

THE CONCORDIANS NEWSLETTER



Sadly there was never enough blood for the number of patients who need it. I ended up donating my own - Janelle Allen



There were many dead bodies at the front of the hospital following the Tet Offensive. It was very confronting - Jan Bell

Launch of Oral History Project ON VIETNAM VETERANS DAY

By John Gatfield

Individual recollections of frontline service during the Vietnam War have been collated in a video which will be available on YouTube and in a display at the E.M. Lane Concordians Museum at the hospital.

The Concordians supported the project, in which 17 extended interviews were recorded over the past 12 months, 14 with former servicemen and three with nurses who carried out their duties under extremely difficult circumstances in a civilian hospital. The project was unveiled on 18 August during the Vietnam Veterans' Day commemoration at the Bankstown Sports Club.

For any Australians under the age of 45 the Vietnam War is almost ancient history and as those men and women who took part grow older, it is important that we preserve their stories. Anyone can read official histories and expert opinions on the conflict, but these are the experiences of everyday Australians who did what their government asked of them by serving in a completely foreign, unknown and hostile environment.

The men interviewed included both regular army and National Servicemen, who agreed that in

Vietnam there was no difference between volunteers and conscripts. Almost to a man they also agreed that the experience had helped them mature, but emotional trauma and long-term PTSD had been draining.

Their roles in Vietnam had been varied. They included armoured personnel carrier drivers, a medical orderly, a specialist mechanic, a military police corporal, a lieutenant fresh from Duntroon, and soldiers who had spent long nights and days out on patrol in thick rainforest and rice paddies, avoiding mines and enemy bunkers. They had mates killed alongside them, yet when they returned home, they faced abuse and scorn, accused of being "baby killers."

It's often forgotten that Australia sent 120 doctors and 110 nurses to assist the Vietnamese civilian population, the nurses including some from Concord who answered the call for volunteers.

Jan Bell recalled vivid impressions of the Tet offensive, when hundreds of dead and wounded men, women and children were crowded into the hospital, seeking medical help. Jan Bell cited the lack of equipment as being one of the biggest hurdles they faced and their reliance on

the United States for supplies. And there were gasps of horror when Lyn Foldes recounted the story of a young Vietnamese bar girl who had no family to support her, and who died in the hospital hours after Lyn had seen a rat chewing her nose.

Those who lived through the Vietnam era had their opinions formed largely by television reports, which relied on US sources more often than not. It must be remembered that Australia was responsible for one small province, that we had medical teams providing humanitarian assistance, and that our soldiers were invariably protecting villages and patrolling to limit the influence and presence of the Viet Cong.

Those Australians who have been born since that time have been given a view of the war shaped by movies such as "Apocalypse Now" or "Good Morning Vietnam."

That is not the Australian experience, and with the help of the Concordians, the personal, individual stories of these young men and women will live on, to educate and inform subsequent generations.

The Concordians thank the Department of Veterans' Affairs for funding the project.

Museum Activity Since Opening

The EM Lane Concordians Museum has enjoyed an impressive start, welcoming over 200 visitors in just the first few days of its opening. Since then, there's been a steady stream of visitors each weekday, with community groups, historical societies, and ex-service organisations making group bookings to explore the collection.

A highlight of the museum is its rare collection of nurses' uniforms — including a remarkable WWI-era uniform, one of only three known to exist worldwide. This unique piece, complete with full provenance, offers a fascinating glimpse into history. Visitors have also been captivated by the hospital's proud heritage as a military hospital, the associated artefacts on display, and a range of early medical equipment and innovations.

We're especially grateful for the many Concordians who have



stepped forward to volunteer their time. Among them are nurses and senior administrative staff whose passion for the hospital is both inspiring and infectious. The EM Lane Concordians Museum is fast becoming the beating heart of the campus — a place where the rich history of the hospital is shared with the next generation of staff

and warmly embraced by the wider community.

If you would like to be part of this journey, we would love to welcome you as a volunteer.

Contact us at theconcordians@outlook.com OR visit www.theconcordians.com

Other Successful Grants

We were thrilled to receive a grant from Museums & Galleries of NSW to help protect and preserve some of our treasured uniforms and hats affected by mould.

With the expertise of textile conservator Louise McCullough, we began the delicate task of saving these historic items. Louise identified numerous uniforms carrying mould spores and, with meticulous care, cleaned and treated around 40 garments — including three hats — restoring them to a safe condition.

Along the way, we uncovered other unwelcome visitors: clothes moth casings, spider webs, and cockroach casings hidden within some uniforms. Each of these items was thoroughly cleaned, aired, dried, and treated to ensure both mould and insect threats were eliminated.

Thanks to this project, our collection is now healthier, safer, and ready to be appreciated by future generations.

This important work was made possible through Create NSW's Volunteer Museum Grant Program, a devolved funding initiative administered by Museums & Galleries of NSW on behalf of the NSW Government.



Mould on hat



Cockroach casings

Marking 80th Anniversary of End of WWII



Concord Hospital, established at the outset of World War II, has long stood as a place of healing for those who served — from the soldiers of that conflict through to veterans of later wars.

This year marks 80 years since the end of WWII, a milestone that prompts reflection on the legacies of the few remaining veterans from that era, now numbering only in single digits. At this year's Victory in the Pacific commemoration, held at the Kokoda Track Memorial Walkway adjacent to the hospital, three WWII veterans from the New Guinea campaign were honoured.

Adding to the poignancy of the occasion, two nurses wore authentic WWII uniforms from the EM Lane Concordians Museum, evoking the care once provided at the Repatriation General Hospital Concord, as the hospital was then known.

Extraordinary General Meeting – New Constitution Adopted

On 23 July 2025, members came together for an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) to vote on an important step forward for our organisation — adopting a new constitution.

As mentioned at our Annual General Meeting in May, the old constitution, written back in 1990, no longer reflected our needs today. With the expert guidance of Carole Anne Priest,

Legal Advisor for Concordians, we navigated the process smoothly and ensured the meeting ran seamlessly.

We are delighted to share that the NSW Fair Trading model constitution was unanimously adopted by members at the EGM. It has now been officially lodged with NSW Fair Trading, marking a fresh chapter for the Concordians.

Next Concordians Dinner



A reminder that the next Concordians dinner will be held on 14 November in the Conference Room, Lower Ground Floor, Concord Hospital. This will be a sit-down buffet dinner.

We are grateful to Anthony Dombkins, the hospital's General Manager, who will kindly sponsor pre-dinner drinks in the courtyard next to the museum. The EM Lane Concordians Museum will be open, and our volunteers will be available to conduct tours for Concordians before the pre-dinner drinks and dinner.

We are also pleased to announce that Stewart Condon, the current Medical

Director at Concord Hospital, will be our Guest Speaker. Stewart will share insights from his fascinating experiences serving with Médecins Sans Frontières.

Schedule:

Museum tour opens: 5:00 pm

Pre-dinner drinks: 5:30 pm

Dinner: 6:00 pm

Cost:

\$65 for members

\$70 for non-members

Payment at www.theconcordians.com

REMINDER: SUBSCRIPTION PAYMENTS DUE

Concordians are kindly reminded that the annual subscription fee of \$10 is due in December 2025.

Subscriptions can be conveniently paid online at: www.theconcordians.com

Please note: New members who joined Concordians after June 2025 are not required to pay the subscription fee until December 2026.

JOIN THE CONCORDIANS

Membership of the Concordians is open to all past and present employees and anyone

who has a close relationship with the hospital

Details can be found at www.theconcordians.com/membership/

VALE STANLEY GEORGE KOOREY

Stanley George Koorey was born in August 1931 to Lily and George Koorey. His father had migrated from Lebanon in 1899, and Stan grew up as the youngest in a large, blended family.

Stan excelled at Fort Street High School in athletics, rugby, and drama before studying medicine at Sydney University, where he made lifelong friends. He loved rugby league, following Newtown and later Manly, and shared that passion with his children.

At Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Stan trained as a surgeon and met June, a nurse who became his wife and partner for 63 years. Together they raised Jennifer, David, and Emma. After earning fellowships in Australia and Britain, Stan built a distinguished career as a colorectal surgeon at Concord, Ryde, and Western Suburbs Hospitals. He was known for his meticulous skill, generosity, and devotion to teaching students. Patients adored him—one even named a daughter after him.

Stan was involved heavily in student teaching and surgical training and had the added responsibility of being Warden in the Concord RGH Clinical School. This was on top of his work as a busy consultant colorectal surgeon.

Though work consumed much of his life, Stan delighted in food, family gatherings, and Lebanese cooking passed down from his mother. In retirement, he and June travelled widely, later cherishing time with their grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Stan was devoted, humble, and quietly humorous. Even as age and illness took their toll, he never lost his love of sport, family, and food. He leaves behind children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren who will always remember his compassion, dedication, and warmth.

by Neil Harris

WARRANT OFFICER GEORGE FREDERICK STALKER

3 Squadron Royal Australian Air Force: 1939 -1946



George Frederick Stalker was born in Whitehaven, Cumberland, England, on the 31st of October 1916 to Ernst and G Walker. His sister Ethel was born two years later, in 1918.

Ethel Stalker (nee Lane) was the founder of the E M Lane Museum.

The family migrated to Australia and settled in Wollongong, at 9 Rowland Street. The children attended local schools, with George completing his leaving certificate.

The E M Lane Concordians Museum has, within its collection, several items belonging to George that record his experiences in the Middle East during the Second World War. These include two photo albums, and a diary.

The photo albums contain images beginning from his time at Richmond, NSW, arrival in Egypt and Libya, including Tobruk, Palestine, Libya and Syria. Additional items within the collection, likely belonging to George, are a wristwatch, sunglasses and a German geographical book on Libya published in 1941.

George enlisted in the RAAF a week after the declaration of the Second World War at Richmond Air Base on the 12th of September 1939. He was 22 years old, He enlisted for a period of six years with the rank of 'Ordinary Aircraftman', in 3 Squadron RAAF. By the time he embarked on the HMT Orontes in

Sydney in 1940, several promotions elevated George to the rank of 'Temporary Sergeant.' His role was as 'Orderly Room' Sargent, responsible for the clerical staff supporting the fighting airborne arm of the squadron.

3 Squadron was bound for North Africa to take on the Italians, who had aligned with the Germans, and were controlling Abyssinia (now Ethiopia) and Libya, which they invaded during the 1930s. The squadron disembarked at Port Suez and entrained to RAF Helwan, south of Cairo.

The squadron supported the army's rapid advance against the Italians into Libya, reaching Tobruk on 22nd January. The situation changed with the Germans entering the campaign. George notes on 13th February 1941, "arrived at Bennina at 0300. All hell let loose- know for sure. Died 8 times."



On 2nd April, he records "began packing, things not so good". Through the diary, there is a regular recording of those that were either KIA, killed or died, likely differentiating those killed in the air from those on the ground or other causes.

Three days later, during their retreat through the Derna Pass, German ME110 fighters strafed the men, inflicting more casualties. Following a short rest in Sidi Heneish, the squadron relocated to RAF Aboukir

in Alexandria, Egypt, and received reinforcements.

A week later, the squadron was on the move again. This time heading north to Lydda Airport in Palestine. This move was to participate in the campaign against the Vichy French in Lebanon and Syria.

After two months in Syria, the squadron returned to Egypt via Haifa and Beersheba.

The reinforced allies were now advancing against the German forces back once more into Libya. Through December and into January 1942, George records regular squadron losses, sometime several in one day.

In late January reinforcements arrived from Australia, and George was heading back to Australia.

Throughout the long journey to Australia via Columbo, George suffered badly from seasickness throughout the entire journey. On 7th August, George and his colleagues disembark at Port Melbourne to be transported to Ascot Vale showgrounds, where they undergo medical checks, get fed and rekkitted before heading into the city for a night on the town.

The next day, George leaves Spencer Street Station on the Spirit of Progress, arriving in Sydney the following day.

Service records indicated that George spent the rest of the war at several Australian bases, including time in hospital.

After the war, George settled in North Strathfield, living with his sister, and running a news agency in Five Dock. In 1990 he attended 3 Squadron's 50th anniversary in Richmond. Several photos in the collection show some of his colleagues. Service records also show that he wrote to obtain his war service medals, at this time, possibly for the reunion.