a few years older than me.

One overcast Monday, David Weston and I decided it was a good idea to try to seek the location of the above-mentioned RNZAF Kittyhawk in the hills behind Wainuiomata. Whilst we didn't manage to find the crash site we did come across five pieces of wreckage in the stream, or blueline for those that wish to relive map terminology of past glory days. Sadly, it appeared that someone had marked these items with piles of rocks.

Having reached the end of the stream we decided we would head up hill to intersect the track coming down the spurline. It was during this time that I realised we could very well walk right past the crash site and not see it due to the terrain and vegetation. So, any plan for 'plaque' at the crash site was ruled out.

So, a few options were discussed. Due to the nature of the terrain in which Sgt Marchant crashed, a memorial at the site is believed to be unsuitable for many reasons; most relating to safety concerns, and others relating to the terrain itself. An 'info board' at the head of the track containing the relevant information relating to Sgt Marchant, his aircraft, and the reverence of the site itself is felt to be the best option. This approach would also help deter those who could be tempted to pilfer the site, or go trampling all over the site with little regard for the reverence of the site. All this will be discussed within the committee, as well as with Bart Bartlett who is the President of the Wainuiomata and Valley RSA, as this is in his AO, but LHMRSA will happily lend a hand to ensure Sgt Marchant is remembered.

Next year sees the LHMRSA turn 70. The 23rd May 1950 saw the establishment of the Central Branch of the Hutt Valley Returned Services Association. Through various name changes we arrive at today's LHMRSA, which is still very much here to provide support to current and ex-Returned and Service members and their families. Festivities for next year are yet to be decided, but our soon to be established 70th Birthday Committee will ensure we celebrate this milestone.

MEET YOUR EXECUTIVE - No.1: Norm Rosser (Vice President)

I was born in Takaka in 1943 and was a member of the Nelson-Marlborough-West Coast Regiment from 1960-1964 and was promoted to the rank of Lance Corporal.

I joined Lower Hutt Memorial RSA in 1974 and was elected onto LHMRSA Committee in 2010 and elected Vice President of the LHMRSA in 2018.

We are very proud of our ability to help our members through our Support Team. Money for this comes from the annual Poppy Day appeal and goes directly to help our Returned and Service members and their families. We are proud to host groups such as Vietnam Veterans, the Russian Convoy Club, the Ulysses Motor Cycle Club and would welcome others.

I believe we need more active support from our members to keep the RSA functioning to its full potential. The number of members attending Friday night sessions will not do this. Your committee willingly puts in hours of voluntary time on your behalf but we find it disappointing to have the same faces turn up each week when there are many other members living locally who we hardly ever see. We know that the lift has not been over-reliable of late but it is shortly to be replaced so our members will be able to more easily come upstairs to the ANZAC Lounge.

My vision of the RSA going forward

I would like to see a regular attendance by more of our membership on Friday nights. The ANZAC Lounge has been upgraded and is now attractive and a very pleasant place to share a convivial drink and chat with others. We regularly have guest speakers who broaden our horizons, expand our history knowledge and provide insights into their specific military interests.

If you haven't put in an appearance for a while, a warm welcome awaits you from fellow members. I look forward to seeing you there.

NEED SOME HELP? CONTACT OUR SUPPORT SERVICES:

The Lower Hutt Memorial RSA offers support services for all Returned and Service members (or their widow / widower, spouse, children, or dependant) and they can apply for a grant for assistance with:

- Doctors' Visits and Prescriptions
- Dental
- Optical
- Hearing Aids
- Specialist Visits
- Funeral Expenses
- As well as home and hospital visits there are a number of Home Help services available too

If you need support, financial or otherwise, from the Support Team for any contingencies that Government agencies cannot assist you with, please phone 568-5404 and leave your contact details with the office.

ASSISTANCE FOR ALL VETERANS FROM VANZ:

Veterans did you know that you could get the following assistance to help you in your daily life, and also a possible payment to help you enjoy your leisure times, and help you stay in your own home?

Assistance with, and at no cost to you:

- Lawns and gardens
- House cleaning
- Gutters cleaned
- Windows and house washing (external only).
- Help may be available for internal windows
- Home modifications to assist entry and exit (ramps)
- Furniture modifications
- Attendant care (short term basis only)
- Adaptive clothing and footwear
- Personal alarms (in case of falls, etc)
- Assistance with applications for funding of mobility scooters
- Travel allowances (certain conditions apply)
- Medical costs
- Hearing loss

The above is available to all who served prior to 1 April, 1974 and includes all operational deployments and routine service deployments.

This also covers those who served after 1 April 1974 and served in many theatres, or had routine service since Vietnam.

For further information or clarification, you may contact your Veterans' Affairs Case Manager directly on 0800 483 8372, or e-mail veterans@nzdf.mil.nz Alternatively, you may make an appointment through PWMC/LHM RSA Reception on 568-5404 for one of our Support Team to discuss your circumstances and complete a short "Needs Assessment" form.
Support Team: Dennis Cheetham, Peter Gooch, and David Weston

GONE FISHIN'...

A famous Admiral and an equally famous General were fishing together when a sudden storm hit. When it died down both renowned warriors were struggling helplessly in the water.

The Admiral floundered his way back to the boat and pulled himself painfully in. Then he fished out the General, using an oar.

Catching his breath, he puffed, "Please don't say a word about this to anyone. If the Navy found out I couldn't swim I'd be disgraced."

"Don't worry," the General said. "Your secret is safe. I'd hate to have my men find out I can't walk on water."

THE CALL TO ARMS: Extract from “Petone – First 100 Years” (1840-1940)

When the call came in 1914-18, the Borough was not slow in its reply, and, as ever, there were many who followed the flag to the ends of the earth — and beyond.

Those who stayed behind were quick to offer material aid, and headed by the Mayor, Mr J.W. McEwan, they quickly raised a sum of £8,000. In addition, £500 was raised for Petone men when they returned, and the names of those who did not come back were perpetuated on a monument of New Zealand stone set in the Recreation Ground.



The Petone Memorial as constructed...and how it looks today

TRAINING PRIORITIES...

At one Army base, the annual trip to the rifle range had been cancelled for the second year in a row, but the semi-annual physical fitness test was still on as planned.

One soldier mused, “Does it bother anyone else that the Army doesn’t seem to care how well we can shoot, but they are extremely interested in how fast we can run?”

A JOB WELL DONE...

The Sergeant-Major growled at the young soldier, “I didn’t see you at camouflage training this morning.”

“Thank you very much, Sir.”



75th ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY

Men and women from 13 countries were active in the 6th June 1944 Allied invasion of Normandy, including those from Canada, Poland, France, Holland, Belgium, Australia and New Zealand.

Although no New Zealand army units landed on the beaches of Normandy on that day - or in the weeks that followed - many New Zealanders served and fought on that day. They served aboard vessels in the Royal Navy and squadrons of the Royal Air Force. They were young men born and raised in places like Matamata and Invercargill.

What follows is Peter Krull's story, and is an extract from an article published in the Dominion Post by Will Harvie.

Raised on a Manawatu farm, Peter Krull was accepted into a Royal Navy officer training scheme and in 1943 was assigned to a vessel type known as a Landing Craft Tanks (LCT) Number 708. LCTs are flat bottomed motorised barges about 60 metres in length. They were designed to carry about six tanks as well as other vehicles. Krull was LCT-708's Executive Officer, that is, second in command. They trained for almost a year but D-Day was the first time they carried tanks or soldiers, and they had never practised landing on beaches either. There's an American saying for this: Fubar.

In any event, they steered towards Normandy overnight on the 5th and 6th June. "We were assigned to make the landing an hour before the main assault, so we had to form a beachhead... so that other craft could come in."

They rammed the LCT on to the beach, opened the front ramp and two tanks drove off. But they weren't on the beach proper, the tanks sank and their crews drowned.

They moved the LCT astern and were in the process for another attempt when the vessel beside them exploded. "There was just one big explosion and it was gone," Krull said.

As they charged the beach again, LCT-708 hit a mine. An army officer was badly wounded and Krull administered morphine — he had no first aid training, of course.

LCT-708 was still afloat and eventually got close to the beach. It was bashed about by heavy surf as it tried to off-load the remaining tanks and vehicles. Soon landing craft carrying infantry arrived and off-loaded troops.

"As we would rise on a wave they would get washed underneath, and then we would come down on top of them," he said. Dozens died.

Then a German 88-millimetre shore battery fired on them. The shell coming out of an 88mm gun had a diameter slightly smaller than 8.8 centimetres or 3.46 inches, but not much.

So it was a fairly large gun that was ranging on Krull's LCT. "I would see this splash coming towards us and then finally they put a shell through us. I think two shells hit us." Fortunately, a Royal Navy cruiser offshore was on hand and its guns destroyed the 88 battery.

In time, LCT-708 off-loaded its vehicles and men. Krull never knew what became of them. "We thought that we were extremely lucky to be on the boat and not going ashore."

Krull and LCT-708 waited on the beach until the tide came back. They limped back to England, safe.

The craft was soon repaired and took more troops to Normandy and sometimes returned with prisoners.

Most of the New Zealand servicemen in Europe in June 1944 were in Italy. Rome fell to the Allies on the 4th June and the Kiwis campaigned northwards until the end of the war. Most were in Trieste when Germany surrendered.

D-Day made the Italian campaign a "secondary theatre" that "contributed to the grinding down of German military power," according to the New Zealand History website. But it was costly. Some 948 Kiwis were killed and almost 3,700 were wounded in Italy between 17th June, 1944 and 2nd May, 1945, according to the Official History of New Zealand in the Second World War.

After the war, Peter Krull of LCT-708 became a farmer. He died, aged 90, in 2012.

CHAIN OF COMMAND...

During training exercises, the Lieutenant who was driving down a muddy back road encountered another car stuck in the mud with a red-faced Colonel at the wheel. "Your car stuck, Sir?" asked the Lieutenant as he pulled alongside. "Nope," replied the Colonel, coming over and handing him the keys. "Yours is."

