



"The Messenger"



(Of The Gods.)

**Official Newsletter of the Royal Australian Signal Association (SA) Inc.
Issue 3. October 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 is time for another report on the up's and downs of the President of the RASigs Association. As some people are aware I recently sent an email to join in the comments of the length of service for the new Volunteer Service Medal. Whilst this was of my own beliefs I left my RASigs President signature block on board. Whilst externally nothing has occurred to date, it was with regret that I upset some members with regard to my comments being seen as those of the Association. Once I was made aware of my error I immediately apologised to those involved and to those other members who may of been offended. I sent a retraction to the addressees of my email as well. I would like to formally apologise to all concerned and hopefully learn from this experience. As the President I was officially reprimanded by the Committee for my oversight.

Currently the Committee is planning our Annual Dinner which is to be held on the 20th of November 2004. We have had a number of issues planning the dinner in particular, originally trying to join the dinner with 144 Signal Squadron Official Parade, which will now be held on the Sunday the 7th of November 2004 at Keswick Barracks. The Squadron has invited all to the parade and BBQ, please make an effort to come along. With regard to the dinner this year we have engaged a new caterer to provide the meal and we believe it will be to everyone's approval.

Some good news from the Squadron (OC 144), Major Steve Halliday has offered the Association space to return to the Squadron Lines at our earliest convenience. I have inspected the area allocated and the OC has been very generous. The Committee is discussing the offer and will recommend a decision soon. The idea of being back at the unit is appealing and the OC has asked for some support in the way of OC's Hour etc.

Well whilst my report is short I do hope to catch up with everyone at the parade and the dinner, I ask you all to please make an effort to attend both functions. The Committee have gone to a lot of trouble to make this our 25th Anniversary year special the Dinner promising to be a good night for all.

Regards: Bruce Long President RASigs Association (SA) Inc.

Corps Day 2004.

As a celebration of Corps Day this year 144 Signal Squadron members will be parading on **Sunday November 7th at 1100 Hrs in Keswick Barracks**. All Association members/partner/families **are invited** to attend the parade plus a Barbeque Lunch. This is a pleasant and inexpensive day out and as many members as possible are encouraged to attend and celebrate the **Corps Birthday**, while supporting our serving Sigs. To assist catering it would be helpful if you are staying for the meal to ring or e-mail our President Bruce Long and indicate your attendance plus the number in your party.

Annual Dinner 2004 (Silver Jubilee).



Accompanying this newsletter is an invitation with history and response slip for the Association's Annual Dinner on Saturday November 20th. Please note that the return slip and payment is due at the Association's Post Box no later than November 5th (Return envelope enclosed). This is a special event for our Association and the Committee has gone to a lot of trouble to ensure that it will be a memorable evening. There promises to be some pleasant surprises during the evening so please make every effort to attend. **E-mail recipients please note! You will receive the invitation/history and response slip via a separate attachment, this will need to be printed and returned by post with payment.**

RSL Clubrooms.

In order to assist the Gilles Plains/Hampstead RSL to be cost efficient our Association has been making use of their Friday evenings. On the 1st and 3rd Friday of every month (Except Dec. 31st) at 6.00pm the RSL provides a meal (schnitzel, fish) for \$5 and the bar is open. As the late sunsets approach and together with the pleasant club environs (Bennett Reserve) a pleasant evening is assured. This venue is available to all Association members/families and has the potential to develop into a regular meeting place.

Vale:

Major Trevor R. Phillips Rtd. (RASIGS)

It is with sadness we report the death of Trevor on 29th August 2004 at home in Murray Bridge after a long illness. Trevor was retired ARA and a veteran of SVN. His wife's name is Judy, no other details are available at this time

Wanderers Return.

Brian and Barbara Melville recently returned from a six-week tour of the UK and parts of Europe. The following is an account of Brian's investigation of some WW2 historical sites.

Normandy – 60 years on

During the media coverage of the 60th anniversary celebrations at Normandy, prior to our departure for a six week visit to our daughter in the UK, my appetite was wetted to make an effort to see the beaches first hand. So during a four- day visit to Paris late in June, I left Barb and Rachel wandering around the shops and headed off by train to Caen for the day.

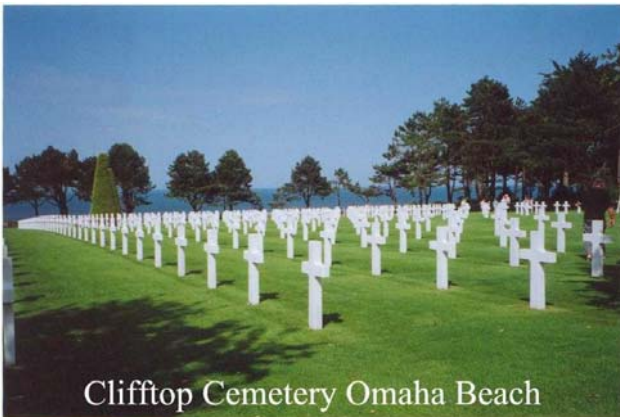


Brian on Omaha Beach

I had learnt from the Internet of a tour, organized by the museum, which runs most days. It allowed you to spend time in the museum and visit the beaches by a guided car tour. I could not believe the amount of people that were also touring the beaches that day which was well after the 6th of June. There were traffic jams in some of the smaller villages.

Nevertheless, myself and two other American couples, spent an amazing five hours driving to the various beaches and listening to a young French woman, whose grandfather and father had been effected by the occupation, retell the story with a great deal of feeling and accuracy. The enormity of Operation Overlord becomes more obvious when you stand on Omaha Beach and see the remains of the German coastal defences. Not only were their guns positioned to fire out to sea from the cliff tops, but also along the beach in a crossfire manner. Its no wonder the allied casualties were so high.

Our visit to the cemetery at the cliff top where some 9700 are buried was emotionally draining. It is groomed to perfection by French gardeners managed by the American Battle Graves Commission. When you look at the ages of these young men, who gave their lives for freedom, it really makes you think how the world could have been so much different today, without their sacrifice in this defining operation. The planning of Operation Overlord took place over some two years and was a mammoth achievement given the men and logistics that were assembled and ferried to France for the landings on 6th June 1944.



Clifftop Cemetery Omaha Beach

I came away with lasting impressions, pleased that I had made the visit and pleased to see that these beautiful beaches were being enjoyed today by families with children bathing. Life goes on!

The history of these battles have been well preserved and acknowledged in every village, the flags of the various countries are flown daily to show who had liberated them. The museum is also very well laid out with many interesting displays, much of it centered on the Normandy landings and the occupation of France and Europe. Its site has in fact been cut into an area, which was actually used as a bunker by one of the German generals during the war.

Althorp/Blethley Park – Station X

Barb and I combined a trip to Northampton to see Althorp the country estate of the Spencer family where Princess Diana is buried on an island. I guess it was a bit of a trade off as I could see that it wasn't very far from Bletchley Park, about which I had been fascinated since reading a book, "The Code Breakers" many years ago.

Firstly, Althorp was very interesting it has some beautiful artworks and is still the home of Charles Spencer who farms about 8000 acres of lush grazing country. The Diana Exhibition of her clothes and charity work is very well presented and leaves you with some sadness that her life was cut so short.

Our visit to Bletchley Park started with a walk from the railway station down the original laneway to the front gate of the camp. It was only after a book was released in 1975 that its story and the role that it played in WW2 unfolded.



It was responsible for breaking the German Enigma code as well as the Japanese codes, which played a big part in shortening WW2. Much of the planning for Operation Overlord was made easier by the intelligence provided from this site. It is also the birthplace of modern computing and communications. It's amazing to think that at its peak some 10000 people were involved (including some 300 Americans). They were billeted out in the various towns and villages around Bletchley.



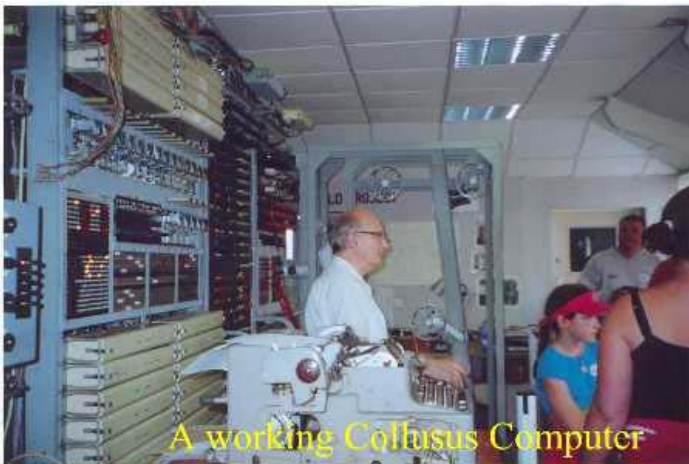
The communications and physical security in place during this period was absolutely amazing. The staff was employed in various huts around the site and only had knowledge of what went on in their own hut and that was it. They never queried or were concerned what happened in the other sections and just got on with doing the job they were trained to do. I know it was war time and people were totally committed to the cause but to think that they kept this secret for so long. Even recently some people who worked at the site during the war were contacted, but had difficulty recalling their experiences as they had simply blocked it out after leaving the site at the wars end.

The camp after the war was used for various things, a training establishment by British Telecom and other organisations but somehow survived a proposed demolition to make way for a housing estate. Thankfully it is now a heritage site and is being managed by a trust who are using it in a very positive way. Offering it for use as a convention centre and also going about preserving and maintaining the various buildings. They are putting back in place meaningful displays about its operations during WW2.



There is an original Bombe on display in its own original hut. It's the electro mechanical device they built to give them the daily settings for the Enigma machine. In a few months they will also have a working model of this in operation which has been completely rebuilt by dedicated engineers over the last couple of years. Also in operation is a COLLOSUS Computer which was designed to break the Higher German codes.

When you look at what was achieved back in the 1940's its absolutely amazing. Their code breaking was so good in the period 41 – 44 that Churchill and his commanders were actually reading the messages about operational tasks and deployments at the same time as the German Field commanders. Thereby creating a problem they had to employ deception to cover the fact that the Germans might realize their code had been broken and all sorts of methods were used to preserve their secret.



The German U Boats were actually withdrawn from the Atlantic as with the naval code broken it meant they were constantly being located and sunk.



It is a fascinating story and as an ex-communicator OKR/OKC I would have loved to have been there to see the site in war time operation. It was in fact Churchill's WW2 Intelligence HQ and they had some 300 teleprinter circuits to stations around the UK and other parts of the world. Also dozens of morse operators working to SOE operatives in Europe as well as airfields and radar sites across Britain Churchill in a fitting tribute wrote in his diary of the importance of Bletchley Park to the Allied success in WW2. "It was the Goose that laid the

Golden Egg" Of its people, he also wrote "They were the Geese that never cackled".

I could have spent much more time than my visit allowed wandering around the various areas. Our volunteer guide for the tour was very knowledgeable and kept our interest as we moved throughout the many buildings and around the site during our two hour tour. After some refreshments in Hut 4 we headed back to the railway station for our journey back to Brighton.

All in all it was a great experience and I purchased a couple of books written by operators to gain an insight into what it was like to work at Station X during WW2. You can visit Bletchley Park as well, or have a look at WWW.bletchleypark.org.uk and it will give you all the details.



Also on my agenda was a visit to the Royal Signals Museum at Blandford. Although not the easiest place to get to by public transport it was certainly worth the effort. They have many interactive displays showing the evolvement of communications through the ages. One interesting display was a video about the Comcan Network. This showing how a message prepared at Marralinga advising of the exploding of the A bomb back in the 50's, found its way through the network to Whitehall some minutes after the event. There is also a very impressive display of medals of ex RSIGS personel either loaned to or presented to the museum.



The equipment and vehicles on display from the various campaigns and theatres of war were very well presented. The camp canteen is housed in the museum and has a very good shop for souvenirs.

They also have a web site WWW.royalsignals.army.org.uk/museum If you are ever over in that neck of the woods its worth a visit.

The above were three highlights of many things that Barb and I enjoyed during our six weeks roaming around the UK and Europe.

Brian Melville.

Looking back: Pride in our Corps!

The last formal message to be transmitted on the Vietnam Circuit was sent by Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant General Sir Mervyn Brogan, KBE, CB, on the 16th December 1972. It read as follows:

0 162355Z DEC 72
FM ARMY CANBERRA
TO AUSTGP VIETNAM
BT
RESTRICTED
CGS50583

FOR COMAAAGV FROM CGS.

ONE. THIS WILL BE THE LAST MESSAGE PASSED ON THIS CIRCUIT AND I CANNOT ALLOW THE HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE OCCASION TO PASS WITHOUT NOTING THAT 1,790,000 MESSAGES HAVE BEEN TRANSMITTED OVER IT SINCE ITS ESTABLISHMENT AT 0600 HRS ON 30 JUNE 65 BY THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN CORPS OF SIGNALS. THE HIGH STANDARD OF THE CORPS HAS RESULTED IN THE CIRCUIT BEING MAINTAINED IN CONTINUOUS OPERATION THROUGHOUT THIS TIME AND FOR THIS I COMMEND THEM.

TWO. I WISH YOU TO PASS ON TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE AUSTRALIAN ARMY ASSISTANCE GROUP VIETNAM, MY SINCERE APPRECIATION FOR A DIFFICULT JOB WELL DONE. THE LOYAL, DEDICATED AND EFFICIENT MANNER IN WHICH THEY HAVE CARRIED OUT THEIR TASK HAS BEEN IN THE BEST TRADITION OF THE AUSTRALIAN ARMY AND REFLECTS CREDIBILITY ON OUR COUNTRY. THANKYOU.

THREE.

I AM CONFIDENT THAT THE GUARD AND ESCORT PLATOON WHICH WILL CONTINUE THE ARMY PRESENCE IN VIETNAM AS THE AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY GUARD PLATOON SAIGON WILL MAINTAIN THE HIGH STANDARDS OF THEIR PREDECESSORS.

FOUR.

I EXTEND MY BEST WISHES FOR THE SEASON TO YOU AND YOUR COMMAND AND FAMILIES.

MESSAGE ENDS.

New member! Joy Gibson just recently joined our ranks

Crafty:

Sig. Jones had just been carpeted by his CO and received 7 days CB for being drunk and disorderly. After being marched out of the CO's office the RSM realizing that Sig. Jones was newly married told him in no uncertain terms that for the length of his punishment he had to remain within the Unit's Lines and was not to sneak back to his married quarters after lights out. "Do you understand!" the RSM bellowed. Sig. Jones replied rather timidly "Yes Sergeant Major". "Well that is all, off you go" Said the RSM. The following day Sig. Jones reported to the orderly room that he had lost his pay book and was told that he had better find it or else. Once that the 7 days CB were completed the RSM said to Signalman Jones, "Have you found your pay book?" "No Sergeant Major" was the reply. "Well, as for being drunk and disorderly I hope that you have learnt your lesson" Sig. Jones replied that he had but the RSM retorted that he was on another charge. What for? Sig. Jones said rather shakily. The RSM replied, " For disobeying a direct order in that you didn't remain in the Unit's lines after lights out, I know this because you dropped your pay book on my office floor 7 days ago, I then went to your billet and put it in between the sheets of your bed so if you had slept in it you would have **found it!**"

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