2/3 A.H.S. CENTAUR ASSOCIATION

For Survivors, Descendants, Relatives, Friends and Organisations

with a common interest in 2/3 AHS Centaur

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NEWSLETTER AUGUST 2026

Centaur Anniversary Commemorations at the Shrine of Remembrance Melbourne 10 May 2026

Submitted by Tom Evans, President, 2/3 AHS Centaur Association

Melbourne commemorations for the 83rd anniversary were held at the Last Post Service at the Shrine of Remembrance on Sunday 10 May 2026.

It was a beautiful autumnal day as the sun set on a near cloudless sky. The ceremony was conducted by Shrine Governor Lieutenant Colonel David Blackwell OAM RFD (Retd), with the bagpiper, Shrine guards, Ode of Remembrance, and the Last Post and Reveille bugle calls providing a poignant and moving ceremony. The Centaur story was read out and then wreaths laid at the Eternal Flame.

In attendance were the members of the O'Brien clan (Patricia, daughter of L/Cpl Michael O'Brien, 2/12th FA, granddaughter Caroline van Oosterom, great granddaughter Frederique, and myself). Also in attendance were members of the Australian Nurses Memorial Centre (ANMC): President Elizabeth Lavender, Board member Barbara Green (niece of Sister Evelyn King, AANS) and Centre Manager Elizabeth Allwood.

We stayed afterward for a lovely long conversation that culminated in Mary Archibald (a senior, sessional Health Practitioner Member at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) introducing herself and sharing that her nursing career began in 1968 with a Centaur scholarship for nursing.

Caloundra Commemorations May 2026

Submitted by Christine Clegg & Keith Clegg (2/3 AHS Centaur Association Member)

Although largely insulated from conflict on the home front for the early years of WW2, air strikes in the north of Australia and submarine raids in Sydney in 1942, would change the wartime narrative within our nation. But as the AHS Centaur sailed along the east coast of Queensland towards Port Moresby on May 14, 1943, those on board had every reason to feel safe. As a hospital ship, its secure passage was protected under the principles of the Hague Convention, because the Centaur was on a mission of mercy, not war.

Yet, all that would count for little in the early hours of that fateful morning, as an enemy submarine torpedoed the AHS Centaur with 268 brave souls condemned to a watery grave. It remains a sombre chapter in Australia's maritime history, and one of its most abhorrent wartime atrocities.

The Centaur was more than a mere vessel – it represented hope and healing amidst the pain and horrors of a world at war – and its sinking serves as a solemn reminder of the tragedies of war, and the heroic sacrifices of our brave servicemen and women.

This morning we gathered, as so many have done since that tragic day, to remember and honour the ultimate sacrifice and courage of those who perished, and to acknowledge the immense impact on loved ones and communities.

Paul Clegg (grandson), his wife Christine, and Keith Clegg (son) laid a wreath to commemorate Pte Percy Clegg (SMS), a much-loved father who would never watch his son grow up, nor meet his grandchildren. As we reflect on the Centaur's legacy – reminded, as we are, of the strength and resilience of the human spirit – may we seek to ensure that the memory of those who never made it home, endures not only as a tribute to their courage, but also as a call to strive for peace and compassion in our world.

Lest we forget.

Fr Graeme Malone, SSS, Hospital Chaplain, with Past President of the *2/3 AHS Centaur Association, Richard Jones*

2026 Kokoda Track Memorial Commemorations at Concord, Sydney 15 August 2026

Submitted by Richard Jones, Past President of 2/3 AHS Centaur Association

Representing the 2/3 AHS Centaur Association, my wife Margaret and I attended the Victory in the Pacific (VP Day) Commemorative Service near the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway adjacent to Concord Hospital. During the Service I placed a wreath on behalf of the Association in remembrance of all those who served on Centaur.

While this commemoration of Victory in the Pacific on this day in 1945 is not Centaur-specific, it marks the end of hostilities and the peace for which those lost on Centaur gave their lives.

Centaur Memorial Window Concord Hospital

There is a strong connection between the Centaur and Concord Hospital, or as it was known at the time, the 113th Australian General Hospital, as many of the ship's medical staff and members of the 2/12th Field Ambulance were taken on strength at Concord, or had worked there before embarking. Included amongst them were Jan Thomas' father, Dr Bernie Hindmarsh SMS, my uncle, Dr Gordon Jones, 2/12th AFA, and Sr Ellen Savage, AANS, the only one of twelve nurses to survive.

For decades, Concord Hospital conducted annual remembrance services in the Chapel on or about the anniversary, organised by Alice Kang OAM, conducted by Fr Graeme Malone SSS, and attended by Centaur survivors, Centaur family members and friends and a strong showing from the Merchant Navy Association including Martin Pash, Centaur survivor. Unfortunately, these Services were discontinued during Covid, and not reinstated. Since the cessation of the Concord Commemorations, the Centaur Association has accepted the invitation of the Merchant Navy to join them in their Annual Memorial Service at Rookwood in April. Centaur was a merchant ship and has always been commemorated at Rookwood along with all other merchant shipping. As an Association our members are made very welcome at this annual service.

Alice Kang and Fr Malone have been and still are strong supporters of Centaur remembrance and it was good to connect with them as organisers in presenting this VP Day Commemoration. Fr Malone offered a prayer for the Commemoration of the Fallen. Rev David Anthonisz, the Anglican Chaplain offered a prayer for the serving members of the Armed Services.

In the Prologue for the service, Mr Anthony Dobkins, the General Manager of Concord Hospital, gave a short history of the hospital and its care of returning service men and women as well as an account of Sr Ellen Savage's work at the hospital, on the hospital ships and in the water despite serious injuries after the sinking of Centaur.

This VP Day Commemoration, though not Centaur-specific but nevertheless inclusive, was much appreciated because of our Centaur connection with the Concord Repatriation Hospital.

Centaur Commemorations at Dapto, NSW, 16 May.

The last Centaur Commemoration for this year was at Dapto on Saturday 16 May.

Our Representative Clare Duggan couldn't attend at the last minute and delegated her cousin Lynette to join long-term member Lucy Walton in representing the Association. Lucy is the daughter of Pte Clem Woods 2/12 FA and Clare and Lynette are two of his granddaughters.

At one of Grantlee's book launches Malcolm Knight and Richard Jones met a lady from the Illawarra who is a relative of Pte Jack Waldon 2/12 FA and is looking forward to becoming a member and meeting people who share her experience.

Thank you to the RSL and the people of Dapto for remembering those lost on the Centaur and for supporting those who lost them.

Centaur Remembrance Day (Banora Point & Point Danger) 14 May 2026

Yvonne Bentley and Jenny Fisher

Submitted by Debbie Butler
(Local Representative,
2/3 AHS Centaur Association)

Debbie Butler, Sister Frances Moran and John Leask

On 14 May 2026, I attended the Centaur Primary School at Banora Point with my husband Peter for the Commemorative Service of the 83rd anniversary of the sinking of the Centaur.

In attendance were John Leask (son of Malcolm Leask who lost his three brothers on the Centaur) with his wife Di. Also present were Yvonne Bentley (whose godmother was Sister Helen Haultain), her sister Jenny Fisher, Sisters Mary and Frances Moran who remember their brother Pte Jack Moran, 2/12 FA and Erica Whitlock who pays tribute to Sister Adams, SMS.

The school captains once again told the story of the Centaur and how it forms part of the school's history and learning curriculum. The school draws its values from the caring, courage and compassion embedded in the Centaur story.

During the Service I presented the Hindmarsh Medals on behalf of the Hindmarsh family to the students who were being recognised for the courage and endeavour they have displayed in the school community.

The bugler who played the Last Post at the service was Rachel, who is based at HMAS Moreton in Bulimba, Brisbane.

After the commemorative service and a warm welcoming morning tea with the school staff and school captains, we then ventured up to Point Danger in between rain showers to re-lay the Centaur Association's wreath and our family wreaths at the Centaur Memorial. With John Leask and Sisters Frances and Mary Moran, we quietly reflected on history and the lives that were lost.

This photo shows the Hindmarsh Medal recipients, proudly displaying their medals, the School Captains and others participating in the Service, including Rachel who played the Last Post, Peter and Debbie Butler (Centaur Association Local Representative). Attending also were John Leask, nephew of the three Leask brothers who lost their lives, and in the front Sisters Mary and Frances Moran (Pte Jack O'Neill Moran, 2/12 FA, Jenny Fisher and her sister Yvonne Bentley (Sr Helen Haultain) and Erica Whitworth (Sr Margaret Adams). The photo shows symbols and flags of the four school houses named Moss, Lawson and Colefax for the three Tweed identities who lost their lives on the Centaur, and Savage for Sr Savage, the one nurse who survived.

Brisbane WWII Memorials campaigner sets his sights on honouring Centaur Nurses

Peter Rasey is an author, podcaster, YouTuber and active member of the Australian American Association. He researches Australia's military history for memorialisation purposes, particularly within the Brisbane area, and has done so since 1988. Among many other initiatives, he has made over 380 contributions to the 'Places of Pride' website, the Australian War Memorial's national register of war memorials project.

Peter has approached the Centaur Association to help promote his latest campaign. He is asking the public to support a proposal for a grove of trees opposite the Canon Garland Overpass to honour all of the Centaur nurses. He explains more on his YouTube site 'Brisbane WWII', with a post regarding his petition - Centaur Nurses Grove Petition BCC Petition number 1597 Ward – which can be found at the following address: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q8NdQl8ZwJU The Centaur Association has joined this petition and is inviting its members to participate as individuals should they wish.

Photographs and the Human Cost of Tragedy

A recent post from the Australian War Memorial referenced the finding of rare negatives and photos of Centaur personnel. The photographic records were recently uncovered among material transferred to the AWM from the New South Wales State Publicity Censor's archive after the Second World War. You can read more about this finding and the AWM's digital restoration processes on the AWM's blog page here https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/blog/centuar-oranje...

Two of the photographic findings are displayed here. On the left is a rare photo taken in early March 1943 soon after boarding the AHS Centaur of the twelve serving AANS nurses. Eleven of the nurses in this photo lost their lives with only Sister Ellen Savage having survived the sinking of the Centaur on 14th May 1943.

Below is a photo of the combined medical staff on board the Netherlands Military Hospital Ship 'Oranje' taken on 2nd March 1943 just before Australia handed the Oranje back. Twenty-eight (roughly one third) of the personnel pictured transferred to the Centaur's medical staff, with eighteen losing their lives.

OUR RATIONALE

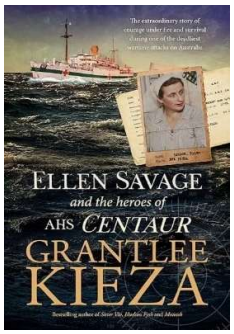
To honour those who gave their lives on 2/3 AHS Centaur.

To provide a forum for Descendants, Relatives, Friends & Organisations interested in 2/3 AHS Centaur.

To help the healing process which for many still continues.

To ensure that the memory never fades, and the facts are not forgotten by succeeding generations.

To turn a tragedy into a triumph, and to foster a peaceful and forward-looking attitude.



Last Post

Bernard Douglas 'Doug' Hoare
25 February 2026. Brother of Pte John Hoare 2/12 FA. Doug was a foundation member of the Association and our long-term Public Officer. He marched with us and the Oranje veterans on many an Anzac Day in Sydney. He will be missed.

Let us remember the Centaur - a vessel of mercy on the turbulent waters of a world at war.