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EDITORIAL

ALLIES - NO FREE LUNCH

Lt Col R. Eastick

Before I address this melancholy prognosis let me make several points.

You may remember General Grey's plea for needing more money to defend Australia and several defence organisation's response that the defence chiefs should debate it publicly, while the then Defence Minister was reluctant to do that.

Later I read in a library book of Australia's defences against invasion - this appears elsewhere in this issue. The same source considered that Australia, because of its location, had few potential invaders. In the light of the high-priced equipment we have surrounded ourselves with I have little to add.

The then Defence Minister naively believed that aeroplanes, destroyers, and submarines gave us sufficient defence capacity whereas General Grey believes that, as the Gulf War showed, bayonets are necessary to occupy ground. He had little chance of convincing the Minister.

The change of government gave me new hope of enlightened thinking but the May issue of the Defence Industry Report reported the new Minister repeating the thinking of the old Minister.

Meanwhile the exodus of engineers, continues. In the last war we had 47 types of engineer units. Such a range of skills cannot be replaced by contract work at short notice at a reasonable cost on a global scale.

It is obvious that Australia's manpower is such that a global effort is beyond us and we require to have allies.

The Labour government approached Indonesia but I can't see what direction that help will take. Our new masters have gone one better and are proposing joint exercises with the USA.

The USA sees itself as the policeman of the Pacific so it is not unlikely it will ask Australia's help globally in return for help in Australia's backyard which upset the scenario our defence planners will have set out.

As I said there is no such thing as a free lunch!

What action should the Corps of Engineers take? Should we encourage the enlargement of the Construction Engineers to the extent of lowering the physical standards of enlistment and accenting the degree of technical skills?

Do it now.

AUSTRALIA'S DEFENCE : WHAT OF THE FUTURE ?

by LTCOL John Slee

The Editor, LTCOL Bob Eastick, MBE, has in his Editorial for Number 15, of January 1996, and also in Number 16 of April, discussed this subject in the context of an article by General John Grey in the "Australian".

While this article generally was concerned with 'funding shortfalls and varying priorities', it did introduce the topic of future plans for defence of the nation and continent.

The Editor has asked me to prepare the following summary, which we hope will help to put readers in the picture regarding current defence strategy - not so easy when one is no longer directly involved, even on the periphery, with the planning or the action. However, here goes!

Two references form the basis of this - a recent speech by the Minister of Defence, Mr Ian McLachlan (1), and the introductory chapter of the volume MODERN MILITARY TOWARDS 2000, part of the Time-Life series "Australians at War" (2). The latter dates from 1989, but for our purpose seems reasonably up-to-date.

The Minister's speech, which followed his inaugural visit to New Zealand, confirmed that the aim of the new Government is to reorder defence spending priorities so that the combat capabilities of the ADF can be built up and projected more effectively so that Australia is able to make a more substantial contribution to regional security as a whole.

He looked to 'reignite a defence debate in Australia', especially in terms of 'the new strategic agenda in the Asia-Pacific'.

Mr McLachlan forecast that, in terms of its overall size and major equipment holdings, the ADF of 2000 will be similar to the one we have now, while much of its major equipment would still be in service in the year 2020 or 2030.

He defined our defence priorities as:

1. To increase the ADF's combat capabilities, while allowing for other roles the ADF has to play, for example, in regional engagement and peacekeeping. We will increase combat elements and combat capability in the ADF through carefully redirecting resources.
2. To ensure that defence is cost-effective. Resources that are saved from administrative reform will be kept by Defence and redirected to achieve greater combat power. He said that while Defence is the only federal government agency not to take an overall spending reduction, the economic climate does not make it possible to think about defence spending increases in the next three years.
3. To offer more satisfying careers for ADF personnel.
4. To revitalise our alliance relations, and ensure their relevance to our strategic circumstances.

Concerning the last, he said, 'Australia cannot be adequately defended only by guarding our territory and by merely looking on at changes sweeping through Asia.

The stability and prosperity of our neighbours; their willingness to resolve issues peacefully; their own perceptions of threats and dangers - these issues will determine whether Australia remains at peace. We also need to continue to strengthen our crucial alliance relationship with the United States. The alliance remains a central pillar of our defence policy.'

He also stated that the Government will place a high priority on our alliance with New Zealand.

Our second reference sees our national defence policy to be one of self reliance within a framework of international alliances and agreements - the emphasis is on self-reliance, not self-sufficiency. Our military strategy is seen as one of layered defence combined with joint operations.

'Australia's northern neighbourhood is by far the most important strategically. The Indonesian archipelago acts as a buffer between Australia and Asia.

As well, the security of passage through the islands is vital for trade, and for the movement of naval shipping between the Indian and Pacific Oceans. All indications are that the most likely direction of any military threat to the Australian continent would be from the north, through the archipelago. An invasion seems unlikely, as it would require massive forces that only major powers could call upon. But much smaller numbers of naval, air and land forces could cause regional instability, disruption of trade, and isolation of remote communities.'

Our reference goes on to outline some of Australia's strategic problems which are already being addressed in part by the attention paid by the RAN to both the Indian and Pacific Oceans, as well as to the seas to the immediate north; by the concentration of regular and reserve Army activities in the far north; and by the construction of RAAF bases at Tindal, Darwin, Derby, Exmouth and Cape York.

Indonesia is seen as perhaps the most sensitive issue. An archipelago with huge population, it is felt by some to have 'potential political and demographic problems, amongst them a volatile border with Papua New Guinea.' It asks if, by increasing the ADF's northern deployments, Australia might seem to directly threaten Indonesia. That country's ambitions and future capabilities need to be considered both in the channels of diplomacy and also in defence planning.

Other strategic problems are suggested. The build-up of India's defence capabilities, especially in navy, while not seen as a direct threat to anyone in the Indian Ocean region, is seen as possibly threatening the balance of power, to the concern of Pakistan, Malaysia and Indonesia. 'The concern for Australia about such shifts in the balance of power is that the stability of its approaches and surrounds may be upset'.

Dr Paul Dibb's report to the Department of Defence in 1986, which has become the basis of the ADF's new regional stance, emphasised the advantages of Australia's geography, giving as it does 'the security that isolation affords'. He wrote: 'Australia is one of the most secure countries in the world.

It is distant from the main centres of global military confrontation, and is surrounded by large expanses of water which make it difficult to attack. Australia's neighbours possess only limited capabilities to project military power against it'.

Nevertheless 'the world is growing ever smaller, and it remains imperfect and uncertain'. The stability of the region could break down, new leaders could come to power with ideas of national aggrandisement, new national or international movements based on religious or racial fundamentalism could arise to further disturb the stability of the region and possibly directly to threaten this country.

In his speech (1) the Defence Minister said 'our key defence policy aim is to develop military forces able to defeat any attack against Australia. No country has the interest or capacity to launch a full scale invasion against us. So our focus is on countering more realistic levels of threat. Our purpose is to deter any potential aggressor and, if deterrence fails, to defeat the enemy in our sea and air approaches and on land. That objective is, and must be the core business of the ADF.'

References:

1. Defence Industry & Aerospace Report, Vol 15, Number 7. May 10th, 1996
2. MODERN MILITARY TOWARDS 2000 ; Australians at War. Time-Life Books, Australia. 1989.

Co-authors of the chapter quoted were Commander Alun Evans, RAN Retd., Group Captain Doug Hurst, RAAF Retd., and Major Bede Jordan, RL.

FAREWELL TO "FIRST FRIDAYS"

Another tradition passes

Some time in the late 50's or early 60's, the Mess Committee at the Engineer Depot, Swan Street, under a PMC whose identity is not known to me, with strong support by the 6 Group Commander at the time, probably Col. Oscar Meyer, began opening the Mess on the evening of the first Friday of each month for serving and former officers, the latter being honorary members of the Mess, to gather for an hour or two - sometimes a good deal longer - for drinks and snacks and socialising.

During the 60's and 70's this became a popular occasion for ex-AIF officers to meet in regular reunion. Early on there were even a few WWI veterans. Serving officers, CMF and Regular, particularly from 6 Group and its SR units and from RAE Tn units which paraded at the Depot until transferred to the new RACT, also attended regularly.

It was convenient for those who worked in or near the city to call in on the way home, have a few drinks and snacks, stock up for home supply, and often to bring friends or business associates.

Later it became customary, with encouragement from PMC's and Commanders for wives and girlfriends to be invited, often coming from home to meet their man before going on to dinner, out or home.

Committee wives helped with the food, supporting rostered Committee members. In winter there was a splendid fire in that excellent fireplace for which the Mess became rather famous. It was not unusual for thirty to fifty people to attend.

But by the 80's numbers were declining, in spite of the continued encouragement by PMCs of the time. By the time the Sappers had to leave the location, the custom had almost ceased. I recall occasions when I and others arrived to find that the Mess was not open. On one night I arrived from Glen Waverley to share two drinks with the Committee member on duty - and nobody else came!

The reasons for the decline are pretty obvious.

Most of the ex-AIF and other regulars, having retired became less inclined to make the journey from home. Many are no longer with us.

The drink-driving laws became more severe, and more respected.

Army regulation of messes became more restrictive, particularly in regard to liquor supply and honorary membership.

The Tn units left the Depot and the Corps.

Possibly business, social and family demands have become greater for serving ARES members.

Whatever the reasons, the "First Friday" tradition of the Swan Street Depot had gone by the time the Sappers left for Oakleigh.

For a while the tradition continued there, but we now know that current barracks administration and changes in Army regulations have discouraged continuation of the tradition.

Sadly the old tradition has passed.

LTCOL John Slee

UNIT REPORTS

In this edition of "Sapper Summit" we are catching up on the contributions of 4 CER over the last year. For next edition we would appreciate some news from 22 Const. Reg.

4TH COMBAT ENGINEER REGIMENT

The following are extracts from the unit newsletter, "The Bill", of 25 / 1 / 96.

"Do what can be done, do it well, take pride in the achievement".

LTCOL A. MURDOCH. CO - 4CER

We have a great deal to do. The sixty eight starters on the IET course at Newborough have to be trained. The next lot of recruits have to be found. We have to get our training organised. We need to get serious about attendance at training. We have new staff to welcome. We have to extend the OR's Mess. We have to finish off the new entry area. We have to get our deployment packs in order so Friday nights stop being a cluster. We have to interview every one of you to determine and meet your training needs.

I should mention that most of the command structure went up to the graduation parade at 3 RTU in December. We had very nearly two forty man platoons of Sappers march off that parade. They did us proud. Nearly all of them will now train for three weeks over February to get to IET. Then they join us in continuation training.

Tuesday nights will change a little. There will be time for at least two formal instruction periods. We will have three classrooms up and running, and lectures will be available in a range of subjects designed to bring you up to speed in the skills required by the weekend deployment activities. Attendance will be recorded in your soldier handbooks. We'll still do battle PT, but it will be shorter and sharper.

We have a long way to go in getting information passed around. I have appointed the Adjt as the unit information officer. His job is to make sure you know what is going on. This Newsletter ("The Bill") is part of that. The new recorded message line is another. There will be an up to date soldiers notice board down near the new Coke machine. We will be mailing information to you once a month. You will receive briefings on each admin parade. We will be doing a lot of work to make sure you get the message, in time, and correct.

Another step will be the issue of the parade card in 'credit card' size, laminated so that you can slip it in your wallet. If you have any ideas to improve our communications to you, drop a line to the Adjt.

We have done much in the last six months. We have a long way to go, I'm learning as I go, and I expect you are too. You'll get my best as I learn. I require no less from us all.

TRAINING CELL NEWS

The following activities have been planned for 1996, the aim of including this in The Bill is to provide a heads up on what is occurring. The next issue will include the courses scheduled for the remainder of the year, and the 1996/97 training year.

Exercise SHAKE OUT, 24 - 25 FEB 96.

The activity was originally designed to be a field deployment of personnel and equipment. The activity will now be directing the Sqns to complete the administrative action, vehicle preparation and reconnaissance required for future training weekends. The exercise will be based out of the Ringwood depot.

Exercise MUDDY MONOTREME, 23 - 24 MAR 96.

This activity will be based out of Puckapunyal. It will be aimed at field engineer training, and plant work at HMAS Cerberus (Road realignment).

6 / 95 RECRUIT COURSE

Due to the sterling efforts of 2LT Parsons, CPL Moore and the Newborough personnel in the Recruiting Cell, the 6/95 Recruit Course (2 Dec to 17 Dec) saw 58 recruits from 4CER attending.

When the recruits from 4CER and LSF were combined, we found that there were nearly 75 Engineer enlistees out of about 150 on the course. A pretty good effort considering that there are about 20 different ARES units in Victoria who also put soldiers on the course - but obviously in much smaller numbers.

The aftermath was that 54 of our recruits (now Privates until they do their IET Course) finished the course and marched out on the final day with most of the senior NCO's and Officers from the Regiment attending.

Congratulations to all those who passed and welcome to the Regiment.

LT Greg Williams
Outgoing 3 Tp Comd

THE DIVE TEAM

After a long term promotional campaign by the now on study leave CAPT. Byrnes, a lot of interest was generated within the unit about becoming an Army Work Diver (AWD). During October/November, four members flew to Sydney to attend what is among the most physically demanding (and rewarding) courses available in the Army today.

Attending were :

LT. Greg Williams, 2LT. Justin Stevens,
LCPL. David Ryan, SPR Rohan Darke.

We were the only reservists on the course, among Sappers and CPL's from 1,2 and 3 CERs, as well as from the Construction Regiments, and even an LT. and a CPL. from RAEME. As it was an all rank course, we were all addressed as "Diver".

We would generally get three dives a day; one before and after lunch, and one after dinner. The night dive was usually in zero visibility conditions and by the end of the course we clocked up around nine hours of zero visibility diving. Manly Dam during the day counts as zero visibility because the brown water was pitch black once you got past about four metres deep.

We now know what they mean when they said "A diver's eyes are his hands". Imagine trying to find a dropped Steyr on an 6 metre deep inland waterway in zero visibility with two foot of silt on the bottom.

2LT "Cousteau" Stevens
4CER Dive Team

1 / 96 IET COURSE

The course will teach you the basic sapper skills that will enable you to perform your duties as a member of one (if not the most) diverse trades within the Army.

During the 16 days at Newborough you will live with your mates within a section environment. You will be looked after by your Cpl, who will not only pass on his knowledge of FE skills, but will also teach you more general aspects of being a soldier.

The course will cover subjects such as :

- Bridge Building, using the most preferred bridge in the world - the Medium Girder Bridge (MGB),
- Booby trapping,
- Mine breaching,
- Chainsaw operation,
- Compressors,
- Engineer search,
- Field defences, and everyone's favourite,
- Demolitions.

MILITARY SKILLS

The Mil Skills week which is held at Dutson Range is designed to rekindle the skills taught to you during your Recruit Course.

This week of infantry lean, mean and green stuff will challenge the keenest of soldiers. You will be expected to seek out and close with the enemy , to kill or capture him, to repel attack by day or night, regardless of season, weather or terrain !!

Now if this last paragraph doesn't make you want to come up, don the DPCU's and go out shopping for a new APC, nothing will !!

WO2 Roger Hyde
Training WO

NEW FACES

As the new training is now upon us and the imminent training schedule due to commence on 6 Feb 96, the recent arrival of the Training Officer, Captain Greg Jenkins and seniors in the training cell will ensure 1996 is a good training year.

I use the term 'good' to refer to sound logical training that develops the personnel of a unit. Therefore, the training will vary from very hard and arduous to interesting with the aim of developing the members of the unit professionally. Your assistance in the form of feed back is essential to ensure problems are resolved and the training is interesting and worthwhile.

As the Training Officer I bring 11 years of service to the position, with experience ranging from the 2/3 Field Engineer Regiment, 2 Combat Engineer Regiment, School of Military Engineering, and Combat Support Engineering.

Originally from Stawell in country Victoria, I am enjoying the opportunity to work in the Southern region, and look forward to continuing my sporting interests in Australian Rules, Rugby and golf.

The New QM - WO1 Kilmaster

Warrant Officer Class 1 Gordon Kilmaster joined the Army 17 years ago at the tender young age of 17 after completing year 11 in Western Australia after trying his hand at working in the outside world for twelve months. After the mandatory three months of "Army education" at Kapooka, he was allocated to "The Corps" and has been there ever since.

Seventeen years of Army life has resulted in several moves including, 22 Const Sqn, School of Military Engineering, 21 Const Sqn, 12 CE Works Mendi PNG, 13 Fd Sqn, 1 RTB Kapooka and finally into 4 CER as the RQMS.

WO1 Kilmaster decided to make the Army his career and consequently his wife decided if she was to continue moving from place to place with him then she would do the same and become a soldier also. She joined the Army in 1995 at an age when most people would not even consider it as an employment option and is currently serving as a Dental Assistant at Watsonia Dental Unit.

SSGT MITCHELL - SQMS 38 Spt Sqn

Staff Sergeant Dale Mitchell joined the ARA in 1984 after completing an apprenticeship as a motorcycle and small engine mechanic. After recruit and IET training he was posted to 17 Const Sqn as a SPR Stmn.

On completing three years, he moved onto Fd Sqn as a CPL Stmn for two years. When time came to move again it was an exotic Pacific Island (Papua New Guinea). In PNG he worked with Australia Defence staff in the position of local purchase clerk.

After two years a posting to 18 Field Squadron, then Puckapunyal as the CQMS 3 Trg Gp. After a short stay he is now posted into 4 CER as the SQMS 38 Spt Sqn.

4 CER REPORT**Extracts from "The Bill", Issue 5,
April 1996**

The CO, LTCOL A. Murdoch reported official approval to use the Platypus as the unit emblem/mascot; also he forecast the opening soon of a Regimental shop.

The following extracts regarding training from the CO's editorial are worthy of note to any Sapper.

"The work on the obstacle course was first class, both in timeliness and quality. I really enjoyed watching the sections start to come together, both on the works site and tactically. We have come a long way. Some simple rules unless you have been ordered to centralize your weapons and webbing while you work, wear it. If you cannot reach down and pick it up, you should have it on. The reason is that the time you leave it off, out of reach, is the time you'll need it. If you aren't in the habit in peace training, you'll die in operations.

Also if it isn't issued by the Army, don't wear or carry it. Exceptions I'll allow are personal knives approved by Troop staff, self-inflating and dense rubber compound sleeping mats, gas cooking stoves approved by troop staff and balaclavas (at night, in your sack only). Nobody is to carry or sleep on a stretcher. These are small things, but they are vital to the standards we set for ourselves. See to them."

Lt. Col A. Murdoch
Commanding Officer - 4CER

Training for the squadrons has included road works and tree felling at HMAS Cerberus and range qualification at Puckapunyal.

A ANZAC Day Dawn Service at Ringwood RSL was attended by members. A cenotaph guard was provided.

A drive to reinforce safe driving skills is operating in the transport area.

A recent exercise, Ex Muddy Monotreme was aimed at developing FE skills of the soldiers of 10 Fd Sqn at Pucka and 38 Spt Sqn with plant and driver training at HMAS Cerberus. Other activities included a section competition, inspection of 2/10 Medium Regt guns at Ringwood and preparations for a Vital Asset Protection (VAT) exercise at HMAS Cerberus.

RAAF BASE SCHERGER

"The unit will dispatch two drivers to Weipa from 22 July 96 until 31 October 96 on Full Time Service (FTS), the soldiers will be employed on the last rotation of the project - congratulations to the two volunteers. Opportunities exist between the 1 April, until mid October 96. Interested individuals are to confer and apply through their Troop Staff."

Capt Jenkins
Training Officer

NEW FACES

CPL COLIN NORRIS - I joined the Army in February 1983, and after completing my basic training I was moved to SME to await my IET course. It was during this time that I completed a basic 109 drivers course at Puckapunyal.

After my IET course I was posted at 1 Fd Sqn. During the next eight years I became the Tpt NCO for the Squadron and in 1986 spent four months in Malaya with 3 RAR - quite an experience! My last three years at 1 Fd Sqn was spent as a Scammell driver, upgrading to 'S' Liners in 23 Spt Tp.

1990 saw me posted to 17 Const Sqn as a Tpt NCO and during the last three years I have spent most of my time as the Tpt NCO in Weipa catching fish in my time off.

WO DEREK WHITE - After a long break over Christmas I finally found some Army clothes and wandered into 4 CER to take up my appointment as Chief Clerk. Being posted to 35 Fd Sqn Mt Isa for three years did not prepare me for the cold weather experienced in a Melbourne summer and it was difficult to find long pants and jumpers after years of shorts and singlets.

My previous postings include 35 Fd Sqn as stated above, 19 CE Works, 1 Const Regt twice, 17 Const Sqn UNTAG and SME. During these postings I have managed a seven month tour of Namibia, a month skiing in New Zealand, four Skippy exercises, a scuba diving course, a parachute jump, competed in the Tri Service Marathon, gone three rounds at Brophy's Boxing Tent in Birdsville, paddled the Gregory River Canoe Marathon, played five years of inter - service tennis at Nowra and (the absolute highlight) a 3 month exercise on Pucka Range in 1986 - of course the Army paid for it all.

Unfortunately, now I'm here at 4 CER, the CO has curbed my wanderings and chained me to a desk. If anyone has a good escape idea let me know.

My wife, Annette, and daughter, Louise, have settled well in Melbourne and are enjoying yet another culture among the many found throughout Australia. The sledging over football has already begun with each of us following a different team. I look forward to a game of footy at the MCG, but from what I can gather from the locals you have to wait for a rainy day. I guess that means I'll have lots of opportunities.

1/96 IET COURSE

Lt J. Stevens reported in detail on this course of 23 days including a week at Dutton Air Weapons Range in summer, when "56 privates were turned into sappers" for 4 CER and 22 Const Regt.

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#### **4 CER REPORTS**

Congratulations to the Regiment, its CO, Lt Col Murdoch and his officers and men on the unit's first birthday.

We quote from the unit's newsletter "The Bill", Vol 4, 18 July 1996:

##### **"4 CER Birthday**

How many one years old's do you know that can build Medium Girder Bridges, rip Volvos apart and generally save the nation from Kamarian invasion? Thank god it didn't need a nappy!

The Regimental Birthday was celebrated in fine style with a parade held at the Ringwood Depot. Commander 4 Brigade was the reviewing officer and headed the guest list and in fact almost every unit of the Brigade was represented. The local Federal member of Parliament, Mr P. Baresi also attended.

A good effort from all of those on parade made for a good showing in front of the mountain of observers out the front. One of the highlights of the day was a very honest and complementary speech by Brigadier McNeilage who praised the Regiment on how much had been achieved in 12 months but also pointed out how far we all have to go.

A great day all round that was enjoyed by all. Those who were there would have noticed that the rain stopped as we marched onto the parade ground and the clouds broke up. I guess the rest of the Brigade found out what the sun shines out of !!!"

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Summarising recent activities, report from the CO include the following:

Some 21 new recruit graduates were welcomed to the Regiment from the last recruit course at Kapooka.

Capt Greg Jenkins left recently for a three month exchange with the British Army. His temporary replacement is LT Tom Meek, from 9 Sqn (Para) UK.

The regiment now has a new Logo, the Platypus having been officially recognised as its mascot. As "The Bill" says 'Don't be fooled. The Platypus is one mean critter'.

We congratulate the RSM, 4 CER, W01 Spencer Goss on recently celebrating 30 years of military service; and SQMS W02 Mitchell who was promoted to that rank at the Regimental Birthday parade. Also the Regiment's cook LCPL Jones, promoted to that rank on the same occasion.

W02 Roger Hyde, Training WO, reported in more detail on a most interesting and challenging program of activities.

Not to be outdone, the QM, W01 G. Kilmaster, in his report on the Logistics Cell, campaigns shamelessly for new Q staff personnel by promoting the pleasures of spending some of the cold Tuesday nights and weekends 'in a heated office, drinking unlimited amounts of hot coffee on tap and staying clean'. It seems that strange Q breed has not changed over the years.

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## WEIPA 95

### A Belated Report on 1995 Activities.

The dream of getting away from Victoria's winter became a reality for members of 55 Resources Sqn last July. Although it was known there was a possibility of some members attending Kangaroo 95 it was in late June that it was announced that 55 as a Squadron would be deployed to Weipa (Cape York peninsula, far north Queensland) along with 39, 105 and 106 Squadrons. Befitting the origins of 55 we were the first Squadron to be deployed to the low-level operations area.

Assembling on Saturday, 22 July at Oakleigh Barracks, 65 personnel were briefed and equipment checked : 55 and subsequent Squadrons tasked for engineer services as part of Joint Support Force Unit. Saturday night was spent in last minute preparations and for most having a BIG drink - the days ahead of us were to be alcohol free.

Rising on Sunday to more briefings and equipment checks including personal baggage the anticipation of what might be ahead was evident. After an early lunch we squeezed onto a Army bus and off in Melbourne drizzle to Tullamarine to catch a flight with Ronny RAAF. At Tulla the bus parked on the tarmac effectively making McDonalds and other attractions out of bounds. Like a school excursion we were allowed in small groups to visit the toilet; most of us know the facilities on a Hercules are very basic.

Approx 1500 hours saw us in the air to Weipa via Richmond RAAF Base (NSW). A half hour break at Richmond turned out to be about one and a half hours with a sell out situation for the small canteen. Those who purchased the more substantial fare proved to have good judgement as the in-flight meal failed to appear - somebody stuffed up. As the Herc. droned north some slept, others read, played cards, listened to walkmans, etc. Around 23.45 we landed at Weipa Airport to be greeted as the cargo door opened by North Queensland warmth. A fair sweat was worked up in locating personal baggage, a briefing from a Comalco employee : "keep out of the way of the bloody big trucks" and finally into Toyota Troop Carriers for our final destination.

Waiting for us in what appeared to be a shallow dusty quarry was a line of tents containing stretchers and 1-man ration pack on each - our dinner ! With the normal amount of confusion, directions and orders were given and personal weapons issued. Not being Steyr qualified I was issued with a AR, a slight improvement on the M60 I carried during AFE 94. The wisdom of having 4 full water bottles started to be understood - it was warm even at this late hour.

Monday saw the start of routine we were to follow until the end of our deployment : sleep, interspersed with clearing patrols, O.P. duties, stand to, dixie bashing for some and the odd whinge or three. Further explanation follows :

Sleep - after the first night semi-permanent hoochie lines were erected with mossie nets strung over individual stretchers. Sleep included an hour or so after lunch to avoid the heat of the day. Each day, according to ABC Regional News, Weipa Airport had the highest state temperature - around 31 degrees.

Eat - meals were normally eaten in an open sided mess tent located in the "quarry". They were high quality prepared at a central kitchen and delivered in hot boxes. Most of the sappers spent a half day dixie bashing at the kitchen - near to sauna conditions.

Clearing Patrols, O.P. Duties, Stand to - the low level scenario meant 'enemy' were a possibility so these necessary activities were a part of normal life as was the occasional call out of our QRF ( Quick Response Force) in their quick mount Unimog. Personal weapons went everywhere, every time.

Work - our primary tasks were the construction of toilet and shower facilities, water points and a number of plant tasks. All construction equipment and resources together with transport and plant had been shipped in on a Japanese motor vehicle carrier. The ship, the largest apparently to enter Weipa harbour, also carried the tanks and other vehicles of 1 Armoured Regiment. The transfer of the Tankies from Pucka to Darwin was well reported in the media.

Pre our arrival and for the first few days post our arrival the main JSFU location, home base for a 1000+ soldiers for a couple of months was serviced by porta loos, no shower facilities. Using sapper skills, materials shipped in or scavenged, the concrete footings of an old Comalco workers camp and its water supply and waste disposal system, we soon had approx 60 Royal Doulton pans housed in softwood framing clad in hessian, roofed in shade cloth with a marine ply floor ready for use. A super urinal, water points and 2 shower blocks plumbed inside 2 tents provided heavenly relief for all on site.

Our skills in toilet construction were also utilised at Weipa Airport, for the RAAF contingent and at the barracks of 51 Far North Queensland Regiment (51FNQR) at Weipa Northern where we constructed a multi pan toilet with an observation post on top - have to be a first.

By Week 2 the saw dust generated by hand saws on pine framing was not enough to satisfy some of the older 91 members who knew the Q store had chain saws that would love to see the light of day. Management recognising the situation (there was the potential for an industrial dispute far bigger than what happened later between Comalco and its workers) sought out big timber possibilities.

After the pre-requisite reccies, forms, etc the majority of Forestry Tp found itself at RAAF Base Scherger. This RAAF facility is being constructed by 17 Construction Sqn. The facility, part of the network of RAAF bases across the top will, when completed, be put under civilian caretaker arrangements and activated as required.

A lot of clearing for the construction of roads, plane run-offs, etc had revealed a treasure chest of sizeable timber suitable for use as foundations, etc in construction of loading and off loading ramps for heavy equipment at JSFU HQ. The main timber species is called blackwood and the 91 guys took to it with relish with their ECHOS.

I never cease to be amazed how 2 stroke mixture and saw dust changes moods !! What would a MDS have done ? The last few days with dunnys and showers working, porta loos removed, bodies acclimatised, time was spent by drivers updating their driving codes (Army has a fleet of new "white" vehicles. eg. Canter 2WD and 4WD), others ensured 55 was remembered by stencilling construction sites with LV and WOODY, some even refreshed themselves in our pool - a stave tank.

A highlight for me was sharing my birthday with Lt Stevens our Troop Commander who on 4/8/95 attained half the age I did that day. That night tried and true foresters toasted with me during my stint in the O.P. - cheap port never tasted better !!

Unlike most AFE packing up on Saturday, 5 August required little effort other than for personal gear for 39 Sqn was flying in and we were flying out. What a joy to hand in the AR. Everybody wished Neville Handley good luck in staying on (Nev in his own way had found ongoing employment in the central kitchen).

Out to Weipa Airport, sandwich lunch and wait for 39. 39 arrived, to some good natured banter, them and us - fresh and white, tired and tanned. Somebody forgot the in-flight meal again and a direct flight to Tulla. Arrived Tulla approx 2100 hours to typical Melbourne winter weather - cold and wet, out with the jumpers.

Management on the boil at Oakleigh - a bit of a snack and kept the boozier open an extra hour. It doesn't take much to get pissed after 2 weeks on the dry.

Late rise Sunday, debrief and early release. How will those who have to travel far keep awake and those fined for a UD explain the deficiency in their pay are some of my thoughts. Foremost thought however was - I'm glad I did Weipa 95.

**SPR Mick Murray**

## THE GERMAN 303 MACHINE GUN

A small country town in South Australia may seem an unlikely place for machine-gun inventions, but during 1941 that is precisely what occurred. The story really begins at the end of WWI, when literally hundreds of German machine-guns were brought back to Australia as war trophies.

There were two main types: the medium Maschinengewehr 08 or MG08 model, some complete with the original Schlitten or sledge-type mounting, and the light MG08/15 model. Made by many famous German armaments companies such as Spandau, Sauer and DWM, both models were developments of the earlier designs of Hiram Maxim, as was the Vickers MMG in British and Commonwealth service.

Like the Vickers the MC08 worked on a short-recoil principle where the barrel and breech block remained locked together while moving rearward during the first part of the firing cycle.

At the point of separation the barrel returned to its forward position while the breech block continued to the rear until the motion was overcome by the fusee (or fusee) spring and returned to the locked position. During this motion the spent case was withdrawn and ejected downward through the ejection port in the underside of the receiver, another cartridge was stripped from the belt, then chambered with the forward motion of the breech block.

The cloth ammunition belt was also indexed across to the left, presenting a fresh cartridge for the next cycle. Rate of fire was about 300 rounds per minute, although this could be increased to around 450 with the addition of a booster to the muzzle which increased the force of the recoil movement.

The MG08 was water cooled and weighed over 26kg unloaded. The sledge mount weighed about 32kg. Together with extra barrels, water and gun spares, the whole system weighed over 60kg, which severely limited the weapon's mobility.

This led to the development of the MG08/15, which was a lightened model incorporating a bipod at the rear of the water jacket, wooden butt and pistol grip trigger. The receiver was also redesigned to save weight. Despite these efforts, the weapon still weighed more than 20kg with the water jacket full.

Upon arrival in Australia, most of the trophy machine-guns found their way onto the walls of local memorial halls, mechanics institutes and even schools where they remained, untouched and gathering dust, during the interwar years.

With the outbreak of WW2 in 1939, the Australian armaments industry was hard pressed to manufacture the quantities of weapons needed to equip a rapidly expanding army.

Shortages included machine-guns, both the Bren and Vickers machine-guns chambered for the standard .303 Mark VII service cartridge. Front-line units had the highest priority for weapons receipts, with the needs of the Volunteer Defence Corps (VDC) having the lowest, so it is not surprising that such units were rarely issued with the Vickers or Bren during the first few years of the war.

Like most towns throughout Australia, Waikerie had its complement of returned servicemen from WWI who were eager to "do their bit" in the second.

Many joined the VDC, parading each week at the local hall and guarding the local infrastructure against sabotage.

Given their level of enthusiasm and collective military knowledge, it is perhaps not surprising that they came up with many novel methods of relieving equipment shortages, including the conversion of the old German MG's to fire service ammunition.

Although this conversion had been undertaken in New Zealand early in 1941, it was not until mid 1941 that the idea developed in Australia.

The process reportedly started when Mr W.H. Foster a VDC member and proprietor of the motor garage in Waikerie, was asked to give a lecture on the Vickers to his fellow VDC members at the local memorial hall.

Not having a Vickers on hand, the German MG08 machine-gun hanging on the wall was pulled down for use as a substitute.

Surprised to find that the gun was still complete, Foster, upon examining the lock, declared that it might be possible to convert it from the original 7.92mm rimless cartridge to fire the .303 inch rimmed cartridge. This was some time during late July 1941, and by early August Mr Foster had effected some alterations to the lock and original German barrel of a light model MG08/15.

A Vickers barrel and ammunition belt were also obtained unofficially from contacts in ordnance in Adelaide, the barrel subsequently being fitted to a medium model MG08.

Both worked satisfactorily during trials and by early September, a demonstration was held for senior officers at Port Adelaide firing range. In mid December, Foster and the two guns were sent to Army Headquarters in Melbourne to give further demonstrations.

The benefits were immediately realised and an appropriation of 40,000 pounds was made for the conversion of medium and light models to fire .303 ammunition from Vickers ammunition belts.

Not only would these help to relieve shortage of machine-guns in VDC and garrison battalions, but there was an estimated saving of 170,000 pounds, this being the cost difference between the same number of new Vickers machine-guns against the conversion of the German guns.

Nearly 3,000 German trophy guns were collected through local police stations and, following further development of the conversion method, an armourer's workshop in Melbourne proceeded to carry out the conversions during late 1941 and early 1942.

This was no easy matter as many weapons were incomplete and had suffered from neglect during the interwar period.

Parts interchangeability was also a problem as there were minor differences between parts manufactured by different companies. It was a matter of cannibalising some weapons to provide a stock of parts, then mixing and matching to complete the remainder.

A total of 1320 machine-guns were converted, consisting of 720 light MG08/15 guns, designated the "Guns, Machine, Light, .303 inch (German)", and 600 medium MG08 guns, subsequently designated the "Guns, Machine, Medium, .303 inch (German)".

Many of the medium guns were equipped with a locally manufactured tripod, although some retained the original sledge mounting.

Issued to VDC and garrison battalions, the converted weapons were used until mid 1944 when the shortages of Vickers and Bren guns had been largely overcome. The converted guns were subsequently declared obsolete in June 1944 and returned to store. Here they were stripped of all parts common to the Vickers gun and disposed of while the Vickers parts were retained as maintenance spares.

An unfortunate sequel to the conversion was the controversy over who actually originated the idea. While Mr Foster made the initial claim to the Army Inventions Board, a counter claim from Mr R. Notman, also of the Waikerie VDC, was made soon after.

Waikerie is a small town and it appears that the often bitter dispute between the two claimants caused quite a division among residents. It also necessitated an investigation by the authorities, which was periodically rekindled during the ensuing years by one or other of the claimants or their associates.

Incredibly, it took more than 10 years before the matter was finally resolved, with the inventions board recognising Mr Foster's claim and awarding him an ex-gratia payment of 250 pounds in June 1952.

Despite the controversy there is no doubt that whoever originated the idea, it was both practical and timely.

With a war against Japan looming and a general shortage of machine-guns for home defence, the addition of another 1320 converted guns in just a few months provided a valuable boost to local defences.

**Mike Cecil**  
**Army Magazine No.26**

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### ***MORE ABOUT THE S.R.*** ***Specialists in Uniform*** ***Civilian Skills in Service of the Army***

Under these headings in an article in "The Age", 26 September 1957, Horace Chisholm introduced readers to the Supplementary Reserve (SR), RAE, which had been formed about eight years before.

The content and tenor of that article are worthy of comment, following recent references in this Newsletter to the need for regeneration or effective replacement of this important Reserve Engineer component. (References 1, 2, 3).

The writer enthusiastically reported the formation and subsequent activities of the SR with this introduction: "More than 3000 Victorians will be using their civilian and professional skills in army engineering units when the supplementary reserve is the latest development of the successful Australian concept of the citizen - soldier."

We must all regret the loss over recent years of such enthusiasm from the media, the Government and the public at large.

After outlining the structure of the SR, already dealt with in this publication (Ref 1), he named the first senior officers and their postings. What a great lot of sappers they were! It is worth remembering here those who so effectively led the SR in its early years. Regrettably they are not all still with us.

Chisholm wrote:

"supplementary reserve units are officered by a well-balanced mixture of World War II veterans and keen, younger men. (It) is virtually an embryo A.I.F. formation, as enlistment is for service at home or abroad.

With weapons and warfare becoming increasingly complex, skill, knowledge, imagination and the will to serve are more necessary. These highly skilled citizen soldiers are meeting the challenge."

Among those whose service was recorded were:

MAJGEN Sir Clive Steele who developed the concept. MAJGEN (then COL) R.R. Mc Nicoll who helped with the planning. COL J.G. (John) Wilson who as Comd, 6 Engineering Group, was the first commander of the SR. COL O.G. (Oscar) Meyer, commander at the time of the article.

LTCOL (later COL) I.J. O'Donnell, first CO of 22 Construction Regiment, Australia's first SR unit. (CRB). LTCOL R. Eastick (familiar name - sounds like our Editor), CO, 22 Construction Regiment at the time. (CRB).

MAJ (later COL) R. Handley, OC 104 Squadron. (CRB).

MAJ J. Tyson, OC 105 Squadron. (SR&WSC).

MAJ H. Miller, OC 106 Squadron. (MMBW).

MAJ K.N. Opie, OC 107 Squadron. (CRB).

LTCOL E.A. Coulson, CO, 16 Construction Regiment. (SEC).

COL R.M. Wright, Comd 8 Railway Group. (VR).

CAPT W. Chapman, OC 41 Railway Squadron. (VR).

In addition, in August 1951, the Melbourne Stevedoring Company raised a Port Operating Squadron, OC MAJ A.B. MacAdie, which became 31 Port Operating Squadron, in the CMF, later renamed 31 Terminal Squadron, and later still transferred to the new RACT.

The article featured some of the projects undertaken by SR units in those early days, in particular 16 Regiment, shown in a photo constructing a pontoon Bailey bridge near Seymour.

It also recorded construction by that Regiment at the Pan-Pacific Scout Jamboree in 1955 of a steel mesh and canvas reservoir 84 feet in diameter, six feet high, and holding 180 000 gallons of water, with a pumping station on the Yarra and 1500 feet of rising main.

It was noted that the desire to use their skill to strengthen Australia's defence had brought men into the force; and that the initial plan had been to give units military tasks as closely allied to their civilian work as possible. Later engineers would gain professional experience beyond their own specialises which would be valuable to them in civilian life. Such experience included military bridging, airfield construction and use of explosives.

#### References:

"SAPPER SUMMIT" : RAE Corps Newsletter, Victorian Engineers.

1. No. 13, June 1995, page 18  
"The Supplementary Reserve, Royal Australian Engineers. The SR."  
This summarised its concept and origins.
2. No. 15, January 1996. Editorial  
LTCOL R.F. Eastick, MBE, discussed the call by General John Grey for action on Australia's defence.
3. No. 16, April 1996, pages 22-23.  
"General Grey Again".  
In which the Editor announced the formation of a sub-committee of the Historical and Heritage Committee "to investigate a new approach to recruiting with emphasis on the RAE Corps".

**LTCOL John Slee**

## **BOOK REVIEWS**

### **"FIRST IN - LAST OUT"**

Abridged History of 2/2 Field Company, RAE, 6 Division, AIF 1939- 1945.

A book review by LTCOL John Slee.

On the principle that it is never too late to tell a good story or to record important events, Joe Jopling has produced a very readable and well researched history of the first Victorian sapper company to be formed after the outbreak of hostilities in World War II.

In an advance notice the author has made a comment which could apply to many similar situations ; "This book should have been written 50 years ago to enable Ex Members of the unit to relive those times between 1939-45 when so many enlisted, really not knowing what experiences lay ahead of them".

But in the late forties and after we all had so much to do to pick up our interrupted lives that there was no spare time for researching and recording recent intimate history, unit by unit.

As for many other unit associations it has taken all those years until now for a dedicated author to find the time, and with the help of old comrades, families, libraries and Army Records to collect the pieces and to put together a valuable history of a great unit. In this case the Australia Remembers Committee gave financial assistance.

Sir John Holland, AC, who spent seven of its early months with the unit, has provided a foreword in which he acknowledges this problem of delay. He pays tribute to the initiative, enthusiasm and drive of Joe Jopling which led him to take on the onerous role of authorship, and also praises his long and dedicated service to the Unit Association.

In hearing the stories of the units of 1 Aust Corps, AIF, one is hard put to realise that one is not reading about two wars, so great were the differences between the actions of Middle East - Greece - Crete and those of New Guinea - SWPA - NEL. 2/2 Fd Coy served with distinction in both of these theatres, and Joe had given continuity to the record.

The unit was raised as part of 17 Brigade, which was formed at Puckapunyal on 20 October 1939. The first recruits joined the Company on 3 December.

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So the "First In" part of the title is amply justified, applying to the time of the unit's formation as well as to the role of the sapper everywhere.

With other units of the Brigade, 2/2 embarked on 14 April 1940, and disembarked at El Kantara on the Suez Canal on 18 May for onward movement to Palestine for further training, and thence in September to Egypt, and on to the desert in December.

The Company went into action for the first time in the assault on Bardia, and it was there that the first battle casualties were taken. On 5 January, the day that Bardia fell, the OC, Maj Whitford and Capt Kenny were killed by a land mine.

Tobruk and Benghazi followed. In March the unit returned to Egypt, and by April was in Greece.

There 2/2 was closely engaged in the advance north, and then the retreat - what a remarkable and harrowing period in their history is covered by that bald statement!

Although most of RAE, 6 Div, went to Crete, 2/2 Fd Coy, evacuated from Greece on 27 April was taken direct to Alexandria, less some members who, with elements of the CRE's HQ ended up by accident in Crete. Four of the 2/2 men became POW with many sappers from other units. One of the four, Lt John Holden, graphically relates his experiences in Chapter 6: "Crete - The POW Story".

The Company, after rest camp in Palestine, moved to Lebanon and Syria to join 7 Div on defensive works; and eventually embarked from Suez, now with 19 Brigade, for an unknown destination, which turned out to be Fremantle, 20 March 1942, and on to home leave.

After concentrating in Victoria the unit moved to Darwin and other locations in the NT to carry out a variety of sapper tasks on defence, base, and L of C works supporting 19 Bde.

Next the long way round via SA and Victoria to Queensland in May-June 1943, with home leave en route. On the Atherton Tableland 19 Bde rejoined the rest of 6 Div which had returned from New Guinea.

After long months of work and jungle training, 2/2 finally embarked on 19 November 1944 for Aitape, NG. From there along the north coast, with other RAE units of Div and Corps Troops, they supported, indeed enabled, the coastal advance and mountain operations of 16 and 19 Brigades. Joe Jopling's record of this campaign, which ended with the fall of Wewak, mirrors closely the story of 15 Fd Coy in New Guinea and Bougainville, so ably recorded in "Mad Mick's Mob",

reviewed in the October 1995 issue of this Newsletter: sappers struggling in heartbreaking conditions of heat and flooding rains to keep roads open and bridges built and rebuilt in spite of the lack of proper equipment, (and of course Japanese resistance), but always enabling the advance to continue - a common tale of RAE endeavour in the New Guinea and inland campaigns.

We can be grateful to the authors of both these histories for detailed records of operations which at the time and since found so little publicity. Of the "two wars" to which I referred earlier, this one was and is so much less well known, overshadowed as it was at the time by great events further north.

Joe Jopling concludes his excellent book with a Roll of Honour, list of Honours and Awards and a Nominal Roll of all who served in the unit.

2/2 Fd Coy lost eleven killed in action, four deaths on active service, and 24, including the author, were wounded in action.

My copy for review was a final draft which excluded illustrations, but it appears that the final version will include an unusually comprehensive collection of photographs of all periods of what was a splendid contribution by a fine unit to the history of the Corps and the Army.

Better late than never, Joe! Although many who were part of the history have joined that other Company beyond, their grandchildren and those who come after will know "what he did in the war", while the lessons of their service will pass to the sappers of the future who choose to read and learn.

Anyone interested in Military History will appreciate this book.

Book size 205mm deep x 145mm wide. Includes a text of approx 150 pages plus maps and photographs.

Orders can be placed with:

Joe Jopling  
151 Linacre Road  
Hampton  
Victoria 3188  
Ph: (03) 9598 6784

Estimated price \$20.00, plus postage

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## "THE KOOKABURRAS CUT-THROATS - VOL 1 "

**BY PHILIP DANDY**

Author Philip Dandy in this first volume has produced an interesting 7 Division Markham & Ramu Valley campaign history, commencing on the 1st Sept 1943 at Tsili Tsili until the 31 Oct 1943 on Shaggy Ridge. The book (in very large print) brings together the threads of the 6 month campaign against the Japs in New Guinea. Maj Gen Vasey's fighting battalions had fought a number of major battles in the drive north and the 7 Div saw action along the Markham Valley Road, Kaiapit, Surinam Valley, Johns Knoll and then at Shaggy Ridge. There is a lot of important events for gunners, starting with the first "Arty Para drop" by 2/4th Fd Regt "Light Section" into Nadzab with the 503rd Para Inf Regt. Artillery is well covered.

The information in this book has been extracted from many other books and unit histories into a nicely condensed overview. The only major problem with the book, is the lack of correct reference for the original books, AWM reports and sources within the text. However, Dandy acknowledges this fact and he still has the next volume to correct this error when the important index is produced.

This is a very interesting and nicely produced book and with only 1000 produced we highly recommend it to our readers. A good read !

**DESCRIPTION:** VOL 1, Ed 1995, 6 Ch, 235 pages, 30 pic, 16 maps, Size A4x20mm. Printed by McPherson Print Group 1995.

Copies are available through the RAA Assn (Vic) shop.  
Order from : SSgt Reg Morrell  
BH : 9543 3888  
AH : 9562 9552

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## THE GUNNERS

**A History of Australian Artillery**  
**David Horner**

"An invaluable and meticulously researched contribution. David Horner has done justice to a proud Regiment that has served Australia in peace and war for almost 150 years".

**Major General S.N. Gower**, AM, General Officer Commanding Headquarters Training Command and author of Guns of the Regiment.

"A valuable and important contribution to Australian military history. It will be of considerable interest to 'old' gunners and inspire those now serving".

**Major General John Whitlaw**, AO, CBE (Retd), Patron, RAA Historical Society.

To obtain a copy write to :  
Artillery Centre  
PO Box 42  
Manly, NSW, 2095

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## GOVERNMENT HUMOUR OR HOW MILSPECS LIVE FOREVER

The Australian standard railroad gauge is 4ft 8 1/2in. That's an extraordinary odd number. Why was that gauge used ? Because that's the way they built them in England, and the Australian railroads were built by English expatriates.

Why did the English build them like that ? Because the first rail lines were built by the same people who built the pre-railroad tramways, and that's the gauge they used.

Why did "they" use that gauge then ? Because the people who built the tramways used the same jigs and tools as "they" used for building wagons, which used that wheel spacing.

OK ! Why did the wagons use that wheel spacing ? Well if they tried to use any other spacing the wagons would break on some of the old, long distance roads, because that's the spacing of the ruts. So, who built these old rutted roads ? The first long distance roads in Europe were built by Imperial Rome for the benefit of their legions. The roads have been used ever since. And the ruts ? The initial ruts, which everyone else had to match for fear of breaking their wagons, were first made by Roman war chariots. Since the chariots were made by or for Imperial Rome they were all alike in the matter of wheel spacing (ruts again).

Thus we have the answer to the original question. The Australian standard railroad gauge of 4ft 8 1/2in. derives from the original military specification (MilSpec) for an Imperial Roman army war chariot.

**MilSpecs live forever !**

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## A POLISH HONOUR

We were alerted by receiving a short article from a Queensland newspaper late last year, that Mac Turnbull (32) of Noosaville, had been awarded the Polish War Cross. This is a most distinguished decoration and it is understood that it had never before been awarded to a non Polish citizen. The decision to award it in 1995 was made by the then Polish President Lech Walesa who signed the citation personally.

One might ask as to why Mac who is 81 should be recognised belatedly in 1995 for distinguished service in Tobruk in 1941 ?

The answer could well be that the Polish servicemen who fought with the Allies received scant recognition by the Communist Polish government post World War II. It would seem that with the demise of the Communist regime, long neglected recognition of gallant deeds is now being rectified.

Mac Turnbull is a modest old soldier so we hope that he will not mind if we print the reason for the award, a copy of which we have now obtained :

**MAJOR ROBERT M. (MAC) TURNBULL ,**  
Royal Australian Engineers (RL)

In early September 1941 during the "SIEGE OF TOBRUK" the recently arrived Polish Carpathian Brigade suffered a considerable number of fatalities caused by German anti-personnel "S" Mines.

Having had considerable experience with German and Italian mines and booby-traps, earlier during the Siege, the then Lieut Turnbull was consequently given the task of demonstrating and training the Polish Engineers in the location of and the lifting of "S" Mines at night and then disarming them back in safe territory at first light.

When the majority of 9th Australian Division was being relieved from the Siege the Polish Command requested that Lieut Turnbull remain behind and continue his training of the Polish Engineers. Lieut Turnbull was then seconded to the Polish Brigade.

When a patrol group of Polish Engineers was adequately trained and experienced, Mac then took them out on actual mine-lifting patrols that disarmed and collected a number of mines.

Lieut Turnbull's suggestion that all these "S" Mines be given back to the Germans, met initially with dismay and then with heated opposition from the Polish Engineers.

However when he continued by suggesting that the return of the "S Mines" should be carried out by re-laying them near German posts and on their patrol tracks, his suggestion met immediate and enthusiastic approval and the "S" Mines were gleefully "given back" during the next dark nights.

Lieut Turnbull had been in the desert and in the Tobruk Siege for almost twelve months and after a few weeks with the Polish Engineers, his deteriorating health necessitated his evacuation from Tobruk and immediate admission to the Scottish Hospital in Cairo.

After the war Major Turnbull stated that the Polish Engineers were most exhilarating soldiers to work with. Individually they were so keen to get personal revenge on the Germans for the horrors perpetrated on their families by the Germans and for the devastation of their homes and cities.

### The German Anti-Personnel "S" Mine

When trodden on, or triggered by a foot colliding with a connecting trip wire, the mine was propelled out of the ground and when about waist high, exploded 400 fragments within a 30 metre radius. The presence of the mine was detectable only by three small prongs the size of match sticks protruding above the ground or by a trip wire leading to the prongs. The fragments were contained in a canister buried beneath the prongs. At night to find these mines was a nerve-racking and painstaking business for an Allied soldier had to advance slowly on hands and knees, using his fingers to search the ground in front of him for the dreaded prongs. (Editor)

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## THE EDITOR APOLOGISES

It has been pointed out that the obituary for Tom Thomason contained a serious omission. A sentence in the third paragraph should have read "By virtue of his years of hard living in the Mallee and elsewhere, operational living in the army came relatively easily to him". The underlined words were those omitted. The error is regretted.

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## PERSONAL NOTICES

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### SYMPATHIES TO THE YOUL FAMILY

We were saddened to hear of the sudden and premature death, on 27 July 1996, of David Youl, brother of our well known sapper officer and author, LtCol Robin Youl.

Our sympathies are extended to David's widow Christine, daughter Chloe and to Rob and his family.

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### OBITUARY

#### MAJ. WILLIAM (BILL) T.L. JINKINS, MBE



*War hero: Major William T. L. Jenkins in 1945 . . .  
"Bill was just one of those unsung war heroes. And a thorough gentleman, too."*

Died 29 April 1996, at age 83, after a long illness.  
Civil engineer.

Maj Jenkins joined the AIF on 2 September 1939, and a year later 2/21 Battalion, 8 Div, which later formed the major component of the ill-fated "Gull Force" on Ambon (Included was a section of 2/11 Field Company RAE).

There he was captured by the Japanese and imprisoned. Bill, with six others, was one of the very few who managed a successful escape from a Japanese camp. After making 17 trips out at night at great risk to establish contacts with the Ambonese,

he led the party in an island hopping return to Australia, picking up ten other soldiers on the way. For this escape and for providing important information on the enemy he received his MBE.

Later he joined Z Special Unit. He led numerous operations with the US Navy by submarine, to land on occupied shores by two-man canoe. Operations included the destruction of railway lines. He also attempted missions to free prisoners of war, and in one operation rescued a party of soldiers from Borneo.

For his work with US forces in the South-west Pacific he was awarded a Bronze Star. After leaving the Army in 1947, Maj Jenkins returned to British Borneo as a civil engineer, and eventually became a leading safety officer in Australia and the Pacific. He was involved in the construction of the Melbourne Underground Rail Loop. He was made a life member of the Safety Institute of Australia before retiring in 1983.

In the words of a former fellow officer, Lt Laurie Black, "Bill was just one of those unsung heroes, and a thorough gentleman too".

Maj Jenkins is survived by his wife, Gwenith, daughters Geraldine and Derryn, and son Stewart.

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### OBITUARY

#### CAPTAIN L.E.A. (Lloyd) ORTON RAE



Captain Lloyd Orton was born in Geelong on 21st November, 1918. He was educated at Camberwell Grammar and Scotch College, where his father was a Master and, after leaving school, he studied architecture at R.M.I.T. He was brilliant academically, and was frequently dux of his class.

In 1940 his architectural studies were interrupted when he joined the A.I.F. and late in that year he was commissioned as an officer in the Royal Australian Engineers.

He was posted to Middle East and served with the 2/8th Field Company in Palestine, Syria and Ceylon. Following his return to Australia in 1942, he served with distinction in New Guinea and the South West Pacific Area. He was about to attend a Staff Course at Toowoomba when the war ended, and he was discharged with the rank of Captain in December 1945.

As a member of the R.A.E. Reserve of Officers, Lloyd maintained his interest in the Army. He was an enthusiastic member of the RAE Staff Group, as well as an active member of the Engineer Mess.

Following his discharge from the A.I.F., Lloyd Orton resumed his architectural studies at Melbourne University. In 1947 he was awarded the Victorian Institute of Architects Haddon Travelling Scholarship, and so was able to continue his architectural studies in England.

In 1948, he was invited by the Victorian Agent-General in London to join a delegation led by the Victorian Minister for Transport to advise the Government on the proposed introduction of UK prefabricated houses for migrants coming to Victoria. This was known as Operation Snail - migrants with houses on their backs.

On completion of this task, the award of another scholarship allowed Lloyd to continue his architectural studies at Cornell University in the USA. He was awarded the Master of Architecture degree in 1950.

In 1954, he and his friend, Tony Armstrong, established the architecture firm of Armstrong and Orton, later to become Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong and Orton Pty Ltd. He retired as a Director of the company in 1984.

During this period he was made a Life Fellow of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects - he was President of the Victorian Chapter for several years.

His service to the community also included 10 years as a member of the Hawthorn City Council, including one year as Mayor. He was President of the Swinburne Technical College Council for nine years and a member of the Council for 20 years. He was appointed a Life Governor of Swinburne in 1987.

He was also a Council Member of the Royal Commonwealth Society since 1958 and a member of the Committee of the Sorrento-Portsea-Blairgowrie conservation Group, with three years as Chairman.

Lloyd was an enthusiastic cricket player - he played for Old Scotch on many occasions.

He was also a member of the famous RAE cricket team that toured England in 1961. During that tour he managed to break three ribs in a fielding mishap.

The Steele Memorial Gates at S.M.E., Casula, NSW, are a tribute to the imagination and skill of Lloyd Orton and his friend and fellow architect, the late Captain Stan Evans. RAE. Although they were in separate practices, they submitted a joint entry in a nation-wide competition for the design of the Major General Sir Clive Steele Memorial Gates at SME. Their design, submitted in 1957, was judged the winner and the entrance was dedicated in October 1958. It is located at the entrance to SME and features a Steele truss bridge.

Apart from his work, his company activities and the army, Lloyd's main interest was sculpture.

He had always wanted to be a sculptor, but he was persuaded by his father to accept the fact that there was more money to be made in architecture than in sculpture. However, he was able to maintain a keen interest in sculpture throughout his life, in fact while at Cornell University he was able to take sculpture as an elective subject.

He was a member of the Association of Sculptors from 1978, and served two years as Vice President.

He was very interested in African sculpture in particular that of the Shona people in Zimbabwe. In recent years he made eight visits there, and spent many weeks working with the other students. His works included many pieces in stone, wood and bronze. These were shown in a number of exhibitions, at which he won five major prizes.

He also showed considerable skill as a painter in water colour, and in pencil sketching.

Lloyd Orton was a quiet and unassuming man, his many friends testify to his abilities and to his qualities of loyalty and trust.

He died on 20th April, 1996; he is survived by his wife Helene, who played a significant role in all that he did.

**Obituary prepared by Wilton-Eady, old friend and brother officer to Lloyd Orton.**

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## **THE SURVEYORS RETURN TO THE SAPPERS**

On 1 July the Survey Corps was formally amalgamated into RAE with a parade in Sydney, ending a separation dating from the end of WWII.

Delving further into history, McNicoll records in the RAE Corps History, Vol 3, that the original Survey Corps ceased to exist, for the time being, on 1 October 1920 "when its remaining four officers were transferred to the 'Survey Section, Engineers (Permanent)' to which the warrant and non-commissioned officers belonged". From then on for many years it operated at a slow pace with small numbers, until the demands of war had to be met.

In 1941 the surveyors occupied the historic property "Fortuna" in Bendigo, where they remained, eventually as Army Survey Regiment, until the end of April this year when the Regiment handed over the keys to the new Army Topographic Support Establishment, which is staffed by public servants (many being former survey soldiers).

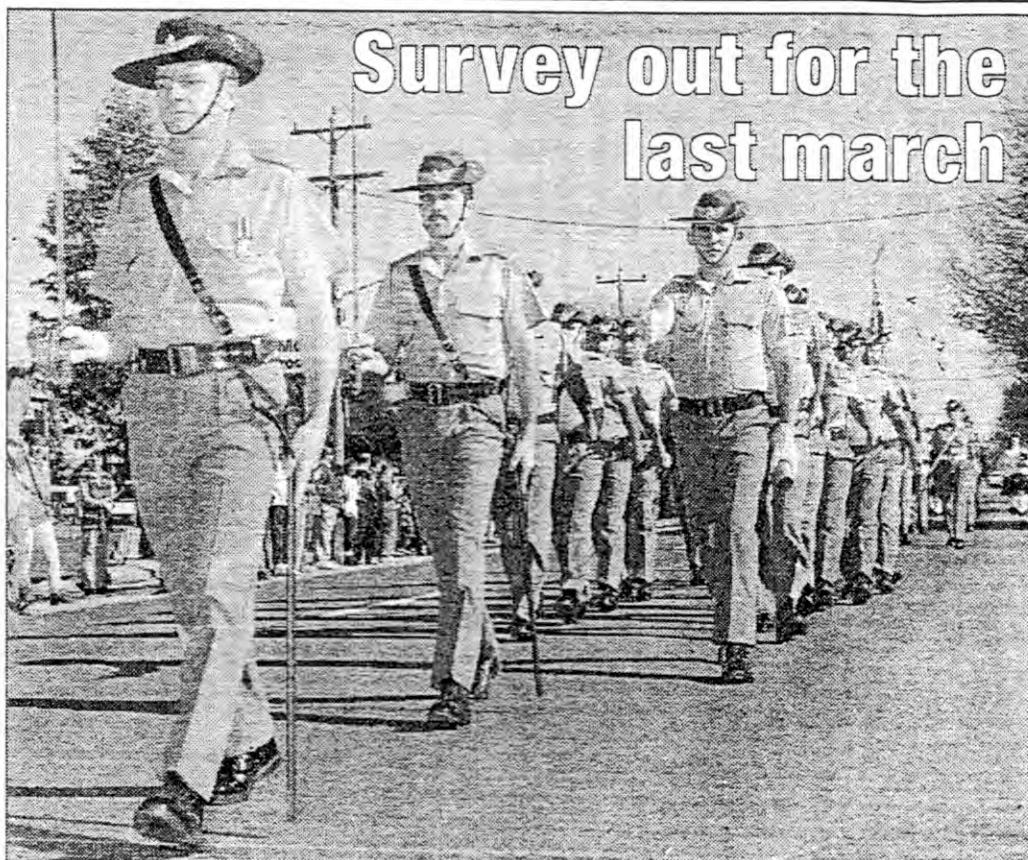
It has the task of continuing the mapping traditions established by the Regiment.

"Army" newspaper records that a number of celebrations occurred between ANZAC Day and the end of April to mark the occasion, culminating in a freedom of entry parade, after which the Regiment handed back the right to the City of Bendigo. People of Bendigo lined the streets to cheer the serving members and about 200 former soldiers.

Corps Director Col. Simon Lemon unveiled a rock cairn in the grounds of Fortuna dedicated to those who had served with the Army Svy Regt.

A pleasing local sequel to the change has been the recent welcome by the RAE (Victoria) Historical and Heritage Committee to Capt. Graeme Beasley as the Survey Corps representative, in anticipation of the amalgamation of the Corps into RAE.

**LTCOL John Slee**



Led by their OC, Maj Terry Lord, soldiers from the School of Mil Svy exercise their Right for Freedom of Entry to the Shire of Hume for the last time at Howlong in rural NSW. Following the disestablishment of the corps on July 1, the school has now become the Geomatic Engineering Wing of SME and will be relocated to Moorebank by 1997.

# Regiment closes chapter in history

THE ARMY Svy Regt took to the streets of Bendigo recently to pay tribute to and farewell the place it had called home since 1941.

Story and photos by CPL TRACY TILLMAN

Based at historic Fortuna in Bendigo, the regiment used the doors to its military past when it handed over the keys to the new Army Topographic Support establishment.



ATSE is staffed by public servants (many former survey soldiers) with the task of continuing the mapping traditions established at Fortuna by the regiment.

A number of celebrations occurred between Anzac Day and the end of April to mark the occasion and culminated in a freedom of entry parade, after which the regiment handed back the right to the city of Bendigo.

The people of Bendigo lined the streets for the parade to cheer the serving members and about 200 former soldiers.

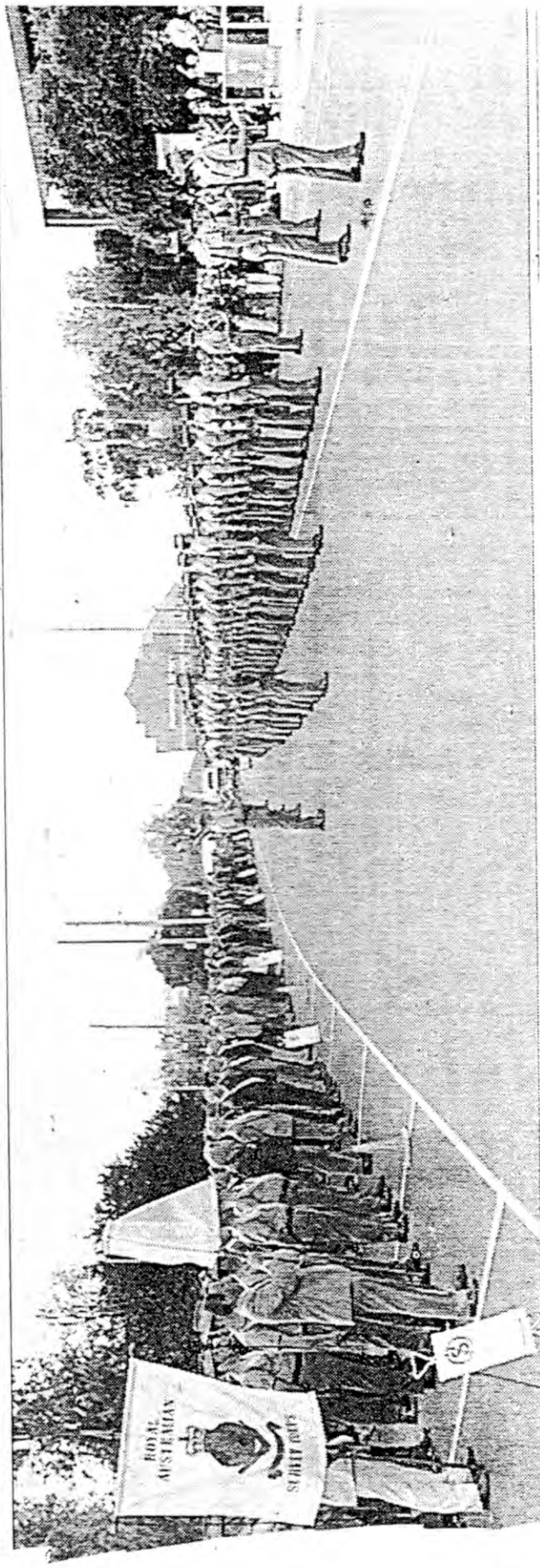
The final chapter in its history will occur on July 1 when the corps is formally amalgamated into RAFE with a parade in Sydney.

Corps Director Col Simon Lemon unveiled a rock cairn in the grounds of Fortuna dedicated to those who had served with Army Svy Regt.

LEFT: RA Svy Corps Director Col Simon Lemon stands in front of a cairn dedicated to corps members who have served at Fortuna.

RIGHT: WO2 Ken Cugley, Army Svy Regt, flanks the unit's final parade at Bendigo.

BELOW: The regiment pays tribute to the city of Bendigo as it farewell its home since 1941. The unit is flanked by about 200 former members of the regiment.



## AND ANOTHER WELCOME BACK TO THE SURVEYORS

Originally Army Surveys were included as part of the RAE Corps. Then, like some of our other offspring such as Signals, they became a separate Corps, and as such carried out much important survey and mapping work, both in peace time and at war, extending over several decades.

Now as of 1 July 1996, the Survey Corps has been disestablished and its members are once again members of the RAE Corps.

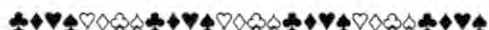
The RAE welcomes all you sappers (survey) back to the Corps and we look forward to seeing more of you back at functions such as the Waterloo Dinner, as well as at training and work.

Also the editorial staff of "Sapper Summit" hope that those ex - Survey Corps members already on our Sapper Summit mailing list will enjoy our little newsletter and will be prepared to supply articles about their own activities, for publication in it.

Just to start the ball rolling the photos extracted from "Army" newspaper of July 11, 1996, show Survey Sappers from the Shire of Hume, for the last time as members of the Survey Corp.

Best of Luck, and Welcome Back, Surveyors

**Bruce Campbell**  
(Also a Civilian Surveyor)



## RAE PROMOTIONS - VICTORIA

### RAE Officer Promotions

To Major J.F. Young, (22 Const Regt)

### RAE Other Rank Promotions

To WO1 G. Kilmaster (4 CER)

R. Viner (22 Const Regt)

To WO2 D. White (4 CER)

To Sergeant A. Mackie (4 CER)

To Lance Corporal R. Hoyland (22 Const Regt)

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## HMVS CERBERUS Battleship to Breakwater

Courtesy of City of Sandringham

### FIFTY-THREE YEARS OF SERVICE

IN 1871, the 'Cerberus' commenced a period of 53 years service which must rate as the longest and most uneventful of any naval vessel in the world. The years were spent within the confines of Port Phillip Bay, and she never engaged an enemy in battle. Training runs from Williamstown to Sorrento and Queenscliff were undertaken and mock battles were held with these forts and her attendant torpedo boats, 'Countess of Hopetoun', 'Childers', 'Nepean', and 'Lonsdale'.

The only casualties suffered were when a mine accidentally exploded during exercises, killing one officer and three seamen.

The guns were too powerful to be fired close to shore. On one occasion when this was done, the public protests and general damage to windows were such that there was not a repeat firing. Notwithstanding their power, they became obsolete compared with breech loading guns and torpedo tubes.

During her years of service, a number of changes were made to the 'Cerberus'

On arrival in Port Phillip the colour scheme was white with a yellow funnel. This was later changed to Navy patterns, a black hull with red boot top, white upper work, a broad royal blue band at the top of the breastwork and a buff funnel and mast.

The two small pole masts were replaced in 1878-9 with a single mast with fighting top situated abaft the funnel. In 1883 the square box pattern boilers were removed and replaced by cylindrical boilers. Steam steering gear had been installed in 1877.

In 1887 torpedo netting and spars were fitted these being tested in exercises in July of that year. In 1890 they were modified for easier operation.

A proposal to replace the muzzle loading guns with breech loading guns was not proceeded with because of the expense involved. In 1884, one of the muzzle loading guns had split into three pieces during firing practice. In 1892, 'Cerberus' was modernised.

**MAIN FEATURES OF H.M.V.S. 'CERBERUS'**

Type: Breastwork Monitor  
 Displacement: 3,413 tons  
 Tonnage (builder's old measurement): 2,107-23/94 tons  
 Length between perpendiculars: 225 feet  
 Length along keel: 195 feet 7 1/2 inches  
 Extreme beam: 45 feet  
 Draught (maximum): 15 feet 6 inches  
 Freeboard: 3 feet 4 inches  
 Depth of hold: 16 feet 6 inches  
 Breastwork: 112 feet 6 inches long, 36 feet wide, 6 feet 5 inches high above deck.  
 Engines: Two Maudslay, Son and Field horizontal two-cylinder double acting simple steam engines; 43 inches bore, 27 inches stroke; fired by 4 boilers with working pressure 30 psi; twin screws; 1.H.P. 1370; N.H.P. 250  
 Propellers: Two: 12 feet diameter, 9 feet pitch; 4 blades  
 Rudder: Single balanced: 95 sq feet  
 Speed: 9.75 knots maximum; 6 knots economical  
 Bunkers: 240 tons of coal  
 Consumption: 50 tons per day at full speed  
 Guns: **Main armament**  
 4 muzzle loading rifled Armstrong guns mounted in two turrets, one at each end of the breastwork:  
 10 inch bore; length 15 feet range 4 miles; charge 60lbs; shot 400 lbs; weight 18 tons  
**Secondary armament**  
 4 four-barrelled 1 inch Nordenfeldt machine guns  
 Armour plate: Between 6 and 8 inches thick on sides, 8 and 9 inch on breastwork, 9 and 10 inches on turrets, 11/2 inches on upper deck, 1 inch on breastwork deck, and 11/4 inches on shell  
 Designer: Mr E.J. Reed, C.B. (Chief Constructor, Admiralty)  
 Builders: Palmer Shipbuilding and Iron Co. Jarrow-on-Tyne  
 Cost: 117,556 pounds  
 Keel Laid: 1st September, 1867  
 Launched: 2nd December, 1868  
 Completed: September 1870  
 Arrived Melbourne: 9th April, 1871  
 Scrapped: 1924, and scuttled as breakwater at Black Rock on 2nd Sept, 1926.

(Note: Metric conversion 1 foot = 0.3048 metre,  
 1 inch = 0.0254 metre)

**EASTERN REGION RAE CORPS COMMITTEE**

Extracts from the Committee's Newsletter of March 1996. The Committee is administered by 14 Fd Sqn. Adamstown.

Col. Norman Sharpe, RL, has retired as Representative Colonel Commandant RAE and Colonel Commandant Eastern Region. As reported in "Sapper Summit" Newsletter No.16, the former position has gone to Col. John Wertheimer RFD.

MAJGEN D.F.W. Engel, RL, AO, OBE is the new Colonel Commandant, Eastern Region.

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**THE INSTITUTION OF  
ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ENGINEERS**

The last meeting of the Institution was held on Tuesday 7 May 1996 at Lecture Room One Victoria Barracks, Sydney. The presentation was somewhat different than those previously given because it looked at a different arm of the Corps that is not well known to most - RAE Transport (Tn)

1996 marks the 25th anniversary of the disbandment of 32 Small Ship Sqn, RAE. This unique unit was raised in 1959 and initially operated four World War II American Landing Ships Medium (LSM) class vessels. They were purchased from the United States Navy in Japan for a total cost of \$300,000 and sailed to Australia by RAE crews.

Finding a home for the unit was a problem. Its first base was at Kangaroo Point at the old RAN Depot on the Brisbane River. This was followed by a relocation to Chowder Bay before moving to Watsons Bay Wharf and later to Woolwich where it remained until its disbandment in 1971. The names of the LSMs were:

AV1353 HARRY CHAUVEL  
 AV1354 BRUDENELL WHITE  
 AV1355 VERNON STURDEE  
 AV1356 CLIVE STEELE

Later, the register was boosted by the addition of a cargo ship purchased from the Adelaide Steamship Company. This was the AS30151 JOHN MONASH.

Colonel Ken Duncan, RL, gave a presentation on the squadron, its ships and the Transport Service at the Institution meeting.

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No one would be better qualified to talk on this subject. Colonel Duncan was commissioned into the RAE after graduating from OCS Portsea in 1952. Two years later he was selected to undergo training as a Deck Officer in RAE (tn). This commenced a long relationship with the Army maritime fraternity and during this service he :

- \* commanded Army vessels
- \* commanded water transport units
- \* saw exchange service with RE (Tn)
- \* commissioned the first two LSMs into RAE
- \* was Force Movements Officer in South Vietnam
- \* commanded Tn Centre, RAE
- \* was the Logistics Planner for a number of Kangaroo exercises
- \* was Director of Army Movements and Deputy Director of RACT

Since leaving the Army, Colonel Duncan served for seven years as the Colonel Commandant, RACT in NSW, and concurrently as Representative Colonel Commandant for three of these. He has been made a Life Member of the Army Water Transport Association and is the Patron of 32 Small Ship Squadron Association.

He is currently the Executive Director Australia, for the Chartered Institute of Transport.

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#### **ANZAC DAY CELEBRATIONS**

The annual RAE Wreath Laying Ceremony was held at the RAE Centre on 14 April, the Guard being formed by the Apprentice Troops from SME.

1 Fd Sqn held the annual ANZAC Day Dawn Service at Gallipoli Lines, Holsworthy.

Serving and ex-serving members of RAE joined a Corps contingent in the Sydney ANZAC Day March.

#### **WATERLOO DINNER**

This years NSW Waterloo Dinner was held at the RAE Officers Mess on 21 June.

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## **MORE NEWS OF OUR HISTORICAL RECORDS - PROGRESS WITH THE MEMORIAL STONES**

The article entitled "RAE HISTORY TO BE RECORDED ON STONES" in the last edition of the "summit" has prompted Major Harijs (Harry) Johanson to provide a summary he prepared in about 1980, of the various moves that Engineer troops in Melbourne have made since the formation of the Corps in 1860.

The following points not mentioned in the previous edition have been extracted from Harry's notes, and need to be read in conjunction with our last article to put them into context.

Thanks Harry.

In 1863 a Depot was established on a small site in Lygon Street, Carlton. The building housed an orderly room and a small area at the rear was used to construct an earthwork battery position. There was no space for bridging training. The building was extended in 1867 to provide a small committee meeting room, and some activities continued on the site until 1875.

During the period 1868 to 1875 the Corps continued with its activities at both Lygon St and Jolimont, although the orderly room remained at Carlton throughout that period. "Osiers" were planted in the 1870's for use in making gabions and fascines. This saved the cost of carting Teatree from distant supply points, and saved the cost of hoop iron.

In 1882 the Victorian Railways arbitrarily moved the Engineer depot fence, to allow for expansion of the rail yards, thereby cutting off the Engineer's dry bridging gap trench. Also in 1882 Treasury granted the sum of \$1000 for repairs and additions to the Depot. Following further pressure from the Railways, Major Shakespeare in 1882 requested that a new depot site be allocated. Finally in 1889 the engineers were given notice to quit the site.

The Pontoon Shed constructed near the Princes Bridge site in 1869 suffered frequently from the river floods and equipment had to be rescued on a number of occasions. Special commendations were made to members of the Corps who carried out rescue work in the 1869 floods. Finally the shed was demolished in 1885 to allow works to be done on the straightening and raising of the river banks, and the stores were transferred to Victoria Barracks.

In the 1870's the Torpedo and Signal Corps were located at Victoria Barracks. In 1882 the Torpedo Corps Depot was moved to the hulks (previously prison ships) Deborah and Sacramento at Williamstown. These later became the Submarine Mining Company Depot. The Submarine Miners later moved from Williamstown to a site near Station Pier at Port Melbourne, where they were later taken over by the Navy.

In 1887 the Submarine Miners moved to Swan Island, to a Depot occupied full time by the Permanent Section and part time by Militia. The Depot was handed over to the RAN in 1922.

When the Engineer Corps moved to Alexandra Ave in 1890-91 the Railways contributed \$11,218 towards the total Depot cost of \$12,600. At the same time the "Lonsdale" house was dismantled and re-erected at Carrum. Later it was again dismantled and the materials handed over to the National Trust.

When the State finally reclaimed the Alexandra Ave site in 1934 the State Govt provided the land for the new depot in Swan Street (Batman Ave), in exchange for the gardens site. We wonder how many more of these land exchanges we can look forward to.

#### **PROGRESS WITH THE PLACING OF MEMORIALS**

At the time of writing this article, approval has finally been obtained from the Melbourne City Council to proceed with the placing of the three memorial stones, details of which were given in the last edition of the "Summit". The wording for and lay-out of the plaques has been finalised and we expect to receive them from the manufacturer about the end of August. We will then be left ONLY with the task of carting the stones in from the quarry (to be supplied by the generosity of Boral Quarries), placing them and attaching the plaques.

If any readers can offer assistance with these activities it will be appreciated as they now do not fit in well with the A Res training program over the next few months.

**Bruce Campbell**

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#### **"OUR READERS HAVE THEIR SAY"**

The following letter was addressed from Major Smith to Col Wertheimer, Representative Colonel Commandant, RAE and a copy sent to the Editor of "Sapper Summit" with an invitation to publish it in our next edition.

Col John Wertheimer agrees with the proposal to include the letter in the "Summit" and the editorial staff of the "Summit" are happy to oblige, in fact we're delighted to have this evidence that some at least of our readers not only read our magazine closely, but are also keen enough to commit their opinions to paper.

We would appreciate more letters and articles from our readers, regardless of whether they are complementary / supportive or critical.

Incidentally no doubt Major Smith appreciated the facts that :

1. There was a good turn-up at the Waterloo and
2. We all sang "Hurrah For The CRE", even though the band did not provide us with support, and John Slee tells us that, had he been able to attend, he would have been delighted to add his voice to the many "singers" who were no more in tune in 1996 than in any previous year.

From : Major R L Smith RAE

20 May '96

Colonel J Wertheimer  
Representative Colonel Commandant RAE  
John Wertheimer and Company Pty. Ltd.  
60 Collins Street  
MELBOURNE  
Vic 3000.

' I have recently received my copy of "Sapper Summit" the RAE Corps Newsletter of the Victorian Engineers within which was placed the notice for the 1996 Waterloo Dinner to be held on 15 JUN '96 as well as several articles which greatly concerned me, to wit, 'Have we heard the last "Hurrah"?' and "What's in a name?"

For many years I have fought an apparently solitary campaign for the Waterloo Dinner to be held on the date of the anniversary of both the original and the centenary of that battle on which 'our' Waterloo Dinner was held at Gallipoli. That I can recall, the only occasions that the dinner and the dates coincided were when the date fell on a weekend (Friday or Saturday) or when I organised the dinner at 1 Fd Engr Regt and in the Regimental Officers Mess of 1st Bn The Gordon Highlanders in Singapore. It has always seemed to me that we held 'our' Dinner in so little regard that we would hold the function on a night that suited possible hangovers rather than to commemorate an important date in the Corps calendar. I am reminded that just prior to the original Waterloo, officers of Wellington's army left the Duchess of Richmond's Ball in Brussels to attend to the business at hand; no inconvenience there!! Our Capt Watson thought so highly of the significance of the date the his (our) Dinner was held on the 18th and not at a more, possibly, convenient time; we should do no less!!

I was appalled at the attitude displayed by the Corps Committee, as detailed by John Slee regarding "Hurrah for the CRE" and the renaming of the RAE Corps Museum; is this how we protect our traditions and heritage? Who cares if we sing out of tune and that civilian visitors to the Museum may not understand the term "RAE"; maybe it is because we have failed to tell them what we are about and who we are.

This is all tied up with 'esprit de corps' and morale; do the terms mean anything today? My Corps used to be proud of its achievements, its idiosyncrasies, its characters and its occasional marching to the sound of a different drummer; how incredibly boring we seem to have become! My reading of military history (do you recall when we were obliged to study it; rather we did it 'not as a duty only') indicates that we were (soldiers all) at our best when we were sustained by our 'regimental' traditions and history (being well lead and trained did no harm either); to so easily dismiss such things borders on gross dereliction of duty. Amongst others I could name I wonder what Sir Mervyn Brogan, who **always** sang out of tune, would say to the asinine suggestions of our Corps Committee?

I will conclude as I find the more I write the angrier I become, albeit on the 18th day of June I will toast my Corps and absent friends in the forlorn hope that eventually we will come to our senses.

## 22 CONSTRUCTION REGIMENT ANNUAL GET TOGETHER 1996

### Serving Members Welcome

22 Regiment has conducted very successful "Get Togethers" in 1994 and 1995, principally for its retired members.

This year they are most anxious to extend an invitation to serving members to also attend, with the aim of providing closer friendships between the present serving members and the retirees, some of whom have service dating back to the 1950's, and some with very recent service. We feel sure there could be many good tales to tell, both of present doings and past traditions, so, Serving Members, make up a party and come and share some fellowship with your predecessors at Paynesville in November.

Information on the event should be available through your unit HQ, but the following notice also tells you all you need to know.

Also, if you have any queries you are welcome to phone any of the following :

|                              |              |
|------------------------------|--------------|
| Peter Bloor at Numurkah      | 058 621 138  |
| Mike Flemming at Paynesville | 051 567 114  |
| Norm Dodgson in Melbourne    | 03 9571 1428 |
| Bruce Campbell in Melbourne  | 03 9568 0320 |

Details of the week-end arrangements are as follows

### **EX-MEMBERS "GET TOGETHER"** **PAYNESVILLE 15,16,17 NOVEMBER 1996**

#### 1. Friday 15 Nov

- A. RV at the CFA Fire Station cnr. Wellington & King St
- B. Evening meal 1900.....2100hrs
- C. Jenny Eaton will co-ordinate this function
- D. Meal bookings will have to be made, as this is a normal Club night. Make sure you complete this section of your attendance return.

#### 2. Saturday 16 Nov - Midday

- A. RV at the Motor Cruiser Club
- B. Location - Slip Rd opposite the Marina
- C. Timing - 1200hrs
- D. Activity is a 4 hour boat trip of the Gippsland Lakes on either the MV. Lakes Odyssey or the SV Llinase. Afternoon tea provided
- E. Costing for the trip (children half price)

- 1. MV Lakes Odyssey has a maximum capacity of 50 pers. at \$12.00 per head. 50 pers. and under it will be this vessel.

- 2. SV Llinase has a maximum capacity of 100 pers. Minimum required is 56 at \$14.00 per head. Over 51 pers. this vessel.

#### 3. Saturday 16 Nov - Evening

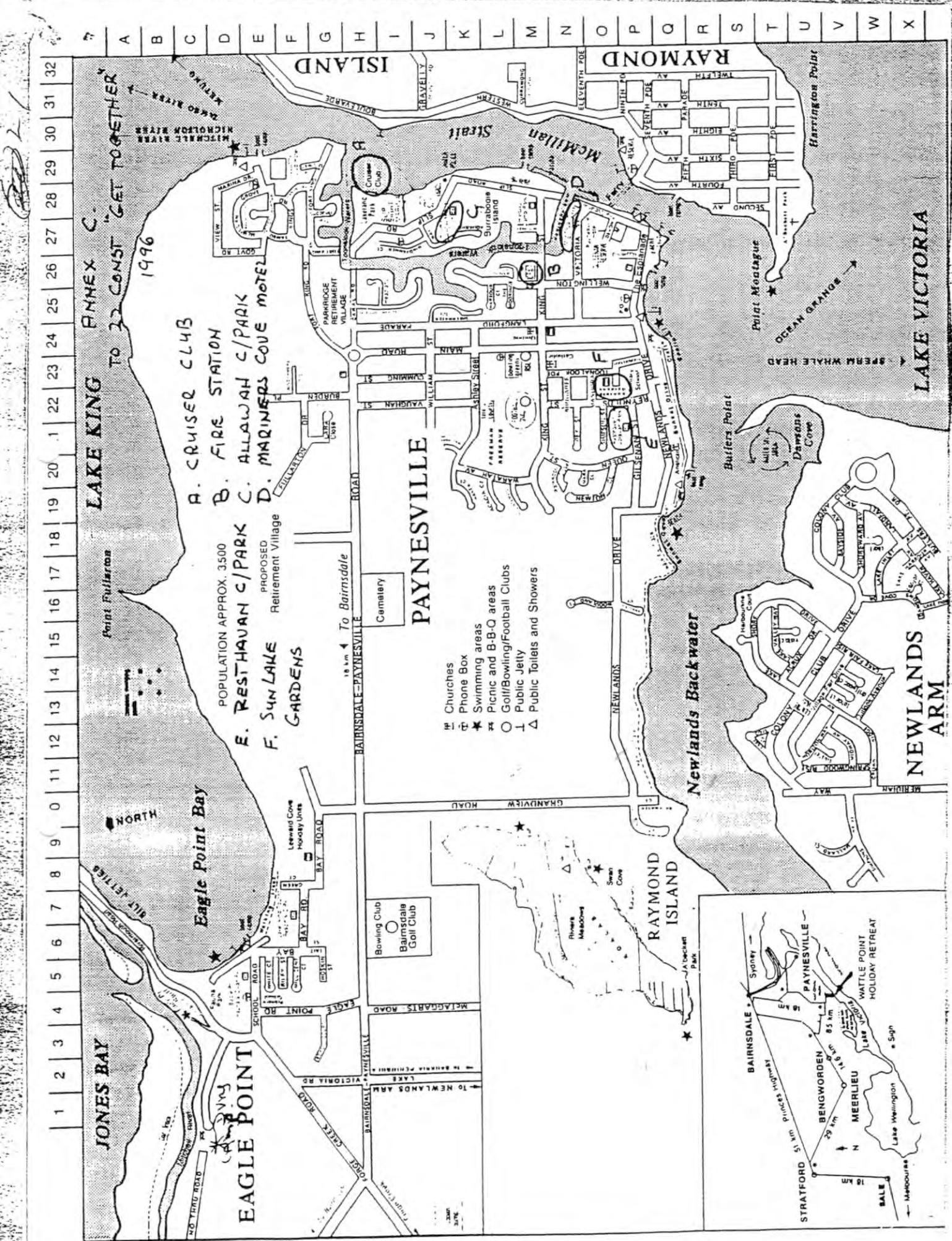
- A. RV at the Motor Cruiser Club
- B. Timing ..... 1800hrs
- C. Cost ..... \$18.00 per head (3 course's, and 2 choices

#### 4. Sunday 17 Nov

- A. Farewell BBQ
- B. Location is the CFA Fire Station
- C. Timing ..... 1200hrs
- D. Cost will be \$6.00 per head BYO Drinks
- E. Jenny will co-ordinate this function

Please Refer to Map of Paynesville





## THINGS TO SEE AND DO

1. Visit the famous silt jetties, Eagle Point.
2. See the animals at Eagle Point Reserve (5.D).
3. Water ski in Newlands Arm.
4. Stroll along Newlands Backwater Arm.
5. Play Mini Golf.
6. Wind surf.
7. Fish off numerous jetties and river banks.
8. Hire a boat and visit Sperm Whale Head, Rotomah Island Bird Sanctuary, Ocean Grange or Ninety Mile Beach and Steamer Landing.
9. Treat yourself to an organised scenic tour of the Lakes.
10. Take the ferry to Raymond Island to see koalas, wildlife and animals in miniature.
11. Have a leisurely stroll along the beach at Swan Cove and Gravelly Point, Raymond Island.
12. Hire a bike and explore the area.
13. Have a picnic at Wattle Point.
14. B.B.Q. your catch on one of the many B.B.Q.s in the area.
15. Join in the fun at the Sunday Market (2nd Sunday of each month.)
16. Browse and shop in our great local shops.
17. Round off the day with dinner in one of the excellent local venues.

### STREET INDEX

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| Fulton Drive       | F-20     | Newlands Drive      | O-15       | Western Boulevard  | K-31       |
| Giesman Street     | P-20     | Newton Close        | O-19       | White Court        | E-5        |
| Government Road    | E-26     | Ninth Parade        | P-31       | William Street     | J-23       |
| Grainow Road       | L-10     | Outlook Avenue      | W-13       | Windermere Terrace | F-23       |
|                    |          | Parkwood Close      | N-19       | Windjammer Court   | I-26       |
|                    |          | Queen Street        | N-20       | Woodland Court     | O-16       |

## POINT NEPEAN PARK FRIENDS AT WORK

Taken from Newspaper Article

For seven years the Friends of the Point have been working in association with the Point Nepean management of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DNRE), to help park rangers improve the natural environment of Point Nepean.

Sorrento Portsea Blairgowrie Conservation Group (SPBCG) was active in setting up this and other Friends groups on the Southern Peninsula.

According to Friends of the Point Convenor, Stuart Sherran, "within this area of great beauty, intrusive plants are a massive problem overwhelming the indigenous plants in many areas.

"Plants such as polygala and simlax have infested the Park," Mr Sherran said.

"Teams of volunteers have worked since 1989 removing polygala and other problems weeds and replanting indigenous plants where appropriate."

"Most of the work has been done along roadsides and tracks, and more recently at the Park entrance."

Mr Sherran said the group had experimented with methods of eliminating polygala by pulling or spraying mature plants and slashing seedlings.

"Our aim is to preserve the natural vegetation and encourage its regrowth."

"When the intruders are under control, the native plants will thrive."

"Native tussock grasses, which grew under the melaleucas, are regenerating prolifically in the restored habitat."

### Replanting

Mr Sherran said that before the Friends moved in Pisterman Track was badly overgrown with polygala, a major intruder on the Peninsula.

"This growth has been removed along the track and back from the edges."

He said DNRE had helped in the project with resources including grants to SPBCG for slashing and purchase of plants.

"With this help, the Friends have replanted nearly 1,000 native plants."

"SPBCG believes that it is important to replant indigenous plants which are natural for the particular location and environment."

"Too often street and road verges have quite inappropriate natives planted by well meaning residents and authorities and the end result is predictable."

"Some plants indigenous to the Southern Peninsula, which are valuable in many situations, can stifle growth of less prolific natives."

"The Shire and SPBCG have brochures on indigenous plants and some nurseries, particularly the Shire Nursery, specialise in them."

"Indigenous under storey plants of the Point, which had free reign in the Park before the introduction of intrusive plants, include Coast Bearded Heath, Coast Pomaderris, Thyme Rice Flower, Coast Sea Box, Common Correa, Coast Daisy Bush and Sticky Daisy Bush."

Mr Sherran said a major project undertaken at Point Nepean by a section of the Friends Group, led by P.O. Bill and Shirley Goodall, was the removal of sand from Fort Pearce.

"Tons of sand were removed for gun emplacements and underground rooms over four years - 1990 to 1994."

"Planting by the Friends Group is complete and the Fort is now open for viewing."

"More recently, the Friends Group has been repairing and replanting at the entrance to the Park," Mr Sherran said.

### Volunteers

SPBCG President, Lt Col Ian Haskins, said that it was rewarding for Friends to view their achievements in the Park, "but it is sad that so few people are prepared to participate in the programs."

"Where are the people with environmental consciousness?" he asked.

"We need volunteers to join our teams working a few hours monthly," he said.

Anyone interested in joining the Friends of the Point, can phone Stuart Sherran on (059) 84 1953.

Or Ian Haskins on (059) 84 2624

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## Historical and Heritage Committee Coastal Defence Day Trips

South Channel, Fort and Point Neapean Fort

Date: Sunday, 20 October 1996

The Trip will be in two parts and attendees are invited to take part in one or both, with the proviso that in the case of the visit by the good ship "Moonraker" to the South Channel Fort, we have been obliged to charter the boat for our sole use, cost must be paid in advance, and no refunds are possible.

### Part A: South Channel Fort

Tour Commences at 0900 hrs  
Report to the "Moonraker" at  
St Aubins Way Road, Sorrento  
Melways Ref 157 B 6  
Car parking is available near the launching ramp,  
in St Aubins Way  
Cost is \$20 per head, payable by 15 Sept '96, by cheque  
payable to RAE Corps Committee.

### Trip B: Point Neapean Fortifications

Tour Commences at 12.45 pm  
Report to Point Neapean Orientation Centre  
Melways Ref 156 C 2  
and met Bill Atkins or Reg Morrell.  
The Tour Party will leave the centre at 1.00pm sharp, for  
the Fort area, and return to the centre not later than  
5.00pm (1700 hrs).  
A shuttle bus runs from the Gunners Cottage to the Point  
area  
Cost of Trip B to be paid at the Entrance is \$ 7.50 per  
person, \$ 4.00 for Pensioners / senior citizens  
( Group Bookings no longer apply).

### GENERAL:

#### Transport and Meals:

Members are responsible for own transport to the  
Sorrento area and for all meals and refreshments.

#### Bookings

Bookings should be made by 15 September 1996 to

Sappers: Bill Atkins (059) 964 084 - Work  
(059) 961 013 - Home

Gunners : Reg Morrell (03) 9562 9552 - Home  
(03) 9543 3888 - Work

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## SIR CLIVE STEELE MEMORIAL LECTURE

The Fourth Sir Clive Steele Memorial Lecture will be  
held at Oakleigh Barracks.

Date: Friday 15 November '96.  
Subject: Sappers in Korea  
Speaker: Brig. I.G.G. Gilmore OBE, FIE Aust.  
Time: 19.30 Hrs  
Attendance: All members of the Sapper Family including  
their families and friends.

Old Sappers will be open at 1800 hours  
Light refreshment will be available at a nominal charge.  
To assist in catering would please complete the attached  
and return by 13 November '96 to :

Maj Les Malseed  
16 Malcolm Court  
Mt Waverley Vic 3149  
Any further details, call Les on (03) 9807 1857.



I ----- will attend the Sir  
Clive Steele Memorial Lecture at Oakleigh Barracks on  
15 November 1996

I will be accompanied by ----- guests.

I / we do / do not wish to partake in light refreshments  
before the Lecture.

