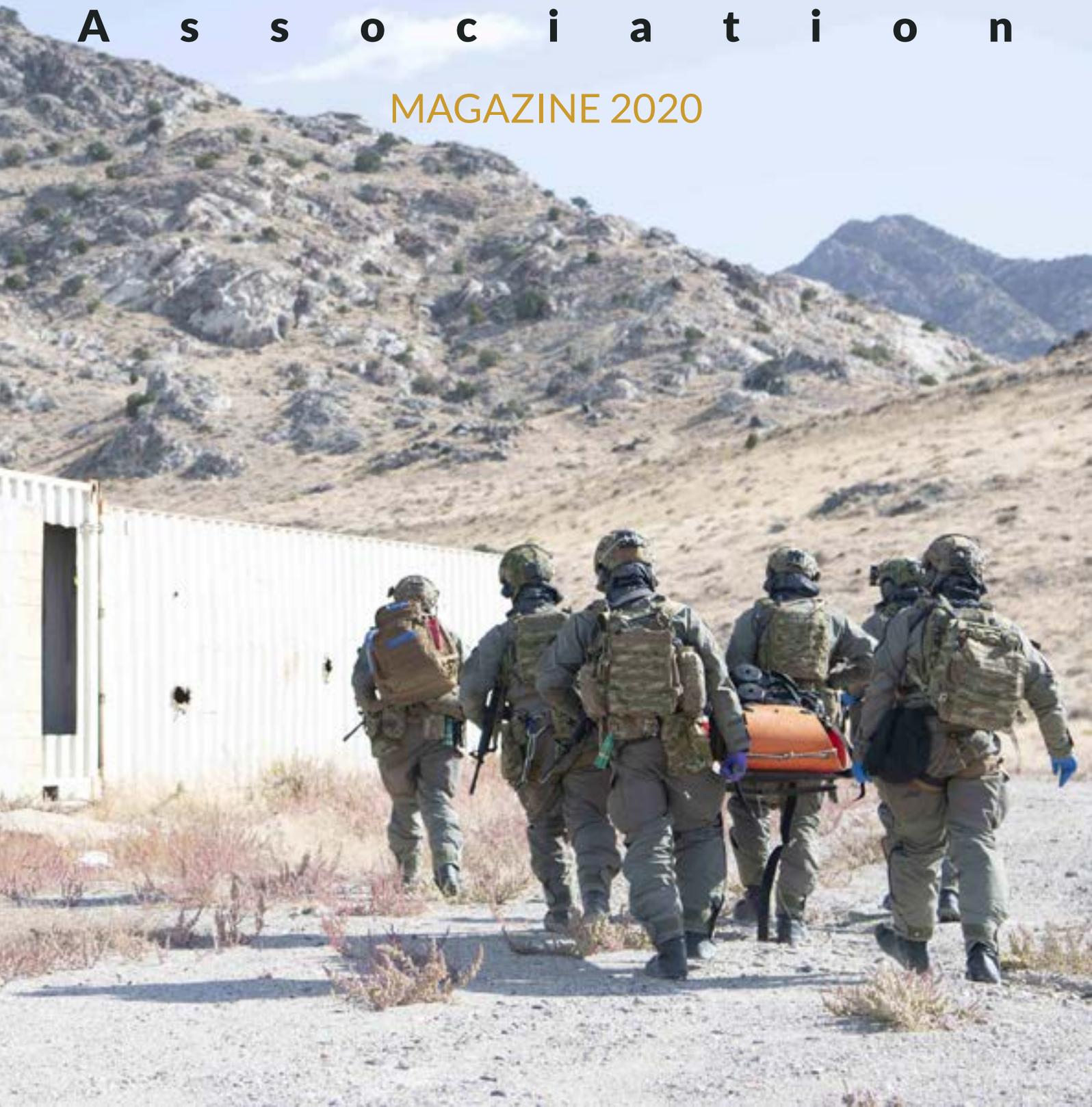


SOER

A s s o c i a t i o n

MAGAZINE 2020



PAGE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

05 Introduction

ASSOCIATION UPDATES

08 President statement

10 Communications manager update

13 Treasurer report
Profit and loss 01 Jan - 15 Dec 20

14 QLD chapter report
By Andrew Pitt

16 SA chapter report
By Nathan Bolton

17 ACT chapter report
By Stuart Roesler

22 Membership information

FEATURE ARTICLES

25 Sarbi
By David Simpson

32 We happy few wines
By Dan Corkery

34 Yoga in PTSD recovery
By Danielle Begg

36 The military to civilian transition
By Megan Fry

40 Afghanistan subterranean search
By Terry James, DSM



INTRODUCTION

The SOER Association aims to support the Special Operations Engineer Regiment and Incident Response Regiment extended family through coordination of advocacy and welfare support services, well-being initiatives, information sharing and heritage sustainment for the Unit's current serving and veteran personnel and their families—with a special focus on the families of our fallen.

CONTACT DETAILS

The Special Operations Engineer Regiment
ABN 23 190 315 692
Email: contact@soerassociation.com.au
Postal address: PO Box 501 GyMEA NSW Australia 2227

YOUR COMMITTEE

National President: Scott Corrigan
Vice President: Yarran McGeachie
Secretary: Steven Bennett
Treasurer: J K
Communications: D L
Membership Support: K K
Public Relations: B P
History: J S
Auxiliary: Amber Lynch
SA/NT Chapter Representative: Nathan Bolton
VIC Chapter Representative: D C
ACT Chapter Representative: Stuart Roesler
QLD Chapter Representative: A P
NSW Chapter Representative: M M
WA Chapter Representative: O P
TAS Chapter Representative: M A

Patron:
P J Shanmugan

ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE UPDATES





2020 President Report

SOER ASSOCIATION MAGAZINE 2020

Dear SOER Association Members and Friends,

Welcome to the 2nd edition of the SOER Association Magazine.

Whilst producing a magazine may seem like a dated concept in this social media information age, recent engagement with both the Association members and the current Unit members would indicate that numerous great stories and anecdotes from the last two decades are being lost or forgotten; and that there remains a lack of consolidated information that people can refer to for support. So, we see this as an important opportunity to capture elements of history from both the Unit and our members; as well as an annual capture of key contact and support references.

The Association is now in its third year and it has been a growing period. Whilst I remain extremely proud of the organisation and positive as to its future direction, I think for many there has been a perceived lack of activity - and certainly in the last year this is somewhat true. I want to reinforce to everyone that the essence of being for the Association - existing to support those in need and improving engagement between members of our community - remains true, and there continues to be genuine effort to build on and improve this great foundation that everyone has worked on.

As I have mentioned in the regular Newsletters, the last year has been a particularly difficult time for individuals and the community as a whole.

As we enter 2021, we will be looking to build stronger regionally based support mechanisms with a focus on providing additional engagement opportunities and improved peer support. That said, the support provided to numerous individuals over the last few years has been exceptional - and I thank those that have been involved - but there is always room for improvement.

Whilst the year in lock-down was not great for personal engagement, it did provide a valuable opportunity to finalise the encrypted Membership Database and release the updated website. Both of these initiatives were undertaken to ensure membership privacy is maintained whilst at the same time improving ease of communication and engagement. I thank the entire Membership for your patience in the lengthy implementation of these platforms; and I thank those individuals for their commitment in the development and delivery of the improved systems.

I would also like to take the opportunity thank the North Bondi RSL, the Vietnam Tunnel Rats, the Paterson Family and We Happy Few Wines for their ongoing and continued support to the Association. We truly value our relationship with you, and as we look to equivalent support across several regional areas we can only hope that the level of commitment and support that you have shown can be adopted by others.

Lastly, I strongly encourage all members to continue to provide ideas for initiatives that can be used to improve our support and engagement endeavours. The Association is only as good as its people and actions, and we welcome any and all input from you.

Sincerely

Scott Corrigan

Communications Manager Update

The new SOER Association website and our Facebook page and group.

Introduction

The Communications portfolio was very busy in 2020 leading the development of some of the Associations key objectives.

The Communications strategy aimed to increase awareness of our existence and mission amongst the community while enabling effective internal engagement to connect our members.

To promote awareness, we established a new website that describes who we are and seeks support and sponsorship to allow us to achieve our mission. The website is supported by our public Facebook page which keeps our followers informed and aims to attract potential partners to our website. This coming year we will expand our social media presence.

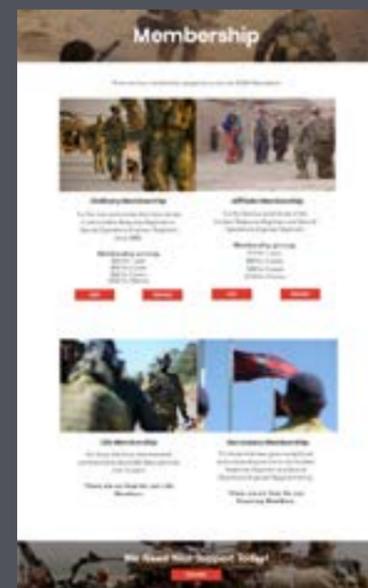
For our internal member engagement, we have fostered gatherings led by the State Chapter representatives, monthly newsletters compiled by our amazing Kelly-Ann, our members only Facebook group and this yearly Magazine!

Website

www.soerassociation.com.au

The Association has been fortunate enough to have a great functioning website since inauguration which has served us well to date. In early 2019, the Committee agreed to update the website to add features and improve the design to assist with attracting donations and sponsorship.

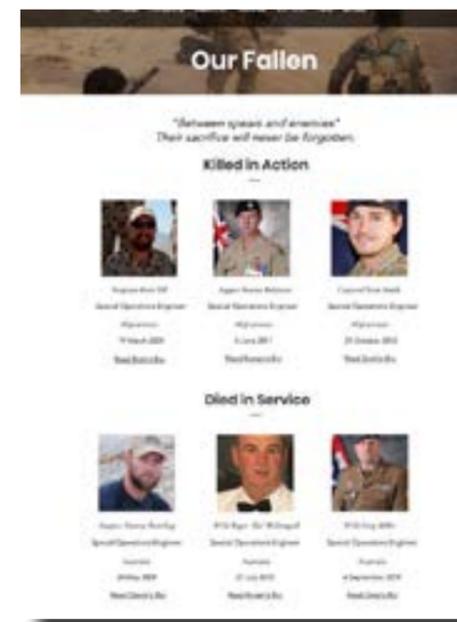
The primary addition to the website was an encrypted members area where members can login, check personal details and membership status as well as renew their membership for different periods of time in different membership categories. All member details are protected by the latest and most stringent encryption and firewall.



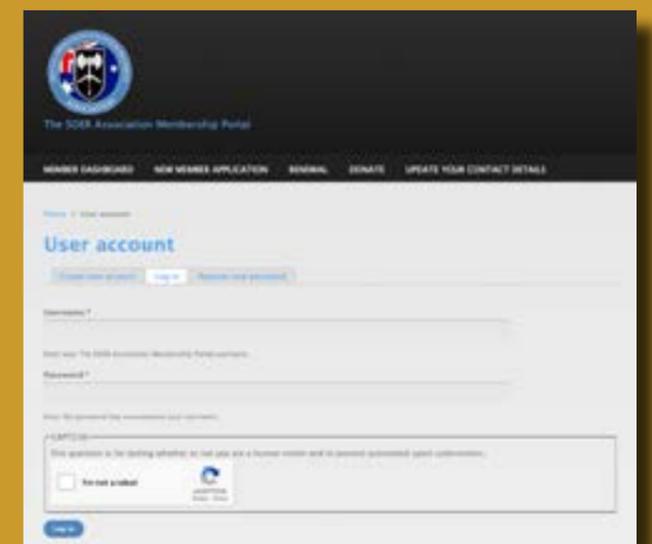
The secondary features hopefully attract generous people to either donate funds, services or discounts. These contributions are the lifeblood of the Association and allow us to provide support to our members, their families and others in need. We have been fortunate enough to have been able to come to the aid of a number of our members in this last year. We hope increases in sponsorship will help us offer a broader range of services to our membership.

One of our members, Lara Daddo, was responsible for the sleek new design. She volunteered a great many hours of her time to design exactly what we were after. We owe her a debt of gratitude and cannot thank her enough. Thank you Lara.

The website has a dedicated page to honour (Our Fallen) including those killed in action and those who died in and after service including our Military Working Dogs.



Another one of our members, Scott Coleman added in the member and donation functionality. We express our sincere gratitude to you Scott for the countless hours building these functions, ensuring the tightest security and debugging at launch. Members can access the protected area accessible only via login with password once an account has been created. If the member wishes, they can add dual authentication and only allow login with a key in addition to the password which is generated on their smart device via the Google Authenticator App.





A donations page has been added. Individuals and organisations which donate or sponsor via this mechanism will become the primary lifeblood that will assist the Association in supporting our members, their families and most importantly the families of our fallen.

Facebook

Many of you have 'liked' our Facebook page (@soerassociation). If you haven't, and you are ok with having a public Social Media presence, please do and if you can, share it to help us build our cause. We are already over 2100 'likes' which is a significant achievement for a small Association. Many of you are also in the members only group, however, if you're not, please contact us and we'll add you. It's our primary means of passing out immediate messages. Please feel free to make it your own and share any information that might be of interest to the rest of the group.

Conclusion

If you haven't done so already – please check out the new website, login and update your details, renew your membership if you need to and if you're feeling charitable, why not donate to help us continue to meet our mission. Finally, a massive thank you again to Lara Daddo and Scott Coleman for the new website and functionality and to you all for your ongoing engagement which has made us one of the most technologically savvy Ex Service Organisations.

DL
Communications Manager

TREASURER REPORT

2020

The main asset held by the Association is cash at bank. This year total cash at bank increased by \$10,932.01 to current cash at hand of \$17,611.82.

Cash inflow. Total cash inflow from the year was \$13,837.49 mainly comprising of membership fees and sponsorship. The membership fees totalled \$8,565 with about 27 people choosing to pay for lifetime membership for the amount of \$250. This has generated some additional cashflow for this year but will result in lower membership fees in future years. The association also received a \$5,000 sponsorship from Katrina and Russell Paterson.

Cash outflow. Total cash outflow for this year is \$A\$2,905.73 with the following breakdown.

Category	Amount	Comments
Bank charges	13.02	
Meals and entertainment	49	Morning tea at the Unit for Scott Smith's memorial
Online record-keeping	963.3	Dropbox for record keeping. No longer required as we have moved to MS365 and MZ Azure
Other selling expenses	347.79	Shopify account - no longer active
Shipping and delivery expense	124.65	To ship goods
Web hosting	1407.97	MS Azure and previously go daddy

Management and governance. The association's finances are now managed using QuickBooks - monthly cost of \$13.99 currently paid by the treasurer. This will be paid by the Association from 2021.

Current revenue is below the threshold that requires any formal reporting and external audit requirements.

Bank account. The association currently maintains one bank account with NAB. Signatories to this account are the Treasurer and the President.

Queensland Chapter Report - Andrew Pitt

Our first real chance to do anything was on Sunday September 6 where I was joined by both Ian Hallt and Michael O'Brien at the Redcliffe Cemetery for the first anniversary of the passing of Greg Miller and his beloved partner, Jos. It was a moving experience and we had the pleasure of being joined by Greg's Aunt and Uncle for the hour we were there.



With the easing of restrictions up here, our next gathering was planned. An invitation was sent to the other Associations up here and through Luke King, the Stone and Wood Brewery in the Valley was the chosen venue. An



awesome place to have a cold beverage on any day of the week and this looks like it just maybe our Brisbane base. A small gathering was held on Saturday 17 October and we were joined by Hypo and a few of the Old's and Bold's from the SASR Assn. Was great to sit back and listen to their tales even though I did ask ole Nev if it was him sitting next to David Sterling in the jeep back in the Desert Campaign.

Over the weekend 13 - 15 October, a few of us participated in the annual 42 for 42 here at Suncorp Stadium. The event is a 42-hour challenge where teams walk for one of the fallen from Afghanistan for an hour. This year we walked for Brett Till, Rohan Robinson and Scotty Smith. Myself, MZ, Spin Turnbull and Ty Rodda were joined by current members of the 20th Explosive Ordnance Squadron who were walking in Bomb Suits for JT's hour, at least it was cool at 2am.



While this is going to publish, we have plans to meet up with the other Assn's here at the Grand Central Hotel in the City on Saturday 21 Nov. It will be great to catch up with a few more familiar faces. Our last event for the year will be in mid-December at the Stone and Wood Brewery, pics to follow next year.

I look forward to continuing as the QLD rep for 2021 and will be looking towards the North of the State for our fellow Association members up there to gather together for a few beverages and a tale or two.

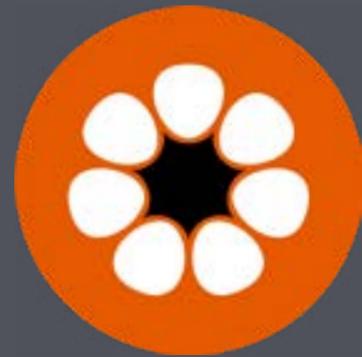
If you are travelling through Brisbane over the festive season, please don't hesitate in making contact, be it for just a cuppa or a cleansing cold ale or five.

Merry Christmas to all.

Andrew Pitt
QLD Rep
SOER Association
qld@soerassociation.com.au

SA Chapter Report – Nathan Bolton

What a fantastic year it has been! The SA Chapter has been busier than ever, with adventures, excitement, beer pong and water slides. Unable to fit anymore in, I have been informed to slow down and take a breather, and allow the rest of the year to cruise on through.



As you can probably tell, 2020 has been far from any of that and all of the above was a complete furphy. Thought I'd just spin a yarn or two, catch you off guard, and gain myself some readers to hear about the goss and the happenings of the City of Churches. If you've gotten this far into the SA review, then I'm doing a stellar job.

So, what's been happening...

Anyways, on that note, I should probably start winding things up. I could go on for minutes and fill another whole sentence of the happenings in Adelaide, but I shall not bore you.

On that note, this year has been challenging. It has caused many of us a lot of grief, a lot of isolation leading to loneliness and a loss of connection, it has caused anxiety and a lot of uncertainty about the future, it has cost jobs, placed others in financial hardship, torn us apart from our friends and family, and for some, completely altered the way we live our lives. It has been a year of shattering the old, and a lot of forced change...but come change, comes evolution...and maybe



all for something better. Who knows what tomorrow shall bring, but all that matters is making the most of today and moving through it one step at a time.

Here in Adelaide over the last few months, has been relatively quiet. Earlier in the year, before the very idea of "vertical consumption" was an actual thing...and then soon to be banned, we had a get together at the Southern Hotel in Gawler. Graced with the presence of Katrina, Roxanne and the kids and close friend Luke Adamson from Heroes on the Homefront. There we indulged in the delights of chicken parmi's once again causing the unholy need to crack the belt buckle and let the ol'gut hang in all its glory.

It was a great night, with another evening being planned for the coming weeks.

Also, the one and only Graham Ellis or affectionately known by his comrades as Pom arrived in Adelaide just before our very own Scotty Smith's anniversary. Unfortunately, unable to attend with,

Pom travelled to the beautiful Soldiers Memorial Park out in Two Wells to pay his respects. However, this was followed up with a terrific catch up over a bowl of wedges and couple beers as the former Pom froze to death over a warm Adelaide evening. Don't you just hate stereotypes mate...hahaha.

And Shane Potter also found himself back in Adelaide after a tragic death in the family and so our hearts go out to him and his family during this difficult time. I would also like to personally, congratulate him on completing his Masters in Cyber Security and Protection...I have no idea about anything you said after "internet".

Lastly, a massive shout out to Katrina and Russ for their contributions to the SOER Association once again and their support in helping soldiers and their families in times of need. Your generosity does not go un-noticed, and if you were to ask me, you'd well and truly be deserving of the one and only Scott Smith Altruism Award for your selfless actions in supporting everyone else. You have officially peaked...at legendary status.

Well, that is about it I think, I have exhausted my cognitive resources and the happenings here in SA and have no doubt there will always be more to tell in time to come. I wish everyone a great Christmas and New Year, and until we speak again.

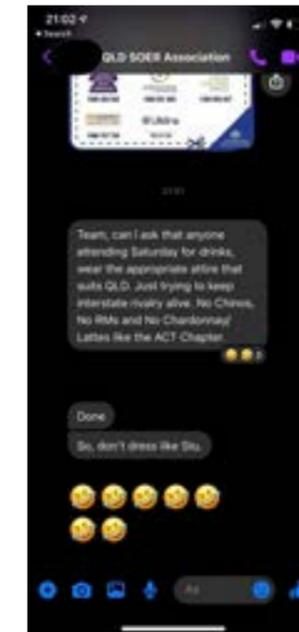
Adios Amigos.

sa@soerassociation.com.au

ACT Chapter 2020 Year in Review

G'day to all members of the Association from the ACT Chapter. Certainly, hope you are all well.

The Team here in Canberra hopes that everyone has fared well during this year and wishes everyone the best for 2021! Although perhaps ACT doesn't really mean that for our supposed QLD Chapter associates... apparently there has been some online trolling about standards of dress. Nothing wrong with 'Barracks RM Social' attire whilst frequenting establishments after hours



After a very successful 2019 under MZ's stewardship, the aim was to keep social outings rolling with a shift in intent from mid-week trivia nights to Friday night catchups – continuing the aim of frequenting new places, but without the threat of work the next day. The year opener was set at Capital Brewing where a few of us stayed until stumps. We also added an unofficial member to the ACT Chapter with the CDF coming over for a drop after hearing a bunch of Sappers and a Doc quickly becoming the loudest bunch in the venue. He sent his best wishes to the Association and escaped in his best Barracks RM Socials – again, whilst in Rome.

The biggest hand brake to the monthly catchups was of course COVID 19. Whilst this curtailed a decent number of monthly events, including ANZAC Day where we had planned to join the rest of the ACT Engineers, contact between Chapter members was frequent via Messenger and email. This mostly involved banter but also included genuine welfare reach-outs. It is humbling to know there are many people around the ACT who are ready to lend a hand or an ear if needed. I am sure this will continue into 2021.

The general message remains for anyone remaining or coming into the ACT Chapter – if you need something, don't stay quiet – there are a number of us who are ready to help even extending to including very passionate contacts in the medical fraternity if needed.

Once COVID restrictions in the ACT eased, we allowed the residents of Canberra to once again be near us. Notable evenings included:

- Private residence show - thanks to Patty H and Briony M-H for hosting the Team at your house for a brilliant backyard pizza and cheese spread during our first breakout.
- Vietnam Tunnel Rats Association Dinner – in honour of those who fought and died during Operation Hammersley in 1970, several ACT Chapter Members joined the Tunnel Rats to honour all involved.
- Gryphon Pub 'Sub-basement'- the wine cellar at this pub will become the ACT Chapter venue of choice – not only because it is a brilliant venue, some of the Chapter Members are cosy with the Publican BUT...the ACT Chapter of the CDO Association likes it too. Therefore, we ask the President, via the VP – to donate a large SOER Plaque to the venue to claim it as ours!



- Co-event with the ACT CDO Association – this was a lunch time event with what was a very large gathering of CDO’s past and present.
- End of year Christmas gathering – this was held at another private residence with the honour of hosting the Associations Patron along with the new Vice President. A top evening was had with plenty of red.



Overall, a good year despite the restrictions. I encourage all those who are in the ACT, especially on postings, to join in. We have approximately 40 members on our list, but don't hear from about half. Please consider coming along next year when emails and Messenger calls go out.

Lastly, if you are coming to the ACT on posting or happen to move here for work – bring your Barracks RM Socials, make contact, get a Messenger account and get involved.

Thank you and take care.

Respectfully,

Stu R

Need Support?

 <p>OPEN ARMS Veterans & Families Counselling</p> <p>1800 011 046</p>	 <p>Talk it over Mens Line AUSTRALIA</p> <p>1300 789 978</p>	 <p>Beyond Blue</p> <p>1300 224 636</p>
 <p>The ACT Mental Health Services All Hours Support Line The Right Support Right Now 1800 628 036 <small>Call from outside and within Australia</small></p> <p>1800 628 036</p>	 <p>kidshelpline Anytime Any Reason</p> <p>1800 551 800</p>	<p>SUICIDE CALL BACK SERVICE</p> <p>1300 659 467</p>
 <p>1800RESPECT NATIONAL SEXUAL ASSAULT, DOMESTIC FAMILY VIOLENCE COUNSELLING SERVICE</p> <p>1800 737 732</p>	 <p>Lifeline</p> <p>13 11 14</p>	






SPECIAL FORCES TIMEPIECE LIMITED EDITION

SPECIAL FORCES TIMEPIECE

LIMITED EDITION CHRONOGRAPH Premium merchandise.

- **Dial:**
SunRay dial with customised numbering and inner ring '10' marker.
- **Crystal Crown:**
Containing and displaying actual Afghani sand on the side of the timepiece.
- **Back:**
Crest, motto and sequential numbering.
- **Inside:**
State-of-the-art SWISS chronograph movement in all timepieces.
- **Case:**
43mm Polished surgical grade Stainless Steel.
- **Waterproof to 200m.**
- **Scratch proof sapphire crystal watch face and crown face.**
- **Easily Interchangeable bands:**
Polished Stainless Steel, Black Leather, NATO.
- **5 Year manufacturers warranty.**

The Special Operations Engineer Regiment watch was a resounding success with nearly 150 orders taken in the first batch.

We are happy to announce that a second batch will be made available from now. The cost of the watch will be **\$695** (a significant discount from the estimated retail value of over \$1200). It may take up to 6 months to gain the minimum 100 orders and for the watches to be manufactured and quality tested. It will be quicker than last time given we have an approved design.

Preferences for individual numbering on watch back will be taken commencing from numeral 150 onward.

Preferences will be considered for sand in the bezel. Options include Afghan sand (extremely limited, first in best dressed), Bondi Beach sand (reflecting our affiliation with North Bondi RSL) or no sand. Updates on ability to incorporate various fillings will be promulgated in coming months.

Orders are to be made by emailing: contact@soerassociation.com.au and a **50% deposit** (\$347.50) to the Association Account: BSB: **085-034**, Acc No.: **95-619-2991**, with reference: last name, preferred number and preferred sand, eg. Smith, 151, Bondi.

**NOT A
MEMBER
YET?**

There are 4 types of membership:

**1yr:
\$25**

**2yr:
\$40**

**3yr:
\$60**

**Lifetime
\$250**

**1yr:
\$15**

**2yr:
\$20**

**3yr:
\$30**

**Lifetime
\$150**

Ordinary membership is for the men and women who have served in the Unit since 2003

Affiliate membership is for the friends and families of the SOER and IRR since 2003

Honorary Members will be appointed by the committee

Membership has benefits:

- Access to support services
- Maintain connections with the SOER community
- Attend our functions
- Discount products and services (developing)
- Receive regular SOERA news (newsletter / magazine)
- Join State Chapters (SA/NT, VIC, ACT, NSW, QLD and soon WA)
- Affiliate with other Special Operations Associations (SASA, CDO Assn)
- News and Updates (primarily via our Facebook Group)

Membership anniversary date is 08 Dec annually

**JOIN THE
SOER
ASSOCIATION
FAMILY**

Visit our Website to express your interest and one of the team will get back to you with further instructions when your application has been approved

www.soerassociation.com.au



**FEATURE
ARTICLES**





Michael.Cassidy 2006



Featured article

SARBI

BY DAVID SIMPSON

Sarbi was an incredible Explosive Detection Dog (EDD) who went missing in Afghanistan for 14 months after becoming separated from me during a contact which was later to become known as the Battle of Khaz Oruzgan.

The same contact for which Mark Donaldson was awarded his Victoria Cross.

This is our story.

Sarbi and her brother Rafi both came to us in 2005 when CPL Murray Young went and assessed them at their home in Bowral to see if they would be suitable to be trained as EDD. Both dogs were mad for the ball and had great dispositions ideal for training.

From July to Nov 2005, I trained Sarbi and CPL Young trained Rafi to detect explosives, weapons and ammunition so that they could be deployed on operations both within Australia and overseas. The dogs were trained to recognise the required odours then respond to that smell by giving a passive response which is either a sit or a down.

They would then stare at where the smell was coming from, which allowed us to know exactly where the item was hidden. During training, the dogs were rewarded with a tennis ball, and this is the only reason that they are out searching for us. They think it is just a big game.

Following Sarbi's training, we deployed to Melbourne in support of 4 RAR (Cdo) tasked with supporting the security and counter-terrorism response force arrangements for the 2006 Commonwealth Games. This was an excellent opportunity to expand both mine and Sarbi's skills and experience.



After our first overseas deployment together in 2007, Sarbi and I deployed again in 2008 with the Special Operations Task Group to provide them with a high-risk search capability in the detection of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and explosives, weapon and ammunition caches. In late August we headed up to the American Forward Operating Base (FOB) Anaconda in Khaz Oruzgan. Plans were formulated and we conducted some nights patrols and a very successful operation during the day that accounted for KIA in a valley to the Northeast of the FOB. A similar patrol was planned to take place in another valley to the east near a village called Ana Kalay.

There were five Humvee's in the group that departed at 4 am. The first and last was made up of Afghan Security Group (ASG) personnel, and the middle three were made up of ODA (American Green Berets) and Australian's. I was travelling in the tray of the second vehicle. As we approached the pickup point for the patrols that we dropped off earlier in the day, we received the same sort of ICOM chatter that we had been receiving all day. This chatter was saying that they were going to hit us when the dismounted troops got to the vehicles. The dismounts arrived at the vehicles, but there was no attack. We

while to the right of the road receiving intermittent ICOM until we got to an area where the mountains on the right got closer to the road, with a finger of the green zone stretching towards the mountains from the green zone on the left of the road. We made our way around the finger of the green zone about 1530 moving a bit closer to the mountains when someone on the ICOM started talking, and they were told to chup sha (shut up). This happened two more times as we made our way around the green and then closer to the road again. This seemed out of place, and at this stage, everyone

We had just turned right and started paralleling the road when the contact was initiated by an RPG or mortar that landed about 20m to the rear left of our vehicle.

departed from the marry up point about 10 minutes later and started heading back to FOB Anaconda. We travelled for a short

starting scanning for contacts. I put my Peltors on and checked my gear. The first ASG vehicle continued to travel closer to



We were taking small arms and RPG fire the whole time.



the mountain, and my vehicle drove down towards to road, roughly halfway between the mountain and the green zone. We had just turned right and started paralleling the road when the contact was initiated by an RPG or mortar that landed about 20m to the rear left of our vehicle. We all jumped out of the tray and took cover on the right side of the vehicle as the .50cal, M240 and 60mm mortars engaged the launch site. The other four vehicles also engaged the launch site. We had an ODA JTAC into our car, and he started calling in air to drop a bomb on the compound that we took the initial RPG or mortar from. There was a sniper on each side of me facing the green, and I was facing the rear covering the finger of green about 150m out that way. The ASG vehicle was only just forward of our position up on the right near the mountain and was firing too close to us. That vehicle was moved forward about 100m. The third vehicle in the convoy moved down to a position about 60m behind us and supported us with .50cal, M240, 60mm mortar and small arms fire. At this time we noticed a Dutch Apache further towards Anaconda and G called them in to provide supporting fire. The Apache came in and flew around the green zone for a short while before saying they couldn't see anything and left. We were taking small arms and RPG fire the whole time. We were preparing to move when one of the ODA in the fourth vehicle was shot in the hand manning the gun. We realised that the fire had come from the mountain and the last two vehicles engaged that site. After the ODA soldier was treated, we started paralleling the road towards Anaconda staying on the right side of the car and scanning the mountains to the right. At this time fast air arrived and dropped a bomb on the initial compound, they also conducted several gun runs in the green zone. We had travelled a couple of hundred meters when we started taking a lot of fire from the mountains on the right. We ran around to the left and took cover on that side as the vehicle continued to roll along. We continued like this for another 200m swapping sides depending on which was taking the least amount of fire. The small arms fire that we were taking seemed to be a lot of single shots rather than bursts. We had an RPG go past the front of the car and explode about 60 meters to the right. At about this time we had a wounded soldier in a vehicle behind us that had to be stabilised.

We started moving again about 15 mins later when we were taking heavy fire from the left and right so about five of us were in a small triangle at the rear of the car. I was looking to the left just as the vehicle sped up a little going into a ditch and saw an RPG fly in between the vehicle and our group. At least one other person saw it as we both said holy shit at the same time. We travelled at the back of the car for another 20m when another RPG landed about 5 meters to our rear left, I was on the rear right of the group with Sarbi.



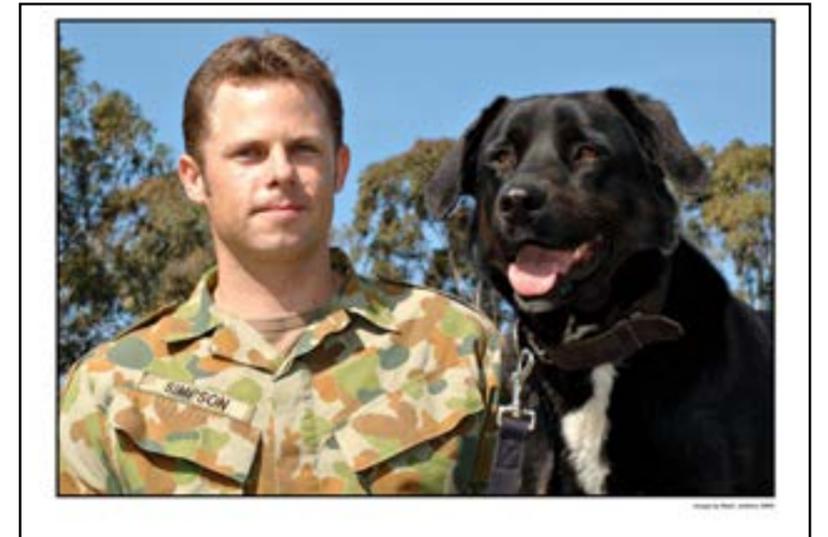
The RPG knocked a couple of the guys on the left over, and a couple of the other guys fell over them. When the RPG went off, Sarbi yelped and started crawling along the ground. I helped one of the guys up and encouraged Sarbi along. It was shortly after this that I noticed that the lead attached to my body armour had been severed and Sarbi was loose. Sarbi ran off towards the road and paralleled us down near the road away from the gun fire. There was too much

fire coming in for me to break cover and run the 40-50m to where she was. I saw that she wasn't running off and decided there may be a better opportunity to grab her later on. I continued to see Sarbi every now and then during the rest of the contact as she ran down near the road. About another 200 meters along, I was on the left side when I looked back and saw G feeling under his armour as though a spent cartridge had gone down his shirt.

We were told to stop and wait as G had been shot through the side and needed to be stabilised. We waited there on the left side of the car for about 20 mins while he was being treated. Once we got moving again and had gone a bit further, I was on the right side with S in front of me, and I think there may have been someone behind me. We took a burst of fire from the right hitting S in the hip and calf. I was also hit in the hip, but it was from a ricochet, so it didn't penetrate. The boys found the round in my pocket later on when they cut my pants off. We dropped to the ground, and I fired into the area where I could see muzzle flashes. After I stopped receiving fire, I crawled backwards to the vehicle and came across S's rifle, which I passed to him.

I later learned that he had taken a round in his ejection port which knocked the rifle from his hands. S had taken cover under the rear of the vehicle by the time I got back to him when it started moving.

S grabbed a hold under the axle and was dragged about five meters before the car stopped again. Once the vehicle stopped moving S got up and hobbled around to the front of the vehicle and climbed in between the bumper and grill. I travelled alongside of the vehicle for another few hundred meters. It was at this stage that I was getting pretty tired and decided to get back up into the tray and jump on the M240. As I was stepping up with my right leg and left arm up I felt the heat from an explosion that lifted and threw me off the side of the vehicle. I was later told that it looked like we had run over an IED and the guys behind thought that that we were all gone. It turns out it was just a couple of RPG's, one exploding just to the side and one hitting just under the rear of the vehicle. I landed on my back, still facing towards the Humvee and saw the interpreter roll out the side of the vehicle covered in blood. I could feel the blood running down my face and checked my teeth with my tongue. After I was happy that they were all I good, I got up as one of the guys helped the Terp up. I started chasing after the vehicle as it hadn't stopped. I continued for about 20m then passed the Terp who was lying on the



ground waiting for the next Humvee. I continued along but was hardly moving at this stage and deciding that I was too much of a target and ran down towards the road where I noticed a pretty big hole. I jumped into the hole and rested there for a minute to try catch my breath. While I was taking cover in the hole, I saw Sarbi and called her over to me, and she got to within five meters of me when one of the .50cals opened up and fired over the top of us. I was later told that we had so much fire coming in on us that the dirt was spitting up all around the hole, and they didn't want to call out to me in case I lifted my head. Sarbi didn't appreciate the covering fire and ran out of reach again. By this time, the second last vehicle was passing about 50m away, and I had to break cover and run over to them and re-join the convoy. This is the vehicle that J's stretcher had been put on. I climbed up and sat in the middle covering to the right. I didn't have a clear shot, so gave my weapon to the guy that was sitting on my knee. I held onto the back of his armour so that he wouldn't fall out the side as he provided covering fire to the left. J was in a bad way after being shot through both legs, and we had to break contact if the wounded were to have any chance of surviving. I kept talking to J to keep him awake for the rest of the trip back into base. He later told me that he could not look at me as my face was covered in blood. We eventually broke contact and made it out of the valley rolling

I could feel the blood running down my face and checked my teeth with my tongue.

back into the FOB with one US KIA (the US dog handler) and one US WIA. Of the eleven SASR members myself and Dinger, there were only four who hadn't been wounded.

The Humvees dropped off the wounded to be treated and immediately took up positions along the walls to repel any follow attacks on the base. Thankfully there was no follow up.

We didn't have to wait for too long and were soon on our way in the medivac choppers. I was on the second chopper out and went back to Tarin Kowt to be treated at the Role 2 hospital. I spent about 10 days in hospital before being released.

I was receiving intel that Sarbi was still in the Khaz Uruzgan area being held captive by a Taliban commander in the area, so organised a flight back up to see if she could be retrieved. I spent two weeks up there, working with the ODA to try to facilitate her return without success. I returned to TK to finish off my deployment.

It was 14 months later that I received word that the ODA had recovered Sarbi in an unrelated operation and was returning her to Australian forces in TK.

I had never given up hope and was so happy to hear the news.

A few months after Sarbi was found, I deployed to Afghanistan again in 2010 with a new EDD on another rotation with SOTG and was able to see Sarbi while everyone was trying to work out how to get her home.

As soon as I flew into the base at Tarin Kowt, I went down to the kennels and said hello to her.

After a very long process to return her to Australia which included a six months stay in the UAE, Sarbi finally made it home and was released from quarantine in late 2010. When Sarbi returned from Afghanistan, she was awarded the Canine Service Medal and the War Dog Operational Medal from the Australian Defence Force Trackers and War Dogs Association.

It was Sarbi's unquestioning, unwavering service to her human companions that saw her recognised with the Purple Cross Award from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) which is bestowed upon animals which recognise exceptional courage shown by an animal in the face of danger, which greatly benefits a human or humans.

Former Chief of Army, Ken Gillespie posing with Sarbi

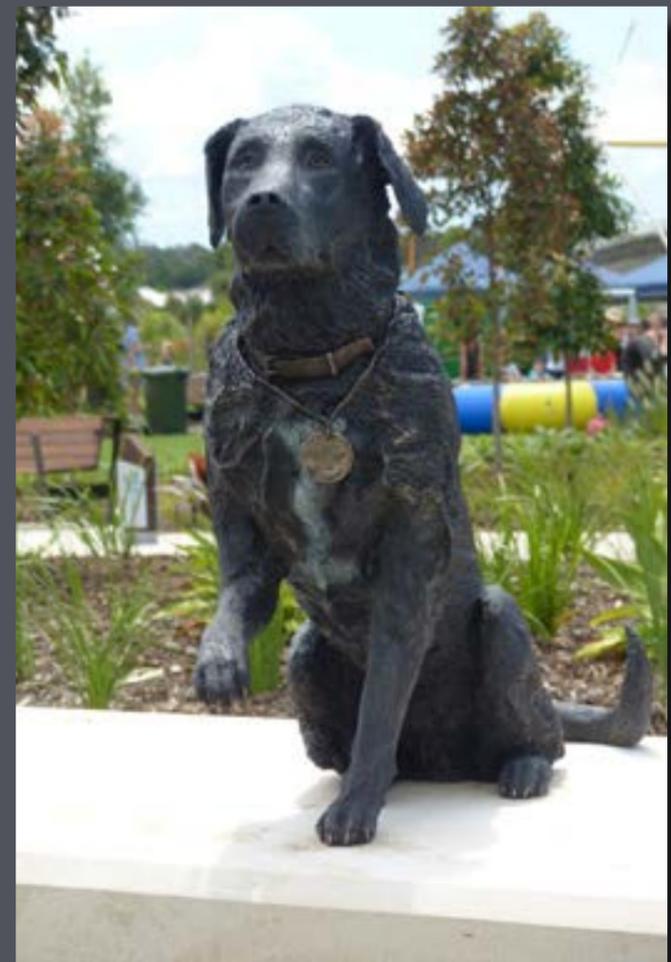


There has been a book written about Sarbi by the author Sandra Lee, which goes into a lot more detail about where Sarbi came from, the events leading up to the fateful day. Sarbi has most recently been honoured by the naming of a park in Warner Lakes, The Reserve and the erection of a life-size bronze sculpture skillfully created by the artist Kathy Mclay.

Sarbi was retired on her return to Australia and enjoyed her time at home with me getting pats and just enjoying herself.

Sarbi passed away in 2015 shortly after the opening of Sarbi Park.

She was preserved and is now taking up residence at the Australian War Museum in a permanent display.



Featured article

We Happy Few Wines – Veteran Winemakers

Dr Dan CORKERY, drdancorkery@gmail.com

We Happy Few Wines is a social enterprise, founded in 2014 by a group of Australian veterans. Dean Evans, of North Bondi RSL, a longtime supporter of SOERA, and Dan “Doc” Corkery (ex RMO IRR) decided upon the venture after a few beers at a North Bondi serviceman’s club.



Put simply, the business exists to make great wines, and do good deeds with said wine. Since 2015 they’ve been making cool climate, high altitude wines in the Murrumbateman, just north of Canberra.

The name “We Happy Few” is taken from the famous St Crispin’s Day Speech in Shakespeare’s Henry V and represents that while this particular group of veterans have undergone loss and adversity, they also look back on their Army service with many fond memories.

We Happy Few donates 1/12th of their completed product to worthy Veterans Organizations. They prioritize supporting frontline start-up Veterans groups before they are accredited as Charities, as they often are “passion rich but cash poor”.

Supported organizations include Commando Welfare Trust, the Special Operations Engineers Regiment Association, Integra Service Dogs Australia, Mounted Missions and Forge Through.

Bill Crowe, from Crowe Wines, was their consulting winemaker for their first half decade. From him they learnt how to make cool climate, high altitude wines with a American and French influence. Lighter in body than “meaty” Barossa reds, their Shiraz is both complex yet refined.

Their wines are made from the best grapes that they can find in the Canberra and Hilltops wine regions. They utilize local winery infrastructure to make the wine. Their workforce is augmented by local GWOT veterans from most of Five Eyes.

In 2018 they entered their first wine show, and were blown away when they collected National Medals for 2/3rds of their wines.

Making custom labelled wines is a burgeoning side line for the company. They’ve made wines for several SOCOMD units and officers messes, along with many Australian defence industry ventures.

More than just high-end clean-skins, these custom wines have military themes, imagery and names, and are much sought after Christmas corporate gifts.

2020 was a complete winemaking write off due to the fires ruining all the local fruit. 2020 also included devastating hail storms, COVID-19, and was topped off by extortionate Chinese market import tariffs. However, rather than sit on their hands, they doubled down, sold their available stock, and thus are positioned to markedly increasing production in 2021.

What does the future hold? Planning is well underway for a “tiny winery” south of Canberra (on the Monaro highway). It will surely become a recurrent haunt for anyone craving a glass of the good red stuff on their way to the cold white stuff.

If you are interested in partnering with We Happy Few Wines, or carrying their range of products, please email drdancorkery@gmail.com



The role of Yoga in the treatment of PTSD

Danielle Begg

Somatic therapist Dr Peter Levine observed that animals in the wild can easily regulate the high levels of stress that arises when trying to out-run a predator or climb to safety. Wild animals return to a healthy, relaxed state even after being threatened with their lives.

Resolving trauma is unfortunately not always as simple for people. The effects of trauma can be wide-ranging, debilitating and persistent.

Historically, the focus on resolving trauma has been on the mind through treatments like talk therapy. We now know that when we experience trauma – the experience can involve the mind and the body. For this reason, any approach that successfully resolves trauma often needs to utilise the mind and body in its solution.

There is a growing body of research on the impact of Yoga on PTSD. For example, in 2017 US military veterans and active duty personnel with posttraumatic stress disorder took part in a 10-week yoga intervention and it was found that those who participated in Yoga classes had a reduction in PTSD symptoms¹.



So why is Yoga effective in resolving trauma – How does it work?

People engaged in stressful situations like combat are often in a continuous state of fight or flight, also known as the stress response. First described by Dr. Walter B. Cannon at Harvard Medical School in the 1920s, the fight-or-flight response evolved as a survival mechanism preparing us to fight or flee from a real or imagined threat. When the stress response is stimulated breathing becomes more rapid and shallow, pupils dilate, muscles constrict, chemicals like adrenaline, noradrenaline and cortisol are released in the bloodstream and we are on high alert. In PTSD – a person can feel stuck in the stress response and perceive a threat where there isn't one.

The key is interrupting the stress response and triggering the Parasympathetic nervous system, our relaxation response. Dr Herbert Benson from Harvard's Mind/Body Medical Institution, discovered that the body's relaxation response causes the release of neurochemicals in the body which creates a soothing effect on the mind.

There are a number of elements utilised within Yoga, including controlled breathing techniques, that are known stimulate the body's relaxation response.

The Yoga Impact Charity (www.yogaimpactcharity.com) has been sharing trauma informed Yoga since 2015. Our classes focus on combining psychology, somatic therapy and Yoga to provide evidence based mind body solutions to healing trauma. Participants in our yoga programs report

- Improved sleep
- Reduced stress
- A greater sense of calm
- Reduced anger
- Improved confidence
- A sense of community

You can read more about our approach and access a number of free resources via our website: www.yogaimpactcharity.com

Danielle Begg
MSc (Oxford) BPsySc (Hons) (Queensland)
Co-Founder & CEO
The Yoga Impact Charity



¹Reinhardt KM, Noggle Taylor JJ, Johnston J, Zameer A, Cheema S, Khalsa SBS. Kripalu yoga for military veterans with PTSD: a randomized trial. J Clin Psychol. 2017;74(1):93-108.



THE MILITARY TO CIVILIAN TRANSITION – MEGAN FRY, Clinical Psychologist

The 2020-21 federal budget announced that \$17.7 million has been allocated for the establishment of the Joint Transition Authority (JTA). Finally! Transition from the military is being recognised as a significant and important issue requiring attention and getting the funding needed to create change. This long-standing issue has always impacted ex-serving

personnel and it has been recognised as an issue since “Homecoming Theory” was cited after WWII (Ahern et al., 2015). The military to civilian transition is now widely cited, nationally and internationally as a significant and important issue requiring attention (Binks & Cambridge, 2018; Cooper et al., 2018; Pease et al., 2015; Van Hoof et al., 2018).

Military training has developed and adapted over the years to ensure that every military person has the skills and training required to do their job effectively in a military and most importantly in an operational environment. Given a human beings natural resistance to killing, this process of training has ensured that the firing rate in combat increased in American rifleman from 15-20% in WWII to 90% in Vietnam (Grossman, 2009).

With the development of military training over the years from the open battlefield, to the jungles, to the more recent urban warfare; military personnel have been trained to adapt, overcome and endure.

But what happens at transition? What happens when you lose the collective, the culture, the identity? So often I have clients tell me they would prefer to go back to an operational environment, rather than live day to day in the civilian world. This is because the military world makes sense.

Unlike civilian life, the military world is clearly defined with routine, structure, rules, purpose and again it offers the collective of people with the same beliefs and values.

This creates a feeling of security, stability, comfort and familiarity, which are part of our core needs. Most military personnel enlist between 17 and 25 years of age and many come from a pre-military background where these core needs have not been met. 17 to 25 years is a key developmental period when young adults figure out who they are and where they belong in this world (Mobbs & Bonanno, 2018). Unlike a 20-year-old in society exploring the world and figuring this out; for military personnel, these existential questions are

answered for you. The military issues you with everything from your jocks and socks; to your mates, family and identity. Therefore, many skip this natural developmental period and their sense of self, others and the world becomes fused with being a Soldier and being in the military. So, when you can no longer serve there are often feelings of disconnection, alienation, discomfort, uncertainty and confusion. For many there is a feeling that you no longer belong in the military, but then don't know how or don't want to belong in the community, which can result in a feeling of being lost. This can create psychological distress. Along with the simultaneous life changes (occupation, finances, social support, relationships, routines, and residence), transition between environments can significantly impact on your health and well-being (Bauer et al., 2018). Hence, the challenges faced at transition extend far beyond deployment related experiences and posttraumatic stress disorder and they currently place veterans at significant risk.

The military issues you with everything from your jocks and socks; to your mates, family and identity.

So, there is a reason if you:

- struggle with low tolerance levels and connecting to people,
- get easily frustrated and irritated,
- want / expect people to be more competent or efficient,
- have difficulties switching off and miss the adrenalin rush
- thrive of performing, achieving and succeeding

SOER ASSOCIATION MAGAZINE 2020

It's what I call "The Psychological Effects of Service". These are all a natural consequence of just serving in the military. You are used to connecting to and being around people who have been trained to think and act like you do and the consequence of not being around someone who thinks or acts like you in an operational environment is a threat and dangerous. Hence, this can lead you to react in aggressive ways post military service, as subconsciously you are trying to protect yourself.

You may find that the Soldier / military part of you comes forward unexpectedly and sometimes at unwanted times to act, defend and protect. This can be useful (e.g. in an emergency situation), but sometimes it is not useful (e.g. in your relationships).

Hence, some things learnt from military service need adjusting and updating. We all need to undergo personality updates in life. This is normal and a natural part of life and growth. Some things need to be left in the military world and some new things need to be learnt to adjust into the civilian world.

The military to civilian transition offers a unique opportunity for growth. If we see this process as being a normal and natural process that needs to occur and we can embrace it, rather than struggle with it, you can adapt and develop a new healthy sense of self. This is not an easy process and it takes time and often support.

I believe in a natural process of supporting veterans to understand how service life has impacted them and in helping veterans learn the things they need to know to transition successfully. I find that with this approach, veterans transition more effectively and that they can figure out who they are and where they want to be in this world, developing their own sense of self naturally over time. By utilizing this time and support as a unique opportunity to get to know yourself, you can undergo a healthy and natural adjustment process.

Based on experience, the things that are helpful in this process are exploring different activities and experiences; including hobbies, interests, education / learning opportunities, and different jobs. From learning a musical instrument, to a language, to learning about a topic of interest; through to more formal study and career / job options, these can all be useful in this process. Also, just simply becoming aware of the little things that you like and don't like. Developing your sense of self – who are you, what do you enjoy, what have you learnt in your life and what do you want in your future is what is important. Again, from experience, this more natural adjustment process of learning and exploring the world and learning how to connect to non-military people takes a good two years and does require support. However, in the end, there is a more clearly defined self who is no longer fused with the military and who is ready, able and willing to tackle what's next.

I am currently conducting a research project at Griffith University exploring the impact of the military values and beliefs on transition. If you are interested in contributing to this important research and you are ex-serving Army, who deployed on operations during your service and have transitioned in the last five years, please consider completing my online survey at: <https://is.gd/lostsoldier>.

If you would like to know more about the survey, please watch this brief video. Whilst at this time this research is focused on a specific population and using an online survey, we are working towards validating a face to face Transition Program, which we are currently using in clinical practice and we hope will be available to all ex-service personnel in the future.

This article is not intended to undermine or dismiss those who experience posttraumatic stress disorder or other mental health concerns, it is only intended to highlight the more generic issues most veterans experience at transition. If you are experiencing difficulties, support is available through Open Arms (1800 011 046), or your doctor.

About Megan: Megan is a Clinical Psychologist who owns and operates her own private practice, M Fry Psychologist, at Bald Hills, Brisbane QLD (www.mfry.com.au). As an ex-serving soldier (RACT 1999 – 2004) and Military Psychologist, Megan has spent a large proportion of her career working with military personnel. This includes working as a contracted psychologist at Tobruk Lines Health Centre, Holsworthy Barracks; supporting 2 CDO REGT, SOER and SOLS, whilst also working as an Army Reserve Psychology Officer for 1 CDO REGT (2008-2012). Over the past few years, Megan has enjoyed combining her two passions: Schema Therapy and veteran mental health. You can contact her via email: megan@mfry.com.au

References:

Ahern, J., Worthen, M., Masters, J., Lippman, S., Ozer, E., & Moos, R. (2015). The challenges of Afghanistan and Iraq veteran' transition from military to civilian life and approaches to reconnection. *PLoS ONE*, 10(7), e0128599.

Bauer, A. Newbury-Birsch, D., Robalino, S., Ferguson, J., & Wigham, S. (2018). Is prevention better than cure? A systematic review of the effectiveness of well-being interventions for military personnel adjusting to civilian life. *PLoS ONE*, 13(5), e0190144.

Binks, E. & Cambridge, S. (2018). The transition experiences of British military. *Political Psychology*, 39(1), 125-142.

Cooper, L., Caddick, N., Godier, L., Cooper, A., & Fossey, M. (2018). Transition from the military into civilian life: an exploration of cultural competence. *Armed Forces & Society*, 44(1), 156-177.

Grossman, D. (1995). *On killing: the psychological cost of learning to kill in war and society*. Boston: Little, Brown.

Mobbs, M. C. & Bonanno, G. A. (2018). Beyond war and PTSD: the crucial role of transition stress in the lives of military veterans. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 59, 137-144.

Pease, J. L., Billera, M., & Gerard, G. (2016). Military culture and the transition to civilian life: suicide risk and other considerations. *Social Work*, 61(1), 83-86.

Van Hooff, M., Forbes, D., Lawrence-Wood, E., Hodson, S., Sadler, N., Benassi, H., Hansen, C., Grace, B., Avery, J., Searle, A., Iannos, M., Abraham, M., Baur, J., Varker, T., O'Donnell, M., Phelps, A., Frederickson, J., Sharp, M., & McFarlane, A. (2018). Mental health prevalence and pathways to care summary report. Mental Health and Wellbeing Transition Study, the Department of Defence and the Department of Veterans' Affairs, Canberra.

During one of my deployments with the Special Operations Task Group, one of the Engineer Element key tasks was to investigate subterranean networks for possible use by Insurgents and if so to undermine their operational effectiveness by destroying caches.

This capability was eagerly accepted and evolved to concentrate on searching subterranean systems such as Karez, tunnels, wells and caves. By eliminating materiel supplies wherever possible and also denying the use of these areas as cache locations or transport routes, it was assessed that it would have a profound effect on any Insurgent networks. Early rotations created new systems for subterranean search and clearance capability further enhancing SOER's already wide diversity within SOCOMD.

The Engineer Element were not only responsible to deliver their assigned Commando or SAS Element safely to and from either a vehicle or HELO mission, but they were also responsible for the detailed search of villages or targets. The Engineer Teams were also expected to conduct subterranean search at very short notice.

The most typical system that was searched were the Karez.

These systems have been around for centuries and are generally dug by hand.

These systems are predominantly used to supply water from one village to another and could be both above and underground; however, they were also used for the concealed safe routes for Insurgent personnel and equipment.

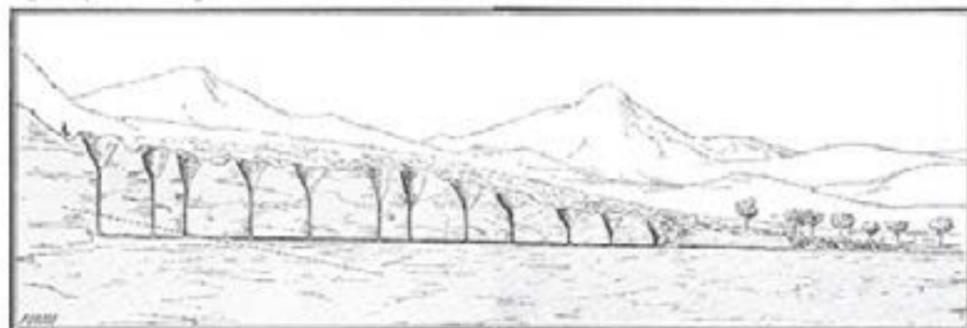
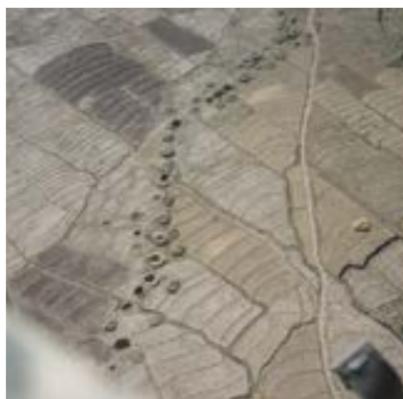


Diagram showing the layout of a typical Karez. The dotted line shows where the groundwater is tapped by the long, sloping horizontal tunnel.

The vertical shafts (wells) are access points for cleaning out the tunnel during construction.



An aerial view showing the wells that were used to clear out the Karez System during construction.

The types of access required was a mixture of both vertical and horizontal entry and exits. Vertical access was gained via applying roping techniques. Frequently the only anchor point available were the quad bikes that had to be taken on HELO missions.

Horizontal access was predominately walk in entry and exits; some of these entry points had restricted access due to the size of either the entry and exit points. Not only did the Engineer Teams have to consider the entry or exit method but also the communication methods (as radios may not have worked),

CAS evac method/s, close quarter fighting or ever presence of the already known IED threat was also heavily considered during mission planning. The restricted nature of these

systems (that could be up to 20m below ground level) meant for the majority, no body armor or long arms could be worn or carried. This meant Engineer Team members searching these tight subterranean spaces without body armor and only equipped with two light sources, pistols, a detector and a small equipment bag that could be tied to your ankle when required.

These tasks show the modern-day similarity between Special Operations Engineers and their comrades from the Vietnam Tunnel Rats Association who conducted similar tasks in Vietnam from different Engineer units but deployed in the field as part of 'Splinter Teams' with Infantry units and searching tunnels created by the North Vietnamese Army and/or Viet Cong.

It was not uncommon to come across snakes, scorpions, spiders and pigeons within a system. This would see the lead searcher cursing on the discovery of a snake or spider or having a bird fly at them unexpectedly. It was quite amusing seeing the lead searcher having to kill a snake in the tight confines of a system whilst trying to continue on with the search. Disrupting the use of these systems for Insurgents as a cache location proved successful and demand for these types of missions rose dramatically; which also further developed the capability. Usually the search pair would reemerge at the completion of the search task covered in mud and soaked to the bone.

Unconventional methods were developed to ensure all equipment had multiple uses, was extremely lite or was a backup i.e., the Munt Knot was used instead of the Figure 8 Descender, the Prusik Knot used both as a break on the Tape Harness and also used to ascend ropes and a prusik cord used for both CAS evac (vertically) and cache recovery etc.

Entry and exit points



Horizontal walking in/out.



Vertical entry/exit.



Ready to descend.



Setting explosive to collapse a well of a Karez.

System break down



Entry filled with water.



Members passing each other in a searched system.



Points within a system could be 3m tall.



Points within a system could only be large enough to only crawl through.

The longest length of system searched and cleared by an Engineer Team in one session was 1.4 km and led to numerous caches finds.

The longest length of system searched and cleared by an Engineer Team in one session was 1.4 km and led to numerous caches finds. It was not uncommon to search a system that would disappear under water and have to back-track and ascend a well and move forward to the next well descending back into the same system.

In conclusion, these missions in Afghanistan demonstrate the diversity, adaptability and how fast the Corps can redevelop a capability that has not been used for decades. This is a reminder that lessons learnt from previous conflicts may one day be unexpectedly required, then developed and used again by the Corps in future conflicts.

Written by Terry James, DSM

Typical cache finds



Main charges, electrical wire, detonators, low metal pressure plates, ammunition, DK82, Det cord, Russian HMG parts etc.



Weapons, ammunition and magazines.



USA surveillance cameras, IED diagrams, rockets and ICOM radios.

Tip of the hat to our comrades in the Vietnam Veteran Tunnel Rats Association



Photo: Jim Marett, President of the VTRA, back in the day.

