

# NOTICE TO MARINERS

Newsletter 32 Small Ship Squadron Association Incorporating RAE Tn

Patron: Colonel K L Duncan (RL)

## President's Message



With only a week to go many of us will be in Canberra for the plaque dedication ceremony in the Western Courtyard of the Australian War Memorial. This event has taken me twelve months to finalise and would not have happened without the solid support of the Patron Colonel Ken Duncan and Ross McMurray. I believe it would have been easier to be given an audience with Her Majesty than dealing with the bureaucrats at the War Memorial and D.V.A. The dedication file is now 45mm thick.

On a more positive side I can only thank General Peter Gration AC, OBE (Retd) for accepting our invitation to unveil the plaque and give a formal address on the Squadron. Last Monday evening I spoke with General Gration and he told me that he and his wife Ann were looking forward to the dedication and the anniversary dinner and how proud he was of 32 Small Ship Squadron.

My thanks to John Merrick for assisting Ross McMurray with the arrangements for the 40th anniversary dinner of our deployment to Vietnam at the Yowani Country Club. Ross has selected an excellent menu and wine list.

Major Geoff Grey CSM, Officer Commanding and Music Director and Warrant Officer Class One Stephen Hooper, Band Sergeant Major from the Royal Military College Band have supplied a piper and a bugler for the dedication ceremony and musical support for the anniversary dinner.

Monsignor Eugene Harley and Reverend Richard McCracken have accepted the Association's invitation to be Association padres. It is unfortunate that Reverend McCracken will not be able to attend due to a prior engagement. Monsignor Harley is looking forward to his involvement in the dedication ceremony.



## **PRESIDENTS MESSAGE Continued**

Unfortunately Brigadier Phil Greville CBE (Retd) (former Patron) is unable to attend due to health reasons and he and his wife June have sent their best wishes for the coming events.

You will all be sorry to hear that the Association publisher and ANZAC Day barman, Roger MacDonald has been diagnosed with a brain tumour and the operation is to take place on 30 March. Our prayers are with him for a speedy recovery.

## **JAMAIS ETRE REMORQUE**

**Ocka**

### **ANZAC DAY ACTIVITIES**

#### **MUNICIPALITY OF HUNTERS HILL – 83rd ANZAC MEMORIAL SERVICE**

On Friday 21 April 2006 a combined community ANZAC Service, arranged by the Hunters Hill Council, in conjunction with the Hunters Hill RSL Sub-Branch, will be held at the Town Hall. Prior to the service there will be the traditional evening march to the Town Hall. Members are asked to form up at the corner of Alexander and Woolwich Road ready to step off at 1940 hours. Service medals should be worn. Family and friends can meet at the front steps of the Town Hall. During the service our Association will lay a book (rather than a wreath) for presentation to a local school. Heavy bar snacks and refreshments will be served after the service at the Sub-Branch Memorial Hall.

#### **DAWN SERVICE – GEORGES HEIGHTS**

As stated on page 3, due to congestion and traffic problems at the Army Mariners' Memorial at Chowder Bay the Dawn Service will be held at Georges Heights on the site of the old WRAAC School / HQ Training Command. Enter via Suakin Drive (off Middle Head Road). There is ample parking. The service will be conducted by Mosman RSL Sub-Branch and will commence at 0530 hrs.

#### **DAWN SERVICE - SCHOOL OF MILITARY ENGINEERING**

The Dawn Service at SME will take place at the RAE Memorial and commence at 0530 hrs. After the service, breakfast will be served in the ORs Mess. (**MORE INFO TO COME**)

#### **ANZAC DAY MARCH – SYDNEY**

Assemble on the corner of Phillip and Bent Street in front of the Legal and General building by 1000 hrs. Step off time is usually around 1100 hrs which will give us a little time to renew acquaintances and take refreshment prior to the march. As usual, dress is requested to be coat, Association tie and service medals. The Banner Party has been appointed in advance. After the banner Party has formed up in Bent Street members should fall in on parade in columns of ten. When entering Martin Place the Association will divide into columns of five for the salute at the Cenotaph and reform into columns of ten after entering George Street. There will be an "Eyes



Right" for the Legacy widows called by the right marker shortly after entering George Street. On arriving at Hyde Park in Elizabeth Street the marshals will direct us to the dismissal area.

### **ANZAC DAY REUNION LUNCHEON – SYDNEY**

The reunion will be held at the Hunters Hill RSL Sub-branch on the corner of Alexandra and Ady Streets, Hunters Hill. As usual, Roger Macdonald will be manning the bar from noon, and Ross McMurray will be on the door. Similar to last year, a very good quality buffet luncheon will be served at 1400 hrs. And again, the price hasn't changed. Still only \$35.00 per head which includes drinks. I doubt you'll get this elsewhere for such a price. Guests are always welcome, especially the ladies. For those who turn up unannounced it will be \$45.00 per head, so try and let us know if you are attending as it is always a bit of a juggle to cater for a set number, with only a small leeway for contingencies. Drinks (beer, wine and limited spirits) will be available from noon to 6pm.

### **ANZAC DAY MARCH – PERTH**

Any member attending the ANZAC Day activities in Perth, especially those from interstate or country WA, please contact Doug Wyness for details on the Dawn service at Karrakatta or the march in Perth with the Australian Water Transport group. Phone him on 08 9581 4449 or email [awwyness@bigpond.net.au](mailto:awwyness@bigpond.net.au) Also, he has details about the 2007 Water Transport Reunion to be held in Perth.

### **ANZAC DAY RAFFLE**

The raffle is on again and you would have noticed your tickets in this newsletter. Once again, by popular demand, the prizes are a 6" solid brass ships clock on a Tasmanian oak backing, second prize is a brass display sextant in a timber carrying case and would look fantastic in your office or bar, and third prize will be a 3" version of the ships clock. The cost of the tickets is \$1.00 each and your support will be greatly appreciated. Go on, give it a go.

### **SICK PARADE**

We have just learned that Roger MacDonald is ill. As we go to print he is in hospital undergoing an operation. As you know, he is the stalwart publisher of the newsletter and his illness prevented him from doing this one (that's why this edition is a bit patchy, and is missing a few articles and photos). We wish him a full recovery, and send our best wishes to him and his wife, Gail. Get well soon, cobber.

One of our staunchest supporters at ANZAC Day activities is Jeff Beach who always sets a lively pace at such events. However, this year will be a bit quieter because he is recovering from a bout of problems involving arteries, an aneurysm and liver failure. However, true to form he is bouncing back and should be pretty well back to normal by the end of the year. He sends everyone his regards, and hopes to see all his old mates again on ANZAC Day 2007.

Allan Reading has also given us a scare. Not long ago he had a flu shot which turned out to be rather nasty. He was fortunate because he didn't catch the flu, but instead contracted encephalitis which is life threatening. He was in a bad way for some time but now seems to be recovering



pretty well. Obviously Margaret had a hand in his treatment which has been most successful. Hang in there, mate. Our thoughts are with you.

### **PLAQUE DEDICATION CEREMONY**

The 32 Small Ship Squadron RAE Plaque Dedication Ceremony will be held at the Australian War Memorial on 6 April 2006. That evening a dinner will be held at Yowani Country Club to commemorate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the deployment of the squadron to Vietnam. Details of these activities will be published in the next newsletter.

### **VALE – LES JOB**

Don Grace reported that Les Job (pronounced Yobe) passed away after a long illness on 3 February 2006. Les was a National Serviceman but transferred to the Regular Army for a couple of years after his original commitment. He served as a seaman on AS3031 John Monash and later in 35 water Transport Squadron as a deckhand on the tug AT 2700 Joe Mann (with Don Grace as the skipper). Our sympathy goes to Les' wife Elaine.

### **VALE – MAVIS DRAPER**

It is with regret that we report the passing of Herb Draper's wife, Mavis, on 1 February 2006 after a long battle with cancer. Mavis was very supportive of the Association and often attended functions with Herb. Our condolences to Herb and their son, Malcolm.

### **VALE – GARNET CARTER**

Dazz Graney reported the death of Garnet Carter, who died on 19 February 2006 at Coutts Crossing, near Grafton NSW, after moving there from Darwin about seven years ago. He was a cook on AV1353 Harry Chauvel in 1968. Dazz said that he died of emphysema.

### **VALE – REX HEWITT**

Mrs Hewitt advised that her husband, ex-Sergeant Rex Hewitt, died on 1 August 2002.

### **VALE – MAURICE VERRAN**

Mrs Mollie Verran advised that her husband, Maurice Verran, died on 14 October 2005.



## **THE ARMY MARINERS' MEMORIAL CHOWDER BAY**

The traditional Anzac Day Dawn Service commenced at Chowder Bay in 1975 with fourteen attendees. Ten years later, in 1985, the present Memorial was constructed and dedicated.

When the Army departed the area in 1997, our Patron, Colonel Ken Duncan (Retd), was appointed as the Official Custodian of the Memorial and the Dawn Services, and other events continued at the Memorial, with the Dawn Service growing rapidly in popularity. Since the turn of the century attendances have grown to more than one thousand people and Police and Emergency Services started imposing restrictions on parking anywhere closer than Middle Head and shuttle buses were needed to move the crowds.

It was obvious that a new venue was necessary and, with the cooperation of the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust, the Service has been moved to what many will remember as the WRAAC School, or Headquarters Training Command parade ground on Georges Heights. As part of this move the Mosman Sub-Branch of the RSL has assumed responsibility for the conduct of the Service in 2006.

The Army Mariners' Memorial remains at Chowder Bay, for use by Army mariners as desired, and Colonel Duncan is currently negotiating with the Federation Trust to pave the area between the memorial and the re-furbished parade ground, in order to increase the overall ambience of the site.



## **THE ARMY MARINERS MEMORIAL SYDNEY, NSW**



## A CENTURIAN AT VUNG TAU

In the December 2005 newsletter we had a photo of a Centurian tank disembarking from AV1356 Clive Steele at Vung Tau (pictured below). We had two responses to our request for details of how, when, where and why. Wally Blumenfeld (skipper of the LSM at that time) wrote ...

"The LSM was the "Clive Steele" and we moved 12 tanks from Cam Ranh Bay where they'd been discharged by a heavy lift crane from the "Jeparit" (there was no heavy lift crane at Vung Tau). We did three trips, running continuously between Cam Ranh Bay and Vung Tau. The fastest time in discharging four tanks from "down ramp" to "up ramp" in Vung Tau was 25 minutes. Our radar was unserviceable at the time and as our radar mechanic was on R&R in Hong Kong at that time, our watchkeepers navigated very well by the silhouettes of the hills on the coast!"

" I doubt whether any of the shore staff at Vung Tau appreciated our efforts, as the Duty Officer got quite indignant one night when I wanted fresh water at 2100 hours.

We made these trips around September / October in 1968".

George Stubbs also contacted us, backing up Wally's account (well, he would wouldn't he, as he was Wally's XO at the time). He said that although there was a heavy lift crane at Saigon capable of lifting the tanks, the "Jeparit" was reluctant to go there because of the potential threat of rocket and mine attack on the Saigon River. So that was why we had to go to Cam Ranh Bay instead. George thinks that this operation took place in November 1968.

Thanks Wally and George for this interesting story - especially the bit about navigating by the hills.



## **STORIES OF THE “JOHN MONASH”**

**By Les Muras**

I am relying on memory for this story.

I was selected for the first intake Nashos in July 1965 and completed my recruit training at Puckapunyal followed by Corps training at SME.

After completing the course at Casula I was posted to 6 Water Transport Workshops at Chowder Bay where I discovered everything that moved was saluted – and everything that didn’t was painted.

Not long after that I was attached to 32 Small Ship Squadron; my first ship was AV1354 Brudenell White. I was transported from Clifton Gardens to Woolwich late one afternoon and escorted on board the “White”, shown my one locker and a top bunk where the air conditioning trunking went across the end of the bunk so my feet could not fit with my toes pointing up.

I was told grub was on and shown to the galley, I was confronted by a big fat unshaven cook, and as he dumped a scoop of food onto my plate he said, “Do you want any of this garbage?” (Civilian cooks were still on board).

After engineering on the barges it was a wonderful change to transfer to AS3051 John Monash with real cabins and a spacious engine room with only half the noise of LSMs.

Around the early part of 1967 there was to be a joint exercise at Tin Can Bay, Queensland, and the “Monash” and the tug, AT2700 Joe Mann were to proceed there to participate in it.

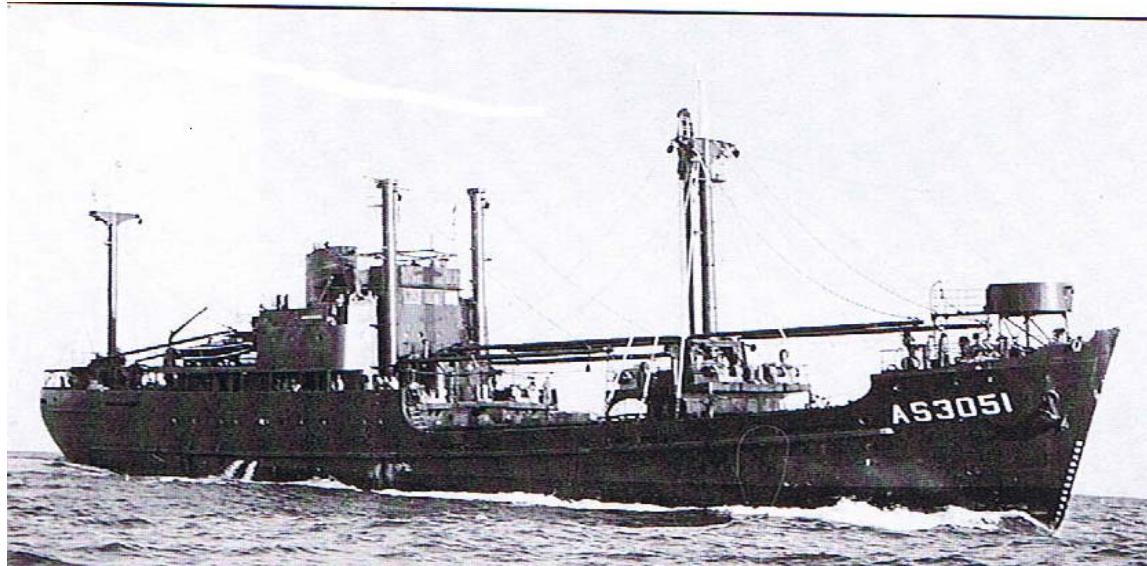
We left Sydney early morning, heading up the coast, progress was fine until a gale weather alert warned us that a cyclone off the Queensland coast had changed direction and was heading towards us. North of Nelson Bay the seas started to develop into huge rolling swells coming from a North East direction, still not a lot of wind, but the seas were really developing. At this point we were off Laurieton and a decision was made to get the “Joe Mann” into safe water, and we would steam North East and keep our head into it and weather the storm. We escorted the “Joe Mann” to the Laurieton Bar, and in she went - picked up on the stern by a breaking wave and broached. She rolled on her side and the wave went straight over her. In the wash the little tug popped up like a cork, straightened up and shot into Laurieton on the next wave. I think the guys on the tug had some underwear to clean. By this time the Monash was broadside to the swell, the ship heaved an almighty roll, there was a crash from the galley and the cook came flying out screaming, “Bloody sandwiches for lunch!”

Our task over, the duties for the next two days and nights were to keep our heading into the storm, which by now had developed into a cyclone. The engine room watch were constantly manning the throttle on the old Polar diesel. The huge waves were such that the stern of the ship would get lifted high and the propeller would come out of the water. Our task on the throttle was to cut back and stop the engine from throwing a leg out of bed.



When the cyclone abated enough that we could bring the ship around, and with the sea astern, we surfed back to Nelson Bay for shelter.

Nature had put paid to the exercise in Tin Can Bay.



## RAE FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Attached is an "OPORDER" giving details of the RAE Fortieth Anniversary activities centered around SME in August 2006. Please give it some thought and get your replies in to the organisers if you intend going to all or some of the activities. If you are going to the dinner, could you let me know so I can organise a few tables together (or even apart!.. Note that this is an advanced notice at this stage and further details will be given in the next couple of newsletters. I hope we get a good representation at this function because it may be the last time a lot of us will get to return to SME. In the next few years it will gradually be relocated to Puckapunyal. In fact some of the training is already conducted there. A sad turn of events for Sappers, but no doubt the bean counters and efficiency experts have done their sums!

## AN AMERICAN LOOKING FOR EX-CREW MEMBERS OF CLIVE STEELE

We recently received this letter via various sources from Dave Spencer, ex-US Coast Guard, who was stationed at Cat Lo in 1969:

" Sir, during my tenure in Vietnam in 1969 and 1970 at Cat Lo Base, about six miles up river from Vung Tau, was the home port of the US Coast Guard's Division 13. This Division was comprised of several 82 ft WPB Class cutters. A visiting Australian Army ship, the "Clive Steele" did moor at our site on several occasions. The "Steele" was a WWII type LSI or Landing Ship Infantry type vessel and by the design it appeared to be of American construction.



“The “Coasties” and the “Aussies” shared one of the finest parties I have ever attended. We brought the steaks and they brought the beer, we brought the balls and they brought the nets and bats.....need I say more!!!

“I rotated Stateside at the end of January 1970 but on the day before I left, I was forced to endure the “Rites of Departure” which can be endured only by ones sound stature and firm resolve. It was a fantastic program surrounded by tubs of blue Fosters, green VB and gold something or other. I am absolutely convinced that it was a resounding success as it took four days for my head to clear and another week and a half for the bruises to heal.

“Nevertheless, Sir, my question to you is, “Is the “Clive Steele” still surviving? Are there any of those illustrious, renegade rowdies still surviving? How can any of them be contacted?”

“I had the good fortune to visit your homeland for my “six day out-of-country R&R”. Ya got a good spot there, mate. My thanks for your country’s hospitality”.

“Yes, the plaque from the “Steele” still hangs on my “Hall of Honour”.

Thanks to you, Sir,

Dave Spencer  
Formerly: Boatswains Mate, First Class (at that time)  
US Coast Guard

Editor’s Note: Ian Henderson has set the record straight to Dave about the LSI being an LSM, the “gold something or other” being Castlemaine Perkins XXXX beer and also gave him a brief history on the Squadron. I’m sure some of you “illustrious, renegade rowdies” who served on AV1356 Clive Steele during 1969/70 could contact Dave and say G’Day at his email address: [bethdavespencer@adsnet.com](mailto:bethdavespencer@adsnet.com) or [mrtransportation@hotmail.com](mailto:mrtransportation@hotmail.com) He lives in Michigan City, Indiana, USA.

Could you let me know if you do contact him, and the outcome? Thanks

## LOOKING FOR ROGER FINN

Jeff Roberts, the son of an ex US Vietnam veteran, sent us the following edited letter:

“I am contacting you on behalf of my father, Richard Roberts. My father was in Vietnam from 1966 to 1967 in the First Cavalry Division, and was stationed at Vung Tau. During this time he met a fellow by the name of Roger Finn who was with 32 Small Ship Squadron. They became close friends and spent a lot of time together. When my father was transferred to Germany for the remainder of his tour, he lost touch with Roger and never heard from him again. However, before he left he traded National flags with Roger. Roger’s flag was from an LSM and my father’s flag was from his base.

“My father recently contacted me and said that it would be 40 years ago this year that they had traded flags, and I thought it would be really nice to see if I could contact Roger and bring the



flags together again. I have gained information on Roger from your Veterans Administration in Australia and they have given me some information but not enough to contact him. Any information on Roger's whereabouts would be very helpful and I would be in your debt forever".

Jeff Roberts  
1010 Wingate Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15210 USA

Telephone: 412-334-8026  
Email: [junior964@comcast.net](mailto:junior964@comcast.net)

Note: Army Records give the following details: 3789166, FINN, Roger DOB 23 April 1945, Served in 32 Small Ship Squadron from 23 January 1967 to 8 June 1967.

LSMs AV1356 Clive Steele and AV1355 Vernon Sturdee served in Vietnam during this period, so if anyone remembers or knows the whereabouts of Roger Finn could you please contact us and Jeff Roberts.

## NEW DEFENCE MEDAL

Last year we mentioned that the Government will issue an Australian Defence Medal for those with six years of service. However, there was a good deal of comment made about the criteria, and a number of issues (including the time in service) have now been resolved and the medal approved. The Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence, the Hon. Bruce Billson, MP made the following announcement today (30 March 2006):

"Australia will recognise the service of more than one million current and former Defence Force personnel with the Australian Defence Medal (ADM).

"Her majesty the Queen has approved the official regulations and design for the award that aims to recognise current and former Australian Defence Force (ADF) Regular and reserve personnel, and volunteer and National Servicemen, who have served since the end of World war II.

The Australian Government is committed to recognising the outstanding contribution to our proud military history made by Australian men and women in uniform.

"After extensive consultation with veterans' organisations and the wider community, the government has decided to broaden the eligibility criteria to include former ADF members who completed their initial enlistment period, or four years service, whichever is the lesser.

"The criteria also recognise National Servicemen and those who could not serve the four-year qualifying period because of the ADFs workplace and enlistment policies of the time.

"The expanded criteria also include those who die in service or are medically discharged due to permanent injury and unable to reach four years or complete their initial period of enlistment.



“Although creating any new medal is an extensive process which includes consultation, design and testing, Royal approval and manufacturing, the medal is an important tribute to those who have given so much for our country.

“Presentation ceremonies by senior military officers and federal parliamentarians are expected to commence in mid-2006 as the medals become available. I encourage all those eligible to submit applications and supporting evidence as soon as possible to receive the recognition they deserve.”

So there you have it. Looks like many of us are eligible for the gong. For further information, a special application form for the ADM is available from the Defence website at [www.defence.gov.au/dpe/dpe\\_site/honours\\_awards/](http://www.defence.gov.au/dpe/dpe_site/honours_awards/) and from RSLs and other ex-service organisations, or by calling 1800 111 321. Note that on the website the spaces between **dpe** and **site**, and **honours** and **awards** are actually underscores. They are obliterated by the underlining of the complete address. For those among us without computerlaters please disregard this. For those with them, do you want me to run through it again?

### Australian Defence Medal



## ATTENTION !!!!

Any member who receives their Notice To  
Mariners by email and would also like a  
hard copy please contact Ocka Murray  
to be placed on the mailing list.  
Back copies are also available.  
Changed your email address ?  
Let Ross McMurray know.

## Disclaimer

Thoughts expressed in this  
newsletter are those held by  
the writers and contributors  
and are NOT necessarily those  
of the editor or the Association  
Committee or members.

## Committee Members

This committee of the Association meets on the third Tuesday of each month at the  
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## Property for Sale

Ties.....\$18.00  
32 Small Ship Sqn. Book....\$30.00  
Assc. Aniversary Plaque.....\$25.00  
Assc. Patches..... \$8.00  
LSM Badges .....\$12.00  
( awaiting a new shipment )

Collar Badges.....\$6.00  
Flag Army Afloat..... \$50.00  
Assc. Caps (navy).....\$12.00  
Assc. Polo Shirts, White, Red  
And Navy To Order.....\$25.00

Contact Ken Shannon 02 9871 466

