



South Australian Division

President's Report to SA Division Council 21st of June 2021.

Meetings and Functions. Moonta visit, dressing of graves etc, 18-20th May; Dinner with Royal Society of St George 20th; Mitcham branch meeting 21st; visit with Greg Weller to Tim Thomson, sculptor 25th; Aboriginal Veterans' Commemorative Service 28th; Mitcham Committee 28th pm; meeting with CESM President re MOU 31st; Mitcham awards panel 2nd of June; Bomber Command Commemoration 5th, am, Dinner pm; Executive meeting re DEW documents and CESM MOU 7th; AF 2021 teleconference 9th; DEW Tenants' meeting 11th; Air Force Cadets 80th Anniversary party 12th; visit to Ron Biddell to present Distinguished Service Award 13th; Port Pirie Commemoration 16th; Mitcham branch meeting 18th.

Our three days with Robyn and Ned Knight in Moonta were very interesting. The four cemeteries at Paskerville, **Moonta**, Kadina and Wallaroo all had ceremonies "**dressing the (9 or 10) graves**" that had been nominated by families, who attended. Local school children sang at intervals and presented posies and citations. RAAF grave sites were marked with flags, the Ode was recited and a brief summary of the RAAF's 100 years and of Williams' importance were read. His framed photo was seen at the memorial to his parents. The community was clearly very involved; subsequently local newspapers provided great publicity. Some of the graveside stories were remarkable; others harrowing.

We returned before the last two days of Kernewek Lowander to attend a formal dinner, attended by the Governor and Mrs Le, at SACA for "Presidents of Royal associations", apparently an annual, rather "British", event. **The Royal Society of St George**, this years' host, does know that we have dropped the "R". James Muecke AM, ophthalmologist, addressed us on the evils of sugar. We sang "Land of Hope and Glory" and Gustav Holst's "I vow to thee my Country".

The **Aboriginal Veterans' Commemorative Service** on the 28th of May was another splendid event. FLLT Steve Warrior gave an excellent keynote address in recognition of the RAAF Centenary. By chance a visitor from AFA WA, Ian Craig attended the ceremony. He had been visiting Nathan Klinge to learn more about the Andrew Russell Living Centre run by RSL Care SA. WA is planning to provide a similar centre for homeless veterans; and the AFA Foundation may



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have an ideal project on which it might be promoted. Ian was most impressed with the indigenous service and with those whom he met.

Mitcham continues to have branch meetings with guest speakers but is considering its future as numbers attending are down to 20 or thereabouts. Its **Awards** Panel has recommended a member for a Certificate of Merit, requiring Division and National approval, and a Distinguished Service Award, for Division approval. Mitcham has also recommended branch Certificates of Appreciation to two members. Your executive has subsequently recommended a Life Membership and a further Distinguished Award. These are to be discussed later in the meeting, together with the National O'Connor and Michael Awards.

I was disappointed that an acute respiratory infection (COVID -ve) prevented my full participation in the **Bomber Command** Commemoration and enjoying the refreshments that followed. Greg and the RAAF members are to be commended for an excellent event. I have written to Air Commodore Bender to thank him and his team. Annette has also written to thank named individuals who helped the CESM significantly. Getting five Bomber Command veterans to the service, and naming in the booklet all SA's surviving twelve, was wonderful.

Our visit to **Sculptor Tim Thomson** in the hills was revealing and reassuring. Robyn Knight, just released from hospital, and her husband Ned also visited. Greg's photos of the clay Sir Richard have appeared on Facebook and sent to AFA National. Many have expressed approval and enthusiasm.

CESM MOU, DEW tenancy and Veterans SA discussions. Annette and I made updates to the MOU between the CESM and AFA on Monday the 31st. The following week members of the executive amended it in a few places. It is for discussion, and hopefully for endorsement, today. At that second meeting we discussed matters concerning our Lease agreement from 2003 and two documents from DEW to be put up for approval

At the **Parade Ground Tenant Management Committee** meeting on Friday the 11th it was agreed that the documents are out of date and neither currently relevant nor helpful. Policy, operations, responsibility and authority are jumbled. The Minister allegedly to be referred matters is described as the Minister for Administrative Services, which portfolio no longer exists. He is also, however, the Minister who agreed to our lease! Catherine Walsh and Veterans SA and DEW officers will be meeting me, Greg and Dave tomorrow for further discussion. The later version of our lease from 2005 has been found recently by



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Dave Helman. It should be seen by Councillors. The Premier has invited us (while I am on leave) to a “round table” on the 1st of July.

The Air Force Cadets celebrate the 80th anniversary of their formation in 2021. Originally named the Air Training Corps its purpose in 1941 was to prepare teenagers for enlistment and service in the RAAF, many via EATS for air crew in Europe. Wing Commander Patrick Pulis, Commander 6 Wing AFC, hosted a party in the Drill Hall on Saturday the 12th of June. I was a late invitee with my wife, Tania. AVM Osley, a former Air Force Cadet, allegedly invited himself from Canberra. It was a happy event with a birthday cake but with nostalgia over the rumoured decommissioning of the **Link Trainer**. Many of those present had trained cadets or been trained in it. It is not ours nor is it our responsibility. But its space is costing us rent. We have not seen any official document concerning the fate of the Link Trainer. The AF 2021 banners were well seen, and photographed, at the party.

We attended the **RAAF Centenary** commemorative events at **Port Pirie** on Wednesday the 16th of June. Two separate ceremonies acknowledged the loss of life by 22 young airmen during WW2, being among the thousands trained at number 2 Bombing and Air Gunnery School and at 3 Air Observers School. The ceremonies were well organised and conducted by the Port Pirie RSL Sub-Branch, President John Chesson, with members of 92 Wing RAAF Edinburgh. The first was at the Port Pirie Cemetery, with Headstones of 21. A plaque was added, after a moving address by a Queensland member of the family, for Sergeant Reuben Plummer, whose body was never recovered from the sea. The second, which included a splendid address on RAAF WW2 history by Mayor Ken Madigan AM, author of “Port Pirie remembers”, was at the RAAF Memorial, constructed and dedicated just this century. The man behind this project had been Tony Semmler, Pirie branch RAAF Association stalwart before it closed. I met and thanked him at the excellent lunch hosted by the RSL. The RSL organising group, under Gail Swanton, had been encouraged and assisted by Greg via the AF 2021 committee. Greg produced two superb service booklets. Kevin Gogler drove me with SAAM President Nigel Daw. They were two in a party that had retrieved a crashed Fairey Battle from nearby mangroves in 1974. Greg travelled independently as did Catherine Walsh, Janice Silby and the Governor.



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Council executive members have seen, and this meeting should note and discuss, documents concerning the proposed **AFA Foundation**.

Robert Black. President, AFA SA 21st of June 2021.