

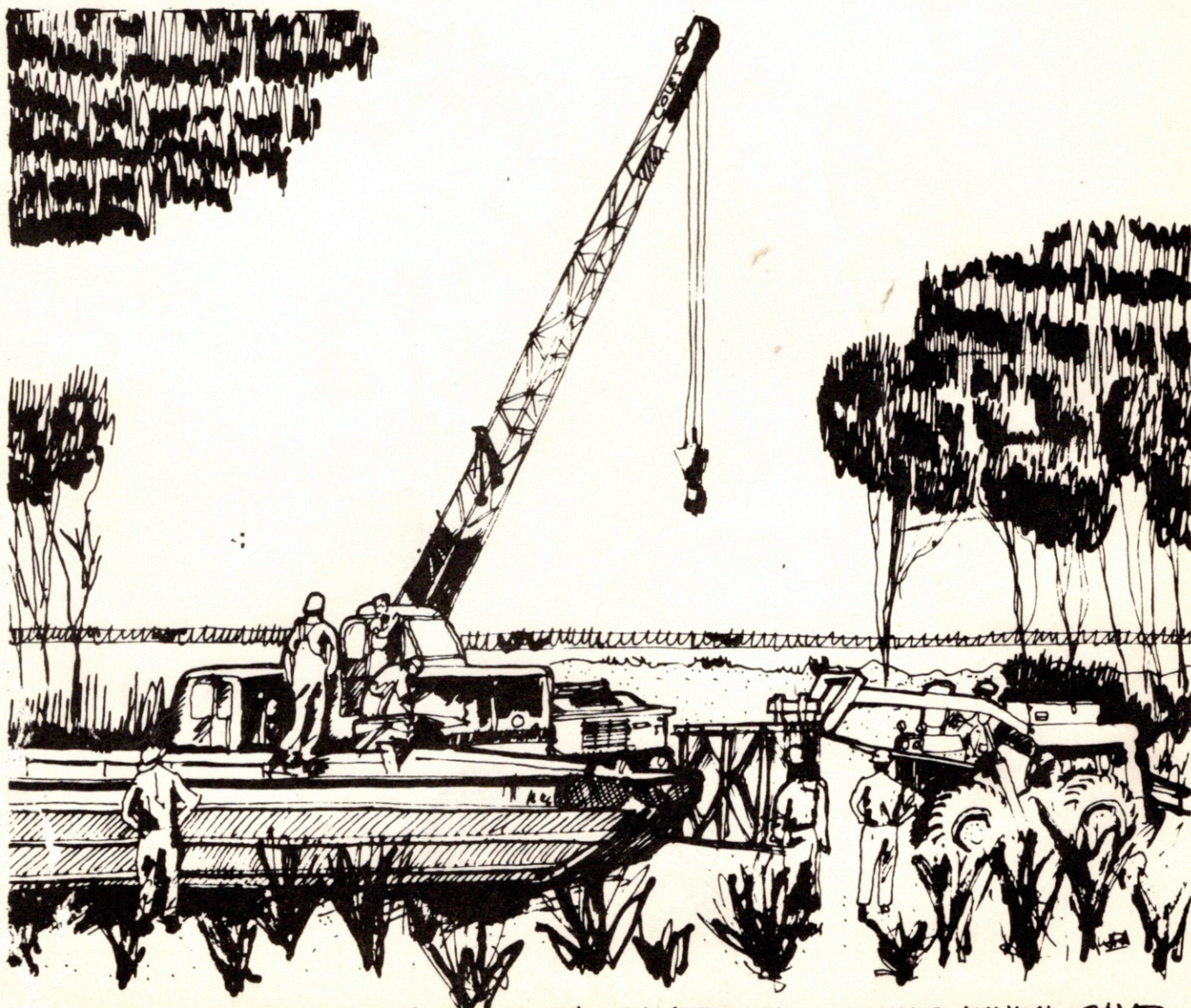


SOUTHERN COMMAND

RAE

APRIL 1971

NEWSLETTER



TERMINAL SQUADRON HANDLING BAILEY BRIDGING DURING ANNUAL CAMP AT SANDY POINT, WESTERNPORT BAY.

SOUTHERN COMMAND
ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ENGINEERS NEWSLETTER

APRIL 1971

My Dear Fellow Sapper -

This is the second of our "new look" Newsletters and I hope that it will not only give you an idea of what is happening in our Corps, but will also serve to seek your support for our forthcoming Corps activities.

The Corps in Vietnam

Our Corps is strongly represented in Vietnam and members are changed over on an individual rotation basis, normally after one years service. So far, over 3,500 members of the Corps have had service in this theatre, and this number grows by about 800 annually.

The major units are 1 Fd Sqn and 17 Const Sqn. In addition there are a number of minor units and detachments in the works, transportation, movements and stores fields. As well, RAE is represented in the Civil Affairs Unit, HQ Australia Force, Logistic Support Group and the Australian Army Training Team.

One American soldier wrote about these men, and I have enclosed a copy of this article, represented from "KYSU" a US Army Publication. It has a humorous vein and will illustrate what the Corps is doing, both as Sappers and as ambassadors for Australia.

Southern Command RAE Officers' Mess

The Mess has fared well this year under the able leadership of Lt Col Bruce Wadeson as PMC. However, Lt Col Wadeson has now been promoted to bigger things as CRE 3 Div.

So to Lt Col and Mrs Wadeson, go our very sincere thanks for all that they have done to make the Mess and its activities such a success.

Lt Col Jim Riley (CO 16 Const Regt) has been appointed PMC and I am sure that you will give him your support and help him to keep this Mess a really worthwhile part of our Corps activities.

However, once again I make my annual plea. The Mess can only be as good as the degree of support that you give to it, so please come along and support your Mess.

All serving and retired RAE officers are welcome and the subscription is a nominal \$4 per year. A particularly good time for "fronting up" and "paying up" is on Anzac Day, after the March.

The other functions programmed for the remainder of this year are:

- 25 Apr 71 - Anzac Day - Mess opens immediately after the March.
(This is repeated, in case you tuned out when I mentioned subscriptions in the proceeding paragraph.)

22 May 71 - Theatre Night.
19 Jun 71 - Waterloo Dinner.
21 Aug 71 - At Home.
11 Dec 71 - Christmas Party.

The RAE Corps Fund

As is normal, the central RAE Corps Fund is hard put to meet its obligations in maintaining the RAE Band and Museum, plus the constant flow of trophies and entertainment commitments necessary for maintaining our Corps' image.

On the local front unfortunately, our main item of expenditure is for wreaths.

So help us to keep this essential facet of our Corps alive. Serving officers pay on a "rate-for-rank" basis and will be dunned by me individually. However, for retired officers, we offer a cut-rate of purely "voluntary" subscription, ie.

- a. Annual Subscription \$2.00
- b. Life Membership \$10.00

If you are a retired officer and would like to help this Fund, please complete the enclosed proforma and return it with your cheque to the address shown.

The RAE S Comd Mailing List

Bluntly, this list is a mess and guess who is to blame. Unfortunately my staff are not trained in mind reading, neither are they issued crystal balls!! As a result, they cannot keep up with your movements, unless you tell them yourselves.

Last year, after circulating and then formulating an overall RAE address list, we thought that the problem was "buttoned up", however, our last circular on the 1970 Corps Ball resulted in 113 copies being returned marked "Address Unknown".

Therefore it is with reluctance that I must strike these 113 names off our list, but please, may I seek your help. Doubtless some of you will sooner or later run into a fellow sapper officer who is "anti-the-system" because he doesn't get any advice of Corps activities. Please don't worry about explaining the facts of life to him - Instead, be receptive, and then ring me up fast and give me his name and address.

And speaking of addresses, please let my office know if you change your own. The contact there is:

SORE 2 (Training) (At present Maj David Horsley)
CE Branch,
HQ S Comd,
Victoria Barracks,
St. Kilda Road,
MELBOURNE, 3004.

Or on the other hand, you might care to be economical and ring, and so pay only 5 cents for a call instead of 6 cents for a stamp. Maj David Horsley's telephone number is 698-6628 (direct).

The 1971 Waterloo Dinner

This year's dinner will follow last year's pattern. The Engineer Depot, Swan Street, at 7.30 p.m. on Saturday, 19th June, Dress, in order of preference, will be "Scarlets", "Blues" or Dinner Jacket. Cost per head will be \$6.50, which will cover your pre-dinner drinks, dinner plus dinner wines. After dinner, unfortunately, rising costs will make us impose a "cash over the bar" policy.

I have enclosed an application form for the Dinner. If you know of a Corps friend who has not had a copy of this Newsletter but who wishes to attend the dinner - please notify Maj David Horsley in my office.

The 1971 Corps Ball

Our Corps Ball has now reached the stage where it is a popular annual event, as those who have attended the last two will testify.

So please - mark this date in your diaries now - so that when I send out my next circular to drum up trade for the Ball, you cannot claim you weren't briefed in advance.

<u>The Date</u>	-	29th October, 1971.
<u>The Place</u>	-	Camberwell Civic Centre.

RAE Corps Insignia

As the result of a number of enquiries, we are establishing a small "Mail order" Corps shop in my Branch, dealing in items of RAE Corps identity, such as ties, cuff links, tie bars, tie tacks, lapel badges, and wall plaques. I have enclosed a list of the items being stocked and approximate prices.

Maj David Horsley is our "shop keeper" and you already have his address and telephone number in the preceeding paragraphs.

Maj Horsley is prepared to serve anyone who "drops-in" or who writes for a cash sale, but naturally he is hoping that you folk get together and make bulk buys: it makes his work so much easier.

RAE S Comd Officers' Mess Sports Results

Golf - "Tillyard Trophy". Approximately 24 Sapper Officers competed for this trophy at Royal Melbourne Golf Club, East Course, on Friday, 20th November, 1970. The trophy was won by Maj J. Standish and Capt R. Carr, square, on a count back from Lt Col E. Deveson and Lt Col M. Johnstone.

Cricket - "The Mollard Ashes" - RAE versus R Aust Inf. Due to unseasonal rain this match set originally down for 3rd February, 1971, was washed out. To gain a decision we had to resort to other means, and roulette was chosen. The trophy was then won by Infantry - after an excellent dinner at the Naval and Military Club on Wednesday, 17th March, 1971.

Cricket - "The Evans Cup" - RAE versus RAA. This game was played on 17th March at the Albert Park Ground. The Artillery side batted first, and made a very quick 120 runs. Our best bowlers were Ernie Deveson (4), E.M. Daly (3) and S.M.C. Evans who finished the innings with one wicket and a strained groin. The game was played on an "equal number of overs" basis and our batsmen were just too slow. We made 6/110 for the same number of overs. We were consistently pinned down by B. Watson (not so long since he finished on top of the 1st XI district bowling averages). Our best batsmen were E. Hoppen (27), E.M. Daly (23) (a good double) and J.L. Daly (24) not out.

Next year we hope to reverse the process and have a Sapper win.

Tennis - "O'Donnell Trophy". This trophy was not played for in 1970/71 but we hope to reinstate it this year.

RAE Corps History

This is particularly directed towards our elder retired officers. How many of you have some treasured service memento tucked away in an old trunk? To you and to our Corps, this could well be a significant link in our Corps History - To someone else, in later years, it could equally be just a piece of worthless junk.

The RAE Corps Museum is now well established at the School of Military Engineering in Sydney, and it really needs all the photographs, kit, uniforms and military souvenirs that you can spare. Please don't keep those mementos to yourself - Put them where all the Corps can see them.

Again, Maj David Horsley, my overworked SORE 2, "volunteers" to be your agent and to arrange shipping and postal details.

In addition, Brig Lucas, better known to most of us as "Luke" is writing a history of RAE. Brig "Luke" would welcome contributions and help - and surprisingly, the contact again is Maj David Horsley.

Where Did It All Start?

Genesis states:

"And the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep".

So obviously Sappers were needed to sort this lot out.

And in fact, this message was not lost on the loyal citizens of Melbourne, who, on 15th November 1860, held a public meeting at the Duke of Rothesay Hotel, 23 Elizabeth Street, to form the "Corps of Victoria Volunteer Engineers" for the defence of their Colony.

Hence, cynics have always associated Sappers with "Pubs".

Other Australian Colonies subsequently followed by raising Engineer Corps at later dates and on Federation, all were amalgamated to form what is now RAE.

However, Victoria was first!

The site of the Duke of Rothesay Hotel - where it all started - is now part of the new building of the Victorian Head Office of the Commonwealth Savings Bank.

In anticipation of your support, the S Comd Corps Sub-Committee, sought and got the agreement of the Commonwealth Savings Bank to erect a suitable memorial plaque on the former site of the Duke of Rothesay Hotel in Elizabeth Street.

Subsequently, the Engineer-in-Chief, The National Trust, and the Royal Historical Society of Victoria, all gave their support to this project.

So now our aim is to arrange a suitable parade to celebrate the Anniversary of the formation of the first unit of Sappers raised by the Australian Colonies. We are hoping to present this on 14th November, 1971 (Remembrance Sunday).

Details will be promulgated later -

The New CGS

I am sure that all Sappers will join with me in congratulating our Sapper General, Maj Gen M.F. Brogan CB, CBE, on his nomination as CGS, to follow Lt Gen T.J. Daly KBE, CB, DSO.

We Sappers in Victoria have a particularly soft spot in our hearts for General "Basher" Brogan, whose distinguished record of service included both the appointments of Adjutant RAE 3 Division and CE Southern Command.

He is one of us, and I have sent him a signal on your behalf congratulating him on his appointment and pledging our support.

Some Thank Yous

Too often someone moves out from a unit or formation and is lost. I hope this will not happen here.

Col Bob Handley, ED recently relinquished command of 6 Const Gp and was succeeded by Col John McDonald ED. Col "Bob" has given so much to the CMF and in particular to RAE. This was most evident when he was commanding the equivalent of three Melbourne based regiments from Benalla, despite the travelling and time involved.

In spite of the heavy commitments of his civilian employment as a senior engineer with C.R.B., he still found time to command 6 Const Gp, to be the CMF representative on the central RAE Corps Committee, to represent his group on the S Comd RAE Corps Sub-Committee and as well, to be an Honorary ADC to the Governor General.

Col Handley has set us all an example of service before self and we are all most grateful for all that he has done for the Corps.

Col Peter Robinson ED has recently handed over the appointment of CRE 3 Div to Lt Col Bruce Wadeson. Although Col "Peter" is not an engineer in civil life, his allied academic disciplines and his personal drive proved him to be a most competent technical manager. We note that despite his transfer to the Unallotted List, he has been appointed Honorary ADC to the Governor General.

Good luck Colonel "Peter", we know you will keep in touch.

Last Post

Since my last Newsletter, we have lost three grand comrades, Colonel Sir Frederick Thorpe, Lt Col Bill Harker, and Lt Ian Miller. Wreaths and messages of condolence were sent on your behalf.

Col Sir Frederick Garner Thorpe MC, ED. Sir "Fred", as he was known to most, had a distinguished career in RAE in World War 1, where he was awarded the MC. He was a staunch supporter of the CMF and at the outbreak of World War 2, was CRE 3 Div.

In World War 2, he served as CE Southern Command until he was seconded to Department of Munitions as Director of Machine Tools and Gauges where his talents as a leader and an organiser won him his well earned knighthood.

Lt Col G.W. (Bill) Harker, passed away on 15th July, 1970, at the age of 49 after a long illness.

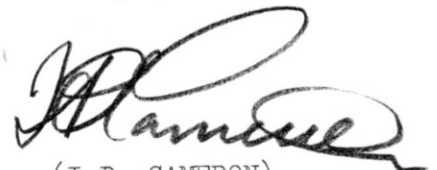
Bill was first commissioned in RAE in May 1941 and after overseas service, was demobilized as a Capt. He was a staunch supporter of the CMF and when it was reactivated in the post war years, he was one of the first to volunteer. After serving as a Capt and a Major, he was promoted to Lt Col to command 3 Fd Engr Regt on 1st September 1957.

In civil life, Bill worked with the Board of Works to 1951 when he joined John Holland Constructions. He was appointed General Manager in 1962 and subsequently became a Director in 1963. Although ill-health forced his retirement from active engineering in 1964, his spirit and interest in our Corps and its activities was very much alive right to the end.

Bill was a fine soldier and engineer. He will be sadly missed by all those who knew him.

Lt Ian Miller, a CMF officer of RAE 3 Div, lost his life in the recent Westgate Bridge disaster on 15th October, 1970. Ian enlisted in the ranks in the CMF in February 1965, and after serving in WA for a year, transferred to S Comd in August 1966 and subsequently obtained his commission in 8 Fd Sqn, RAE 3 Div.

He was a brilliant and dedicated engineer. Both the Corps and the profession are the poorer for his passing.



(I.D. CAMERON)
Colonel
Chief Engineer

RANK
NAME
ADDRESS
.....
.....

The Secretary,
Southern Command RAE Corps Committee,
Chief Engineer's Branch,
HQ Southern Command,
Victoria Barracks,
St. Kilda Road,
MELBOURNE, 3004.

WATERLOO DINNER : SATURDAY, 19TH JUNE, 1971

Please reserve me places at the Waterloo Dinner to be held at
Engineer Training Depot in Swan Street, Melbourne, on Saturday 19th June, at
1930 hrs. I enclose cheque for \$

Signed

1. Please make cheques payable to Southern Command RAE Corps Fund.
2. All applications should be submitted by 4th June, 1971.
3. Cost per person is \$6.50.

FROM: NO.

RANK

NAME

UNIT

PRIVATE
ADDRESS

.....

.....

TO: Secretary,
Southern Command RAE Corps Committee,
Chief Engineer's Branch,
HQ Southern Command,
Victoria Barracks,
St. Kilda Road,
MELBOURNE, 3004.

RAE CORPS FUND

Subscriptions for the Corps Fund for 1971 are now due.

I am already a life member of the Corps Fund. I paid my subscription
in year in Command.

OR

My 1971 subscription of \$ is enclosed.

Signed

Cheques should be made payable to Southern Command RAE Corps Fund.

RAE CORPS INSIGNIA

The following items of Corps Insignia are available from CE Branch
HQ S Comd.

We would prefer groups to consolidate orders and forward demands on an
organizational basis.

Delays can be expected on some items.

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>PRICE</u>
RAE CORPS TIE (WOOL)	\$1.50
RAE CORPS TIE (SILK)	\$2.55
TIE CLIP	\$0.95
TIE TACK	\$0.95
LAPEL BADGES	\$0.65
CUFF LINKS	\$1.50

THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ENGINEERS

By Specialist Four Jock Pites

They come from cold, barren mining towns in the Northern Territory, from golden, ripe wheat fields in Victoria, and from sprawling cattle stations in Tasmania.

Their homes of record are Sydney instead of New York City, Melbourne instead of Chicago, and Brisbane instead of San Francisco. Instead of Budweiser and Pabst, they drink Victoria Bitter or Queensland Yellow, and they drink a lot of it.

Like their ale, their personalities are potent and their language is biting and colorful.

They discuss the war and the Army much the way we do. (Taking a bloke away from his bird just isn't easy ya' know!) For every argument for or against being here, they have counter arguments. But they will still relate to you a familiar statement that starts off: "It's something we have to do....."

Like us they do it. Day after sweat-filled day they live and work as we do - talking of good friends and good times, what they're missing and what they're doing, of things they left behind and things they're going back to.

To meet the blokes who comprise the 17th Construction Squadron, Australian Force Vietnam, Royal Australian Engineers, all one has to do is catch a Wallaby Flight out of Ton Son Nhut to Nui Dat.

It wasn't always that easy though. The first men arrived in 1965, bringing the knowledge and equipment to work hard and the spirits and dart boards to play hard. Despite the Australian accent and being in a portion of the country where the scenery invokes images of kangaroos bouncing about and Koala bears frolicking in the trees, the Land of the 'Roo is still Vietnam - Phuoc Tuy Province southeast of Saigon.

There are approximately 8,000 Australian serving in Vietnam. About 800 of these soldiers are Army engineers. Slightly less than half of these belong to the 17th Construction Squadron. The other men belong to the 1st Field Squadron and other smaller engineer units.

The officers may remind you of English actors in knee socks and shorts out of a movie like "Burma Road". But the swagger stick and the native-powered fan no longer exist. These men are efficient. They spend their days planning how to utilize the least number of man hours and materials to build something advantageous and profitable.

A good example of this is the wells they have drilled throughout the province. These wells are sufficient to provide the people in the area with an all year supply of water. Instead of complicated electric or gasoline-powered pumps in remote areas, a simple windmill is built. A basic need - a simple device - excellent results.

The Australians even turn the actions of the enemy into benefits for the people. In late summer 1969, a vital bridge on National Highway 15 (QL 15) connecting Saigon and Vung Tau was blown. Instead of building a new bridge they built what is now the Rach Hoa cause-way. Harder to destroy than a bridge there now exists behind the cause-way a shallow fresh water reservoir, suitable for citrus farming and shrimp breeding, bringing new industry to the area.

People working in the land of the 'roo have observed that many of the province inhabitants act as if the war were over. It is just an attitude as best one can tell. Yet, the residents are building and planning for the future as if peace were truly at hand. The Australian engineers are riding the crest of this progressive feeling. Baria market, the largest shopping area in the province, originally stood in the heart of the province capital Phuoc Le. There was much traffic and congestion, and the province chief asked for help in moving the market to an open area on the edge of the village.

The Aussies were happy to oblige and moved 8,000 cubic yards of rock to the new site where it was used to fill a wide flowing marsh. Now the villagers are building three-storey buildings and permanent market stalls that rival the main areas in Saigon.

Lambretta space is plentiful in the giant parking lot provided by the Australian engineers.

The goals of the Aussies are the same, but somehow they accomplish their task with a different style. They drive their dirt-hungry dozers on the "wrong" side of the road.

The playful children who dance along the street at their approach have learned to mimic the famous salute - palm facing you. Instead of stars on the fenders of their land rovers, they have painted red kangaroos ('roos, they call them). The men are the same though - lean and bronzed and working with dedication and determination.

One monument to their determination to help the people is the Baria hospital. Once a dirt-encrusted, shabby group of ramshackled buildings setting in a sea of mud, the hospital is fast becoming a 190 bed medical facility with 60 trained medical technicians.

Because of the swampy land around the hospital, the Australians had to build their own streets into the building complex, just to lay a firm foundation to haul in building materials. They are adding sanitary facilities, a good water supply, improved waste disposal system and electrical services.

They are also building kitchen facilities for the staff and a small wing on one of the wards. At the same time the Vietnamese have caught on to the idea and are making their own improvements, including a major addition to another one of the wards.

The Australians, too, are faced with the problem of solving unusual engineering problems. One of these involved the construction of a dispensary on Long Son Island, just off the southern tip of the province near Vung Tau.

To get materials and men to the job an arrangement was made with the U.S. Army to use a landing craft to haul the rock and sand to the island a truckload at a time. The shallow water and narrow channels prohibited any other means of transporting the materials.

Even with this, the materials must be off-loaded on a corner of the island some distance from the native village of thatched huts and exotic temples. The materials are hauled in small boats through a twisting, vine-covered waterway which laces the edges of the island. Despite the handicaps, an isolated village will soon have an adequate medical facility.

Even the Vietnamese fishing industry is feeling the aid of the Australians. At one site a mountain of sand was moved across a road to fill a mangrove swamp so a boat building firm could expand its facilities. The boats are built by hand using primitive tools and ancient methods, but turning out some of Vietnam's finest fishing sampans.

The Aussies haven't forgotten there is a war going on. They do their share of combat engineering - land clearing, road building, and troop housing. They build rifle ranges for Vietnamese military trainees and teach Vietnamese to operate their equipment.

They use the term "tasks" instead of missions. They fall out in the morning for a "parade" instead of a formation. They call their privates "sappers" and their master sergeants "warrant officers". Even so, the name of the game is engineering, and the results are good.

Should you visit them, you may have trouble translating the English into English. You may also lose your shirt playing darts, your dignity drinking their potent beer, and your skepticism watching them work. But you'll remember them - the Royal Australian Engineers, because "Well there, Yank, there ya go ya see!

That's the way it is in the "Land of the 'Roo".