"SAPPER SUMMIT"

RAE CORPS NEWSLETTER

VICTORIAN ENGINEERS

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Have you paid your 2005 Subs for Sapper Summit??

We are now seeking subscriptions for 2005. Anyone on our subscriber list who has not paid the current year's subscription will have a red sticker at the bottom of this page ... a mere $10.00 to keep in touch! See page 4 also.

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EDITORIAL: IN OUR 14TH YEAR!

In 1992, the late LtCol Bob Eastick MBE decided to resurrect the Historical and Heritage Committee which had operated several years previously. He recruited a group of ex-reservists and got things going. Over succeeding years, the Committee produced and distributed Sapper Summit, collected and stored memorabilia, arranged the Sir Clive Steel Lectures and conducted excursions to engineer related installations. They also helped install memorial plaques at the sites of former RAE establishments, such as at the site of the Swan Street Depot. Members also became involved in the writing of several books of RAE history.

Last year, the Committee changed from its nebulous 'Committee' title to an Association, adopted a 'Statement of Purposes' and a 'Set of Rules' and became incorporated. They have an agreement on a Memorandum of Understanding with the Corps Committee on common issues and key activities.

2005 marks the 14th year of activities for the people involved in the Association. As well as continuing to produce Sapper Summit, and arrange excursions, they are tackling some new horizons. They want to widen the Association membership to give a better representation from the various RAE associations and groups in Victoria. They are also looking at developing an e-mail option for Sapper Summit distribution, and need to pick up some expertise for the cataloguing of memorabilia. They also want to identify which local Unit Histories need to be written up over the next few years.

For this, your help is needed! See page 4 for more detail.

. . . . *The Editor.*

SAPPER SUMMIT

Sapper Summit is produced four times a year by the RAE (Vic) Historical and Heritage Association Inc. (Reg No. A0046126U.)

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

Mail can be sent to:
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OAKLEIGH SOUTH, VIC, 3167

We need Your Articles!

Our deadlines for articles for the rest of 2005 are:

- 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.

ROB YOUL'S COLUMN

In early June 1940, immediately after Dunkirk, Montgomery and 3 Division moved to the Sussex coast, and, such was the confusion were placed in a War Office reserve, then ordered to prepare to take the Azores. Their destination was amended to the Cape Verde Islands, and then to south west Ireland! This plan faded away rapidly, and defence of the coast or further overseas service became the likely task for Monty's division. In late June he met Auchinleck again – they'd been together in India – and Montgomery, perhaps perversely, did not take to Auchinleck, although the latter had fought creditably in Norway and shared Monty's views on training, streamlined organisations and campaigning.

If this was unreasonable, so was his decision that none in his division could take leave after Dunkirk, as he expected to have to return straight away to France. Nevertheless, when re-equipment was delayed, he immediately reversed his stance and sent the entire division off for 48 hours. But the Dunkirk experience had hardened his character. Dunkirk had to be analysed and learnt from, and a new division created with Monty its undisputed leader.

Debate ensued on how to defend southern Britain – Montgomery met Churchill on one of the PM's visits to the coastline and convinced him that strategic strongpoints and especially mobile reserves were essential, rather than a thin continuous line of troops along the beaches and cliffs. Monty was organizing his first divisional exercises for late July when he was promoted to lieutenant general commanding 5 Corps. In contrast, Auchinleck, who had been 5 Division's leader, and was moved to GOC Southern Command, was very committed to the concept of immediate confrontation through wide coastal deployment.

Montgomery provoked a bitter row immediately with Auchinleck by designating a mobile reserve, stopping much of the static defence construction and sacking many senior officers who'd worked under Auchinleck. Indeed, he believed in 'active defence' – lighter units to meet attacks, followed by strategic use of strong balanced reserve formations afterwards, and he commenced and continued explicit and hard training throughout the winter of 1940-41 – mental and physical, combat and logistic – centered on the attack – a series of progressive exercises for the entire corps. He was everywhere, but always ensured he met and got to know his men. For the officers, his post-exercise reviews were exceptionally memorable – no coughing, no throat-clearing, no questions – just sheer education in the art of war. They make superb reading: the lessons from one exercise were grouped under: The art of night movement; The handling of artillery; The traffic problem; Demolitions; and Man management. But he was able to masterfully weave these strands together.

In late April 1941, the War Office moved Monty to a tranquil 12 Corps covering Kent and Sussex. But the times were a'changing. Within a month, as summer started, the Germans had conquered Greece, cleared the Balkans and overrun Cyrenaica. The fall of Crete soon followed. Three weeks after that Barbarossa commenced, and in six weeks the Germans had reached a line from Leningrad to the Crimea. By winter Moscow's suburbs were threatened. Montgomery, as usual, swept through his new command, which might take the brunt of a cross-channel invasion, evacuating families, sacking incompetent divisional and

battalion commanders and instituting his physical training hallmark – the weekly run. Most importantly he changed the strategic doctrine – locality defence backed by reserves, rather than a thin khaki line along the beaches and cliffs – and again initiated rigorous intellectual, physical and military training leading to corps exercises. By 30 June the corps had been reshaped and Monty was reaffirming that in almost all cases, divisions must fight as divisions, not as scattered brigade groups. Just then Auchinleck was replacing Wavell as C-in-C Middle East after the failure of Operation Battleaxe. Both dissipated their divisions.

Monty had an eye for good officers, and would poach them shamelessly, but he looked after them, trusted them when they'd earned his respect and planned their promotions well ahead. He established a chief-of-staff system to free the commander of responsibility for detail, which was immediately adopted in other commands. His post-exercise summaries were described as hypnotic! In late November 1941 Monty became GOC South-Eastern Command, embracing 12 Corps and the Canadian Corps. In effect, he was, and he so styled himself, an army commander. He came into his new unit in his usual manner, and set out a major training program, but encountered political problems with Lieutenant General Crerar on the Canadians' deployment, which soon dissipated as Monty co-ordinated the activities of the two corps.

As ever, General Brooke was the strong and sensible Chief of the Imperial General Staff who could work behind the scenes, reconcile opponents and collaborate with politicians – and soothe and encourage Monty. But during the northern winter of 1941-42, after Pearl Harbour, the war was still going badly, with Japanese victories in the Philippines, Hong Kong, Malaya, Singapore, Java, Sumatra and Burma. Alexander was sent to Burma – some ask why Monty did not go, but he himself seemed unperturbed as if he knew he would eventually lead an army in battle.

Meanwhile in the Middle East, Auchinleck had formed Eighth Army, headed by Alan Cunningham, an appointment that lasted three months due to Cunningham's alleged 'defensive mentality.' Ritchie took over. Chaos ensued? But at home Monty's army and his headquarters were smooth-running, vigorous and rational.

By the northern spring of 1942, the Japanese navy was in the Indian Ocean, Ceylon had been bombed, Malta was beleaguered and two German battleships had run along the Channel northwards from Brest. The RAF was preoccupied with bombing, not army-air co-operation. Then Rommel defeated Eighth Army and captured Benghazi on 29 January 1942. Brooke and Churchill railed at Auchinleck's inability to take advice, to make headway, and especially at his incompetent staff.

On 26 May Rommel launched his forces eastwards, captured Gazala, encircled Tobruk and pushed the British forces almost to Cairo; the Royal Navy deserted Alexandria and the British Embassy burnt its secret documents. After fourteen ineffectual months, with a high level of resources, it was time for The Auk to go!

But no-one was nominating Monty for field command, despite the wide recognition of his unfailing and initially (for his ideas were gaining acceptance) unique leadership in training and motivating his formations. Neither Churchill nor Brooke seemed to sense his promise, nor did Monty press his claim, for his main ambition was to do his current job well, rather than to move up the ranks. He continued with Exercise Tiger from 19-30 May 1942, which General Dwight Eisenhower visited, noting: *General Montgomery is a decisive type who appears to be very energetic and professionally able.* Tank brigades, artillery, good wheeled transport and aircraft support ensured his formation practised mobility, air co-operation and tactical integration of infantry, engineers and the guns in defence. His commanders knew how to regroup to apply overwhelming force at key points of the battle. He was somewhat involved in planning the Dieppe raid, for which his Canadians were selected and many died or were captured – people ask why Monty supported the flawed concept, pointing out that the Germans never attempted such an operation!

On 21 June Tobruk fell with its garrison of 32 000. On 25 June Auchinleck sacked Ritchie and took his place reluctantly, moving out into the desert with the Eighth Army and belatedly showing his courage. The Germans miscalculated, and held back as well by their long supply lines, failed to make it to Cairo. The RAF, 1 Armoured Division and the dominion artillery had also hugely assisted The Auk to hold on, on a line temporarily separating the two run-down armies at El Alamein.

. . . to be continued

... Rob Youl

The First 50 Years of 22 Construction Regiment

This Unit History was completed late last year. Copies are available for $8.00, including postage.

See the 3rd item on the return slip on page 11.

SAPPER SUMMIT SUBS ARE DUE

It is now time to renew your subscription to Sapper Summit!

We have had to increase our subscription rate for 2005 by $2.00 to $10.00. This is the first price rise in 4 years.

We have three different groups of readers:

- The RAE (Victoria) Corps Committee pays for the copies of Sapper Summit for serving members of 4 CER and 22 Construction Regiment, and for a short list of official copies which go to other Units and Associations. (The address labels have a ► beside the name)
- The RAE Association at Ringwood pays for their members in bulk. (They have a ♣ on the address label)
- Everyone else is a general subscriber and is expected to pay the $10.00 per year subscription. (Once you have paid the current year, there is a ♦ beside your name on the address label)

Because some people have already paid for 2005, we are putting a sticker on the bottom of page 1 to show where you stand — A RED STICKER MEANS YOU HAVE TO PAY. If you have a red sticker, please forward your payment by the end of April using the form at the back of this issue.

CORPS SUBSCRIPTIONS

The CORPS Committee relies on Corps Subscriptions to carry out its role. Whilst subs are voluntary for retired personnel, everyone is urged to contribute. The rates are detailed at the bottom of page 11. The CORPS Committee in general fosters esprit-de-corps amongst sappers, administers corps property and assets as well as acts as a central link for all the niche engineer groups (e.g. The RAE Association, Vietnam Veterans, the Old Sappers, the Historical and Heritage Association, etc).

Notable recent and current projects facilitated by the Corps Committee include:

- *Organisation of the annual Sir Clive Steele Lecture.*
- *Assisted the production of the RAE Corps History.*
- *Funding memorial plaques to commemorate past RAE Units and Activities.*
- *Funding the distribution of* ***Sapper Summit*** *to serving members through units.*

They also make awards to Sappers for key achievements.

One cheque can cover both subscriptions – see page 11

NEWS FROM THE ASSOCIATION

The Historical and Heritage Association Inc. held its AGM on 14 February 2005. There were seven members present and the following office bearers were elected:

Chairman	Bruce Campbell
Vice-Chairman	Les Malseed
Secretary	Austin Byrne
Treasurer	Norm Dodgson
Ordinary Member of Committee	Tony Bourke Bill Atkins

The Association currently has twenty members. These are the former members of the Historical and Heritage Committee, plus the people who used to assist the Committee carrying out tasks, or fill a liaison role to various RAE associations or groups in Victoria. The main activities over the last year were:

- The production of four issues of Sapper Summit.
- Coordinating the writing, printing and distribution of **The History of the First 50 Years of 22 Construction Regiment.**
- Maintaining the memorabilia collection.

Over 90% of Association's expenditure was Sapper Summit production and mailing (Approximately $600 per edition).

The Association operates with a Committee of Management and a Working Group.

Some Future Actions:

Association Membership:

We are writing to the various RAE groups and associations in Victoria to invite them to have at

least one person in our H & H Association -- to provide a link or to contribute articles or assist with collecting information for Unit Histories, etc
The Ringwood Units and former Units are under-represented in our Association.

We are also looking for people to join the Association who can:

- Help with the production of Sapper Summit (edit, write articles based on information from others, maintain subscriber lists, etc.)
- Help with investigating email options for distributing Sapper Summit from 2006.
- Help with cataloguing and displaying memorabilia
- Help with writing Unit Histories

Unit Histories:

We have just finished producing the First 50 Years of 22 Construction Regiment. The Association is currently asking for assistance in identifying:

- What documents ex-members of RAE Units have which would help us write up the various Unit Histories.
- Which Unit histories should be written in the next group of Histories. (Two groups which come to mind are the various Ringwood ARES Units and 16 Construction Regiment.)

Anyone who would like to assist the H & H Association cantelephone Bruce Campbell or Austin Byrne, or write to the Editor (see page 2 for contact details)

As part of our investigation of future email options, we are asking subscribers if they would be happy to get Sapper Summit by email in 2006. The Email Subscription would be about half the subscription for the mailed-out version. See the proforma on page 11.

COMING EVENTS

ANZAC DAY ARRANGEMENTS

Anzac Day 2005 falls on a Monday, and will be celebrated with the usual ceremonies, including a Dawn Service at the Oakleigh Barracks.

The ceremony at the Oakleigh Barracks will follow the normal arrangements:

0530 hours	Gunfire Breakfast
0600 hours	Dawn Service
0640 hours	Breakfast in gym

Personnel who are going to the March are reminded to wear hats as a protection against the sun's rays, wind and weather.

4 CER will, as usual, be fully committed providing guards and catafalque parties to local ceremonies. The Ringwood service will be at the Clock Tower under the aegis of Ringwood RSL from 0545h. Breakfast will be from approx 0630h at the Ringwood East Depot, and personnel will depart from the march in the City at 0800h (march commences at 0930h).

APRIL EXCURSION
ADI, Bendigo

Bill Atkins has the job of arranging excursions for us. He is currently organising a visit to the Australian Defence Industry establishment at Bendigo.

At the time of going to press, we do not have a confirmed date. But we are aiming for somewhere in late April.

If you are interested, ring Bill Atkins after Easter on 5996 1013. At that stage he will be able to confirm the visit date, plus transport arrangements.

WATERLOO DINNER

This year's Officers Waterloo Dinner will be held on Saturday 18 June. This is the 90th Anniversary, to the day, of the first Dinner at Anzac Cove.

The venue is the Victoria Barracks Officers Mess. Put the date in your diary. Further details will be in the May issue.

The Old Sappers Waterloo Dinner details will be in the next issue also.

RESERVE FORCES DAY MARCH SUNDAY 3 JULY 2005.

The Reserve Forces Day March in Melbourne will be on Sunday 3rd July. The assembly time is 1100hrs for a step off at 1130hrs.

Last year's March was a great success and thoroughly enjoyed by all participating. So mark this date in your diary for 2005.
Full details will be in the May issue.

Reminder
The RAE Corps Officers Golf Day 2005
at The Royal Melbourne Golf Club.

Keep **Friday 14 October** free.
Tee off is 1000hrs

If you need more details before the next issue, please contact Capt Bill McAuley on
(03) 5489 3218 or Mobile 0428 486 018

NEWS FROM THE UNITS

4 CER

4 CER has commenced 2005 with a reasonably large changeover of staff on HQ, including the ADJT (CAPT Tanya Goddard), the CCLK (WO2 Colin Biddell) the acting RQMS (WO2 Ron Cox) and OPSWO (SGT Jason Trass). 4 CER also welcomes new officers MAJ David Andrewartha (OC 10 Sqn) and LTs Tom Courtice and Matt Lowe. 4 CER carries a vacancy of RQMS (WO1) in 2005.

The CO (LTCOL David Westphalen), XO (MAJ John Raike), OPSO (MAJ John Roberts), OC 38 Sqn (MAJ David Herman) and RSM (WO1 Peter Mangan) remain points of continuity for 2004/ 05.

This year promises to be busy as 4 CER embarks on Sqn training in the lead up to the 2006 Commonwealth Games. So far this year a section of 11 personnel returned from RAAF Butterworth (RCB 68) in February, and a composite section have also supported a defence trial with DTSO and LWDC at Graytown. SGT Trass and CPL Murdoch have also recently returned from operational deployment in Iraq. Support continues to be provided for MONUR and RMC.

The Australian Service Medal was presented to CPL Cox and CPL Seccull on 21 Feb 05 for service in the Solomon Islands on OP ANODE. CPL Cox also received a 1st Division Commander's Commendation for his work in the Solomon Islands.

Congratulations must go to 2LT Covey who has recently been promoted to LT.

Activities

The Regiment has recently completed Ex Kickstart (annual induction training) and a week of training for the JNCOs, which saw them travel to Canberra to visit the National War Memorial and to meet with RSM-A.

Future activities include:

a. Engineer display at Avalon Air show,
b. Ex Demolition Sapper (Mar 05),
c. The Regiment marching in the city on Anzac Day as a part of 4 Bde, and
d. Commencement of planning for the Regiment to exercise Freedom of the City with the Maroondah City Council in 2006.

Continued involvement with the Reserve Response Force (RRF) will also be a focus for 2005.

The Regiment is busy raising funds for the construction of a Soldier's Memorial at the entrance of the depot which is planned for completion by 06 Nov 05. Any advice on funds for the memorial will be gratefully received.

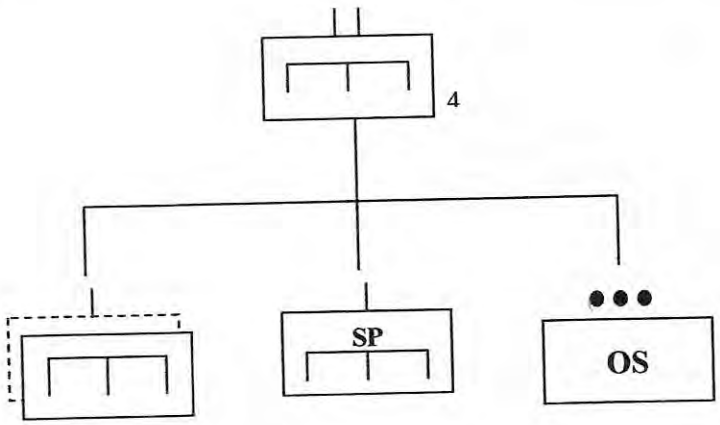
Unit Structure

4 CER structure can be seen below. Discussion is ongoing regarding the raising of a second Combat Engineer Squadron. Key personnel are:

CO	LTCOL David Westphalen
XO	MAJ David Raike
S3 (OPSO)	MAJ John Roberts
ADJT	CAPT Tanya Goddard
RSM	WO1 Peter Mangan
OC 10 SQN	MAJ David Andrewartha
OC 38 SQN	MAJ David Herman

Currently, 10 SQN contains the qualified combat engineers with 38 SQN containing plant and transport elements, 'Direct to Unit (DTU)' recruits and Kapooka graduates. Operational Support Troop, which consists of the caterers, Q store, RAP and RAEME elements, is currently supervised by the ADJT.

4 CER has 16 ARA staff and approximately 150 GRES personnel on the books.



22 CONST REGIMENT

The training year began with Exercise Kickstart, held at HMAS Cerberus. A good proportion of the Unit was in attendance to go through its annual mandated training package, which consisted of briefs on OH&S in the workplace, security, equity and diversity, drug and alcohol awareness and others.

With everyone in the same place at the same time, the CO took a rare opportunity to have a few words and lay down his command philosophy and vision for 2005. His words on AFX in Tasmania were particularly enticing and presented a great chance for a few of us to get our teeth into it over the coming months. BRIG Slater joined us on Sunday morning to say a few words to the troops and hear the Sqn OCs present their training programs to the Unit.

The opportunity was taken to introduce all the new ARA staff to the Unit, and for those who weren't on the exercise, we have gained the following members:

CAPT Alan White	OPSO	
CAPT Sarah Reynolds	2IC	105 Const Sqn
CAPT Chris Reeves	OPSO	39 Const Sqn
WO2 Noel Schwartz	SQMS	105 Const Sqn
WO2 "Jock" Colligan	SQMS	39 Const Sqn
CPL Mark Parison	CLK	39 Const Sqn
SPR Tim Browning	QMS	105 Const Sqn

Along with a bunch of new Reserve Officers, the Unit is looking very healthy and well placed to make 2005 a year to remember. The hierarchy looks like this:

|-- **RHQ:**	CO	LTCOL	Stephen Bell
|	2IC	MAJ	Terry Pruden
|	RSM	WO1	Pat Jorna
|	ADJT	CAPT	Hayden Barlow
|	OPSO	CAPT	Alan White
|			
|-- **105 Const Sqn:**			
|	OC	MAJ	Mark Roberts
|	2IC	CAPT	Sarah Reynolds
|	SSM	WO1	Jim Davis
|			
|-- **39 Const Sqn:**			
|	OC	MAJ	Cliff Parfitt
|	2IC	CAPT	Stephen Towell
|	SSM		(Vacant)
|			
|-- **203 Works Sect:**			
	OC	MAJ	Brent Rogers
	2IC	CAPT	Noel Tipton

Over the next few months, 22 Const Regt will be gearing up for its AFX to be conducted in Tasmania in the Buckland and Stony Heads Military Training Areas in Oct 05.

The tasking will be road maintenance, causeway construction and constructing of sheds for training areas. It will provide the members of the unit with work in unfamiliar areas and opportunities to tackle problems that those issues will bring.

The tasks will require the unit to exercise its ability to deploy a Sqn and conduct tasks in an unfamiliar setting. It will also test the Regt in its ability to communicate over a large area.

39 Const Sqn Summary of Ex Golden Plover

Exercise Golden Plover conducted over the period 11 to 25 February was a culmination of trade training and construction engineering tasks within the Newborough Depot.

Throughout the exercise Resources Troop constructed a Bailey bridge (lookalike, using bailey panels, railway line, and timber milled from the new Lucas mill) at the entrance to the depot, to give the depot more of an engineer feel. They also constructed a storeroom within the trades shed, started on a new materials storage bay, built a project stores rack, constructed a culvert for plant/Transport Tp and repaired an old NEB that the unit built in 1975.

Plant and Transport Tp set to work constructing a road through the rear compound to the depot, to allow vehicle access. They also started works on a hardstand within the rear compound and levelled out the middle compound Vehicle Park.

All up, the exercise was a great start to the year and has put the unit off on a good footing.

Projects and training for the rest of the year include numerous live fire activities to up-date unit members with current in-service weapons systems, advanced driver and plant equipment activities, vertical and horizontal concrete construction tasks, and an introduction to Chemical Biological Radiation and Nuclear Decontamination procedures.

22 CONSTRUCTION REGIMENT REUNION – 2005.

The next Reunion will be held at Bendigo in October. Please put the weekend 21 / 22/ 23 October in your diary and keep it free.

Organisation is by Jenny Eaton, telephone 5156 0298.

ASSOCIATION REPORTS

OLD SAPPERS ASSOCIATION INC FORTHCOMING EVENTS

The 70th AGM of the Association was held in December with all Office Bearers and ordinary committee members being returned to office.

Association members attended the Shrine Pilgrimage with the 2/22 Battalion Lark Force Association during January.

Our next major event will be Anzac day followed by the Waterloo Dinner.

WOODPECKERS RAE ASSOCATION

From a fertile seed planted in a receptive environment a MOU has been born.

On Saturday 20 November 2005, at Plunketts Winery a Memorandum of Understanding between the Woodpeckers RAE Association and 105 Construction Squadron RAE and 22 Construction Regiment RAE was signed. The occasion was part of a Soldiers Dinner held during a 105 field exercise a Pucka.

The signatories to the MOU are -

- Woodpeckers - Michael Murray, President, Witness John Morey, Secretary/Treasurer;
- 105 - Major Mark Roberts, Witness James Davis WOCI;
- 22 - Lt Colonel Stephen Bell, Witness Brigadier Robert Slater AM RFD (RET).

The MOU formalises existing relationships and I quote from the document:

... "**AND IN RECOGNITION THEREOF:**

1. The Woodpeckers R.A.E. Association commits, to the extent allowed by the Australian Defence Force (Australian Army), to support and mentor the role of 105 Construction Squadron R.A.E.
2. 105 Construction Squadron R.A.E commits, to the extent allowed by the Australian Defence Force (Australian Army), to support and further the objectives of the Woodpeckers R.A.E Association.
3. 22 Construction Regiment R.A.E, bears witness to this relationship between the Woodpeckers R.A.E Association and 105 Construction Squadron R.A.E.

... **AND IT IS FURTHER AGREED:**

4. That on Anzac Day each year the Parties will honour the legacy of Ex WWII Forestry Companies by providing a banner party for the Anzac Day March in Melbourne.
5. That the Parties will meet twice a year either in a social or social/working environment.
6. That on Reserve Forces Day the Parties will assemble and march under the banner of the Woodpeckers R.A.E Association.
7. To acknowledge and value the commitment of all Parties to foster and encourage the passing on of the skills, knowledge and wisdom of retired members to currently serving personnel."

Of course, the signatories spoke for the purpose and achievement of the occasion with minimum (as I recall) raucous comment from the assembled serving Soldiers and Woodpecker members. The occasion was also used to first display the Woodpeckers Banner - we sure won't be missed on Reserve Forces Day.

Before going to other subjects a public answer to Bob Slater and Steve Bell and a BIG THANKS to Mark Roberts.

- Bob, yes the Woodys will seek support from the Corps Committee to jointly sponsor annual awards to 105 soldiers. I'm not yet convinced that 'LOGYS' is an appropriate name for the awards.
- Steve, yes the Woodys are in for the 'TIT HILL' project.
  (Gents our correspondence is coming your way).
- Mark, "we" did it between us - Thank You - e'nuff said.

At a Committee meeting on 5 February 2005, we honoured the efforts of Les and Elaine Malseed by shouting them lunch (a very costly shout - ask Les to tell you the tale) and presenting to Les a Woody plaque, to recognise his overall contribution over many years to the Association.

Where is NARRWONG? A long-term bushie and 91 Sgt was awarded Citizen of the Year on last Australia Day. Congrats Sam Bruton.

The Woodpeckers look forward to a great year and hopefully we can share it with you in the flesh or in S.S.

.... *from Michael Murray*
(President)

RAE VIETNAM ASSOCIATION

The reunion for the RAE Vietnam Ass Inc will be held again this year at the Bedford Hotel (formerly known as The Turf Club Hotel) on ANZAC day. All are welcome. There are plans afoot for a big do for the 25th Reunion in 2007 --- expressions of interest are being sought for this event.

Allan Rantall is on the sick list but should be back soon.

Hoping to see you all at the Bedford after the March.
... Lorraine Livingstone

Calling All Past & Present Sappers.
Invitation
Our RAE birthday reunion function for 2005 is to be held on
SATURDAY 2nd July 2005

at the 4 CER Depot,
Dublin Road Ringwood East.

Timings 7.30pm onwards.
Costs TBA

The evening is open to all past and present sappers, plus support staff of the RAE and their partners — It's a chance to catch up with the old and bold as well as the new. Hope to see you there!
More details will be in the next edition.
Contact Details: Margaret Handte / Jenko – 03 9879 2986-voice mail

TOUR OF PAY CORPS MUSEUM and LECTURE by LTCOL TERRY BEATON On THE THAI BURMA RAILWAY, WW2

In November last, I was part of a group who jumped at an invitation to tour the Pay Corps Museum at Watsonia and listen to a lecture on the infamous Burma Railway. Major Tom Phillips, the museum curator, started events with a guided tour of the Museum. The museum displays general army memorabilia, uniforms, webbing, weapons, photographs, books, medals and old army maps, and in particular, enlarged copies of pay sheets of days gone bye, together with a 1940's Blitz pay wagon. The curators are now negotiating for larger premises to display their extensive range of items held in storage.

The tour was followed by a barbeque lunch, in the company of Lt Col Terry Beaton, guest speaker for the next part of the day. Congratulations were in order for Terry's recent appointment to Colonel Commandant of RAEME Vic.

The next venue was the 108 Sig Sqn lecture room to view artefacts Terry had collected when he was the curator of the *Hellfire Pass Museum Complex* in Thailand from December 1999 to December 2001. In addition, during this time, he recorded a lot of detailed information from former POWs and visitors, etc. Terry also produced a draft edition of "A Travellers Guide to the Burma Railway" for the 60th Anniversary Anzac Day Pilgrimage, held in 2003 between 20 April and 6 May. What follows is an outline of the lecture supplemented by some details from the book.

Terry commenced by asking if we thought David Lean's film, produced in 1957 at Tamarkan, called "The Bridge on the River Kwai" was fact or fiction? --- the film was mainly fiction!! It was an adaptation of Pierre Boulle's fictitious novel.
During the war, two bridges were built over the *Mae Khlong River* at Tamarkan. Later, to cash in on the tourist trade after the film, local Thai tourist officials changed the name to River Kwai. Official maps still show it as Mae Khlong!!

During the war, there was a simple timber trestle bridge with a stringer type flat deck. It was built as a by-pass to carry stores, etc, across the river. The bridge in the film was a much more elaborate affair, with timber trestles and diamond shaped cantilevers!! In fact, a steel girder bridge, with concrete piers, was built adjacent to the timber bridge to carry the railroad. This bridge was not shown in the film.

The timber bridge was not destroyed as portrayed by actor Alec Guiness as the British officer Lt Col Toosey falling on the handle of the exploder as he was dying. The spin doctors were well and truly active in those days.

Both bridges were finally put out of action in June 1945 by allied air raids with Mk VI Liberators (B-24J Liberators to the Americans) with Australian, British, Canadian and New Zealand crews operating from India.

The destruction of the two bridges hardly stopped the flow of material going forward. With plenty of POWs as labour and trains either side of the river, plus Thai barges on the river, the Japanese were able to have trains on their way in 8 to10 hours.

During the late 1880s and onwards, Britain helped build railways in Burma, Malaya and Thailand, mainly for trade purposes. A stretch of railway from Thunbyuzayat in Burma, near Rangoon, to Nong Pladuk, near Bangkok in Thailand had not been constructed because of very rugged country. This was the stretch that Australian, British and some American POWs plus some 200,000 Tamils, Burmese, Malays, Chinese and Dutch finally built. It involved 416km of track and 688 bridges and some 90,000 people perished.

The Japanese required the railway to assist its army to:

1. Cut the "Burma Road" which was the supply route for war material to the Chinese.

2. Move into India, stir up trouble and prevent India from supplying war material to Britain.

Post-war evidence shows that Japanese army railway personnel surveyed the missing rail link (which, by the way, British surveyors had surveyed years earlier) by air photo, etc in 1939 and two years prior to their attack on Pearl Harbour in Dec 1941!! Eventually, the rail tracks were stolen from Thailand and the steel bridge girders were of Dutch origin from the Batavia railway in Java.

When Singapore suddenly fell, the Japanese had some 200,000 workers, a mix of POWs and civilians – no doubt some were highly skilled. The Japanese said "No work, no eat" – not much choice! The rail was commenced in June 1942 and finished in October 1943.

During the construction, the Japanese used a lot of Korean guards, known as "No Star men" – ie no star on the forehead of their caps or on arms. They were regarded by the Japanese as being lower human beings than the POWs and other workers on the line. The Japanese belted the guards who in turn belted the POWs and others. These were mainly the people working on the railway "coalface". Those not working directly on the railway had "cushy jobs", so to speak.

British and Australian officers, some of whom still had their batmen, plus senior NCOs, many of which did not work at the "coalface" were rarely subjected to regular beatings. These were bad, especially during the *speedo period* or *hurry-up time* from April to August 43, when there was enormous pressure to complete the railway.

Rations were distributed through the British and Australian command structure down to the lower ranks, and how well the workers fared varied along the railway depending on the Senior Ranks in command. Additionally, higher ranks, with better pay, were able to purchase extra food and grub locally. POW batmen interviewed subsequently said most of the time they ate "well".

However, POWs at the coalface, due to a smaller share of rations, regular beatings, long working hours, squalid living conditions, and lack of proper medical help succumbed to malaria, cholera, amoebic dysentery, beri-beri, etc. and died at a higher rate than others. Weary Dunlop and LtCol Albert Coates, plus lower ranks medical staff, working under very difficult conditions, no doubt saved many lives – 1 Australian officer died per 250 ORs, and 1 British officer died per 48 ORs. Possibly Australian officers were better survivors. Surviving POWs would be the best to judge who were fine, fair or foul.

At the end of the war, some POWs stayed behind to guide war graves personnel to the locations of the cemeteries. Sgt Kemp, Royal Army Ordnance Corps worked at the Japanese POW Branch Headquarters, and at great risk to himself secretly compiled a set of death records of every group including where POWs were buried. A lot of evidence was buried in tin boxes, etc, alongside the POWs. His detailed maps, etc helped the War Graves personnel to retrieve "concrete" evidence which helped to convict some Japanese at the War Crimes tribunals after the war. Some were hanged, others were sentenced to jail for between 1 and 20 years. However they hardly served any of their sentences – most were quietly released when the Korean War broke on 25 June 1950.

The USA in particular, and Australia needed an ally. A treaty was signed at the San Francisco opera house USA, with both US and Australian officials present. This treaty extinguished all compensation claims for POWs, etc. 50 years later, in 2001, the treaty was ratified at the same Opera house by the US Secretary of State (Colin Powell) and the former Secretary of State (George Schultz), as well as by Australian officials. This confirmed the existing treaty and the extinguishing of any compensation for POWs or civilians or for as damage to Country infrastructure, etc.

Over the years, the railway has justly attracted many former POWs and tourists. Terry's book no doubt helped them locate sites of interest. The draft book is a good factual read. Readers who wish to obtain a copy may care to contact:

LtCol TR Beaton
4 Brownes Cresent
Eltham Vic 3095
Tel (03) 9431 3961

... from Bill Atkins

"Sir John Holland still soldiering on"

The editor has noted in the last edition of "Mufti", items of interest to the Sapper family. These occurred at the 89th State Conference of the RSL held at Caulfield Racecourse in mid-2004. The conference was opened by Vice Admiral Chris Ritchie and addressed by Premier Steve Bracks, who offered a $2 million package to the veteran community.

At the conference, Sir John Holland presented certificates and plaques to recipients of the ANZAC of the Year Award.

The State President of RSL subsequently presented Sir John with an Australian Flag in acknowledgement of his retirement as
Chairman of the ANZAC Awards Committee.

We at "Sapper Summit" join with all ex-servicemen and women in acknowledging Sir John's outstanding contribution to the community over a lifetime of service.

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