



THURUNKA

December 2009

Newsletter of the
Royal Australian Signals Association (NSW) Inc.

Patron MAJGEN R.P. Irving AM PSM RFD (Retd)

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8/62-64 Lynwood Avenue
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Ph: 02 9972 4957
Mobile: 0431 422 247
cjb47@optusnet.com.au

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28 Mendelssohn Avenue
EMERTON NSW 2770
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thurunka@optusnet.com.au

Coming Events - 2010

Update your diary NOW!

Committee Meeting 1	Wed, 24 Feb	1800 hrs	RACA Club
Rhumb Corps Luncheon	Wed, 3 Mar	1200 hrs	CTA Club
THURUNKA March edition	Mid-March		
Committee Meeting 2	Wed, 31 Mar	1800 hrs	RACA Club
ANZAC Day March	Sun, 25 Apr	1030 hrs	City
Signals Reunion	Sun, 25 Apr	1200 hrs	City Hotel
Committee Meeting 3	Wed, 26 May	1800 hrs	RACA Club
Rhumb Corps Luncheon	Wed, 2 Jun	1200 hrs	CTA Club
THURUNKA June edition	Mid-June		
Reserve Forces Day March	Sun, 4 Jul	1030 hrs	Sydney
Committee Meeting 4	Wed, 28 Jul	1800 hrs	RACA Club
Battle for Australia Service	Wed, 1 Sep	1100 hrs	Cenotaph Sydney
Rhumb Corps Luncheon	Wed, 1 Sep	1200 hrs	CTA Club
THURUNKA September edition	Mid-September		
Committee Meeting 5	Wed, 29 Sep	1800 hrs	RACA Club
* Eastern Region Corps Dinner	Sat, Nov	1900 hrs	TBA
* Annual Memorial Service	Sun, 14 Nov	TBC	Signal Hill, South Head
* Annual General Meeting	Sun, 14 Nov	TBC	Paddington RSL Club
Rhumb Corps Luncheon	Wed, 1 Dec	1200 hrs	CTA Club
* Committee Luncheon	Sun, 5 Dec	1200 hrs	TBA
THURUNKA December edition	Early-December		

* TBA: Dates and details to be announced. TBC: Dates and details to be confirmed

NB: Dates and details of events may change but are constantly reviewed in an attempt to advise changes to members in a timely manner.

The Patron, Committee members
and the staff of THURUNKA take
this opportunity to wish you and
yours a **Safe and Happy Christmas**
and a **Healthy, Safe and Prosperous**
New Year.

RASigs Website

RASigs Assn (NSW) now has its
own website

www.rasigs.com

See inside for further details

*Be assured that THURUNKA will
continue as usual.*

In this issue

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Next Issue

Copy for the next issue of THURUNKA must be in the hands of the Editor, Ken Forway, 28 Mendelssohn Avenue EMERTON 2770. Or by e-mail: thurunka@optusnet.com.au NO LATER THAN 19th February 2010.

Recent Events

Remembrance Day 2009 - Vietnam

This year, our President, Chris Ballantine, was the Master of Ceremonies and conducted the RASigs Reunion Vietnam Memorial and Remembrance Day Service at the Long Tan Cross, Vietnam.

Approximately 200 persons attended the service along with the Australian Defence Attaché - Colonel Stuart Dodds. The weather was hot but pleasant under the canopy of that rubber tree plantation, the site of the battle on that fateful day of 18th August, 1966, when 11 Pl, Delta Company, 6 RAR encountered and engaged the enemy, as Little Pattie and Col Joye and the 'Joy Boys' performed at the Nui Dat base, 2.5 km to the West. 18 Australian soldiers perished with 21 wounded. The official casualty count of NVA/VC was 245, with an estimated 350 wounded.

The mood was sombre, a calming silence; a place of peace now. The sun shone onto the memorial, giving it prominence; this hallowed ground amongst the trees.

The Prologue was read by COL Dodds and Graeme 'Breaker' Cusack recited 'In Flanders Field'. Wreaths were then laid by COL Dodds on behalf of the Australian



Photo: W02 (Ret) Dave (Buddha) Winch
 'Two-Minute Silence' at the 'Long Tan Cross' by the members of the 'RASigs Reunion Vietnam 2009' tour.

Government and Mal 'Bluey' Fergusson on behalf of the Corps. The ODE was recited by Mick Muldoon.

After the service, poppies and joss sticks were placed in remembrance of all those who had suffered and perished as the result of war.

Errol Hazlewood's Ashes Scattered at Sea

On Saturday, 3rd October, 2009 Errol's ashes were scattered to the moderate winds off South Head from the yacht Electra, on which Errol's family members were passengers. Also observed by those on board Sarus included Chris Ballantine (President of the Association), Scott Bennet (a sailing buddy of Errol's), Mike McEvoy as Skipper (and Secretary of the Association), Barry Izzard (ASM of the Association) and Tony Rickards (ex-army and sailing buddy of

Errol's). The weather was just as Errol would have liked it, moderate to strong winds from the SE and the waves were sufficiently rough to make it interesting. Accompanying Electra and Sarus was an 'East Coast 31' from the Blue's Point Yacht Club.

After the prayer, the ashes were cast to the winds, red roses were scattered on the waters and a libation consumed by the passengers and crew on each vessel, in Errol's memory.

Regards,
Mike McEvoy

Association Matters

Association website: <http://www.rasigs.com/nsw>

Annual Memorial Service, 2009 - Sydney

On a beautifully sun-lit morning, augmented with a slight westerly breeze, members, family, fiends and colleagues assembled at Signal Hill, South Head, Sydney for the Association's Annual Wreath Laying and Memorial Service. We were supported by a Flag Party from the 8th Signal Regiment and drummer and bugler from Army Band - Sydney. Under new guidelines from the 'powers to be' we did not have a Catafalque Party, but were assisted with a Flag Party from the 8th Signal Regiment, for whom we are very grateful. We are also grateful for the continued support by Army Band Sydney and the Drummer and Bugler for supporting the Memorial Service again this year.

Our Patron, MAJ GEN Paul Irving, COL Bill Hanlon and LTCOL Andrew Butler, FORCOMD, and LTCOL Paul Hummerston, CO 8th Signal Regiment were attendance.

The Service was graciously conducted by Chaplain Peter R Hayes, Command Chaplain, HQ Forces Command, Victoria Barracks. The

theme of the Chaplain's sermon was, in remembering those who have suffered death and injury during and since their service, the need to continue to persist to strive toward the abolition of war and for the outbreak of everlasting peace.

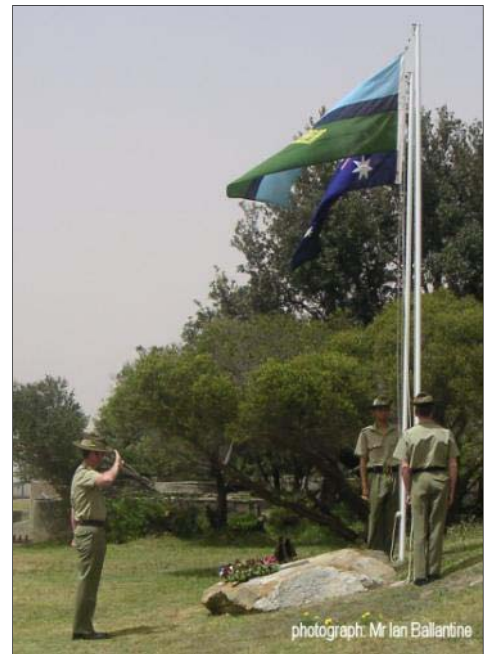
After the singing of the National Anthem and the Blessing, the Flag Party was dismissed and the President thanked the twenty or so persons for their attendance and invited them to join him at the Paddington RSL for the AGM and a light luncheon.

And afterwards ...

AGM - 2009

Members, family and friends gathered at the Paddington RSL Club for the AGM and a light luncheon.

After opening the meeting, the members confirmed the minutes of the last AGM, dated 23rd November 2008. The meeting was presented with the Treasurer's Report and Auditor's Report (as published in the September edition of *THURUNKA*). The President



Colonel Bill Hanlon, G6 FORCOMD

then presented his report (see below) then followed by General Business, which included discussion of the Association's website, introduced by the Secretary.

Certificates of Appreciation

Certificates of appreciation were presented at this year's AGM.

Our Patron, MAJGEN Paul Irving AM PSM RFD, was pleased to present a certificate to our President, MAJ (Ret) Chris Ballantine.

A Certificate of Appreciation was also presented by our Patron to Ken Forway for

"Your excellence as Editor of *THURUNKA* has exceeded all expectations and reflects most favourably on your integrity and judgement".



Our Patron, MAJGEN Paul Irving, presenting our President, MAJ Chris Ballantine (Retd), with his Certificate of Appreciation.



PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT 2008/2009

I present to the members my ninth annual report as your President and I look forward to being able to serve the Association in the future.

As at 30th June 2009 members' funds totalled \$15,528, an increase of \$139 over the previous year. The financial health of the Association enabled us to support Eastern Region Signals Units and this year we again granted the 17th Signal Regiment \$250 towards their annual year book. I continue to encourage funding applications for any reasonable projects.

Membership currently stands at 219 and six affiliated WW2 unit associations. Membership declined during the year owing to the passing of older members, several resignations, posting of serving members outside NSW and the removal of long-term un-financial members. It continues to be discouraging that despite the potential pool of members in NSW, membership has rarely exceeded 250. Feedback from the other states tends to indicate a similar membership picture. Apart from Victoria, the strongest Associations appear to be the Vietnam Veterans Associations such as 104th Signal Squadron and 110th Signal Squadron Vietnam Veterans Associations.

The past twelve months since our last AGM have been busy. In February 2009 I attended the L of C Signal Association Commemoration of the Bombing of Darwin Service at Bankstown; Reserve Force Day Parade Briefings leading up to the Parade; the ANZAC Day March and Reunion during April 2009; 17th Signal Regiment Birthday Parade, Holsworthy during August; Battle for Australia Commemorative Service during September and more recently, attendance at the Corps Reunion in Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City) Vietnam and the ER Corps Dinner during November. There is more in *THURUNKA* about the reunion and the dinner.

The ANZAC Day March and reunion continues to be our major annual activity and the major source of new members. This activity has been re-

ported upon in detail in our newsletter, *THURUNKA*. Your attendance at the 2010 March and reunion is strongly encouraged and is a great opportunity to catch up with old mates you may have previously lost contact with.

Our quarterly Rhumb Corps luncheons continued at the Commercial Travellers Club, Martin Place. Whilst attendance rarely exceeds ten, I took the initiative of inviting guests from other Corps to refresh the usual 'chook chatter'. To date Bob Pink OAM, Secretary of the 1/19th RNSWR Association and Bob Ferrari OAM, Secretary RAAC Association have attended as our guests on separate occasions during the year.

Whilst national liaison between associations has been continuing on an informal basis, we wait with bated breath for HOC, Brig Mike Milford to initiate a formal structure to replace the extinct National and Regional Corps Committees. Without such a structure, Corps domestic matters such as the Corps Dinner continue to be a challenge. On a positive note, the appointment of Colonel Bill Hanlon, G6 (CISEW), Forces Command and his staff has improved formal liaison within NSW.

Liaison between our committee and Eastern Region units was enhanced during the year following the appointment of Major Mark Murray, 8th Signal Regiment, WO2 John Bower, 301st Signal Squadron, 1st Commando Regiment and RSM 17th Signal Regiment as unit liaison officers. My appreciation is extended to these representatives and their COs and OCs for their support.

Management of the Association has continued in the hands of a small group of committee stalwarts - Vice President Tony Staas, who has soldiered on despite poor health; Secretary Mike McEvoy, whose management skills have ensured effective administration and the wise counsel of committee members John Wynn Jones, Ken Myers, Barry Izzard and John Rowlands. The committee met on a regular basis during the year to ensure the effective management of the Association.

It was very pleasing however, to receive a nomination from younger new blood for a committee position.

The voice of the Association continued to be our quarterly newsletter, *THURUNKA*, produced under the skilful hands of Editor, Ken Forway and publisher, Mike Gategood. In addition to his editorial role, Ken also has the added role of Membership Officer. Ken spends weeks collecting and reviewing articles and sending them to Michael in Manilla NSW who performs his desk-top publishing magic to produce probably the best Signals Association newsletter in Australia.

An exciting new venture for the Association is the establishment of a website linked to the Corps and other state association websites. This will become our major communications channel with members, other associations and the world. Member Chris Mugdan accepted the role as project manager assisted by members Paul Lechowski and Michael Henry, who have been working closely with our counterparts from South Australia whose website model we have adopted. Secretary Mike McEvoy is providing committee oversight and will have more to say about this project.

I extend my deepest appreciation to the members of the committee for their dedication and effort over many years and to the members of the Association for their continued support. I also extend my appreciation to our Patron, MAJGEN Paul Irving for his continued support and to the CO 8th Signal Regiment, LTCOL Paul Hummerston and CO 17th Signal Regiment LTCOL Susan Coyle for their support on ANZAC Day and at our annual memorial service with the provision of soldiers and resources.

In conclusion I wish all members, families and friends a safe and joyous Christmas and New Year.

Chris Ballantine

President
November 2009

Your Committee for 2009/2010

The President stood down the outgoing Committee and declared all Committee positions vacant and asked Bob Eaglesham to be the Returning Officer. As Returning Officer Bob Eaglesham thanked the outgoing committee for its efforts and achievements over its term and called for nominations for the new Committee.

After the election the Returning Officer named the Incoming Committee as:

The Executive

President	Chris Ballantine
Vice-President	Tony Staas
Secretary	Mike McEvoy
Acting Treasurer**	Chris Ballantine

The Committee

Barry Izzard
John Rowlands
John Wynn Jones
Ray Simpson

Honorary Auditor	Bob Eaglesham
Editor THURUNKA	Ken Forway
Membership Officer	Ken Forway

**As there were no nominations for Treasurer, the Returning officer asked Chris Ballantine if he would continue as Acting Treasurer. Chris agreed to continue as Acting Treasurer, for the short term, until a full time Treasurer could be found.

In The Blue Corner

Blue Hawkins has advised us of the following. If anyone is able to help Blue in any way, or you have your own enquiry, please contact Blue direct...Ed

Ted 'Blue' Hawkins
(Keeper of the RASIGS contact dbase)
23 Belcher St
Caboolture QLD 4510
Phone 07 5499 3704
e-mail: hawkins2@aapt.net.au

Assistance Required

John Harmer
RSTT 215211 WO1 (ret) John Harmer (deceased)
All replies direct to:
Albert Grulke
Phone 03 5966 2085
E-mail: agrulke7@bigpond.com
14262 CAPT (ret) Albert Grulke, 110 Sig Sqn Vietnam 1968-70 is, like many others, an active Legatee who cares for the widows(ers) and children of service personnel who have died on active service or in training for active service. One of the main objects of Legacy is obtaining a War Widow's Pension from Dept of Veteran's Affairs so that the widow(er) has a reasonable standard of living.
Albert is seeking information (see below) on John Harmer and welcomes ALL input, no matter how insignificant it seems. I am sure there are many, particularly technicians, who would have been aware of John's circumstances at the time of his death, therefore please take the time to advise Albert.

Thanks in anticipation.

Ted (Blue) Hawkins

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I am wondering if anybody can confirm whether John

Harmer was still in the army when he died.

We are working on a pension for his divorced widow. You may not be aware that if a veteran dies within five years of a divorce and it was a marriage of any length she is now eligible for a War Widows Pension subject to cause of death.

In this case the marriage was over or close to thirty years. We have a death certificate that records his occupation as a Warrant Officer.

Thanks

Albert Grulke

agrulke7@bigpond.com

3 November 2009

DVA Claim - Can anyone help?

Regarding a veteran's DVA claim, can any 110 Sig Sqn members present in early 1968 confirm explosions were often heard; the explosions were the safety detonation of expired/excess ordnance. If possible, the names of those carrying out the detonation would also be helpful.

Barry Billing
(110 Sig Sqn Vietnam 1967-68 & 1970-71)
VVAA NSW Advocate
Mobile 0419 845 350
E-mail: baza1@bigpond.com
6 November 2009

Request for Assistance

Ted,
Mate, do you think you can do me a favour and ask on your website for me if anyone out there in the Sigs world can build me a free website - (I will pay for the Domain name and Maintenance for two years) for the 135 Sig Sqn reunion - the guy who was going to do it for nothing now has a new job and no spare time to get it up and running.

(Continued on page 8)



Vale - Bill Duguid

24172 William Mervyn (Bill) Duguid

110 Sig Sqn Vietnam 1968-69

DoB 9 November 1924

DoD 16 October 2009

<http://www.vietnamroll.gov.au/VeteranDetails.aspx?VeteranId=1235153>

It is with sadness and regret that we have been advised of a valued member of the Corps and servant of Australia. Bill was a long time member of the Association and will be sorely missed but well remembered by his family and friends. Messages of condolence may be forwarded to Bill's son and extended family at:

Ian Duguid

Phone 02 4296 8809

Mobile 0418 433 580

E-mail idoogie@bigpond.com

VALE - Fred Parslow

I have received a letter from Jenny Forbes, the daughter of Fred, informing the Association of the death of Fred on 26th September 2009. Fred was a WW2 veteran and member of the L of C Signals Association and our Association. I have written to Jenny expressing our condolences to Fred's family.

Mike McEvoy

Secretary

Vale - Bill Dickinson

11214 WO1 (Honorary Lieutenant)

William (Bill) DICKINSON

110 Sig Sqn Vietnam 1968-69

<http://www.vietnamroll.gov.au/VeteranDetails.aspx?VeteranId=1255435>

It is with deep regret that we have learned through Bill's family of his passing this day. Bill enlisted in the army around 1950 and served in RASIGS until his retirement around 1970/71. He saw active service in SVN in 1968-

1969. Bill was a Foreman of Signals, he did his qualification course in the UK, and he served in the main in the 6th Signal Regiment and the School of Signals. Bill had a large input into the School of Signals at Watsonia. After retirement he was active in the Corps Museum. Bill leaves a wife Shirley and five children, two of his children, Dawn and Jennifer, served in the army at the 6th Signal Regiment. Messages of condolence can be passed to his family through Janne (my wife); she is Bill's niece.

Janne Chamberlain

Phone 02 6231 4787

E-mail murrayjanne@bigpond.com

Murray Chamberlain

A few words for Bill Dickinson.

As I recall what he told me: He was a very proud Technician and enlisted in ACMF when it was raised in July 1948 and transferred to ARA in late 1949 or early 1950. He completed the first Technicians Course at School of Signal Balcombe before being posted to AHQ SIG REGT [later re titled 403 Sig Regt and then 6 Sig Regt]. He then went to UK to complete the long [2 Years?] Foreman of Signals Course. After he qualified, he was one of the first ARA WOs posted to a Foreman of Signals posting, all Foremen before that were ex RSigs. Postings in Australia were in 6 SIG REGT and School of Signals [TECH MAINT]. When he left ARA in 1970/72 he was granted the Honorary Rank of Lieutenant; Following his Military service he worked for some years in the communications section of the Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works and as a volunteer for the Signals Museum and the Puffing Billy Railway.

Peter Waller

President

RASigs Assn VIC

Vale - Chris Burge

CPL (ret) Chris Burge, Liney/Rigger
6 Sig Regt, 2 Sig Regt, 104 Sig Sqn & School of Signals.

DoB 1952

DoD 20 September 2009

I received a telephone call from Elizabeth Burge advising that her husband

Chris had passed away in his sleep (heart attack) in the early hours of Sunday morning, 20th September, 2009 aged 57 years. Chris is survived by his widow, Elizabeth, daughter, Erika Hopcraft and grand-children, Emily and Lachlan. Letters and cards of condolence may be sent to Elizabeth and Erika at 18 Sturrock Street, Brunswick East Vic 3057

Regards

Mike Beinke

M.J.A. BEINKE

Warrant Officer Class One

Warrant Officer Coordination

Headquarters 8th Brigade

Timor Barracks

Telephone: (02) 9858 8933

Facsimile: (02) 9874 5503

E-mail: michael.beinke@defence.gov.au

Vale - Harry Freeman

It is with sadness that we have learnt of the passing of another valued member of the Corps and servant of Australia.

Messages of condolence may be passed to Harry's family via:

WO1 RSTT (ret) Ray Wilson

Phone 07 4938 7615

E-mail beachbumswil@bigpond.com

Ted (Blue) Hawkins

A Few Words...

QX500526 Harry James Freeman

Enlisted in the AIF 25 Mar 46; Transferred to interim Army 1st July, 1947;

BCOF Japan 16th October, 1947 to

12th April, 1949

Brief service history is:

5 RTB; 1st Signal Trg Bn; 98th High

Speed Wireless section; 99th Heavy

Wireless Tp; BCOF Signals Regt

Harry was a past President (twice) of the

RSL Emu Park sub-branch, a thorough

gentleman and a bl..dy good bloke. I

was privileged to count him as a friend.

Regards,

Ray Wilson

WO1 RSTT (ret) Ray Wilson

Phone 07 4938 7615

E-mail beachbumswil@bigpond.com

Vale - from Ted (Blue) Hawkins

It is with sadness that we are advised of the passing of the following loyal servants of the Corps and Australia:

VALE - Kenneth Robinson

2788119 Kenneth John Robinson
 110 Sig Sqn Vietnam
 DoB 16 March 1947
 DoD 28 August 2009
<http://www.vietnamroll.gov.au/VeteranDetails.aspx?VeteranId=1229546>

Vale - Stan Rose

2783804 Stanley Ian (Stan) Rose,
 110 Sig Sqn Vietnam
 DoB 6 August 1945
 DoD 29 August 2009
<http://www.vietnamroll.gov.au/VeteranDetails.aspx?VeteranId=1247402>

Messages of condolence may be passed to Stan's family via his widow:

Mrs Pauline Rose
 2 Highland Pl
 Craignish QLD 4655
 Phone 07 4128 7780

This was in the local paper:

'ROSE, Stanley Ian "Stan" 2783804 110 SIGNAL SQN

Late of Craignish, formerly of Cranebrook, NSW.

Passed away at St Stephen Hospital on 29th August 2009.

Aged 64 years.

Much loved husband of Pauline.

Dearly loved father of Peter, Shannon and Belinda.

Loved father-in-law and grandfather of their families.

RESTING IN PEACE'

Vale - Ray Clark

DoB 21 March 1930
 DoD 16 October 2009
<http://www.koreanroll.gov.au/veteran.aspx?id=1211959>

It is with sadness that I inform you that Ray Clark passed away at 0100, 16th October, 2009.

Ray was diagnosed with bowel cancer in late 2008 and was operated on unsuccessfully, and had been receiving treatment since. Unfortunately his condition deteriorated and he passed away.

Ray was a former Director of Communications (DCOMMS) and Representative Colonel Commandant. Ray was a long-serving Legatee and the widows and children of our departed comrades were thankful for his continued duty to them. He first joined Brisbane Legacy in 1978 on transfer from Canberra Leg-

acy. Later that year he transferred to Gold Coast Legacy, returning to Brisbane Legacy in 1997. Ray was a stalwart of both Brisbane & Gold Coast Legacy. I can only imagine that he was as committed while a member of Canberra Legacy. Ray served on the Board of Management, was Convenor of the Welfare Committee and Chairman, Redlands Contact Group from 2003 until 2008 when he took leave of absence. One of nature's true gentlemen, Ray will be sorely missed by his family, especially his wife, Erica, a gentle and kind lady of an era sorely missed.

Rest in peace, Ray.

Messages of condolence to:

Steven F Blinkhorn
 Chief Executive Officer
 Brisbane Legacy

41 Merivale Street,
 South Brisbane Qld 4101
 PO Box 3003,

South Brisbane Qld 4101.

Phone: (07) 3846 4299

Mob: 0413 226 601

Fax: (07) 3846 2093

[E-mail: sblinkhorn@legacybrisbane.org.au](mailto:sblinkhorn@legacybrisbane.org.au)

VALE - Bill Coolburra

RAE - 17587 Clement William (Bill / Kookaburra) COOLBURRA
 3 Fd Tp & 1 Fd Sqn Vietnam 1965-66
 DoB 20 June 1945
 DoD 28 October 2009

<http://www.vietnamroll.gov.au/VeteranDetails.aspx?VeteranId=1241511>

It is with sadness and regret that we have been advised of the passing of another valued servant of Australia and member of the Royal Australian Corps of Engineers. Bill was also well known to many RASIGS personnel who served in Vietnam and Townsville. Messages of condolence, point of contact and any information clarification may be forwarded / requested from / to (please read fully Beth's e-mail below):

Beth Campbell
 Westlakes Veterans & Support Group
 Consultant Snr Advocate
 Pensions and Welfare Officer
 Counsellor
 P O Box 485
 Toronto NSW 2283
 Phone 02 4940 5128

Mobile 0438 828 189

[E-mail: bethcam@optusnet.com.au](mailto:bethcam@optusnet.com.au)

Who will collate them and present them to the family.

Vale - Robert Brown

218519 Robert Norman Brown
 104 Sig Sqn Vietnam 1971
<http://www.vietnamroll.gov.au/VeteranDetails.aspx?VeteranId=1229258>

It is with sadness and regret that we have learnt of the passing of another valued member of the Corps and servant of Australia. Bob's passing will be felt by his family and friends.

Messages of condolence may be forwarded to Bob's widow:

Mrs Maree Brown
 7 Yates Ct
 Mooroolbark VIC 3138
 Phone: 03 9722 9787

Vale - Clifford Wignell

Clifford Charles Wignell
 DoB 3 October 1960
 DoD 19 October 2009

It is with sadness and regret that we have learnt of the passing of another valued member of the Corps and servant of Australia. Cliff will be sorely missed by his loving family and friends but well remembered. Messages of condolence may be passed to Cliff's wife Maria, and children Amelia and Clifford:

Mrs Maria Wignell
 44 Willis St
 Kensington VIC 3031
 Phone 03 9376 5728

[E-mail maria.wignell@bigpond.com](mailto:maria.wignell@bigpond.com)

Our thoughts and prayers are with their families at this time.

Ted (Blue) Hawkins

VALE - Eric GRACE

12433 WO1 (ret) Eric Charles Kingston GRACE
 Malaya & 547 Sig Tp Vietnam
 DoB 11 November 1931
 DoD 5 December 2009

<http://www.vietnamroll.gov.au/VeteranDetails.aspx?VeteranId=1248319>

It is with sadness and regret that we have been advised of the passing of a valued servant of the Corps, Australia and RSL. Eric was one of those types who were respected by all who knew



him and totally dedicated to the welfare of his fellow veterans. I am certain that our thoughts and prayers are with Barbara and the family at this time.

Messages of condolence may be forwarded to Eric's wife:

Mrs Barbara Grace
16 Ocean St
Burnett Heads QLD 4670
Phone 07 4159 5868

E-mail
egrace4@bigpond.com

Ted (Blue) Hawkins
Phone 07 5499 3704

SICK PARADE



John Tate
2784943 WO1 (ret) John Robert Tate
104 Sig Sqn Vietnam 1969-70
<http://www.vietnamroll.gov.au/VeteranDetails.aspx?VeteranId=1268608>

It seems our old mate, John, is experiencing a long-term bout of ill-health - Guillian Barre Syndrome (Google it and you will find many informative websites). I am sure that we wish John and Alison well in his prognosis on his long journey back to good health. John is currently hospitalised at:

Calvary Mater Newcastle Hospital
Corner Edith & Platt Sts
Waratah NSW 2298
Phone 02 4921 1211

Web <http://www.mater.net.au/>
Messages of support may be forwarded to:
215655 WO2 (ret) John Murray
Phone 02 4956 5062
Mobile 0427 565 062
E-mail johnmurr@tpg.com.au

He will collate them and present them to John and Alison.

Ted (Blue) Hawkins

Tom Hickinbotham
38519 SGT (ret) Thomas James (Tom)
HICKINBOTHAM
Det 152 Sig Sqn Vietnam 1967-68
Just out of Palliative care and home for maybe a couple of weeks or so. I contracted MND Xmas eve last year and confirmed it on New Year's Eve. Could you pass on to those who know me as I don't have much

time left? A reminder that Tom's e-mail address is now 'dartom11@bigpond.com' should you wish to contact him.

Regards,

Chris Johnson

for ASASA Vic Branch Committee
I spoke to Tom tonight and he informed me that he only has approximately two weeks left to live.

I am sure that our prayers and thoughts are with Tom & Darlene as he battles his motor-neurone disease (MND).

Tom's contact details are as follows but he prefers contact via email:

Tom & Darlene Hickinbotham
3125 West Tamar Hwy
Loira TAS 7270
Phone 03 6394 7522
Mobile 0429 976 925
E-mail: dartom11@bigpond.com

Regards,

Ted (Blue) Hawkins

Don Mackeson
2782875 Donald (Don/Tracker)
Mackeson,
104 Sig Sqn Vietnam 1971

It seems that Don is now out of hospital, (Berkely Vale Private). Apparently, he blacked out while on his way to see his sister. He is now 'on the way to recovery' and welcomes contact from old mates via phone 02 4392 4205.

In The Blue Corner

(Continued from page 5)

Any takers can e-mail me direct and I am sure I can find some sort of reward for the person who puts his hand up to build it.

Mate many thanks - keep safe
Kind regards

Terry Wilson

E-mail: tjwilson50@hotmail.com

90th Birthday for Mac McCoubrey

310928 CAPT (ret) James Terence McCoubrey
HQ AFV & 145 Sig Sqn Vietnam
<http://www.vietnamroll.gov.au/VeteranDetails.aspx?VeteranId=1236152>

I am sure that many of us have had the pleasure of Mac's company and friendship over the years and truly wish him well on his 90th birthday tomorrow, 17 November 2009. Mac was born in Belfast, Ireland.

Mac's contact details are:
20 Tressider Ct
Trentham VIC 3458
Phone 03 5424 1632

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CORPS MATTERS

RASIGS Corps website: <http://www.defence.gov.au/army/RASIGS/default.htm>

17th Signal Regiment 3rd Birthday Parade

On 30th August 2009 I had the pleasure of representing the Association at the 17th Signal Regiment 3rd Birthday Parade at Vincent Lines, Holsworthy Barracks. Unlike their first parade, the weather was fine apart from a strong breeze that sent a few hats flying.

The parade was commanded by the Regiment's Commanding Officer, LTCOL Susan Coyle who wore the distinctive former 2nd Signal Regiment CO's Scottish sword. The Reviewing Officer was the Commander, 17th Combat Service Support Brigade, BRIG David Creagh; the Principal Official Guest was our Head of Corps, BRIG Michael Milford AM and the Host Officer was G6 Forces Command, COL Bill Hanlon. It was also pleasing to meet again the senior guest, MAJGEN Ian Gordon, AO (Retd).

The Princess Anne Banner was paraded and the two guards, supported by the band of the 1/15th Royal New South Wales Lancers completed an outstanding parade. In addition to the official guests, over 100 friends and relatives attended.

A unique feature of the parade was the presence of the Regimental mascot, Sig Mercury, a very imposing and noble adult male lion. Sig Mercury normally resides in the OR's lines, Mogo Private Zoo near Bateman's Bay. The unit RAEME personnel constructed the lion's travelling cage and

3 CSR Museum SITREP

Peoples,
Greetings etc.

Things are happening at the Unit History Room (museum). On Friday the 13th of Nov we held the Corps Dinner (all ranks) plus the official opening of the museum. A lot of people have helped us to get where we are, they have donated uniforms, publications, equipment, memories, photos and the list goes on. So to all the people who have assisted us, many thanks, to 'Boo' Taylor, many thanks for your vision and confidence in two ex-members of '103'.

We may not have as much gear as the Corps Museum so I am working on a cunning plan to relocate some of their gear. Webby confirms that we do have more comms gear than the Australian War Memorial.

Our FFRs are slowly being pulled apart and the good bits (useable) are being put to one side in preparation for the

his large holding cage at Holsworthy. The Regiment provided the transport for Sig Mercury and he was accompanied by two handlers. The Army ration scale had to be adjusted to cope for his daily diet of 20 kg of meat!

Following the parade, guests were invited to join unit members at an informal luncheon in the grounds of the OR's Logan Club. The unit catering staff did a great job with the buffet luncheon for over 200 people.

The post parade activities also provided the opportunity to thank the many people who supported the fund-raising for Darrin Gibson, a former corporal at 104 Sig Sqn, who lost his wife, children and his home in the disastrous Victorian bush fires. Darrin was badly burnt himself and is still recovering. It was a joy to witness the level of support Darrin has received, especially from the Army community.

One of the outcomes from the fund-raising was the presentation to Darrin by the current Miss Australia, of a new Toyota Hilux utility vehicle to assist him re-establish a business in Victoria. Miss Australia accompanied Darrin for a drive in his new vehicle and there was some concern when Darrin called out as they departed, that he could be some time!

Congratulations to LTCOL Coyle and the members of the 17th Signal Regiment on the occasion of their 3rd birthday.

Chris Ballantine

assembling of 'El Grande'. We have got the approval for the trailer - just waiting for the nod to go and collect it.

The website has had some more pics added - it does take time to do the editing and entries but it is worth it.

We have been slowly tracking down members and adding them to the huge sectionalised AIG, through your efforts we are getting there, we just need you blokes to spread the word and also find people who are not from Webbie's or my era - we are all from the same unit just different times.

That's enough for now, check the web site

www.3csr.com.au

See you on the airways

Lofty

Mobile 0408 062 316

E-mail loftuse68@optusnet.com.au

Here is the first of what could be an avalanche of reports over the next few editions of THURUNKA from those who attended the re-union. I was one and was impressed, even over-whelmed, by my three weeks in Vietnam, sharing stories and tales with those who had trodden the dirt there some forty years ago. I am keen to share my experiences in the pages of THURUNKA. If you would like to submit an article to THURUNKA, about this or any other military activity, please send it to the editor. See front page for details. In the meantime we have received this report from Gregg...Ed

RASIGS Reunion Vietnam

5–12 November 2009



www.rasigsvietnam.com

Report by Chairman

Greetings All,

As you can imagine the Committee was up to its eyeballs ensuring everyone had a great time during the Reunion which finished on 12th November 2009. My special thanks to all the Committee for coming to and assisting in their own way towards the success of the Reunion. The Vice Chairman Mick Muldoon and his lovely wife Tham were there whenever I needed assistance and Mick oversaw everything in case I got run over by a motorbike. Tham assisted Michael interpreting with the Vietnamese as did my partner Quan, who helped with calls and visits to hotels and function centres to make sure things happened. Our team in Vung Tau, 'Breaker' Cusack, David Roach and Anh Davis looked after the accommodation, transport and entertainment. 'Breaker' was the lynchpin of the Reunion assisting in both Saigon and Vung Tau; not bad for a 73 year old!! Ages on the committee were from 32 to 73 combining a wide range of knowledge within the group. My thanks, also, to the other members of the committee that live outside of Vietnam, namely George Cooper, David Roach, Trevor Hopper and Andy Anderson. Dave Rudd came on board towards the end assisting with the finer points of getting the Reunion underway as did Bill and Norma Parkin who had just blown (flown) in recently. Special thanks to our ARTY mate, Paul Quinn,

who was called upon to collect passengers from the airport and most importantly to chaperone 'Little' Pattie as well as assisting with other issues.

The Reunion finally got underway on 5th November with the meet-and-greet Registration Night and buffet dinner to the accompaniment of live background music. People found mates they had not seen for years and so old and new friendships were formed. It was a wonderful occasion all-round.

The morning of the 6th saw all members undertake a city tour of Saigon in five buses. Members visited the Reunification Palace, the War Remnants Museum and drove past many of the old landmarks around Saigon such as Notre Dame Cathedral and the Canberra BEQ. We all then joined up for a delicious lunch at the Barbecue Gardens restaurant.

The Corps Dinner was held on the evening of the 6th, celebrating the Corps birthday. The event was hosted by 'Breaker' Cusack with Mick Muldoon as Mr Vice. Prior to the start of the dinner children from a local school welcomed everyone with the playing of the drums. This lasted 10 minutes and was well received by all attending and it was hard finding a dry eye in the house. The Principal of the school received a laptop for a blind student and a donation of 5,000,000 dong whilst Miss Trish Franklin, Programme Director for LORETO, also received donations to purchase 10 bicycles for children living in

poorer areas to enable them to ride to high school once they had finished primary school.

Toasts to the President of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the Queen were made by Mick Muldoon, followed by Phyllis Kirkman reciting the Corps Grace and lastly, Ian Stewart from RAEME (our oldest participant) toasted the Corps. Dennis Curran recited the ODE and toasted Fallen Comrades and then we toasted those absent comrades. With the formal part of the evening over, the band struck up and a lot of folk danced the night away. 'Little' Pattie, who had just arrived by plane from OZ, called in to say a brief hello before heading off for an early night.

The Chairman of the Peoples Committee of Ho Chi Minh paid us a brief visit and paid compliments and welcoming us to Viet-Nam and stating that our two countries had a common friendship and he hoped we all were enjoying our stay. We then toasted our two countries.

On the 7th a trip to the Cu Chi Tunnels was conducted and on return to Saigon everyone enjoyed a buffet lunch at a local restaurant.

The Children's Charity Concert for LORETO on Saturday evening, the 7th, was a great event and all the artists were absolutely fantastic with the final act being 'Little' Pattie who wooed the crowd for over an hour with the backing of the Vietnamese band 'Saigon

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RASIGS Reunion Vietnam

(Continued from page 10)

River Band', formed especially for the Reunion. MC, our very own Colin Butler (ex 110 Sig Sqn) was superb, great, fabulous, and even sang a couple of Tom Jones numbers. The band leader Mr Hung, is a true entertainer and performed several numbers with different acts throughout the show.

'Andy' Anderson's decision to lose his long locks took 22 minutes and raised 15,000,000 VND for Loreto. Andy's wife Antje got to keep the locks which she contributed 50 Euros for the honour.

'Little' Pattie signed some 80 posters which were sold, raising another 5,000,000 VND.

Three hundred people bopped, rocked and danced to the music as if they had become forty-odd years younger again. As 'Little' Pattie was

leaving the venue the three Bignall sisters were dancing and singing one of her songs so she joined in and the four of them linked arms and danced in time with the song. What an experience for the girls and Pattie.

The Reunion's musical organiser, Michael Forsyth, owner of Sheridan's Irish House in Saigon, arranged all the entertainment except for the band which performed at the pool party. Along with his wife, Han, both were a great inspiration, asset and help to the organising committee.

The 8th was a day in the Mekong area and folks enjoyed another great meal on the river and sampling the fruits and candies from the islands off My Tho.

The Floating Restaurant river cruise on the 8th was another hit with local musicians playing Vietnamese Cultural music and a fire dancer even got in on the act at the end; another great night

for all the participants of the Reunion.

The 9th had everyone going shopping on their free morning before travelling by hydrofoil to Vung Tau and a free evening of catching ones breath and enjoying the balmy weather of Vung Tau. We also watched the first 4 night's entertainment on the Ned Kelly Bar's big screen which had been produced by a local video crew.

The 10th had everyone doing their own thing whether shopping, swimming in the pools or the ocean, resting or bar hopping which seemed to be a favourite pastime. That evening, the pool party at the Rex Hotel was held where a Filipino Band from Saigon played great music, the chorus-girls wore miniskirts and they were great. The barbecued buffet just had to be the best food of the trip and everyone had plenty to eat.

Remembrance Day, the 11th was a

(Continued on page 12)

A HUGE BIG THANKS TO:

Mick Muldoon – Vice Chairman and mentor
 Tham Muldoon – Secretary
 Quan Ngo – Treasurer
 David Roach – Saigon Accommodation and Vung Tau Assistance
 Andy Anderson – Saigon Entertainment
 Breaker Cusack – Vung Tau Transport and mentor
 Anh Davis – Vung Tau Entertainment
 Trevor Hopper – Saigon Transport
 George Cooper – Welfare and Merchandise
 Dave Rudd – all rounder with great input

THE VOLUNTEERS:

Colin Butler – MC and a great all round bloke and not a bad singer either.
 Bill Parkin – Anything he couldn't do Norma would.
 Norma Parkin – Every team has Norma and she was a damn fine worker.
 Paul Quinn – ex Artillery and companion to Little Pattie
 Michael and Han Forsyth – for arranging the majority of the music and for advising and supplying names of suitable companies to use.
 Bud Cramer – Ex grunt and no longer with us.
 LEST WE FORGET

THE SPONSORS:

Jim Hilston
 Grand Hotel Vung Tau
 Indochina Holdings (Hanoi)

Kangaroo Indochina – wine suppliers
 Sheridan's Irish House Sai-Gon
 Vi Phuong

PAID STAFF:

Thai Vu – Vietland Holidays with great assistance in Saigon and post tours.
 The 5 Guides for 3 days in Saigon
 The 5 coach drivers in Saigon
 The guides and bus drivers in Vung Tau
 I must also thank those who assisted in getting things moving so I would like to thank 'Buddha' Winch, Denis Hare, 'Blue' Hawkins and all the Associations who advertised our reunion and got the word out. To the Web Master, Mark Allan, who did the web for nothing even though he was snowed under with his own workload.
 The Committee is to hold a debrief next week to sort out the highs and not so highs.
 Thanks to all of you, the participants of the Reunion for your kind words to the Committee, for making it a Reunion to remember and for digging deep for the kids.

Gregg Dickson

On behalf of the Organising Committee
 for the RASIGS Reunion Vietnam 2009
 Reunion Web Site:
<http://www.rasigsvietnam.com/>

RASIGS Reunion Vietnam

(Continued from page 11)

busy day with five buses taking guests via Vung Tau and Baria and out to the former 1 ATF site at Nui Dat and some even visited the local school making a small presentation of four AFL footballs to the school and an impromptu lesson in the art of kicking went over well but all too soon we had to leave for the LONG TAN Cross in time for the Ceremony.

At Long Tan, we were joined by the Australian Military Attaché - Colonel Stuart Dodds - who was welcomed by the MC for the ceremony, Chris Ballantine, President of the NSW Signals Association. COL Dodds read the prologue which included all those who gave their lives at Long Tan from both sides. 'Breaker' Cusack recited 'In Flanders Field'. Wreaths were then laid by COL Dodds on behalf of the Government and Mal Fergusson on behalf of

the Corps. Mick Muldoon was passionate with the ODE and afterwards everyone was invited to lay a poppy and burn a josh stick if they so desired. Photos were taken by everyone there and I am sure there were a few tears shed for those who are no longer with us.

After the ceremony we went up into the mountains via The Horseshoe, Dat Do and the Long Hai Hills for "heppo" rolls, prawns and some cold refreshments. 'Breaker' had arranged for the local bars in Vung Tau to make up different varieties of rolls which were enjoyed by all. The local people in the mountains supplied the refreshments which I am sure helped their coffers for the day. Everyone was informed not to stray off the marked paths as there were still likely to be some unexploded munitions in the Long Hais. On return to Vung Tau people had time to relax before their final dinner together.

The night kicked off with the organising of bums on seats for the return to

Saigon the next day. Another great buffet at the Grand Hotel was held, no doubt bringing back memories to those veterans who had the opportunity to visit the place way back then. The buffet was also another fine example of Asian and Western cuisine and the refreshments flowed as they had done all through the previous week or so. A donation of a thousand dollars of wine by ex-Sig member Jim Hilston provided enough wine to be had by all. Thanks Jim.

To the bands and entertainers a mighty thanks for an exceptional and professional effort.

The MC, Colin Butler, was brilliant as MC and as a singer of great songs.

There always had to be a leader but without the assistance of my Committee members and especially our volunteers the organization of the Reunion could not have been as successful as it was.

In The Blue Corner

(Continued from page 8)

E-mail kinoaf@bigpond.com

Why not send Mac a heart-felt birthday wish at his e-mail address?

Ted

John Watson White

215077 WO1 (ret SCC) John Watson White

709 Sig Tp, 532 Sig Tp

110 Sig Sqn Vietnam 1967-68

[http://www.vietnamroll.gov.au/VeteranDetails.aspx?](http://www.vietnamroll.gov.au/VeteranDetails.aspx?VeteranId=1249218)

[VeteranId=1249218](http://www.vietnamroll.gov.au/VeteranDetails.aspx?VeteranId=1249218)

Recent contact made with Dennis Wynne, Ray Whellum and Jeff Fewson revealed that Ray and Jeff were of the opinion from information received some twenty plus years ago that I was in fact dead. It is with much regret that I had to inform them of my continued existence.

Would you please promulgate widely to all the fact that I still have currency, though limited.

I would be delighted to have contact with those that I served with in:

126 Sig Sqn, 130 Sig Sqn, 110 Sig Sqn (532 Sig Tp);

32 Small Ships Sqn (AV Vernon Sturdee and AS John Monash);

HQ Eastern Command, 1 Sig Regt, 135 Sig Sqn;

PNGDF Sig Sqn, ADAG PNG, 139 Sig Sqn;

School of Signals, 2 Sig Regt; and

RAER, AIER and AIEF School of Signals.

I retired from the ARA in 1984 and was age retired from the AIEF in 1997.

Regards

WO1 John White

(retired Spv Comms)

Farewell to WO1 Ray Beddome

319087 WO1 Ray Beddome,

13th November 2009.

Ray is finally calling it quits after a notable career. I am sure that we all congratulate him on reaching his personal milestone and wish him and Allison well in their retirement and endeavours.

Please forward your own replies to the following who will collate them into a presentation package for Ray:

CAPT (ret) Geoff (Lofty) Evans

Phone 07 4775 1625

Mobile 0408 062 316

[E-mail loftuse68@optusnet.com.au](mailto:loftuse68@optusnet.com.au)

Searching for Steven Moore

2785928 Steven Curtis Moore

110 Sig Sqn Vietnam 1967-68

If YOU have contact details for the above member, please

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FYI

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

DISCLAIMER: The thoughts and ideas and any views expressed in the articles of THURUNKA are those of the contributors and are not necessarily those of The Royal Australian Signals Association (NSW) Inc. or the staff of THURUNKA. Nor are we able to attest to the accuracy of the information so contained. While contributions are welcome not all of them can be published. Those published may be edited for length and clarity. Contributions are acknowledged as from our source, unless otherwise informed. Contributions cannot be returned unless arrangements are made with the Editor prior to or upon submission of the contribution for publication. We encourage contributions and thank those who contribute to the pages of THURUNKA.

ARMY NEWS HEADLINES

Merge of Commands Enhances Capabilities. On 1st July 2009 Land Command and Training Command merged at Victoria Barracks, Sydney to form Forces Command, under command of Maj-Gen David Morrison. The role of Forces Command is to train and equip conventional land forces ready for operational deployments.

Raising of 2 CDO Regt. On 19th June 2009 4 RAR (CDO) was de-activated and 2 CDO Regt raised in a ceremony at Holsworthy Barracks. The 126th Signal Squadron is part of the new Regiment. 4 RAR will remain on the ORBAT and may be raised in a conventional role at a later date.

Gunners to Convert. All 2nd Division Artillery units are to lose their 105mm Hamel guns and replaced by 81mm mortars. The rationale is that mortars provide greater flexibility in a reserve environment and require smaller teams. Conversion courses will be held over the next two years.

Army Newspaper, Edition 1216, July 9, 2009

Australian Government

Defence Honours and Awards Tribunal

Current Inquiries

The Defence Honours and Awards Tribunal is currently inquiring into the following issues:

- Recognition of unattached Australian Entertainers in the Vietnam Conflict
- Recognition of Australian Defence Force Service for Special Air Service Regiment Counter Terrorist and Special Recovery duties
- Recognition of ADF service in Somalia between 1992 and 1995
- Recognition for members of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) for service in Papua New Guinea after 16 September 1975
- Recognition for Defence Force personnel who served as peacekeepers from 1947 to the present

Terms of Reference

- Inquiry into Recognition of unattached Australian Entertainers in the Vietnam Conflict
- Inquiry into Recognition of Australian Defence Force Service for Special Air Service Regiment Counter

Terrorist and Special Recovery Duties

- Inquiry into Recognition of Australian Defence Force Service in Somalia between 1992 and 1995
- Inquiry into recognition for members of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) for service in Papua New Guinea after 16 September 1975
- Inquiry into recognition for Defence Force personnel who served as peacekeepers from 1947 onwards

For further details refer: <http://www.defence-honours-tribunal.gov.au/current-inquiries>. ED.

Calling all ex 'Sig' tyre biters . . .

. . . would you be interested in having a get together sometime next year, probably in Melbourne?
If you are, could you contact us and if you know of any tyre biters who may not be on Ted's list, could you please let them know?

My e-mail address is:
djfraser@pacific.net.au
Many thanks.

Dallas Fraser

RASIGS Transport 1971- 1986

In The Blue Corner

(Continued from page 12)

advise:

2783947 Des Davie
110 Sig Sqn Vietnam 1967-68
[E-mail drdavie@bigpond.net.au](mailto:drdavie@bigpond.net.au)

And

1200907 Ted (Blue) Hawkins
110 Sig Sqn Vietnam 1967-68
[E-mail hawkins2@aapt.net.au](mailto:hawkins2@aapt.net.au)

Searching for two lost mates

1200183 Douglas Robert Hawtin
709 Sig Tp Vietnam 1967, 110 Sig Sqn Vietnam 1967-68;

and

61717 John Nicholas Roby
709 Sig Tp & 503 Sig Tp Vietnam 1967, 110 Sig Sqn Vietnam 1967-68.

If you have contact details for the above members, please advise both:

Ted (Blue) Hawkins
503 Sig Tp Vietnam 1967
110 Sig Sqn Vietnam 1967-68
& keeper of the RASIGS contact dbase

And

Robert Cecchini
709 Sig Tp Vietnam 1967vb
110 Sig Sqn Vietnam 1967-68
[E-mail robertc@alpha.net.au](mailto:robertc@alpha.net.au)

Military history



CAMBODIA 2008

The last of a series of articles published in previous editions of THURUNKA by Chris Ballantine, on his trip to Vietnam and surrounds in 2008...Ed. Chris continues...

My previous travel instalment failed to mention a significant trip to Vung Tau on 2nd October 2008 with Gregg Dickson. We departed HCMC on an ancient Russian hydrofoil and travelled down the Saigon River for several hours until we reached the coastal town of Vung Tau, Australian logistics base during the war. First stop was Ned Kelly's Bar to meet with owner, Anh Davis who was arranging our local transport.

During the day we visited the former site of the ATF at Nui Dat; a moving visit to the Long Tan Cross; Ba Ria and a tour of Vung Tau. Not that there is much to see of the Australian presence now. In Vung Tau a refurbished Grand Hotel and the deserted R&C Centre that was due for demolition. Gregg and I walked through the rubber plantation that now covers the former Australian Base at Nui Dat, about an hours drive north of Vung Tau in the centre of Phuoc Tuy Province. The columns of the back gate remain, a crumbling concrete CP, a few building slabs and a number of "unit rocks". These were large rocks painted in Corps colours and unit names to define the unit boundaries. Unfortunately we could not locate the Signals rock due to the tall grass.

Then it was a short drive to the Long Tan Cross, reflection and a chat with some other Aussie tourists. There were several tourist groups in the area on the day. We concluded with refreshments at Ned Kelly's Bar and back onto the fume spewing Russian hydrofoil to HCMC. It least it had a bar on board to see us over until we got back to Marguerites!

I had pre-booked the next phase of

my travel by e-mail from Australia and was wary of the low price quoted (\$US55) for a two-day trip by boat up the Mekong River, meals, sight-seeing tours, accommodation overnight ashore and the final bus trip from the river to Phnom Penh. When I visited the travel agent in Saigon to collect and pay for my tickets, the price was actually \$US50! Similar tours offered by Australian operators would have been at least \$250.

The coach left at 0800 from Saigon and we reached the Mekong about lunch-time. We transferred all our luggage to a small covered long boat with an outboard motor and I was about to settle into one of the seats when it was explained that we had a local river tour in individual sampans first. With much trepidation by both the skinny little boat lady and me, and with anxious tour escorts standing by, I gingerly boarded this tiny, rocking sampan with about six inches of freeboard. After an hour or two and lighter in dong, we picked up the "ferry" further upstream.

The boat slowly headed up the flood-swollen Mekong River, passing rustic townships on the banks, fishing and cargo sampans housing entire families and isolated villages on stilts in a vast brown lake of the Mekong. At times one could not distinguish the river course from the lake. The river is used for drinking, cooking, washing and as a toilet with the latter usually a pole projecting out from the hut. It was not uncommon to catch out some poor local perched on the pole as we passed.

By this time I had teamed up with a young Korean lass who was travelling to Phnom Penh to work as a Korean

language teacher. What a challenge for her travelling alone with little English and no Vietnamese or Khmer language skills! My other companions were an American couple of no fixed address. He was a retired Judge and former Vietnam Vet Green Beret. They had sold their home in the US, bought a large yacht and sailed/back-packed their way around the world. They had, however, a large share portfolio to support their life style.

We went ashore at Chau Doc, near the Cambodian border for dinner and hotel accommodation, thence a bus trip and back to the river. At lunch time we reached the Viet-Cambodian border and following lengthy customs procedures out of Vietnam and into Cambodia, we boarded a larger fast ferry to Phnom Penh. We were put ashore several hours later on a muddy river bank, across a 5m sagging plank. A crew member kindly offered to bring my luggage ashore – originally for \$2, however he claimed, it was worth at least \$5 because it was very heavy luggage and it was a hot day – what's new!

Surely we must be at Phnom Penh by now, but no – into a Coaster bus without an inch to spare! Another several hours on dusty, very corrugated roads, driver with hand constantly on the horn barely missing the multitude of people, carts, animals, scooters and other vehicles. The temperature was in the high 30s, the air-conditioning was barely working and a Cambodian woman facing me in the bus was green with motion sickness and looking for somewhere to unload her last meal.

As the sun slowly sank through the dust and heat haze, we reached Phnom Penh and were offloaded at our com-

plimentary accommodation, the Red Guest House – a back-packers delight with a rabbit-warren of rooms. I was escorted to my \$4 per night room – small, mouldy but with air-conditioning, cable TV and an ensuite. There were \$2 rooms with no facilities for the back packers. Next morning I upgraded to the best room in the house – very pleasant at \$12 per night. The guest house had a rustic, thatched restaurant and bar. No cashiers – just an honesty system of helping yourself at the bar and recording what you ate and drank in a book that was tallied up at check out.

Still in the company of the American couple, I visited the magnificent Royal Palace and temples in Phnom Penh. We even splurged on dinner at an up-market restaurant with Australian wine – about \$US50 for the three of us!

Next day we paid one of the guest house lads to drive us in his ancient Datsun car to the infamous Pol Pot prison – now known as the S21 Museum and then onto the “killing fields”. Pol Pot and his Khmer Rouge came to power in Cambodia in 1975 and after the four-year genocide of 2 million Cambodians – a quarter of the population – he and his infamous regime were driven out by the Vietnamese (referred to by the Cambodians as the Youns). The suffering of the Cambodian people is brought home in the book “First They Killed my Father” written by female child survivor, Loung Ung.

The S21 Prison Museum had been a modern high school when Pol Pot came to power. The Khmer Rouge closed all schools and used this school, located in a suburb of Phnom Penh, as an interrogation centre and short-term prison. The photographic displays are horrendous, graphically displaying the torture, mutilation and murder of millions of men, women and children. The tiled floors of the former class rooms still bear the blood stains and stains of rotting corpses. Signs listed the Khmer Rouge society rules – no clothes other than black, no TV or radio, no theatres nor singing, no education, no books, no western medicine/drugs, no doctors nor dentists, no make-up or jewellery, no watches or

clocks, no private motor vehicles/scooters, no private residences et al. The bottom line was that if you could not work hard as a farm labourer, you were killed, as were all of the educated and professional class.

From S21 the prisoners were trucked about 30 minutes out of the city to open fields with a few rustic wooden buildings for the “staff”. Small children were separated from their parents and their heads smashed against trees. Other prisoners were grouped beside the pits and bashed to death with large mallets. To this day the excavated burial pits are evident and after heavy rain, bones and rotten clothing are exposed. There are containers with signs requesting visitors to place bone fragments they might find, in the container. A glass memorial tower is filled with the bones of the victims and their clothing.

A very depressing site and one wonders how modern humanity could sink to such depravity. The western world knew of the genocide and did nothing!

On a more positive note, I then flew from Phnom Penh to Siem Reap, the town nearest the Angkor temple complexes. I had pre-booked the Yellow Guest House, owned by the same family as the Red Guest House. Whilst situated up a dusty back lane on the outskirts of town, the guest house was modern, air-conditioned and clean. My top-of-the-range room included cable TV and free internet access. Breakfast was included and a complimentary tuk-tuk and driver on call at any time. The cost per night was \$US16!

At great expense (in relative terms), I engaged a tour guide, tuk-tuk and driver to take me around the huge Angkor temple complexes over two days. The cost was about \$US50 per day. The first day we visited the well-known Angkor Wat temple park not far out of town. It was a huge and amazing complex that one needs to visit to really appreciate.

Visited to a lesser extent, are the hundreds of other Wats (temple complexes) several hours out of town. After heading out there on the second day, I asked if we had sufficient fuel

and was assured we did. About half way back during an afternoon down-pour, we coughed to a stop and a quick check of the fuel tank disclosed its aridity. Not having seen a service station outside of Siem Reap, I envisaged a long walk home. However I was the only concerned person. The driver disappeared up the road towards a small village and returned several minutes later with a plastic soft drink bottle full of petrol. As it turned out, there are roadside stalls everywhere selling such staples as (re) bottled water, dodgy fags, warm soft drink and of course, small containers of petrol.

We travelled to numerous Wats from various periods (800 AD to 1200 AD) and in various stages of ruin. Some were merely piles of stone blocks whilst most still had substantial walls and ornate towers. Unfortunately many of the Wat complexes, including Angkor Wat, were occupied by the Khmer Rouge Army and were damaged during the war with Vietnam in the late 1970s. At various sites there were signs warning visitors to stay on defined tracks as there are still uncleared mine fields in the area. It is not uncommon for the family cow to come home as mince meat and there are many amputee beggars.

On the return to Siem Reap I visited the renowned Land Mine Museum near Banteay Srey, operated privately by a dedicated Cambodian, Akira, who has been personally clearing land mines since the demise of the Khmer Rouge. He and his small team receive no government assistance and rely entirely on donations. The local army commander set up his own museum in opposition and attempted to close Akira's museum down. However, International reaction was swift and put an end to that little scheme. www.cambodialandminemuseum.org

Thence by air back to HCMC and a very pleasant several days staying with Gregg Dickson prior to my return to Oz on 14th October 2008.

Chris Ballantine

Media Releases

Here are some more MEDIA RELEASES that we received concerning the Defence Force, and particularly, veterans. We are unable to include all the content of these releases within the pages of THURUNKA, so what it has been decided is to list some of them for your reference with the relevant media contact details, should you choose to follow them up. This by far is not the full list, but those brought to our attention and considered relevant to us.

If you wish to receive the Ministers' media releases automatically by e-mail please go to:

www.minister.dva.gov.au/subscribe.htm....ED.

Media Release VA080

Minister for Veterans' Affairs
Friday, 4th September, 2009
VA080

\$1.2m for Veteran Health and Wellbeing Projects

Minister for Veterans' Affairs Alan Griffin today announced more than \$1.2 million in funding to support 78 health and wellbeing initiatives for veterans and their families across Australia.

"I am pleased to announce that more than \$1.2 million has been allocated in this round of the Veteran & Community Grants program," Mr Griffin said. "The funding will benefit some 26,000 veterans, war widows and widowers and their families by supporting a range of initiatives including health, nutrition and exercise sessions."

Mr Griffin said the grants demonstrate the Australian Government's commitment to organisations that care for the veteran community, and encourage veterans, war widows and widowers and their families to become involved in local health and wellbeing activities.

"Veteran & Community Grants help fund local initiatives that improve access to community care services and encourage social interaction through Day Clubs, Men's Sheds and social excursions," Mr Griffin said. "It is important that the veteran community has access to a range of programs where they can learn skills to help them remain independent and active, particularly for the elderly living by themselves."

Veteran & Community Grants are available to ex-service and community organisations, veteran representative groups and private organisations that contribute to the health and welfare of the veteran community.

Local and community organisations interested in applying for funding are encouraged to visit www.dva.gov.au/grants or contact their nearest DVA office on 133 254 (for metropolitan callers) or 1800 555 254 (for non-metropolitan callers).

Veteran and Community Grants NSW recipients—\$275,074 – benefiting more than 8800 veterans.

Media inquiries: Belinda Cole 0437 863 109

Media Release VA081

Minister for Veterans' Affairs
VA081
Wednesday, 9th September, 2009

More Suicide Prevention Workshops for Veteran Community

On the eve of World Suicide Prevention Day, the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Alan Griffin, is encouraging more of the veteran and ex-service community to take advantage of the expansion in the number of suicide prevention workshops available to them.

The Australian Government's VVCS – Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service has increased the number of free Operation Life suicide prevention workshops for people who are concerned about family, friends, mates or others in the veteran and ex-service community.

"So far 119 participants have been trained in suicide prevention strategies at workshops over the past three months and I encourage more people in the veteran and ex-service community to register their interest in attending," Mr Griffin said.

Operation Life is a strategy to prevent suicide and promote good mental health and resilience across the veteran community. Its major components include workshops providing introductory, intensive and refresher courses in suicide prevention. Welfare, pension officers and others from ex-service organisations and the veteran community are encouraged to attend.

Mr Griffin said World Suicide Prevention Day provided an ideal opportunity to promote the Government's work in suicide prevention and mental health, especially for veterans.

"The Government made a commitment to enhance suicide prevention and it has done this by expanding Operation Life and providing an additional \$9.5 million to implement the recommendations made following a major study by Professor David Dunt into suicide in the ex-service community.

"This is in addition to the Government's commitment of \$83 million over four years to address gaps identified in mental health care in the ADF and transition through discharge," Mr Griffin said. "Operation Life workshops are not treatment programs but are designed to help members of the veteran community to recognize someone who might be having thoughts of suicide and to link them in with appropriate help."

To find out more about Operation Life workshops, contact VVCS on 1800 011 046 (during normal business hours) or visit www.at-ease.dva.gov.au

World Suicide Prevention Day is held on 10th September each year to promote worldwide commitment and action to prevent suicide.

Media inquiries: Sasha Nimmo 0437 863 109

Media Release VA087

Minister for Veterans' Affairs

VA087

Saturday, 3rd October, 2009**Statement on Rex Crane**

This statement is regarding the article on Rex Crane in the Sydney Morning Herald, the Age and the West Australian published today, Saturday, 3rd October, 2009. I am aware of Mr Crane's case and have been briefed by my Department. I have directed my Department to refer this case to the Australian Federal Police. This occurred on Thursday, 1st October, 2009.

This is a very serious matter. I know these allegations will be distressing for the veteran community and I fully understand why. Those who have sacrificed so much for our country are rightly outraged when fraud of this nature occurs.

Personally, I think for anyone to impersonate a prisoner of war is disgusting. It is a betrayal of all the values our veterans stand for. I have very strong feelings about

this and need to stress the gravity of the situation.

My Department works hard to protect the repatriation system and ensure people who deserve entitlements are those who are actually getting them. There are reasons why we are so strict with the operation of the system and why some claims take time to examine.

Should these allegations be proven, it will illustrate to what lengths some individuals will go to, to defraud our system and the large amounts of money that can be involved. This matter should be pursued to the fullest extent of the law and I am confident that the AFP will do so.

I eagerly await the outcome of that investigation.

Minister for Veterans' Affairs

The Hon Alan Griffin MP

Media inquiries: Sasha Nimmo 0437 863 109

The VVCS – Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service can be contacted 24 hours a day, seven days a week on 1800 011 046.

To receive the Minister's media releases automatically by e-mail subscribe at minister.dva.gov.au/subscribe.htm

Letters, e-mails and FAXES**Next Aussie Soldier Book****A Call for you to participate**

Research for the third book in the Aussie Soldier Series is now underway - Aussie Soldier Peacekeeper (this includes Peacekeepers, Peace Enforcers, Observers, Humanitarian and Reconstruction Operations).

Attached is a questionnaire for those of you who wish to complete and return back to me. For those that would prefer to be interviewed (over the phone) please drop me an e-mail.

As usual not all questions need to be answered; alternatively you have the option to just send us a story – your story.

Also the second book in the Soldiers' Tales series (very short stories, quotes and anecdotes) is being put together so if you have any story on anything military send it through. Also send any photo's you think appropriate - the best photo will be used as the cover for this book.

Thank you all for your time and please feel free to share this amongst other who you know have served.

Cheers

Denny Neave

Big Sky Publishing

Big Sky Productions

www.bigskypublishing.com.auwww.aussiesoldier.com.au

Please see the attachment for the questionnaire. Why not answer the questionnaire over the Christmas break and return it and add your story to the pages of history...ED

From the Ed.

It is that time of the year when we are rushing out of it and we are all trying to get everything done before Christmas is upon us. We are trying to find the time to get those Christmas cards out and the rest of the presents in. Hoping not only that you remembered everyone on that lucky list, but, if you thought you would beat the rush and did you shopping during the year, do you remember where you put them. We forgot one year and had to go out and get in some emergency supplies. Luckily, we found them and used them the next year.

Things have been a bit rushed for us as we spent three weeks in Vietnam at the re-union and the post-tour (and then the 3-day R&R). Coming back, we have produced **THURUNKA**, BUMPER issue AGAIN and then we still have not got around to the 'Crissy' cards; BUT we have found the presents.

So then, to those to whom I have said 'I will get back to you', 'e-mail you', or 'let you know', be assured that I have not forgotten and plan to do so, hopefully prior to Christmas.

One of the things I now do, and with great pleasure, is to thank all those who have been so generous in their time and assistance to me as Editor of **THURUNKA**. Especially to our Publisher, Michael Gategood (and of course, his wife, Dawn) for the excellent job done on the laying out and publishing of **THURUNKA**. Michael (and Dawn) present a first class newsletter to the members of the Association and this is recognised time and time again as reported to me by many.

I must also thank Barry Izzard for assisting me in the photo-copying and distribution of the hard-copy of **THURUNKA**. We still send out about half the copies in hard-copy. Our policy is to maintain the format in preference towards the hard-copy as not every-one has access to computers and the internet.

But to those who do have Internet access we have announced exciting news that we now have our own website.

So, in conclusion, please accept my personal thanks for the support from those around me and may all of you and yours have a safe and Happy Christmas and New Year.

A safe return to our troops serving around the world and health and happiness to all...Ed.

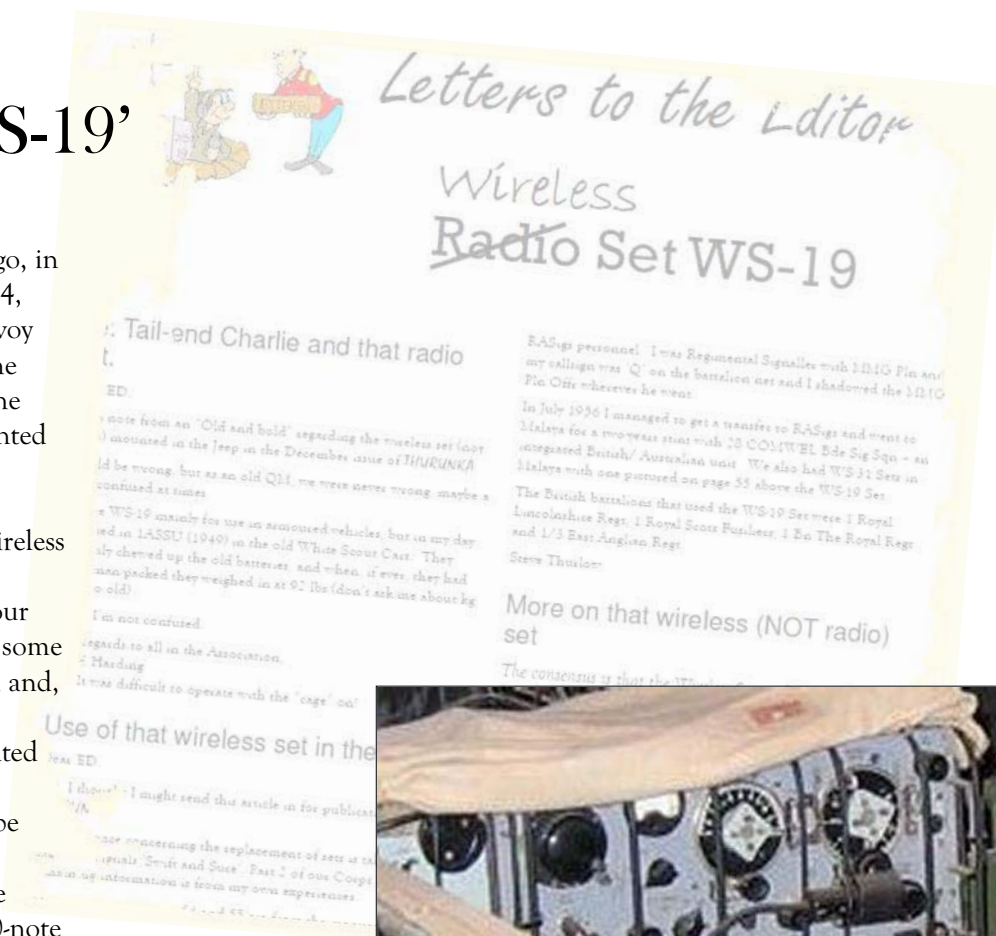
Tail-end Charlie

That Illusive 'WS-19'

Do you remember a few years ago, in this column way back in December, 2004, when we had an article from Mike McEvoy which included a picture of a 'Jeep' at the Duxford Museum in England? I asked the question, what was the wireless set mounted on the back of the Jeep?

About three out of four persons who responded advised us that it was the 'Wireless Set 19'.

Well, while in Hanoi, on the Post-Tour for the RASigs Reunion Vietnam 2009, some of us visited the Military Relics Museum and, low and behold, I came across a display featuring a Wireless Set WS19 MKII, dated 1942, Serial Number: US11374. A few knobs missing and I suspect it may not be fully operational, BUT HERE IT IS. What do reckon? Were we right? Please right your response on the back of a \$50-note and send it to the Editor (tic)....Ed.



The 'Wireless set in the Jeep in the Duxford Museum.



That Illusive 'WS-19' In the Military Relics Museum, Han Oi.

Serial Number plate for the WS-19 in Han Oi.



PO Box 303 Newport, NSW 2106
ph.02 99182168 fax.02 99182396

Personal Details

1. Full Name:
2. DOB:
3. What year did you enlist and discharge?
4. What is your Regimental Number ? (for verification purposes only)
5. What Corps did you join?
6. What is your rank (or if discharged was your rank on discharge)?
7. What Peacekeeping/Enforcing, monitoring or observing were you involved in?
8. What is your brief military history (units served, rank, honours and awards etc.)?
9. Do you consent to having your story included in Aussie Soldier - Peacekeeper?

The Questionnaire

When answering these questions please provide as much detail as possible. Our aim is to provide readers with an insight into what soldiers on these deployments went through be it good, bad or ugly. We feel that your story needs to be told to the next generation of Australians. There are lots of questions, you do not need to answer all of them, just those that have meaning/relevance to you.

Q1. How do you feel you have contributed to world peace or stability in the countries you were deployed to?

Q2. What was your role with whilst deployed, and do you have any specific actions relating to this role?

Q3. Do you feel you achieved your mission within your deployment? Why/Why Not?

Q4. Can you describe any actions of significance on your deployment? This could be incidents, contacts, close calls, hostilities etc

Q5. What were the challenges faced in dealing with other defence forces, UN, Non Government Organisations and civilians?

Q6. Can you describe actions/events that showed compassion or mateship where any person you observed demonstrated these attributes?

Q7. Can you describe actions/events that showed brutality, war crimes or cruelty that you observed?

Q8. Can you describe any direct action against the enemy where you were involved in fire fights or offensive/defensive actions even though on peace ops?

Q9. What did you do to relieve stress/boredom/missing loved etc whilst on operations?

Q10. Describe the cultural challenges faced in your theatre of operations; include food, religion, culture, personalities, language etc.

Q11. Did the ROE/OFOF/UN Mandate in which you were operating effect your ability to achieve your role and tasks?

Q12. Do you think you were adequately supported within the international community for the mission you were given? Why/why not.

Q13. Were you involved in reconstruction tasks and what sense of satisfaction did you gain from this process?

Q14. If you were an Observer, did you feel you were able to influence outcomes without the use of your conventional military training? Did you feel empowered enough to achieve your objectives?

Q15. If involved in humanitarian efforts, what was your sense of pride in completing your task compared to other non-humanitarian operations you may have been involved in? What were the challenges and how was the reception/interaction with the local community?

Q16. Were you involved in a training team and what issues were faced in regards to this role; include gender, culture, enthusiasm of forces being trained, etc?

Q17. How were you treated when you were repatriated to Australia? Can you describe the support you received on arrival home?

Q18. What issues do veterans from your deployment face?

Q19. How have past diggers/wars influenced/inspired/impacted you?

Q20. If you've deployed on warlike active service (not a peacekeeping mission) what is the most defined difference between this deployment and that of a peacekeeping deployment?

Q21. In your opinion what is the greatest 'myth' related to being a peacekeeper?

Q22. How did you/your family manage while you were away? Concerns, communication with each other etc?

Q23. Any final reflection on being involved in peace operations; consider leadership, training, complexity, international law and media?

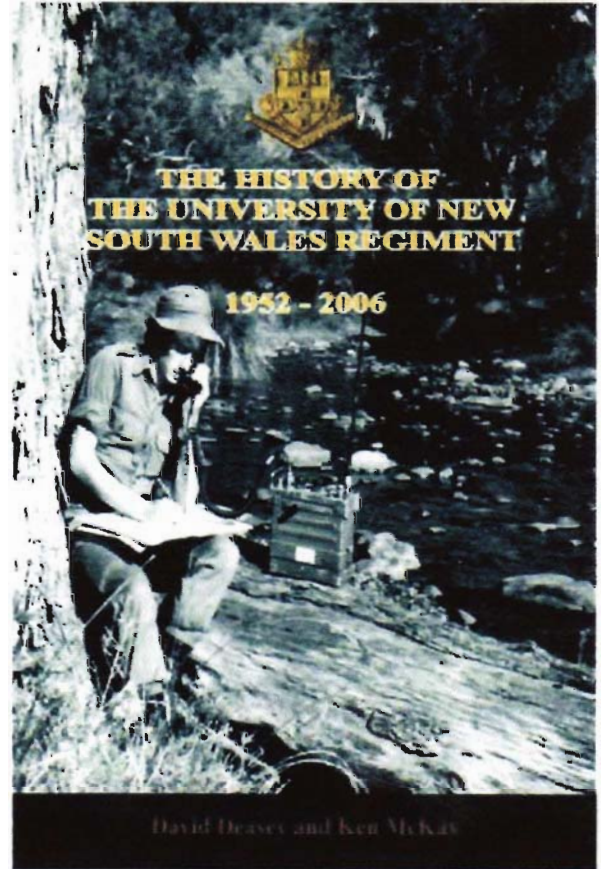
THE HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES REGIMENT 1952 – 2006

The History of the University of New South Wales Regiment 1952 – 2006 has been published to record the great contribution that UNSWR has made during its first 54 years to produce commissioned officers for the Australian Army Reserve.

The history is in a hard covered book made up of more than 370 pages of interesting facts and photographs. The major features of the book are:

- Over 200 photographs including 29 pages with colour plates;
- Outlines of annual field training and exercises conducted;
- A record of major ceremonial events including the presentation of New Colours, exercising Freedom of the City of Randwick and the laying-up of Old Colours of the Regiment;
- A list of more than 600 members of UNSWR commissioned as officers in the Army Reserve;
- The way in which the Regimental Band has stirred the feeling of pride in UNSWR;
- Profiles of Honorary Colonels and Commanding Officers;
- Contributions by several former members of UNSWR who have described interesting and occasionally humorous experiences with the Regiment; and
- A summary about the way in which pre-commissioning training has developed for Army Reserve members generally.

With a comprehensive index, this book is a must if you have ever served in UNSWR or have had a family member who has done so. If you have an interest in the Australian Army either as a member or as a citizen of the local community where UNSWR has had a presence, then you may also find this book to be one worthy of your home library.



An attractive personalised bookplate, signed by the authors, will be added to the inside front cover for anyone who has served in the Regiment.

The History of the University of New South Wales Regiment 1952 – 2006 can be obtained by sending the mail order form below to:

Honorary Secretary, UNSWR Association, c/- 6 Chester Avenue, Cambridge Park NSW 2747 (if paying by cheque or money order)

or

Email to: secretary@unswr.com (if paying through Internet banking)

✂ Enquiries: (02) 4721 4752



MAIL ORDER FORM

(Please add details and strike out where not applicable)

Enclosed is my cheque/money order for \$ for **copy/copies** of *The History of the University of New South Wales Regiment 1952 – 2006*. (Cheques payable to the University of New South Wales Regiment Association please).

Please advise the bank account details for the University of New South Wales Regiment Association so that I may make a payment of \$ through Internet banking for..... **copy/copies** of *The History of the University of New South Wales Regiment 1952 – 2006*.

(\$49.95 per copy - \$39.95 + \$10.00 for packaging and postage per copy for mail delivery within Australia)

Name: **Postal Address:**

Phone Number: **Email Address:**

Details for Bookplate (if desired):

Rank: **Preferred Given Name:** **Surname:**