

# NOTICE TO MARINERS

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

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

### President's Message

On Wednesday morning 24<sup>th</sup> Dennis I attended the funeral of the long battle with cancer on arriving at the Eastern Suburbs made our way to the West Chapel to family and friends.

The service was conducted by Commandant RACT, Peter White. as friends from the Masonic Lodge, Bonnie Doon Golf Club, the Amateur Dramatic & Musical Society and his military career spoke on their involvement with Martial.



February accompanied by Les late Martial Story. Martial lost his Wednesday 17 February. On Memorial Park Crematorium we find the chapel overflowing with

Representative Colonel Martial had a very interesting life

Martial did two tours to Vietnam during his military career – 11 Movement Control Group in 1966 and Headquarters Australian Force Vietnam in 1971. Les did a handover/takeover of the 40' work boat in Darwin from Martial in December 1963.

During the service the Last Post and Reveille were played by Ian Cox, Music Master at St. Josephs College Hunters Hill. After the service we were invited for refreshments at the Bonnie Doon Golf Club where many tales were told about Martial being a burglar in golf and Les telling us about the crocodile Martial kept under his married quarter in Darwin. The Association was represented at the funeral by Ken Duncan, David Clarke, Eric Hale and his wife Kim, Charles Watson, Ralph Pridmore and Ken and Kaye Shannon together with a number of members of RACT Association N.S.W.

On 21<sup>st</sup> February committee members of the Association and their wives attended the Garrison Church at Millers Points for a commemoration service for The Australian Water Transport Association RAE AIF. Both Association ensigns and the National Flag were displayed at the altar during the service. Afterwards we had a pleasant lunch at The Hero of Waterloo Hotel organised by Cec Weekes, President of the AWTA.

As ANZAC Day falls on a Sunday this year I hope to see a good attendance both at the march and luncheon.

Ocka

**JAMAIS ETRE REMORQUE**



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## ANZAC DAY ACTIVITIES

I'm sure members check the details of ANZAC Day dawn services and marches in their own area so I'll just put in details for Sydney for those who are visiting or attending.

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

A Gunfire Breakfast will commence at 0450 hrs in the vicinity of the RAE Monument. The Catafalque Party will mount at 0510 hrs and the service will commence shortly after. On completion of the service a breakfast will be available at the Other Ranks Mess followed by traditional ANZAC Day activities at the Peeler VC Club.

Note that this service is very popular so if you are attending please try and get there by 0430 hrs. Ample car parking is available.

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

The service will be conducted on the parade ground of the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust precinct commencing at 0530 hrs. Following the service there will be the traditional Gunfire Breakfast for those who require to be fortified by a beverage manufactured in Bundaberg, and also a light breakfast will be provided by the Mosman Lions Club for a nominal charge. Parking is available under the control of the SES.

### **ANZAC DAY MARCH – SYDNEY**

Assemble on the corner of Phillip and Bent Streets in front of the Legal and General building by 1000 hrs. Step off time is usually around 1100 hrs which will give us time to renew acquaintances and take refreshment before the long march to Hyde Park. The Banner Party has been appointed in advance, and after it has formed up we will assemble behind it. Coat, tie and medals please.

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

As usual the reunion will be held at the Hunters Hill RSL Sub-Branch Memorial Hall on the corner of Alexander and Ady Streets, Hunters Hill. A high quality buffet lunch will be served at 1400 hrs. Again we have managed to keep the cost down to \$40.00 per head which includes drinks. To put it on at this low price we need to know early the numbers attending, so please submit your return slip as soon as possible. Those who turn up unannounced, the cost will be \$50.00 a head.

### **ANZAC DAY RAFFLE**

The raffle is on again and your tickets are enclosed. The prizes are:

First Prize: 6" ship's clock and barometer, port hole style, solid brass, timber backed

Second Prize: 5" barometer, port hole style, solid brass, timber backed

Third Prize: 5" ships clock, port hole style, solid brass, timber backed

These popular items are made of brass and mounted on polished hardwood. The tickets are still only \$1.00 each or ten for \$10.00.



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### **ANZAC Day Brisbane**

Dawn Service – Meet at Sportsmans Club 2 CER Enoggera at 0430

March: There is a change to the ANZAC Day Brisbane City Parade this year. We form up just behind the official party. All World War II Veterans from all services will march in a block or travel in buses or vehicles. Then I expect our Post WW II units will step off a bit earlier so marchers are asked to be at the FUP by 10.00am. This year our form up point is in George Street on the left side facing Elizabeth Street, between Mary & Elizabeth Streets, near the old Lands Office building. We are Unit # 69 in the parade.

### **ANZAC Day Melbourne**

Dawn service at the Shrine

March: Sappers form up beside the Town Hall in Collins St by 11:00 am under the RAE Viet Assoc Banner (blue)

Reunion is at the Prahran RSL. Catch the # 6 Tram from the Base of the Shrine and get off at the front door in High St.

### **ANZAC Day Hobart**

The RAE Association of Tasmania members attend dawn services at their respective RSL branches and then march in the main ANZAC day parade in Hobart. The parade commences at 1100 hr (assemble at 1040 hr) and then gather at the Theatre Royal Hotel in Campbell Street for re-union drinks and lunch.

## **NEW MEMBER**

Welcome aboard Peter Griffiths who served in 32 Small Ship Squadron in Vietnam aboard *AV1353 Harry Chauvel* in 1967/68. He also served on *AV1354 Brudenell White* and *AV1355 Vernon Sturdee*. Peter and his wife, Kay live at Medowie NSW.

## **SICK PARADE**

Wally Blumenfeld recently had an accident while riding his bike with a group of friends. He came off rather heavily and managed to break a bone in his hip. He has been in traction at the Calvary Private Hospital, Canberra for a couple of weeks but is now on the mend. He even thinks he'll be able to attend the ANZAC Day march in Sydney.



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## SUBSCRIPTIONS

We have had a very positive response to our request in the December 2009 newsletter about lapsed subscriptions. Nearly everyone is now fully financial. Thank you to all who responded.

## DONATIONS

Thanks to the following members who recently made donations to the Association: Robert Tait, Colin Wright, George Stubbs, Bob Woodhouse, Bob McLeod, Max Lockwood and Gary Carne.

## CORRECTION

In the December 2009 edition of Notice to Mariners we showed some photos of the 'Albury Ambush'. One of them depicted Peter and Elaine Sewell but with incorrect spelling (see photo). We try to ensure that spelling is correct but occasionally mistakes are made. Apologies, Peter.



Peter and Elaine Sewell with Audrey and Bruce Pattison



## WANGI WANGI WIPEOUT WEEKEND

Gary and Sue Everitt are planning to have a mini Water Transport Reunion during weekend 15 – 17 October 2010. The venue is at Wangi Wangi NSW, which is located on the western shore of Lake Macquarie, about 20 km south of Newcastle.

Basic details are:

**Friday 15<sup>th</sup>:** Meet and Greet at the Wangi Wangi Caravan Park Camp Kitchen. BYO Everything (barbeque food, drinks, etc).

**Saturday 16<sup>th</sup>:** Morning Tea cruise around Lake Macquarie on the “Wangi Queen” in the morning, and that evening, dinner at the Wangi RSL Club.

**Sunday 17<sup>th</sup>:** Gunfire Breakfast/Brunch at the Wangi Wangi RSL Club beer garden.

**Accommodation** can be found at the following venues:

Wangi Wangi Point Caravan Park. Phone 02 4975 1889. There are cabins (but not many so book early), powered sites and tent sites.

Wangi Wangi Hotel. Phone 02 4975 5511.

Toronto Hotel. (15 minutes away) Phone 02 4959 4833.

Paradise Palms Caravan Park. (15 minutes away). Phone 02 4959 1271.

There are plenty of things to do and see in this picturesque part of the central coast. The spectacular Watagan Mountain range is only 30 minutes away, and the Hunter valley vineyards is an easy one hour drive.

Morriset Mega Markets are open on weekends and Dobell House at Wangi Wangi is popular. It was the home and studio of one of Australia’s greatest artists, Sir William Dobell and it’s open between 1 and 4 pm on Saturday and Sunday.

For golfers there’s the Toronto Golf and Country Club and the Morriset Country Club – both 15 minutes from Wangi Wangi.

Further details will be given in subsequent newsletters, including prices – but these will be kept to a minimum. To register your interest please email Gary at [sueeveritt@bigpond.com](mailto:sueeveritt@bigpond.com) or phone him on 02 9997 2648 or his mobile on 0408 414 400 or Sue’s mobile on 0407 069 076.



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## Passing parade and obituaries

### VALE – CAPTAIN HENRY SYDNEY (JOE) LAXTON 8 January 1917 – 10 January 2010 'JOE THE WO'

Nearly everyone in the Corps of RAE in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s would have known or known of Joe Laxton. Most would use words like 'legend' or 'icon.' Others may have said something else! He was probably all three. You always knew where you stood with Joe; he wasn't one to beat around the bush, and didn't suffer fools (gladly or otherwise). He was a good disciplinarian – hard but fair.

Here is a summary of Joe's extensive service, provided by Ron Gibbens:

2 May 1938: Enlisted in the PMF. Recruit training with 10 Heavy Battery RAA. Fort Largs, SA. Stationed at Keswick Barracks after training. Note: Prior to enlisting, Joe served in a CMF Mounted unit (horses) in SA. In early 1940 Joe volunteered for service with the 2<sup>nd</sup> AIF and served in the following units in Middle East, Far East, Pacific and Darwin:

23 Corps Field Park Company

2/8<sup>th</sup> Field Company

2/11<sup>th</sup> Field Company

23<sup>rd</sup> Field Company

In 1943/44 he joined the RAE Parachute Troop and Served with the 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Parachute Battalion, Far East, ending up as the RSM.

In February 1946 Joe returned to Australia and served at the Loveday Italian Internment Camp in the Riverland district of SA. While there Joe was selected as one of six Australian Military personnel chosen to join the London Victory March Contingent. They spent six months on HMAS Shropshire sailing to the UK and back.

On his return he was posted to Kapooka where he spent one day (not sure why), then posted to 2 ESB at Haberfield NSW. In 1947 he was posted to SME where he did an eight month Cadre course, training to be an instructor and staff in CMF units. He then served as an instructor with 2<sup>nd</sup> Field Engineer Regiment at Moore Park NSW. In 1951 he served for two years at RSME Chatham, Kent, UK as an exchange instructor, and then a further year with a RE Field Engineer Regiment with the British Army on the Rhine in Germany. In 1954 – 55 he was posted to SME as an instructor. During this time he spent 18 weeks as a student at the School of Infantry with three other sapper WOs.

From 1955 to 1960 he was the RSM of SME. In 1960 he was posted to the Transportation Training Centre at Chowder Bay as the RSM and remained there until 1962. 1962-64 RSM, Chief Engineers Branch, Eastern Command.

1964 Commissioned as a Lieutenant (QM) and posted to 21 Construction Squadron as QM.  
1965 Promoted to Captain and posted as 2IC 35 Field Squadron, Mount Isa and at the same time as Garrison Engineer North Queensland. Lavarack Barracks was being re-constructed at that time.



- 1969 Posted to 32 Small Ship Squadron.
- 1970 Posted to Georges Heights as Adjutant with 33 Terminal Squadron.
- 1970 Posted to 1 ALSG Vietnam.
- 1971-74 Posted to HQ 1 Terminal Group as QM and various other appointments
- 1974 Retired after 36 years service.

Joe had been in pretty good health up until a few years ago. He was very mobile and robust but started to have problems with circulation in his legs Last ANZAC Day Les Dennis saw Joe in Adelaide and wrote a good report about him in the July 2009 newsletter. However, later in the year he had one leg removed, and the other one was taken towards the end of the year. His good mate, Ron Gibbens, summed it up when Joe passed on:

“While I feel a great sadness and loss, I know that he was ready to lay down his arms and this is the kindest thing for this old warrior. He no longer had any quality of life. You would be aware that he was a very proud man and to have him rely on others to do everything for him was, I believe, too much to bear. I also know that he would not want us to grieve too long. He had a good life and helped so many along the way, and he has earned his final rest. I know too that the anecdotes about Joe are legion amongst those whose lives he touched; especially those of us who had the honour to serve in the RAE...”

Ron tells us a little of Joe’s early life, as follows:

“Joe was orphaned at quite an early age, his father had been a Light Horseman in the Middle East in WW1, was wounded and also suffered other illnesses as a result from which he subsequently died in the early 1920s. Sadly, a few short years later his mother his mother was electrocuted, leaving a family of orphans. Joe was about eight years old. Fortunately he came from a large family of brothers and sisters and they all looked after each other. For a while the government installed a lady to take care of them but Joe always maintained that she was no lady, but an absolute bitch! Soon he had had enough of her and he went to lodge a complaint at the relevant government office. Obviously they were not inclined to listen to a young boy but Joe persisted and to keep him quiet they sent somebody to the house. When the woman appeared at the door she was so drunk she could barely stand. She was removed immediately and the authorities deemed the eldest sisters were now capable of looking after the younger siblings.

Joe was among the first of the “Legacy” children and had a lifelong admiration for the organization. After a variety of jobs in the 1930s he finally found his life’s path in the Army. He married his first wife in 1937 and in 1938 she presented him with a daughter – Marie. Sadly his wife died in about 1943 and he was left alone to raise a young daughter. Fortunately the family rallied around and cared for her during his many absences. In about 1949 Joe met and married his second wife, Pearl, who proved to be his soulmate and they shared almost 50 happy tears together. They had a son – Peter”.

Ron then goes on to relate how he met Joe in 1961:

“After leaving the Royal Navy as a seaman/torpedoman for eight years I enlisted in the Australian Army and was naturally posted to Water Transport at Chowder Bay where of course Joe was RSM. When he learned that my fiancée was coming out from England to get married he asked me what arrangements we were making and whether we had family here and as the



answers were “none” and “no” he immediately offered to give the bride away and contacted her parents in England to seek their approval. He also helped us with organizing everything for the reception which was to be held in the Sergeants’ Mess at Chowder Bay. He and Pearl organized a couple of barbeques at their Middle Head married quarters so my fiancée could get to know some of the other wives and girlfriends. On the wedding day whilst on the way to the church she suggested to Joe that they arrive a little late as was the bride’s prerogative, however he informed her “the ceremony is scheduled to start at 1500 hrs and we will parade on time”. Needless to say she has always thought the world of Joe. He was a close friend and a second father to her for 49 years. “

As to Ron’s military service, he served in the Royal Navy then the Australian Army at Chowder Bay, then SME and 17 Construction Squadron. Because his wife had to return to England for family reasons he was given a compassionate discharge to go with her. He wanted to maintain his military connection and he joined a Royal Signals reserve unit which was the only one available in his area, and as he was a telecoms technician he rapidly made Sergeant. However, he kept in contact with their Australian friends and decided to return, which they did, and joined the CMF 44 Signals Squadron. He retired in 1976.

Joe’s funeral was held at the Centennial Park Cemetery in Adelaide on 25 January 2010. Many people attended including a number of Joe’s WW2 comrades and of course, Ron Gibbens and his wife, Olive.

Our Association was represented by Tich Freeman, Dave Miller and Terry Zajer.



Ron Gibbens and Joe, ANZAC Day, Adelaide 2009.





Joe and Les Dennis, ANZAC Day Adelaide 2009



The Warrant Officers and Senior NCO staff at SME in 1959. RSM Joe is front row, centre.



**VALE – PETER THOMAS NORTON CASKEY**  
**6 May 1933 - 3 February 2010**

It is with regret that we report the passing of 53103 Lieutenant Colonel Peter Caskey (Rtd) who died on 3 February 2010 after a long struggle with cancer. He was 76 years old.

Peter graduated from the Officer Cadet School, Portsea in 1957 and was allocated to RAE. He attended the Long Transportation Course at Chowder Bay in 1960. He was then posted to 32 Small Ship Squadron and sailed on *AV1354 Brudenell White* in 1961 as 1<sup>st</sup> Mate with “Two Thumbs” Tanner as the Skipper. He also sailed on *AV1355 Vernon Sturdee* as 1<sup>st</sup> Mate when it was deployed to Borneo in 1964 with Mike Heal as the Skipper.

Units Peter served in before he retired from the Army on 31 July 1976 were:

22 Construction Squadron

13 National Service Training Battalion

3 Water Transport Troop

30 Terminal Squadron

32 Small Ship Squadron

34 Water Transport Squadron

35 Water Transport Squadron

Headquarters 1 Terminal Group

Headquarters Northern Command



After retirement Peter settled in Brisbane and joined the Carrington Boating Club on the upper reaches of the Brisbane River near his home at Corinda. He was an active member of the club and was always on hand to offer assistance with marine engines or seamanship which he did frequently.

His family requested a private funeral which was in keeping with Peter’s no fuss approach to life. The family did, however, organize a memorial gathering at his club where he spent so much of his time. The gathering was arranged so that his friends could be present while his two sons, John and Rick could

spread their father’s ashes on the Brisbane River out from the club. It was a casual affair as requested by his family, and is what Peter would have expected. The attendance was large with a good turnout of Association members from as far away as Cairns and Canberra.

People from all aspects of Peter’s life stepped up to say a few words. The Army was represented by Laurie Hall who went through OCS Portsea with Peter, and Max Lockwood who sailed with him on LSMs and served with him in 22 Construction Squadron. George Stubbs read out apologies and condolences from our members who were unable to attend and filled in a few aspects of his time with the CMF Water Transport Unit in Brisbane, and also the friendships he maintained after his retirement from the Army after his 20 years of service.

One of Peter’s many projects at the Carrington Boating Club was to erect a large flagpole, complete with cross tree and gaff (as one would expect from such a man). The Commodore and



members of the club felt it would be fitting to dedicate the flagpole in Peter's memory. With Peter's family's permission, a portion of his ashes was interred in a small trench prepared at the base of the flagpole with a plaque above inscribed appropriately as the Peter Caskey Memorial Flagpole.

All of those present watched in silence as his two sons, John and Rick motored out and spread Peter's remaining ashes on the waters of the Brisbane River abeam his flagpole. The picture shows Alison Lambert replacing the soil where some of Peter's ashes were interred at the base of the flag pole. One of his grandsons is with her. Peter gave Alison a lot of assistance with repairs to her yacht. When Peter became sick Alison came down from the north coast to look after him.

Members who attended Peter's funeral were: Jack Campbell and wife, Jack Neenan, John Purcell, Bob Modystack, Laurie hall (OCS), Eddie Edstein, Phil Cannane, Max Lockwood, Bob Gunn, Geoff Rowbotham, Jack and Kay Campbell (OCS), Tony Batt and wife, Brett McDermott (representing James and Kate McDermott), Don Hacker, Charles and Jackie Gillman-Wells and George Stubbs. This list is not complete because not everyone signed the Attendance Book.

Thanks to George Stubbs for this information, and for the assistance he gave to Peter's family.

### **VALE – ROBERT JOHN GARRATT 30 July 1945 – February 2010**

We received word recently from Bob Gunn that former Sapper Robert Garratt had passed away. He was a National Serviceman who served in 32 Small Ship Squadron on *AV1355 Vernon Sturdee* in Vietnam in 1967. He was not a member of our Association.

Apparently he had an isolated and hard life. He had no next-of-kin and no known relatives that can be located. The cause of his death is not known at this stage. He died in Darwin in early February but no one claimed his body until it was discovered that he was a TPI. Although he was not a member the Northern Territory TPI Association the President rightly stated "...there is no way an ex-soldier who served his country is going to be buried in a Pauper's grave..." And so the NT TPI Association arranged for his burial at Darwin's Thorak Cemetery on 22 February 2010.

The TPI Association's President, Bob Johnston, was in hospital at the time and against the advice of hospital staff, discharged himself for a few hours so he could conduct the service. There were only about 15 persons present at the funeral including Noel Norton who represented our Association. Also in attendance was the Country/Liberal member for Sanderson, Peter Styles, MLA who will deliver a speech in Parliament about Bob's death shortly (we will try and get a copy).

The only person who had much contact with Bob was Stephen Ellis, manager of Pearl Marine Engineering, Darwin who employed him as machine shop tradesman's assistant in the early 1990s. He said he was a good worker, reliable and honest.



Yes, we are well aware that we have to go some time but usually it is with some dignity and surrounded by loved ones. Often we forget that there are people like Robert Garratt who have at some stage of their lives fallen by the way side. Thanks to the Northern Territory TPI Association for at least picking him up and burying him with honour.

He served in Vietnam on *AV1355 Vernon Sturdee* from June to December 1966. Perhaps some of his crew members who remember him could contact me and shed some light on his life.

## VALE – TERRY JACKA

**3 May 1946 – 15 March 2010**

Ocka Murray and David Clarke recently attended the funeral of their classmate at the Army Apprentices School, Terry Jacka who died of leukemia. The service was conducted at St Margaret's Presbyterian Church, Blaxland NSW.

Terry joined the Army as an apprentice fitter and turner in 1962. He served in various RAE units including a posting as Troop Sergeant of Support Troop, 30 Terminal Squadron in the late 1960s.

The funeral service was conducted by the Reverend Keith King who is the Padre of the NSW Rural Fire Service in which Terry had served for many years and had attained the rank of Group Leader. Many senior members of the RFS attended including the State Commissioner which gave an indication of the high regard that Terry was held in that organization. The RFS also formed a Guard of Honour.

Thanks to David Clarke for this information.

## RAE Vietnam 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary at SME



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## Our plaque in Canberra and a school searches for Veterans



Recently John and Carrol Spindler visited the AWM and our Squadron Plaque. The plaque is looking a bit weathered these days so John gave it a spruce up with a hanky, some spit and a fair bit of elbow grease. It's now looking like new. Thanks mate! Glad you remembered how to do it!

### LOOKING FOR JOHN MAXWELL

Guildford Grammar School in Perth is conducting research into former students who served in Vietnam. Apparently 73 former students went there (52 Army) and the school is doing this for its archives and possibly also for the Australian War Memorial.

One of these students was John Maxwell, a national Serviceman seaman who served in 32 Small Ship Squadron on *AV1356 Clive Steele* in Vietnam during period 11 July to 3 September 1970 and also from 2 to 12 March 1971.

This trip was the last voyage of the *Steele*. In Vietnam during rough weather (a typhoon no less) she lost her stern anchor, and on the way home, just north of Fraser Island the port bow door came adrift (although it didn't drift for very long).

She then limped into Bulimba where the starboard door was removed and the ramp welded to the superstructure. *Clive Steele* arrived at Woolwich a few days later after a slow trip down the coast. Rodger Seaward describes this episode in "Rolling Through 32".

So, if anyone who was on these two trips and remembers John Maxwell could you please contact me? Bob Freeman and John Bryden have also given some details about the two voyages but I would like some information about John himself; details about his recruit training, FE training, seamanship training, other vessels he may have served on plus anything else you can think of.



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## ANZAC DAY 2009

John Bryden, Gary Edwards and Bob Bailey attended the ANZAC Day parade at Widgee in 2009. Widgee is a small town west of Gympie. This coming ANZAC Day they will attend the parade at Borolen, a small town north of Bundaberg. They only go to small towns so they won't get into too much trouble.



In the photo Gary is fourth from the right in the front row, and John is behind him, wearing a grey beard. The only problem is we don't know where the front row starts and finishes.

## SYDNEY HERITAGE FLEET



Bruce Reilly is the Executive Chief Engineer on the 1902 Steam Tug, "*Waratah*", a vessel of the Sydney Heritage Fleet. Here he is playing with the levers and throttles in the engine room ( I distinctly remember that he was discouraged from doing just that by Phil Cannane, the Second Engineer when Bruce first joined *AV1356 Clive Steele* as the Chief Engineer.).

Bruce is also Second Engineer on the 1874 windjammer "*James Craig*" and is shortly to be examined to be Chief Engineer on her too. Bruce spends three days a week at the Sydney Heritage Fleet base where they are always looking for more volunteers. Michael Schultz is one.

So if you live near Sydney and still have some salt water in your veins, why not consider joining this organization. Phone the SHF on 02 9298 3888.



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## BORNEO PLAQUE DEDICATION

The deployment of elements of the Australian Army to Sabah during the Indonesian Confrontation from 1964 to 1966 was called *Operation Granite*. RAE units which served there were 1 Field Squadron Group, 7 Field Squadron Group, 21 Construction Squadron Group, 22 Construction Squadron Group and 24 Construction Squadron Group. *Operation Granite* commenced for 32 Small Ship Squadron on 23 May 1964 when two LSMs, *AV1353 Harry Chauvel*, commanded by Major Jim Wilson and *AV1355 Vernon Sturdee* commanded by Captain Mike Heal, sailed from Sydney loaded with plant and equipment for 7 Field Squadron Group, the initial RAE unit to serve in Sabah. The ships staged through Manus Island where they refueled and were then escorted to Borneo by minesweepers *HMAS Gull* and *HMAS Hawk*.

Once the LSMs had unloaded their cargo they assisted in the unloading at sea of all the Squadron's vehicles and 76 tons of stores at Jessleton from *HMAS Sydney* which, because of the limited port facilities and reasons of security, had to be anchored off shore in the harbour. The *Sydney's* aircraft assisted in this operation.

The task of the Engineers in Sabah was to complete 77 miles of road, most of it through virgin jungle. Each Squadron Group was in-country for about six months and as well as road building they also had to construct camps, airstrips and helipads on the long and tenuous supply line. On its completion the road contained six Bailey Bridges, seven timber bridges and 252 culverts. Four Sappers lost their lives on the operation.

On 23 September 2009 a large gathering assembled at the School of Military Engineering to dedicate a bronze plaque honouring the four Sappers who did not return. Lieutenant General Frank Hickling, AO, CSC (Rtd) accompanied by Brigadier Frank Cross, AO, DSM (Rtd) unveiled the plaque, and a Eulogy was delivered by Major General John Stein, AO (Rtd). These three officers were members of the deployed RAE units of *Operation Granite*.



## CHOWDER BAY PHOTO

Here is another interesting photo – this one supplied by Bill Moncur who was an RE Exchange Officer serving at the Transportation Centre in the early 1960s. This time we have all their names (but not ranks) provided by Ken Duncan. A bit of nostalgia for you older blokes...



Standing at Rear: Mal Thompson, Ken Duncan, Keith Alcock

Back Row: Ian Henderson, Jim Young, Mike Holton, Tom (Eric Bernhard) Crompton, Eddie Shaw, Dennis Castle, Bob Finch and Tony Hallett.

First Standing Row: Rob Vickery, John Merrick, Rod Roche, Phil Cameron, Jim McFarlane, Peter Caskey, Jim Wilson, Bill Mack, John Meade, John Hearn and Bruce Fletcher.

Seated: Bill White, MC (CO 10 MC Gp), Bill Moncur (RE Exchange), Jim Laughlin (CO 1 Port Regt), COL Bell (Engr in Chief), Phil Greville (DTn), COL Ed Logan (Engr in Chief Designate) and Gordon Combes (Director of Movements).

Craft at Wharf: NLE Barge, 62 ft Command Craft, 40ft Workboat, 56ft Tug, *AV1379 Tarra*.



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## A LETTER FROM DEREK SMITH AND THE MiVAC TRUST

Derek Smith has been a member and a great supporter of our Association for a long time. He served in Vietnam with 32 Small Ship Squadron, 1 Field Squadron, 21 Engineer Support Troop and Headquarters Australian Force Vietnam. Derek is the President of the North Queensland Branch of the Sapper Association of Queensland. He was instrumental in forming the Mine Victims and Clearance Trust (MiVAC). To find out what it's all about a description of its profile is shown below and on the two pages following it Derek gives us a glimpse of his recent project at Kon Tum, Vietnam. Our Association is an active supporter of it and will continue to assist. Perhaps you would like to help also.

### MiVAC *Mines Victims and Clearance Trust*

**Our lives begin to end, the day we become silent about things that matter.**

*Martin Luther King*

The MiVAC Trust is the initiative of Australian Vietnam Veterans who cleared landmines in Vietnam and have seen first hand, the devastation caused by these indiscriminate weapons. The two ex-Sappers who were the driving force behind the establishment of MiVAC are Rob Woolley and Jack Miller, both from Tasmania. MiVAC now has membership Australia wide and in the USA.

It is a voluntary organisation that has its primary aim to be fundraising and to inform the community of the dangers of landmines. The concept of MiVAC is not only to bring relief to those people living in areas affected by mine warfare, but to also provide a positive focus for those who served overseas, in any capacity, and are concerned about what has been left behind on their return to Australia.

Money raised is allocated to projects identified to the trustees of MiVAC by Australian de-miners, other Non Government Organisations or Federal Government agencies. 80 to 90% of funds effectively reach the identified projects.

Projects may include:

- a. Assistance to an Australian mine clearance operation,
- b. Provision of artificial limbs to victims,
- c. Medical/hygiene assistance to areas affected by land mines,
- d. Provision of farming equipment,
- e. Support to school children.
- f.

Some landmine facts that many people are unaware of include:

- a. Landmines target innocent civilians, as well as soldiers and those in de-mining teams.
- b. It is estimated that as many as 26,000 people are killed and maimed by landmines every year.
- c. Many of the victims are women and children.
- d. Australia is one of over 120 countries to sign the Treaty prohibiting the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of antipersonnel mines.
- e. Countries who have not yet signed the Treaty include USA, Russia, China, Egypt and Vietnam.



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Some statistics on landmines:

- a. It would cost about \$44billion AUD to remove every landmine in the world if no others are laid.
- b. It is estimated that there are 250 million landmines stock piled world wide.
- c. It is estimated that there are 110 million landmines in the ground world wide.
- d. 1 million people killed or maimed by anti personnel mines since 1975.
- e. It is estimated to cost \$1300 AUD to remove one landmine.
- f. It cost about \$4 AUD to make a landmine.

Mines make thousands of hectares of land impossible to cultivate. As a consequence, farmers and peasants' lives are put at risk, farming being the only resource to feed their families. Mines are often found near wells, graveyards, schools and even playgrounds; any social place could be mined according to the logic of terrorism, which doesn't spare anything or anyone. It doesn't matter if there is only one mine or hundreds, the land is inaccessible until it has been cleared. That is a very dangerous and expensive job. MiVAC is helping.

**You can help too. Become a member of MiVAC. Give a small donation. Every bit helps. The Queensland representative for MiVAC is Derek Smith. Please email him with your offer of support at [dsmith@ozemail.com.au](mailto:dsmith@ozemail.com.au) He will put you in touch with MiVAC representatives of other States if necessary.**

More detailed information about MiVAC can be found at [www.mivactrust.com.au/](http://www.mivactrust.com.au/)



**Derek Smith (right) with Speedie Sahariv at the Australian War Memorial during the 50th Anniversary activities.**



## 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
Book "Rolling Through 32" (includes postage)			\$45.00

Please contact Ken Shannon 02 9871 4667 or [property@32smallshipsqn.org.au](mailto:property@32smallshipsqn.org.au)

## Disclaimer

Views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Editor or the Committee of 32 Small Ship Sqn RAE Association Incorporating RAE Tn.

## Contributions

Contributions are welcome from members and their families of anything that is of interest of members. So, if you would like to contribute it doesn't have to be typed or in electronic form (although that helps). Just send it to the editor at

[editor@32smallshipsqn.org.au](mailto:editor@32smallshipsqn.org.au)  
or to

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## Email and Postal Addresses

Please let the Association know if you get a new email address or change your current one. The same goes for your postal address. Remember, we want to keep in touch with you!



April 2010 Notice to Mariners

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