

NOTICE TO MARINERS

Newsletter 32 Small Ship Squadron Association Incorporating RAE Tn

Patron: Colonel K.L. Duncan (Rtd)

President's Message

Governors-General of Australia

General Peter John Cosgrove AC, Governor-General of Australia on the

Of the 25 Governors-General term career Army officers. Sever records.

Alexander Hore-Ruthven, Earl of General from 1936-1945 was the first Victoria Cross as a young officer in the Sudan Campaign of 1898 for rescuing a comrade in the midst of a Dervish charge. He was severely wounded at Gallipoli and finished World War 1 as a Brigadier General.



MC is to become the 26th 28th of March 2014.

previously only three were long others had distinguished war

Gowrie was the 10th Governor-career military man. He won a

Field Marshal Sir William Slim, the 13th Governor -General from 1953-1960, was a regular soldier from the outbreak of World War 1. He too was wounded at Gallipoli and in 1918 won a Military Cross in Mesopotamia. His military fame came, however, when he commanded the British Army in Burma during World War 11.

The third career man, and only Australian, was the 24th Governor-General, Major General Michael Jeffery who held office from 2003-2008. Major-General Jeffery, won a Military Cross in Vietnam

There was the unusual case of Prince Henry, Duke of Gloucester, who was the 11th Governor-General from 1945-1947. He was an officer for 18 years and returned to active duty in World War 11. He was slightly wounded in France in 1940. But as the third son of King George V his primary career was being a royal.

Sir Ninian Martin Stephen served as a corporal in the Australian Army, 3rd Water Transport Group RAE AIF during World War 11 in New Guinea and Borneo rising to the rank of Lieutenant before discharge in 1946. Sir Ninian was the 20th Governor- General from 1982-1989. He is the Patron of the Australian Water Transport Association.

Our Patron, Colonel Ken Duncan and I had the privilege of attending a luncheon organised by the League of Ancient Mariners on Sydney Harbour in May 2007 at which General Cosgrove was the guest of honour.

Jamais Etre Remorque

Ocka



Notice to Mariners April 2014

ANZAC DAY ACTIVITIES – FRIDAY 25 APRIL 2014

I'm sure members will 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. 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. Also be aware of the strict security requirements. You will need to have photo ID (drivers licence is OK) to gain access to SME.

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

NOTE NEW FORM UP POSITION. Assemble on the corner of O'Connell and Bent Streets 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 spit roast lunch with vegetables and salads, desserts and fruit platters will be served at 1315 hrs. Please try and be there by then. Again we have managed to keep the cost down to \$50.00 per head which includes drinks (beer, soft, spirits and wine). 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. **For those who turn up unannounced the cost will be \$70.00 a head.**

ANZAC DAY RAFFLE

The raffle is on again and your tickets are enclosed or will be posted. The prizes are :

First Prize: 150mm Ships Radio Room Clock.

Second Prize: 150mm Ships Radio Room Clock.

Third Prize: 150mm Ships Radio Room Clock

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



Notice to Mariners April 2014

UPDATE ON COOLANGATTA CORROBOREE

By now everyone should have received a flyer with an attendance form outlining the program for Bob Modystack's Coolangatta Corroboree week end over 31 July 2014 to 2 August 2014. If you haven't received one and wish to attend please contact Steve Monk: Telephone 07 5599 9932, mobile 0477 489 920 or email steve_monk@bigpond.com

The program for the daily events will be:

Thursday 31 July 2014: 1730. Meet and Greet at the Billabong Caravan Park undercover area. BYO everything. A barbeque will be available.

Friday 1 August 2014. This is the major event, the unveiling of the Memorial at the Centaur Remembrance Walk, Point Danger.

0930 Morning Tea.

1000 Commemorative Ceremony. Some seating will be provided. Lieutenant General F.J.Hickling, AO, CSC, will be the Guest Speaker. He is a former Chief of Army, and is currently the Representative Colonel Commandant, Royal Australian Engineers. He is also a veteran of Borneo and Vietnam.

The ceremony will cover 32 Small Ship Squadron and its involvement with Vietnam and Papua New Guinea and also emphasise that 2014 is the 50th anniversary of the deployment of *AV1353 Harry Chauvel* and *AV1355 Vernon Sturdee* on active service to Borneo.

1200 - 1230 Move to the Twin Towns Services Club for lunch (five minutes away). .

1300 Lunch commences in the Vista Room.

Saturday 2 August 2014. The day will be free for sightseeing. At **1800** those attending the dinner cruise please assemble at the Faux Park Public Jetty (opposite Boyd's Caravan Park). Seating is limited so please return your attendance forms early.

Important Notice: Bob Modystack initiated this project and it started off by being a 50th anniversary for Borneo, and a Water Transport Reunion. This is still the case but it has since developed to include the Squadron's involvement in Vietnam and Papua New Guinea.

This has necessitated the Memorial itself being larger than Bob first envisaged and consequently the cost has increased because of this. Our Association is contributing towards some of the work, and some other organisations have been asked to help fund it.

However, there will be a shortfall and Bob would appreciate any financial assistance from members.



Notice to Mariners April 2014

BACK TO SME

About every two years the RAE Sergeants' Mess invites serving and ex-Senior NCOs and Warrant Officers back to SME for a reunion. This year will be the final one at Casula because the School will move to its new location at Holsworthy in 2015.

This final 'Back to SME' at Steele Barracks will be held over the period 3,4 and 5 October 2014. The program for the event will be as follows:

Friday 3 October. 1000hrs to 2000hrs. Registration at the RAE SGTs Mess.

Saturday 4 October. 0900hrs. Continue with Registration.

1000hrs. Memorial Service at the RAE Memorial.

1200hrs. BBQ Lunch at the RAE SGTs Mess.

1330hrs. Tour of the new SME at Holsworthy, and the new Museum.

1800hrs. Meet and Greet at the RAE SGTs Mess

1900hrs. Reunion Banquet at the RAE SGTs Mess.

Sunday 5 October. 0800hrs to 1000hrs. Buffet Breakfast.

1200hrs to 1315hrs. BBQ Lunch.

There will be Commemorative Polo Shirts and Port for sale which must be pre-ordered. These and the functions mentioned above have to be pre-paid and returned on a registration form. The costs are quite reasonable. The lunches and breakfast are \$10.00 per head and the banquet is \$50.00.

As this will be the last one at Casula it is expected there will be a big turnout. The SGTs Mess committee requested that people intending to join in the celebrations should have their registration forms returned to them no later than 16 August 2014.

The forms are two and a half pages long and therefore too big for this newsletter. If you would like one, please email me at secretary@32smallshipsqn.org.au or phone me on 02 9403 1456 if you would like one posted to you. Anyway, have a think about going. It will be a good opportunity to have a look at the School before it is bulldozed and turned into a civilian freight terminal.

There will be limited accommodation at SME in the OR lines but only for single men. However, partners are welcome and SME recommends the Best Western Casula Motor Inn, 667 Hume Highway, Casula 2170. Phone: 02 9822 5807, or email: info@bestwesterncasula.com.au, or www.bestwesterncasula.com.au Mention "Back to SME" for a discount.



LANDING CRAFT HEAVY - L126 BALIKPAPAN AN INTERVIEW WITH HER FIRST MASTER

An interview with WO2 Les Dennis, Ship's Master of the Army's new landing craft, *Balikpapan*

Note: Les was interviewed by the editor of "Australian Warship", Ross Gillett. This article was originally included in Issue 77, and published by Topmill Publishing who kindly approved this article.

The heavy landing craft (LCH *Balikpapan*) was delivered to the Australian Army in December 1971 and operated with them until transferred to the RAN in September 1974. The new LCH was put to work immediately, fulfilling the tasks and roles of the retired medium landing ships that Army operated between 1959 and 1970.

In December 2012, the Navy decommissioned *Balikpapan*, the oldest LCH, after an impressive total of 41 years' service. This is the story of the early years of the first of the class of eight vessels, when she served in her jungle green colour scheme.

1. How did the brand new *Balikpapan* of 1971/72 handle on her first mission to northern New South Wales?

Our first mission began immediately on assuming command. We sailed from Sydney to the Clarence River in support of a major Water Transport Training exercise which was an opportunity for the crew and myself to familiarise ourselves with *Balikpapan's* modern equipment and her handling characteristics. The LCH handled extremely well on the coastal voyage, although like all flat bottomed craft tended to be uncomfortable in anything above a moderate sea. Our role during the exercise was logistical support up and down the length of the Clarence River which also allowed all of us to accustomise ourselves to the capabilities of the new craft. All told I was very pleased with the performance of the vessel during our initial operation.

2. How successful was the design compared to the retired Army LSMs?

I believe the design of the LCH was far superior to the LSM as the 1940s era vessels were designed to carry out a limited number of beaching operations before being scrapped, whereas the LCH was designed for the long haul. As well, technology and ship building techniques were so much further advanced as to allow a far superior product. I believe it would be like comparing apples with oranges.

3. Did the crew find it easy to transfer from a 1940s era landing ship to a new craft with 1970s technology?

Water Transport crews never had any problem in adapting to the newer vessels as they came on line. As seamen and navigators their training was such as to enable them to operate any variety of water craft in the eventuality of having to take over the operations of a port in time of hostilities.

4. Did the smaller payload of the LCH affect your operations compared to the older LSMs with their larger tank decks?



Notice to Mariners April 2014

Operations were never compromised by the smaller payloads as we were still able to meet our commitments as far as transporting tanks, vehicles, plant, stores etc. For example we managed to move one Leopard and two Tiger tanks and equipment from Townsville to the Tropical Trials Unit at Innisfail without the need for a second trip. Also, we transported personnel, vehicles and equipment of an Army Reserve Unit from Hobart to Oakhampton Bay some ninety nautical miles up the east coast adjacent to Maria Island without leaving anything behind. So we had the capacity to meet our commitments as required.

5. What was the make-up of your crew?

Crew establishment was as follows;

- one Warrant Officer Class Two Master,
- two Sergeant Watch Keepers Deck,
- one Warrant Officer Class Two Chief Engineer,
- two Sergeant Watch Keepers Engine Room,
- one Sergeant Signaler,
- one Corporal Bosun,
- one Private Cook,
- one Craftsman Electrician and
- three Sapper Seaman.

6. How did the crew react to a new ship with modern facilities?

Compared to other vessels manned by our crews, with the exception of the cargo ship *John Monash*, *Balikpapan* was luxurious in regards to accommodation, equipment, navigation aids etc.

7. What was the most unusual event during your time as CO?

During my twelve months as Master of *Balikpapan* we spent but a few days in our home base in Sydney and carried out a variety of tasks, but two particular operations stand out, both of which were civilian oriented requests.

Firstly whilst supporting the Reserve Unit in Tasmania we were recalled to Hobart where I was briefed on a task to transport two very heavy and outsize pieces of plant equipment from Devonport to Three Hummock Island on the North West tip of Tasmania. An air strip was to be built on the Island and the civilian contractor was having difficulty with the vessel he had hired to do the job, due to its state of sea worthiness. He was aware that we were in the vicinity and enlisted the aid of the local MP, a brother of the then Defence Minister, who duly authorised our involvement. From the moment we turned west into Bass Strait for our passage to Devonport we became a commercial vessel with all its attendant consequences. But we completed the task to everyone's satisfaction and returned to Devonport prior to returning to Sydney, I might also add that a similar operation was carried out by my successor when the air strip was being built on Lord Howe Island.

The second task was far more challenging but also very interesting. We had just finished a few months of supporting a survey team in Torres Strait and adjacent waters when, instead of returning to Sydney, we were ordered to sail for Port Moresby. Coming under Naval Operational Command, I was briefed by the Commander in regards to our mission. Once again it was in response to a civilian request for assistance viz, the Admiral Nimitz Museum in Fredericksburg, Texas, USA. They had located war relics in the jungles of New Guinea and New Britain and needed our services to recover them for movement to various locations.



Our initial task was to sail to the north coast of New Guinea, beaching at Giropa, adjacent to Buna where the war relics lay. These consisted of three American General Stuart tanks and a Japanese anti-tank gun. One of the tanks had been destroyed by the anti-tank gun, injuring the Australian driver and killing his Australian hull gunner. Evidently it was unusual to find both relics together. After a couple of days spent recovering and securing the relics on board, a demanding task in itself, we departed for New Britain where we anchored in a lagoon at Gasmata on the south coast of the Island. Here a Japanese Val Dive bomber was airlifted on to our deck by an RAAF helicopter and after securing the plane we headed back to Port Moresby. After arriving there it was necessary to thoroughly clean all pieces of equipment before receiving a clearance certificate from Quarantine authorities which would also be recognised in Australia. One of the tanks was off loaded for the museum in Port Moresby and we commenced our passage back to Sydney. Here one of the tanks was destined for the Australian War Museum in Canberra whilst the remaining relics were transported to the USA by HMAS *Melbourne*, finally being delivered by road to the museum in Texas. At the completion of that task, I handed over command of *Balikpapan* to my successor.

8. Do you think Army Water Transport would have operated the craft as long as Navy?

I have no doubt that the Army would have operated the LCH every bit as long as the Navy, if not longer. Water Transport and Small Ships had a history of extending the life of a vessel far in excess of its originally designed life span. Work boats, 300 ton cargo vessels and the LSMs are prime examples. And, from my experience they would have been kept fully operational for as long as they were capable of putting to sea.

As a post script, I was invited to witness the handover of *Balikpapan* to the RAN in Brisbane in 1974. It left me with mixed feelings on the day as my time as Master was perhaps the most full filling experience in my time with Water Transport and Small Ships.

A FEW WORDS ABOUT LES DENNIS...

Les is one of our longest serving members and a past President of our Association. He first joined the CMF in 1951 in Brisbane and served with 2 Transportation Squadron RAE. In 1957 he joined the ARA and did recruit training at Kapooka, Corps training at SME and Army Seaman training at Chowder Bay.

He was a crew member of the Delivery Squadrons that brought the LSMs to Australia from Japan in 1959/60 - known as Krait Force 1 and Taipan Force 2. He served in 32 Small Ship Squadron and 35 Water Transport Squadron and also with the RAE Detachment Larrakeyah Barracks, Darwin. During this period he qualified as a Navigator and Watch Keeper Deck.

In 1971/72 he was posted as an exchange instructor at the US Transportation Centre, Fort Eustace, Virginia USA. On his return to Australia he was appointed Master, *L126 Balikpapan* and remained there until 1976 when he was promoted and posted as RSM 10 Terminal Regiment. He elected discharge in 1978 but rejoined the Army Reserve at 75 Water Transport Troop, 33 Terminal Squadron until 1984.

During period 1996 - 2009 he was Team Leader of the Australian Volunteer Coastal Patrol based at Broken Bay, Sydney. For his exceptional and exemplary service with this organization he had a vessel named after him - Coast Guard Rescue Vessel *CG 032 Les Dennis*.

Well done Les - what a fine career and record!



Notice to Mariners April 2014

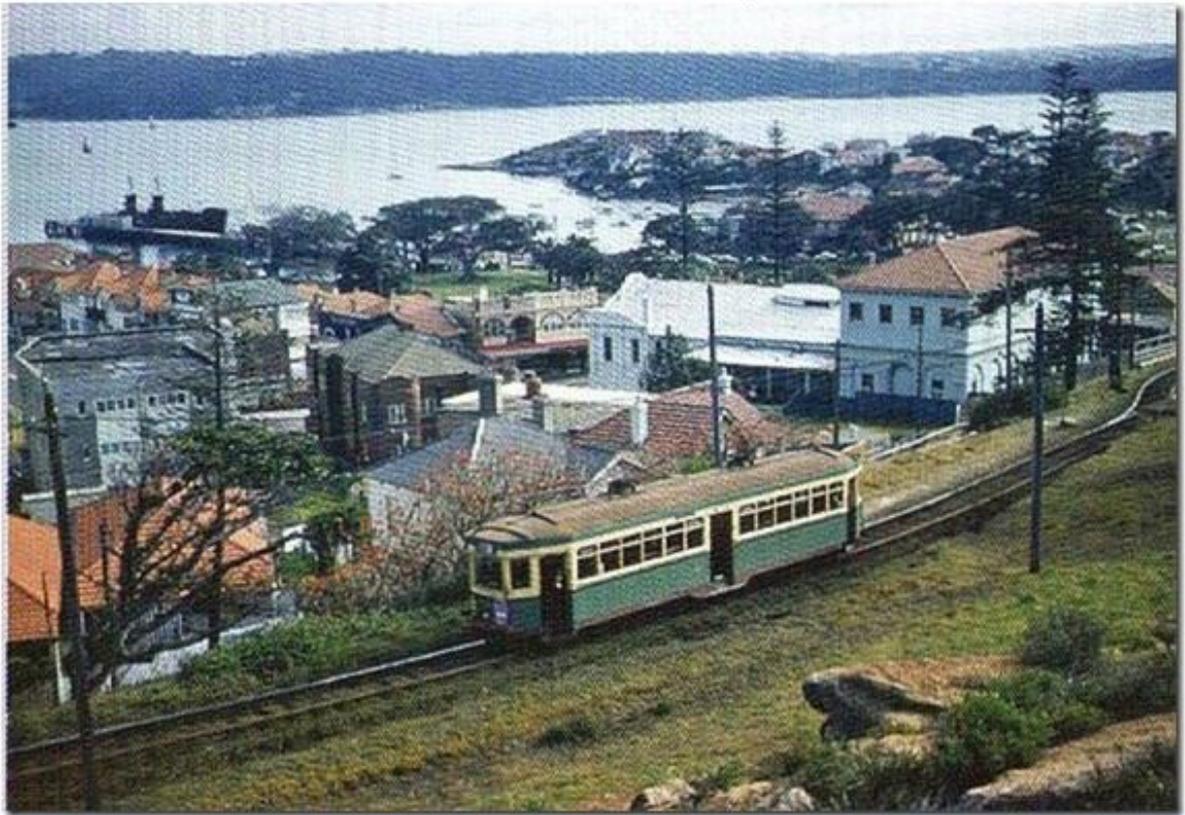


L126 Balikpapan in Army colours at Bulimba



Les Dennis on the bridge of the *Balikipapan*.
Both photos courtesy of Ross Gillett of Topmill Publishing.





Jack Madden sent this picture of the *Clive Steele* and *Brudenell White* tied up together to a wharf at Watsons Bay. (I know the green and yellow thing in the foreground looks like an LSM but it's not - it's a tram). Phil Cannane said it would be late 1961 when the *White* was about to go in for repairs, and its stores and equipment were transferred to the *Steele*. It was a walk off one, walk onto the other and away again.

VALE - TOM O'BRE 1945 - 2013

It was noted in a recent issue of the Vietnam Veterans' Association newsletter that Sapper Thomas Boyd O'Bre, RAE had died in 2013 (the actual date is not known). Tom was a National Serviceman who was born in Glasgow in 1945.

He served in Vietnam on *AV1355 Vernon Sturdee* in 1967 and on *AV1353 Harry Chauvel* in 1967/68. Not much else is known about Tom but I would appreciate any feedback from those who served with him. It's a bit sad when one of our own passes on and no one knew.

DIRECT DEBIT PAYMENTS

We intend to use the direct debit system for members to make payment for purchases of stock, subscriptions, raffles, membership, etc. We can't organise it for this lot of payments but it should be ready soon and details will be in the next newsletter. On the subscription form accompanying this newsletter there is a box for you to say if you would prefer to use it.



VALE - DON GRACE 1925 - 2013

Brian Hart recently reported the death of Sergeant Donald Francis Grace, RAE. He lived at The Entrance on the central coast of NSW. Don had not been well for some time and suffered heart and respiratory problems and also liver failure. He was admitted to Berkley Vale Hospital in late November and was transferred to a nearby nursing home where he died on 8 December 2013.

Don was born at Oyster Cove, Tasmania on 13 June 1925. He enlisted in the RAN in October 1943 and served on various ships in the waters of the Pacific Islands and Papua new Guinea. He was discharged from the Navy in June 1946.

He enlisted in the Army in 1959 and served in the following units: School of Military Engineering, 3 Small Ship Troop, 1 Small Ship Troop, 32 Small Ship Squadron, 4 Water Transport Troop, 35 Water Transport Squadron, Transportation Training Centre, 10 Terminal Group, 71 Water Transport Troop, 10 Terminal Regiment and 42 Transport Troop.

People who served with Don would remember him as a hard working seaman with a dry sense of humour and was as honest as the day was long. He was very popular, and well respected by all. He loved a game of cards when off duty and especially liked 'Crown and Anchor' where he would systematically relieve many a man's 'hard earned' on ANZAC Days.

Don's funeral service was held at Cessnock NSW and was attended by many family and friends. Our Association was represented by Graham Murray, David Clarke, Les Dennis, Brian Hart, Peter Tierney and Geoff Freeland. Cessnock RSL Sub-Branch conducted the eulogy, and a short wake with Don's family was held afterwards at the Ourimbah RSL Club.

Brian Hart has informed us that Don's ashes were scattered on Sunday 2 March 2014 in Broken Bay on an outgoing tide and under the RAE Afloat Ensign to sail the 'seven seas' at Don's leisure. Good bye old mate!

Jack Peel provided this eulogy which was read during the service.

"Many of us have two families, the one we are born into, and the one created as we serve our country. Don Grace is a member of the Army Water Transport family. Don experienced great difficulties and sadness through his life but he faced each situation squarely and soldiered on, and in doing so set a strong example to those serving with him. Don was never happier than when behind the helm of the Tug Boat 'Joe Mann' with one hand on the throttle, or feeding the sea birds at Woolwich Dock. A man of principles who was a loyal friend to many of us. Not one for parades or formalities, when we gather again for morning tea at the Sergeant's Mess in heaven, Don will be there warning us to avoid the mistakes he made, telling a joke or just enjoying the company. You may have passed from this world Don, but you have left some big boots to fill, and a vacancy at the Crown and Anchor table. Don, you will continue to live on the lips of members of the Water Transport family until we are reunited".

Our condolences to Don's children, Rosie, Danny, Patrick and Coralie.



Notice to Mariners April 2014



Dave Clarke, Ocka Murray, Les Dennis, Brian Hart and Geoff Freeland at Don's funeral.



Don's children, Rosie and Danny, who served in RAE as a WO2.



Notice to Mariners April 2014

VALE - DON SAILLARD 1936 - 2013

John (Speedie) Sahariv advised that Sergeant Donald Saillard, RAE died on 26 December 2013 at Westhaven Hospital, Cessnock NSW. He had cancer and had been in and out of hospital for some time. Fortunately Don wasn't in any pain when he passed on.

Don was conscripted into the Army in 1955 as a National Serviceman where he undertook basic training at 19 National Service Training Battalion, allocated to RAE and posted to 2 Field Engineer Regiment. After he finished National Service he joined the CMF and remained at 2 FER until 1960.

He enlisted into the Australian Regular Army in 1963 and was posted to 1 Field Engineer Regiment. In 1964/65 he served in Borneo with 1 Field Squadron. In 1966/67 he served in Vietnam, again with 1 Field Squadron. In 1967/68 he served in Vietnam with 32 Small Ship Squadron aboard *AV1353 Harry Chauvel*. He again served in Vietnam in 1970/71 with 55 Engineer Workshop and Park Squadron. All up, he served a total of 790 days in Vietnam. As well as serving in the units mentioned above he was also posted to HQ Eastern Command, 27 Engineer Stores Squadron and HQ 6 Construction Group.

About 30 people attended Don's funeral service at Cessnock. Speedie Sahariv represented the Association and five ex-members of 55 EWPS were there to farewell him. After the service he was moved from the Chapel to the hearse to the Corps march, "Wings". A guard of honour lined the footpath and a lone piper led the hearse through the town to the cemetery. Afterwards Don was farewelled in style at a wake at the Cessnock Bowling Club.



Don Saillard, Darryl Crilley and Speedie Sahariv at a 55 EWPS reunion in 2011



NEW MEMBER

Richard Campbell served with 32 Small Ship Squadron in Vietnam on *AV1353 Harry Chauvel*. He also served in Papua New Guinea. In fact he served aboard all five ships. He was later posted to 40 Water Transport Squadron. He lives at Evelyn Central, Queensland.

VALE - BOB ROSE 1941 - 2014

Again, we learn from the Vietnam Veterans' Association of another shipmate who died. This time it was Sapper Robert Rose, RAE who passed away on 9 January 2014. Bob was born in Bangalore India in 1941. He served in Vietnam in 1970 aboard *AV1356 Clive Steele*.

GEELONG GETAWAY

David Gray is organising a Water Transport Reunion in Geelong in Mid October 2015. It will be in the Belmont area which is a nice part of the country on the beautiful Bellarine Peninsula in Victoria. There are plenty of caravan parks, hotels, motels and an RSL club nearby. Further details will be given in coming newsletters, but pencil it in now.



I forgot who sent me this picture of LSM 220 somewhere in the Pacific in WWII. It looks like a huge terminal operation. Good picture though.



Notice to Mariners April 2014

INTERESTING PICTURES



In July 2008 and past newsletters we have updated the whereabouts of the tugs *The Luke* and *Joe Mann*. Here's a recent picture of *Joe Mann* at Anne Street Pier, Williamstown Victoria. Both these pictures were sent to us from Sandy McLean .



Here's a picture of the *Harry Chauvel* in Vietnam unloading a Centurion tank with assistance from what looks like a Caterpillar D8 bulldozer from 17 Construction Squadron. Does anyone have any details of this? If so, please let me know.



OLD MATES

Gerry Dunn reported that over the Christmas break he and his wife, Deb did a road trip from his home in Brisbane to Shepparton and stayed with Wayne (Bull) Rush who he hadn't seen for over 40 years. Most of you will recall that Bullrush was a Signalman on *AV1356 Clive Steele* and *AS3051 John Monash* in Vietnam from 1968 to 1972 and before that with 103 Signal Squadron in Vietnam in 1966/67. On the way to Shepparton they also stayed with George Scorgie who lives at Finley NSW.

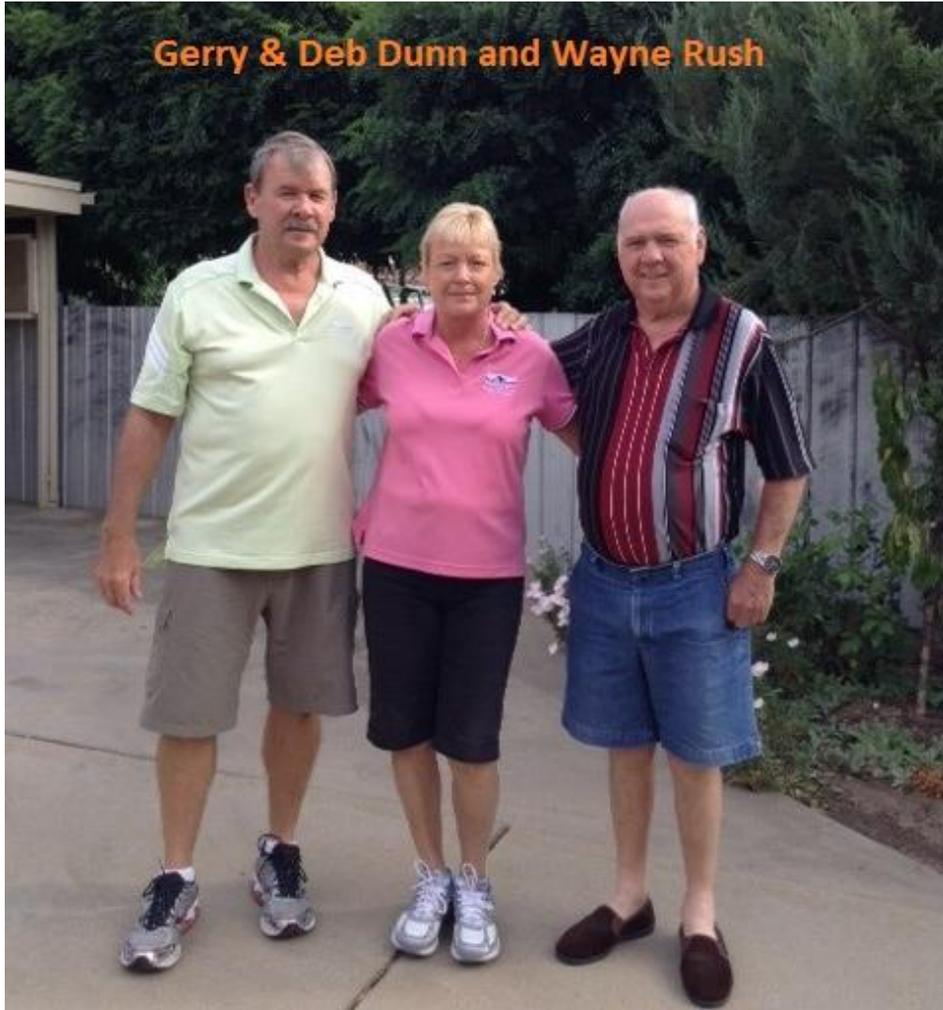
They then drove to Melbourne and caught a flight to Hobart where they had lunch with Paul Quarmby.

On the way back to Brisbane they stopped at Bandiana and had a good look around the Army Museum there, including the John Monash theatrette which has some memorabilia from *AS3051 Jon Monash*. Gerry says it's definitely worth a look if you are ever in that area.



Gerry Dunn and Paul Quarmby





Gerry and Deb Dunn, and Wayne Rush



The John Monash Theatrette at the Bandiana Museum



Notice to Mariners April 2014

Saigon after the fall by Jack Madden

In 2010 I was in Saigon (nobody there calls it Ho Chi Minh City, but it is now commonly called Sai Gon) and wanted to get a permit to go into the closed port at Vung Tau (Phu My). Naturally nobody could understand me and I finished up with the harbormaster, the only fluent English speaker in the Port Authority Office.

The harbormaster was a very interesting person. He originally came from North Vietnam but was in Poland doing his Masters ticket during the war. He said he intended to stay in Poland till the war finished! Anyhow we got around to talking about what happened immediately after the fall of Saigon.

The Army, he said, were a bunch of un-educated peasants who were only interested in anything of value they could steal. They even stole the Telex machine from the harbourmaster's office! They were under orders to destroy anything American or French.

As a result of this policy, for two weeks until a civil authority could be established, the Army went berserk. All the French land titles were destroyed, maps and hydrographical charts were burnt and all government documentation thrown out.

The Captain said this act set the country back 15 years. He showed me the chart for Saigon River and wharves and it was a photo copy of a hand drawn chart. He said the new administration had to sound the harbour using a rowing boat and a lead line. There was nothing else left to do the job. I never got my permit to go into Vung Tau container terminal. This was done by another department and I had run out of time.

Sadly the clapped out Russian Hydrofoil to Vung Tau has Perspex windows that you can't see out of and the small deck space available to passengers is crammed full of smokers. Though I believe there is a newer, better ferry in service now. The old one stopped every 5 minutes to rid the props of weed. The old DeLong Pier and LSM Hard area is now a container terminal. Cam Ranh Bay is now a major naval base and is off limits also.

I went down to Can Tho and nothing much is visible there. Plenty of corrugated iron buildings near where the US Navy Base used to be so the base was put to good use. When the US Navy pulled out they scuttled all the LCMs and LCUs in the middle of the Bassac River. When I was there the Vietnamese had just finished salvaging everything. Even after 46 years there was a profit to be made from the scrap.

Not many signs of the war nowadays. A few horse-shoe bunkers still at Tan Son Nhat airport but nothing else. It is now two generations since the war and everybody seems to have forgotten it. Travelled up to Hanoi by train and felt that Hanoi was the most boring city I had ever been. Got sucked into queuing for hours to see Uncle Ho's body in the massive mausoleum that houses it. There were more soldiers guarding that place than we have in NSW. From Hanoi Rosemarie and I went by bus into southern China but that is another story.



Notice to Mariners April 2014

the Canberra Times (ACT : 1926 - 1995), Wednesday 29 June 1960, page 14

Army Buys Two Additional Landing Ships From U.S.

The Australian Army has purchased two additional landing ships from the United States Government.

The Minister for the Army, Mr. J. O. Cramer, said yesterday this had increased the Army's fleet of such craft to four.

Specially trained crews drawn from the Regular Army and the Citizen Military Forces had taken delivery of the ships at a Japanese dockyard and were sailing them to Australia.

They were due to arrive in Brisbane on Thursday and Sydney on Saturday.

The first two ships arrived in Australia from Japan last December.

Mr. Cramer said the 1,000-ton craft, known officially as landing ships medium, would be used for ferrying Centurion tanks and general transport of stores and equipment.

The vessels were powered by two diesel engines giving them a speed of 13 knots and a range of up to 3,500 miles. They had been named Vernon Sturdee and Clive Steele after famous Australian generals.

the West Australian (Perth, WA : 1879 - 1954), Friday 10 November 1950, page 1

ARMY SQUADRON'S PROMPT ACTION IN SEA RESCUE

Within ten minutes of a police request for a rescue craft to go to the aid of the disabled Dutch trawler *Jacoba* near City Beach, a 49th Army workboat had left its base near the Fremantle railway bridge and was on its way to the stricken vessel.

Three hours later, when it was realised that the workboat could not tow the disabled trawler in the choppy sea, a larger Army craft, the 56ft. vessel *Lerida* was sent out and it towed the trawler back to Fremantle.

This was the first rescue work undertaken by the Army's water transport squadron in this State—No. 3 Transportation Squadron, Royal Australian Engineers (C.M.F.)—since it was announced fortnight ago that seagoing craft stationed at Fremantle could be continuously available for rescue work. The decision was made in conjunction with the R.A.A.F. after the Commissioner of Police (Mr. J. Doyle) had pointed out the need for an efficient sea-air rescue service. The squadron, which is manned by men of the Regular Army and the C.M.F., has a Fairmile craft, with a speed of 20 knots; the *Lerida*, which has a speed of eight knots; three ten-knot workboats, and a 300-ton cargo vessel. A special 40-ton army landing craft is also available. Most of the vessels are equipped with radio and

keep in touch with the station at the Artillery Barracks, Fremantle, when on exercises. The *Lerida* kept in constant touch with the station during the rescue operation.

One of the duties of the squadron is to make three trips a week to Rottnest with rations and stores and to return to the mainland with men on leave. Training exercises are conducted during C.M.F. parades at weekends. Parades are also held on each Tuesday night at the Fremantle Drill Hall. Recent recruits to the squadron include chemists, engineers and bank officers and members of the Army and Navy in World War II.



Notice to Mariners April 2014

Bill Culbertson sent us these two newspaper clippings. They may be difficult to read but it is the best we can do. The cutting about buying two additional LSMs is from the Canberra Times of 29 June 1960 and the one about the rescue is from the West Australian dated 10 November 1950.

Property for sale

Ties	\$25.00	LSM Lapel Badge	\$12.00
Association Book	\$30.00	Collar Badge	\$6.00
Association Woven Patch	\$8.00	Car Stickers	\$5.00
Association Cap Navy Blue	\$15.00		
Association Polo Shirt (navy blue only) made to order			\$30.00

Items may be purchased through the web site at www.32smallshipsqn.org.au and click on Q Store. Alternatively, please contact Ken or Kaye Shannon on 02 9871 4667 or email them at 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 to members. So, if you would like to contribute please have it typed on MSWord and send it to:

editor@32smallshipsqn.org.au

or to:

**32 Small Ship Squadron RAE Association
Box 33
12 Philip Mall
WEST PYMBLE NSW 2073**

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! An email to the Secretary or a note to the above address would be appreciated.



Notice to Mariners April 2014

Committee Members

President:	Graham Murray president@32smallshipsqn.org.au	02 9634 3752
Vice President:	Ken Shannon property@32smallshipsqn.org.au	02 9871 4667
Hon. Secretary:	Ross McMurray secretary@32smallshipsqn.org.au	02 9403 1456
Treasurer:	Peter Tierney treasurer@32smallshipsqn.org.au	02 4369 2616
Assistant Secretary/Treasurer Vacant		
Welfare Officer:	Bob Freeman 29 Victoria Road DUBBO NSW 2830	02 6882 2864
Property Member:	Ken Shannon property@32smallshipsqn.org.au	02 9871 4667
Social Member:	George Fisher	02 9876 4713
Committee:	Ian Johnston, BEM John Bryant elizabethandjohnb@gmail.com Bruce Reilly bruce@truckalign.com.au	02 9623 7948 02 9979 1197 02 4655 9394
Hon Auditor:	Lt Col Phil Cameron, OAM (Rtd)	
Editor NTM:	Ross McMurray	
Publisher NTM:	Jack Madden	
Chaplains:	Monsignor Eugene Harley Reverend Richard McCracken	
Web Address	www.32smallshipsqn.org.au	

