



SITREP

Thank you for your Services Day



Lara RSL Sub Branch

Issue 4, Nov 2024

Presidents Report

Welcome to our November issue of SITREP, meticulously put together by Russell!

I feel like I say this each and every issue, but wow it's been a busy period for our Sub Branch and gee, we punch well above our weight when it comes to landing the big guests too!

I will start with our annual Poppy Appeal and Remembrance Day services. I would like to extend my personal thanks to each and every volunteer who gave up their time to make up badge trays, distribute and collect them across 22 sites, giving time to man our stall across the five different sites, doing the "bean counting process" at the end of the appeal, it is all critically important to everything we do, so thank you all for making our 2024 Poppy Appeal a huge success, especially to some of our new faces and members non-committee members too. Andy, our very astute figures man will provide us with the final numbers at some stage during December after Head Office have completed all of their auditing.



Remembrance Day services always place a big strain on our resources, because we can receive up to seven requests to attend services across all of the schools as well as retirement and aged care facilities. This year we sent four representatives out to three different schools and the feedback

received was amazing. Then there was our main service at the RSL which was attended by a greater than expected crowd, with representatives from most community groups also attending. It was an absolute honour to have the Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon. Richard Marles MP as our guest speaker for this service and also to have Ella George MP attend and lay a wreath. I am happy to share with you all that Richard's attendance was at the request of his office, not because we asked them, HE ACTUALLY ASKED TO COME TO LARA!!!! Considering just how busy he is, to have him attend our Sub Branch for the third time in 18 months is phenomenal!

Our Thank You For Your Service day was well attended by our members, but it was most exciting to see us finally have some emergency service vehicles and crews in attendance, as well as the team from 8/7 RVR. We have already taken onboard some feedback about how we can make this event even better in 2026, so we will certainly include this in our planning.

I am also very pleased to see other activities happening around the Sub Branch like our ladies afternoon, our karaoke night, the Bendigo bus trip etc. All of these things take a lot of planning to pull them off, but for me, they are at the heart of what we do because they encourage the social interactions that we all know are critical to our own physical and mental health, so please, keep the event ideas coming through and we will do what we can to make them happen. This brings me to our upcoming Christmas Party. I know that Jackie and Fiona are hard at work putting this one together for us all to enjoy, so I encourage you all to please, RSVP to the ladies and come along, because I promise you that these two are making some magic happen! As you will read later on in the newsletter, there is also some very exciting news coming early in the new year, but I will hold off on sharing that just yet, maybe I might blurt it out at the Christmas Party, but you won't know if you aren't there!!!!

Once again, this year we will be putting up a Christmas Tree in the foyer of the Sub Branch whereby we ask that people donate non-perishable food items so that we can gift these to a family in need just prior to Christmas. I know that our donations last year were very well received, so I hope that together we can put a smile on the faces of another family doing it tough, just when it counts.

In closing, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our members and guests for their continued support of our Sub Branch over the 2024 year. The Sub Branch is growing at a very healthy rate which is an absolute credit to those of you who turn up regularly, with a positive outlook, constantly wanting to have a great time. The word from Head Office is that we are in the top 4 Sub Branches across the state because of our approach to our core fundamentals, our light hearted and positive members, and the work that is done to ensure those members who have relatives who have served are properly recognised as Affiliate Members, which is why we keep getting the positive attention from ANZAC House! We are also starting to think about making our walls from elastic so that we can fit everyone in, but my goodness, it's a great problem to have!

Looking at the calendar, we will continue to be open each Friday night over the Christmas / New Year period, so if you aren't away over the holiday period, please know that we will still be business as usual at the Sub Branch!

On behalf of my family and I, we would like to wish you all a safe and merry Christmas. We know that the holiday season can be tough for some, so please, if you are struggling or just need a chat, please use the Committee contact numbers contained in this newsletter and reach out to one of us. We are always available if anyone needs a coffee, an ear, or a beer!

Yours Aye,
Marcus McEwen
President

Roy's Kokoda Walk

24th Jul - 01st Aug



Team Photo Pre Trek



Owen Stanley Ranges



Preparing Dinner



Imata Ridge



Trekking the Jungle



Bomana War Cemetery



Giving power packs to the school at Menari



Isurava



Roy and his son Tyler



Camp



96kms later

Ladies" Afternoon

17 Aug 24



Catering Corp



in action



Plenty of brainstorming went on at the Ladies Afternoon. We fully expect a few suggestions to be thrown Marcus's way in the near future. Maureen, Margaret and Jackie whipped up a couple of double batches of scones curtesy of Maureen's Thero mix.

By the end of the session there were no scones left and a successful afternoon was run by our ladies" at the Lara RSL Sub Branch.

Good turnout for the first ladies afternoon.

RSL Vic promo photo Shoot at the Lara RSL





There are a lot more shots of the afternoon but we will have to wait and see which pics get picked for the RSL Vic's future promotions. As Fiona McBean has said, if your face makes it into the public, you owe a slab.

Vietnam Veteran's Day 18 Aug 24

Sunday the 18th Aug saw Marcus, Isobel and family pay respects to the Vietnam War Memorial on behalf of the Lara RSL. The word going around said that there was a healthy turn out on the day. Others present were Cr Elise Wilkinson (Veterans Portfolio Chair), Geelong Mayor Trent Sullivan, Air Force Cadet, Cr Ron Nelson, Air Force Cadet, Marcus and Deputy Mayor Anthony Aitken.

Sergeant Sashi Serving the State



Sashi Vagadia
SERGEANT, PUBLIC ORDER RESPONSE TEAM
(Paid Employee)



VICTORIA POLICE

Sashi Vagadia serves as a Sergeant in the Public Order Response Team within Victoria Police, overseeing operations and supporting team members across the state.

With a background in the UK Metropolitan Police as a Detective Inspector, Sashi joined Victoria Police in 2017, bringing with him a commitment to community service and mental health advocacy. He established the 'Baton Challenge' initiative at the Victoria Police Academy, raising over \$10,000 for Victoria Police Legacy (VPL) and enhancing awareness among recruits.

Sashi volunteers extensively, notably organising the Lara RSL 24hr 96km Kokoda Memorial Challenge, raising \$50,000 for Soldier On and increasing RSL membership significantly. He also supports the VPL Children's Retreat and serves as an Ambassador for VPL. Sashi's dedication extends to promoting mental health and wellbeing within the police force, fostering a supportive environment through initiatives like 'Canines & Coffee' with Police Veterans Victoria. His selfless contributions exemplify his commitment to community, mentorship, and leadership in Victoria Police.

For anyone wanting more information on the night you can ask Sashi's stand in girlfriend for the night, June Meaney. I am sure this was done with Divya's approval.

New Jackets



On Fri 23rd of Aug 24 we handed out our order of Wetsuit and Puffer jackets with many comments on how good they look. (Some of us need all the help we can get). Individual orders can be placed through our usual supplier.

Lara RSL Polo Shirts

If you require a polo shirt

Come on down to the Lara RSL

And I will take your order

We will run a bulk order in the coming weeks

Contact Russell on 0490 116 181

Bendigo Bus Trip

24 Aug 24



Military Museum

32 of the Lara RSL's finest

Lots on display and we were not disappointed.

Bendigo RSL 24 Aug 24



Great Venue



Birthday's to both Poddrick and myself



David McBean telling Marcus how big the fish was that he caught.



Bendigo RSL Board Room



Ian and John had our backs



James wasn't happy with the Leopards position



There whiter than mine



Marcus with some flash backs



4.5 inch Twin RP41 MTG is good for clay bird shooting on wet and windy days.

We had the luxury of being shown the Bendigo RSL's offices by their President Glenn Ludeman. Glenn explained their vision going forward which included a revamp of the beer garden/museum area.

If the Bendigo RSL go ahead with their restructure of their back area and find that some of their museum pieces don't fit their yard anymore, we can help them out and take some pieces, we wouldn't mind a leopard tank or a replica spit fire.



At the same time that we were having a meal at the Bendigo RSL, June was revving up the Cats back home.

A newly acquired helper of June's was able to arrange this outing to the final home and away match. June lined up to high five Zac Toohey and other prominent players.

The young lady that arranged the day is an ex-Carlton AFLW player who has transferred to Geelong. She is not in the picture.

Sip and Paint 30 Aug 24



The Sip and Paint had their night at the Lara RSL and it turned out that some of them can paint quality pictures. It crossed my mind to offer up one of our members in their birthday suit with an apple in the mouth, but I changed my mind.

Young Veterans Evening

6 Sep 24



Dave McBean Afghanistan



Marcus McEwen Bougainville



Peter Solomon Timor



Dave Law was a champ with the set up and has a great passion for military displays.

Come down and check out the displays, we cover all eras of conflict.

Hall/Pool Room



Multi National non-United Nations
Peacemaking Task Force

In the last few months, we have added some additions to the room we now commonly refer to as the Pool Room. Our first President Rev Dexter takes centre stage adorned in poppies; we have our resident Rev Roxanne Addley to thank for that. Roxanne put in the highest bid on the 75th Anniversary Dinner night to take the freshly painted picture.



Daniel Keighran signed 6RAR Flag (VC recipient)

Thanks to the kindness of our resident Reverend, we will be sharing the painting somewhere between the RSL, approximately Anzac Day to Remembrance Day then over to Trinity Church for Christmas to Easter.

Dave Law graciously donated the flags to our RSL during the Young Veterans Evening.

Costa House Visit

19 Sep 24

I had the privilege of visiting some of our ex-service members and spouses at Costa House. It was good to catch up with some of the crew that we saw on our last visit.

Majorie Quinn was in the group this time and I got the chance to find out a little about her life and her husband.

Jack Carol a World War Two veteran is 101 years young but wasn't that keen on talking about his experiences during the war.

Donald MacSweeny is a member of the Lara RSL and did run the bar with John Wamsley for a while, he served in the British Army seeing action in Saudia Arabia.

Jim Bowkett is also a current member of our RSL and a Vietnam Veteran who is the young one of the group and is also our inside man.

Norm Dougal is an Army Nasho who saw service in Korea.

Ron Cockell is an ex-journalist who has contributed at each of our group sessions.

We might A-line our next visit with their happy hour, just a thought.

Lara RSL BBQ Trailer



The week prior to Karaoke saw the Lara RSL trailer getting plenty of use. We can't be accused of lying down on the job, we do have concrete evidence of our hard work, LOL.

Members can have use of the trailer for a small fee of \$10.00. It will fit a queen size mattress; the shop was going to deliver it for \$50.00. We also have an adaptor plug for older vehicles with the round plug. **Ring Marcus on 0434 885 483**

Note : Marcus has changed phone numbers in recent weeks, it would pay to check if you have this number, cheers.

AFL Grand Final Day

28th Sep 24



Considering it was a long weekend, we had a good turnout. The Lions rolled the top side and we had hot dogs in rolls. Unfortunately, we did have two Swans supporters with us and we were reminding them of the score during the game. (Sorry Robyn and Kira) I will need to wait until karaoke night to see if they are still talking to me. We did get stuck into some pool after the match and those results were a little closer than the AFL game....

Karaoke/Quiz Night

Fri 4th Oct 24



The Supremes... hold the olives



YMCA



Good golly it's Dolly



A bad version of Kenny



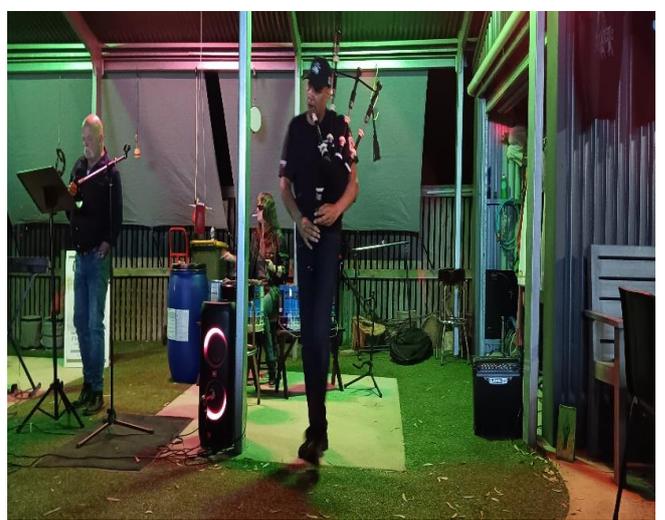
Guests on the keyboard



Dolly's husband and the YMCA man



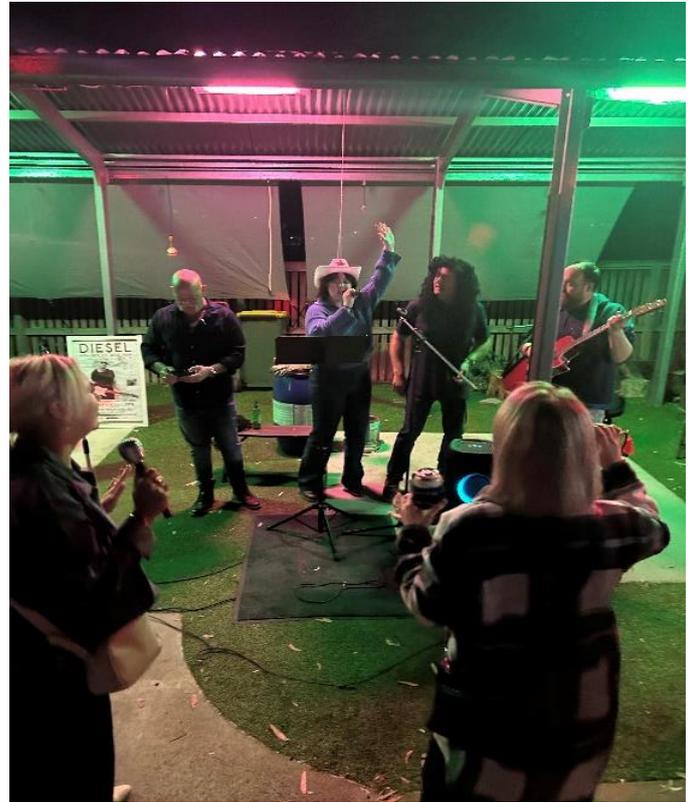
Ray and Loz on the Raffles



Sashi Bagging the Pipes



Eddie Van Poddrick



Does Taylor Swift wear a cowboy hat?



It's a long way to the top, especially the way we did it!



Father and son routine



Mamma Mia what an act!

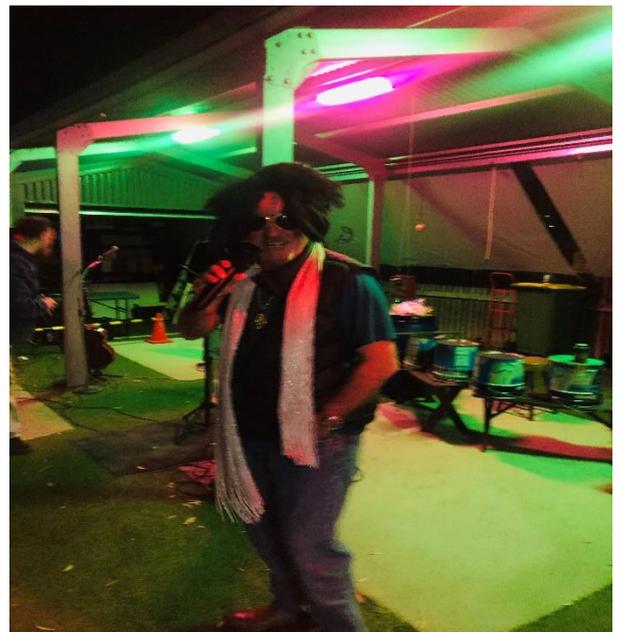
And the winner is.... Proud Mary by Tina Turner and friends. (I have been waiting for this act for 6 months) well done ladies.



Polly & Co



John Travolta, eat your heart out.



This guy said if there is any trouble "I will throw them out" and he did...His hip!

Veterans Interview Panel

Wed 9th Oct 24



We had the opportunity to put together a panel that reflected the issues of veterans of different genders and age groups combined with different experiences. This was filmed and recorded for the purposes of getting the message out to relevant organisations to recognised veterans needs and know what is not currently being addressed. We also had a small group of interested visitors who also put forward meaningful and relevant questions.

Fish and Chips Night

18th Oct 24



Catchers of the fish



Buyer of the chips

Very enjoyable supper thanks to Captain Kev of the SS Minnow and his first mate Macca.

Thank you for your Services Day 19th Oct 24



SES Team



Lara CFA

The crowd was good considering the Geelong show was on. Approximately 70 people attended the event.





We thank the organisations that help keep the community operating efficiently.



Our local constabulary, Tamara

8/7 RVR Geelong

RSL Regional Meeting at Torquay RSL Sub Branch Tues 22nd Oct 24



Marcus and I took the trip to the Torquay RSL Sub Branch where the Regional 8a meeting was held. We had Tina Linnane as guest speaker speaking about her written submission and in person experiences dealing with the royal commission panel and her thoughts on suicide prevention relating to veterans. We live in hope that the powers to be will listen to Tina and will listen to the recorded panel that we did on the 9th Oct 24.

Lara RSL Logo on the Go



Ian in Webberburn



Marcus in Deni



The iconic ute in Deni



Jackie and Russell back to school

Probus Group Tour 24th Oct 24



Probus is a club for retired or semi-retired people from all walks of life and may include business or professional people. The movement operates worldwide. A couple of their members have relatives up on our memorial wall. We also received two memberships from their visit.

Vietnam Veterans Display Fri 25th Oct 24



We put together a story line based around the Vung Tau Ferry that connected our Vietnam Boys with their arrivals to the country. We run through the history of HMAS Sydney 3 (the Vung Tua Ferry) which led into Bob Lawson then Kevin Bate followed by Ray Asmus and Doug Laird. Kev and Doug were on hand to run us through some of their stories.

Graham Toll let us know how not to set an ambush in Malaysia and Dazza of Loz and Dazza gave us some detail on his dad in Malaysia also.

Anam Cara House 29th Oct 24



Marcus, Deb, Emma and Rieny (Vet)



Running through the layout of the facility with Emily from marketing and Rob the Deputy Chair.



This stand-alone facility has recently signed an agreement with DVA and will accept veterans without private health insurance. Marcus, Liam and I took the tour of what was more like a home like atmosphere than a state-of-the-art palliative care facility. The surrounds are pleasant and serene, the rooms are huge and designed for loved ones to stay overnight. There are various kitchens, sitting rooms and quiet rooms to suit all alike.



There are numerous medical specialists on hand and wood panelling in each room that gave the impression of a normal every day bedroom, but pull on the wood panelling and all your hospital apparatus climbs out of the walls (very impressive!). We hope to have more involvement with Anam Cara House in future.

Deputy PM and Vet Affairs Minister Visit 31ST Oct 24



Although the Deputy PM was otherwise detained for other matters at the last minute we had the honour of Matt Keogh, Minister for Veterans Affairs on hand and the Deputy Prime Ministers rep in Claire the Business & Community Liaison in our presence.

This in turn gave our members and sponsors a chance to meet and greet with our VIP guests. And by the way, they asked to come to the Lara RSL for this occasion, that's not bad for such a small venue, well done Lara RSL.





We showed off our recently adorned displays with the Young Veterans and Vietnam Displays, the Rev Dexter Painting, the Timor Flag and the 6 RAR signed Flag. The mobile BBQ is seeing plenty of action at these recent events and we expect it will see more action over the summer period.

Holy Trinity-All Saints Day 3rd Nov 24



A group of members from the Lara RSL accepted the invitation from Rev Roxanne to attend their day for commemorating those who have passed. Robyn Gothard did a fine job of co reading out the names that had been put forward. Thanks Rev Roxanne, it won't be long before the changing of the guard (the Rev Dexter painting).

Poppy Sales 2nd-10th Nov 24

We know it's early in the day, but we have to share this!

Earlier today this wonderful young lady came along, looked at all of our Poppy Appeal badges set up on the display board for a few minutes, then went to the tray and said "I'll have that one, and that one, and that one" and she just kept going! She walked away with \$200 worth of badges! What a collection!!!

Thanks so much for your amazing support of the [RSL Victoria](#) 2024 Poppy Appeal (and for agreeing to have your photo taken with our President for socials 😊)



 **Lara Sporting Club**
21m · 🌐

We are proud to be volunteering our time to sell merchandise for the Lara RSL. Come on down to Coles and buy a badge, pen or keyring from Elly and Ron now or other volunteers will be here till 6pm



Poppy Appeal raised \$10,202.40 in stalls.

Poppy Appeal raised \$3,512.80 in trays that were handed out to various schools and businesses. (waiting on two locations).

Total to date \$13,715.20

It was very encouraging to see the roster for the poppy sales fill in no time. Liam took names on a Friday evening and zim zalla bim it was filled.

If you ask Marcus very kindly, he might let you know our surprise event in March, aiming high, aiming for the sky.

Bendigo Bank AGM 7th Nov 2024



Carol the Secretary at the Sporting Club, Roy our Vice President, the Lara Golf Club who ticked over the 3 million grant, Natalie and Libby who are Bendigo Bank Directors.



The recipients of the Bendigo Bank grants over the past 12 months, which are greatly appreciated.



Standing up are the Bendigo Bank Staff, sitting down with backs to the wall are the Executives and Directors of the Bendigo Bank.



Andrew Chairman of the Bendigo Bank
With Roy, Vice Pres of Lara RSL.



How long does it take to donate 3 mill?

It cannot be emphasised enough what the Bendigo Bank, Community Bank do for the Lara and surrounding areas. They are indirectly saving lives with some of their grants. This came to light through the Little River Fire Brigade guest speaker. Better equipment, fast response, time critical.

Mitch and Kira



Kart racing at Avalon Raceway

We have had some fun at the Avalon Track previously now we have a member who races karts at this venue. Entry is free with limited canteen facilities. Entry via pits. You could follow the Avalon Facebook page for updates. I will be keeping in touch with Mitch about these meets.

Avalon Raceway

Sunday 24th Nov 24-Track Championship Rd 1, start 1100 hrs

Sunday 01st Dec 24- Track Championship Rd 2, start 1100 hrs

Sunday 16th Feb 25- Track Championship Rd 3, Start 1100 hrs

Saturday 22nd March- Doug Drew Memorial Twilight Start 1530 hrs

Remembrance Day 11th Nov 24



Marcus (Lara RSL President), Ella George (Member for Lara),
Richard Marles (Deputy Prime Minister), Sashi Vagadia (Lara RSL Member)





Great spread provided by Millar's Cafe



A crowd of over 200 attended the Remembrance Day Service this year which is terrific considering it was a week day. That is up on the previous year which was held on a Saturday.

Richard Marle's was backed up with media support. Not that Marcus was prepared but the mic was swung in his direction for an on-the-spot interview.



Russell and Jackie at Little River Primary School.



Bob at St Anthony's Primary School.

Jackie and I presented the Spirit of ANZAC Award to Mae Barrie from the Little River Primary School, speaking to their Principal Gavin, Mae is a more than worthy recipient and a future leader in the making.

Bob Schouten spoke a little about Armistice Day with the St Anthony School assembly.

Kev did the honours at Lara Primary School; this is all part of our service to the wider Lara Community.

Lara RSL Committee at your service

President	Marcus McEwen	0434 885 483
Vice President	Roy Cook	0433 704 460
Treasurer	Andy Donald	0400 824 496
Secretary	Russell Lowe	0490 116 181
Logistics Officer	Bob Lawson	0417 575 604
Memorial Custodian	Dave Boulton	0413 315 355
Governance Advisor	Bob Schouten	0402 940 470
Appeals Officer	Anita Cook	0413 786 188
Bar Manager	Dave Flatt	0431 675 993
Asst Bar Manager	Ray Mills	0468 999 724

We Support the people who support us:



Leslie James Kelly OAM



Retired CFA Captain

Life Member



60 years svc



Air Show 32 years



Member 4 years

CITIZEN OF THE YEAR AWARDS
Reflect. Respect. Celebrate.



Event's Safety Officer



Former President, 31 Years svc



Former President, Life Member



Founder and Former Treasurer



Freemason's 50 years



Les was born in Geelong to descendants from Ireland, his dad Ronald Patrick and his grandfather Patrick Augustus. Les grew up in Marcus Hill (Bellarine Peninsula) and, with no power back in those days, it was kerosene lights at the table.

The farm that Les's Dad managed was shared with his Mum Marjorie, his three sisters being Ilma, Joyce, Gail and three brothers being Bill, Wal (Walter) and his twin brother Bob. But there were others that had better conditions on the property.

Back down on the lower part of the farm the livestock were just fine, they had town water at their troughs while a mile and a half back up at the farm house there was no running water. Les remembers his family members hand pumping the water from the underground tanks up to the overhead tank, this would then gravity feed to the taps. The town water pipe ran through the lower part of the farm which was over a mile away and it wasn't until Les was 12 years old that his family acquired running water to the house.

Twin brother Robert (Bob), Wesley Gordon Smith AKA Mick a plumber (Uncle) and Les.

Les also remembers his mum boiling all the clothes, no washing machine in sight. This would require many boiling kettles and a pot stick to stir and push down the clothes.

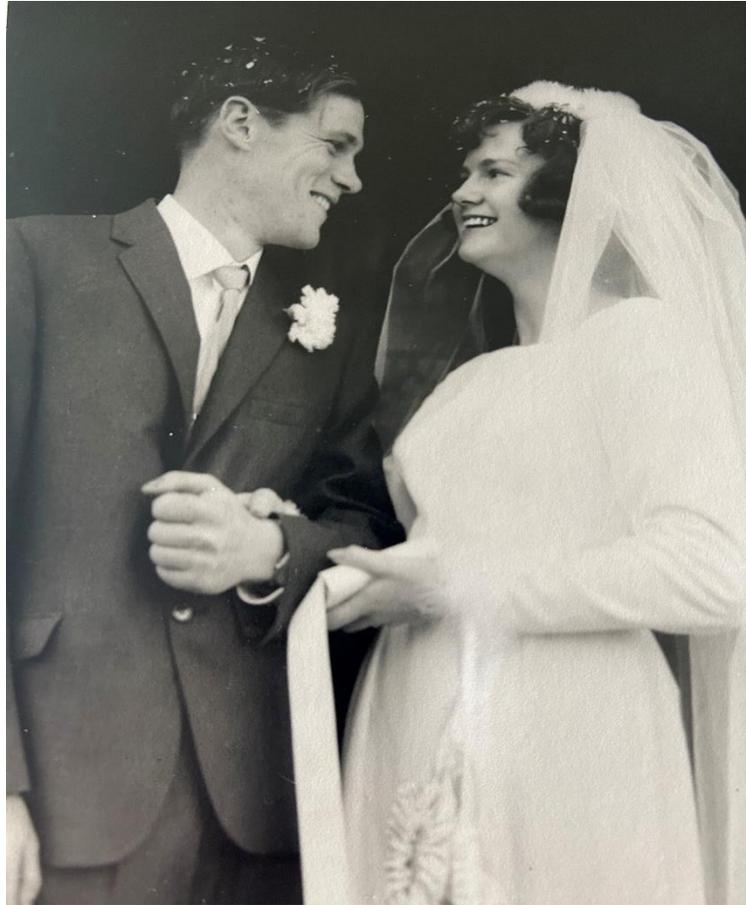
Not only was there a town water pipe running through the property but there was also the Queenscliff/Geelong rail line which cut right through the middle of the property.

The rail line was in place first and to run the water pipe under the rail line was a big deal back in the day. The method used was to blast jets of water under the rail line which would be inspected by the V-Line equivalent at the time. The inspection was to make sure that not too much foundation had been blasted away.

The rail line was fenced off with a gate on either side, this meant moving cattle from the top paddocks to the bottom and vice versa required a bit of fiddling around.

Les left Marcus Hill when he was 16 years old, this was when his dad Ronald passed away at the age of 54 years old. Les along with the rest of his family moved into Geelong, Les didn't like it at all. It wasn't all bad, Les went to the dance hall in Leopold where he met a young lass by the name of Jennifer King, Jennifer and Les were both 16 years old and exactly 2 months apart, Les's birthday in Feb and Jennifer's in Apr, this meeting would prove to be pivotal.

In **1961 at the age of 12 years old** Les was attending Geelong Junior Technical School (Moorabool St) for 4 years completing Form 4 and receiving his indenture to be gainfully employed as an apprentice Plumber with C.E. & I Bramham Plumbing & Gas Fitting, where at the end of his 4-year apprenticeship he was fully qualified. Also, in the same year Les joined the Mannerim Fire Brigade (Bellarine Peninsula) which is still spanning a lengthy career to this day in the CFA. The following year Les transferred over to the Geelong City Fire Brigade.



Les Kelly married Jennifer King on the 4th September 1965

All Saints Church, Newtown Geelong

1965 was a busy year for Les, fully **qualified as a plumber** joined the **Freemasons** and now **married** to the girl he saw at the Leopold Dance Hall 4 years earlier.

1968 was the **move to Lara**, Jennifer and Les Built a Home in Banks St in June.

1969 Lara Fires

1969 Les now transfers over to the Lara Fire Brigade only to witness what would be a catastrophic year for some. Perfect conditions for a total fire ban brought **fires that devastated Lara** and the surrounding districts. On the 8th January on a total fire ban day 230 fires burnt more than 324,00 hectares. Twenty-one of these fires were highly destructive with the worst occurring on the urban fringe of Melbourne.

A fire at Anakie near the Geelong-Ballan Road which had been extinguished the previous day flared up again and moved quickly towards Lara where it **destroyed** a 90-year-old gothic church and **40 houses**. The

worst death toll occurred when a fast-moving grass fire approached the four-lane Melbourne-Geelong Expressway at Lara. **Seventeen people died** when they left their cars and, in the dense smoke, tried to outrun the fire. **Six people who sheltered in their cars survived.**

The event was a catalyst in changing guidelines recommending people are safer staying in a car when the fire is upon them. The fires burnt to the edge of suburban Melbourne affecting Altona, Diamond Valley and Kangaroo Ground. In total **23 people died, 100 were injured, and 230 homes and 21 buildings were destroyed.**

Courtesy of the WWW



On this infamous day Jenny wanted some things at the shops so Les went down around 9.00am to buy these items. It was at this time that the fire got away from the Bacchus Marsh Road area. **Les didn't make it home** until approx. 6.00pm that evening. Jenny was worried about Les; Les was worried about Jenny (pre-Mobile Phone days).

Jenny was smart enough to pack what she could fit in a basket and with the dog Kim headed to the local pool. (As Les is showing me his wedding album, he is pointing out what looks like brown burn marks on the album).

Les then went on to say that there is a big sign on the freeway near the airport, which is near

Beach Road, that is where all the people died in the Freeway fire. There was a lady who lived opposite Lara Lake Primary School who wouldn't leave her home, she also became a **fatality of the fires.**

Les also spoke of occasions when he has been on the back of a fire truck and the heat was so intense that it has **peeled the paint off of the Truck.** One thing Les has requested is **not to be cremated.**

On the Move

In **1970** Les and Jennifer rented out their home in Banks St and head north to work with his older brother. Bill was a foreman who built commission homes in estates in various towns throughout Victoria. Of course, Les did the plumbing while his brother did the build. Les had a unit in Shepparton and one in Mildura for use whilst constructing these estates, the reason being that they were moved at short notice to different locations to fill job allocations. Les and Jenny started in Shepparton then Echuca, Cohuna, Kerang, Kyabram, Broadford, Seymour, Hamilton, Penhurst, Robinvale and Mildura. This lasted for two or so years.



1972 Charlene was born



Charlene with Kim the Corgi

AKA

Now back to the Geelong area Les and Jenny moved down to his sister's place at Marcus Hill. Fortunately, Les's old Boss was looking for an employee so Les got in contact with him and got the gig. Les's brother's wife (Bill's wife) once asked as to when she was going to be introduced to the other brother, everyone was puzzled, "you have met everyone". Now realising that the person being referred to as Jim for so long was in fact Les's nickname. Originally Les was going to be called James Leslie Kelly but his mum preferred Leslie James Kelly. Les still answers to Jim, his niece still refers to him by this name.

Les remembers visiting his sister on the farm that they grew up on. Jenny was with him and he was wearing his wedding suit, (so they would have gone out on the Town that night). Now dropping into his sisters they decided to go out spot lighting for rabbits and foxes, so Les and Jenny joined in. Still dressed up to the nines they headed down to Yarram Creek 900 metres to the east, it had 14-foot embankments along its edge. Les said they could fold the canvas back in the Toyota then they would stand up in the back which made it easier when spot lighting. They had spotted a rabbit, so Les jumped out and chased it up and over the embankment and ended up straight over the edge and into the creek. Jenny yelled out "you're in your wedding suit" it probably didn't go down too well.



1984 Les and Bill Built his current home.

“As a kid I was excited to get involved with the CFA and most excited at running for the brigade at the CFA-VFBV State Firefighter Championships. It wasn’t always about the competitiveness’, Les originally joined the local CFA to have fun and meet new people. That has turned out to be a very good decision.



Jenny, Charlene and Les 26 Feb 2005

The day before Charlene’s wedding to Luke, Les turned 60 years old, but he waited until the honeymooners were on their way before he had his birthday celebrations the next day. Big weekend!

1992-2025 Avalon Air Show



Les and his very good mate would handle the plumbing on the Avalon site. Over the years the markings on the ground have faded or been removed and the plans for the layout have been lost. Les is the only connection they have as to what lays where. (There is power in knowledge).



This is a great shot of two mates that did there trade together, are in the same trade and live in the same town. For these reasons they would always be close. Good camera work to capture the names of the two tradies. Not only is Allan Bate Kevin's cousin but was Libby Bate's husband.

In recognition of Outstanding Airshow Contribution

1969 Les Joins the Freemasonry

1999-2006 Les has held many leadership and critical roles in the CFA throughout his life. Notably he was Captain of the Lara Fire Brigade for seven years.

2005 Founding member Headquarters Brigade

2007 Les joined the Geelong Beer and Beef Club and has taken up the position of President for the last two years. Meeting on a monthly basis they enjoy beer selected by their Beer Master and food chosen by the Food master at great locations.



2008 Recipient of Lara Citizen of the year Club

2011 Distinguished Service Award with the Lions

2013 Co-Founder and former Treasurer of the Lara Museum and Historical Centre

The opening of the **Lara Museum and Historical Centre** is a story about community spirit. Through the passion of the Lara residents to preserve and celebrate the town's history, the Lara Museum and Historical Centre on the corner of Forrest Rd South and Canterbury Road West, was officially opened on the 18th April 2013.

Its opening was the culmination of more than three years of planning and hard work by the people of Lara, Lino Bisinella and the rest of the team at Bisinella Developments. The project also demonstrated what can be achieved when residents and business work together for the common good. Long time Lara residents and friends, Ian Board and Les Kelly had often discussed the need to preserve Lara's history, and the lack of any facility to collect historical material and make it readily accessible to the public.

In mid-2011, Ian and Les heard that the former **Lake Bank Hotel** property had been sold to Lino Bisinella, managing director of Bisinella Developments. The Lake Bank is Lara's only surviving 19th century hotel. One of Lara's oldest buildings, it was constructed in 1860 for Scottish immigrant James Henderson and operated as a licensed hotel until 1908.

The distinctive limestone buildings were home to five generations of Mr Henderson's family. The property had been sold to Lino by James Henderson's great grandson Jack and his wife Brenda Darcy. Ian and Les approached Lino about the possibility of using the historical building as a community museum. Lino quickly gave Ian and Les his commitment that, provided they could muster sufficient community enthusiasm and support, he would fully renovate the historic buildings at his own cost and allow them to use these facilities for their purpose.

A public meeting was held in September 2011 to gauge public interest and a provisional committee of eight was elected to start work. The Lara Heritage and Historical Inc was incorporated on January 12th 2012. Lino set about personally overseeing every single detail of the somewhat challenging renovation project. It was very much a labour of love. The building was lovingly restored and refurbished at a cost to Lino of about \$500,000. He then leased the property for \$1 a year to the local community group formed to operate the museum.

Ian, Les and their members worked closely with Lino and the Bisinella team throughout the renovation project. At the same time, they started the process of collecting historical information and items from the community. Since it opened, memorabilia and items of historic interest have continued to be loaned or donated to the museum, bringing local history to life in the ideal setting of the limestone buildings.

The Lara Museum and Historical Centre is open to the public from 11.00am to 4.00pm on Wednesdays and Sundays. Group bookings are available by appointment. www.laramuseum.org.au

This information was provided through the Lara Museum & Historical Centre brochure.

2017 Jenny passes away

2017 District 7 Headquarters Captain & Group delegate

2018-2024 Safety Co-Ordinator, acquired through the Community Centre operating at The Opening of the Lara Museum, Open Garden at Lino Bisinella's, Australia Day Breakfast's, Music in the Park, Food and Wine Festivals and Christmas Carol Events.

2023 Received an Award for recognition of services to the community through emergency response organisations.

2023 His commitment to the CFA has not gone unnoticed and he was recognised as part of the King's Birthday Honours, awarded the **Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM)** at Government House. The OAM is awarded for service worthy of particular recognition and for Les, it's his passion for the CFA and the commitment that has been regarded so highly.

2024 Stepped down as Captain of the Headquarters Brigade on the 30 Jun 24

2025 Avalon Air Show services - trophy in recognition of services rendered (32 years)

Once again providing his service next year

“I’ve always loved being involved in the emergency management sector and helping to protect my community. I couldn’t have given **58 years of my life to the CFA** without the support of my family and the organisations that I have been part of. The CFA has built me up to be a better communicator and leader, it has also given me tangible skills that have equipped me to be better in my personal and professional life”.

Nov 2022

Les has known of Maureen and seen her around the Lara area. They were both frequenting Anna’s Café and this is where Les started to take notice of her. Les hadn’t asked anyone out on a date for fifty years, so asking Maureen out was a hard thing to do. Maureen asked Les why he picked her and Les responded that it was her personality and that she is always happy. Their first dinner date was to the Indian Restaurant near the RSL, then movies and then drives.

Les and Maureen take Argentinian Tango Dancing lessons as we witnessed at Maureen’s 80th birthday party, which was held at the Lara RSL. Maureen also does theatrical dancing, Les described this as dressing up like witches with brooms, interesting!

Maureen and John Walmsley were running the bar for a few years with great success from what I hear but were both happy to hand the reins over when the time came. Maureen has now been a member of the Lara RSL for 7 years.



Maureen’s 80th



Lara RSL’s 75th Anniversary Dinner

Les has a nephew by the name of Ken that was in Vietnam. Jenny was corresponding with Ken while he was in country. Les said the letters are at his home and that he will need to go through them one day as this may give some insight as to what he was doing and how he was feeling at the time. Les is an affiliate of the RSL in his own right due to his CFA and emergency services commitments but he could also be an affiliate due to his dad's service and his nephew's service.



Her Excellency Professor Margaret Elaine Gardner AC (Governor of Victoria) presents the Order of Australia to Les Kelly at Government House 2023.

“Never dreamt that I would ever receive an honour of this calibre.”



Lara RSL

Les showed up numerous times to the Lara RSL before a past President pulled him up and said you can't keep coming here without joining up. Les told him he didn't know that he could join the RSL... Just for the record we will not remove anyone from the RSL for continuing to show up without being a member.

Bounce Back

Les recently had a visit to the hospital, he was supposed to be in for a standard operation then out in four days. With a couple of complications and a couple infections later, things weren't going to plan. At one point Les wasn't sure he would be coming out of hospital; he was so convinced he had a pen and note book ready so he could write down a list of things that Charlene would need to do before his funeral. Of course, he did make it out and when Les had his next appointment with the specialist, he said he was jack of the slow recovery, the specialist replied "Les you were very ill you will be lucky to be at full recovery by Christmas".

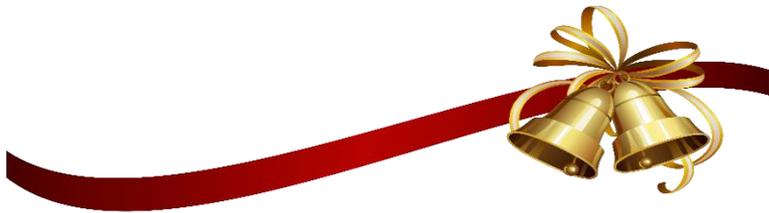
But we know Les, he's always in the kitchen at parties. You can never keep a good man down, so of course he's up and about again.

On The Go

On a personal note: my son's hot water service packed it in, so I rang Les to see if he could replace it at some stage, Les said he could do it in an hour when he finished installing a dishwasher at another home. He came around in less than an hour, and within 2 hours he had removed the old hot water system, replaced the new one then, I called Scrappy John and he took the old one from the front lawn. Not bad for a bloke close to 80 years old. My Son was astounded at the efficiency of the operation.

Les Kelly is the quintessential Aussie, he gets the job done, never makes a fuss, doesn't big note himself, isn't looking for accolades (even though they head his way) and is still a hard-working bloke.

It is a pleasure knowing you and I am sure that I am not alone in saying that.



2024 Lara RSL Sub Branch Christmas Luncheon

Greeting to all. This year the Christmas Lunch for member's will be held on Sunday 15 Dec 2024. Lunch will consist of two courses: main: roast meat selections, vegies, salad & dessert. There will be raffles & wacky door prizes throughout the afternoon. Upon entry each person over the age of 18 yo will be given a ticket which will entitle them to a free drink of their choice from the bar on this day.

If you wish to attend this year you are required to complete the **RSVP** section at the bottom of this page and hand it into the bar staff on a Fri evening by 29 Nov 2024.

- Where:** Lara RSL Sub Branch
- When:** Sunday 15 Dec 2024 (1200 – 5 pm)
- Cost:** Members  **No charge**
 Member's Guest **(1) @ No charge**, Each additional guest \$35 p/h
 Guest **under 18 years – No charge**
- RSVP:** **Friday 29 Nov 2024 (Complete below & return)**
- Dress Code:** Christmas Festive / Neat Casual + Fun Attitude

2024 Lara RSL Sub Branch Christmas Luncheon (RSVP)

PLEASE COMPLETE & RETURN TO RSL BAR STAFF

Member Full Name/s:

Guest/s Name Attending:

If payment required indicate if you are paying by **CASH** or **CARD** (circle one)

If paying **CASH** insert cash & this RSVP inside envelope then seal. Hand to bar staff. Envelopes available at the bar. **CARD** payment via the bar

If all too much catch up with Jackie or Fiona on a Fridy evening



