"SAPPER SUMMIT"

RAE CORPS NEWSLETTER

VICTORIAN ENGINEERS

November 2004 *ISSN 1325 – 7676* *Number 48*

Merry Christmas to all our readers.

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Printed by: Kwik Kopy, 6 Burwood Highway, Burwood

ROB YOUL'S COLUMN

Monty – continued

With my main source Nigel Hamilton's biographies, my précis of Bernard Montgomery's life until El Alamein continues:

Days before World War II broke out, Montgomery took over 3 Division in southern England. His experiences over the next eight months, culminating in Dunkirk, were vital preparation for his role as a commander of armies in the field.

He recognized that modern forces needed efficient, even dictatorial command and able and tireless officers. Units had to be properly trained and appropriately fielded – divisions as divisions, brigades as brigades, completely supported by guns and tanks and good staff planning and administration.

Montgomery's corps commander was Lt Gen Alan Brooke, leader of 2 Corps, and, from his first days with 3 Division, Monty concentrated on organization, tasks and command, not drill and turnout.

A month later, the division landed in France on 30 September at Cherbourg in Normandy. However its transport was in Brittany at Brest, where French wharfies looted the stores and the officers' luggage. The expected intensive individual training was curtailed, and the division moved north to Lille. The British Expeditionary Force (BEF) commander was Lord Gort, a VC winner but inexperienced in high command.

Whilst the image of the Phoney War is one of bored armies facing each other, Gort failed to prepare the BEF for its mission, and kept his own headquarters scattered and labyrinthine.

However, Monty soon had his division laid out, dug in, installing minefields and training in the art of manoeuvre, especially the fighting withdrawal to preserve initiative in defence. From 30 October he mounted five full-scale divisional exercises – motorised movement at night, day marches, road blocks for civilians, telephone battles, daily routines that included guaranteed rest periods and meals for the troops. Carefully staged conferences preceded and followed the exercises to maximize value to officers, with postings for those who failed to impress.

By 12 November German troops were massing to the east of Belgium, the likely destination for 3 Division, but the Belgians, trying to preserve neutrality, would not allow any British reconnaissance or planning within their country. This situation continued for months – the Germans kept deferring their attack plans and the Belgians stayed aloof.

At Lille, Monty had a theological crisis: he'd issued written orders that COs address their men on the dangers of venereal disease, ensure condoms were on sale in the NAAFI, publicise the French word for condom, and endorse certain local clean brothels. The Chaplain-General complained to Lord Gort and Monty was almost sent home. General Brooke saved the day by insisting he be the one to censure his pragmatic subordinate.

Monty cut his headquarter staffs, combined them into one and made his GSO1 into a chief of staff – authorized to take whatever decisions were necessary whilst the commander was in the field watching, encouraging, learning and planning. His sapper, gunner and signals commanders were all part of his centralized planning and co-ordination. The last divisional exercises were in March and April.

Belgium and Holland were invaded on 10 May 1940, and 3 Division moved northeast into Belgium to Louvain on the river Dyle, where at dawn next morning the Belgian division already and unexpectedly in place, fired on 3 Division's machine gun battalion.

The Netherlands capitulated on 14 May as a southern push by the Germans took them well into northern France and eventually to outside Calais. Now the Northern Allied Armies – French, Belgian and BEF formations – were disposed between the Wehrmacht's Army Groups A and B. The French were not fighting hard; nor were most of the Belgians, who often surrendered without a shot. Moreover, the French general staff seemed totally unorganized for war. Meanwhile Gort was responding piecemeal, with his chief of staff by his side always and his three headquarters often out of touch.

Yet Monty was unperturbed; 3 Division stoutly defended Louvain, the gateway to Brussels. He had confidence in his commanders; he did his rounds and gave his orders; and he slept well each night, to be wakened only in an emergency.

The BEF prepared to retire to the Escaut canal. As 3 Division was well versed in such moves, it was at the river Dendre by dusk on 16 May, minus one brigade. Monty watched as the corps screen, an husssars unit, was destroyed – he had always complained the cavalry were quixotic and under-trained, and the experience stayed with him in later campaigns.

Things got much worse for many elements of the BEF, with units breaking up and reforming as the Germans pressed on, pushing the BEF and its French and Belgian allies towards the coast. Gort and Pownall, his chief of staff, were caught up in this, but back at the BEF headquarters, Leese on Gort's staff was taking a longer view, conceiving an emergency plan to withdraw the BEF through Dunkirk port, maintaining the integrity of the BEF and salvaging some of its equipment.

The French and Belgians only started to learn from 28 May that the BEF would leave France. Apparently, the War Office didn't know too much either, and was still unwilling to countenance defeat or absconding – although the latter was the only possible strategy with the general French defeat of 18-19 May. For all this, little was done to prepare Dunkirk for the eventual evacuation.

On the eastern flank of the BEF, 2 Corps under Brooke stood firmly, intact, orderly, always fighting - an inspiration to the other BEF units. It reacted rapidly to cover a premature withdrawal by Barker's 1 Corps, and occupied positions north east of Lille from 23-27 May. Brooke observed his two divisional commanders closely: Alexander leading 1 Division was unaffected, cool, composed, undoubting; Monty was stimulated, alerted, on edge, responding immediately.

The panzers halted outside Dunkirk on 24 May – the pincers were very tight, with the BEF still moving westwards and the remaining Belgian forces dissipating to the north. Gort briefly looked at the BEF breaking out through the southern German lines to rejoin the bulk of the French army beyond the Somme. This would have been hard to do with fourteen panzer and motorized divisions, plus many an infantry division, in the thirty-kilometre belt between the French-Belgian border and the Somme.

And the threat to the BEF on the north was intensifying as the Belgians continued to crumble.

Gort called off the attack, strengthened the BEF's northeastern front and saved his force. Brooke was the man who made the decision work. He blocked German attacks from the north east, and after warning Monty about the plan to use Dunkirk, moved 3 Division to the north of Ypres on 27 May at night, so that it could cover all the withdrawing BEF and allied forces pivoting behind it.

This difficult manouevre – disengaging the division from contact; crossing the lines of communication of three other divisions, whose own fronts were fluctuating; and taking up a new and unreconnoitred position before dawn – was accomplished perfectly. The route had been marked, numerous guides were in position and wireless used to control each phase.

But Gort's headquarters had faded. Brooke took over. The Belgians surrendered leaving 3 Division at dawn on 28 May with no formed units between it and the coast twenty-five kilometres away – but at least there were lots of milling Belgian soldiers there to hold up the German progress.

As it happened, a collection of French troops and 3 Division's artillery and engineers filled the gap, and as the Germans reached Nieuport heavy rain fell and low cloud prevented operations by the Luftwaffe, saving the day as the roads were crammed with men and vehicles and wrecks. That night, Monty's trusted deputy, 'Marino' Brown, was killed at Nieuport.

On 29 May, 3 Division withdrew again towards Dunkirk; it now faced four enemy divisions. The Germans were as relentless as ever, but by dawn on 30 May, 3 Division was at La Panne overlooking the Channel. The campaign was twenty–one days old, but Monty had slept regularly each night, was cheerful and convinced he had the best division in the British Army. His division still numbered 13 000, and had most of its guns and plenty of ammunition.

Suddenly Brooke was called home to help 'reforming new armies.' He felt like a deserter, and spent his last day ensuring 2 Corps remained secure. Brooke broke down in Monty's presence but recovered and was driven away, leaving Montgomery to command 2 Corps.

By now, the concentration of the BEF precluded heavy German attacks, so they relied on patrolling, sniping and artillery to disrupt the BEF – without realising that the sandy soil made the exploding shells relatively ineffective. Evacuation seemed more and more achievable.

Monty attended Gort's desultory conference at La Panne on 30 May, and urged Gort to give Barker's 1 Corps to Alexander, which happened. Moreover he pointed out that full evacuation was possible, in contrast with Gort's expectation that one corps might have to stay behind.

Gort and Barker departed the theatre, leaving Alexander and Monty in charge. The plan for 2 Corps was straightforward: vicious counter-attacks when German units moved in, then a night withdrawal to the La Panne-Bray coastline, where all the sappers had been summoned to improvise jetties from trucks run into the sea.

Monty was in his element – Corps HQ was at La Panne and the defence effort well co-ordinated. The sea was choppy with numerous bombing raids and air battles. Evacuation was well regulated by 3 Division's signalers with troops passing from the reception areas in the dunes to the small craft coming and going from the makeshift piers. The exodus accelerated at night until the tides were unfavourable, when troops were directed 25 kilometres south to Dunkirk itself. Fortunately southern England's small ships and boats had been mobilized by now – on 31 May, 68 000 troops crossed the Channel.

Monty and his staff left the Bray dunes at 3.30 am on 1 June and walked towards Dunkirk, but found a lorry and then drove the rest of the way with difficulty, leaving on *HMS Codrington*, a destroyer. He was in London by 3.00 pm to report to the War Office.

By the next evening, Alexander had evacuated the entire rear guard. Dunkirk was ablaze and the campaign was over. A quarter of a million British troops had been repatriated.

Churchill warned that wars were not won by evacuation – that this was not a victory! But the nation believed the opposite and the returning troops were heroes.

But there were to be two more years of bungling and loss. However, after that Monty especially would avenge Dunkirk in the Egyptian desert, reverse the chain of defeat, reorient the British Army and show that the democratic allies could prevail.

* * * * *

I started the series because, after reading Monty's biography, I wanted to describe how he took over the Eighth Army from Auchinleck in August 1942 and his immediate and astonishing effect on the organisation and the men. But I have found it impossible to compress the story. I intend in the next column to go through with Monty to El Alamein and leave it after that.

To be continued

SAPPER SUMMIT SUPPORT

The RAE (Vic) Historical and Heritage Association Inc, produces Sapper Summit four times a year.

The President is Maj Bruce Campbell (Rtd)
The Secretary/Editor is Maj Austin Byrne (Rtd)

Our deadlines for articles for the 2005 issues are:

- March issue by 25 February
- May issue by 29 April
- August issue by 12 August
- November issue by 28 October

We are looking for news items, suggestions, letters to the editor, etc, including any constructive criticisms. For the next issue, send them to either:

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

Bruce Campbell on Tel: 9568 0320 or 5974 1685
email: bandbcampbell@optusnet.com.au

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

Mail can be sent to:

The Editor, Sapper Summit
RAE (Vic) Historical and Heritage Association,
C/- Oakleigh Barracks,
1318 North Road,
OAKLEIGH SOUTH, VIC, 3167

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RECENT EVENTS

RAE OFFICERS GOLF DAY

Once again the golf day was a success. It rained --- never-the-less, twelve players enjoyed great golf 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 able to attend and presented the trophy to the winners – a pair of bushrangers called "Hutch and McQueen" -- Lt Col John Hutchinson and Maj Alex McQueen. Well done.

... *Information from Maj David Taylor*

NEWS FROM THE UNITS

22 CONST REGT

105 Construction Squadron

105 Construction Squadron have spent the past few months putting the finishing touches on their construction work in Puckapunyal at the school of Artillery and ALTC. It has been a long time since the Squadron has been able to concentrate on construction work for a few months in a row, and this has really enabled some excellent work to be achieved.

Speaking of excellent work, CPL "Ritchie" Cunningham's section brought the CO's challenge trophy back to 105 for the second year in a row (won last year by CPL Collins' section). This year's challenge was a tough slog which had the troops working from midnight on Friday through to midnight Saturday with only a few chances to get some shut eye in between. It consisted mainly of FE-type stands, with a couple of lateral thinking tasks as well. CPL Cunninghams section proved too good throughout the weekend, and came away easy winners.

Currently as this issue goes to press, 105 are in their second extended exercise for the year.The exercise got off to a great start with a soldiers dinner for the Sqn and past members at Plunketts winery. Fine wine, food and company were enjoyed by all, but that was all forgetten by Sunday morning when we had to start the real work. Over the course of the week, the Sqn will run a number of construction tasks, including some high profile work with the Melbourne Zoo and DSTO (More on this next edition) and a new work area at the barracks.

Finally, congratulations to our newest NCO's - LCPL Laragy and LCPL Smith, and also to CPL Devenish and CPL Collins for well deserved promotions.
... *Capt Haydn Barlow*

39 Construction Squadron

Since the last Sapper Summit, 39 has been busy, both on and off the "field". We kicked off this part of the year in August at Dutson Downs with a reserve demolition task on a Non-equipment Bridge that the squadron had built the month before. The weekend was a big success with the Squadron working with elements of 4/19th Prince of Wales Light Horse. In extremely cold temperatures, our newly issued cold weather clothing got a good work out.

In September, the Squadron saw two of its most experienced Sappers, Sappers Helmuth and Harvey, promoted to Lance Corporal. September also saw the Squadron running Red Card Training and an Appliance Tester's Course, with the Plant/ Transport Troop lending support to RMC – Duntroon for the third year in a row. They assisted in the construction of a defensive position at Puckapunyal for the benefit of 3rd Class Staff Cadets.

In October, the Squadron participated and hosted the Regiment for the "CO's Challenge" weekend activity around the shores of Lake Narracan. One of 39's sections, led by LCPL Helmuth came an honourable second place – Congratulations to all participants for their efforts.

LTs Courtice and Goodson travelled to Nepabunna in South Australia for a reconnaissance. Nepabunna is a remote aboriginal community which has an airfield in dire need of repair to enable the Royal Flying Doctor Service to serve the community. We hope to have this task as a future AFX task.

LT Goodson received an ASM for his four months service in the Solomon Islands during Operation Anode. He also received a Commendation for his work from the Commander of Combined Task Force 635. The OC, Maj Cliff Parfitt, finally received the Defence Force Long Service Medal (15 years service) plus clasps 1, 2 and 3 for 30 years service. WO2 McEvoy also received his DFLSM plus clasp for 20 years service.

Our congratulations also go to 39 Construction Squadron members who have recently had children: SPR David Stevens and his wife Jenny and CPL Gerard Van Der Velden and his wife Narelle both gave birth to girls recently.

With the end of the year rapidly bearing upon us, the calendar sees one further training weekend for the squadron, before a Regimental end of year parade and short stand down. We wish everyone a safe and enjoyable holiday period.
Capt Jenny Bourke

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4 CER UPDATE – Nov 2004

The second half of the year has seen the focus of 4 CER's training remain on basic soldier and sapper skills, but has seen an increase in the integration of our training with the other combat arms. August and September saw the Regiment deploy to Puckapunyal to practice counter mobility tasks. Anti tank ditches and wire obstacles were sited and constructed to protect company defensive positions, culminating in a live fire demonstration of the effectiveness of machine gun fire in the defence. It was somewhat disconcerting to all sappers to see the weight of fire a single machine gun can apply to a correctly sited obstacle that a sapper would be called on to breach.

In October we consolidated the unit's fieldcraft training with a back-to-basics section level patrolling exercise. The exercise was spiced up by the inclusion of enemy parties supplied by Recon Platoon 5/6 RVR. Our soldiers were tasked with tracking down the enemy patrols, while the recon soldiers had been tasked to gather intelligence on our patrols. While our enemy managed to gather a good deal of useful intelligence, one of our patrols managed to catch a recon party with their pants down at one point – evening up the scorecard.

The increased importance of the Army Reserve in meeting the ADF's overseas commitments was once again demonstrated when 4 Bde were tasked with providing a company group to deploy to Rifle Company Butterworth in Malaysia. A section of sappers from 4 CER have downed tools and slapped on some cam cream for a four month stint of infantry minor tactics in the close terrain of the Malaysian jungles. We look forward to the return of these soldiers early in the new year.

Looking ahead, the Regiment will hold its end of year combined dining in night at the Victoria Barracks Sergeants Mess on Friday 26 Nov. This function will give us an opportunity to farewell our QM, WO1 Dale Mitchell, who will be leaving the ARA after 21 years to pursue his fortunes on the outside while he is still young and good looking. Messages of farewell and best wishes for WO1 Mitchell can be passed through 4 CER, 56B Dublin Rd, Ringwood East, 3135.

Best Christmas wishes from all at 4 CER

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MEMORIAL PLAQUE AT SITE 17, SEYMOUR

A memorial wall has been constructed at the site of the old SITE 17 Camp, Seymour, with plaques listing various units which trained there. The Historical and Heritage Association has decided to arrange for the installation of a plaque commemorating the RAE units which trained at Site 17.
We know that units included 16 and 22 Const Regts,41 Rwy Sqn, 91 Forestry Sqn and 3 Div Field Engineers, however we believe the list is incomplete. There must have been many RAE Units, particularly during WW2 who should be included. Would anyone with information on this please contact the Editor of Sapper Summit so that we can complete the list. It is intended to install the plaque in the first half of 2005.
(See page 4 for how to contact the Editor)

ORBITUARIES

Col John McDonald, ED

Members of RAE Corps and other friends of Col John McDonald were saddened to hear of his death at the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital on 16 October after a long fight with cancer. He was 80.

He served in a variety of units, and was Commander of 6 Construction Group from 1970 to 1973.

Attendance at John McDonald's funeral on 20 October included a great number of his friends who served with him in various RAE Units, MUR, and other military units and professional ssociations.

At the conclusion of the funeral service, conducted by 6 Roman Catholic clergy, a guard of honour of more than 60 serving and retired members of ARA and AREs formed up outside the church as the cortege departerd for the cemetery.

We extend our condolences to John's family.

There will be a full orbituary in the next issue of Sapper Summit.

Sergeant Ian Buck

Ian Eric Buck
29.1.1945 – 28.9.2004

Ian died after a long battle with cancer. He will be remembered by most members of 22 Const Regt for his good-natured knock-about character. Ian was a good field engineer Sgt. and could drive just about anything in the way of trucks or plant.

In civilian life, Ian had a long career in construction, working on the MURLA Tunnel, before starting his own business, at the height of which he employed 36 people in the roof plumbing trade. As a hobby he loved fishing and was President of the Knox Boating & Fishing Club. He will be very much missed by us all.
.... *Capt. Tony Bourke*

ASSOCIATION REPORTS

WOODPECKERS RAE ASSOCIATION

On 10 October 2004, the Woodpeckers RAE Association held their AGM at the Manhattan Hotel. There was a healthy attendance of members including a number of partners. Some members had travelled a considerable distance, eg. Dimboola, Nathalia, Tyers, Maffra. There were over twelve apologies.

Some items of business conducted at the AGM will be of interest to the wider RAE family:

- Incorporation of the Association to be undertaken during 2004/2005.
- Website, with appropriate security, on-line 2004/2005.
- Application with Forests Commission Retired Personnel Association.
- Representation on Historical and Heritage Committee.
- Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with 105 Construction Sqn.
- Soldiers dinner with 105 Construction Sqn, 20 November 2004. (NB: This function hopefully will incorporate signing off of the MOU).
- A Woodpecker banner, to be used as a rallying point to be purchased. Offer of payment for the banner by Ashley Green's widow, Lorraine, was appreciated.
- Social and joint activities for the next year.

The following members were elected to the Committee for 2004/05:

Oliver Raymond	Graeme Ford
Dan Darcy	Les Lasham
Tony Jackson	Chris Costello
Bob Brasher	John Morey
Michael Murray	

Great to have three serving members, Tony, Chris and Bob on the Committee.

On 20 October 2004, I had the pleasure to attend the 'break-up party' of the Ex-Forestry Group Association RAE. Sadly the ranks of these WWII veterans is, as you would expect, declining. At their Committee meeting in September, the three members present determined to disband and close the Association down. I was proud to report to the break-up party that the Woodys and 105 commits in the MOU to provide a banner party each Anzac Day, thereby continuing to remember and honour the WWII Forestry Coys RAE.
.... *Michael Murray*
President

22 CONST REGT ANNUAL GET TOGETHER

The annual get together of the Old & Bold took place this year at Lakes Entrance and was organized by our Secretary Jenny Eaton and thanks to an enormous effort by Jenny we broke many records for attendance.

Friday 22 Oct. 04: From lunchtime onwards we began to arrive at the RSL Motel and at 1500hrs. in the main members lounge we started to gather for drinks, nibbles and conversation and … conversation and … conversation. We moved into dinner at 1800hrs and had an informal meal for about 50 people.

Saturday 23rd Early morning was free to do your own thing. At about 1100 hrs we boarded the Thunderbird for a trip down the lakes to Metung for lunch. About 54 of us took part. Had a leisurely lunch at the Metung Pub after which we rejoined the boat for a trip to Paynesville and a look at how the other half lives, then back to Lakes about 1600hrs.

We gathered again at 1800 hrs for our Annual Dinner for which we seated 64 people. Tony Bourke was Dining President, Norm Dodgson said grace, Maurie Squirrel gave the toast to past comrades, Jim Spencer the toast to the Queen, Bob Treller gave the toast to the Regiment, Noel Osborne replied on behalf of the Regiment and Tony Bourke toasted the Corps. The dinner was a great success, which can be attested to by the late finishing hour and the seedy people next morning. The evening ended with a rendition of "The barmaid at the Inn of Inverary" given by Norm Dodgson, Keith Bennett, Tony Bourke & Bob Eaton.

Sunday 24th saw some 40 people for late breakfast and fond farewells until we next meet in **Bendigo in 2005**.

It would be unforgivable if I did not congratulate the Lakes Entrance RSL and Jenny for the magnificent effort that they put into the weekend. It was great. Please put the 3rd weekend in October 2005 in your diary and keep it free.

… *Tony Bourke.*

22nd Construction Regiment RAE

Warrant Officers, Lieutenants, Captains just a few
Corporals and Sergeants, many Sappers too
Majors and Colonels had made their way
We even had someone to do the pay

Plant Operators, drivers, and cooks
Storemen and people who kept the books
Men and women made up this crew
All with their training and jobs to do

Many characters along the way
Have joined in and had their say
Skinner and McCormick in the Admin cell
Quick to help you or give you hell
In Transport, Hunnam and Bloor
Drivers and plant operators who knew the score
Williams and Eaton tended the store
Counting clothing and blankets behind the door

Carboon and Woolley, they did cook
For a coffee we all knew where to look
Buck n' Johnson hid in the Sergeant's mess
Where'd they'd been, **well** that was anyone's guess

Squirrell and Bourke took a PSO
From the Sergeants' mess they had to go
Bilton, Spencer and Barnes
Always great for telling yarns

Chirgwin and Hardy held the reins
Green ink ran through their veins
Treller and Printz the feared 'RSM'
The disciplinarians of women and men

Who are this band of women and men?
Who come together to remember when
When they were called the 'ginger beers'
22nd Construction Regiment, Royal Australian Engineers

Lorraine & Jenny Eaton © October 2004

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OLD SAPPERS ASSOCIATION INC.

We were fortunate to have Dr Clement Malau as a guest speaker at our October general meeting.

Dr Malau spoke on the worldwide problem of AIDS and particularly its impact on Papua New Guinea. We all understand that AIDS is an enormous worldwide health problem but perhaps do not quite appreciate the additional problems thrown up by underdeveloped countries.

Finance to fight the problem is always difficult to find but additionally the country has approx. 260 different dialects. It follows then, that printed material has only a limited effectiveness as would radio or television broadcasting. The distances involved coupled with the type of terrain only exacerbate the problem of education.

The Association will conduct its 70th AGM on December 12th 2004. That is a truly remarkable achievement and testament to the resilience of old sappers.

To facilitate catering, those interested in attending should contact our Secretary, Jim Crosling on 9438 2273 by 5 December. Inquiries re membership are always welcome on the same number.
... *Jim Muir.*

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VIETNAM VETERANS

Vietnam Veterans Day, 18th August, was once again held at the Shrine with well over 1000 vets marching. Large crowds watched them marching up the Shrine -- each year the crowds are getting bigger.

This year was the first time we have had politicians attending the ceremony. We had the Governor, John Landy, AC, MBE together with the Premier, the Hon Steve Bracks MP, taking the salute.
Mr George Logan RFD, was the guest speaker.

On 24th October, 2004 the AGM was held at the Noble Park RSL. National Patron, (Ret) Col John Wertheimer, OA, RFD attended.

The 2005 Committee consists of:
President : Alan Brown
Vice-President: Roger Herrod
Treasurer/Secretary (Doc) Max Livingston together with his wife Lorraine.
Editor: Bob Pride

Committee members were re-elected.
Allan Rantall, George Hawkins, Jim Muir, Jim Crosling, Les Cowell, Harold Bromley, C. Tricket.

Allan Rantall is the representative for the AVADSC (Australian Veterans and Defence Services Council) taking over from Jim Muir. Jim Muir decided to step down after many years in this position. Many thanks to Jim.

See you next meeting,
Regards
... *Allan(Bluey) Rantall*

NAMIBIA (UNTAG) RE-UNION 15 YEARS

This is a reminder to Ex 17 Const. Sqn personnel who served either in the first or second contingent that went to Namibia (Untag).
Re-union activities are:

- Re-union to be held at SME at 1800 hrs on Sun 24th April 05, including a BBQ dinner
- RAE dawn service and Gun Fire Breakfast at SME at 0430hrs, on Anzac Day.
- Marching with 17 Const Sqn Assoc in Sydney on Anzac Day 05.

Local motels can provide accommodation, but get in now! Interested parties please contact:
WO1 Bob Dooley RSM 5CER,
The Crescent, Penrith, NSW 2750
Ph (02) 4721 9255
email:robert.dooley@defence.gov.au

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RAE ASSOCIATION

The Association had to cancel their Reunion BBQ at the Ringwood Depot on 13 November because the Depot was unavailable.

We are holding a **"PRE-CHRISTMAS DINNER"**
at the Ringwood RSL,
Station Street, Ringwood
on Tuesday 7th December, from 1830 hours.

Book directly with the RSL & reserve a table... tel 9870 6604
... *Arthur Cale*
tel 0411 102 715; email: arthur_cale@bigpond.com

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I DON'T WRITE THEM, I JUST PRINT THEM!

A man and his wife were having an argument about who should brew the coffee each morning.
The wife said, "You should do it, because you get up first, and then we don't have to wait as long to get our coffee."
The husband said, " You are in charge of cooking around here and you should do it, because that is your job, and I can just wait for my coffee."
Wife replies, "No, you should do it, and besides, it is in the Bible that the man should do the coffee."
Husband replies, "I can't believe that, show me."
So she fetched the Bible, and opened the New Testament and showed him at the top of several pages, that it indeed says.....
"HEBREWS".

PERSONALITIES

Brig Peter Hutchinson

The Australian troops in Iraq are currently being led by a Sapper. He is Brig Peter Hutchinson.

He spent a considerable time in Victoria with postings at HQ 3MD, OC 21 Const Sqn, Commander Combined Arms Training and Development and Commandant Army Combat Arms Training Centre.

He headed to Canberra in early 2002, and has been in charge in Iraq since the middle of this year.

Over the last 3 years, he has furnished us with two excellent "letters to the Editor" where he has outlined how he thinks the Corps is going. He has been a consistent "pusher" for the importance of Engineers, and for the need for career paths and mentors.

Even though he left Victoria, he is still a payed-up subscriber to Sapper Summit.

Congratulations! --and we will be looking for another **letter** in the future.

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LETTERS

From Col Bruce Wadeson, ED ...
The Editor

I am always happy to receive my copy of this periodical – even though the names mentioned were often in nursery school when it was decided that I should be retired.
Items in the August 2004 edition had great interest – but one did puzzle me. What you ascribe to Ernie Briggs scarsely gives a reason for him to be included in Sapper Summit – so why no mention of his service as 'padre' to 3 Fd Engr Regt?

During the late 1960s and early 1970s he was probably the most popular soldier in that unit – cheering up mana a mob who, in those years slaved on roadwork in the Knockwood wilds. I would challenge the statement that he retired in 1969 – but then, I would like to see his story continued in a future issue.

Thanks for your good work
B Wadeson

Apologies for not highlightingPadre Briggs involvement with 3 Fd Engr Regt.

Arthur Cale, the Secretary of the RAE Association, found the article and forwarded it to the Editor because of his involvement with Sappers, and because it was the 10th anniversary of his death. The Editor left for holidays without handing over the linking information to the relieving editor.

I can just hear some crusty old Colonels muttering something about 'a lack of clear direction' ... Editor.

* * * * *

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.

First 50 Years of 22 Construction Regiment

We are pleased to report that, after many delays, the history of the **First 50 years of 22 Construction Regiment** is in the hands of the printers.
Copies will be posted to out in December to those who have paid for copies in advance.

Copies will be on sale to any other interested sappers and friends – at a cost of $8.00, including postage.
Anyone who wishes to purchase a copy should complete the return slip at the bottom of page 11.

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From all at Sapper Summit ---

A Merry Christmas

EARLY ENGINEER HISTORY

This article comes from Bill Goodall who has spent a considerable amount of time over the years on archive hunting. The historical document mentioned is lodged with RUSI (The Royal United Services Institute of Victoria). Bill has been a significant source of information for Sapper Summit.

They recently re-discovered this document in the library collection. It is a foolscap-sized exercise book of 72 pages made from blue lined wove paper. The paper has a large watermark of a seated Britannia surmounted by a crown. Pasted on the cover is the following label:

CORPS OF VICTORIA VOLUNTEER ENGINEERS.

SUBJECT Questions set at 1st Examination
for Non Commissioned Officers
held on the 19 August 1861

N.B.—This Book is not to be taken out of the Orderly Room, nor is it to be defaced by pencil or ink marks, nor to be injured in any way.

P.H. SCRATCHLEY,
Commanding Royal Engineer

Melbourne 23 August 1861

The first page has a notice of exam pasted in. It states that the exam will have 35 questions to be answered in a 5 hour 50 minute time limit. The subjects covered were: Arithmetic, Field Fortification, Practical Geometry, Logarithms (candidates were to bring their own log tables, but for some reason or other pocket calculators were not mentioned!). This first page is signed by P.H. Scratchley, CRE.

The rest of the document has the individual printed questions cut out and pasted in, together with model answers handwritten in ink. The handwriting throughout may also be that of Scratchley.
What is the significance of this exercise book?

Sir Peter Scratchley was born on 24th August 1835 in Paris, the son of a doctor in the Royal Artillery. He attended the Royal Military Academy Woolwich and passed first in his class. From 1854 to 1856 he served with the Royal Engineers in the Crimean War. He then performed engineering works at Portsmouth and proceed overseas to serve in the Indian Mutiny campaign, being mentioned in despatches three times.

He was promoted to Captain in 1859 and dispatched to Melbourne in command of a detachment of Royal Engineers to erect defence works that he had designed. The Victorian Government had requested a detachment of engineers for this purpose. Scratchley had been described as 'an officer of great ability'. Arriving in the colony in 1860 he reported to the Victorian Parliament that the estimated cost of the defences of the colony, £81 200, was

insignificant when compared with the wealth and security of its people. However, lack of funds prevented most of his construction, other than the first works at Queenscliff.

THE LATE SIR PETER SCRATCHLEY, K.C.M.G., H.M. COMMISSIONER OF NEW GUINEA.

Scratchley played a central role in the formation of the Corps of Volunteer Engineers in Victoria. He was evidently present at the meeting at the Duke of Rothesay Hotel in Elizabeth Street on 7 November 1860 where the formation of the corps was first formally discussed. He made many valuable suggestions for the government of the corps. The Corps Regulations were gazetted in March 1861.

Scratchley was posted back to England in 1863 but retained an interest in the defences of all the Australian colonies. He returned to Australia as a lieutenant colonel in 1877 and commenced an affiliation with Sir William Jervois in advising the colonies on their defences. After Jervois was appointed to be the Governor of South Australia, Scratchley became Commissioner of Defences in 1878. His plans were largely implemented and perhaps all of the Australian coastal defences of this period can be traced to his inspiration.

He retired from active military service in 1882 as an honorary major general but continued to assist the Colonial Office as a defence adviser. He was appointed Special Commissioner for the British Protectorate of New Guinea in 1884 and was knighted in 1885. He contacted malaria on a journey of interior exploration in 1885 and died in December at sea when sailing to Townsville. He was buried in the St Kilda Cemetery but reinterred in Woolwich in 1886.

The Corps of Victoria Volunteer Engineers was the first engineer corps formed in Australia. Here we have one of the earliest surviving written records of the Corps of Engineers in Australia, with the signature of its founder. It is indeed a valuable document.

Return slip:
First 50 Years of 22 Construction Regiment

To: RAE (VIC) Historical &
Heritage Association,
C/- Oakleigh Barracks,
1318 North Road,
OAKLEIGH SOUTH VIC 3167

From:

Name.....

Address .....

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I enclose payment for the First 50 Years of 22 Const Regt (\$8.00)

(Please make cheques payable to RAE Historical & Heritage Association)