



Newsletter

*Royal Australian Survey Corps Association
of South Australia*

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ANZAC DAY 2012

Alex Munro reports on another Adelaide Anzac Day and RASvy reunion

Anzac Day is the most important day on our social calendar, and I'm glad to report that everything went well for an enjoyable day. The weather was mainly cool and overcast with some patches of sunshine. Fortunately, the forecast of a few light showers did not eventuate, so that was a big bonus.

I believe everyone would know by now that two years ago our RASvy group was repositioned near the end of the parade, along with all the other unit associations. That situation will remain for some time yet with our form-up point in Grenfell Street about 100 metres west from Hindmarsh Square at 10.00am and stepping off a few minutes before 11.00am. The upside of this is that there is now no rush to join the parade after attending a Dawn Service in the suburbs and so is perhaps better for members who live well out from the city. It also leaves plenty of time to joke and yarn with others while waiting for the start, and I had great delight in picking out those in need of a haircut!

The downside is that old legs begin to weary a bit while waiting, and the crowd at our pre-reunion drink stop on Torrens Parade Ground is a bit of a push and shove by the time we get there.

As a more congenial alternative, perhaps next year we can arrange an esky of stubbies to be at the RASvy memorial so as to avoid the bun fight on the parade ground below. It might not be that easy to arrange, but well worth a try.

Our group of 22 members marching six abreast was ably led in the parade by Noel Sproles with Dave Irving bearing



All lined up and ready to step off for the 2012 Adelaide Anzac Day march

our banner. Going on a remark that I overheard from an RSL official, we must have presented ourselves fairly well throughout even though the band from 10/27 RSAR to our rear was playing at a beat many of us found awkward to march to. We relied on Noel to maintain step. The crowd lining the route showed their appreciation for those marching just as strongly as in previous years, and spectator numbers seem to be steadily increasing each year.

Most years our TV coverage lasts just a fleeting couple of seconds, as it was this time when showing the group as a whole. But then the camera zoomed to close in on John Whitburn's right breast to show his father's Distinguished Flying Cross and other WW2 medals. It then zoomed slowly over those marching on our right flank, making them easily recognised

'stars' for the day as viewed by the Adelaide TV public. Eddy Jacobs recounted that he was recognised by a complete stranger several days later at an auction and I understand there were others recognised similarly.

The reunion was again held in the upstairs function bar at the British pub 'The Elephant' in Vaughn Place off Rundle Street from noon until late afternoon. The only change to the place since last year was the installation of a large TV screen which was ideal to watch the AFL match of the day from Melbourne between Collingwood and Essendon. The pub grub was good and the prices were reasonable, so combined with good company, it was a very agreeable afternoon.

[Continued overleaf]



Left to right: Mark Bates, Bill Griggs, Lincoln Smith, 'TJ' Wicker and John Frith, Anzac Day 2012

Left to right: Bob Ballard, Darcy Patrick and Antony Stephens, Anzac Day 2012



After the parade. From left to right; Front Row; Bob Cooper, Alex Munro, John Whitburn, Darcy Patrick. Middle Row; Anthony Stephens, Stevo Hinic, Daryl Miller, Jim Dunn, Bill Griggs, Noel Sproles, Bob Ballard, John Wicker, Dave Irving (holding our banner). Rear Row; Peter Elverd, Stan Stephens (obscured), Neil Houston, John Frith, Mark Bates, Lincoln Smith, Steve McGuinness, Ken Talbot-Smith. Not in photo; Eddy Jacobs (photographer)

[Anzac Day 2012 continued from page 1]

During the day I had numerous conversations with old friends so picked up odd news items, such as Jim Dunn's sporting prowess since retirement, Max Coletti is still free of his cancer problems and giving some thought to future retirement and John Frith's contribution to the largest atlas in the world (see page 6) are some of the items I can recall.

Around 28 members turned up on the day so you might know an old friend or two; Rob Langley, Stevo Hinic, Eddy Jacobs, Bob Dikkenberg, Daryl Miller, Darcy Patrick, Max Coletti, Jim Dunn, T. J. Wicker and Lea over from Stansbury,

Bill Griggs, Peter Elverd, Steve McGuinness and Janet, Dick Crawford, Ken Talbot-Smith, Stan Stephens down from Pt Augusta, Alex Munro, Dave Irving, Lincoln Smith, Peter Smith, Jason Phillips, Mark Bates, John Frith, Neil Houston, Bob Ballard (resplendent in purple bow tie and beret) came up from Goolwa, Bob Cooper, Anthony Stevens, Noel Sproles and John Whitburn.

Apologies were received from; John Dean, Allan Adsett, Ken Jeffery in America, Mick Coventry and Mal Henderson. My apologies to anyone missed—maybe Simon Capp?

Annual General Meeting

The AGM for 2011/12 was held at Keswick Barracks on 15th March 2012. Originally intended for October 2011 the meeting was postponed, with our secretary Ken Jeffery absent interstate at the time before resigning to move to America, therefore requiring the appointment of another secretary. Only the main items discussed are reported below in brief.

Present:

Alex Munro, Stevo Hinic, Allan Adsett, Bob Dikkenberg, Jim Dunn, Bob Cooper, Peter Elverd (Treasurer), Rob Langley (Secretary).

Apologies:

Noel Sproles, John Whitburn, Ken Jeffery, Max Coletti, John Wicker, John Phillips, John Harrison, Dave Irving, Neville Stone.

Quorum:

The members present were less than required but considering the business in hand it was decided to proceed. Alex Munro chaired the meeting by mutual consent.

Treasurer's Report:

The treasurer reported details of receipts and expenditure for the period, with a final balance of \$2134.58 unencumbered funds. The amount is inclusive of \$344.58 history funds.

Subscriptions:

Annual subscriptions for local members remain at \$10.00 and \$5.00 for interstate members (who do not receive function flyers). No subscriptions are required for WW2 members or widows of deceased members. Outstanding subscriptions are to be advised by email or post.

Memorial to 4 Field Survey Squadron:

This was to have been completed during 2011, but extra effort to finalise the project this year is in place.

Unit History:

Although some work has continued during the past year, additional help is to be sought from members, especially those with computer skills

Annual Functions:

It was agreed to hold the following functions;

Early year BBQ;

Anzac Day March/Reunion; and

Corps Birthday.

Flyers will be sent out advising details before each function.

Management Committee:

It was agreed to continue the management of our Association with the present informal system.

Management Committee:

Secretary: Rob Langley

Treasurer: Peter Elverd

Functions: Alex Munro/Secretary/Volunteers

Newsletter: Noel Sproles and Jim Dunn.

RSL Donation:

It was agreed to donate \$25.00 to the RSL, as in previous years.

The meeting lasted about 75 minutes and finished at 9pm.

Vale

Graeme Dowd

Those who knew Graeme will be saddened at the news that he died in mid May 2012, suffering from throat cancer. His funeral service was held at the Catholic church on Bribie Island, QLD, on Thursday 24th May, not far from his home.

The church was packed with mourners not only from his own family but the community at large and many old friends from his service days, indicating the esteem in which he was held.

Graeme enlisted in RASvy in 1968 and served for twenty years until his retirement in 1988, serving in Vietnam and the School of Military Survey as well as other postings.

In civilian life he managed a successful business producing special localised maps for local business and advertising organisations until ill health forced a stop.

I think all members will join me in offering our condolences to his wife and family.

The Fortuna Situation

An update from Alex Munro

Bob Dikkenberg mentioned that a service friend of his who had recently returned from Bendigo, had toured Fortuna Villa on a Sunday afternoon, so it seems that the Friends of Fortuna / Heritage Group are still conducting guided tours each Sunday, a scheme that was originally organised by Bob Skitch.

While reading an article in the 'Bendigo Advertiser' some months ago I remember a paragraph stating that if the grounds of Fortuna were sold, then the soil over the entire area would need to be removed and treated because of contamination during the old gold mining days.

This raises the question of possible health problems for the many hundreds of RASvy personnel who lived and worked there over several decades.

Roll Call

Alex Munro brings us up to date on some comings and goings

Mal Henderson

Mal phoned to say he would not be able to take part in the Anzac Day parade because of serious circulation problems in his legs. Apparently he was unaware of the condition that had developed over a period of time but came to a head fairly recently, so he now has to take life fairly easy until the condition improves, hopefully soon.

Jim Dunn

Jim has fought off two bouts of cancer since retirement but that has not stopped him from keeping up his sporting activities. As a member of the Marion Bowls Club he recently won a club tournament to become the B grade singles champion for 2012, being presented with a trophy and having his name placed on the club honour board. Jim also reckons his golf is improving almost as well, coming close to a win in a match play event. He recently underwent his biannual check for cancer and was naturally very relieved when the results showed he was still free of the disease. Jim and Rita together have planned their world trip for this year, leaving for Vietnam on 1 August.

Barry Lutwyche

Barry's health has been reported on in the past. However, speaking to Barry recently on the phone as I do every few months I was impressed by his positive attitude to his health problems, considering that in the past twelve to eighteen months he has had surgery for life threatening blood clots, a heart attack and surgery to remove a kidney tumour, without mentioning other minor ailments. Barry said that at the moment he feels pretty good.

Ron Wienert

Not many around now who would still know Ron from his time in 4 Fd Svy Sect as a survey assistant at Keswick Barracks and his time on mapping operations in the Northern Territory, beginning over 50 years ago. Nature has claimed a few since then. Anyway, for those who might still be interested, Ron is living in Clare S.A. and can be contacted on (08) 8842 1184.

Karl Bratz

I recently received a copy of a glossy tourist brochure from John Harrison, showing the tourist attractions of Coober Pedy as the 'Opal Capital of the World' in outback South Australia

A photograph of one attraction showed a stainless steel beer keg complete with the extractor and the epithet 'Have a drink on me', being the grave site in the town cemetery of Karl Bratz. All very interesting I know, but most readers are probably wondering who was Karl Bratz. From memory, he enlisted in RASvy about 1960 and served in 4 Fd Svy Unit and maybe other postings, before discharging after perhaps twelve years service with the rank of corporal, although I'm not certain as to his length of service.

Those were the days of hectic mineral exploration by numerous mining companies, always looking to employ Corps trained topo surveyors, so Karl had no trouble finding a job. Except for the odd report I lost track of him for many years, but it appears that eventually he settled in Coober Pedy, working for the town council on survey tasks in the district.

Karl was a very sociable and likable character with a cheeky grin and a quick wit, always able to solve a problem although very often in strange and non practical ways, but he generally did impress most people he met—one way or another. In a very nasty turn of fate, Karl developed terminal bowel cancer, but his strength of character was such that he accepted this and continued on with his lifestyle with the time he had left.

He claimed to be an environmentalist, so had himself measured for a coffin locally made from corrugated iron, then installed in his dug-out home with shelves as a bookcase, until required on the final day. Karl also purchased the keg of beer to be consumed at his wake and then placed over his gravesite. He was something of a celebrity for a while when two

T. J. Wicker

A few days ago I rang John to his mobile phone as his house number was not responding, and made contact a few miles from Broome when he and Lea pulled off the road to answer my call. He told me that it was a sunny 30c where he was while Adelaide was a wet and dreary 14c. John and brother David are presently on their annual fishing holiday around the north coast of Australia and probably will not return south for many weeks yet.

Bob Williams

Bob advises that he has retired to Tura Beach on the South Coast of NSW.

[Karl Bratz continued]

popular national weekly magazines printed the story of his corrugated iron coffin, including some newspaper articles.

Following a telephone call from the late Bill Love, I caught up with Karl at the Mary Potter Hospice at North Adelaide where a constant dosage of opiates made life bearable for him. We yarned away the missing years while enjoying a can of beer or two, which he was allowed to keep in a container under the bed. On my last visit late one afternoon, I missed him by about an hour. He had left for the airport with his nurse carer to return home, so I knew his passing was fairly soon as it was his wish to end his days in Coober Pedy. He died the next day.

Just a few hours later I received a telephone call from a woman in Coober Pedy to advise me of Karl's passing, and to make a request for a memento to hang at his favourite water-hole in the Greek Club. I have no idea how she obtained my telephone number, but I did send her an inscribed Corps plaque which I hope is still there.

Karl has certainly achieved a measure of fame in the manner of his passing, however, as this is about the fourth report on the matter over a period of several years, I think we should now put it to rest. (Terrible pun, Alex!)

An Easter break in Rabaul

by Noel Sproles

The prospect of spending the long Easter break in Port Moresby held little appeal. Murray Barracks was not the most comfortable place at the best of times in the early days of PNG Command, but during holiday periods it was just the pits. So, what to do about it? After some discussion Bob and Mike and I decided that a trip to Rabaul would be just the thing. Bob and Mike were in positions enabling them to call in a few favours, do a little bribery perhaps in what is now known as the 'Melanesian Solution'. The result was free return tickets to Lae on the TAA Electra, free return tickets to Rabaul from Lae, and 'mates rates' on the accommodation at Lae and Rabaul. To cap it off, Mike had a contact in Rabaul who was spending Easter in Port Moresby. He said that we could have one of his cars. He would meet us at Rabaul airport or, failing that, he would leave the keys at the TAA desk.

Our trip started smoothly enough as we checked in at Jacksons Field. Then things started to go wrong when, at boarding time, we were told that as we did not have tickets we could not board the aircraft. That was doubly awkward as, not only did it threaten to thwart our travel plans, all our luggage was already on the aircraft. After a quick conference we decided that we would just wait until all the other passengers had departed the lounge and we would just join the end of the line. We would then find empty seats on the plane and act as if we belonged. It worked! Nowadays, al Qaeda and its associates have closed that avenue but life was much simpler then.

We duly arrived at Lae and spent a pleasant day or so sight seeing. We went out to the site of the WWII airbase at Nadzab, by now largely overgrown with kunai grass. Bob had been a RAAF pilot during the war and was based at Nadzab for a long period and he got quite nostalgic about it all as he tried to re-locate his old haunts.

Our ride to Rabaul was not as comfortable as in the TAA Electra. Instead, we sat in bucket seats on a war surplus C 47 Dakota. It was standing on its main undercarriage and about to lift off when one engine failed and the pilot aborted his take off. No reverse thrust or anything fancy with the 'Dak'. It was just wait until enough speed had washed off and the pilot could safely apply the brakes. About the time the tail wheel touched the tarmac again, I saw the cones marking the end of the old Lae town strip flash past the window and we were racing through long grass. The plane stopped right on the edge of the cliff at the end of the runway overlooking the road, the rusted bow of the *Tanya Maru* and Huon Gulf. A few metres more and we would be over the edge. After being towed back to the hangar and several hours wait, we were able to resume our journey and we finally arrived at Rabaul.

Due to the delay, Mike's friend had already departed for Port Moresby but Mike was able to pick up the car keys from the TAA desk without any problem. We had a pleasant surprise when we saw the car. It was a brand new Holden Premiere with automatic transmission and air conditioning. These

were rare luxuries in those days. We were quite happy driving around Rabaul in air conditioned comfort for a day or so until we were abruptly stopped on a road outside town. A car had cut us off, blocked our way, and four big bruisers got out and claimed that we had stolen the car. It appeared that the bruisers were family and friends of Mike's mate and they had been patrolling Rabaul for the past few days looking for the car. The long and the short of it was that Mike had been given the wrong set of keys. His friend had left two sets at the TAA counter. One was for his new car which his family was to pick up later in the day; the other set was for the black clunker which the bruisers were using as a road block. When all was cleared up, they drove off in the air conditioned Premiere leaving us to sheepishly continue on our way with the old manual Holden, having wound the windows down to let in some fresh air.

Not everything was so dramatic. At one stage we were driving through an old German coconut plantation. The trees were tall and the plantation itself was so well maintained that it was like park land. Mike inquired about the type of trees and we told him that they were coconuts and if you looked up, you could see the huge bunches of coconuts. He looked up and then told us that these were not coconuts. His mother would buy his family coconuts from the local fruit stall in Melbourne so he knew what coconuts looked like. He believed that they were dark and hairy and small. I am sure that he still did not believe us until he saw someone down on the beach husking coconuts for copra.

It being Easter, we decided to go the cathedral for the Easter services. When the bishop and priests and altar boys made their entrance, it was apparent that one of the altar boys needed to go to the toilet quite badly. For the duration of the service he crossed his legs and uncrossed them; he jiggled and wriggled; he rolled his eyes to heaven for inspiration and almost tied a knot in it. He did everything that he could do except the sensible thing of slipping off for a pee. Then there was the gentleman who probably thought that this was such a significant ceremony that one should wear a collar and tie. Such apparel was not only rare in Rabaul, it was also inappropriate for the climate. But, undeterred, he wore not only a neck tie but a vivid yellow bow tie with red polka dots. He was sartorial elegance personified.

The rest of our sojourn was uneventful. I do not remember how we got around the TAA check-in at Lae for the return trip but we managed it somehow. It was, all in all, a most enjoyable and interesting trip. We had a much better time than those who stayed in the mess at Port Moresby. But there was a sequel a few months later in the form of the account sent by TAA to the Army for three return tickets from Port Moresby to Lae. In the spirit of the trip, the bill was paid but not by us. How that came about is also interesting but I am not telling. Bob and Mike are long gone and maybe there is a statute of limitations on criminal acts committed half a century ago in a long gone Commonwealth Territory, but I am not that much of a mug to tempt fate!

Can anyone identify 'Brian'?

John Harrison was recently listening to an ABC talk-back programme. He is not certain though whether it was a national or local broadcast.

The subject matter of the song 'The pub with no beer' came up for discussion and the question was asked 'Which pub was it?'. Someone called 'Brian' rang in with the opinion that it was the pub at Borroloola in the N.T., which he had passed through in 1959 on survey operations with a field group from the Survey Regiment in Bendigo.

So, just as a matter of interest, can anyone tell John who 'Brian' might be?

During 1959 the late Jim Stedman was in charge of a field party conducting a First Order traverse from Qld. across the N.T. into W.A., with the late George Ricketts maintaining the base camp in Katherine.

Social Function

A BYO barbeque will be held in the recently upgraded and enclosed patio area of the Keswick Barracks Sergeants' Mess on Sunday on 1 July 2012 between noon and 4.00pm.

There are two gas fired grilling plates available and a small fridge if needed, plus the bar will be open from noon until 2.00pm. The function is in remembrance of the Corps birthday.

And just to inspire you to come along, below is a photo taken of our last BBQ picnic earlier this year



Now, this is an atlas!

John Frith brings back memories of printing RAAF charts at Fortuna!



John Frith (ex ARES member of 4 Fd Svy Sqn) from Flat Earth Mapping, a private cartography company in Adelaide, was recently involved in the production of the largest atlas ever published. Maps for the EARTH Platinum atlas were prepared from digital geographic data owned by the publisher, Millennium House, and presented as huge Adobe Illustrator files - one per page.

Each single page measures an amazing 1200mm wide by 1800mm high, making the open book about 8 feet wide and 6 feet high in the old language! There will only be 31 individually numbered copies of this 128 page monster ever produced.

Weighing in at around 200kg and costing US\$100,000 each, EARTH Platinum Edition is destined to become a prized reference and a focal point of the world's major libraries and repositories. More than 100 cartographers, geographers and photographers from around the world were part of the production team.

For more information see;

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