"SAPPER SUMMIT"

RAE CORPS NEWSLETTER

VICTORIAN ENGINEERS

November 2003 *ISSN 1325 - 7676* *Number 44*

Merry Christmas to all our readers.

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ROB YOUL'S COLUMN

I have two topics this issue, one on Australian philosophy and the other on our one-time neighbour at Swan Street.

Recently my wife and I enjoyed a Remembrance Dinner run by the Vietnam Veterans Association. We were in great company – a retired gunner major and PTI and a former air force engineer and their wives – and heard a short and compelling after-dinner speech by Peter Bruce CSC. Peter spent his RAAF career in bomb technology, including duty in Iraq.

He started by quoting the intensely moving inscription in English on a monument at Gallipoli – Ataturk's sensitive assurance to families of foreign dead on Turkish soil, that by dying in Turkey their men had become Turks and accordingly would be accepted and loved. I reproduced it years ago in Sapper Summit.

(Incidentally, I should be called a 'columnist' now, not 'editor' – others have always done the real work on Sapper Summit – people like the late Ed Vial, Bruce Campbell, and Austin Byrne, who runs the show so well these days!)

Peter continued that it seemed to be in our makeup to make friends with former enemies; that's certainly been so with Afrikaners, Germans, Italians and Japanese. I feel sure that the process continues with Korea, Indonesia and Vietnam.

However Peter criticised a VVA committee's veto of a recent plan for North Vietnamese veterans to visit Australia. I don't have any more details, but when he finished many localised discussions commenced. Almost everyone reckoned that the NVA servicemen would be very welcome, in keeping with our philosophy of 'let's get on with things now that the war's over!'

My neighbour, who had been in the training team, spoke of the letters and photos his Montagnard unit had found from time to time. They indicated that

the enemy forces were comprised of South or North Vietnamese or Communist Chinese with families, men just doing their job. One eminent brigadier with a practical passion for veterans' welfare said privately how welcome he'd been in Germany, and was later moved to stand and expand his strong feelings against the veto.

Another speaker reckoned sincerely that Vietnam veterans were without prejudice – I thought that went a bit far, in my experience. However, the only person I heard supporting the veto also has a great and deserved reputation for helping ex-servicemen. He said many of the men he worked with were marginalised and battered and would not want the visit to proceed. He felt such loyalty to them that he would respect their views.

For me, I heard Peter Bruce's last words with two thoughts running through my brain. How can we help Iraq and the Iraqis? And, whilst every year sees real progress, can we accelerate creating a better partnership with the Aboriginal community?

* * *

It's several years since 'Swan Street Sappers' appeared. Interesting people ring occasionally – like Garry Baker (9544 6066) -- to pass on their recollections. His passions are motor sport and local history, and he sees tragedy in the way whole community cultures can disappear, be forgotten. He encountered our book when researching the story of the Motordrome, just west of the depot.

It operated between the Wars, with homemade racers circling the steeply banked track at speeds up to 100 mph. You might think that's hardly appropriate for a dignified inner-city precinct! Well, Garry has aerial photos of a similar track behind the Exhibition Building, where the new museum stands today. It operated from 1928-36, when it closed abruptly – the owners ran a similar track at Kardinia Park, Geelong.

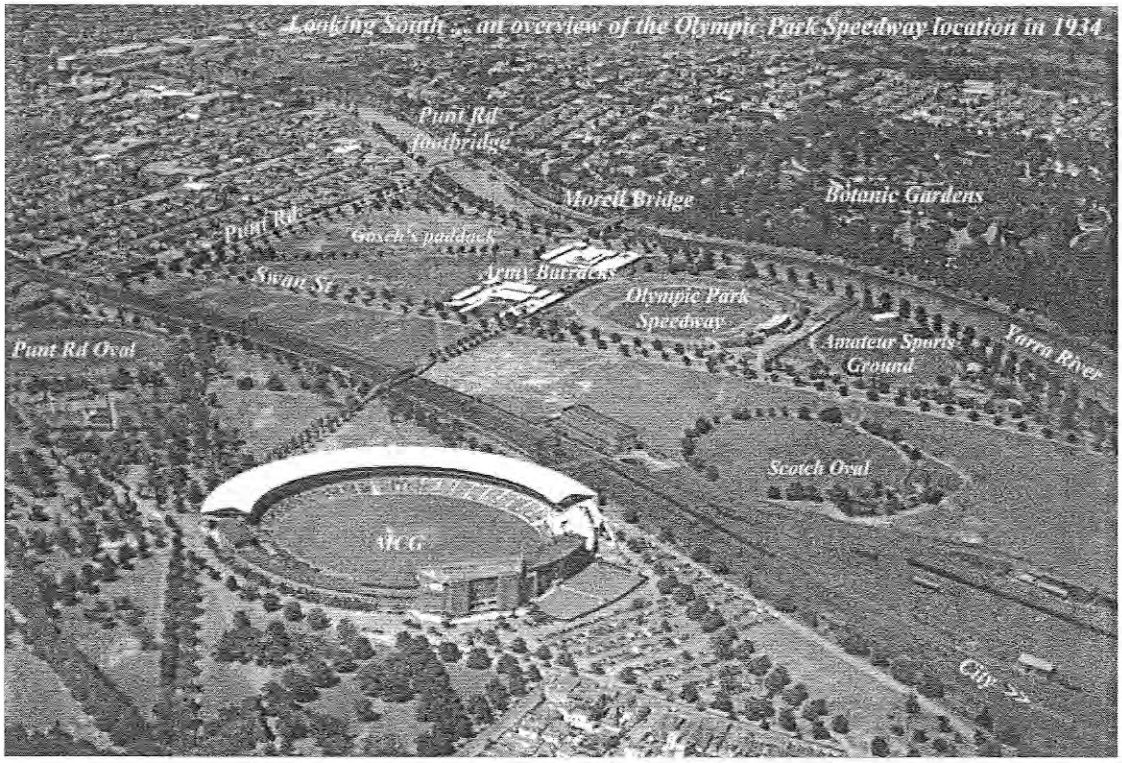
Garry has supplied some detail: Melbourne Motordrome was a high-speed saucer track built by John Wren's company, Melbourne Carnivals, for £30,000 and opened in December 1924. Specifications: three laps to a mile; 37 foot wide banked track, the outer 13 feet set at 48 degrees; access by subway. It was dismantled in April 1933 and replaced by Olympic Park Speedway, which continued until early 1946.

Garry also has a copy of a 1935 contract John Wren drew up for the Motordrome land to become the home of Richmond Football Club – had the proposal not failed by one VFL vote, we would have had the Tigers for neighbours!

Garry works in motor racing engineering and has a talent for restoring and enhancing images. His super-clear aerial photos of a cricket match at the MCG and surrounds include the newly built Swan Street barracks – there's no one on the parade ground – no vehicles either. In sharp contrast is a photo taken around 1940, with hundreds of army trucks lined up on the Olympic Park turf. Garry wonders about the name 'Olympic' – it appears first in 1934, which happens to be the year Frank Beaurepaire, a Games swimmer, made his first motor tyre.

Thanks, Garry, for many fascinating insights into a departed world.

Rob Youl



"SAPPER SUMMIT" SUPPORT

The RAE (Vic) Historical and Heritage Committee produces Sapper Summit four times a year. Can you help with news items, suggestions, letters to the editor, etc, including any constructive criticisms. Send them to either:

Austin Byrne on Tel: 9803 1061
email to: austbyrne@bigpond.com OR

Bruce Campbell on Tel: 9568 0320
email: bandbcampbell@optusnet.com.au

Our next deadline for articles is 29 February.

Note that articles or opinions of authors or contributors are their own and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Committee. The format and clarity of the articles is the responsibility of the contributor.

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COMING EVENTS

SIR CLIVE STEELE LECTURE "OPERATIONS IN IRAQ"

Readers are reminded again of the Sir Clive Steele Lecture scheduled for Friday 28 November.
It will be held at the Ringwood Engineer Depot, Dublin Road, Ringwood East.
Timings are:

Mess open: from 1900 hrs
Lecture commences: 1930 hrs

Light refreshments will be served at the conclusion of the lecture.

This year we are very fortunate to have three speakers who have just returned from Iraq. It is an outstanding opportunity to hear first hand accounts of Engineer operations there.

Further details are included on the flyer included in this issue.

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RECENT EVENTS

22 CONSTRUCTION REGT ANNUAL GET TOGETHER MYRTLEFORD 24-26 OCT. 2003

The host of this year's reunion was the 'Old Soldier' himself, Bob Eaton, his wife Joan, daughter Wendy and her husband Paul and centered on their motel, The Golden Leaf.
Most of our members stayed at this excellent establishment and we were certainly made most welcome.

On the Friday night we adjourned to the Railway Hotel, where they opened up the back Bar & Lounge for our private use. 32 members, wives and children took part in this informal gathering and, if success can be measured by the high level of animated conversation and laughter, a success it truly was.

Saturday saw the group break up into small parties and go their separate ways to the Myrtleford Show, Bright, Beechworth, Mt. Buffalo, the pokies at the Savoy Club or have a bet and watch the Cox Plate.

On Saturday night a semi-formal dinner was held in the dining room of the Golden Leaf Motel. Some of our members had during the afternoon, given a hand to make the table look impressive. The evening started with pre dinner drinks at 1800 hrs followed by dinner at 1900. Bob and Joan Eaton acted as hosts and Norm and Judith Dodgson acted as Dining President. Tony Bourke gave the toast to the Regiment and to recently departed comrades, Peter Bloor and Alan Hunnan. Warren Hardy replied to the toast to the Regiment. It was Peter Bloor's last wish that the Bloor family supply the port for which we thank them.

It was a great evening with 42 guests sitting down to dinner, some of who had come a great distance -- Jim Wood and his wife Margaret having driven for three days to get there from Harvey Bay.

On Sunday we had a BBQ Brunch at the Motel with about 30 people in attendance. The weekend was nearly complete. Jenny Eaton had agreed to take over as Secretary of our 'informal association' and took to the task with great gusto, raising about $200 toward the expenses for our next get together in Paynesville next year. Mike Fleming and Jenny Eaton will act as hosts.

Last but not least -- everybody had a great weekend, the comradeship was outstanding. Our thanks to Bob & Joan Eaton and their family for all the work they had put in. I am sure that Peter Bloor would have been suitably pleased with our weekend.

Next year's Get Together will be held at Paynesville on the weekend 22nd to 24th October. Please put it in your diary.

Tony Bourke

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RAE OFFICERS GOLF DAY

Once again the golf day was a success. Thirteen players enjoyed great golf in good weather at the Royal Melbourne Golf Club. Players came from across the State with a notable group from the LaTrobe Valley. Col Sir John Holland AC was unable to attend because of another engagement. The winners were LtCol Bill Van Ree and Capt Hayden Barlow from 22 Construction Regiment.

The handicapper, Brig Noble, has advised that next year he wants handicap information before the day. Handicap details will be part of the application, as well as the Club to which it attaches. In 2004 the Golf day will be on Friday 15 October, and will start at 1000 hours.

FROM THE UNITS

22 CONST REGT SITREP

The year commenced with Exercise Kick-Start on 17 Jan 03. This exercise aims at preparing all the Officers and SNCOs for the year ahead. This covers key personnel addresses, safety briefs, security briefs, AIRN requirements, command planning seminars and preparation for the following year. As tends to occur in the Army, the best-laid plans always seem to change. And change they did! This started on route to Ex Kick-Start when a tentative warning order was received. This stated that 22 Const Regt might be required to provide assistance for the fire fighting effort in the NE of Victoria. Within 48 hours 22 Const Regt and 4 CER had mobilised 100 personnel and deployed them to Myrtleford to assist with the fire containment of Victoria's worst fires since Ash Wednesday.

The initial rotation was commanded by 22 Const Regt; this was handed over to 4 CER in the second week and then to 2 CER for the final week. In total, 22 Const Regt had nearly 100 personnel involved in the effort over a three-week period. This provided a hectic start to 2003 for the regiment. The pace did not abate as within two weeks of the final DACC Tasks, 22 Const Regt was deploying on its Annual Field Exercise (AFX). This two-week exercise was based around the two Squadrons with the focus on skills training involving numerous construction tasks. Due to the huge commitment the unit had made for the DACC Fire Containment Task numbers were low for the AFX. This did not prevent the two squadrons completing some valuable training and construction tasks at Puckapunyal and in Newborough.

After this, 22 Const Regt turned the focus to weekend training and developing skills to ensure competency in the CO directed capability bricks. This period also saw the deployment of unit members to Timor, Bougainville and later on Iraq. It was also the preparation phase for 22 Const Regt's involvement in AACAP 03.

22 Const Regt, as part of its new role to round out 21 Const Sqn, had been tasked to complete a three-bedroom house. This was broken into two deployments of about 20 personnel each for a period of four weeks. Throughout the deployment, stores not being available for the house plagued the detachment. As a result, additional tasks were undertaken to assist 17 Const Sqn. Overall the tasks 22 Const Regt were assigned were completed and extra tasks were also finished. Throughout the two-month deployment manning fluctuated with extra requests being received continually for people from caterers, to plant operators and drivers. These were filled as best as possible given the short notice and the unit contributed a significant number of extra personnel.

Other activities that the squadrons have conducted during their training weekends have included extensive search training, watermanship training, demolition of an old non-equipment bridge, construction of MGBs, trade continuation training and an adventure training ski qualification.

All of this has led to an extremely busy, though rewarding year for the members of 22 Construction Regiment. As 2004 appears around the corner the unit is preparing for another busy year with the AFX being conducted in Sydney and support to AACAP in Far North Queensland.

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22 CONST REGT SUPPORT TO THE BUSHFIRE FIGHTING IN VIC

22 Const Regt officers and NCOs commenced arriving at the Newborough depot on the evening of Friday 17 Jan in preparation for exercise "Kick Start", the Regiment's planning weekend prior to the start of the Training year. The arrival of the CO and senior officers of the Regiment heralded the news of the worsening bushfire conditions in the alpine regions of Victoria and a possible request from the State Government to send in the Army Reserve to help out.

The CO directed that planning commence immediately on the make-up and size of any force that the unit may be asked to deploy to the area to help the stretched resources already on the ground. As the planning progressed the word came down that any assistance would probably not be required for another week or so, but, given the changing nature of this type of emergency the decision was made to continue to develop the plan for a quick response in case things quickly changed. This decision was to prove a prudent one because the request for troops to be deployed as soon as possible was received early the next day.

As the phone around continued for additional volunteers, final touches were made to the force composition and the logistics plan swung in to operation to allow for provisioning and equipping of the deployed force. After a period of less than 48 hours a team of reservists from both 22 Const Regt and 4CER were heading towards the bushfire threat.

The force consisted of some 60 members from 22 Const Regt and 40 from 4CER and 22 Const Regt commanded the first rotation. The force was based in the Myrtleford football ground precinct, which had been organised and prepared by a detachment from SLG Bandiana. This same group was co-located with the main force and did a great job in providing logistics support.

After some quick but valuable training provided by the CFA the main group was divided up into four discreet fire fighting support teams and allocated equipment, vehicles and plant. The Plant

support team consisted of D3 and TD15 dozers complete with individual plant floats (hired from civilian agencies) and the remaining teams were set up with chain saws and equipment for hand clearing of fire control lines.

As the fire situation worsened additional equipment and resources were allocated which included extra TD15 dozers, a forward repair team, a TPA from 1 PETL COY, a medical detachment and an MGI team from 1st Topo Sqn, Brisbane. Communications were important and this was well provided by a detachment from 108 SIG SQN. VHF, HF and CFA hand helds were the main means of communicating with important backup provided by satellite phones. Mobile phones also proved an invaluable tool for comms back to Melbourne.

All teams were in great demand and the working hours and conditions were both long and demanding. The following tasks were undertaken:

- The construction of several hundred kilometres of fire control lines
- The mixing of thousands of litres of fire retardant chemicals for water bombing.
- The clearing of fire control areas around vital assets such as communications towers and buildings.
- The repairs to Military and civilian plant and vehicles.
- The distribution of thousands of litres of fuel to plant fighting the fires, and
- Assistance with medical and administrative matters at emergency assembly points.

The first detachment completed their work and conducted a handover with the second rotation on Saturday 25 Jan. The following morning the first rotation minus some hardy souls who decided to stay on for another stint returned home to Melbourne for a well-earned rest. There was to be another 3 rotations after the first and these were composite forces made up from both Full Time and Part Time units from as far afield as 2 CER. In all, approximately 1.2 million hectares of forests and bushland was affected by the fires over that period.

The tasks proved extremely worthwhile and rewarding for all personnel involved. It also highlighted some frequently overlooked reserve engineer capabilities in Southern Australia. The potential to raise a 100-person contingent within 24 hours and be deployed in location within 48 hours is a formidable achievement for any unit, never mind reserve units who had to quickly rearrange full-time jobs to assist in this DACC Task. Overall the task was a success and portrayed to the public the Australian Army and the Army Reserve in a very good light.

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4 CER UPDATE
Key events for the rest of the year.

The unit should be starting to wind down as we approach the end of the year, but there is a long way to go before we can start drinking those Christmas beers.

The 21 members of the unit who have completed the Reserve Response Force training will formally sign the newly created conditions of service. The members will receive an annual bonus of $700 if they meet all the High Readiness requirements. The force goes operational in December.

We will be conducting an IET Module 1 and Plant course this November – December period. This will see the great majority of the unit employed in manning and attending the courses.

The 4 CER end of year parade will occur on the 13 Dec. The parade will farewell LTCOL Greg Mirabella as CO and welcome the new CO, LTCOL David Westphalen. The parade is open to all and will commence at 1730h at the Ringwood Depot. After the parade there will be an end of year function, featuring a band, raffle and BBQ.

The **Sir Clive Steele Lecture** is looking like a real success this year. We have secured two speakers, SGT Stuart Simpson and CAPT Adam Kelly, who will talk about their experiences in Iraq. The evening will be open to all ranks, both serving and retired and should prove an educational and entertaining evening. See the included flier for full details.

Life in the British Territorial Army – Capt David Wynd

When my civilian employer, ADI, sent me to England for 2 years, I decided to continue my Army Reserve service on attachment to the Territorial Army (TA). I'm currently attached to 125 (Staffordshire) Field Support Squadron, 75 Engineer Regiment, Royal Engineers (Volunteers).

I marched into the Squadron in February this year, and straight into the hot seat. The entire TA was gearing up for the gulf war with talk about compulsory call-ups, something that hadn't been considered since 1939! With the Sqn Ops Officer being sent to the gulf, I soon found myself a position in his seat. At the moment I am running two troops (Resources Troop, and Workshops Troop).

75 Engr Regt has four squadrons. These are 107 Field, 125 Field Support, 143 Plant and 201 HQ squadrons. All the squadrons hold almost all of their allocation of equipment and stores. A continuing maintenance nightmare! During war, 75 Engr Regt is under command of the 29 Engineer

Brigade, along with units from Turkey, Poland, the Netherlands, and Italy. The Brigade is under command of the NATO Allied Ready Reaction Corps.

125 Fd Sp Sqn is actually a divisional asset and usually lives in the Divisional Logistic area. That's right, we're Engineer Loggies, sitting ~100km from the front line. The Sqn's role is to support the division by running the Divisional Engineer Logistics Park, (where they store all the big engineer kit, from mines and explosives, to multiple sets of bridging, and Engineer Tanks!). The Sqn is also tasked with running battlefield illumination with huge search lights, running a general engineering workshop, and providing a bridging train (engineer drivers, who only deliver and pick up equipment bridging).

Obviously there are a lot of specialist skills here, especially in the field of Engineer Resources. These people are in strong demand, and almost all of my Resources Troop are on tour or have just returned from the gulf.

The biggest difference between the GRes and the TA is the training. All TA training is non-continuous modular training. They find it very fragmented and difficult to complete successfully. For all of those who think a weekend a month is too much, try two weekends a month!

So what's next for me? At the moment we're getting ready for the third rotation of compulsory call-ups for the gulf. Naturally recruiting is hurting a bit because of this, but we'll get through it with the usual engineer style (just make it up as you go). Just to make things interesting, the OC and 2IC are moving on, and I'm nominated for the 2IC's spot. I expect to be here for at least another 12 months.

Capt David Wynd, Formerly 2IC 38 Spt Sqn, 4 CER.

Sapper Summit has received several other reports on the activities of 22 Const Regt and 4 CER personnel this year, but have been unable to include them in either of the last two issues because of space limitations.
One of them was a report by Cpl A Jackson of 105 Const Sqn on a detachment that went to Darwin and East Timor to support the Tour de Force 5 Concerts for the troops. They erected the prefab canopy over the outdoor stage.
-- plenty of evidence of great work by both Regiments!

ASSOCIATION REPORTS

WOODPECKERS RAE ASSOCIATION

Woodys were well represented at the Reserve Forces Day on 6 July 2003, readily identifiable by our baseball caps. Two former OC's of 91 Forestry Sqn and members from Benalla and Ballarat were spotted exchanging the gos with city-based members. I appreciated the chance to meet and chat with the 'oldies' from 22, 105, 39, etc.

Tom Habblett Chambers, SSM 91, late 1960 early 1970s, passed away last August. A tribute to Tom appeared in the Herald Sun and together with Les and Elaine Malseed, Ashley Green, John Pitcher, John Phillips, John Arnold, Rus Williams and I attended Tom's funeral on Friday, 22 August 2003. Memories of Tom's past life, especially his army life, will abound for many years. I can see Tom, as I pen this article, as plain as day with his portable tape recorder playing marching music as he, on the move, drilled his Squadron to march down the main street of Benalla in the early 1970s.

On 20 September 2003, the AGM was conducted at the "Mill Site", Puckapunyal. This came about due to the wish of Maj Mark Roberts OC, 105 Construction Sqn. to utilise the knowledge and experience of Association members. Members, some 30 not including serving members, on site, first witnessed 'Ex Fair Dinkum' before participating in the AGM followed by a BBQ hosted by 105. The AGM included elections of the Committee for 2003/2004. The outgoing Committee was re-elected except Beth Stevenson (back in NZ). CPL Chris Costello was elected to the vacancy. Great that we have three serving members on the Committee.

Arising from a 'subtle' selling of a plan, at the AGM, to go back to Snake Island (see Swan Street Sappers pages 152-154) for the long weekend of Labour Day next March - the Executive of the Association subsequently met with Maj Mark and I am pleased to report the Woodys and 105 are going to Snake Island next March.

In closing, congratulations to Les Malseed on his recovery from his ill health and ongoing thoughts and prayers to Ashley Green for a similar outcome.

Michael Murray
President

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OLD SAPPERS ASSOCIATION INC

During September, we had a day out at Puckapunyal as guests of 22 Const Regt when they demolished the centre section of the Graytown Bridge. As part of the exercise, they also had to defend their position. Interesting to see in the modern day that not only are there blank cartridges for small arms but also hi-tech blank grenades. We thank 22 Const Regt for their hospitality.

Professor Dot Angell, our October meeting guest speaker, introduced the book "A Woman's War" which had been written by her sister Barbara Angell. The book detailed the exceptional life of

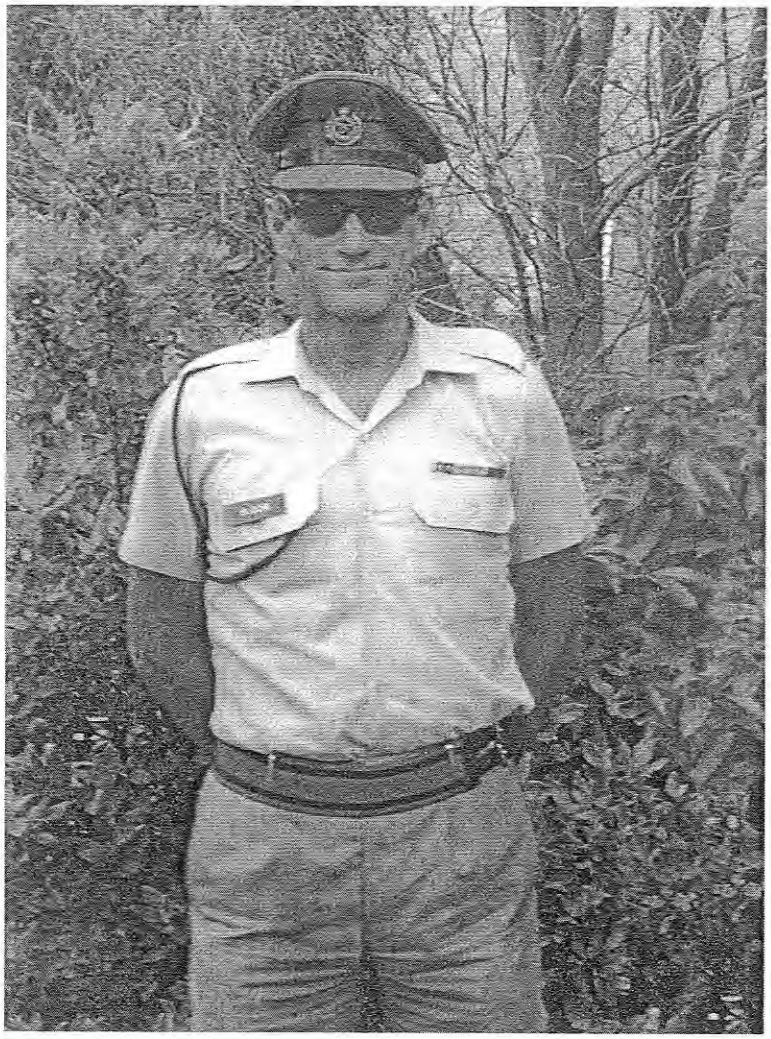
Wilma Oram Young AM. Wilma was well known to the OSA as she had been our guest speaker at the 1999 Waterloo Dinner.

We are now looking forward to our December meeting when we will conduct the 69th AGM of the Association.

RAE VIETNAM ASSOCIATION

Just a short report:
We held our Annual Meeting on 19 October, and re-elected the same Committee.
President: Allan Brown
Vice President: Roger Herrod
Sec/Treas.: Max and Lorraine Livingston
Committee Members: H. Bromley, L. Cowell, J. Crosling, G. Hawkins, J. Muir, and A. Rantall.

VALE
WO_2 Peter Alan Bloor
28 October 1938 – 18 October 2003



Peter Bloor was born in England in 1938 – the son of a successful British soldier, and emigrated to Australia in 1952. In the mid 1950s he joined the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission (SR&WSC) Survey Section at Numurkah, and in 1958 responded to the annual advertisement for employees of the SR&WSC to join 105 Construction Squadron. In fact, the writer, then a newly commissioned Lieutenant met Peter at the roadside between Congupna Road and Tallygaroopna to swear him in as a member of 105 – and what a successful enlistment that was – Peter continued on for 35 years, before finally retiring on his 55th birthday on 28 October 1993.

Peter served for the whole of that 35 years as a member of 22 Construction Regiment, with practically all of the time as a member of 105 Construction Squadron. He joined when enthusiasm

for service was on the rise, and rapidly won promotion through the NCO ranks, on successful completion of courses for promotion to Cpl, Sgt and finally WO. But his chief interest was always in the technical aspects of the RAE. He was an enthusiastic attendee, first as a pupil and later as an instructor at courses on demolitions, watermanship, bridging and driving.

Peter's enthusiasm was such that he was called on to fill many and varied postings in 105. During the 1960's, when 105 had an abundance of troops but was desperately short of Officers, Peter was frequently called on as a Troop Commander in Annual Camp, but he hated administration and formal parades and was always at his happiest with demolitions or teaching drivers.

One of his greatest attributes was his ability to make do with the minimum of equipment supplied by the Army – he could somehow arrange supply of whatever was needed from his sources to meet the needs. Peter was a generous spirited person who always did his utmost to support his beloved 105. As Maj Brian Chirgwin who was Peter's OC for many years, and close friend for decades, said in delivering an enthusiastic eulogy at Peter's funeral, Peter was a loyal friend, a soldier's soldier and a great asset to the Regiment. Peter's service to the RAE was recognised by the awards of EM, RFM and National Medal, with clasps.

One of Peter's greatest contributions to RAE continued until his death – namely his organisation, over a period of 10 years, of a series of well attended Annual Reunions / Get Togethers of members of 22 Regiment, held over a full weekend each Spring, at various towns around the State, where 22 members were active. Tragically, his death occurred just one week before the weekend activity at Myrtleford held on 24-26 October. Peter will always be remembered for the excellent organisation at these activities.

Peter's other great community activity was as a member of the Numurkah Country Fire Brigade, in which he served in various roles from 7 Nov 1966 until his death. His service was recognised with awards of 20, 25, 30 and 35-year badges culminating in life membership. He filled a wide range of postings including Group Secretary and Media Officer.

Peter was a great family man, and is survived by his wife Val, and children Juanita, Chris, Sally-Anne and David, together with 8 grandchildren.

Approximately 250 people attended Peter's funeral, held at Numurkah on Thursday 23 October. The service in St George's Anglican Church was followed by a march through the town led by three CFA fire engines, behind which some 45 members of the CFA and 35 active and retired Army Reservists marched the length of the main street. Following the burial at the Numurkah Cemetery, attendees went to the Numurkah RSL for refreshments.

All serving and retired members of 22 Construction Regiment join in offering sincere condolences to Peter's family, and thanks for Peter's unshakable loyalty and contribution to the Sapper family.

Bruce Campbell
OC 105 Const Sqn, 1965 to 1976.

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SOME MEMORIES OF THE WAR CRIMES COMMISSION, RABAUL 1946-47

John Hook, the writer of the following notes on the War Crimes Commission, Rabaul, was recently invited to read Ted Renton's excellent article on Sandakan, published in the March issue of Sapper Summit, and provide some comments on the aftermath, as seen by a young soldier / interpreter who worked on the trials of the Japanese soldiers brought to trial as a result of those crimes.

John was born into a family with an interesting military history. His great uncle Henry Hook was born in Wales and was awarded a Victoria Cross in the famous Rorke's Drift action in South Africa and served for almost all his remaining years in the British Army.

John's father, Thomas Hook, served in the "Old Contemptibles" (the equivalent to the ANZACS in British Army History) at Mons in 1914, and later with the British Army in Iraq in 1916. He was one of the few British soldiers to serve throughout all of WW1 and survive. As a result of Iraq, he suffered malaria attacks for the rest of his life.

He emigrated to Australia with his young wife in 1925, with John being born on the boat.

In accordance with the Hook tradition, John decided early in WW2 that he would join the AIF as soon as he turned 18, but to gain some useful knowledge in the meantime enrolled in a Japanese language course. He duly enlisted in January 1944, and after rookie training was drafted into an AIF crash course in written and spoken Japanese. Two other members of the course with whom John still maintains contact were:

- *Don Mann, born in Japan of Australian parents, who, as a LCpl, was the only Japanese speaking Australian serviceman present on Bougainville at war's end, and in consequence accepted the surrender of the Japanese garrison.*
- *Peter Barbour, who reached the rank of Sgt before his post-war discharge, and later, became Director-General of ASIO.*

The AIF was not generous in its promotion of expert interpreters – John also only reached the rank of Sgt, before his eventual discharge in January 1947, when he took early discharge. He spent the

last few days with his parents before his father's death as a result of malaria.

John's training as an interpreter included many days spent with Japanese POWs at Cowra, before transfer to New Guinea where he was involved in interrogation of POWs captured in the last stages of the war. He then acted as an interpreter at the War Crimes Trials at Rabaul, first at the trials related to the Ocean Island Massacre and later the trials of those involved in the Sandakan Death Marches.
--Bruce Campbell

John's memories of the trials are:

Hearing the straightforward admission "Yes, I gave the order for their deaths" from the Japanese Naval Lieutenant, (by name Miyasaka as I recall) who had been the Commanding Officer at Ocean Island at the end of the Pacific War, quite staggered me. As a young Japanese language interpreter, I had just landed at Rabaul to join the W.C. Commission after service in New Guinea with the A.I.F.

Unaware of the well-established precedent from the earlier Nuremberg Trials in Germany, of senior officers trying to protect subordinates by taking responsibility for giving the actual order to kill, I was taken aback as I had fully expected a denial. In fact he had ordered the death of the entire native population of Ocean Island (an island close to Nauru Is in the Pacific, NE of Queensland) by standing on a small hillock in a central position, and dipping the end of his sword in a gesture signifying "Fire" -- in full view of all his troops lined up fairly close to, and along some cliffs on the island. At the resultant volley, the approx 130 islanders, bound together in groups and lined up close to the actual cliff top, were all shot, falling into the sea below. Ironically, one of the sailors, a cockeyed cookhand, had missed his intended victim, who had survived by being dragged into the sea by the weight of his dead fellows. Feigning death, he had managed to free himself in the water when night fell and escape into nearby bushes. When Australian troops landed in following days (the war had just ended) the islander named Kabunare came out of hiding and informed the Australians of the massacre. That survivor was of course, the key witness in the subsequent trial at Rabaul, in April 1946.

That was my introduction, as a twenty year old, to the War Crimes Commission. My second trial, however, was much more traumatic - - it was that of those accused of war crimes in the Sandakan to Ranau Death Marches. It was especially traumatic, not only because of the ghastly details which emerged during the trials of the deaths of the POWs, from exhaustion, starvation, illness, bashings, shootings and torture, but also because the majority of the victims were Australians. As is well-reported only six, all Australians, survived out of some 1780 Australians and 640 British. Moreover, they survived, not because the Japanese did spare their lives, but because they managed to escape into the jungle at various times during the marches.
Three of the survivors, K. Botterill, W. Moxham and W. Sticpewich went to Rabaul to give evidence at the trials, from May 1946.

I clearly remember Keith Botterill, a tall seemingly laconic young man, who over the years, was often asked to comment in the press on the atrocities. He died in January 1997, a man reportedly frail and aged, but driven in his later years by a strong commitment to seek out and give news and comfort to relatives of comrades who had died in the Borneo marches. The last survivor, Owen Campbell, died recently (25th January 2003) in Adelaide at the age of 87.

It is not well known that apart from the Japanese, amongst the guards were a number of Formosans and Koreans #. However, it was widely known amongst the POWs that nationals of both these two former Japanese colonies were even more brutal towards them than the Japanese -- seemingly a case of 'Caesar's wife -------', in their perceived need to outdo their masters.

Investigations into the Death Marches commenced in Labuan, but were then passed on to the Australians at the 8th Military District, Rabaul, where the main trials were held.

War criminals found guilty of the Borneo atrocities were executed at the War Criminals Compound, Rabaul mostly during the middle of 1946. One of my duties on Rabaul and that of the other young sergeant interpreters from ATIS* was to attend the formal promulgation of sentence on the morning preceding execution. This occurred on parade at the WC Compound in front of assembled generals and admirals, several months after sentencing. The proceedings of the trial had, by then gone down to the Army's Legal Section in Melbourne for the final decision regarding confirmation, or rarely, commutation, of sentence. The reaction of the war criminals on parade at these ceremonies prior to their impending execution was without exception, completely lacking in emotion. As we were spared attendance at the actual execution on account of our age, I am unable to comment on their demeanour at the end.

By the time I returned to Melbourne in January 1947 for discharge, almost a hundred war criminals had been executed at Rabaul for various crimes. Towards the end, many had involved the killing of Chinese or Indians in and around Rabaul during its occupation by the Japanese. Again a little known fact is that apart from some long term residents of Rabaul, many of those killed had been volunteers from either the Chinese or Indian Armies who had volunteered to join the Japanese Army as labourers. The latter were Indians whose disgruntlement with British rule emerged strongly after the surrender of Singapore.

As a final irony, some twenty odd years later, seeing a paragraph in a local newspaper calling for volunteers to home host members of a visiting Japanese youth group, and wanting to see what the younger generation of Japanese was like, my wife and I volunteered to take two for the weekend. This led to some thirty years of involvement in both short and long-term Youth Exchanges with the Australia-Japan Society, of which the late Weary Dunlop was a patron for a period of some years!

John Hook
Ex A.I.F. VX94251

Allied Translating and Interpreting Service, an Allied unit the majority of whom were American 'nisei'. Nisei were American-born Japanese, not trusted to serve as infantrymen in the Pacific, but in Europe, they served in the 66th Infantry Division, reportedly the most highly decorated division in the U.S Army.

* It may be of interest to note that one of our colleagues, Sgt Peter Barbour, subsequently became Director General of ASIO.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

From Maj Oliver Raymond:

I saw the Editorial in the last Sapper Summit on the Solomon's' campaign. My elder son has been trying to sort out the Solomons' Forest Department for the last three years, trying to ensure that they are being paid for the logs that are being ripped out of their forests by various Malaysian and Philippine logging companies, as well as trying to ensure that the logging is done in an environmentally sensitive way. You can imagine what an up hill battle all that has been in a country that has had no enforceable laws – until a couple of months ago.

At any rate, Carolyn and I went over there for three weeks about 18 months ago, and one of the highlights from my point of view was a battlefields tour - one day with an Aussie who seems to be the acknowledged expert on the Solomons' campaign. Some of the points that really struck home to me as a result of this tour were:

- The initial landing at Henderson Filed by the US Marines was hardly opposed. Henderson Field was in the process of being constructed by a largely Korean group of labourers, with very few soldiers amongst them. The US victory was quick and complete.
- All the major action on land in the island of Guadalcanal took place within range of 155 mm artillery based on Henderson Field. The US troops had the guns. The Japanese had very few, and certainly nothing with the range of the US 155's.
- After the early assault by Ichiki's 900 men on the Marine positions on Red Beach (which was on the coast just near Henderson Field), all the next night the Marines could hear crocodiles munching on the Japanese bodies in the swamps to their front.
- Losses by the Allies at sea were considerably more than for the Japanese, whose seamanship seemed decidedly superior. Most of the naval actions were conducted at night, and despite the fact that the Japanese had no radar and the US forces did, the Japanese use of searchlights was so effective that they invariably ended up sinking more allied ships than they lost.
- Losses by the Japanese on land were considerably more than for the US troops.
- Bloody Ridge, which looms so large in the story, is just an insignificant wrinkle in the ground, covered in kunai grass rather than forest, and is within rifle range of Henderson Field.
- Time and again luck played a vital role in the outcome. One example – early in the US invasion of the area around Henderson Field, the Japanese Navy turned back from a night time foray down "the Slot" which could have wiped out the US transports with about half the invasion force of Marines still on board. The US navy had pulled back, leaving the transports undefended – luckily for the Allies, the Japanese didn't know this and turned back before encountering the US transports.
- The US troops had no heavy construction equipment with them, and Henderson Field was not complete when they took it. They finished it using captured Japanese equipment, which was primitive in the extreme. The outstanding efforts of the "Sea Bees" (Construction Battalion) in getting Henderson Field operational as soon as they did under appalling conditions was undoubtedly one of the major contributors to the final victory.
- The Japanese controlled the high ground for virtually all the campaign, which didn't seem to help them much as they didn't have the artillery to exploit their observation. From memory, their heaviest guns were 75 mm. Many of the Japanese positions looked directly down on Henderson Field.
- The fanaticism of the Jap soldiers was undoubtedly the major strength of their land battle. Once one gets into the hills around Henderson Field one could easily imagine how hard it would be to winkle out soldiers who were prepared to die rather than retreat or surrender. Anyone who has seen the film "The Thin Red Line" can rest assured that the scenes showing the US troops assaulting up a steep, kunai covered ridge is very true to life. Why was Henderson Field built where it was? Because it was about the only area on Guadalcanal that was flat enough for an airstrip!
- One of the US transports moored off the invasion beach had only one purpose – to manufacture ice – cream for the troops!
- It was the ability of the Allies to pour aircraft into Henderson Field that turned the battle. I

personally know one of the NZ fighter pilots who flew out of Henderson (an official Ace, with 5 victories) and there were Australian planes flying from there as well. The ANZAC fighter pilots flew Tomahawks, which I had always thought to be inferior to the Zero, but my friend assures me that they were equal to the Zero in the right circumstances.

- When the Japanese were all but finished, the Marines handed over to the US Army, and withdrew to prepare for their next campaign. After that, the fighting appeared to really bog down, and progress against the Japanese was extremely slow.

If anyone with any tactical training goes to Guadalcanal, I would strongly recommend making a strenuous effort to get on one of these battlefield tours. The Aussie who takes them has at times got a foxhole by foxhole grasp of the battle, and can tell you that PFC Joe Blow manned this foxhole on the night of such and such – because he has talked to Joe when Joe returned to Guadalcanal for a reunion. Not only the Americans, either. He has taken groups of Japanese veterans around the battlefields and correlated their stories with those of US troops. The tour I was on had an American History Professor on it. He was researching a book on the Marines on Guadalcanal and kept challenging points all through the day – but never successfully. The two men were obviously obsessed with the subject, and greatly appreciated bouncing their theories and stories off each other.

The official US memorial in Honiara is an incredible monolith. Their unofficial memorial is for sale in the Honiara Market every Saturday – old, dated Coke bottles that are apparently highly prized by bottle collectors, and which are scattered all over the battlefield! The Japanese memorial, by way of contrast, is a small white pillar hidden amongst the kunai on a high ridge well away from the town of Honiara.

For about three years after the war it was highly dangerous to swim in the sea around the Solomons, as the local sharks had become used to the taste of human flesh – they had plentiful supplies of it, after all. Now, however, the sharks have gone back to eating fish, and I was able to swim amongst sharks with no obvious problems to me! Quite an experience for an apprehensive Aussie.
Hope this is of interest to you.
Oliver RAYMOND

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From LtCol Don Hughes, former CO of 4 CER who is now at the Australian Command & Staff College:

"Enhancing the Knowledge Edge!"

In 2001 the three services individual Staff Colleges amalgamated to form the Australian Command & Staff College located at Weston Creek in Canberra. The purpose built College provides a 12 month course for about 180 middle ranking officers from the Royal Australian Navy (25), Australian Army (60), Royal Australian Air Force (36), Australian Defence Civilians (15) and a variety of overseas students (44).

Other courses conducted include the RAN Reserve Command & Staff Course and the Australian Army Reserve Command & Staff Course. For Army Reserve Majors, the course is a pre-requisite for promotion to LTCOL and consists of a Military History module (conducted by distance learning), a Command, Management and Training module (2 weeks residential) and an Operations module (also 2 weeks residential).

Army Reserve course members who successfully complete all coursework are awarded the post-nominal "psc (r)". Dependent upon an option within the Management module, a Graduate Diploma of Defence Management from the University of Canberra is also available.

Lieutenant Colonel Don Hughes RAE
Directing Staff – Land
AC&SC

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Things that are difficult to say if you are drunk:

- Innovative.
- Preliminary.
- Proliferation.
- Cinnamon.

Things that are VERY difficult to say if you are drunk:

- Specifically.
- British Constitution.
- Passive-aggressive disorder.
- Transubstantiate.

Things that are downright IMPOSSIBLE to say if you are drunk:

- Thanks, but I don't want to sleep with you.
- Nope, no more booze for me.
- Sorry, but you're not really my type.
- No kebab for me, thank you.
- Good evening officer, isn't it a lovely night tonight?
- I'm not interested in fighting you
- Oh, I just couldn't – no one wants to hear me sing.
- No, I won't make any attempt to dance thanks, I have zero co-ordination.

We will have a subscription form in the March issue of Sapper Summit.
If you are not a subscriber, and wish to become one, contact Austin Byrne on (03) 9803 1061.

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From all at Sapper Summit ---
A Merry Christmas