



"The Messenger"

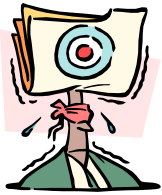


(Of The Gods.)

**Official Newsletter of the Royal Australian Signal Association (SA) Inc.
Issue 2. June 2004.**

Disclaimer: The views expressed in articles in the "Messenger" are those of the writers/contributors and not necessarily those of the "Committee" or "General Membership" of the Royal Australian Signal Association (SA) Inc.

PRESIDENTS REPORT.



It has been decided within the committee that I attempt to provide a President's Report in each of the Messenger editions. Whilst this could be good I will try very hard not to bore you. As you are aware the Association is preparing for this years Formal Corps/Association Dinner. Being the 25th Anniversary of our Association it is hoped that we can provide a memorable evening for all. At this stage it appears the dinner will be around the Corps Day period (November) and will include the Corps Banner visiting SA. 144 Sig. Sqn are considering a freedom of "The City of Burnside" march or re-enactment during the weekend of November 6th-7th. Discussions will be undertaken to see how we can help and participate. We are also considering a number of locations for the dinner along with a better quality meal and service, however, we must keep in mind that not all members can afford expensive outings and therefore we are trying to make it affordable to all members. You might like to take this opportunity to place a **Warning Order** in the calendar for **November 2004 (6th or 7th)**. It might also be worth placing a dollar or two away each fortnight to cover the night when it comes, just lessen the burden of paying all at once. Anyway stay tuned and we will keep you up to date.

This years ANZAC DAY whilst a good day for most appeared to have lower numbers. I believe this was due to the long weekend. Unfortunately the same may occur next year, as it is another long weekend.

Our Membership is still growing, but still I ask you to look up old mates and see if you can point them in the Association's direction.

The committee is currently looking at a website for our Association in SA. We would hope to set it up with a number of connections to important sites and also use it as a means of communicating to our membership. "Even when retired the Communications continue".

Well I think that will do for this edition, I hope this information has been of benefit and I look forward to keeping you in touch with the Association's future direction.

Regards
Bruce Long President RASigs Association SA. (Inc)

Association Ties etc.

We were fortunate to have ten (10) of these ties made available to us by the Victorian Assn.! All ten sold in record time! You would have had the opportunity to see these ties being worn by some members on Anzac Day! Some have expressed disappointment in not being able to procure one. Orders were taken by me prior to the day (phone or e-mail) and those we had available were covered by those orders! No backup supply was available. Should any members still be interested supply will depend on us being able to order a minimum quantity of twenty (20) to place a combined order through the Vic. Assn again. There is no way I can visualize us placing an order for fifty (50), the required number for a direct order on the supplier!

Still available for sale are two (2) Corps Ties Jimmy type & one (1) Diagonal striped version! The price is \$25 + p&h in each case.

We also have available the very last two (2) Certa Cito 75 Plaques at the price of \$40 +p&h.

If any one is interested in any of these items please contact me **ASAP** by e-mail erwin@arcom.com.au or phone 08 8264 5502.

Jim Erwin.



Attention all Members!

Operation Black Swan 2005:



The organizers of this reunion in Perth from 7th to the 16th October 2005 are concerned about the lack-lustre response and anxiously await bookings and deposits from prospective attendees. To guarantee the acquisition of function centres etc., **the deadline for a booking and deposit is November this year!** but have a heart and don't leave it until then! Members please note! Enquires and or a deposit after November **will fail to secure a booking** as function centres etc. will have been booked commensurate with the numbers attending. Initial planning forecasted an attendance of around a thousand but so far bookings have falling far short of that figure. Page 4 of this issue gives details of the interesting relationship between the final (2005) **Wombat** exercise and operation **Black Swan**.

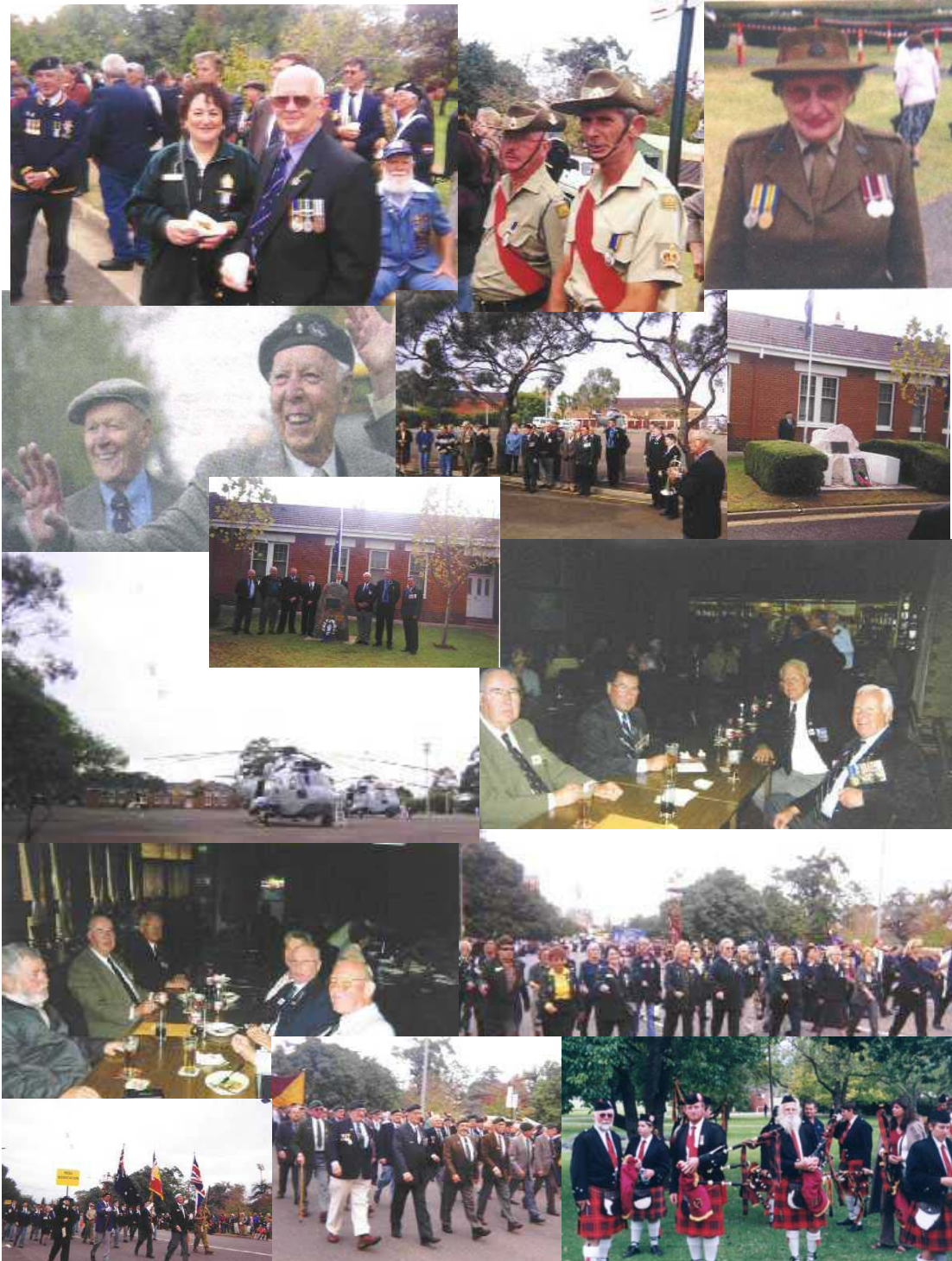
Anzac Day 2004.

After a breakfast with the Sigs at 144 Sig. Sqn. we attended a brief service at our memorial before travelling to the City for the March. The numbers in our group were slightly down on last year nevertheless the march was enjoyable because of the camaraderie within our ranks plus the Southern District Pipes and Drums ahead of us provided an excellent beat and marching rhythm. We marched well with just an occasional lapse when appreciative spectators made the band difficult to hear. Only a handful of members attended our reunion at the Gilles Plains/Hampstead RSL our small group enjoying the many yarns and camaraderie. It was good to see Ian and Trevor Hart and Curly Materna. Moss Oates was also there and looked hail and hearty after recovering from injuries received in a motorbike accident.

Godfrey Williams.

Anzac Day 2004 Montage: From the top and left to right:

Heather and Malcolm Simms, Don and Kiwi (Mates of Jim Erwin) Heather Snewin 12 Aust. Sigs Unit.
Cecil Ireland and Colin Hetzel 9 Div. Signals. Our memorial Group and the Commando Memorial.
Sea King helicopters on parade. Our memorial and our reunion at the Gilles Plains RSL
Our reunion again and WRAAC's marching (Many served in Signals Units).
Other units and the Southern Districts Pipes and Drums. (The Tartan is Clan Cameron).



IS THE WOMBAT SINKING? The end of an era !

From Bert Lane, Presiding Wombat !

BOOKINGS FOR WOMBAT 2004 are being taken as we speak. Four boats booked on spec and if you are just slightly interested in coming on board then by golly, you should really start talking to us pretty soon. There is a contingent from Queensland signed up and another crowd from Western Australia competing with them.

The Flagship on this occasion is 'Solitaire' which has been booked and has vacancies for three couples and one single. The cost for Solitaire is \$350 per head - all found. The longer you procrastinate, the less options we will have on available boats.

THE DATES FOR THIS YEAR ARE 4th - 12th SEPTEMBER

The overall cost of this magnificent week long cruise ranges from \$340 to \$360 depending upon your boat with the 'All Ranks Dinner' an additional \$30 per head. (If you can't make the trip you can attend the Dinner! At the Renmark Hotel on the 4th .)

It is well worth it because for that modest amount, you get all food, boat hire, secure car parking (if you have wheels) & ice! Plus, fishing lessons, morning paper delivery, entertainment, free fish scaling & cleaning, bird identification sessions, boat handling instruction, lessons from the Naked Chef on culinary niceties and a whole lot of other things thrown in.

Book now by writing to Win Keightley at 37 Eringa Ave LOXTON SA 5333.
or, if you are that way inclined, you could phone him or fax him on 08 8584 6080.

Wombat 04 is the penultimate (second last) in the series of Wombat Extravaganza's. **Yep! Next year, 2005 will be the very last Operation Wombat.** If you haven't yet experienced a Wombat holiday then don't miss the boat. You'll be sorry if you do.

Several hundred people have done the trip since it's inauguration in 1996. If you can't make it this year then you have one last chance and only one chance remaining and that will be the BIGGY in 2005! We will cruise the Mighty Murray en masse for the last time!

At the finish of the 2005 cruise --we will all travel across to Perth for the All singing, All dancing, All in, monster Signals Reunion, which will attract a huge gathering of Signals flavoured people from around the nation and around the world. **YOU MUST BE THERE.**

A convoy of Grey Nomads will be travelling - albeit, slowly - from Renmark to Perth - arriving in time for the start of Operation "Black Swan" which is the title of the 2005 Perth Bash.

Operation 'Black Swan' is programmed to run from the 7th to the 16th October 2005 and is fully supported by the Wombat organisation. Ex Sigs, regardless of what flavour you were in the past are strongly urged to start saving to **BE THERE** for what is shaping up to be an exciting ten days.

We are fully aware that some folk can only make it for part of that time - but that's better than nothing. On behalf of the Organising Committee we pass to you the following information!

The reunion covers the period of the 80th Anniversary of the birth of the Royal Australian Corps of Signals.

Most people will arrive and register on 7th October.

The 9th of October will be a 'Family Day' at Whiteman Park.

Saturday the 15th of October will be the Reunion Dinner at the Perth Convention Centre.

Reserve Forces Day South Australia 2004.

This day commemorates the contribution of South Australians to the volunteer defence of our country. Defence volunteers have been involved in South Australia since 1841 and in New South Wales since 1800. In 1948 part-time defence force units named "Citizen Military Forces" were established and South Australians joined in the thousands and have continued to join and serve since that time. **On Sunday 4th of July 2004** commencing at **1100 AM** there will be a ceremony of remembrance at the Reserve Forces Memorial on the Pathway of Honour, Adelaide. Her Excellency Marjorie Jackson-Nelson AC, CVO, MBE Governor of South Australia will be represented by The Lieutenant Governor Mr Bruno Krummings AM. Following the ceremony there will be an open day at the refurbished



Torrens Training Depot and a Combined Tri-Service Band concert at the Adelaide Town Hall at 2-00 PM, entry is free! but a booking must be obtained to guarantee a seat. Occurring on June 6th prior to this issue of this "Messenger" but of great significance to Reserve Forces Day is a ceremony to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the unveiling and dedication of the South African War Memorial situated at the entrance to Government House. This year also marks the 90th anniversary of the commencement of World War 1. The aim of Reserve Forces day is to recognize the contribution that reservists have made by serving their country during conflict and peace.

The "Walers".

Reserve forces Day 2004 will also acknowledge the horses that served, suffered and died in the Boer War, World War 1 and World War II. 2004 marks the 90th anniversary of the departure of Australian Troops to the Middle East accompanied by their Horses. Visitors to the Memorial Horse trough located on East Terrace near the main entrance to the Botanical Gardens on Anzac Day would have observed that it had been bedecked with flowers, carrots and apples. A fitting, and touching tribute to those courageous creatures that served us so well. These horses were derived from a mixture of breeds that were originally transported to the colony, Heavy horses, Pony's, Saddle horses, Coach horses all contributed. The eventual result was an animal that was intelligent, had incredible endurance, courage and strength while possessing an excellent temperament. The British Army sought them eagerly and purchased large numbers of them as Artillery horses, remounts and trooper horses. They came to be nicknamed "Walers" meaning "The horse from the Colony of New South Wales". The "Walers" are famed as the mounted infantry horse of the Australian Army serving in the Boer war and later and more famously in WW1. The legend of the " Australian Light Horse " is well known, the cavalry charge on Beersheba and the victory achieved there honouring those 800 men and their faithful steeds. It is perhaps fair to say that in the Australian spirit if a man or animal has a unique enough characteristic he or it will very quickly be given a suitable nick-name. So it was with one particular "Waler" who had a habit of bucking so was named " Bill the Bastard" but became a hero when he carried at a gallop in soft sand, for more than a kilometer, five men to safety after their outpost was over-run during the battle of Romani. Horses also served in WW2 with the North Australia Observer Unit (NAOU) providing mobility in the rugged terrain plus carrying signals equipment and general supplies. One could argue that a horse does not know whom he is serving, but it could be said that such an animal is able to sense and adopt the endeavor and courage of its riders. For a horse to be regarded as a hero, demonstrates an edifying spirit and respect for a "Battler". The "Walers" hold an honourable place in the Anzac tradition!

Trans Siberian Railway journey-Dean and Velma Hudson-October 2003



Continuing the Story

The last building we could see from this view of the Kremlin was the Ivan the Great Bell Tower complex. It is now 81 m high and topped with a golden dome. On top of the dome is a 7 metre high gold cross. The Bell tower has 21 bells, made by Russian casters in the 17 to 19th century. Some of the bells weigh over 7 ton,.

All in all a very impressive sight!

Our next stop was at the impressive memorial to Peter the Great. Moscow has both trolley buses and trams as well as an extensive Metro system. It has a population of 12 million and about half of these, use the Metro each day. We were told that the average wage in Moscow is US \$700 to 800 per month. It is no wonder that they have difficulty surviving on this wage, with the expensive cost of apartments, and with Moscow now being the second most expensive city in the world.

We continued our trip with a view of a very old convent in Moscow, and then on to the impressive University, with a very high spire. It has 30,000 students and 15 million books. Unfortunately the view over the Olympic sports stadium was foggy and we could not see the city clearly. There were many commercial stalls at the lookout and as a result a lot of shopping took place here.

After lunch we moved on to actually visiting the Kremlin. We had a close up view of the cathedrals we had seen from the river in the morning, and had a look inside some. We visited the Armoury Museum, which is a treasure-trove of Russian Tsars with a unique collection of gold, silver, Russian arms and armour, the State Regalia, thrones, crowns, carriages; coronation dresses as well as ambassadorial gifts.

Although it was snowing heavily we continued our walk in the Kremlin grounds seeing the Czar Bell. The casting of this bell commenced in 1734 with 200 men participating. Three days later the furnaces went out of order and the process was suspended. The bell was finally cast in 1735. The height was 6.14m with a diameter of 6.6m. It weighed over 200 tons. In 1737 during a powerful fire in the Kremlin the roof of a structure erected over the casting fell down on the bell. When the burning debris was sprayed with water the bell cracked due to the uneven cooling and an 11.5 ton piece broke off. In 1836 the broken bell was raised on to a pedestal and has stood there since. It was restored in 1979/80.

Nearby is the Czar Cannon. This is said to be the world's largest cannon which was cast of bronze in 1586. The gun's barrel weighs 40 ton, it is 5.34m long and its calibre is 890mm. However, not a single shot has been fired from it.

After leaving the Kremlin, we visited the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, with its eternal flame. This memorial was established in 1966 when the Moscovites celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Nazi's defeat of Moscow. Sentries from the Kremlin regiment guard the Memorial day and night. Changing of the guard occurs every half hour in wintertime.

On the way back to our hotel we walked through Red Square, which today is predominantly roped off to the general public. (Red means beautiful; nothing to do with the army) The square was cobble stoned in 1804. Lenin's Mausoleum (built in 1930) is one side of the square. This houses the mummified body of Vladimir Lenin. In 1953 the mummified body of Josef Stalin was also put into the mausoleum, but in 1961 his body was removed and buried in the Kremlin's wall.

In summary a very “historic” day. It snowed all day with the ice on the roads and footpaths becoming quite treacherous.

Today was also a busy day. It commenced with a tour of the Tretyakov Gallery, housing a remarkable collection of Russian Art, from medieval icons to the 19th and 20th century paintings. As with most places we visited in Russia, they had an extensive cloak system. Because of the cold outside, most establishments provide a free cloak service where jackets are handed in and looked after whilst on tours or visits to historic centres).

Had lunch at the Gallery and then embarked on a trip on the Moscow Metro. We saw samples of their stations decorated with marble, mosaics and bronze statues and beautiful chandeliers in some. Very elaborate and have not seen anything like this in any other underground in the world.

Our last day in Moscow was a free day but we arranged a trip to the markets for some final shopping for Russian gifts. The inevitable Russian dolls were in proliferation, but also some new products not seen previously, particularly shawls and scarves. Some of the group opted to visit a monastery however Velma and I decided to head back to our hotel in the city by underground. What an experience with not knowing which way we had to travel, no English signage nor English speaking people. However, we managed to get some information from the locals and eventually arrived at a station that I recognised from the day before. It was the station at Red Square. Phew, we made it!

In the evening we attended the Moscow Circus, and this was a great experience. Not held in a tent but in a large circular building, with bands playing, and animals (llamas, an elephant, monkeys and a young jaguar) in the foyer before the performance for photos with young adults and children.

The llamas were very good in the circus and one of the main acts were two men dressed in a Grecian manner, who would have been the strongest I have ever seen. Their balancing and use of sheer strength had to be seen to be believed.

Then we had a spectacular high wire act, which was awesome, and included long swings with people leaping from and to them.

A group of apes dressed in various clothes and with various musical instruments was very humourous, but not all people enjoyed seeing them perform. There were some good horse, llama and dog acts as well as the usual clever clown who entertained between major acts requiring change of equipment.

Then we went on to yet another great farewell dinner where we were entertained on arrival and throughout the meal by a group of female singers and a male playing the accordion. The waiters were all dressed in Russian dress. We had a huge entrée of smoked salmon, a main course of Chicken Kiev and for sweets, Apple Pie.

This was a big, but memorable day as we then headed for the train for a 12.30am departure.

Awoke again today to very heavy snow on the ground, but with a very clear sky. Arrived in St Petersburg at 8.20am to a temperature of – 6c. Brisk, but with the sun shining and no wind, it was very pleasant. For breakfast we went straight to our hotel, the Hotel Pribaltiskaya, which was very modern and comfortable, located on one of St Petersburg’s 42 islands, and on the Gulf of Finland. As with all the hotels we stayed at, there was a wide range of foods in a buffet style meal.

We then enjoyed a half-day tour of St Petersburg. We drove down the main street, Nevsky Prospect, and along the tree lined canals and embankments. We stopped at a couple of viewing locations where we could look across the wide River Neva to the Peter the Great Fortress and cathedral. We saw the Spilled Blood Cathedral, which was very interesting with its domes and spires. It is now a museum with 7000 square meters of mosaic inside. Unfortunately we could not go inside. We saw a number of other impressive buildings, including St Isaacs Cathedral with the 4th highest dome in Europe.

In one way we were fortunate to visit St Petersburg this year. The city is celebrating its 300th anniversary so many of the buildings have been restored and painted. We were told that the city was severely damaged during the war.

The city is well planned with a population of 5 million. There are many old palaces here as this was the capital of Russia until 1918. It has had several names over its 300 years. It was initially St Petersburg, then Petrograd, then Leningrad and then in 1996 back to St Petersburg after a popular vote for a name for the city.

We were lucky with the weather. We had one of the 60 sunny days a year they receive. The day was reasonably warm with the sun shining and snow was melting on the roofs of buildings and dripping down the huge down pipes. St Petersburg is on the same latitude as Alaska and has 24 hours of daylight in summer. The River Neva is the main river with St Petersburg stretching 30km each side of the river. There are numerous bridges, which are all opened between 1 and 4 each morning to allow the river traffic to navigate. The city has both trams and buses, which are well maintained. It also has an underground Metro system. Once again we had a very interesting lunch where Russian musicians, playing accordion, balalaikas and a small ceramic bird whistle, entertained us. The afternoon was free to stroll the city or relax back at the hotel

After a hearty breakfast, we visited the world famous Hermitage Museum, located in the former Winter Palace of the Russian Tzars. The winter residence of the Russian Monarchs became the centre around which this great museum was built.

While the hermitage can trace its architectural history back to Peter the Great, the history of the Hermitage as a museum collection is said to have begun in 1764 when Catherine the Great ordered the first 225 paintings. Today it has a collection of 2.7 million items including masterpieces by Leonardo de Vinci, Raphael and Rembrandt.

That evening we attended a Russian Folklore performance at the Nicholaevsky Palace. This too was a terrific performance, with singing, dancing and the traditional Russian Cossacks.

We are now into day 22 and today we travelled out of the city to Pushkin and the grand, baroque Catherine's Palace. The facade is 1 kilometre long.

We were greeted by a band playing the National Anthems of the various countries as they arrived. A good way of busking!

This palace, too was spectacular with its grand entrances, gold gilding in the various rooms, frescos on the ceilings, exquisite table settings and furniture, and the spectacular Amber Room, which has just recently been restored opening in May 2003. The same architect responsible for the Winter Palace also designed this palace.

The palace suffered extensive damage during the war, and photographs throughout show the rooms as they were in 1945 to compare with those as they exist now.

The formal European style garden was well created and maintained.

During our trip to Pushkin, our guide was telling us about the 1 million people of St Petersburg who were killed by the Germans during the Second World War. The city was basically surrounded and even today some of the residents can recall the sufferings that took place, particularly through starvation as the Germans surrounded the city and cut off the food supply chain. Most of those who died are buried in two mass graves.

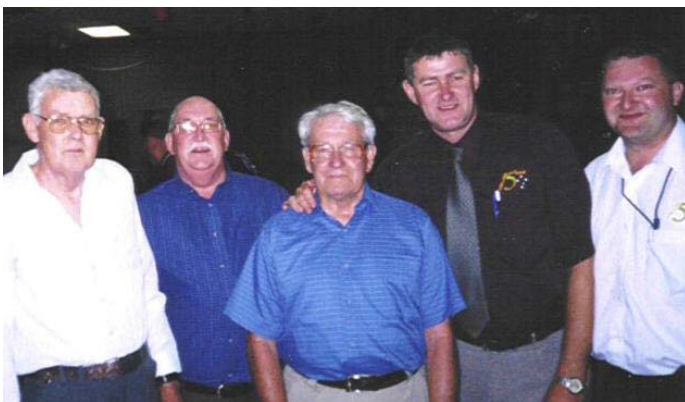
On the way back to the city we stopped at the spectacular War Memorial, which is built both above and below ground. It has many statues depicting the various aspects of the war

This was our last day in Russia and the end of our marvellous Trans Siberian Railway Journey, on a rail track which was commenced in 1891, and built almost entirely by unskilled labour that included Chinese coolies and the inmates of Siberian prison camps. When it opened it was, and still is, the longest continuous railway line on earth.

On the following day we departed from St Petersburg airport early morning for a flight to Frankfurt in Germany, and the beginning of our trip home.

That concludes Dean and Velma's interesting account of their Trans-Siberian holiday. They must have kept comprehensive notes throughout their journey to be able to provide such a detailed description. If you have any input which you think the membership would appreciate please contact the Secretary or Publisher.

After seventeen consecutive years in the position of Secretary/Treasurer of the Gilles Plains & Hampstead RSL Stewart McWaters officially retired from the Committee at the AGM on 20th January.



He has since moved to live in Ceduna, in close proximity to his son who is a schoolteacher in that area. Pictured above with "Stew", centered, are Jim Erwin , Dean Hudson , Bruce Long & Michael Southern . All have worked closely with Stew as he has provided our Assn with tremendous support over the years & nothing was too difficult for him. On behalf of the Association , President Bruce Long presented Stew with an Association plaque ! We all wish him well in "retirement".

Jim Erwin



“Apologies for belated congratulations to Ruth and Kim Rountree on the arrival of Aaron Philip a boy of course, weighing in at 7lbs 11 oz! Wonder what his two sisters think about it? Dad, Kim will be pretty pleased about it having previously outnumbered 3 to 1 by the “Girls”, 3 to 2 is a bit better! Sgt Ruth will continue to soldier on with 144 Sig. Sqn. No doubt?”

From Jim Erwin

From: The Red Cross Blood Service.

A few weeks ago at a movie theatre in Melbourne a person sat on something that was poking out of one of the seats. When she got up to see what it was she found a needle sticking out of the seat with a note attached saying a quote; You have just been infected by HIV quote; The Disease control Centre in Melbourne reports many similar incidents have occurred in many other Australian cities recently. All tested needles are HIV Positive. The Centre also reports that needles have been found in the cash dispensers in ATMs. We ask everyone to use extreme caution when faced with this kind of situation. All public chairs/seats should be inspected with vigilance and caution before use. 17 people have been tested positive in the Western suburbs alone in the last 2 months!!! A careful visual inspection should be enough. In addition they ask that each of you pass this message along to all members of your family and your friends of the potential danger. We all have to be careful at public places! This is very important. Just think about saving a life of someone even you don't know by forwarding this message. Please, take a few seconds of your time to pass it along.

Association and Committee contact details.

President: Bruce Long. Mobile Tel. 0417 227 533 Email: brucelong@fivestar.austbiz.net

Vice President: Jim Erwin. Tel. 8264 5502 (also fax) Email: erwin@arcom.com.au

Secretary: Michael Southern. Tel. Mobile 0418 956 915 Email: binky@bigpond.net.au

Treasurer: David Bolton. Tel. Home 82232656 Email: bolton@kern.com

Publisher: Godfrey Williams. Tel. 82528939 Email: godfreywilliams42@yahoo.com.au

Association mailing address: (Secretary) PO box 881, Kent Town S.A. 5071

Contributing: News, articles etc. Send via the Secretary or the Publisher.

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