

War Cemetery Tour – Quarterly Report September 2022

The planned War Cemetery Tour at Sandgate was held on Sunday August 14th 2022.

The tour was the initiative of Ed Tonks OAM as a gesture of appreciation for assistance from the Society in the past.

It was very successful despite less-than-ideal weather conditions, with 32 attending. More had registered but illness caused a significant number to cancel during the last couple of days and even on the day. Six volunteers were involved, with our numbers also being reduced because of illness.

A few participants were Society members, the remainder were people who had left their contact details at Sandgate General Cemetery tours, plus family and friends. This follow up by the group representing the Society was greatly appreciated, with many reminders to keep these names on the lists for future tours.

Visitors received a lovely sprig of rosemary tied with two ribbons in colours representing the medal ribbons for Forces members who had served in the Pacific War; they were created by Maree Shilling. Their 'goodies' bags a brochure about the War Cemetery created by Ken and Maree Shilling, a Society brochure, a Society publications flyer and order form, a Society membership form and a brochure about Ed Tonks' publications. Many of those who were forced to cancel expressed disappointment so as a gesture of good will they have been sent an emailed copy of the one-page brochure, for their information.

On display was a double-sided board displaying illustrations of the many aircraft that had been involved in the lives and deaths of so many RAAF personnel buried in the cemetery. This generated a lot of interest and discussion.

Notable attendees were the grandson of one of the men interred in the Cemetery and a 98-year-old WWII veteran who had served in the New Guinea campaigns, the father of a member.

St John's Ambulance provided their services for the day and were presented with a donation of \$100 gathered from visitors and volunteers.

We were delighted with the response and it was an excellent way to promote the Society and the Cemetery. In turn we received donations of resources – Ed Tonks' research on the Cemetery and those interred, which will be bound and added to the Society's collection of Cemetery listings; resources for a story in *They Served Their Country*, which will be of greater interest than perhaps is usual, as the family is of Chinese-Australian descent.

Letters of thanks went to Ed Tonks for his initiative, research and wonderful talks; DVA/CWGC for permission to conduct the tours and enthusiasm for the event; St John's Ambulance for First Aid services gratis; Northern Cemeteries for parking and verbal support; and Iain MacDougall for transporting and erecting equipment.

Among the comments received, either by email or on Facebook, are:

Thank you for a well organised tour of the War Cemetery. Thank you also to Mr Tonks for a well-researched, informative and entertaining tour.

[we] really enjoyed our tour of the War Cemetery with Ed Tonks today and I thank you very much for organising it. I know what a hassle it must have been for you with such uncertain weather. We are looking forward to going back again too and have started visiting cemeteries in the towns we visit when we go on holiday. Thank you again

It was a wonderful day even though it was so cold and windy. Thank you for your excellent teamwork and to Ed Tonks with well-researched information.

It was a windy but informative and sad day. Thanks so much.

An excellent tour. Thanks to Ed Tonks and the organisers.

It was a very interesting day. Thank you.

So pleased to see so many people brave the wind to listen to a very informative speaker, Ed Tonks. A great event.

Additionally positive comments and acknowledgement from DVA for the report and photos sent to them; from Ed Tonks, on receipt of his letter of thanks, a very nice response saying that it was very gratifying to be appreciated so much and thanking all the NFHS people involved for our acceptance of him and for our professionalism; and thank you notes from those who received the Cemetery brochure by email.

We do not have a current financial statement at hand but there was very little expenditure for the War Cemetery Tour so the remaining budget will be sufficient for this year.

The group looks forward to reverting to Sandgate General Cemetery tour planning as soon as we can.

Margaret Ashford
Convenor
Sandgate Group
September 2022