

# NOTICE TO MARINERS

## Newsletter of 32 Small Ship Sqn RAE Association Incorporating RAE Tn

*Patron: Colonel K.L. Duncan (Rtd)*

### President's Message

On Friday 1 August members of the and family members attended the anniversary of the deployment of Vernon Sturdee to Borneo on Operation confrontation. This was held at the

The guest speaker, Lieutenant General Representative Colonel Commandant of unveiled the memorial The memorial Butler RAN (Retd).



Association and their wives/partners commemoration of the 50<sup>th</sup> AV1353 Harry Chauvel and AV1355 Granite during the Indonesian Point Danger Light at Tweed Heads.

Frank Hickling AO CSC, the the Royal Australian Engineers was consecrated by Chaplain Ron

The event was organised by Bob Modystack with the support of our Hon. Secretary Ross and MC George Friend who gave a delightful introduction to the event. Our thanks to Jerry Dunn's family, the local stonemasons, who supported Bob's vision of the memorial and engraved and positioned the granite memorial. In the same area is the memorial dedicated to the sinking of the hospital ship SS Centaur in 1943 by a Japanese submarine.

Luncheon was held at the Rainbow Bay Surf Life Saving Club nearby which was a beautiful location overlooking Tasman Sea. In the future when members and their families are holidaying in the north of N.S.W. I do suggest they visit the memorial.

The Vietnam Veterans Day Commemorative Service was held at the RAE Vietnam Memorial at the School of Military Engineering Steele Barracks Moorebank on Monday 18 August in the most inclement weather. The address was given by His Excellency General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC (Retd), Governor General of the Commonwealth of Australia. After the ceremony the Governor General thanked the children in the Wattle Grove Public School choir and the catafalque party.

The memorial committee Chairman, Jack Peel and committee are to be congratulated for their organisation of the guest speaker and the outstanding luncheon which was subsidised by the memorial committee at the Sergeants Mess. This was the last Vietnam Veterans Day to be held at SME.

Ocka

**JAMAIS ETRE REMORQUE**



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## UNVEILING OF BORNEO / 32 SMALL SHIP SQUADRON MEMORIAL

Over 100 people turned up for the ceremony commemorating the 50th anniversary of the deployment to Borneo of *AV1353 Harry Chauvel* and *AV1355 Vernon Sturdee* on active service to Borneo on "Operation Granite". They sailed from Woolwich on 6 May 1964 carrying the heavy plant, machinery and equipment for the 7 Field Squadron Group..

Bob Modystack initiated this project and he has worked on it for over two years. The memorial is of a unique design. It is 1.7m long x 1.6m wide x 0.3m high. It is three sided and shaped to represent the bow of a ship, and is constructed of concrete and granite and rests on a circular bed of sculptured sandstone. On the left side white lettering depicts 'Borneo' and 'Vietnam' and right side is 'Papua new Guinea'. A large bronze plaque is on the 'stern' and at its base are coloured pavers representing medal ribbons for service in Borneo, Vietnam and Papua New Guinea. A stainless steel towing post, donated by Bob, is fixed to the top surface. I think this is Bob's in-house joke about the squadron's motto, 'Jamais etre remorque' (never to be towed). The granite on the memorial represents 'Operation Granite' and was engraved and positioned by the Dunn Family who are local stonemasons.

On a bright, sunny morning on 1 August 2014 the Master of Ceremonies, Major George Friend OAM welcomed the attendees and the official guests, and introduced Lieutenant General Frank Hickling AO CSC who gave a very good speech highlighting the history and achievements of 32 Small Ship Squadron, and the voyages of the two LSMs to Borneo. He then unveiled the memorial. His speech is on following pages.

The memorial was then dedicated by Chaplain Ron Butler RAN. His introduction to the dedication was, "We are gathered here - on the first day of August in the year of our Lord, two thousand and fourteen, to mark the occasion and place for the permanent memorial to the 32 Small Ship Squadron of the Royal Australian Engineers"

His dedication was "Almighty God, whose son, Jesus Christ our Lord; who didst from time to time go down upon the sea in small ships, and who stilled the raging of the storm and in whose faith we now do DEDICATE and CONSECRATE this memorial to the memory of all those who served and sailed in the 32 Small Ship Squadron of the Royal Australian Engineers. In the name of God, the father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen".

After the ceremony we all adjourned down the hill to the Rainbow Bay Surf Life Saving Club for a pleasant lunch. During the lunch Bob Modystack gave a short speech, thanking those who assisted him for the project, especially his partner, Janet. Jack Peel read out the names of the Borneo crew members who have passed on. Graham Murray thanked many people for their involvement and presented anniversary plaques to Lieutenant General Hickling, Bob Modystack, George Friend and Councillor Chris Robbins of the Gold Coast City Council, who helped Bob get the project off the ground. All up it was a great day for the Squadron. Thanks Bob - well done!

The week end started off with a 'meet and greet' session at the Billabong Caravan Park, Tweed Heads. Quite a few people turned and a lot of discussions were held over a barbecued steak and a beer. A couple of raffles were run by Tony Harris and the prizes were appreciated by the winners (forgot who won them).



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The next day was Friday, the day of the commemorative ceremony. On Saturday night Bob had arranged a Dinner Cruise on the "Captain Bill", a 22m ex-crab catcher. The owner of Tweed Endeavour Cruising donated the vessel and the crew for the night; a generous gesture which considerably reduced the cost to the passengers. During the voyage Rod Cook auctioned the granite core plugs from the drillings of the memorial (which were the bolt holes for the stainless steel towing post). This raised quite a few dollars to further help offset costs. A good time was had by all including an excellent dinner and drinks. The boat sailed along the upper reaches of the Tweed River and into Terranora Lake.

Bob would like to thank the many people and organisations (including your Association) who donated money towards the cost of the memorial. Your generosity enabled him to complete the project. He's still a bit out of pocket but is very happy with the response of members.



**The 32 Memorial at Point Danger, Coolangatta. The white structure in the background is the Point Danger Light which is also the border of New South Wales and Queensland.**







**Lieutenant General Frank Hickling AO CSC giving his presentation prior to unveiling the Memorial**



Some of the participants at the ceremony. Front row, left to right: Ocka Murray (President 32 Small Ship Squadron RAE Association), Mrs Beth Murray, Mike Heal OAM (Master of AV1355 Vernon Sturdee), Mrs Val Heal, Bob Modystack, Lieutenant General Frank Hickling, AO CSC (Former Chief of Army and Representative Colonel Commandant, RAE), Colonel Ken Duncan (Patron 32 Small Ship Squadron RAE Association), Mrs Dawn Duncan, Mrs June Greville (wife of the late Brigadier Phil Greville CBE, Past-Patron of 32 Small Ship Squadron RAE Association ), Major George Friend OAM (Master of Ceremonies).







**Chaplain Ron Butler, RAN, dedicating the Memorial.**



**Crew members of AV1353 *Harry Chauvel* and AV1355 *Vernon Sturdee* who attended the ceremony. Left to right: Jack Peel, Eric Hubbard, Tony Harris, Mike Heal OAM, Bob Modystack, Max Lockwood AM and Peter Atkinson.**







Lieutenant General Frank Hickling and Colonel Ken Duncan



The bronze plaque at the rear of the memorial



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## CONTRIBUTORS WHO SUPPORTED THE PROJECT

Bob Modystack is mindful of the people and organizations who made donations to help him fund the cost of the memorial. He is especially appreciative of the significant sums offered by Brian Clulow, Dennis Collins, Phil Cameron, Ken Duncan, Gerry Dunn, Robert Ekberg, Bob Freeman, Geoff Freeland, Dazz Graney, Ross Hayes, Eric Hubbard, Max Lockwood, Steve Monk, Bruce Reilly, Robbie Robinson, Alan Rix, Bob Woodhouse, Terry Zajer, 32 Small Ship Squadron RAE Association (yes - that's you!) and the RAE Vietnam Memorial Committee.

People who also made important donations are: Peter Atkinson, Jock Balfour, Doug Bennett, Mal Campbell, Colin Coakes, Rod Cook, George Cosis, Ray Curren, Les Dennis, Gary Everitt, Roger Finn, Dave Fryer, Vince Gardner, Bob Gaylard, Dave Gray, Mike Heal, Bruce Levy, Len Martin, Mike McCartney-Lees, Sandy McLean, Bruce McLean, Peter Jansen, Ross McMurray, Laurie Mills, Carl Nobelius, Noel Norton, Bruce Pattison, John Purcell, Pat and Daphne Scott, Sam Ramage, Len Ramsey, George Scorgie, Bob Shoebridge, Kerry Stuart, Ray Winter and Alan White.

Other people and organizations who supported the project are: The Chinderah Maritime Museum, Spirit of the Gold Coast Whale Watching, Tweed Endeavour Cruises, Justine Elliot MP - Federal Member for Richmond, Cr Chris Robbins - Gold Coast City Council, Cr Barry Longland - Mayor of Tweed Shire Council, Joe Russell - President of Tweed Heads and Coolangatta RSL Sub-Branch, and Twin Towns Services Club, Tweed Heads.

Also thanks to Steve Monk who processed and coordinated the administration and donations. No doubt I've missed a few people and if so I'll try and pick them up in the next newsletter.

John Purcell summed up the fund raising by saying:

"This is a further appeal for donations to reimburse Bob the loss he incurred in building that wonderful memorial at Tweed Heads. As a result of previous appeals and the generous support of raffles at the lunch at Tweed Heads the gap is down to about \$10,000. Donations have included a significant one from the RAE Vietnam Memorial Committee and from those generous donors who can always be relied on in these circumstances.

There were some large donations from some who can least afford it. Bob is very appreciative of all donations and I am proud to be associated with those whose spirit of mateship continues in such a strong way."

## LIEUTENANT GENERAL F J HICKLING AO CSC

Lieutenant General Frank Hickling was commissioned into the Royal Australian Engineers in 1961. His regimental appointments have included troop, squadron and regimental level command tours of duty in both field and construction units, as well as an instructional



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appointment at the School of Military Engineering. His overseas tours of duty have included service in Papua New Guinea, Sabah, Malaysia and in Vietnam.

Following attendance at the Royal Military College of Science at Shrivenham UK and the Army Command and Staff College at Queenscliff, Victoria he served in Grade One and Grade Two appointments at the Department of Defence (Army Office). He commanded the 2nd/3rd Field Engineer Regiment and then served on the staff of Headquarters 1st Division before attending the Joint Services Staff College in 1983.

Lieutenant General Hickling was a member of the Directing Staff of the Joint Services Staff College and was then appointed Director of Plans - Army at Army Office. In 1988 he attended the National Defence College of India, before being appointed to command 1st Brigade in 1989 and 1990. He assumed command of Northern Command in December 1990 where he was awarded the Conspicuous Service Cross.

He was promoted to major general and appointed General Officer Commanding Training Command in July 1992. He was appointed Commandant, Australian Defence Force Academy in 1995 where he received the award of Officer of the Order of Australia.

He was the Land Commander Australia from May 1996 to June 1998. In February 1998 he led 'Operation Bel Isi', a peace monitoring mission to Bougainville following a break in civil unrest in that country. He was Chief of Army from June 1998 to July 2000.

Lieutenant General Hickling is the Representative Colonel Commandant, Royal Australian Engineers.

**UNVEILING OF 32 SMALL SHIP SQUADRON MEMORIAL AT POINT  
DANGER - BY LIEUTENANT GENERAL FRANK HICKLING AO CSC  
1 August 2014**

"Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are gathered here this morning to unveil a plaque marking the passage - 50 years ago - of two vessels from 32 Small Ship Squadron RAE as they tracked north carrying vital heavy equipment and vehicles to North Borneo for 7th Field Squadron RAE, who were on their way to operations in support of the British Commonwealth response to Indonesia's confrontation against Malaysia.

Before doing that, I think I should make a few remarks.

Firstly, the memorial exists largely through the efforts of Bob Modystack, who has done the bulk of the heavy work needed to gain approvals of many agencies, along with the funding and other support needed to make this project a reality. Bob, a veteran of Borneo and Vietnam, is a former member of 32 Small Ship Squadron and you will soon see for yourselves the fruits of the work that he and members of the Squadron Association have devoted to this project.

32 Small Ship Squadron has a unique place in the Australian Army's history. It is the only army unit ever to operate sea-going vessels - something that put more than a few noses out of joint



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among our distinguished naval colleagues - and it supported a range of missions that would have been impossible without the capabilities it brought to the table.

The unit was raised in 1959 to man and operate four Landing Ships medium (LSM) that had been bought as war surplus from the US Navy. Subsequently a fifth vessel *AS3051 John Monash* was added to the fleet to provide a more conventional shipping capability.

Initially the unit's role was to provide mobility for the 1st Armoured Regiment's Centurion Tanks. These vehicles weighed in at over 60 tons and were virtually impossible to move out of their home base in Victoria by any means other than sea.

But it didn't take the army long to realise that the LSMs had far greater capabilities than acting purely as tank transporters - although they did that too - and soon these ships were undertaking a vast range of jobs that nobody had thought possible before. The key thing was that the LSMs could move men and material by sea over great distances and then deliver them over the beach, ready to fight or work as needed.

One early mission was to deploy and support the army engineers' construction squadrons on the north coast of Papua New Guinea. In 1961, as a newly minted 2Lt, fresh out of Officer Cadet School, Portsea, I happened to be part of the cargo delivered from Brisbane to Wewak from *AV1353 Harry Chauvel*, commanded by the formidable Major Jimmy Wilson.

The voyage was unforgettable to a 19 year-old who had never been to sea in his life. Among other things, it confirmed the wisdom of taking up a career in the Army, rather than the Navy. The LSMs, despite their undoubted virtues, were slow, hot and very uncomfortable for passengers and crew alike. I developed a healthy respect for the men who manned these ships over the following decade in trying, difficult and sometimes dangerous conditions.

A few years later - in 1964 - I was a member of 7 Field Squadron RAE, deployed to North Borneo as part of Australia's efforts to maintain the security of the newly-formed nation of Malaysia in the face of hostility from Indonesia. The two LSMs identified here today on this memorial carried all of our heavy vehicles and equipment to and from Borneo, as well as lifting other stores from *HMAS Sydney* from ship to shore.

This time, I and most of the Field Squadron's people travelled aboard *HMAS Sydney* which had been converted from aircraft carrier to troop ship. Having had that experience, I think we'd have been better off on the LSMs.

32 Small Ship Squadron went on to support a huge range of other activities - in peace and war - all around Australia, in Papua New Guinea and Southeast Asia. Notable among their efforts was the deployment and support of our armoured squadrons in Vietnam in the late 1960s until the end of the war, and the variety of logistic tasks they undertook - sometimes under fire - in that theatre. There is no doubt in my mind that the availability of tanks that they carried in the latter years of the war saved many Australian lives; and that would not be possible without the small ships.



I think it is fitting that the work of 32 Small Ship Squadron be recognized. It's also fitting that that unit's short but distinguished history be acknowledged somewhere other than in history books or the Canberra War Memorial.

I congratulate Bob Modystack, 32 Small Ship Squadron Association and all concerned with bringing this memorial to reality. I am honoured and very pleased to unveil this plaque".

## **VIETNAM VETERANS' DAY - SCHOOL OF MILITARY ENGINEERING**

On Monday 18 August 2014 the RAE Memorial Committee commemorated the 48th anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan at a very wet and windy ceremony at SME. Very little rain had fallen for about three months leading up to this but we got 84mm that morning with winds gusting at over 30 knots. It was quite challenging for the Catafalque Party and they obviously ended up drenched. But they were really good, and didn't miss a beat. The spectators were in tents but everyone still got wet. Supporting the service were a bugler from the Australian Army Band - Sydney, a Piper from Ingleburn RSL Pipes and Drums and the choir from Wattle Grove Public School who entertained the crowd before the service, and gave a fine rendition of our National Anthem - they even embarrassed a lot of us by knowing the words of the second chorus.

The Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Ken Martin and his RSM, WO1 David Harvey welcomed some 250 guests. Usually there are between 70 and 80 who attend but because this was the last commemoration to be held at Casula before it relocates to Holsworthy there was a big increase in numbers. Also among the guests was Lieutenant General Frank Hickling AO CSC the Representative Colonel Commandant RAE and a former Chief of Army.

The Guest Speaker was the Governor General, Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC. You will recall that he was the Chief of the Defence Force from 2002 to 2005. He gave an excellent speech about the quality and resourcefulness of Sappers. After the ceremony the Governor-General presented mementos to each member of the choir.

We then proceeded to the RAE Sergeants' Mess for a buffet lunch, accompanied by the Governor-General. It was a great day and one that will be remembered for a long time.

Our Association was represented by Jack Peel, who is the Chairman of the RAE Vietnam Memorial Committee, and his son, Tim and his wife, Emma and children, Ocka Murray and his son, Anthony, Peter and Sue Tierney, accompanied by their friends, Jenny and Richard Korff (ex-1 Field Squadron), Ross and Jenny McMurray, Norm Mason, Ken Duncan (our Patron), Cec Weekes (President AWTA), George and Judith Cosis, Allan and Deborah Hyde, Brian and Val Waites, John Sahariv, Frank Poole, Lance Northey and Glenn Daly. I think that was all - I apologise if I've missed anyone.



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**Rod Bourke (55 AESS), Graham Murray (32 Small Ship Sqn) and Ray Oliver MM (AATTV) about to lay wreaths at the RAE Vietnam Memorial.**



**A wet sapper of the Catafalque Party at the RAE Vietnam Memorial**



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**His Excellency the Governor General of the Commonwealth of Australia, General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC with Jack Peel. (Jack's on the right).**



**The Governor General with the choir of Wattle Grove Public School**



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**Pipe Sergeant Peter Jakobsson of the Ingleburn RSL Pipes and Drums**



**WO1 David Harvey. RSM!**



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**Lunch at the Sergeants' Mess SME. From left: Norm Mason, Brian Waites, George and Judith Cosis. I think the empty chair belongs to Val Waites who took the photo.**



**Allan and Deborah Hyde.**







**Our Patron, Ken Duncan (left) with Anthony and Graham Murray.**



**Lance Northey in the rain.**



**VALE - IAN GRAHAM  
1944 - 2014**

Sergeant Ian "Nobby" Graham, RAE died on 28 February 2014. Ian enlisted in the ARA in 1960 as an apprentice fitter and turner at the Army Apprentices School, Balcombe, Victoria. On graduating he was posted to 4 Water Transport Troop and then to 32 Small Ship Squadron. He was a crew member on *AV1353 Harry Chauvel* on its deployment on active service to Borneo in 1964. Allan Reading recalls that in late 1964 he was accepted into the Officer Cadet School, Portsea but did not complete the 12 month course. He then went back to 4 Troop for a while and was then posted to SASR and worked at their Water Training Facility at Garden Island WA. He elected discharge in 1972 after 12 year's service. He had cancer a few years ago, recovered but unfortunately it got him again on the rebound.

**VALE - KEVIN YESBERG  
1948 - 2014**

Bob Freeman advised that Sapper Kevin Yesberg, RAE died on 24 August 2014 after contracting emphysema following a collapsed lung seven years ago. Kevin was a National Serviceman who served with 32 Small Ship Squadron from 1969 to 1971. He was posted to the Squadron after completing FE3 training at the School of Military Engineering.

He served on *AV1354 Brudenell White* in New Zealand in 1969 and completed two tours in Vietnam aboard *AV1356 Clive Steele* in 1969 and 1970.

After leaving the Army he worked as a cane harvester in Florida USA for a period before returning to Tully Queensland where he was born and lived most of his life, taking up his trade of fitter and turner.

His funeral was held in Tully and attended by over 50 people. Kevin's wife, May died some years earlier. Our condolences go to his son, Carl and daughter, Jessica.



**Kevin Yesberg**



**VALE - KEN WHITBREAD  
1931 - 2014**

Brian Hart advised that Sergeant Kenneth Whitbread, RAE died on 25 September 2014.

Ken was a member of the CMF from 1952 to 1958 and served with 34 Australian Infantry Battalion during this time. He served in the ARA from 1969 to 1972. He was posted to 32 Small Ship Squadron in 1969 and served in Vietnam aboard *AV1353 Harry Chauvel* twice in 1970 and *AS3051 John Monash* twice in 1971.

Other units he served with were: 1 Recruit Training Battalion, School of Military Engineering, Transportation Centre, 1 Terminal Group and 1 Field Engineer Regiment.

Ken's funeral service was held at Taree NSW on 29 September 2014.

**VALE - JAMES CABLE  
1936 - 2014**

It was recently learned that Private James Cable, AACC died on 26 March 2014. Jim served as a cook aboard *AS3051 John Monash* in Vietnam in 1967/68. He also served with 86 Transport Platoon RAASC and I Australian Field Hospital in Vietnam during 1969/70. We don't have any more details about him but if anyone remembers him could you let me know and I'll add a few more things in the next newsletter.

**VALE - COLIN SYMONS  
1936 - 2014**

Sadly, Staff Sergeant Colin Symonds, RAE died on 25 October 2014 after having been admitted to hospice care at Murdoch Hospital in Perth. He has been suffering cancer for a long time and his condition worsened considerably. His funeral was held in Perth on 3 October 2014 and was attended by many people, and the Chapel was full. Members of our Association who attended were Charles Deans and Bill Culbertson. Charles reported that Nobby Clark came over from Hervey Bay Qld to assist Colin's wife, Pat and their sons, and to ensure that all DVA issues were attended to. An obituary by Speedie Sahariv was read out by Colin's son, Peter. The WA Sappers Association provided flag bearers.

Colin first came in contact with the Army when he was called up for National Service in 1955. After that he served three years in the CMF and then enlisted in the ARA in 1958 and remained there until he elected discharge in 1978.

Col sailed to Papua New Guinea twice in 1965 as a clerk aboard *AV1355 Vernon Sturdee*. He served in Vietnam in 1966 aboard *AV1356 Clive Steele*.

Other units Col served in were: 17 National Service Training Battalion, 3 Field Regiment Survey Troop, 1 Recruit Training Battalion, School of Military Engineering, Transportation Centre, 33 Port Squadron, HQ 32 Small Ship Squadron, HQ RAE 1 Division, HQ 1 Division, HQ Training Command and 4 Field Engineer Regiment.





Our thoughts and condolences go to his wife, Pat and sons, Peter and Mathew.

The picture below was taken at SME in 2006 during the 40th anniversary of RAE units being deployed to Vietnam. From left are: Derek Smith, Speedie Sahariv and Colin Symons.



## What is happening at Middle Head

This article is from the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust. The recent decisions of the Minister for the Environment and the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust regarding the former Defence lands at Middle Head, Mosman are not yet guaranteed. There has been a backlash from the community and notably from the fire brigades who rightly say there would be difficulty in getting people out of the area during a bush fire. There is a lot of doubt about it going ahead.

“The approval of an aged-care facility at 10 Terminal, Middle Head, follows the same model that the Harbour Trust has successfully adopted elsewhere at Headland Park: buildings are leased and adapted for uses that fit well in a parkland setting, and the area around the buildings is upgraded for public access and enjoyment. The reuse of the 10 Terminal buildings will serve an important public good. It will meet the area's growing need for aged care, set within public parkland open to all.

Since work began in earnest at Headland Park 14 years ago, over 40 hectares of the site has been opened up for public use. Most of this was land that the community had been previously unable to access. An extraordinary range of public facilities have been created at Headland Park. The public now enjoys spectacular harbour look-outs, outdoor walking trails and interpretation of historical military features. There are also a range of cafes and restaurants, sports facilities, a men's shed, an artists' precinct, gym, childcare centre, dance school, a marine research institute and a wide variety of commercial tenants”.



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## ANZAC DAY AT GERALDTON

We received this note and pictures from Carrol Spindler about their trip to WA to meet up with old friends and commemorate ANZAC day.

"Tony and Dalveen Harris, John and myself travelled from NSW to Dongara WA on the Indian Pacific to visit John (Slack) and Pat Lalor and surprise Ross and Hazel Davies for ANZAC Day this year. Ross is the President of Geraldton RSL and we had a wonderful time all round. The march was great and they even had a Turkish soldier in battle dress to march as well. Here are some photos of the day." Thanks Carrol - well done!



**John Lalor, Tony Harris, Ross Davies and John Spindler after the march**



**John Spindler and Tony Harris laying a wreath for 32 Small Ship Sqn**



## NEW MEMBERS

**Lawrie Wright** served with 32 Small Ship Squadron on *AV1355 Vernon Sturdee* and *AV1356 Clive Steele*. He also served with 22 Construction Squadron and the Papua New Guinea Construction Troop. Lawrie lives at Seville Grove, Western Australia.

**Ken Tonkin** served with 1 Terminal Group on *AS3051 John Monash* in Singapore and Indonesia. Ken lives at Cheltenham, Victoria

## DONATIONS

We thank the following members for their donations to the Association:

Bob Madgwick and Don Kennedy.

## JIM FLETCHER

Our Treasurer, Peter Tierney reports that he had recently spoken to Helen, the wife of Jim Fletcher. You would be aware that Jim has been in poor health for some time and he is now in full time care only a short walk from Helen's new home in Madeley, a suburb of Perth WA. She is now able to have daily contact with Jim. He has a strong recognition of Helen and communication has not deteriorated since Peter last spoke to her about six months ago. Sadly, walking is a thing of the past for him; however he and Helen always enjoy receiving Notice to Mariners where he has occasional memory, and recalls his time in 32.

All their family will be together later this year and Helen's ambition is to take him out in a wheel chair for a period during the day, perhaps for coffee.

Peter will keep in touch with Helen to maintain progress on his condition, but Helen would appreciate any of Jim's friends or former shipmates to give a call or maybe even visit Jim if is having a good day. She appreciates also the support of Charles Deans and others who have contacted and visited her. Her address is:

Helen Fletcher  
'Kingsway Court'  
19 Viscount Loop  
MADELEY WA 6065 Telephone: 08 6305 0506



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I was told that this Bushmaster vehicle belongs to 2 Combat Engineer Regiment during its deployment in Afghanistan. The sign on the rear door says, "FOLLOW THE SAPPER" which is pretty good advice, don't you think.

### **DIRECT DEBIT PAYMENTS**

Earlier this year we advised that we would trial 'direct debit' payment for members to pay for subscriptions, stock, raffle tickets etc. On the last subscription forms sent out we asked if you would prefer paying electronically. The response was fairly positive so our Treasurer, Peter Tierney would welcome this option. Cheques, money orders (or even cash) are also good. Use BSB 062182 Account No: 0090 2492 but please follow up with an email or post a note to Peter advising what you are paying for. This is important!

### **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

An Annual General meeting will be held on Monday 19 January 2015 at 1100hrs. The location is the RSL Sub-Branch hall at the corner of Alexander and Ady Streets Hunters Hill NSW. Come along and support your Association.



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## GEELONG GETAWAY

In our last newsletter we advised of the 8th Biannual Water Transport Reunion (although in recent years they have been 'Annual' affairs). It will be held over the period 16, 17, 18 October 2015 mainly at the Geelong RSL Club. By now you should have received a flyer/invitation with all the details, including payment on it.

David Gray and Brendan McCormack are organising it so if you need any further details or would like a flyer sent to you contact Dave at [david\\_helen@hotmail.com](mailto:david_helen@hotmail.com) or phone him on 0418 543 355 or Brendan at [micormac@y7mail.com](mailto:micormac@y7mail.com)

The planned program will be:

Friday 16 October 2015 - Meet and Greet at 5.30pm at the Geelong RSL Club.

Saturday 17 October 2015-Dinner / Dance at Geelong RSL Club. Timings TBA.

Sunday 18 October 2015 - Farewell BBQ at 1.00pm at Riverglen Holiday Park.

Geelong RSL Club is on the picturesque Barwon River. Its location is very close to three large caravan parks that run alongside the river, as well as a few motels and a shopping complex. The total cost for the weekend will be \$70.00 per head.

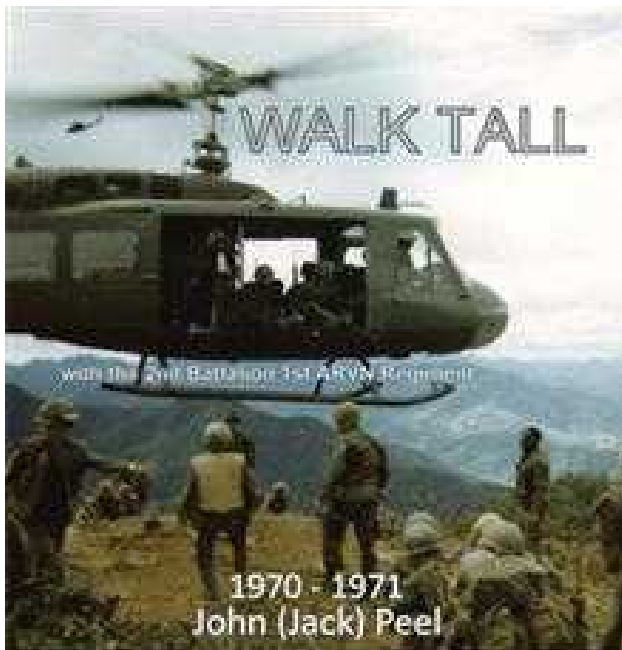
It has the makings of another good reunion. Bob Modystack has indicated that he could be available to provide a 32 Small Ship Squadron memorial down there. Well, you never know...

## JACK'S BOOK

On the next page there is an advertisement for Jack Peel's book, "Walk Tall' about his experiences with the Australian Army Training Team in Vietnam. It is a commendable account of the life of an Army Advisor in 1970 / 71. It tackles some of the political half-truths as well as Jack's personal experiences. It's quite a good read and he still has a few copies left. Might be a good Christmas present so get in quick!



## WALK TALL - WITH THE 2ND BATTALION, 1ST ARVN REGIMENT



### JACK PEEL

Jack began his Army career in 1959 as a 14th intake apprentice fitter and turner at the Army Apprentices School, Balcombe, Victoria.

From 1962 until 1969 he served with the Royal Australian Engineers as an engine room watch-keeper in Small Ships and as an instructor at the Transportation Centre, Chowder Bay.

He served with 32 Small Ship Squadron in Papua New Guinea in the early 1960s and on active service in Borneo in 1964. In 1966 he served as 3rd Engineer aboard AV1356 *Clive Steele* in Vietnam.

In 1968 Jack volunteered for service with the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam. After completing this training he arrived in South Vietnam in 1970. During his eleven month tour he served with and became the last member of the AATTV to serve with the 2nd Battalion, 1st ARVN Regiment when advisors were withdrawn. Jack was awarded the United States Army Commendation Medal and the Vietnamese Gallantry Cross with Silver Star as a result of his service with the 1st ARVN Regiment.

"Walk Tall" by Jack Peel is his view of the "American War". He has recorded his experiences along with his perceptions on the Army of the Republic of Vietnam's response to constant changes in policy, by reflecting on their character, culture and religion of the South Vietnamese soldier. It exposes the battles fought against their ideological enemy on one front, and the Saigon government on another, a government which ignored their cultural traditions threatening soldiers' families by neglect. It is recommended as an exceptionally good read!

To purchase this book a payment of only \$30.00 (special price to Association members) should be transferred to: Account Name: J.R.Peel BSB: 641 800 Account No: 200321990 (please also send an email with your name and address to [jackpeel@gmail.com](mailto:jackpeel@gmail.com)) or a cheque or money order can be posted to Jack Peel, PO Box 41, CAMBEWARRA NSW 2540.





## **A voyage to remember – on board John Monash in 1968**

In early 1968 John Monash was tasked to take 200 drums of automotive diesel fuel to Lord Howe Island. The reason for this was that the civvy ship that did the Sydney-Lord Howe-Pacific Islands run was going to change their itinerary and go the opposite way, namely Sydney-Pacific Islands- Lord Howe Island. This meant that the power station would run out of fuel and the Army was asked to give assistance which AHQ agreed to. (Little did we know of the future involvement with the LCHs and 17 Const Sqn RAE in the construction of the airfield there).

Anyhow the word got around as if by magic and next thing we know the Bureau of Meteorology has organized a package weather station to go. No problem, we can handle that. Next we hear there is a 35mm movie projector and rows of seats for a proposed cinema on the island. I imagine the deck crew not being impressed with this extra cargo. Add to this the growing list of groceries and frozen food. The main reason the deck crew were unhappy was that John Monash could not get inside the reef so everything would have to be discharged into the island's surf boats and hope for good weather.

Then a decision was made to take two LARC 5s and their RAASC Crew. Oh I forgot the junior officer's course that was accommodated in the luxury accommodation in the tween decks of Number 3 hold.

Off we sailed in early April 1968 with the intention of discharging all the cargo at Lord Howe Island and then RV with the LSM that was to visit New Zealand around the same time. Arriving at the island there was a bit of a swell but the decision was made that it would be safe to launch the LARCS. The Jumbo derrick was used and this was the first time that a lot of us had seen it used so there was a fair size crowd of onlookers or gawkers on deck.

All went fine getting the first LARC over the side but while suspended in mid air side a decent swell hit the ship and the eye bolt on the deck that the pulley block was attached to, to control the sideways movement of the main derrick gave way and the LARC was swinging in the breeze much to the disgust of Cpl 'Bomber' Brown, RAASC who was on board the LARC. Quick action by the Bosun, Hans Kumpel got the LARC into the water. Bomber Brown was an old LARC hand from ANARE re-supply run and later on he said he was used to disasters like that!

Naturally the weather worsened and further cargo movements ceased and we moved round to the western side of the island to shelter in a secure anchorage. So now we have a LARC stuck onshore with a few Sappers including me....Oh me Oh my. We will have to stay in the bowling club till the weather improves. In the meantime the ship's crew did a lot of fishing and we eat shark for a few weeks after that. Eventually discharge resumed but with only one LARC in the water, together with the island's surf boats it was much slower.



So it looked like we might miss the RV with the LSM in Wellington so the decision was to go and have a look at Balls Pyramid, a rock pinnacle a few hours sailing south of Lord Howe Island.



**Balls Pyramid**

**Source: Wikipedia**

Then a further decision was made to go up to Swains Reef to see if there were any more fishing boats on the reef. All good navigation training for the Young Officers, we were not just swanning around the Pacific -). Unfortunately all my photos of this voyage are back in Australia.

Sadly on 10 April 1968 the New Zealand Inter-island Ferry Wahine was caught in a bad storm and ran aground in Wellington harbor with the loss of 53 lives. This, I believe led to the LSM being held up in Wellington for quite a while. Bob Madgwick knows all about this voyage.

I do remember the toilets in the forward accommodation of the LSM being papered with New Zealand Dollars as the banks back in Australia were not interested in changing them due to their low value.

Jack Madden



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## Life on board John Monash

John Monash was a civilian cargo ship built by Ardrossan Shipyards in Scotland in the late 1950s for Adelaide Steamship Company. Eventually purchased by the Army, primarily as a training ship but the logistic requirements of the Vietnam War soon changed her role to that of a working cargo carrier. It was modified with a tween deck fitted in number 3 hold and 13 cabins were installed there for students or extra passengers.

One reason that the Army chose this particular ship was that it was flat bottomed and could sit on the mud, recycle the fresh water from on board and still work cargo with her electric operated winches. It was also converted to automotive diesel fuel to be compatible with Army fuel sources. Other conversions were the covering of the tween deck floor with Masonite to make it into a dance floor to entertain the nurses from 1 Mil Hospital at Yeronga.

Because it was an ex-merchant navy ship the accommodation was of a 'non military' standard. Ducted blown air was great for the tropics except for anyone down in number 3 hold. The idea was that the hatch cover could be opened to allow fresh air in but on a trip to Vietnam number 3 hold was often used for parcels and on the Christmas run there was always a great big freezer with the food for the troops on top of the hatch covers so that idea didn't really work.

All the modern luxuries – a diesel fuel fired cast iron range in the galley. Just the thing for the cooks in the tropics. Yet they did a fantastic job under often trying conditions. I almost forgot the time when we were used as a trial for the new freeze-dried food for the Army. Might have been OK for the Infantry as it was light and easy to re-constitute. The trial was to last 7 days but when I caught the skipper in the pantry eating a tin of peaches he decided to cancel the trial and give the crew decent meals – Much to the disgust of the Professor from the Army Food Research Establishment who was conducting the trials. Apparently he didn't appreciate the comments on the cards that everyone had to fill out after each meal.

My cabin was just under the bridge so it was always cool with port-holes facing forward and to the starboard side also. There was room on the deck for a bit of exercise and once there was a Subject A for promotion course run there while the ship was at sea. Plenty of room for King Neptune's crossing the line ceremonies.

We had some unusual trips. Down to Melbourne to pick up 200 tons of Courage Beer that the brewery had donated for the troops in Vietnam (I had heard, unconfirmed, that ASCO sold it to the unit messes and reduced the issue of other Australian beers until the Courage was all gone). On the same trip we went over to Davenport in Tasmania just for a look around and I had time to step on to the wharf then back on board again as we were tasked to return to Sydney for another trip to Vietnam.

We did go to exotic places like Subic Bay in the Philippines and always seemed to need some repairs as we passed by Singapore. Spent two weeks at a time in Butterworth, Malaysia, unloading new bombs and taking the old ones from there to the RAAF at Phan Rang. Darwin was always a stop to refuel and re-ration and usually buy a heap of fresh prawns to celebrate our return to Australia. Labuan, off Borneo was our chosen location to refuel before entering Vietnamese waters. Good Chinese gambling dens there!

Jack Madden



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## Property for sale

Ties (new stock now arrived)	\$25.00	LSM Lapel Badge	\$12.00
Association Book	\$30.00	Collar Badge	\$6.00
25th Anniversary Plaque	\$25.00	Association Woven Patch	\$8.00
Association Cap Navy Blue	\$15.00		
Association Polo Shirt (navy blue only) made to order			\$30.00

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