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Last song and dance



Final cast Back LtoR John Lockley, Maint Briggs, Norm Heath, Dave Edgel, Jim Bessell, John Purchase
Front LtoR Linda Kean, Jean Walsh, Trish Davis, Rosemary Stewart, Lenore Greive, Elaine Mullen



It's with great sadness that after 25 years of performances the much-loved Merriwa Mudlarks sang their last song and left the stage in October.

At the Mudlarks' AGM in March 2023, the performers proudly marked their 25th anniversary of continuous performances to their fellow residents at RAAFA's popular Merriwa Estate.

Mudlark president, John Purchase said, "we are proud of this achievement but were worried about the future. We only have 16 members left with an average

age in their 80s and a lack of new recruits. So sadly, we decided that in our 25th year, we had to do one last show, even if we had to invite additional performers and acts to help us out."

The Mudlarks started in March 1998, about four years after the first residents moved into Merriwa Estate. Records show that the exuberant group soon took over the bi-monthly Bowling Club sausage sizzles, with their entertaining shows attracting large audiences of up to 280 people.

Then in 2002 it was decided to restrict the shows to a more

manageable audience of 250 people, but on the first day of ticket sales, requests exceeded 500. Not wanting to disappoint, this resulted in an increase in the number of shows to three performances of three shows every year.

Gradually, over the next 10 years, attendance numbers reduced to cater for two shows of two performances. When COVID hit, everything changed and for the first time shows were cancelled.

The final show was held on 30 October and was naturally a very emotional event for the performers, and the audience alike. All the

performers have thoroughly enjoyed not only the opportunity to perform but also the chance to be creative, learn new skills and make strong friendships over countless hours of rehearsals. And let's not forget all of the people who have worked tirelessly behind the scenes. There are too many to list so a big thank you to everyone.

John said that the only thing left to do after the final cleanup and storage of 25 years of memories, costumes and props was to drink a toast to all those who had exuberantly 'trod the boards' for all those years.

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PURPOSE

Pursuing excellence in care and heritage

VALUES

Respect; Care; Honesty

APPROACH

Creating RAAFA communities open to all

President's view



By Clive Robartson AM

Annual Report

Transitioning to the Future is the theme on the cover of our recently published 2022-2023 Annual Report and aptly conveys the activities of the Association over the past 12 months and our plans for the year ahead.

If you have not had a chance to read the Annual Report, it is available online via our website or if you prefer a paper version, please drop into your local estate,

facility or Central Support Office and pick up a copy.

AGM

I sincerely thank the members who were able to come along to the Annual General Meeting in October. It was well attended, and provided an opportunity to ask questions relating to the reports that were presented.

I believe all the questions raised were adequately answered, however since the AGM, I have been asked for a more detailed response to a question relating to the Aviation Heritage Museum advisory group. The work carried out by this advisory group has been completed and we are waiting to receive their detailed report. Once this is finalised, we will be in a better position to advise interested members on their recommendations about the way forward for the Museum.

The five Division Council positions open for nomination were filled unopposed and I extend my congratulations.

Vice President - Pat Hall
Secretary - Norm Waldie

Division Councillor - Brett Dowsing
Division Councillor - Charles Page
Division Councillor - Robert Stewart

Life Membership

With International Volunteers Day on 5 December, it is an ideal opportunity to acknowledge our two amazing volunteers who have recently been awarded life membership. Congratulations to Pat Hassett and Margaret Cunningham for their dedication and loyal service to the community at Cambrai Village and Erskine Grove respectively.

RAAFA's ARVL program

I am pleased to announce that we have recently received a significant grant from the Western Australian Government, ANZAC Day Trust, being a share of \$1.6M made available to Ex-Service Organisations, to further fund our Andrew Russell Veterans Living (ARVL) program. These funds will contribute to the operation and nationally significant research of the program.

I wish to congratulate everyone for their ongoing hard work and

support for ARVL including the ongoing donations from branches and members.

I recently attended a joint meeting of the AFA National Board and the Federation Council with Michelle Fyfe to report on our ARVL and Transition Mates initiatives. There was unanimous support by the Board and Council for these projects.

Anniversaries

Congratulations to the retirement living villages that have reached significant milestone anniversaries. Erskine Grove celebrated their 20th anniversary and Meadow Springs Estate their 25th anniversary. These are three very different estates that have thrived, and the creation of warm and welcoming communities is a direct reflection of the team and volunteers who work tirelessly together. Congratulations.

As 2023 draws to a close and we look with anticipation to the New Year, I take this opportunity to wish you all a loving and peaceful Christmas. Enjoy the festive season, take care and stay safe.

A generous gift

Erskine Grove residents continued their 20th birthday celebrations during October, with a special anniversary event that included drinks in the courtyard followed by a formal dinner with 130 guests.

The night included the presentation of a \$2000 cheque from the Erskine Grove residents' branch to RAAFA's Andrew Russell Veterans Living (ARVL) program.

Erskine's branch committee's immediate past president, David Lloyd, presented the cheque to President Clive Robartson and CEO, Michelle Fyfe, which was pronounced a birthday gift from everyone at the estate.

"2023 is a year of celebration at Erskine Grove, a milestone of 20 years since the opening of our village," said David.

"We are all incredibly grateful to have a safe, secure and supportive place to spend our latter years and we are also aware that Erskine Grove has many veterans.

"Indeed, RAAFA was born out of supporting veterans back in 1929, and it is our members' wish to show support for those who have served our country by offering this birthday gift.

"As such, this donation is a gift to RAAFA's ARVL program, to celebrate our anniversary and to acknowledge and support the work of RAAFA in advocating and supporting veterans who should also have a safe, secure and supportive place to live and recover."

Huge congratulations to everyone at Erskine Grove on their very special 20-year milestone, and thank you for their generosity.



LtOr David Lloyd, Michelle Fyfe and Clive Robartson

Involvement is key to community

Just like her husband Bob, Cambrai Village resident Yvonne Cotton is always happy to roll up her sleeves and lend a helping hand.

The octogenarian, who hails from England, is the coordinator for the Community Hall at the village, a busy voluntary role that sees her overseeing the calendar for activities, which take place six days a week.

On top of that she is on the social committee - which is very active throughout the year - and is also a member of the branch committee and an active member of the band of volunteers who help to organise the annual fete.

"I do it because I enjoy it very much and really think that you get what you give and to me it's very rewarding," says Yvonne, who is a mum to four and grandmother to six.

"I like being busy. I play darts as well as lawn bowls and I love my Scottish dancing, plus Bob and I have lots of interests

outside the estate too, so we are always on the go.

"I think if you want a cohesive and vibrant community, like we have at RAAFA's Cambrai Village, it really helps to get involved. Bob and I both think the same way in terms of staying active, rolling up our sleeves and contributing."



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**5 January for February / March
8 March for April / May
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Please email articles to **airmail@raafawa.org.au** (preferred) or post to **Julie Stearne, 18 Bowman Street, South Perth WA 6151.**

Message from the CEO



By Michelle Fyfe

It is difficult to believe, but we are once again reaching the end of the year and I would like to offer the season's greetings and my very warm wishes to all of the RAAFA family.

For many people, this time of year is centred around friends and loved ones and is, without doubt, a happy and joyous time. But for any members of our community who are not surrounded by family, I want

to reassure you that you are most certainly surrounded by friends within our RAAFA villages and our residential care facilities.

On that note, I encourage people to please reach out to your neighbours and check that they are doing okay during this often very busy time of year, which can be difficult for some.

At the same time, I would also encourage people to keep safety top of mind as we enter the festive season, and to be mindful of safety on the roads in particular. We want everyone to have a happy Christmas, and also a safe one.

Without question, 2023 has been a very busy and successful year for RAAFA and, as we move into 2024, we are looking forward to new challenges and changes. We will see these most especially in our residential care facilities, where we will be embracing new government structures and compliance regimes, all of which are focused on safety and security for our residents.

Indeed, as many of you will know, we have been through a robust accreditation process this year and

have received amazing results. All of our residential care facilities are rated four-star, which is something to be very proud of indeed.

As such, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone who works within RAAFA's residential care area, not only our amazing nurses and carers, but also our therapy teams, domestic staff, maintenance and administration team and absolutely everyone who has been involved in helping to make our aged care facilities the incredible homes that they are.

In addition, I would like to offer my heartfelt thanks to everyone who has supported the important work of RAAFA during the year, and especially our devoted staff and incredible volunteers, for their commitment, dedication and passion for our organisation.

In closing, enjoy this festive edition of Air Mail and have a safe and happy Christmas and New Year break.

I very much look forward to seeing and working with you in 2024.

Coming soon

Keep your eyes peeled as we roll out information about our new sustainability grant and the resulting developments in charging stations for electric vehicles.

We're working hard to prepare a comprehensive what, why, where, when and how, and will be sharing more with you soon in the coming months.

Stay tuned!



Departing on a high

Anyone who knows RAAFA's Ian Craig, Head of Clear Skies, will agree that he doesn't seem the retiring type.

But, at 68 years of age, Ian has decided to end full-time work as he has known it throughout his long career, with his last day in the office scheduled for 22 December.

And although he's made the decision, Ian admits that he has a long list of things he wants to achieve in his next life chapter, so putting his feet up is not going to be an option.

"I've a mountain of things I want to do, so it's a case of working out where to start," says the father of three and grandfather to five.

"I really want to spend more time with my wife, Felicity, and we want to do some travelling throughout Australia in the Mazda MX5 sports car that I've been restoring.

Ian is looking forward to spending more quality time with family, particularly the grandkids, and as he puts it, "basically do what I've always dreamt of, which is being an adventurous, fun grandfather."

Recently, having downsized their home, Ian says, "there's also a large project I'm keen to work on and I'm planning to take a carpentry and bricklaying course to get it underway."

Ian, who has worked in the not-for-

profit sector for over 25 years, says both his life and career trajectory changed forever when his third child, Riley, was born with a life-threatening congenital heart issue. As a result, he went on to become the president of a charity called Heart Kids, while also embarking into the not-for-profit sector, at Anglicare WA.

"I learned very quickly that one of the greatest joys in life is serving others and the community," says Ian.

"And although I've worked in not-for-profit for over two decades, the highlight of my career, without doubt, has been my time with RAAFA."

Ian joined the organisation in 2018 establishing programs aimed at furthering RAAFA's purpose of Pursuing Excellence in Care and Heritage. "My role has really been focused on re-establishing RAAFA's place within the ex-service community and reinvigorating and emphasising our Aviation Heritage Museum, as well as our membership and branch network.

"With the support of a fantastic team, I've been able to find my place. From working with ex-defence personnel and their families, through to passionate museum volunteers, our fabulous residents and the many RAAFA members, there have been amazing people at every step of the way."



"I have felt a sense of being part of something far greater than myself as well as belonging within the RAAFA family. The role has been pure joy, and I'm very thankful that my career has ended on such a high with the best job I've ever been fortunate enough to have had. I am beyond thankful."

CEO Michelle Fyfe paid tribute to Ian, saying, "Ian has been a 'force of nature' for RAAFA and has achieved many great things for our organisation. I can only thank him for the wonderful support he has given me in my short time as CEO.

"Ian's family and growing brood of grandchildren now get his undivided attention, which is very sad for us but absolutely wonderful for Ian and his family." She added, "Ian has

been such a passionate advocate for RAAFA and he will be sorely missed by all of us."

In true Ian style, while being confident that the time is right for his retirement, he's still on the lookout for his next major challenge. "I go for a run every day, but I only have time to do around six kilometres before I need to head off for work," he explains. "So, after Christmas I'm looking forward to running more. In fact, I'd like to set myself the challenge of becoming a State cross-country champion.

"I reckon I'll probably be the only person in my age group, so my thinking is it won't be difficult to win," he laughs.

100 candles on the cake for Roma

▲ Alice Ross-King Care Centre resident, Roma Addison, celebrated her 100th birthday in November and insists that life is about doing what you enjoy.

Subiaco-born Roma attended Subiaco Primary School after which she says she had to go out and look for work given further education was out of the question for her in the 1930s.

But, when she was just 18 years old, the teenager made the decision to join the army and was sent to New South Wales where she was stationed for three and half years, working as a switchboard operator during WWII.

After being discharged at the end of the war, she went on to work as a saleswoman for various organisations, before marrying her husband Jock and going on to have a daughter, Kim, and a son, Mark,

who tragically died aged 21.

“I’ve lived a lot of years and have had an interesting life,” says Roma, who was the eldest of eight children.

“During my lifetime I loved dancing and went to the Embassy Ballroom every Friday night and to ANZAC house every Saturday evening. My daughter was also a very accomplished Highland dancer who won lots of competitions.

“And my son was a talented artist who won the West Australian under 16 art prize. I am very proud of both of them.”

As well as an avid dancer, Roma was also a keen golfer. And, serendipitously, it was Roma’s love of golf that led to her late husband and his friend Wally Joynes initiating fundraising events that were intended to establish a golf course in Bull Creek. As it turned out, the fundraising events were so

successful that the funds were donated to the AFME Nursing Home Building Fund instead, where she herself now calls home.

And when it comes to words of wisdom, having now reached her centenary, Roma says enjoying the small things in life is the most important thing.

“I must admit that I enjoyed drinking and smoking when I was younger. I just really got on with things and tried not to worry too much,” she says.

“Life goes quickly so just enjoy yourself and dance like no one is watching,” she laughs.

A very happy centenary to Roma, from all your friends at RAAFA and Alice Ross-King Care Centre.



It's beer o'clock at RAAFA

▲ One might say that Brad Hatfield, Manager, Hospitality Services, has headed up one of the more enviable projects at RAAFA in recent times.

Brad was tasked with developing and launching RAAFA’s brand-new draught and mid-strength beer, as well as a boutique cider, which has now been rolled out to RAAFA clubs.

And, as well as being tasked with this major responsibility, Brad also had no choice but to become the chief taste tester, so we have it on his very good authority that RAAFA’s beer and cider is not only

crisp and refreshing, it’s also high quality at a great price.

“We really wanted to put a bespoke beer and cider into our clubs at a competitive price, so we could give the benefits back to residents,” explains Brad, who in truth has worked on the project over six months with his dedicated team.

“We feel very fortunate to have worked with the team at the Indian Ocean Brewing Company, which is based in Mindarie. They really understood what we were trying to achieve from day one and we are very pleased with the end results.

“At the end of the day, the Indian

Ocean Brewing Company and RAAFA have a common purpose, to provide a consistent, quality range of products that will be accepted by patrons as great value beer that is locally made and locally owned.”

The RAAFA draught and mid-strength beer is now on tap and available at the clubs at AFME, Meadow Springs and Cambrai Village, in addition to a fresh and elegant RAAFA cider.

And, according to feedback, the range has been met with strong approval, as the following comments attest:

“It’s exciting to have a new taste and great to see the RAAFA name included,” says resident John Cannon.

“I’ve tried them all and they are excellent,” adds Judy Evans.

AFME resident Alan Guy adds: “I like the cider’s sharpness, it’s very refreshing and good in the mouth, although I must admit to preferring an English beer.”

And lastly: “The cider is surprisingly good,” concludes Hazel Love.

And so, if you haven’t yet tried the amber fluid that is a RAAFA beer or cider – why not give it a go? As the infamous Bavarian proverb goes: “A fine beer may be judged with only one sip, but it’s better to be thoroughly sure.” Alternatively, of course, you can take Brad’s word for it!



Annual Report available online

▲ To reduce RAAFA’s environmental footprint, we are pleased to advise that the 2022/23 Annual Report is now available electronically via our website at RAAFWA.org.au.

In an effort to become a more sustainable organisation we have printed fewer copies, thereby reducing waste, transport and costs.

Those who previously provided email addresses will be emailed a copy. If you would like your copy to be emailed in future, please contact membership@raafawa.org.au.

If you prefer paper, limited printed copies are available at your local estate office, residential care facility or at Central Support Office in South Perth, so please pop in and pick up your copy.



Keen to lend a helping hand

Merriwa Estate resident Norm Heath has been volunteering his time to help and support others for decades and, at 86 years young, reckons he's not going to stop any time soon.

"You get what you give in life don't you, and I really enjoy rolling up my sleeves and helping out," says the Scottish-born octogenarian who moved into the RAAFA estate back in 2021 because, in his words, 'it was the best value for money retirement estate to be found'.

Norm currently drives the estate's e-car every month and also delivers lunches to fellow residents once a fortnight, has been an active

member of the estate's popular entertainers, the Mudlarks and the beloved Merriwa Maintenance Men, known as the 3Ms.

"I've volunteered for a myriad of different things since I retired over 20 years ago," says Norm, who is a marine engineer by trade and spent five years in the Merchant Navy.

"I lived in Tasmania for a couple of decades and volunteered for the army reserves there for about 14 years," he explains.

"And then when I moved over to Perth I got involved on the tall ship, The Leeuwin, where I was a relief engineer, and then I volunteered

for the Maritime Museum in Fremantle where I trained to be a museum guide.

"I'm always happy to volunteer and help out where I can. I think that's really what makes for a great community, which we certainly have here at RAAFAs Merriwa Estate."



Recognising the importance of volunteers

International Volunteer Day is a perfect reminder that volunteering is not only rewarding but can also provide a great sense of fulfilment and gratification.

And nowhere were these messages heard more loudly than at the sixth annual Town Team Convergence which took place at Joondalup in October, and saw Erskine Grove's estate manager, Caroline Henning, give a heartfelt presentation together with resident and previous Division Councillor, Denise Nicolay.

With the theme Make It Happen, the event focused on community-building and the benefits that have the potential to flow as a result.

"We are very fortunate to have so many committed and dedicated volunteers who are always willing to go the extra mile for our residents and initiatives like the Town Team event and also International Volunteer Day gives us a wonderful opportunity to recognise them," says Caroline.

"At RAAFA, we're always focused on people and communities. Our philosophy is that community is

all about people and we genuinely care about our residents. In fact, I regularly see our volunteer community leaders engaging with residents, encouraging them to get out of their homes and their comfort zones, and ultimately having an invaluable, positive impact on the well-being of our community.

"In fact, of our 265 residents, of which the average age is 81 years old, around 100 have completed a volunteer job around the village in the past 12 months.

"This also creates strong relationships, which are so important to people's lives, and we know that having passionate volunteers brings a sense of 'togetherness' and makes a significant contribution to the quality of life of those who choose to call our community home."

One resident at Erskine who has forged a reputation for always putting his hand up to help is Alex King, who moved into the popular estate with his wife Marlene back in June 2021.

"When we arrived, there were quite a few vacancies for drivers and having a Heavy Rigid (HR) vehicle licence at the time, I put my hand up and have been a Grover and bus driver at the village ever since. For me I wanted to stay active and not just sit at home reading the paper. Meeting new people and having a chinwag is all good fun."

At the same time as Alex is volunteering his driving services, wife Marlene is also lending a helping hand. She is involved with the village's partnership with Baldivis Secondary College - a special project to provide intergenerational support to the students of parents in the Navy, many of whom come from interstate and don't have any extended family close by. Not only that, but she is also responsible for keeping supplies in the community area ready for use for group activities.

"We're glad we can both be useful," says Marlene. "Neither of us just wants to stagnate, volunteering keeps us active, and we love what we do."



LtoR Denise Nicolay, Marlene and Alex King

These sentiments are echoed by Denise Nicolay, who has been heavily involved with Erskine's anniversary celebrations.

"I don't think of what I do in the village as volunteering," she says. "Rather just being a contributing RAAFA member and a good citizen, working with friends and neighbours to be a part of an active and great community."

AFME's bowling season starts with success

Over 65 club members from the Bull Creek AFA bowling club attended the lunch which heralded the start of the season's new bowling tournament in September.

"Opening day was most definitely a roaring success," says club president Pat Love.

"It was wonderful to see so many residents attend the lunch and had special guest, member for Riverton, Dr Jagadish (Jags) Krishnan MLA."

Following lunch, Dr Jags was invited to roll the first bowl of the season, which was followed by a 'spider', which saw all members bowl just one ball towards the centre of the

green, with prizes dished out to those who bowled the closest.

"Last year we had 59 members play, and this year we are up to 96 so we're just so pleased," adds Pat, who admits that bowling is a great social activity and a fantastic way to meet people.

"I'd say that nine out of 10 people play to be social, and if we win it's just a bonus," he laughs. "It's all about getting out and about and enjoying the game."

"We play from Safety Bay, to Rossmoyne, and everywhere in between.

"Experienced bowlers find strong competition at our club and we all ultimately have a great time whenever we play."

If you're interested in giving bowling a red hot go, have a chat with Pat on nahapajo3@bigpond.com or 0418 929 688.

You too might become hooked on the game that is currently played by over 300,000 Australians.



Bill remembers

Although WWII is a distant memory for so many, Merriwa resident Bill Stanley has vivid memories of the war years as a young boy and a teenager.

91-year-old Bill, who has lived at RAAFAs Merriwa Estate for over 20 years, explains that when war broke out, his father, Thomas Charles Stanley, was in his early 40s.

“My dad joined the 2/28th Battalion which was formed in WA,” says Bill, who is himself the father of two daughters – Julia and Jennifer – and a son Gerard.

“He fought in Tobruk and also El Alamein in the western desert of Egypt, which became the scene of one of the major battles of WWII.

“My father went away in 1941 and was subsequently captured by the Germans and interned by the Italians, who sent him off to a prisoner of war camp in southern Italy.”

Bill explains that, while war news was suppressed back home in Perth, he vividly remembers standing by the side of his house in Osborne Park when a telegram was delivered explaining that his father was missing in action.

“Being young, I didn’t really understand what that meant and why my mother was so upset, but I remember again a few days later another telegram arriving, delivering the news that my father had been captured and was a prisoner of war.”

Bill recalls that, during the years he was imprisoned, his father wrote many letters which Bill still has, and which he treasures to this day.

“My father wrote about how the Italians were cruel to the prisoners and didn’t feed them, but later he was transferred to a working farm where he managed to escape and walk to Switzerland,” he says.

“He had to stay there for a couple of years until he could be repatriated back to Australia after the war ended.”

Fatefully, and also fortuitously, Bill’s father returned to the eastern states of Australia by ship, arriving back home in Perth on a steam train.

“I still remember the plumes of steam at the station as the train stopped, and then my dad stepping off the train.

“It’s funny the things you remember, he was a very musical man, and he brought home a mouth organ for me with six keys on it. Really, he should have never given it to me as I wrecked it, I wasn’t old enough to appreciate it, but I remember it vividly,” Bill laughs.

“And I still remember his conscription number, which was WX 7574, it really is funny how the memory works.”

Significantly, despite desperately wanting to join the army, Bill found himself in the position of either being too young or too old to join

up, by only two or three weeks.

“Some friends went in and were given a year of training in the eastern states, but that didn’t happen for me, much to my disappointment at the time,” he recalls.

“I ended up working for the Commonwealth Bank instead, where I stayed for over 40 years. I did everything, starting off by filling the ink wells and organising the blotters, managing the postage, working on the tellers and then interviewing the new £10 Poms so they could open up bank accounts. It was a far cry from army life.”

In addition to his father serving his country, Bill’s brother, who was born in 1922, joined the army at 18 years old, after which he was stationed at Rottnest Island. His sister also joined the signallers and later faced the tragedy of losing her boyfriend after he was shot on duty in the Egyptian desert.

And so, with so much family history of service, Bill says Remembrance Day has always been a special day.

“We always went to the parade at



Kings Park when I was younger, we always wanted to pay our respects,” he says.

“And the second 28th Regiment was always very close to our hearts, in fact relatives of that battalion continued to meet up for many years on ANZAC Day, for decades really.

“Remembering those who served and lost their lives has always been, and remains, so important. We should never forget.”

Life membership bestowed on ‘humble’ Margaret

Erskine Grove resident and long-term volunteer, Margaret Cunningham, was recognised at the estate’s 20th anniversary when she was bestowed RAAFA life membership.

Margaret, who moved into Erskine in August 2003 when only four or five people had moved into the estate, has been an incredible volunteer throughout that time, from cooking meals at events, driving the estate bus, supporting the Mavericks social group and making beautiful table decorations for functions, among many, many other things.

And although she is known as being extremely humble and shying away from any limelight, Margaret admits that she felt extremely privileged to be granted RAAFA life membership.

“I didn’t know anything about it, so I was really stunned when my name was called out and the CEO, Michelle, presented me with my certificate, followed by Clive

Robartson, who presented me with a pin,” says 85-year-old Margaret, who is considered a real ‘treasure’ on the estate.

“I just love what I do and I love giving back. I haven’t got time to stop and think about how volunteering benefits me, I just enjoy helping out and looking after people in my community.

“If I can do anything to help, I’m always keen to,” she adds. “I love being busy and helping to make people smile and enjoy life, I always have and I always will.”

Caroline Henning, Erskine’s estate manager, says Margaret is an incredibly giving and selfless individual who is a stalwart of the Erskine community.

“Margaret treats her volunteer work like a job, it gives her great satisfaction and a sense of purpose,” she says. “She takes great care in planning the menus, making sure



Margaret with her niece Susan

the meals are wholesome and on budget, and she also makes beautiful, themed table settings as well as supervising other volunteers who help with our events.

“Margaret, has always been a ‘giver’ during the 20 years she has lived on the estate. Quite simply she’s always

doing something to help others and she is truly deserving of RAAFA’s life membership.

“Over the years she has made an incredible difference to many people’s lives.”

Congratulations Margaret, from everyone at RAAFA.

Gordon Lodge residents remember

Like it is for so many of the RAAFA family, 11 November is an important date for the residents of AFME's Gordon Lodge, not only because they remember the war years vividly, but also because many of the nonagenarians and centenarians at the lodge were also in the services during the 1940s.

Residents like Teddy Dean, Beryl Ganfield and Kate Quan all served in the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF) in the 1940s, and also Mike Andrews, who served in the Australian Navy.

Kate and Beryl were both trained as cipher assistants, enabling them to decode messages, and Teddy, who joined the WAAAF while she was living in her home state of South Australia, served as a clerk at Victoria Barracks and then at Mount Gambier.



Teddy

says Teddy, who met her husband, staff pilot Tom Dean, while she was serving.

"My years serving in the WAAAF were really fulfilling and the camaraderie was very strong, I made many firm friends, some of whom I still have today,"

Sadly, my brother died as a prisoner of war at the hands of the Japanese while he was serving in Thailand, as a member of the Australian Army. He was only 20 years old at the time, but years later I was fortunate enough to visit his headstone."



Kate

For 97-year-old Kate, joining the services was a family affair, as five members of her immediate family served in WWII - all of whom survived.

"My sister was in the WAAAF and my brother served in New Guinea," explains Kate who, following the war, was sent to China for 18 months with the United Nations to undertake humanitarian work.



Beryl

And for 98-year-old Beryl, joining the WAAAF at 17 years old was an exciting prospect, particularly as her older sister had already joined up.

"My sister went on to be based in Victoria and I was hoping to serve outside WA myself, so you can imagine my disappointment when I got sent to Busselton and then on to Kalgoorlie," laughs Beryl, who was born in Gnowangerup, a town located 61 kilometres south-east of Katanning in the Great Southern.



Mike

98-year-old Mike, who is also a resident at Gordon Lodge, joined the Navy at 17 years old.

"I was on the ship HMAS Australia as a wireless

operator, and while I was on that ship no less than six Japanese suicide aircraft hit the ship between October 1944 and January 1945. Around 100 people were killed and 100 more were injured, though I worked down below deck which is probably how I survived," he explains.

"I also helped to cart the ammunition to the gun operators, and they would fire while I was next to them, I never had ear protection which is why I'm so hard of hearing now.

"One story from back then is that our damaged ship was sent to Sydney for repair, but there was

no room for it in the dock, so we had to sail to England in 1944 for it to be patched up. We went across the Pacific and stopped off in New York where we marched through the streets, and then we made it to London, where we also paraded through the city.

"We then had to leave our ship and board a vessel bound for Australia called The Suffolk, which was an English cruiser. The crew was made up of around half Australian and half British service men and when we finally made it to Fremantle, I got off and only had to walk 200 yards to my home on Queen Victoria Street. I'm sure there are not that many people who can say they've sailed around the world and then walked home."

Kate, Beryl, Teddy and Mike all attended the Remembrance Day service at Gordon Lodge on 11 November, in addition to many other residents.

It's important for us all to remember," says Teddy, who has been a resident at Gordon Lodge for over seven years.

"Remembrance Day is the day when we remember and acknowledge those who died while serving, not only during WWII, but in wars, conflicts and peacekeeping operations all around the world," adds Kate.

Congratulations Pat

When Cambrai Village resident Pat Hassett was awarded RAAFA life membership back in July, the infamous words of Theodore Roosevelt were quoted:

"Get action. Do things; be sane; don't fritter away your time; create, act, take a place wherever you are and be someone."

And everyone involved with Pat's award unanimously agreed that there was no better statement to epitomise her dedication, service and loyalty to Cambrai Village and its residents over the past 14 years.

Pat, who moved into the village back in 2009 with husband Laurie, is well-known for putting 'service before self' while never expecting or asking for praise.

Indeed, her work ethic and sense of community was evident almost immediately on her arrival at the village. Within a matter of months Pat was already serving as secretary on the residents' committee, a position she would hold for 11 years.

She was also the village's

representative on the West Australian Retirement Villages Association, a position she took seriously while religiously attending bimonthly meetings to provide comprehensive feedback to the committee, particularly around the upcoming changes to the legislation affecting retirement village operations and residents.

In 2021, Pat was appointed chairperson of the residents' committee and was instrumental in advocating and achieving the major refurbishment of the club rooms. In fact, her list of achievements is a long one - suffice to say that Pat is a 'doer', an unstoppable force who has the ability to get the job done - and done well.

Since being awarded life membership, many members of the village have passed on their congratulations, but how does Pat actually feel about the honour?

"I really did feel quite overwhelmed, honoured and quite stunned," says Pat, who was also appointed to the State Government's Advisory Committee on the development

of the freeway to Hester Avenue, and was instrumental in advocating for the safety and welfare of residents during the freeway extension project.

"I've never done things in life for acknowledgement, but I am always willing to speak for people who, for whatever reason, might not be able to speak for themselves.

"When I look at RAAFA and our community here at Cambrai, I feel an overwhelming desire to work for residents, and that is something I'm quite sure will stay with me and be my focus into the future."



A big congratulations to Pat from everyone at Cambrai Village and the wider RAAFA community.

Finding a relaxed lifestyle

■ Moving into Cambrai Village has facilitated a 'no worries', carefree lifestyle, according to new residents Margaret and Michael Gleeson.

"In fact, three weeks after we moved in, we went on a five-week road trip - we just locked up and left everything, which was fantastic," says 69-year-old Margaret, who was originally born in New South Wales.

"We went all over the country to see family and friends and we didn't have to worry about a thing, and that was such a change for us as we previously had a big house in Carramar that needed lots of maintenance.

"Actually, we're still getting used to the idea that we don't have to do things like organise termite inspections, get the gutters cleaned, mow the lawn, do the pool maintenance, or any of those jobs. You just ask and it gets done, and all the facilities like the pool

are included, so we don't have to maintain our own, we just love it."

Margaret says she knew of RAAFA's great reputation as a result of a friend living at Cambrai Village for many years. And following her and her husband's move to the estate, she has already encouraged two friends to put their name down for a home.

"It's not just about the house, which we are so pleased with as it's like a brand-new home and is just perfect. But for us it was also about freeing up the money we had in our previous home so that we could travel and do what we wanted.

"As well as our big trip, we've also been down to Margaret River and Esperance since moving in, and we have a month in France booked for next year. We can afford it now we've sold our big house, plus I definitely don't miss it; we were both getting tired of all of the cleaning and all the jobs.



"Now we've got much more time to spend doing the things we love, including spending time with our 10 grandchildren, all of whom live in Perth.

"I couldn't recommend Cambrai enough to anyone, we just love it here, it's been the best move we've made, there's definitely been no looking back."

Intergenerational partnership creating new friendships

■ An intergenerational partnership between youngsters at Sagewood Montessori Centre in Joondalup and seniors at RAAFA's Cambrai Village is resulting in some lovely friendships between children and residents, who are bonding over art and craft, storytelling and reading.

The innovative partnership sees residents from the popular retirement village, many of whom are septuagenarians and octogenarians, spend time together as they participate in a range of activities, including reading, colouring in, making bookmarks and singing songs.

Vanessa Priestley, Retirement Wellbeing officer, says Cambrai had partnered with the Montessori Centre for around 12 months, with the initiative contributing to the wellbeing of both children and seniors to create a unique atmosphere where the exchange of energy, enthusiasm and knowledge flows freely.

"These intergenerational programs are more than just heartwarming gatherings, they are powerful tools for building bridges between generations and our residents absolutely love having the opportunity to visit the children," she says.

"For our seniors, spending time with young people is a chance to reminisce back to when they were in school and to compare stories

about their own school days and interests.

"At the same time, the partnership is just as beneficial for the students themselves, because it's a chance for them to see our residents as individuals who are special and valuable in their own right, rather than just being 'older people'."

Two Cambrai residents who have visited the children on a couple of different occasions are Neil and Val Munt, who are both in their 80s.

"Our grandkids are all in their 30s and not showing any signs of producing children just yet," laughs Val.

"So having the opportunity to visit these gorgeous little kids was just delightful, it was such a lovely experience and we thoroughly enjoyed it.

"Last time we went, my husband Neil brought along an old dial-up phone, which to the children looked like a relic from a bygone era. Their fascination with what they saw as 'ancient' technology sparked lively conversations about how communication has evolved over the years.

"This wonderful example of sharing knowledge across generations brought smiles to all of us, and then we enjoyed a singalong and the children served us afternoon tea, which was just the icing on the cake."



Sandra Hasselt was another resident who attended the recent 'Book Week' visit, during which she contributed her own touch of magic to the day by bringing along finger puppets.

"The little ones really did watch in awe as we brought the charming little puppets to life, and together we sang 'Two Little Dickie Birds', which was such a lovely thing to do and I think created a beautiful memory for us all," she says.

Resident Shelley McGinn also visited the school during book week and said it was a lovely experience which saw her thoroughly entertained by the youngsters.

"It really was wonderful to see such dedicated staff who really are amazing teachers," she says. "The time we spent with the kids was a gorgeous experience and thoroughly enjoyable."

And, as readers might guess, these sentiments are all backed up by Vanessa.

"Older people can sometimes be deprived of spending time with the next generation if their own families can't visit very often, so seeing bright, friendly young faces is something everyone who attends from Cambrai really looks forward to," she says.

Contributing to the community

Shelley McGinn is very clear that she gets far more out of volunteering than what she actually puts in.

“Over time I’ve realised how important volunteering is to nurture my own mental health,” says the 74-year-old who moved into RAAFA’s Cambrai Village just over 12 months ago with her husband Patrick.

“My advice to anyone who might be feeling a bit lonely or bored is to find something that you love doing and offer to help. You can always try something and if it’s not for you just try something else! Volunteering is so rewarding and it makes you feel good.”

Shelley and husband Patrick started, and now coordinate, a new singing group at the village, which takes place every Wednesday at the clubroom, from 11.00am to 12noon.

“It all came about back in March when a country and western singer played at a sundowner. Patrick and I looked around the room and everyone was smiling and singing, and I said this is something we can do!

“So that gave us the impetus to get started, and at first we only had four people in the singing group, but now we have 17, which is just wonderful.

“It’s not a choir, and you certainly don’t have to be a great singer. It’s all about enjoying singing along, just as you would to the radio by yourself; music can always put a smile on your face and add a bit more joy into your week.”

Over the years, Shelley has become more involved with the not-for-profit organisation ‘Act, Belong, Commit’, WA’s longest running mental health promotion initiative, which encourages people to keep active, connect with others and do something meaningful.

“They refer to me as an unofficial ambassador as I’ve been involved for about 10 years and it’s a really great way to look after your mental health,” says Shelley.

“I’ve also had the pleasure of belonging to the Limelight Theatre in Wanneroo for 30 years and was president for seven years. The theatre partnered with Act, Belong,

Commit and so did Springhill Primary School, where I volunteer once a week.”

“It’s something I would love to introduce at Cambrai as well, and I’m currently looking into how that might happen.”

Always ready to roll up her sleeves and get involved, Shelley has also been invited to Sagewood Montessori Centre with other residents from the estate, where the group have spent time with the children from the early learning centre, including reading books to the youngsters and taking part in activities.

“We recently spent time with the children for book week, and we’re heading there again soon, this time for grandparents’ day,” adds Shelley.

“I absolutely love spending time with the children and jumped when I



got the chance to visit them again.

“Having said that, I’m up for most things when it comes to volunteering. Patrick and I have recently joined the social and activities committee which will give us even more opportunities to be an active part of our new community.

“Without doubt, Cambrai is a wonderful estate to move into, everyone is so friendly and there is so much to do. I’m very happy to get involved and contribute to our wonderful community however I can.”

Octogenarians celebrate Oktoberfest

Residents at Vivian Bullwinkel Lodge clinked their beer steins and sampled some traditional German foods while celebrating Oktoberfest recently.

While the German festival is normally associated with wine and beer halls filled with traditional lederhosen, RAAFA residents turned that stereotype on its head to prove that age is no barrier when it comes to enjoying an ice-cold German beer or two.

On the day, dozens of the lodge’s seniors enjoyed a trio of German sausages, including Bratwurst, Knackwurst and Debreziners, paired with a sauerkraut, scharfer senf (German mustard) and pretzels, all of which was washed down with German beer.

And as part of the celebrations, the care staff included a singalong which saw Bavarian music ring through the courtyard, followed by a German-themed quiz and even a German-themed dance performance, thanks to the team Michaela, Georgie and Louise who performed while everyone clapped and cheered along.

Genene Hewitt, Therapy Assistant, said the Oktoberfest celebrations were just one of many innovative lifestyle and cultural events that are regularly held at the Lodge.



“Our fantastic team here at the Lodge worked hard to make sure the celebratory event was a huge success,” says Genene. “And special thanks to our wonderful resident Peter Cox for dressing the part and helping me cook the sausages.

“Sometimes people have stereotypical views about what kind of activities elderly people living in residential care homes spend their time doing, but by bringing fun events such as Oktoberfest celebrations into our lodge, we ensure everyone continues to live enjoyable and enriched lives.

“We also have a number of residents who are originally from Germany, so they had the chance to relive some memories and share their own cultural experiences with others.

“It was such an impressive and enjoyable afternoon with everyone really enjoying the quiz afternoon too, we had a fabulous time.”

Seniors’ four-legged friends are paw-fect

For many of our residents, prior to moving into residential care, having a pet around the house was a normal part of life – which is why when three Siberian husky puppies visited Cambrai Villages residential care home, Vivian Bullwinkel Lodge, recently, they were such a hit.

The trio of happy hounds were visiting seniors at the lodge with their owner, Desiree, who is a volunteer with Animal Companions, a not-for-profit organisation that provides therapeutic visits with accredited dogs to people in residential care facilities, public and private hospitals, palliative care, treatment centres, schools and even universities.

Genene Hewitt, Therapy Assistant at the lodge, said the monthly visits were a fantastic source of companionship for our residents.

“Having pets around is all part of being in a natural living environment and having the Animal Companions dogs and puppies visit every month makes Vivian Bullwinkel Lodge feel more like home,” she explains.

“Our residents find the visits very relaxing; they love stroking the dogs and giving them treats, and the visits certainly increase interactivity with our residents who are living with dementia; the feedback we receive after the visits is always very positive.”

Statistics show that 85 per cent of people have owned a pet at some point in their lives, which makes it no surprise that animal interaction is a great source of therapy and well-being.

“Research also shows that animals improve the wellbeing of people, and this is one of the reasons why we thought it would be a very positive experience for our residents to receive visits from therapy dogs on a regular basis,” adds Genene.

“All of the dogs from Animal Companions are beautiful and our residents fall in love with them every time.”



Back to the beach

Seniors from Vivian Bullwinkle Lodge had the opportunity to feel the salty, sea air on their faces recently, thanks to lifestyle staff at the popular residential care home and two stalwart volunteers from Cambrai Village, Neil Munt and Maurice Bond.

Organised by the lodge's team of care companions, the trip to Yanchep Lagoon also saw the seniors take a trip down memory lane, as they reminisced about when they had visited in their younger years, often as teenagers or with their young children.

"It was wonderful to be able to take our residents out for a day in

the sunshine and we're extremely grateful to our wonderful bus drivers Neil and Maurice for helping us to make it all happen," says Therapy Assistant, Genene Hewitt.

"You could see the happiness on their faces, they all loved the trip, particularly being able to take in the beautiful view over the lagoon while enjoying morning tea.

"The outing was not only a great way for them all to get some vitamin D, the sensory and also very social experience was a fantastic way for those involved, many of whom are living with dementia, to relive some very happy memories of childhood and their younger years."



New computer group set to help

Concern about the number of people having their computers hacked and being scammed has spurred Cambrai Village resident, Bob Cotton, into action to help his community.

Bob is the new coordinator of the Cambrai computer group, which so far has 20 members, and will be focused on building the computer skills of those who attend, as well as increase their confidence and safety online.



"I'm getting increasingly concerned about the huge number of scams out there, in fact I have been caught out myself and that has made me want to help others," says Bob, a Londoner who immigrated to Australia with his wife, Yvonne, and their children back in 1973.

"Despite not having a background in IT, I've picked up a lot over the years in various jobs and am always keen to help people where I can, so starting the computer club seemed like a good way to do something constructive."

The computer club meets twice a month - on the first and third Wednesday, from 1.30pm to 3.30pm.

After extensive research, Bob has decided to use the Australian government's program, Be Connected, as the 'syllabi' for the meetings.

"Be Connected is focused on increasing the confidence, skills and online safety of older Australians, and empowering everyone to use the internet and everyday technology in our digital world," Bob explains.

"Whether people want to pick up skills or dive into a new topic, those who attend the classes will be able to learn something new as we work through the online resources that this government program provides free of charge.

"Hopefully it will help many become far more computer literate and in tune to identifying potential scams online."

With his commitment to others, it comes as no surprise that Bob is a long-term volunteer at Cambrai's friendly community. An electrician by trade, Bob has volunteered to test electrical equipment for the fete, as well as helping with the bus roster, organising drivers and also driving the shopping bus whenever needed.

Bob is also the commemoration officer for the estate's ANZAC and Remembrance Day events and is a branch committee member covering various portfolios.

"I've always wanted to help people out and I'm really happy that I'm still able to do so," says the 84-year-old.

"I picked up lots of computer skills when I did several courses at West Coast College many years ago, and that has helped me in good stead to continue learning over the years and now hopefully help others when it comes to safety online."

Anyone at Cambrai interested in attending or wanting to find out more, contact Bob via bobyvonnecotton@gmail.com. All are welcome.

Electric road runner transports in style

A brand-new e-car that has just been delivered to AFME will see residents being chauffeured around the popular estate in style.

The electric vehicle, which was delivered in October, is a step or two up from the previous golf buggies used to ferry residents to appointments and events - this one is enclosed to keep residents protected from the elements, and also has heating and air conditioning.

And after a competition to name the new set of wheels by AFME's buggy coordinator, Alan Guy, the brand spanking new e-car will be known as the RAAFA Clipper, courtesy of resident Jan Cook, who thought up the name whilst recalling the handy City Clipper bus service she regularly used when she worked in Perth.

"The batteries on our old buggy had been letting us down, so we were delighted to hear that, courtesy

of the 2023-24 capex budget, we would be getting a new vehicle," explains Alan, the dedicated volunteer coordinator of the buggy service for over two years.

"We're very thankful to Jan and everyone else who entered the competition to name her, it's a very welcome addition to our estate."

Penny John, estate manager, says everyone has been very happy to welcome the new e-car to the AFME.

"The biggest thing for us is that residents will be insulated from the elements, as well as having many new features including a maintenance-free battery, windscreen wipers and lockable doors," she says.

"At the time of writing it's only just been delivered, but we really feel that all of our residents will love their new vehicle and enjoy travelling around the estate in style."



LtoR Alan Guy and Penny John

Club Bites

Proof of membership may be required when using facilities. Please have your card available. Non-members are required to be signed in by a member. Want to join? Applications and details available on our website.

MEADOW SPRINGS CLUB 9582 5375

All bookings for lunch or dinner can be made at the bar.

Weekly specials

Monday, carvery corner - 2 course, choice of 2 roasts \$19.50
Tuesday, tapas - choice of 3 tapas \$18.00
Wednesday, club night - meals from \$15.00, chase the ace, bingo and horse racing
Thursday, happy hour, 4.00pm to 6.00pm
Friday, special day - main meal with glass of house wine or midday \$19.50

Christmas trading

Closed 23 December to 2 January inclusive
Function facilities available to all RAAFA members for hire. Includes Beaufort Restaurant, recently refurbished Sports Bar and Middleton Hall, which include a fully integrated AV system, dance floor, cash bar and commercial kitchen ready to cater for any special event. For more information or to book, contact the Club.



BULL CREEK CLUB 9311 4460

Open for light breakfast and lunch Monday to Friday and dinner every Friday. Check Club for details.

Weekly specials

Monday to Friday, light breakfast 9.00am to 10.00am
Tuesday, fish and chips \$18.00
Monday and Wednesday, happy hour 4.00pm

Christmas trading

Closed 23 December to 2 January inclusive



CAMBRAI CLUB 9304 5400

Check out the fresh new look.

Weekly specials

Tuesday, darts and happy hour, 4.00pm
2nd Tuesday, parmi night, \$15.00. Bookings essential
Wednesday, morning tea, \$6.00 coffee and cake from 10.00am
1st and 3rd Wednesday, roast dinner \$24.00. Happy hour from 4.00pm. Bookings essential
2nd and 4th Wednesday, carvery \$25.00. Happy hour from 4.00pm
Friday, lunch from 11.30am, no booking necessary
1st and 3rd Friday, sundowner and happy hour from 5.00pm

Christmas trading

Closed 21 December to 8 January inclusive



MERRIWA CLUB 9400 3640

Blue Gum Café

Pop down for one of our daily specials or sample something off the menu. Now open Wednesday 11.00am to 2.00pm and Thursday 10.00am to 2.00pm.

Weekly specials

Wednesday, roast lunch \$16.00
Wednesday, happy hour 4.00pm
Thursday, morning tea from 10.00am
Thursday, lunch specials \$16.00

Events

2nd Monday, 2.00pm to 3.00pm Devonshire afternoon tea
1st and 3rd Tuesday, club night \$16.00 parmi or pasta. Includes beverage (bookings essential)
2nd and 4th Friday, bistro night (bookings essential)
3rd Saturday, sundowner bar opens 4.00pm

Christmas trading

Closed 22 December to 8 January inclusive



RAAFA Wellbeing Team

CAMBRAI VILLAGE

Vanessa Priestley
9304 5280

RAAFA ESTATE MERRIWA

Jenett Bayman
9400 3778

AFME

Jo Oliver
9311 4562

ERSKINE GROVE

Angeline Carleton
9586 4309

RAAFA ESTATE MEADOW SPRINGS

Mischa Matthews
9582 5369

RAAFA AMITY VILLAGE ALBANY

Ceridwen Fitzpatrick
9841 8311

Meadow Springs

Southern Quilters

The group has been busy making cuddle cushions for local charity 'The Foster Share Shed', a volunteer resource centre that provides donated items to carers and children in care. The ladies decided that a nice snuggly cushion would be a lovely keepsake for foster children as they are good for all ages and can be taken with them wherever they go for comfort.

Share the Dignity

Staff and residents partnered with Share the Dignity and Bunnings to collect donations for their It's in the Bag Christmas appeal.



Amity Village

Your driving future

RAC's community education team came along to share information about changing road rules, road conditions, and technology and safety concerns for older drivers. Those who attended said it was extremely informative and information booklets are available from the Wellbeing office.



Erskine Grove

Proud Mary

Anyone for a cruise? With itineraries including the Barossa Valley or amazing Kangaroo Island, residents enjoyed a presentation of the highlights over complimentary wine and cheese.

Chair yoga

Come down and enjoy one of our fabulous session on Mondays in the club house at 10.30am.



Intergenerational crafts

You could have heard a pin drop as students from Baldivis Secondary College joined with residents creating artwork for the estate's Remembrance Day ceremony. Another great intergenerational activity.



Cambrai Village

Expo

Highlighting the various self-interest groups, activities and volunteer groups available on the village. The day was filled with excitement and unity, showcasing opportunities to gather, learn and grow together as a close-knit Cambrai family.

