



ANZAC DAY & DAWN SERVICE 2023 WATSONIA VICTORIA

25 April 2023

Waking up at 3.30 am is not good for the body at the best of times, yet for some strange, I felt it was going to be a great day if I was able to capture the moment and seize the day before the sun rose to illuminate everything on its journey across the heavens. At 4.30 a.m., I walked across the road to the Watsonia RSL with a warm cup of coffee to reduce the chill in the air and warm the cockles of my heart.

As I made my way across the car park dividing us, I observed the headlights of one vehicle being parked, while the RSL community bus rolling up with the driver sauntering into the RSL for a cup of coffee. The first thing I noticed is the large TAB sign on the wall of the RSL, and I frowned that it had come to this. A sign of the times when corporations and interested players influence RSL board decisions. I wondered at whose expense, the veterans, service individuals, serving members, or the public.

Whatever the case may be, it is what it is, and we mere mortals can but keep our thoughts to ourselves as life continues changing at a pace that at times is beyond our comprehension. The roar of a motorcycle was heard at the roundabout, and a vehicle drove passed, stopping momentarily at the pedestrian sign. I observe solitary figures approaching the RSL entrance and some activity in setting up in preparation for the Dawn service.

Adrian Hook, the radio technician, arrived on the scene to set up the communications for the day service. The roar of the motor cycle continued in the distance, skirting the roundabout about 40 metres to the East, followed by the odd vehicle making its way towards the South along Watsonia Road. Dennis Gambrellis, the Vice President of 96.5 Inner FM, is operating out of the Warringal Shopping Centre at Heidelberg. (Dennis's ancestors came from the island of Kos in Greece) Dennis was operating all the communications.

George Krupinski, a presenter of the same radio station, has come along to observe the proceedings. George is an ex National serviceman officer who served with 5/7 RAR. I chatted with George for a while, sharing information from a bygone era, and it was interesting to note that as we age how one mellows with time. Throngs of people begin to arrive, many with their wives and partners sporting their medals proudly on their chest. Three buses pulled up and parked in front of the RSL, lights, flashing, idling their engines in preparation to advance to their destination. In observing this, I am reminded of the custom of wearing "rosemary" and not the red poppy on ANZAC Day. The poppy is for Remembrance Day in November.

A young lass in uniform arrives with her mother. The young lady is a member of 39 Army Cadet Unit. I noticed the presence of an elderly cadet officer in uniform in support, and it was pleasing to note a new generation taking an interest. At 4.55 a.m., the buses decided it was time to move off, one after the other. It was a bit nippy but not unpleasant. Scarves, overcoats, and warm clothing keep the cold of dawn at bay. I am wearing my Spartan jacket over my warm t-shirt with a collar. This keeps the warmth in and the cold at bay.

The radio station plays magnificent background music, which I am advised is ADAGIO in G minor, followed by an introduction by the President of the Heidelberg radio station. A wonderful introduction to those beginning to arrive. After a while, music began to be beamed from a huge screen located at one end of the RSL. After taking brief notes, I bade farewell to George and returned home for a quick bite to eat and to the warmth of home. Our home is a mere 75 paces directly across from the RSL, giving us a prime view of the ANZAC Day proceedings.

At 5.59 a.m., I returned back to the RSL for the dawn service. At 6.00 a.m., the bag pipes began to play, followed by the president opening the ANZAC Day service for 2023. His introduction was followed by the Lord's prayer. Colin Brooks, the local State member and Minister, was next cab up the rank, reminding all those present of Gallipoli and of what the nation suffered as a result of those who paid the ultimate sacrifice. Colin Brooks spoke of Gallipoli and in doing so, went through the various generations and described each generations service to the nation. He described the various conflicts and Australia's contribution to world peace. Another presenter gave an interesting outline of all the conflicts that Australia had been involved in and thanked veterans who had served.

Bill Wyndham, the President of the Watsonia RSL, a veteran himself spoke of Kemal Ataturk (Past Turkish President), who is alleged to have spoken the immortal words dedicated to those who fought at Gallipoli. Unfortunately, history has demonstrated that those fine and passionate words were not uttered by Kemal Ataturk but have somehow been constantly repeated over the years and became part of the ANZAC legend. In the East, the colours of Dawn were slowly rising from its slumber, navigating across the roof tops in the distance, illuminating everything in its path. One could see the crowd of people that had come to service, and it was a wonder to behold.

In my 30 years of coming to the Watsonia RSL for the Dawn service, this was by far the most numerous that I had ever witnessed. I looked at all the faces trying to identify someone from my youth, but sad to say, as always, there was no one that I knew, for many were patrolling the stars above. The President spoke again, and there was utter silence. It was the ODE being read out, followed by the last post and a minute's silence. During this brief silence, my thoughts went to mates in hospital, those ill, those far from home, those alone, those at other RSL gatherings, of families who had lost loved ones and of mates since gone onto another field of play.

My thoughts were interrupted by a bugle sound that signalled for the time honoured one minutes silence. Thoughts of goodwill for all mankind and of mates long gone meandered through my brain. Apart from the odd magpies' melodious songs in the distance, the silence was pure gold and while looking up into the East, I could see that the sun's rays begin to strike the heavens and heralding the arrival of a new day. The next bugle call brought the silence to an end and the beginning of another year of hope. In the end, the New Zealand and Australian national anthems were played, a fitting tribute to the fallen.

As the minutes ticked by, the sun's rays began to reach us mere mortals below and I saw that the crowd had swelled considerably over the space of some thirty minutes. They had come from all over the place in their dribs and drabs; the young, the old, families and veterans congregating in the car park and using it as a parade ground for visitors and passer by alike. On reflection, I would say that over 1500 people had arrived to attend the ANZAC Day Dawn service, followed by Gunfire Breakfast at a small cost of \$5.00 per head. A far cry from the Gunfire breakfasts held by that indomitable and much-loved character of Bruce Ruxton. Those were great days, a time when many from all walks of life would stroll to his office to attend the Gunfire Breakfast.

I must add that I was chuffed to be a part of Today's Dawn Service and very pleased to see so many people of all ages attending. The ANZAC spirit is alive and well. Later in the day, there will be a March past by veterans and their families as a final tribute to Australia's contribution to world peace.

MARCH PAST.

The Watsonia RSL March past later in the morning attracted over 2000 people. It was a great scene to watch the ceremony and see the numerous people come to observe ANZAC Day. The Greensborough and the Montmorency RSL Branches according to reliable sources indicated that they too had an excellent turnout. It appears that in the North of Melbourne, Watsonia, Greensborough, Montmorency, Bundoora and Eltham are hubs for retired veterans.

ABSENT FRIENDS.

My very good friend, neighbour, and magnificent supporter of the Watsonia RSL, Margaret Jorgensen, was missing today. Margaret is always in attendance, and her absence was of concern. I checked with Sue, her daughter, who had attended the ANZAC ceremony, who advised me that her mother had a fall and was in rehabilitation. I wish Margaret a speedy recovery and hope she returns home as strong as ever.

My mind takes another turn towards mates now long since passed, far too numerous to name. Men and women of my youth, who strode this earth confident that their service is not to be forgotten. They too had dreams, things to do, places to visit and to create an environment they could call home. The loved ones left behind silently carry the torch of Remembrance and often you see them wearing the medals of those since gone, or maybe a poppy or a simple twig of rosemary.

ANZAC DAY IN PELLANA LACONIA GREECE.

On ANZAC Day in Pellana where the HANZAC Memorial (Hellenic ANZAC) stands, unbeknown to me, a lone figure placed a wreath at the memorial on our behalf. It was my cousin Kostas Mihalopoulos, the Memorial Maintenance Manager who remembered that we in Australia and New Zealand paid tribute to fallen comrades.

I have also added recent images of the HANZAC Memorial taken through the lens of the security cameras surrounding it. From a personal point of view, I am pleased to see that the memorial will endure long after we have gone. I see a bright future for the HANZAC Memorial as more people become aware of its existence. Over the next few years, God willing, the HANZAC Memorial will be further developed and become home to the spirits of all nations seeking a place where they can meet in peace and tranquillity. Foes no more.



HISTORICAL ANZAC MEMORIES.

The links below will only be accessed if the reader has a Facebook/Meta profile.

ANZAC DAY 2015 - WE ARE NOT AFRAID

https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=10231200199970953&id=1311834970&mibextid=Nif5oz

HANZAC IN THE BEGINNING 2017

<https://fb.watch/k9zpeHezal/?mibextid=Nif5oz>

[https://m](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=10229818026177472&id=1311834970&mibextid=Nif5oz) HANZAC LIONS OF PELLANA 2022

[.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=10229818026177472&id=1311834970&mibextid=Nif5oz](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=10229818026177472&id=1311834970&mibextid=Nif5oz)

ANZAC DAY 2022 - WATSONIA VICTORIA

https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=10231200190810724&id=1311834970&mibextid=Nif5oz

AN ANZAC STORY 2023

https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=10231078268562744&id=1311834970&mibextid=Nif5oz

As always, be of good cheer, never give up, and always fight the good fight. This article is dedicated to past, present and future generations. Let us not forget.

Peter Adamis is a writer, freelance journalist and a retired Australian veteran. He holds a Bachelor of Adult Learning and Development and a post-graduate degree in Environmental Occupational Health and Safety.



