RAE CORPS NEWS LETTER

VICTORIA

SEPTEMBER 1992

EDITORIAL

The new livery which you now see is intended to facilitate communication within the Corps. The Corps motto "Ubique" can also imply "At all times".

The common theme that runs from the gallant sappers at Rorke's Drift to a lonely grader driver on a future road between villages in Cambodia is the dedication by a sapper of his military and engineering skills to the service of his country.

This letter intends to echo that message from the sapper in times past as well as the resolve of the sapper facing his first task. Our motto "Ubique" requires that we respond, whether it is when the "battle is hottest" or when it is patiently placing a passage for our fellow soldiers.

Our contributions from a broad sapper spectrum will reinforce our intention to depicit the motto "Ubique".

WATCH THIS SPACE!

By which we mean the entrance foyer of Oakleigh Barracks, for displays to be organised by the Historical and Heritage Committee.

We aim to present a series of pictorial displays telling the story of important RAE occasions - significant campaigns or single operations, construction projects, and unit activities - annual camps, for example.

The first, to appear soon, will feature the BULLDOG-WAU Road, New Guinea, World War II - famous among sappers, but little known in the wider world. We are sure both serving and old sappers will find it interesting.

To ensure continuity and varied interest, the Committee needs help in putting together future displays. Can you give or lend pictorial material, backed by as much information as possible about the events depicted, which can be assembled to tell more stories of RAE history, both recent and distant past? If you think you can help, please send your suggestions to:

RAE (Victoria) Historical and Heritage Committee,
c/- HQ LSF Engineers,
Oakleigh Barracks,
North Road,
OAKLEIGH SOUTH, Vic., 3167.

or 'phone:

LTCOL John SLEE, (03) 802-9279.

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EVOLUTION OF RAE IN A LOGISTICS (WORKS) ROLE

Before WWII RAE units consisted only of Permanent Army training establishments and militia units. The militia units comprised mainly volunteers with small permanent cadres. Types of units included field companies, fortress companies and specialist companies (eg. searchlight). The role of RAE was close support to field (combat) units, and specialist support to fortifications in and around selected capital cities and strategic locations. There was no capability for major construction and maintenance.

During WWII Australia was involved in overseas offensive and continental (home) defensive operations. RAE field companies were deployed overseas with Divisions. At home fortress etc, companies continued to maintain and develop close fortifications. At first infrastructure works at home continued to be carried out mainly through normal government and civilian contract methods. There soon developed a need for more military emphasis and control, and many civilian engineers at all levels were given military rank and positions to oversee military works. Of primary importance were the design, construction, maintenance and engineer services required to develop and maintain lines of communication between the South and the North of Australia.

At the end of WWII it was decided that a capability for logistics (works) engineering should be maintained. An agreement was reached between Army, The Institution of Engineers Australia, and the State engineering authorities in NSW and Victoria, whereby an engineering specialist Supplementary Reserve (SR) would be established to meet this need. SR members would be primarily from the State authorities (who agreed to become 'Sponsoring Authorities') and in recognition of their civilian skills would need only to attend one fortnight camp each year to maintain their military skills and the military application of their civilian skills.

The organisation so formed remained in place during the 1950's and 1960's with changes in unit types and sizes but no change in concept. These units are shown at ARMORG 1.

6TH ENGINEER GROUP - A CHANGE IN ROLE

Most Sappers will now be aware of the change from '6th Engineer Group' to 'Logistic Support Force Engineers' and associated moves regarding 7 FER, 10 Fd Sqn and 3 Fd Sqn. This has been an exciting development for the Reserve Engineers, especially in regard to the role-relevance of SR units in Victoria.

Following is a copy of a short address given by the then Commander, 6 Engr Gp (now COMD LSF Engr), Colonel Bob Slater, explaining the background and nature of the change. Other effects of this change are:

- SR units are now GRes ('General Reserve' has replaced 'Army Reserve' as a title to distinguish from 'Ready Reserve') and will have a full complement of ARA staff, equipment and general resources, individual members can have SR status IE, have a commitment of two weeks per training year only.

- The Victoria based LSF Engrs are the only engineers in the LSF, which is integrated ARA/GRes with primarily ARA headquarters based at Randwick, NSW (NOTE: 21 Const Sqn (ARA) is the LSG Engr Unit, but does not appear in the ORBAT when the total LSF deploys). This will require that a substantial component (if not all) LSF Engrs will be deployed to Northern Australia to support any operation or exercise involving, say, four or more brigades.

- LSF Engrs will have a capacity to carry out construction tasks and provide essential engineer services, however a key role necessitating closer than ever links with sponsoring authorities is the requirement to design and specify works requirements, and to manage projects through a combination of civilian contractors, civilian day labour and military manpower.

- There will be opportunities for all ranks to visit the 'Far North' from time to time for climate and terrain familiarisation, and engineer intelligence.

- Combat related 7 FER has changed to an engineer services related 7 Engineer Support Regiment (7 ESR). 10 Fd Sqn is now part of 4 FER (under comd 2 DIV, based in Sydney).

In the early 1970's, with Functional Commands and Millar, and a scaling-down of the Army, the COMMZ as a formation was disbanded. The RAE transportation and stores units transferred to RACT and RAAOC respectively, and the remaining RAE COMMZ units were grouped for convenience, together with field units, under the two ARES Divisions as shown at ARMORG 2. With 'Continental Defence' as our national strategy there was still a need to retain COMMZ type units, however the grouping and training of such units was left uncoordinated. This arrangement continued throughout the 1970's and 1980's. Although the command structure for RAE COMMZ type units was convenient for higher level command, control, administration and training, it did not provide for the special circumstances for which the SR units were raised, nor did it foster an environment which allowed priorities to be given to the SR role.

Also during the 1970's and 1980's workplace and social changes have particularly affected SR. Completion of major road and dam projects, and cessation of day labour force and construction camp living have contributed to changes in the traditional recruitment base and the nature of Authority sponsorship. But the principle continues to apply.

Now in the early 1990's, with DFSR, the RAE(SR) in Victoria has restructured into a scaled-down version of the 1950's and 1960's, and once again RAE separates into field and logistic organisations and roles as shown in ARMORG 3. This development allows a dual RAE development programme: whilst all members of RAE need to be familiar with the organisations, roles, tactics and administration applicable to combat units and formations, the separate units in separate formations may now concentrate their development and capability efforts on their separate special roles.

Other important factors are:

- All RAE units will now be GRes with provision for individual SR members;

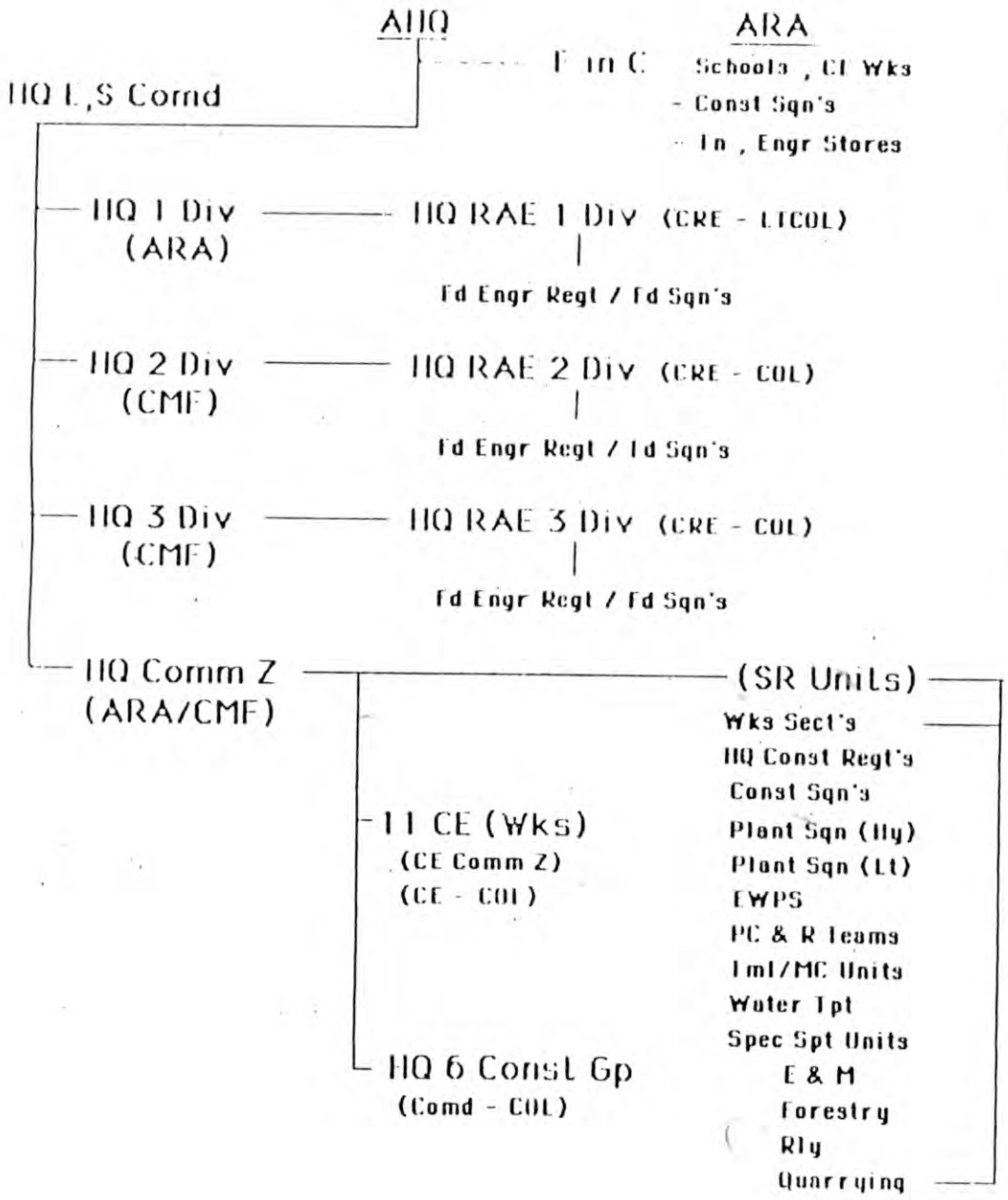
- Units will hold more equipment; and

- COMD LSF Engrs will be RAE Corps adviser for all RAE members in Victoria.

Detailed organisation and roles are shown in ARMORG 4.

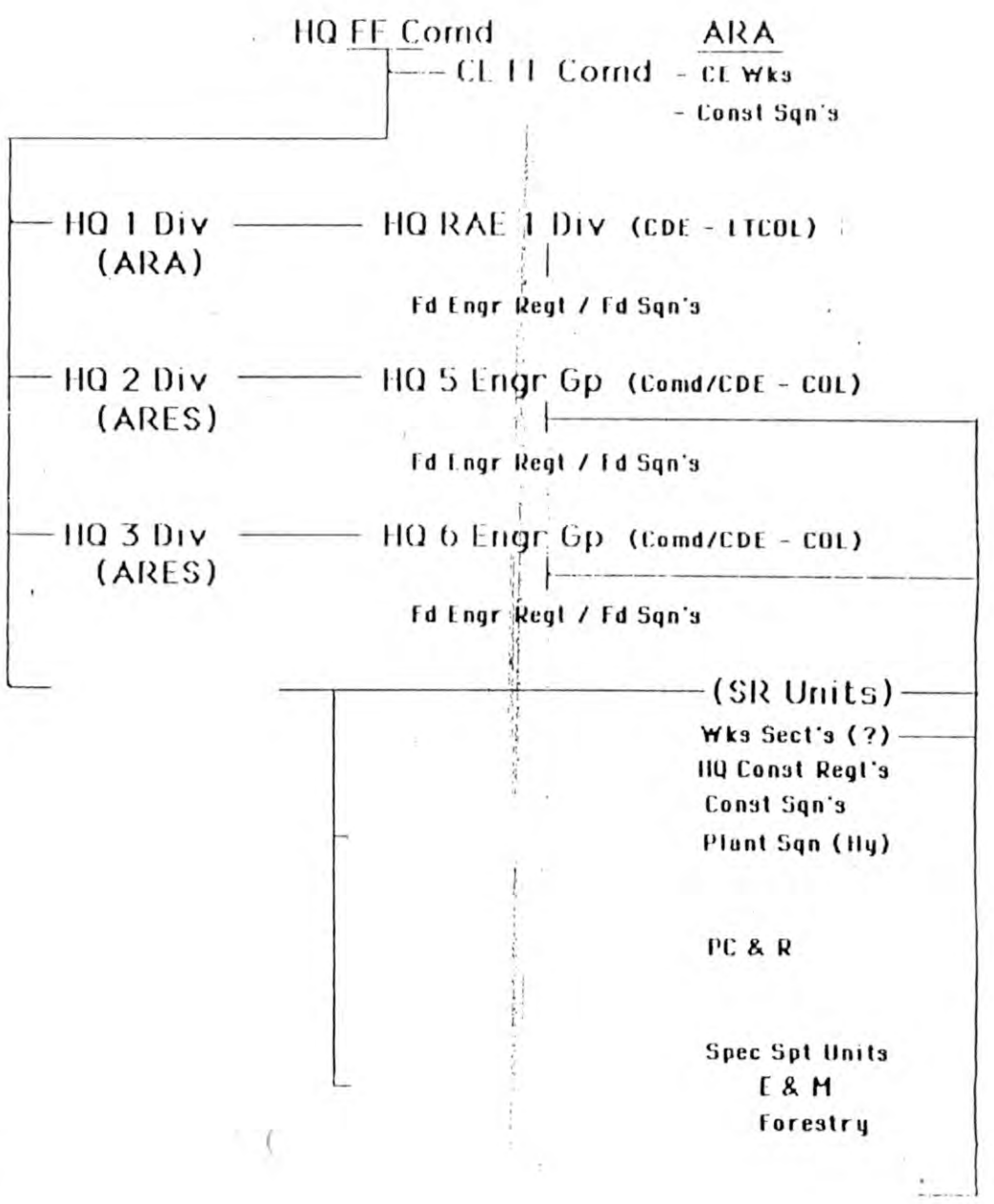
1950's - 1960's

ARMORG 1



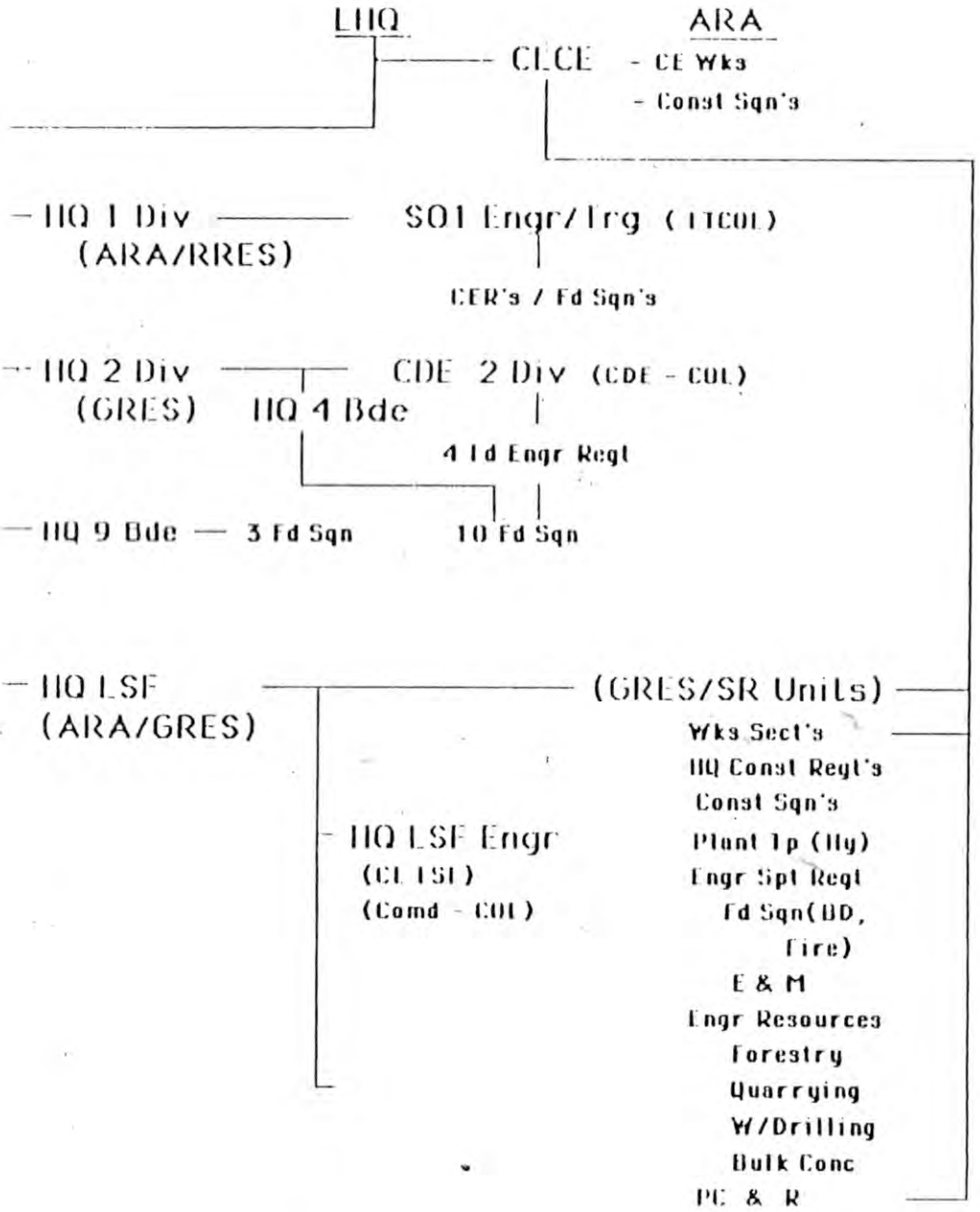
1970's - 1980's

ARMORG 2



1990's - 2000's(?)

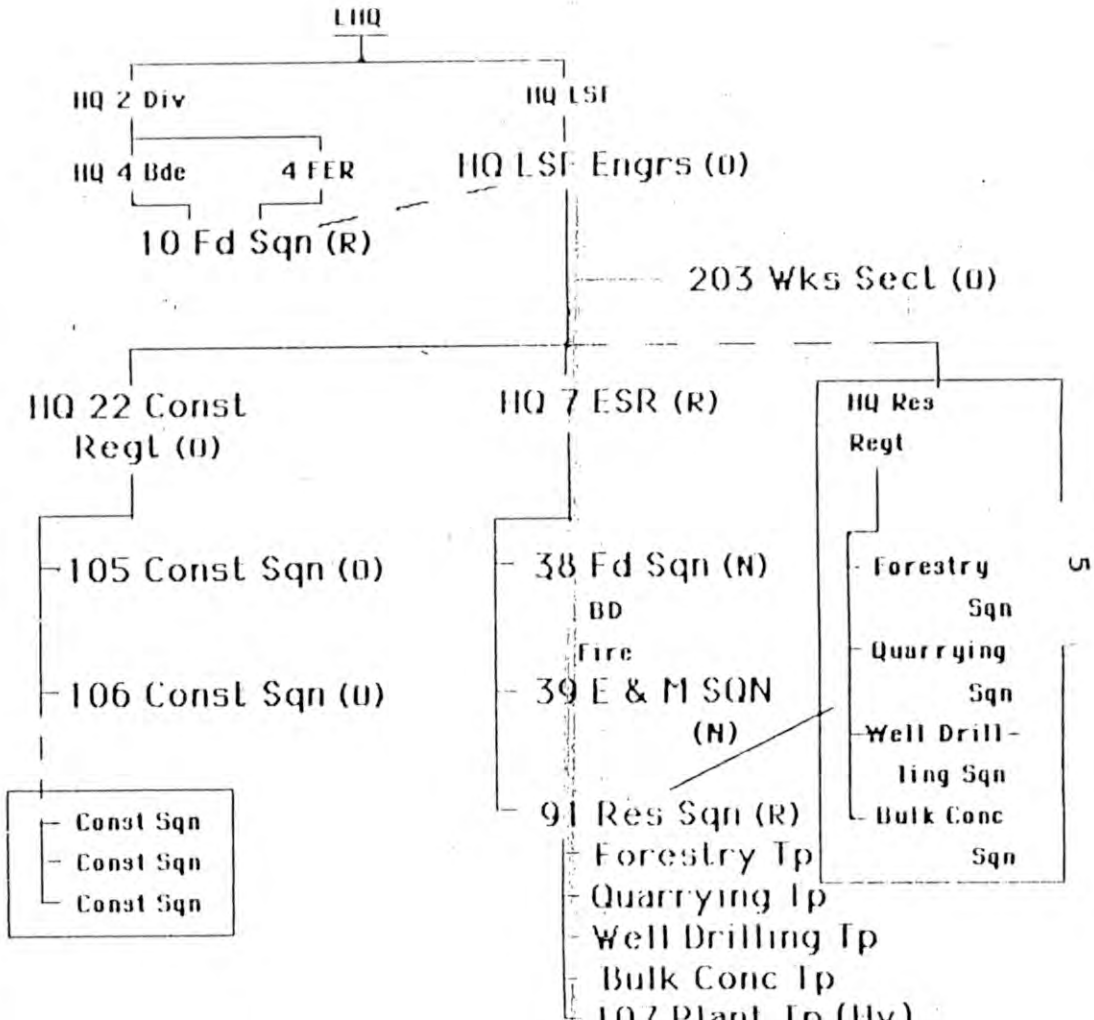
ARMORG 3



RAE (GRES) UNITS IN VICTORIA

(from 1 Jul 92)

ARMORG 4



UNIT LOCATION LEGEND

(O) Oakleigh Barracks
(R) Ringwood Depot
(N) Newborough Depot

VALE

MAJOR-GENERAL SIR ROBERT JOSEPH HENRY RISSON

CB CBE DSO OStJ ED OBE

1901 - 1992

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22 CONSTRUCTION REGIMENT

The Force Structure Review (FSR) has now taken effect and the structure of the Regiment has changed somewhat. We now have eight ARA staff including one Officer as 2IC of the Regiment. Unfortunately 107 Plant Squadron (Heavy) suffered, and is now the plant troop with the sizeable 91 Resources Squadron. The current Regiment strength is now 189 with the capacity to expand to 250.

Things look bright for the future, this years October exercise will be conducted at Puckapunyal and involve the construction of the new Transfield bridge as well as training in the trades and Plant operation area. A Regimental parade will be conducted at 1030 hr on the 18th of October, visitors are most welcome and should contact Lt Col Bob Eastick for details.

Next years exercise will be conducted at RAAF base Sale and involve two independent Squadron deployments over a one month period. Major works tasks will be conducted in an escalated Low Level threat environment.

We also welcome Lt Col Ian Campbell who will administer command in the absence of Lt Col Geoff Spencer who has accepted new employment with the World Bank and now living in Washington.

NEW SAPPER ASSOCIATIONS

Many post war Sappers will be unaware that there are fifteen ex-sapper associations based on WWII units which have been in existence for many years. There is also a Vietnam Sappers Association formed in recent years. Most of these groups meet once or twice per year only. These associations are loosely grouped under the Sapper Association Summit, chaired by LTCOL Bob Eastick.

There is also the Old Sappers Association, which has its own mess at Oakleigh Barracks and is active throughout the year and membership is open to ex-sappers of all ranks.

There are no unit oriented ex-sapper associations for sappers who have served in the Army Reserve or Supplementary Reserve since WWII.

A Committee has been nominated to determine if there is any interest in forming associations from the reserve units and if so to assist in their formation.

The experience of the WWII associations shows that, although the associations include all ranks, they are essentially run by ORs principally for ORs, never-the-less if associations for post war sappers are to be formed it is certain that the initial steps should be taken by officers and/or SNCOs.

The approach and activities of the associations would vary from unit to unit, eg. some units are geographically identifiable, such as 38 Fd and 39 E & M Sqns in the Latrobe Valley and 7 FER in Ringwood, indeed the Ringwood sappers and ex-sappers association was an active group for a number of years, but unfortunately it was allowed to lapse with the passing of WO Ron McMillan. Perhaps someone from Ron's committee could re-activate this association and perhaps this is the type of group which would be suited to the Latrobe Valley.

It is anticipated that initial discussions will take place over the next few weeks for 91 Forestry Sqn, 106 Const Sqn and in the Latrobe Valley. The members of this committee would welcome an indication of interest from any ex-sapper officer, NCO or sapper.

The present committee is COL Jim Riley, LTCOL Bob Eastick, MAJ Les Malseed, MAJ Bruce Campbell, CAPT Bill Atkins (COL Bruce Wadeson is to join the committee when he recovers from his recent operation)

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WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH THE SWAN STREET SAPPERS?

Lieutenant Colonel Rob Youl reports apologetically that the book should be finished and ready for the printer early in September. There is still a financial problem with the book; advance sales have been sufficient only to cover the cost of photography, but that has been a great help just the same. The best and most creative brains in LSF Engineers are at work on this one. Rob and his committee are very confident that the final volume will give readers a great deal of pleasure and be a very readable and human account of the Swan Street engineer depot. 'Thank you for your patience!' he said when interviewed by the editor of your newsletter.

THE BATTLE OF AUSTRALIA, 50 YEARS ON

The fortress sapper in Darwin as recalled by George Warr who returned for the 50th anniversary of the first attack on the Australian mainland on 19 Feb 42.

The role of the fortress RAE was "the night illumination of targets at the defended ports". With the garrison RAA, this meant continuous watchkeeping in peace and war. The beginnings were in the 1870's in the colonies of VIC and NSW, using titles such as Torpedo Corps and Submarine Mining. In VIC, at federation it was No. 2 Electric Coy and in 1912 became 34th Fortress. Between the two world wars the militia retained the 34 and the permanent force became the 3rd. Other states had similar numbering based on military districts. The whole was absorbed into the heavy RAA in late 1943.

Port Darwin defences were commenced in September 1932 when an RAE/RAA group installed four naval guns, 6" MK X1, ex HMAS Melbourne, two each at East and Emery Points. In 1933 the PMF garrison was established as 9th Hvy Bty and 7th Fort Coy with 6 officers and 57 ORs. By the end of 1941 the RAE were operating 4 x 90cm MK 111 searchlights, Elliot Point had 2 x 3" DP guns and the 14th Hvy AA had 8 x 3.7" at Fannie Bay and the oval.

These were the fixed defences whose orders on Feb 19 were to "Hold for 48 hours". Following the two air raids that day and with most of the field force now at Adelaide river, 80 miles down the track, none of us had any delusions as to our future if the enemy were to land. But he didn't and despite the serious shortage of food, clothing, medical facilities and ordnance over the next three months we survived to return in 1992, 12 sappers from East and Dudley points and two from Emery Point. Two were Victorians and all wore the KG V1 hat badge.

And what a return. On Feb 18 a sunset service was held on the oval and involved with school children the dedication of plaques in honour of units which had served in the NT. On Feb 19, on the same oval and on the site of four of the original AA guns and time-slotted to match 50 years ago was the memorial service for those civilians and service men who had died on the peninsular or in the harbour that day. Even the weather was the same, temperature mid 30s, very humid, blue sky with 10% wispy cloud and a 7 knot breeze from the NW.

It was all very sad, and yet there were joyous moments, for the Darwinians threw themselves into this with warmth and friendliness for the "veterans", and a special touch was noted for the "The garrison boys" who had stayed put in a passive role. It occurred to me this was not foreign soil - this was our own home ground and I had been a part of it and Darwin with free food and beer was making sure I remained a part.

Today East/Dudley Point is a museum and it is hard to find any residual RAE material. At Emery the area is still intact, two gun pedestals and three magazines are in good order. the foundations of lights 3 & 4 are still on the cliff face and the RAE engine room is the Long Tan club house. I am proud to have been a part of it. Then and now.

G.Warr

DATES TO REMEMBER

OAKLEIGH OFFICERS MESS

1st Friday of month - Happy Hour - 1800hrs
3rd October - Saturday - Dining In Night 1900 hrs for 1930
5th December - Saturday - Xmas at Home 1800 hrs for 1830 hrs. Details to follow.

OAKLEIGH SERGEANTS MESS

16 October - Friday - Happy Hour, Games Nite
2 November - Monday - Calcutta
3 November - Tuesday - Melbourne Cup
20 November - Friday - Mixed Formal Dinner
12 December - Saturday - Xmas Function.

GENERAL

15 November - Sunday

Viewing Unit Plaques. Assemble in Car Park 1115 hrs. Old Sappers will provide light refreshment $2.50. Advise No.s to J. Crosling (tel. 439 2273) by 30 October.

18 October - Sunday

Family Day - Pucka.

(i) 22 Const. Regt. - Parade - Display Bus, seats 45, leaves Depot 0900 hrs. Return 1800 hrs. Trnasport $10, Buffet $2
(ii) 17 Inf Bde. Ceremony 1145 hrs. Catered $7 Own food optional. BBQ available.

Nos to J.Jopling (tel. 5996784) by 30 Sept.

11 November - Wednesday

1100hrs. Dedication of Memorial. Laying of wreaths. Assemble in car park 1015 hrs. Nos to RSM tel. 550 3900 by 30 October

21 November - Saturday

Open Day Oakleigh Barracks
1000 hrs to 1600 hrs.

22 November - Sunday

2/4 Fd Sqn will hold their Annual Family BBQ at 1100 hrs - 76 Dunloe Ave Box Hill North (Melways 47 - A -7)

Late February 1993 - Sunday

Family Day - BBQ Lunch. Details to follow.

25 April 1993.

Dawn Service - Oakleigh Barracks.
Details to follow.

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BELONGING TO THE MESS

The demise of the previous RAE Corps Mess in Victoria has unfortunately left many former members of the Mess unsure '***where they belong***'

Oakleigh Barracks Officers Mess is **NOW** your Corps Mess even though we share the Mess with RAEME and RAAOC Corps.

Membership of the Mess includes all serving officers, Honorary members and officers retired from their respective Corps.

While the Oakleigh Officers' Mess does not belong solely to one Corps I believe it can still serve very effectively the separate interests of the various Corps at the Barracks.

The Mess Committee is ready to service the needs of the various Members. In fact we need to have all members, especially those retired members from the RAE, to maintain our traditions and build on our proud history of mess activities so as to enhance morale and foster esprit-de-corps.

Oakleigh Barracks Officers' Mess is YOUR MESS where all Sapper Officers are needed and where you belong.

Lt Col George Giummarra. PMC Oakleigh Barracks Officers' Mess

UNIT HISTORIES

While their memories are still clear and with the resolve to encapsulate the experiences of the mates, some Unit Associations have expressed the desire to write their unit histories while there is still time. The Historical and Heritage Cttee invited Sid. Trigellis Smith - a Gunner - experienced in these matters to address on the 19th August members of the three interested Associations, viz. 2/1/ & 2/2 Fd. Coys., 15 Fd. Coy. and 53 Fd. Pk., on the initial steps which are essential.

At the end of two hours the audience felt they needed to digest the advice and Sid agreed to give further advice as they needed it. It was decided that if other associations wished to commence Unit Histories, a similar meeting would be organised in 1993.

The point was also made that Divisional Histories require different treatment and that the RAE 7 and 9 Div. are now completing their histories.

Minutes of the address of the 19th August are available upon request to the Historical and Heritage Cttee c/o LSF - Engineers Oakleigh Barracks.

R. Eastick

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MISSING

The trophies donated over the years have been collected and given a suitable place of honour. However, the Myer and Wilson Trophies, have not yet been located.

Information to the Editor.

Reward. A free beer and one of my WAR STORIES!

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HISTORY OF RAE 3 DIV

The formation in May 1992 of RAE (Victoria) Historical and Heritage Committee has many objectives in it's charter, one of which is the continuing Chronological History of RAE 3 DIV Units at the Ringwood Training Depot.

The period now being covered is RAE 3 DIV at the Ringwood Training Depot from 1971 - 1992 thus continuing the work of the previous Unit Historian Capt.A.Williams who covered 1948 - 1970. "No doubt the best people to write about their history are the people who made it".

To assist with the history compilation any retired or serving members who wish to contribute can forward their contribution direct to Capt.W.Atkins, 9 Evelyne Avenue, Cranbourne, 3977.

Photographs, old parade cards, etc will be returned to the sender or if requested stored at HQ LSF Engineers, Oakleigh Barracks by the "In House" Archivist, P.O. W.J.Goodall

W.Atkins

PORT PHILLIP DEFENCES

Fort Pearce - Pt Nepean, Victoria

This fortification of earthworks and mass concrete with steel beams was constructed during 1911 and its adjacent barracks of timber framed buildings not until 1916-17. Construction followed and encompassed the suitable location of the two 6-inch MK III gun positions - being partly underground, such including shell and magazine stores, casualty room, general store, lamp room etc. Upper level included gun watch crew shelter and Battery Observation Post. Barracks for this garrison were constructed nearby some years later and today are in a ruinous state.

Fort Pearce acquired its own two designated Coastal Artillery Search Lights, during 1939, involving two isolated engine generator housing structures, searchlight directing station and two emplacements, all reinforced concrete constructions - at present all in a reasonable state of preservation.

Sappers were responsible up until May 1943 for power generation and transmission to searchlights and their operation and were quartered in the Barracks during WWII. In between both World Wars, Pearce Battery was essentially a CMF training battery, so Sappers only occupied Pearce Battery during weekend and annual camps. Sleeping arrangements were the unique quadruple type bunks on two levels. At the moment the 'Friends of the Point' are engaged in a 'Hands on' exercise to preserve the fabric of the Fort - more volunteers are required!!

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OLD SAPPERS ASSOCIATION

Our move into our new accomodation at Oakleigh Barracks in North Road has given us a sense of achievement as well as new ideas. The room is being fitted out as resources and labour become available, and the well appointed facilities of the depot allow us to better serve our members and guests.

The New Years syllabus is being finalised and will appear on our 1993 calender. We hold our genral meeting, starting at 1130 hrs, on the 2nd Sunday of the month - and we serve lunch!

New members are welcome to inspect and share our facilities and enquiries should be made to **Jim Crosling tel. 438-2273**

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Sad news about the man who died from drinking varnish. He had a terrible end, but a beautiful finish.

A NEW LIFE FOR AN OLD UNIT

A well known field-force unit, 7 Field Engineer Regiment, disbanded on 1 July 1992; it was immediately replaced by a new and unusual grouping, 7 Engineer Support Regiment, which is under command of HQ Logistic Support Force Engineers, North Road, Oakleigh South.

The disbanding unit, 7 FER, comprising 3 Field Squadron (Warradale, Adelaide), 10 Field Squadron (Ringwood) and 38 Field Squadron (Newborough) was designed to closely support infantry battalions in combat.

In contrast, 7 ESR will serve in the communications zone, which in theory is generally somewhat to the rear of combat. The new regiment includes 38 Field Squadron and 39 Electrical and Mechanical Squadron (both remain at Newborough), and 91Resources (formerly Forestry) Squadron (which has just moved to Ringwood).

Remaining generally unchanged is 10 Field Squadron, which stays at Ringwood but is now part of the Second Division; the latter has its HQ in Sydney. **(Rob Youl)**

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EDITORIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

The heartening response with contributions indicates that the Sappers have something to say.

You say it. We'll print it!

It has been decided to bring out four issues per year - at the end of September, December, March and June. ***Dead lines*** *for copy will be 31 August, 30 November, 28 February, 31 May.*

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CORPS NEWS LETTER DISTRIBUTION.

The Corps News Letter will be distributed, in bulk, without charge, to Units and Sapper Associations to their requests.

Where previous news letters had been mailed to the known addresses, it is proposed to mail this issue on a complimentary basis. Further issues will be mailed as requested on the form (it's the army, you know) below for a charge of $1.50 for 2 issues or $3 for 4 issues - the cheque to be made out to The Treasurer Corp Fund Vic.

CUT N' RUSH

The Editor,
Corps News Letter - Victoria
c/o Oakleigh Barracks
North Road
OAKLEIGH 3167

Your Address

.....

.....

.....

Please mail me 2/4 issues of the Corps News Letter - Victoria to the above address. My cheque for $1.50/$3 to the The Treasurer Corps Fund is enclosed.

Rank and Name .....

Signed

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This News Letter is Edited by The Historical & Heritage Cttee. at the Oakleigh Barracks.

RAE CORPS NEWS LETTER

This is the 1st issue by the 1st/15th Cdre Maitland was 1 Oct.

RAE (VICTORIA) HISTORICAL & HERITAGE COMMITTEE

(RECONSTITUTED COMMITTEE)

MINUTES OF FIFTH MEETING

Date of Meeting 4 September 1992, at 16.00 hrs at Oakleigh Barracks.
(Meeting commenced at 16.15 hrs)

Present:
Chair: Lt Col R.F.Eastick.
Committee: Capt W.P.Atkins, Capt D.C.Boyle, Maj B.A.Campbell, PO W.J.Goodall, Maj L.P.Malseed, LtCol J.E.Slee, Sgt G.Warr.
Apologies: WO1 W.Fry, LtCol R.Youl (unavailable)

Agenda Items:

3. The Newsletter.
Bob Eastick reported that the first edition of the new NEWSLETTER is almost ready for posting. Several units have expressed interest in including items of their own news for distribution via the Newsletter. Sufficient material is now available for a 14 page issue. The first edition will include

George Warr's article on "Fortress Australia" so that it reaches readers concurrently with the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Darwin action.
Having in mind the amount of material becoming available, it has now been decided that there will be 4 issues per year instead of 2, with the next issue being in December on this year.
The Army is doing the printing, collation and stapling of the Newsletter.

Our contributions from a broad sapper spectrum will reinforce our intention to depicit the motto "Ubique".