

# NOTICE TO MARINERS

*Newsletter 32 Small Ship Squadron Association Incorporating RAE Tn*

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

## **President's Message**

Major Sid Cheeseman AM, Workshop RAEME passed away Hospital. His two sons Ken and

Sid will be remembered as an RAEME at Woolwich from April

The celebration of his life was the Castlebrook Memorial March.



former OC of 1 Watercraft on 25 March 2015 in Westmead David were by his side.

outstanding OC of 1 Watercraft 1979 to February 1985.

held in the Crematorium Chapel of Chapel at Rouse Hill on Tuesday 31

The chapel was overflowing with those wishing to say farewell including residents of the Courtland Village North Parramatta, members of the League of Ancient Mariners and defence force colleagues being Mal Campbell, his wife Barb and eldest son Andrew, Keith and Ann Low, Dick and Georgie Kearnan, Glen McEvoy, Harry Cole, Brenden Robertson, Kerry Tunbridge, Garry Boylett and George Truelove.

The Association was represented by Ken Duncan (our Patron), Dave Clarke, Les Dennis, Ian Johnston BEM, Kaye Shannon and Ocka Murray. Our condolences to Michi Cheeseman and her family. The wake was held at the Castle Hill R.S.L. Club.

### **ANZAC DAY MARCH – SYDNEY**

On ANZAC Day Saturday 25 April 2015 we commemorated the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the ANZAC Gallipoli landing.

Unlike previous years there was no rain and our move to form up on the corner of O'Connell and Bent Streets was a good one. Once again our banner was carried by Sappers of 6 Field Squadron, 8 Engineer Regiment with many of their faces looking familiar – they are a credit to their Squadron.

The Association contingent was under the command of Dave Clarke assisted by Garry Smyth. It was the largest roll up for many years. Those on parade were

Norm Mason, Les Muras, Bruce Reilly, Bob Rodger, Phil Green, Lance Northey, Graham Berry, Ocka, Tich Freeman (S.A.), Bill Culbertson (W.A.), Bruce White, Garry Carne, John Phillips, Sandy McLean (Qld.), Gerry Dunn (Qld.), George Cosis, Bob Boyle, Steven Boyle,



**August 2015 Notice to Mariners**

John Peel, Rob Harris, Dorothy Hallinan, Keith Ford, Des McDonald, Jim Brown (Qld.), John McGregor, Arthur Jackson (Qld.), Garry Smyth, Adrian Farmer, Aaron Farmer, Warren Farmer, Mick McIvor, John Bryant, Len Ramsay, Carl Nobelius, Pat Riley, Wally Blumenfeld, Cathy Bevan (Neville), Zuri, John Gerber, Peter Atkinson, (Vic.), John Purcell (Qld.), Bill Tindale, Adrian McMillan, Brad Keating, Angus McKinnon, Fred Seidenkamp and Dave Clarke.

Allan Reading laid a wreath at the Memorial on behalf of the Squadron at the new SME located at Holsworthy.

### **ANZAC DAY MARCH – SYDNEY**



**John Gerber and Norm Mason**







**Arthur Jackson and Bill Tindale**



**Tich Freeman and Bruce Reilly**



**August 2015 Notice to Mariners**







George Cosis



Ocka Murray, Garry Smyth, Wally Blumenfeld, John Bryant, ???,  
Peter Atkinson and John Gerber



August 2015 Notice to Mariners



Gary Carne

**ANZAC DAY IN WOLLONGONG**



John Spindler on the left in both, with Billy Martin in the left picture and Dave Fryer in the right. They were meeting up for the march in Wollongong.



August 2015 Notice to Mariners



## ANZAC DAY IN BRISBANE

The Dawn service held at 2 Combat Engineer Regt in their new barracks was extremely well attended with, my estimate, over 1000 fronting up. So many that it was too many for the area around the memorial and some of the significance of the service was lost by the poor P.A. system and the large crowds.

The scale of Sapper's involvement in the post-Vietnam era conflicts was evident by the large number of younger Veterans and their families attending. Great to see.

The morning march through Brisbane was also well supported by the younger veterans but very few Vietnam veterans. Bill Corby, Peter Coloretti, Peter Aylett and myself were about all of that era that marched. Talking to a few others at the after-march re-union it is thought that a lot of the older Veterans had returned to their home towns for the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the ANZAC landings. The public turnout in the streets of Brisbane was a welcome sight.

Next year will be the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of 32 Small Ship Sqn's Vietnam commitment so there should be a big crowd in Sydney for that.



**ANZAC Day Brisbane 2015. Bill Corby and Jack Madden in front rank. Peter Coloretti photo.**



## BLAST FROM THE PAST



Here's a picture of Dave Briggs on the left with Robbie Robinson aboard *AV1356 Clive Steele* in Vietnam. Both are die-hard Balmain Tigers supporters but they went down 23-4 to St George in the 1966 Grand Final in Sydney. The picture was provided by Dave's daughter, Pam Courtney.

### VALE - FRANK PILKINGTON 1934 - 2015

Sapper Francis Douglas Pilkington RA/RAAC/RAE died in March 2015 aged 81 years. Frank was born in Sheerness, Kent, England and served seven years in the Royal Artillery. He saw active service in Malaya before coming to Australia as a direct enlistee in the ARA in 1961. He also served in Singapore. Prior to his service in 32 Small Ship Squadron as a seaman he was a Centurion tank driver.

His postings included:

- 1 Armoured Regiment
- 1 Forward Delivery Troop (Special)
- A Squadron 4/19 Prince of Wales Light Horse
- Transportation Training Centre
- 4 Water Transport Troop
- 32 Small Ship Squadron

Frank served in Papua New Guinea on *AV1353 Harry Chauvel* in 1965 and in Vietnam on *AS3051 John Monash* in 1966. He elected discharge in 1971 after ten years service.





**VALE - DAVID MEE**  
**1946 - 2015**

Second Lieutenant David Richard Mee RAE died earlier this year. David was a National Service officer. His postings during his two years of service were:

2 Recruit Training Battalion  
Officer Training Unit  
32 Small Ship Squadron  
30 Terminal Squadron

David served in Papua New Guinea in 1967 with 32 Small Ship Squadron. It is believed he lived in Ireland for the last few years.

**VALE - ALAN JONES**  
**1945 - 2015**

Private Alan William Jones AACC died on 23 May 2015. Alan was a National Serviceman and served on *AV1356 Clive Steele* in Vietnam in 1969

**VALE - BOB MADGWICK**  
**1939 - 2015**

Warrant Officer Robert Edward Madgwick RAAOC died 14 April 2015. Bob was born in Sydney and was called up for National Service in 1958. After this he served in the CMF for 14 years before joining the ARA. His postings included:

National Service Training Battalion, 13 National Service Training Battalion, 1 Division Ordnance Company, 11 Base Ordnance Depot, 6 Ordnance Field Park, 2 Base Ordnance Depot, 32 Small Ship Squadron, 103 Field Workshop Stores Section, 21 Supply Battalion, Department of Defence Central Office, Australian Capital Territory Workshop Platoon, 3 Base Workshop Battalion and 31 Supply Battalion.

During his four years in 32 Small Ship Squadron he served in Vietnam in 1968 aboard *AV1356 Clive Steele* and in 1969 aboard *AS3051 John Monash*.

Bob was an active member of the Army Museum at Bandiana Victoria and he was also a welfare officer at the Hume Veterans' Information Centre at Albury. He was a popular identity in the Albury / Wodonga area and was well liked and respected.

His funeral was held at Albury on 22 April 2015 and was well attended by his many civilian and Army friends. Kevin and Lynne Morley represented our Association.



**VALE - SID CHEESEMAN AM**  
**1935 – 2015**

Major Sidney Harold Cheeseman AM RAEME died on 25 March 2015 after a long illness. Sid was born at Crows Nest, Sydney on 7 March 1935. He grew up around Sydney and joined the Army in 1950 as a 4th intake apprentice vehicle mechanic at age 14 - possibly the youngest person to enter the Army Apprentices School.

Not long after graduating from AAS he was posted to Korea after the Korean War and served there, and also with the British Commonwealth Occupation Forces in Japan for two years. He also served in Antarctica not long after that. In Vietnam he was with the first commitment of troops, serving with the Australian Logistic Support Company at Bien Hoa - part of the 1 RAR Group which were with the US 173rd Airborne Brigade. After seven months there he continued his time in Vietnam with 101 Field Workshop.

He spent over three years on secondment in Thailand where he established the Trade Training Centre for Vehicle Mechanics. This was a major challenge for him, but also a great achievement, and gave him a lot of satisfaction for its success.

One of Sid's other achievements was his posting to the RAEME Training Centre, Bandiana where he trained adult tradesmen. His commitment, dedication and professionalism during his military career were recognised with the award of Member of the Order of Australia whilst at 1 Watercraft Workshop prior to his retirement. Sid was an author who wrote the history of Army Apprentices - "From Boy to Soldier". he wrote numerous article for Associations and his last was "An Overview and History of 1 Watercraft Workshop. He loved military history and was a prolific writer.

Sid's funeral was held at the Castlebrook Memorial Gardens Crematorium. There were over 120 people present of which about half were his family and friends and the remainder were either ex Army Apprentices or RAEME members who served with Sid either in Australia or overseas. A wake was held at Castle Hill RSL Club. Our Association was represented by Graham Murray, Ken Duncan, Ian Johnston, Mal Campbell and his son, Kaye Shannon and Les Dennis.

Our condolences go to Sid's wife, Mishie, and sons Ken and David and wives, children and grandchildren. Sid's postings during his 35 year's service were: Army Apprentices School, Eastern Command Workshop, Australian Ancillary Unit Korea, 1 Commonwealth Division Infantry Workshop, British Commonwealth Base Workshop, 2 Base Workshop, 1 Field Regiment Light Aid Detachment, Headquarters Eastern Command, Australian Logistic Support Company, 101 Field Workshop, 1 Watercraft Workshop, Army Headquarters Melbourne, Motor Mechanics Training Centre Thailand, RAEME Training Centre, 35 Water Transport Squadron and HQ 2 EME Group.

Thanks to Harry Cole, Kerry Tunbridge, Ken Duncan and the Australian Army Apprentices Association for information provided for this article.







**Major Sid Cheeseman AM**

**VALE - JAMES YOUNG  
1924 - 2015**

Frank Poole recently advised the death of Major James Young RAAF/ RAE. Frank attended his funeral and submitted this report:

"Jim Young succumbed to cancer in Queensland on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2015. He was 91 years young. Jim lived a colourful life serving in both WW2 and Vietnam, as well as long service in peace. In WW2 Jim enlisted in the RAAF in January 1942 as a just 18 year old who served as a tail gunner and sometimes navigator in Catalina flying boats flying out of North Australia, and later from the Philippines and Borneo, with the covert "Black Cat" flights. He was later awarded the Freedom of the Philippines Medal for his role in freeing the Philippines from the Japanese. These flights took him on long range night time low level mining and bombing operations ranging as far as China and many of the occupied islands. He also inserted and supported commando operations and island coast watchers and transported captured Japanese for interrogation. Jim left the Air Force in January 1946.

Jim joined the Army in the CMF and was allocated to RAE in December 1951 and proceeded through full time duty, Special Reserve and eventually the Regular Army in July 1953. He served with 16 and 21 Construction Sqns, SME and the Jungle Training Centre. Jim then found the Transportation Service of the Corps and joined HQ 32 Small Ship Squadron in April 1960 and had postings to Transportation Centre, 3 Small Ship Troop (*AV1354 Brudenell White*), Army Headquarters, HQ Far east land Forces, HQ 1 Terminal Group, Military Advisors Bangkok and HQ Eastern Command.

Jim had been suffering failing health in Canberra for some time and I had spent time visiting him in hospital where he would, with some prompting recount his "adventures" in the "Black Cats" and looked back fondly on (most) of his time with Tn. His son Grant arranged for him to move up to Queensland where he was closer and better able to care for him, but unfortunately



Jim passed away only some months after the move. He specifically requested an RSL remembrance service back in Canberra where he had his mates and I was very pleased to be able to conduct this service at the RMC Chapel with about 150 present. In attendance were his daughter Gail and sons Grant, Warren (Ex RAE) and Neil and other family members, both local and from interstate and overseas.

RIP Jim"

Thanks for that Frank.

## NEW MEMBERS

We would like to welcome on board the following new members:

**John Tobin** served with 4 Water Transport Troop, mainly on *AT2700 Joe Mann* and various other watercraft. John lives at Kaniva, Victoria.

**Bill Clifford** served with 40 Water Transport Squadron (Heavy) on *L126 Balikpapan*. He also served with 35 Water Transport Squadron, 5/7 Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment and 1 Commando Regiment. Bill lives half a world away in Ballynoe Mallow, County Cork, Ireland.

**David Philpot** served with 35 Water Transport Squadron on *AT2700 Joe Mann*. He also served with 10 Terminal Regiment, Army Maritime School and the Special Air Service Regiment. David lives at Bicton, WA.

**Robert Ogg** served with 35 Water Transport Squadron, Army Maritime School and 1 Watercraft Workshop. Robert lives at Mudgee, NSW.

**Raymond Charters** served with 30 Terminal Squadron in Vietnam in 1969/70. He lives at Wendouree, Victoria

## DONATIONS

We recently received donations from the following members:

Bill Bott, Brian Clulow, Richard Cains, Phil Cameron, Bob Clarke, Jim Creighton, Jerry Davey, Ken Duncan, Les Dennis, Keith Ford, Dazz Graney, Tom Gilchrist, Charles Gillman-Wells, Louis Hesterman, Ross Hayes, Gerry Dunn, Max Lockwood AM, Jack Lawson, Brendan McCormack, Angus McKinnon, Jack Madden, Jim Mulligan, Noel Norton, Peter Nodin, Mike Priest (UK), Rick Paddon, John Pulis, Bruce Potter, Brice Rowe, Len Ramsay, Fred Seidencamp, Rodger Seaward, Pat Scott, Michael Schultz, Ron Woods, Doug Whitwam, Ray Winter, Ian Wilson and Terry Zajac.

Thank you one and all. Your contributions are most welcome and very much appreciated. Please get back to me if I've spelled your name incorrectly or missed your name.





**SICK PARADE**

Mick Festing is not well. His wife, Virginia, advised that he has had a couple of setbacks and is now living in a nursing home at Lawnton, Brisbane.



Here's a picture of Mick in his younger days. Looks like he's at the back beach near Vung Tau. He served aboard *AV1355 Vernon Sturdee* in 1967.

**GEELONG GETAWAY**

Dave Gray reports that all is going well for the Water Transport Reunion on 16-18 October. The numbers are filling fast but late bookings can be made with Dave on 0418 543 355. It looks like being a great week end in Geelong.

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**VIETNAM VETERANS' DAY - 18 AUGUST 2015**  
**ATTENDANCE FORM**

Please look at the notice on the next page to see details of the Vietnam Veterans' Day Service at SME on Tuesday 18 August 2015. If you wish to attend and have lunch please fill out this form and send it with a cheque to address shown. Alternatively you can pay electronically but send this form anyway so your details can be lodged with the security guards on the main gate. If you just wish to attend the service and not have lunch please also fill out the form. Also be aware that the new entrance to Holsworthy Barracks is now located a kilometre south of where it used to be. It's on Heathcote Road towards Engadine.

**Yes, I will attend the service / lunch on 18 August 2015. Post cheque or money order to RAE Vietnam Memorial, PO Box 165 Moorebank NSW 1875 (\$25 per head). Returns are required by 10 August 2015.**

NAME-----  
ADDRESS-----  
PHONE NO-----Email-----  
VEHICLE REGISTRATION NO-----  
GUESTS NAMES-----

If not enough space please attach their details on a separate piece of paper





## REDEDICATION OF THE RAE VIETNAM MEMORIAL, VIETNAM VETERANS' DAY 18th AUGUST 2015

Preparations for this year's rather special service are well under way, the first at the new Home of the Sapper within the Holsworthy Military Precinct, where we gather to not only remember those who did not return from the Vietnam War but also those from the more recent operations.

Lieutenant General F J Hickling, AO CSC the Representative Colonel Commandant, Royal Australian Engineers, will be the Guest Speaker and will conduct the rededication. The service will begin in the new Holsworthy Chapel, and then proceed to the RAE Vietnam Memorial.

The service will commence at 11.00am sharp, and be followed by lunch and refreshments in the Chapel precinct. A cash bar will operate there. The new RAE Corps Museum will be open after lunch and also the Corps Shop. Lunch will be \$25.00 per head.

All Sappers and fellow veterans of all conflicts are welcome to attend, **BUT** due to base security, entry can be a little onerous so, be patient and try to be early. Tea and coffee will be available on arrival.

Also **YOU MUST** be registered to attend, so please use the form on page XX or send an email that lists the names of all those attending and the registration number of your vehicle, so we can get you on the list and keep you informed. A photo ID (drivers licence is OK) will be required at the precinct entry for all but children under 16. Close off date for registration is 13<sup>th</sup> August 2015.

Payment for lunch can be by cheque or money order made out to '**RAE Vietnam Memorial**' to PO Box 165, Moorebank NSW 1875, or a direct deposit to RAE Vietnam Memorial, BSB 803 205 Acct No 20765047. Please use your name as a reference so we can tie up payments. Use the form on previous page.

Email to: [vietmemorialcom@tpg.com.au](mailto:vietmemorialcom@tpg.com.au)

**Entry to the Holsworthy Precinct is via the new entry off Heathcote Road**



**August 2015 Notice to Mariners**



## OFFICIAL OPENING OF SME - 26 JUNE 2015

The Drum Major tossed his mace into the air as the Australian Army Band - Sydney marched on to the parade ground for the official opening of Steele Lines, Holsworthy Barracks, now located off the Heathcote Road, Holsworthy. The big day had arrived.

Chairs had been placed for the Old and Bold to the front of the parade either side of the raised VIP area. The sun was shining in spite of a wet weather forecast and a large spectator group were enjoying the occasion. The transition through the security gates had flowed smoothly and there was more than enough parking. The Salvation Army coffee vehicle was visited and arrival snacks provided.

The RSM, WO1 David Harvey, marched on, called the markers and the staff of SME marched on in two divisions. Officers were posted and the second in command, US Army Engineers exchange officer, Major Caswell, resplendent in his US Army Ceremonial uniform, handed over to Lieutenant Colonel Ken Martin the CO. The Corps Banner was marched on to the strains of the Corps march, "Wings."

Official guests were then received; Brigadier Wayne Budd, AM, CSC, Major General Steven Day, AM, DSC, and Lieutenant General Angus Campbell AM, DSC. Then followed the inspection where the band played a catchy little tune; a departure from the traditional waltz.

Later I was told there was a degree of concern when the General stopped to pat the only explosive detection dog on parade who is known to bite, but on this occasion sat to attention and wagged his tail. Something about the hand that feeds? The march past was well executed and followed by an advance in review order and a faultless General Salute. Sapper Neil Ranger the youngest member of the staff delivered the Bible reading and Chaplain Ricky Su gave the blessing. Lieutenant General Campbell spoke and was joined by Brigadier Budd to unveil the commemorative plaque.

The march off followed to generous applause, with the band playing "The Road to Gundagai" and "A Brown Slouch Hat." All retired to the forecourt of the RAE Museum for the official opening. Lieutenant General Campbell and Brigadier Budd officiated and thanked the many volunteers who had assisted in the relocation from Casula, and spoke of the history and accomplishments of the past now safely preserved. Bursting with pride Sebastian Spencer, the Curator, welcomed all present to a very good luncheon inside the museum.

The day concluded with demonstrations of Sapper Skill by students currently attending the School of Military Engineering; Home of the Sapper.

**(This article was furnished by Jack Peel. Well done, Jack - you should write a book!)**



August 2015 Notice to Mariners

**OPENING OF STEELE LINES, HOLSWORTHY 26 JUNE 2015**



**The RAE Vietnam Memorial**



**Some of the VIPs in the audience at the opening ceremony**



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**Marching on the RAE Corps Banner**



**The Reviewing Officer, Lieutenant General Angus Campbell AM DSC, Commander Forces Command, with a few lieutenants from SME**



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**Jack Peel and Alan Reading (in the centre) at the opening.**



**The RAE Vietnam Memorial**



**August 2015 Notice to Mariners**





**Lieutenant General Campbell (on the left) handing over the School of Military Engineering to the RAE Head of Corps, Brigadier Wayne Budd AM CSC.**



**Lieutenant General Campbell and the CO SME, Lieutenant Colonel Ken Martin inspecting the guard and trying not to trip over the explosive detection dogs.**



**August 2015 Notice to Mariners**



**UPGRADING OF THE HINMOU PEUNG AND PONG HOR WATER SYSTEMS FOR THE PHOUKOD DISTRICT, XIENG KHOUANG PROVINCE, LAOS PDR**

Earlier this year I volunteered to work with MiVAC to upgrade the water systems to the remote villages of Hinmou Peung and Pong Hor in Laos Peoples' Democratic Republic.

MiVAC has operated in SE Asia for 11 Years, commencing with land mines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) clearance, and has embraced the need to marry mine clearance with development and assistance to the communities affected by mines and UXO.

Xieng Khouang province was the scene of much fighting during the Vietnam War and one of two most affected provinces in terms of the number of casualties. Nearly two million tons of ordnance was dropped on Laos with this province being the most hit. Even today the presence of UXO and mines is enormous and they continue to kill and maim civilians here.

During the mine / UXO clearance work it became apparent that the 500 inhabitants of the Hinmou Peung and Pong Hor villages needed additional clean water sources, proper sanitation facilities and improved conditions to their schools. Other villages were included with this but I concentrated on these two. They are about 45 km north west of Phonsavan, the provincial capital. Each village has a population of about 250 people of the Hmong ethnic group. They are mainly cattle and pig farmers and also grow rice, corn and bananas. They are very poor with little or no income.

My job was to provide water to the villages. Up until then women and young girls would carry 20L cans of water for up to 4km from a dam back to their village as there was inadequate or no storage of water available.

The scope of works for both villages were different but usually included:

- Locating a good water source - usually a spring, dam or creek.
- Designing, supplying and installing material for a concrete weir and headworks at the source.
- Digging trenches and laying 63mm diameter polypipe from the headworks to a holding tank.
- Digging trenches and laying 50mm diameter polypipe from the holding tank to a number of water points throughout the village.
- Providing water to the school and its toilets.
- Providing septic toilet packs to the village.

After locating a water source the proposed supply pipe trench to each village must be examined and cleared of UXO or mines before proceeding. This is undertaken by a government organisation called UXO Lao.

The water source had to be higher than the village because it was to be gravity fed - no pumps. This created some difficulties because the villages were always built on high ground





and at Hinmou Peung the school was higher than the source so I had to provide guttering on the school roof to fill a 2000L water tank. This was achieved because the roof was made of corrugated steel (built by MiVAC about five years ago). The roofs on the houses throughout the village were of thatched grass so water tanks were not an option.

Gaining access to the work sites was also a problem. The site of one source was at the base of a steep ravine which also made it difficult to work in. Because of bad weather the ground was always soft and muddy despite diverter drainage. The only access to the site was by a narrow path cut through jungle into the side of the ravine. All materials; timber for formwork, sand, gravel, cement, steel reinforcement, tools, etc had to be brought up a distance of 3.5 km by hand - usually in baskets on villagers backs. But they worked tirelessly and never complained. They also had a good sense of humour. They thought it hilarious when I tripped and fell down a hill whilst carrying a 36" pipe wrench. It made their day. They were more concerned about damaging the wrench than with any damage to me.

At the conclusion of each project the government sends out a team from the district health department to the village and conducts a two day health and hygiene training seminar for the villagers. After this a handover ceremony is conducted followed by a celebration lunch. Also a water committee is formed to look after the sustainability of the system, including repairs and maintenance. The system is then given to the village.

The cost of supplying water to each village was about AU\$10,000. Funding for the projects was jointly provided by MiVAC and Rotary International. A Memorandum of Understanding was agreed to by both parties and the Laotian government to ensure that the works would comply with their regulations.

During the three months I was there I lived in a small house, rented by MiVAC in Phonsavan, a town of about 45,000 people located in Xieng Khouang Province. MiVAC paid for the water and electricity (both were constantly interrupted) and an ancient Pajero 4WD which occasionally stopped, but after removing the thermostat and replacing the alternator and starter motor it settled down.

I had to provide and cook my own food which was OK. The cost of living is about a quarter to that of Australia. There are a few restaurants in town and I ate out a couple of times a week. I enjoyed my time there. The work was pretty hard and long (up to 12 hours a day, six days a week) but after a few "what the hell am I doing here?" moments I settled down and got stuck into it. The Lao people are happy and generous. I made many friends with them and a few Australian ex-patriots who work there.

The MiVAC web site is [www.mivac.org.au](http://www.mivac.org.au). Our Association has supported MiVAC and will continue to do so. Perhaps you can help. They would be grateful of a donation.

On the next couple of pages are some pictures of the work.





Mostly ladies starting to dig a 4 km long pipe trench. Note that the lady in the middle of the picture has her baby on her back. The men were away planting rice.



A section of Hinmou Peung village.







A nearly completed water point in the village.



Me attending to a small leak.



August 2015 Notice to Mariners



**Twists and Turns on the Tasman Sea**  
**An Unexpected Episode Afloat.**  
**By Major W. M. (Bill) Moncur, RE (Rtd).**

Between 1963 and 1965 I was posted to Australia as an exchange officer with the Royal Australian Engineers (Transportation) based in the beautiful City of Sydney, New South Wales.

The appointment I was to fill was that of Senior Instructor at the Transportation Training Centre at Chowder Bay on the North Shore of Sydney Harbour in the district of Sydney called Mosman. My wife Rosel and I, with our three young sons were to occupy an ancient military cottage on a million dollar site actually lapped by the waters of the harbour.

My duties in Australia were to involve me in furthering the training of officers and men in the functions of Military Transportation namely the construction and operation of Railways and Ports including the operation of Marine Craft. I was to include in my responsibilities that of Navigation and Seamanship training, subjects I had been trained in on my own Long Transportation Course in England.

Two trips were to stand out in my memory of my time in Australia. The Royal Australian Engineers were responsible for the operation of Landing Ships Medium (LSM's) capable of carrying five tanks plus personnel. The vessels were ocean going and each carried a crew of about 35. The Captains of these vessels had the Army rank of Captain in the Royal Australian Engineers and all had Masters Certificates. Some had been recruited from the UK and from commercial Shipping Companies and held short service commissions.

The principal course being run by me was an Officers' Long Transportation Course, on a similar but shortened syllabus to the two year course run in the UK. In maritime matters this included a Seamanship training cruise from Sydney to Tasmania, and thereafter to Melbourne and Adelaide; and also, separately, a Navigation cruise from Townsville in Queensland to Noumea in New Caledonia and return to Sydney.

The latter voyage was also to serve as an official visit to the French forces in New Caledonia and at the same time participate in the annual Anzac Day parade for that year in Noumea. This story refers to this particular trip.

We flew from Sydney to Townsville to join the ship which had just come from New Guinea where it had been engaged on re-supply. A day or so was spent settling in on board and effecting preliminary duties for the trip including victualling and refuelling.

On Monday 13 April 1964 we set sail at about 2000hrs. Our Training programme commenced by integrating on board crewing duties with intermittent daytime classes. We travelled down the Great Barrier Reef using coastal navigation techniques.

After Lady Elliot Island we set course, eastwards and deep sea for New Caledonia.

On Friday 17 April, Captain XY, the master, approached me for a private discussion. He expressed grave doubts about the safety of the vessel and said that he was worried about the tank deck. I suggested that we examine his worries in more detail so we took ourselves up to



the deck (accommodation was below). We were not carrying cargo or tanks on this mission. The vessel was rolling and pitching somewhat in a moderately heavy sea, but I could see no cause for alarm. However he was the Master and therefore responsible for the safety of his vessel and all on board. I was simply the Mission Commander and as such, he was required to report to me. He insisted that the tank deck was 'rippling' but I could not see what he was talking about. I resolved to try and settle his mind a bit. However I was somewhat surprised at this unexpected opinion from no less than the Master himself. We resumed our activities and I thought no more about it although I consulted my two assistant instructors who had sea going certificates. They concurred with my view.

At 12.50 on 17 April I was below and became aware from the swell that the vessel was altering course. The Captain was on the bridge so I naturally made my way there. On questioning him as to what was happening he immediately informed me that he was returning to Brisbane – note, without informing me in advance! I accosted him about his decision without reference to me and firmly reminded him of our mission to New Caledonia. After some reasoning and cajoling to warm him towards my point of view, he agreed to reverse his order to the helmsman and we turned eastwards again at approximately 1400 hrs.

I was now rather concerned that this Captain had a flaw in his character and that this voyage was going to present me with problems. My two assistant instructors were alert of course and in open discussion with me about the matter. Neither of them had any reason from past experience to doubt the Captain's competence. We made a point of trying to recover our normal discussions and joviality in the mess to help set his mind at ease. He was a somewhat solitary personality.

Again he complained to me about the safety of the vessel and despite my reassurances about his specific observations, reinforced by my assistants – who were his after all, his fellow officers. At 1530 hrs he altered course, again without reference to me. We were facing the mainland again.!

This was a Friday. I realised that the Captain had a mental problem and we were now in mid ocean. At any time we could be facing East or West according to his whims. I needed to contact the Director of Transportation, Colonel Phil Greville at Army HQ in Canberra. Phil had been on my Long Tn Course in the UK so we knew one another well. In fact I believe he had a part in nominating me to come to Australia.

I suspected that the Captain was trying to outwit me. He knew the weekend was approaching and no one would be available at HQ. He would even turn about when I was asleep and I relied on my A/I's to alert me accordingly. This was a delicate situation. I was in no position to relieve the Captain of his appointment which would have meant putting him under arrest. Furthermore although I was the Mission Commander, I was conscious of being an exchange officer with the Australian Army with my own reputation at stake. This was a matter which had to be handled back in Canberra.

I ordered the duty Signaller to lock both him and myself in his signal cabin and to make contact with Canberra. As I suspected *laissez faire* had set in back at base and everyone was already heading for the golf course or getting the 'barbies and packs of tinnies' out for the evening bash. There was no response to our wireless message. Even the Duty Officer was not



responding, perhaps through a failure of the Signals Office. There was no world tension at that time. Vietnam was to come later. In those days we had no ship to shore telephone communications. In desperation my signaller made contact with the Canadian Duty Officer in Ottawa and we got him to telephone the Duty Officer in Canberra. In due course I was in touch with Phil (who had indeed been found on the golf course!) by telex and explained the situation. He immediately authorised me to instruct the Captain to make course for Brisbane where a relief Captain would be awaiting to replace our wayward Captain. Needless to say our Captain was delighted. After all, this was what he wanted, was it not?

We arrived in Brisbane and sailed up the Brisbane River Estuary to our berth at Bulimba Wharf in torrential rain. An ambulance and Medical Officer were awaiting to escort our Captain away to a safer haven. Meantime the Ship's Crew set about refuelling and re-victualing under the Mate and I arranged a film show and meal ashore for them pending the arrival of our replacement Captain, flying in from Sydney. Within hours we set off again in darkness down river and set course again for Noumea where we arrived with just sufficient time to spare for our planned parade with the French Marines on Anzac Day.

I kept the chart of our trip and a copy of the Ship's Log, anticipating a subsequent Court of Enquiry which never materialised. The Captain concerned was never given a maritime command again and left the Corps. Medical intervention had prevailed.

We were congratulated at the success of our international mission.



**Chart of the passage of the Landing Ship Medium 'Brudenell White' with Royal Australian Engineer Officers on a Long Transportation Course, Navigation Training Cruise from Townsville to Noumea, New Caledonia; to engage also on an Anzac Day Parade with the French Navy and Marines. (The Original Chart was retained by Major W.M. Moncur RE Chief Instructor for any subsequent Court of Inquiry).**



**August 2015 Notice to Mariners**



### Fate of the last remaining US Navy LSM

In the last 'Notice to Mariners' I said I would try and research what had happened to LSM 45 that had been transferred to the Greek Navy and following de-commissioning by them was subsequently refitted by volunteers from the LSM/LSMR Association and sailed from Greece back to the US. It was eventually located in Freedom Park on the Missouri River in Omaha, Nebraska.

The Association eventually transferred ownership of the LSM to the Museum of the Marine at Jacksonville, North Carolina. After it was towed to North Carolina just what happened after then is not 100% clear. The USMC Museum has failed to correspond with me.

I did discover that the electrical components were taken by volunteers of the USS Slater association to help restore the USS Slater, a Destroyer Escort, launched in Tampa Florida on 20 Feb 1944. At least something worthwhile was salvaged and used to help restore another museum artefact. The USS Slater is located in Albany, New York on the upper part of the Hudson River. The Museum of the Marine is thought to have retained the forward Bofors 40mm gun tub and part of the conning tower but whether this is on display is subject to conjecture. The disposal of the hull and other mechanical components is still unknown. Had I known there was so much unknown about this last LSM I would have gone to the Museum of the Marine (both officially connected with the USMC) when I was in the US last year and tried to find out more.

Jack Madden



LSM 45 at Omaha Nebraska, USA

Jack Madden photo



August 2015 Notice to Mariners



LSM 45 Nebraska, looking astern Jack Madden photo



LSM 45 Familiar scene?

Photo Jack Madden



August 2015 Notice to Mariners

## LORD HOWE ISLAND

Here's a picture of *AV1355 Vernon Sturdee* during her trip to Lord Howe Island in 1965. Do any former crew members remember this trip and if so, could you let us know some details of the reason she was sent there. Was it a navigational training run? Thanks.

In 1972 the Landing Craft Heavy, *L126 Balikpapan* sailed there, delivering plant and equipment for 1 Field Engineer Regiment to enable them to construct a 3300m emergency airstrip. This airstrip later became the island's main airport and saw the demise of the flying boat service from Sydney and Auckland.



Here's another shot of the *Sturdee* beached at Lord Howe Island.





## TERMITE REUNION

The reunion known as Back to Middle Head Reunion is retired and from now on it will be the Termite Reunion - and it's off to Canberra!

The termite reunion will be in Canberra on the 13-15 November 2015.

Friday 13<sup>th</sup> Nov at 6 pm (till late). A "Meet and Greet" at King O'Malley's 131 City Walk, Civic Canberra.

Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> November, starting at 10am a "Meet and Greet", at the Australian War Memorial where we will have some photo opportunities and some reminiscing and remembering. Also to take time to enjoy what it is to be a termite (this also includes all who have served with us in the unit) to help make it what we know today. There is a tour guide organised for those who would like to go that way or you can wander in your own time, There will be a wreath laid in remembrance of all termites (the timing of this is still being sorted out)

Saturday Night 14<sup>th</sup> November, a Dinner will be held at The Dickson Tradies 2 Badham St, Dickson ACT, 2602

6.30 For 7pm. Neat casual dress,

Cost for the dinner will be \$50.00 per person,

This bank account has been set up for the dinner deposit:

Bank: Defcredit ,

BSB - 803-205,

Account Number - 20327932,

Account Name - Garry Player. Then send a email with how many people you have paid for to [garryplayer@hotmail.com](mailto:garryplayer@hotmail.com).

And don't forget if you are attending the dinner payment and confirmation of attendance for the dinner is to be received no later than 30 October 2015 (unless pre-arranged with Garry). Partners are most welcome and encouraged to attend.

For those who have indicated that they are attending we hope to see you all and we'll have another wonderful weekend. And for those who aren't please stay in touch as we will gather again in the near future.

So please pass the word and contact any other Termites with you may be in contact with. The Dickson Tradies has a motel attached (if booking on this web site it's the Dickson one) <http://www.qualityhotelscanberra.com.au/sections/main/default.php>

Regards,

Craig and Garry

[craigingram@westnet.com.au](mailto:craigingram@westnet.com.au) 0407173321

[garryplayer@hotmail.com](mailto:garryplayer@hotmail.com)



August 2015 Notice to Mariners

## Property for sale

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

Please contact Kaye Shannon 02 9871 4667 or [property@32smallshipsqn.org.au](mailto:property@32smallshipsqn.org.au) or through the 'Q Store' on the Association Web page ([www.32smallshipsqn.org.au](http://www.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 please email it to:

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

or to

**32 Small Ship Squadron RAE Association Inc RAE Tn.  
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!



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