



**SURVEY
EX-SERVICEMEN'S
ASSOCIATION
SOUTH AUSTRALIA**



**NEWSLETTER No. 20
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Newsletter Committee

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With 1997 rapidly drawing to a close, your newsletter committee takes the opportunity to wish all association members and their families, throughout Australia, a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

SOCIAL NEWS

“Drinks after 5” at the Old Queen’s Arms on the first Friday in each month is slowly gaining in popularity. There was a good roll-up in November and again this month, with three new faces last Friday, Gordon Santo, o Ballard and Ken Talbot-Smith. Our next drinks day will be Friday 6th Feb 1998, with nothing in January.

The Christmas get-together dinner at the Rob Roy Hotel on Saturday 20 Dec was intended for late November or early December, so apologies to those who would have attended on an earlier date. At this time of year I doubt if any date would be suitable to all.

An inspection of the old 4 Fd Svy building has been suggested for February ‘98. The old building has been completely renovated and changed and is occupied by HQ 9 BDE, with the former Q Store area now turned into the Keswick Barracks museum. It could be interesting to see the changes made to the old place, perhaps finishing with a light supper afterwards. If you’re interested please contact Alex Munro by the end of January ‘98, so that arrangements can be made. Naturally the ladies are included.

NATIONAL BULLETIN

George Ricketts is missing editions 9 & 10 of the 23 Bulletins published up to 1989, although he’s not certain if No 23 was the last.

Can anyone help?

LEN BEADELL

Back about 1959, Len travelled from Australia to Europe via the USA, later returning home through Africa and India. Some ten years later he wrote a book of his experiences during the trip, which was rejected by his publisher at the time as it seemed at odds with his other books. Since Len’s death, his wife has managed to have it published, and it is now available in the bookstores.

Len called it “Around the World in Eighty Delays”.

COLIN van SENDEN

Colin sent a letter about his latest journey throughout Australia last July, when he drove over to Canberra to attend the annual lunch of the ACT Association, and visit old friends. Going through Bendigo, he visited Jack Cullen, then recuperating in hospital after his fall.

Colin commented that Jack was eager to return home, and that his steel blue eyes were just as piercing as back in 1943 at Survey School. Other than some lapses of memory, Jack was 'still with it', as also commented by George Ricketts during his March visit. His next calling point was to see John Hillier at Bonegilla. John mentioned an idea regarding the erection of a cairn, etc. at Woomera to commemorate the work by the Corps in the initial startup of the range. Colin remembers well, a recce by him and Maj Lockwood in 1946, into the area that was to become the Woomera Range.

A cairn at Woomera would be a fitting tribute to the work of the Corps, not only in the early days but in later times, and is worth some thought.

Thanks for the letter Colin.

AUSLIG SOLD

An interesting article appeared in 'Westlink' of Dec 97, stating that the Australian Survey and Land Information Group (AUSLIG) was sold to Sinclair Knight Merz (SKM) from 1 July 1997.

The sale price was not revealed, but the deal involved AUSLIG's field surveying, differential GPS navigation, customised mapping, facilities management and consultancy businesses.

SKM have contracted their services back to the Federal Government to the tune of \$13million per year, and will establish a subsidiary company LANDINFO to do the work.

VALE

GILL PARK

A dreadful double tragedy, as both Gill and her husband were killed in a car accident in Tasmania on 13 Oct 97.

Gill had accepted a final posting there for family reasons, and was looking forward to her discharge by Christmas 97.

She attended the closing down party of 4 Fd Svy Sqn, her last visit to Adelaide. Saddened as we are by her untimely passing, Gill will always be remembered with fondness.

NEIL RANKIN

Neil died of cancer in Bendigo on 6 Sep 97 after a short stay in hospital. On returning from overseas service in WW2, he was posted to Fortuna where he remained until his retirement as WO1 about 1976.

His expertise as a printer was very highly regarded and Neil was certainly the most experienced supervisor in the printing room for many years. He married Gwen and raised a family in Eaglehawk, where both were always involved in community affairs over the years.

At the funeral Service held in St Peter's Church, Eaglehawk, all the pallbearers were former friends who had served at Fortuna with Neil.

Neil was one of the true characters from the Fortuna era and will be sadly missed.

LT COL HUGH TAYLOR

Hugh died in Perth on 2 Nov 97.

Enlisting at the age of eighteen years in 1947, Hugh did his basic training at SMS Balcombe, and from there worked his way through various postings over the next 27 years, until his retirement in 1974 with the rank of Lt Colonel.

During that period he became a Licensed Surveyor attached to the WA Dept of Lands and Surveys, and was also awarded an MID(Mentioned in Dispatches) during a stint in Malaya. It was a career to be proud of.

Hugh continued in survey practice for several years after leaving the Service, gradually reducing the workload until full retirement.

VALE (continued)

COL ALEX LAING

Alex died of cancer in Canberra on 20 Oct 97.

As a former Director of Military Survey, his passing at a comparatively young age after such a proud career and with still so much to offer is surely a tragedy.

There was an ounce or two of the larrikin in Alex, but he was a very approachable man, with a bright sense of humour, and was a good all round sportsman.

Appropriately, "Wandering the King's Highway" was part of the musical programme at his funeral service, where eulogies were read by Brigadier Mellor, Major General Blake and Lieutenant Colonel John Bullen.

Whenever association members congregate, Alex will be remembered for many years.

An obituary printed in "The Australian" newspaper is included in this newsletter.

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Map-maker to the military



Alexander William Laing
Army surveyor. Born Mount Hawthorn,
Western Australia, July 26, 1939. Died
Canberra, October 20, aged 58.

ALEC Laing maintained that he was never an ambitious man. When he graduated from the Royal Military College into the army's small survey service in 1960, he knew his career would probably peak at the rank of colonel as the head of his corps.

It was a knowledge that did not sour his outlook, but encouraged him to take advantage of the opportunities presented along the way. He did duly become director of military survey — the first and only Duntroon-trained officer to attain this post — but in many respects it was not the highlight that he initially expected, merely one phase in a broader career that won him a wide circle of friends in at least three countries.

On graduating from Duntroon he went to the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology for two years, completing a fellowship diploma in surveying.

He then returned to his home State for two years, conducting traverses into remote regions such as the eastern goldfields and the Nullarbor Plain.

The experience of running his own show in this fashion appealed to him, offering far more responsibility and training in management than a young officer would have received with the infantry.

In 1965, he was sent to England to undertake a year-long postgraduate course at Oxford under Brigadier Guy Bomford, at that time the world authority on geodesy.

A year's tour of duty in Vietnam followed in 1967, with Laing in command of the section of the survey unit serving with the Australian Taskforce.

Again, it was an opportunity he made the most of, ensuring that his sub-unit made itself a valued adjunct to the taskforce through the timely production of maps and overlays needed for patrols and other operations.

After a stint instructing at the School of Military Survey at Bonegilla, Victoria, Laing, a newly promoted major, was appointed to raise and command a unit for duty in Papua New Guinea.

The army and RAAF had embarked on Operation Skai Piksa, an ambitious program to map the eastern half of New Guinea from aerial photographs.

His time at 8 Field Survey Squadron at Popondetta was, he later said, "one of the best postings of my life".

On his return, Laing took charge of military survey operations in Western Australia. The posting brought the opportunity to lead two co-operative survey missions to Indonesia, where he enjoyed the exposure to Indonesian people and culture.

Promoted to lieutenant-colonel while in Perth, Laing was then sent to Indonesia on a full-time posting, this time as survey liaison officer to the Indonesian army.

In July 1983 he took over as director of the Royal Australian Survey Corps. The period he spent in the top job was difficult and frustrating. Virtually from the moment of his appointment, Laing found himself caught up in a long-standing dispute with the federal government's civilian mapping arm.

As he put it: "I spent my entire time as director fighting brush fires and repelling boarders, both internally and externally."

IN addition, he discovered that there was little interest in survey activities within the army hierarchy, which left him unable to advance the corps technologically in the way he believed was becoming imperative.

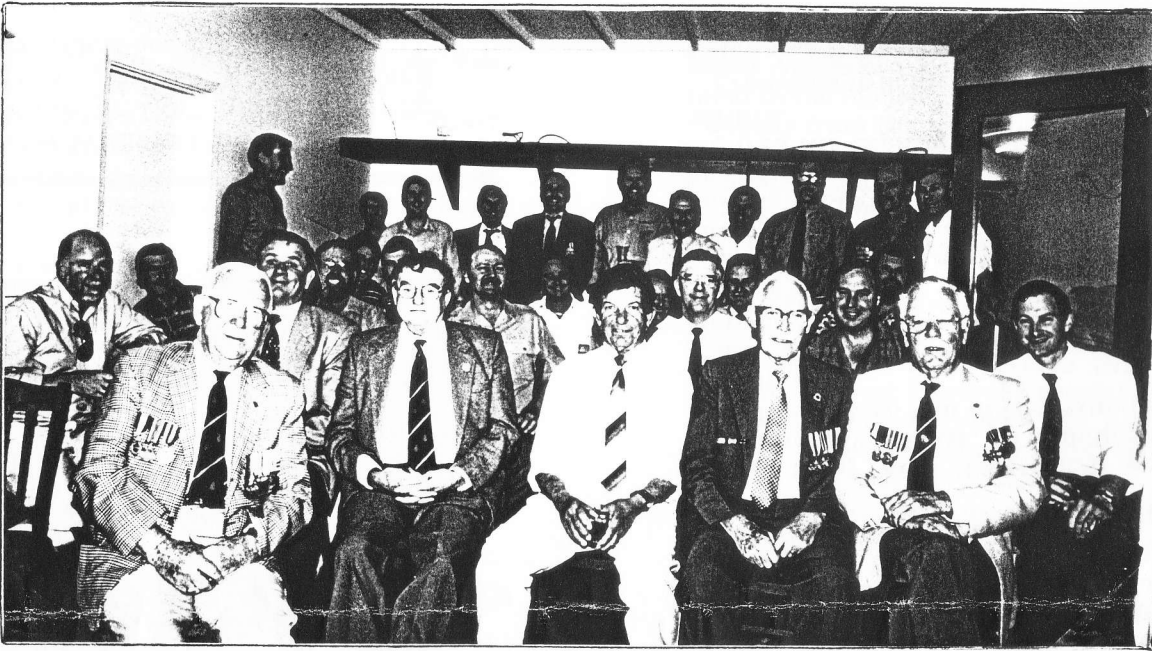
After five years, Laing retired. He joined a large commercial computer mapping company, working as the sales manager for the South-East Asian region, and engaged in some consulting.

In 1994 he saw a unique chance to contribute his knowledge and skills to furthering PNG's development, running part of an AusAid operation to revamp the national mapping bureau.

It was, as he said, a job he would have been happy to do for nothing: "I mean, how many people in their lifetime get to set up a national mapping organisation for a country?"

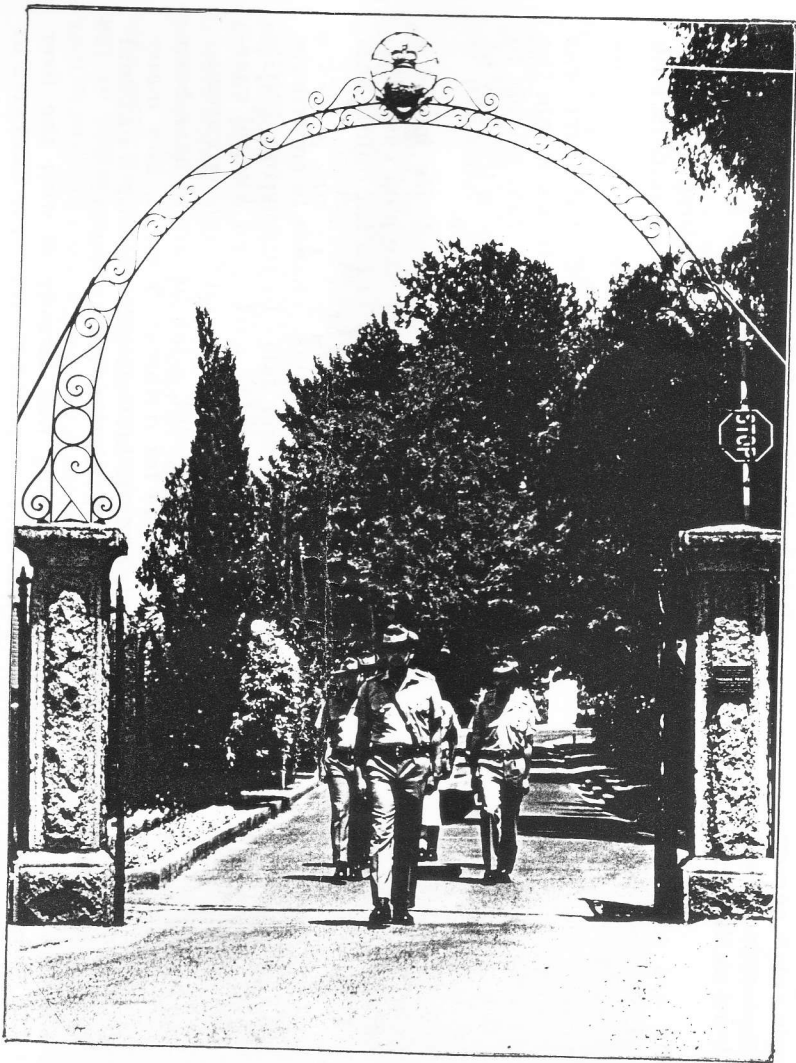
Sadly, Laing was already ill with the liver cancer that compelled his return to Canberra in February this year.

He is survived by his wife of 33 years, Dawn, his son William and daughter Amanda.



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - 25 APRIL, 1997

Front L to R George Ricketts, Harry Dunn, Bob Griffin, Bernie Watson, Bob Love.
Centre L to R Brett Knuckey, Mick Dempster, Alex Czornohalan, Bob Turnbull, Lincoln Smith, Jason Phillips, Dave Irving, Ken Jeffery, Pat Cox, Tony Stephens, T.J. Wicker, Peter Elverd, John Zuringer, John Frith.
Standing L to R Bob Mills, Rob Langley, Luke Mills, Max Coletti, Stevo Hinic, Bill Griggs, Alex Munro, John Nathan, John Harrison, Bob Dikkenberg, Jim Dunn.



The Final Moments

The Royal Australian Survey Corps Flag was ceremonially lowered and marched from the grounds of Fortuna in November, 1996.

The last Commanding Officer of the Army Survey Regiment, Lieutenant Colonel Burns, leads the last few soldiers through the gates of Fortuna Villa, ending an occupation lasting 54 years.

PEOPLE NEWS

Steve Rose: Steve is leaving Darwin in early 98 to take up residence somewhere about 40km north of Brisbane. Steve has lived in Darwin since leaving 4 Fd Svy Sec about 1960, working with NT Lands until his recent retirement.

Peter Brunt: Peter and Barbara are spending Xmas in Brisbane with son Kym, before returning to the UK sometime in the new year.

Peter Presser: Peter was in town early November from homebase Renmark to attend the Masters Rowing Regatta(?) at Westlakes. It was an international event with competitors from numerous countries, such as the 200 strong German contingent, so Peter and his crew were highly delighted to win Bronze medals in their class.

Tony Balkauskas: Tony was over from Stansbury in early November to attend young Tony's 21st Birthday. Tony Snr runs the general store in Stansbury but still finds the time to indulge in his favourite pastime, in fishing well out into the gulf.

Bernie Watson: Reported in our last issue as moving to NSW. The new location didn't come up to expectations so Bernie cut his losses and has returned to Adelaide.

Denis Rockley: Rockie was our much-appreciated cook on numerous field trips in the NT. Since retiring from the Service, he now runs a bakery in Nairne, so if you're up that way drop in and sample some of Rockies baking.

Tom Sawyer: Tom was spotted by John Harrison at a conference attended by both in Perth, during late October. Tom appeared to be hale and hearty.

Roger Rees: Thanks for the letter Roger. Roger included his regards and best wishes to all his friends in Adelaide.

Pat Cox: Pat has now returned to his Crystal Brook abode, after a spell at the Repat Hospital Springbank.

PEOPLE NEWS (continued)

Dennis Marshal: Recently farewelled from Bendigo with a goodly party, Dennis is moving to SA to live at Victor Harbor, hoping to pay his way as a masseur.

Peter Cates: A report in the Canberra Times of 13 Oct 97 stated that Peter and his son reported lost the previous day in the Morton National Park, were found safe and well by searchers shortly before midday. Embarrassing, but not hard to do. Apparently Peter did all the right things, etc. such as leaving details of their hike in his parked car when setting out.

Ian Campbell: Ian is campaign director for the "Veterans Emergency Accommodation and Organ Donation Awareness Campaign", a group sorely in need of cash donations (tax deductible) so how about it. Stan Campbell is treasurer.

Ian's address is: PO Box , ANNERLEY, QLD 4103.

1 Topo Squadron: Stevo Hinic reported that a dinner was held to farewell George Timmins, Barry Lutwyche and Jamie McCrae.

Final discharge dates are not known, but Barry seems likely to stay on in Brisbane, while George will no doubt head back to Lake Boga and his beloved Riverland. Jamie is already with the Dept of Natural Resources in Brisbane, working on the Land Title Database. Rumour has it that Rhys Delaine is moving to Brisbane as SSM 1 Topo, as is Steve Hanson into a WO's position. Steve Winner is being posted from 1 Topo Sqn to SME Casula.

Thanks for the letter Stevo.

Ken Talbot-Smith: Ken sent a letter via Dikko, reporting that his company 'Geomap Field Surveys' is going well, with partner John Shephard working at Olympic Dam surveying water pipeline layouts for Western Mining Corporation's latest major expansion, with a good chance of additional work being available. Ken has just finished 8 months contract with ETSA Power to GPS coordinate all the stobie poles in part of Adelaide and 68 South Australian country towns. Mal Paterson worked with Ken during the power pole contract, but is now looking for other work, if somebody can help out.

PEOPLE NEWS (continued)

Geomap shares premises with Photec Air Surveys (Mick Dempster and Ken Jeffery) as well as doing their field work requirements. The future looks fairly good for Geomap, with prospective contracts offering in SA, WA and Indonesia.

Thanks for the letter Ken, and best of luck to you and Shep in the future.

Ken also had knowledge of several others.

Peter Elverd: Now coordinating the SA Railways PR Group (actually they are transit security/police).

Eddy Jacobs: Now teaching full time at a primary school.

Darryl Miller: He and his wife have moved to Adelaide from Bendigo to operate a hair dressing franchise.

Stewy Adrain: Now working at the Royal Auto Association.

Mike Sarson: Thought to be still in the owner/driver courier business.

From 'Westlink' of Dec 97

Garry Larkin: With Readymix for many years, he is now running a newsagency in Hampton Road, Nedlands.

Bruce Willson: Works at TAFE Leederville, involved in lecturing and admin duties.

Brian Firns: Back in Perth for the summer, before returning north again for the winter.

Cedric Clutterbuck: Recovering after another triple by-pass, and has had to give up driving and his bee keeping hobby.

Don Taylor: Taking things a bit easier after extensive back surgery. Don recently produced a jar of nuts, bolts and metal plates that had been inserted into his back and later removed.

PEOPLE NEWS (continued)

Frank Cohen: Recently returned from a trip to Bali, he has had surgery for skin cancer, but has recovered OK.

Pat Wood: Not too well of late, he is undergoing treatment for what is possibly a cancer condition, but the medicos are not certain as yet.

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WO1 Bob Mills, JMCO Adelaide, lines up to tackle another leg of the Simpson Desert Cycle Classic.
WO1 Mills covered 458km of the 580km course and raised \$2,400 for the Paraplegic Benefit Fund.

MOVER (EX SURVEYOR) CYCLES INTO FOUR DAYS OF TORTURE

You don't have to be mad but it helps: By Capt Grant King

How else can you explain some- one wanting to put themselves through four days of torture? Such is the case for WO1 Bob Mills, from JMCO-Adelaide.

He decided to take part in the Simpson Desert Cycle Classic, a 580km, four-day bike ride from Purni Bore to Birdsville through Rig Road and Inside Track to raise money for the Paraplegic Benefit Fund of Australia.

The race route is an unmaintained track that varies from sand-covered dunes to hard salt pans.

Along the way there are about 900 sand dunes to cross and if the terrain doesn't get you, the weather just might.

The Bureau of Meteorology says the average temperature in October is 32C, with the mercury climbing to 38C on at least one day of the week.

WO1 Mills said it was the toughest thing he had ever done.

"I've competed in military biathlons but this was harder," he said.

"In fact, even competitors who'd done the ride before said it was the toughest." Last year only 22 of the 43 entrants finished the whole race and this year 47 faced the starter's gun, with only two managing to complete the entire distance.

Once the race started competitors needed to maintain a minimum average of 12km/h for each stage or face being picked up by a sweep vehicle and incur penalties for incomplete distance.

On day two, WO1 Mills was swept at the 30km mark of an 80km leg and still finished a creditable 18th out of 47 for the day.

"We seemed to be off the bikes more than we were on them," he said.

"The prevailing weather rearranged the sand dunes and we were pushing through loose sand - I reckon I carried the bike about 10km." WO1 Mills was supported by Cpl Lincoln Smith, also from JMCO- Adelaide.

Cpl Smith said they loaded every- thing including water, food, fuel and spares into the back of a 110 Land Rover and a trailer.

"As well as a spare bike we had seven jerry cans of fuel, 11 plastic jerry cans of water, fresh rations and 20 one-man ration packs plus every- thing else to see us through," Cpl Smith said.

WO1 Mills raised \$2400, enough to see him placed third highest fundraiser.

He said about \$50,000 was raised, the best by an individual competitor was \$ 12,000.



WO1 Bob Mills clocks up the miles on the sun-scorched tracks of the Simpson desert during the cycle classic to raise funds for the disabled.
