



**SURVEY
EX-SERVICEMEN'S
ASSOCIATION**

SOUTH AUSTRALIA



NEWSLETTER No.27
JUNE 2000

A bit unfortunate I suppose, but better late than never, as this newsletter was started in early April for distribution before Anzac Day, but due to acquiring a bad dose of an upper respiratory infection and other problems, I was unable to continue until recently about eight weeks late. Also, four letters went out without the draft instructions regarding Anzac Day details, and only discovered after the bulk letter posting, but leaving no way of knowing who they went to, however, some enquiring phone calls in my direction fixed the problem. My apologies, folks

NEWS ITEMS

I wish to thank members who have phoned me to pass on items for our newsletter. I sometimes mention the news source, but not always, however I am always grateful. George Ricketts was our local reporter fossicking out news for a long time now, but is unable to do so in the future, so we need a replacement. If you can help out give me a call on 8277 7074 and discuss the matter. HELP is sorely needed.

SOCIAL NEWS

Remember our annual dinner to commemorate the birthday of the Royal Australian Survey Corps. It is being held at the Rob Roy Hotel same as last year, at 106 Halifax St. City, on Friday the 30th. of June 2000. Secretary Dave Irving sent out details about three weeks ago, so if you have yet to reply yea/nay, let him know soon. A few late acceptances are not a problem. At 7pm for 7.30pm it's one of the few chances we have to up-date on old friendships.

Keep in mind our First Friday Drinks held at the Queen's Arms Hotel in Wright St. after 5pm on the first Friday of each month. Eight turned up earlier this month for a pleasant hour's chat, including Pam and Laurie Sutton. Laurie gets a bit lonely, being the only litho printer to have retired in Adelaide that I know of.

Mark up next year's calendar for the week-end of 1st of July 2001.

The Ex-Fortuna Survey Association is trying to plan a gala week-end event for that date in Bendigo, to include a formal dinner on the Saturday night and another function on the Sunday, so plan ahead now, although there will be more on this later.

CORPS HISTORY

The Corps history is now in the final stages. Dr. Chris Coultard-Clark has completed his task of compiling the history and the final draft is being prepared for printing. The expected price for a pre-publication purchase is around \$30 per copy, rising to about \$50 when released for public sale. Details regarding purchases by ex-survey members will be passed on, when announced from Canberra fairly soon.

I heard from Garry Warnest that the intended release of the history is next September, at a function to be held at the Corps Museum at Moorebank, but I'm sure more information will be available soon.

REGIMENT HISTORY

Val Lovejoy has finished compiling the history, but in her attempt to include as much as possible, her final draft finished up about twice as long as that required for her thesis for a masters degree. She is now working on the arduous task of editing the history so as to conform to the requirements of her supervisor at the university involved.

I've been told that the original version makes great reading, and is the one preferred for publication, containing a good mix of historical fact and anecdotal fiction/fact, so I'm joining the queue right now for a copy.

There is a problem though, in that the written history does not belong to the Fortuna organising group, and the right to publish must be bought from the university concerned, as I understand. Life is not easy, you know. The sum required is around \$4000, so how about a few donations from the local ex-Fortuna crowd, to help the show get started. The address is-----Ex-Fortuna Survey Association,

PO Box 865, Bendigo, Vic 3552.

The treasurer is Doug Carswell, and it is hoped the history can be printed and released at the intended Fortuna reunion weekend in 2001.

AUSTRALIAN SERVICE MEDAL 1945-75.

The move toward having survey operations in South East Asia and in the South West Pacific from 1975 to 1994, included in the eligibility criteria for the medal have so far been unsuccessful. Entitlement also entails the receipt of veterans benefits, so worth thinking about. I believe that another submission will be prepared by Clem Sargent and Don Swiney.

RAE PORT CROCK

For collectors of military port crocks,one was recently created to commemorate the demise of the School of Military Engineering at Moorebank NSW,being incorporated into the Army Combat Arms Training Centre at Puckapunyal Vic. SME was operational at Moorebank from 1st Sep.1939 until 10th Dec.1999

The crock was produced at Brown Bros Milawa Vineyards,filled with a tawny port,and is available from the RAE Corps Shop,Steele Barracks, Moorebank Ave.,Moorebank NSW 2174. Telephone is 02 9600 4419. The cost is \$25 per crock, but I have no details about postage costs.

BENDIGO CENOTAPH

All members posted to Fortuna over the years would well remember the Cenotaph,near the fountain in Bendigo. The famous memorial was given to the city by the late Sir George Lansell ,known as the Quartz King and the builder of Fortuna. The memorial has stood now for around 100 years at the present location and over \$400,000 has been spent on repairs in the last two years,but now the council have plans to relocate it to somewhere in Pall Mall,not far away but very expensive. Bendigo RSL members are up in arms about the relocation,but whether they have the clout to stop it is doubtful. Time will tell.

FREEDOM OF THE CITY

Talking to Bernie Watson recently,he reminisced about Bendigo back in 1940,when the honour of Freedom of the City of Bendigo was bestowed upon the 2/1 Field Survey Company. Bernie was a member of the company,which was in training at Puckapunyal at the time,and can remember the two day march to reach Bendigo and the stop to smarten up a mile or two out before marching into the city with bayonets fixed,etc,for the ceremony. The company probably marched past the Cenotaph.

At the time in 1940 the company was under the RAE banner,becoming part of RASVY a short time later.

I dare say many members can recall the honour being given to the Army Survey Regiment decades later on two occasions,under the command of the late Bill Sprenger and later with Bob Skitch.

SECURITY AT FORTUNA

The old Picquet Hut of many memories above the car park at Fortuna is no more, after decades of service the only reminder is the concrete floor slab. A new Guard Hut was recently erected adjacent to the old slab, at the side of the road in, complete with a boom-gate and cyclone wire fence surrounding the work areas. The days of walking straight in are over, so phone ahead if visiting the place during work hours as some sort of security is probably needed, although Sunday tours of the villa are still held.

ANOTHER DAY ANOTHER NAME

Fortuna now has another name. Known as ATSE or the Army Topographic Support Establishment until early this year, the new name will last longer than the old, reflecting on the role of producing maps for all three services, something that has been done at Fortuna for years in any case. It is now known as DTA or the Defence Topographic Agency.

UPGRADE AT ENOGGERA

Heard from Barry Lutwyche that the building occupied by 1 Topo Svy Sqn at Enoggera Barracks, has been extended and refurbished at a cost of several million dollars and now includes both secret and top secret areas, involving what I know not. The facility was opened last May.

LAST FRIDAY DRINKS IN BENDIGO

Ex-Fortuna members meet for drinks and a chat on the last Friday of each month at the RSL Club about 5pm. The club is situated in Havilah Rd. at Nth. Bendigo, near the showgrounds. The function used to be held in the old OR's boozier at Fortuna, but why the change I know not.

All ex-svy visitors to Bendigo are most welcome to attend.

As a matter of interest and wonder, Greg Francis-Wright is the honorary treasurer, Steve Burke is president and Bob Bogumil is on committee, of the club. Looks like a takeover.

PEOPLE NEWS

Butch Winterflood

Not heard of for many years, Butch now operates a courier service on Bridie Is. Qld, and previously managed a hotel somewhere, according to Barry Lutwyche.

Graham Dowd

Graham is now a retired pensioner living the good life on Bridie Is., says Bill Griggs who paid a visit while in Queensland a few months ago.

Terry Lord

Now back in the ARA as a major, stationed at Puckapunyal, with the position of SO2 Combat Engineers, whatever that entails. Terry held the position of training officer with the Bendigo Fire Service, previously. Garry Warnest met up with Terry at a dinner function recently at Puckapunyal, to catch up on some news.

Barry Lutwyche

Barry has recently bought into an icecream sales business with a set round of shops to take care of, on a regular basis. He reckons it's a bit too regular, being a six day week driving around Brisbane, but hopes to employ a driver to take care of one day each week.

George Ricketts

George is still recovering slowly after his stroke, but often wishes things would speed up a bit, although he is doing fairly well overall. His eyes are still a problem, able to watch TV well enough but not yet a newspaper. He participated in the Anzac Day March in a wheelchair, pushed along by Bill Love, after which he attended our reunion for a chat and a beer, before being driven home.

John Scharber

John and Joanne returned home in early May, after a five week visit to the U.K. John reckons the bank account is pretty low now, but who cares, it's only money.

George Timmins

George has been holidaying with his mother for the last three or four weeks, travelling by his Prado 4WD from home-base Swan Hill to the Top End, visiting Darwin, Kakadu, etc, then on through Qld before returning home. Last Easter George went fishing about sixty kms. the other side of Wilcannia, with some success. His party caught a good swag of fish, including eight murray cod around 8-10lbs and one 32 pounder. Not bad at all.

PEOPLE NEWS

Anthony Stephens

Anthony is still in the business of selling and producing maps. The sales side is through his shop in Peel St. City, and the production of mapping that he is commissioned to do is carried out in a work area above the shop, aptly named The Map Shop. His client base varies between private companies and organisations to State and Local Government agencies. Last year Anthony was proud to receive two awards for the excellence of thematic mapping he produced, in competition against other cartographers from the whole of Australasia. The Map Shop carries an extremely varied range of mapping, claimed to be the best in Australia, and I remember when buying a road and locality atlas of the entire UK, another customer purchased maps covering Japan pending a trip there. Well worth a visit.

John Hook

John gave everyone a pleasant surprise when he turned up at our reunion on Anzac Day. He has now retired and lives in Brisbane, but was in Adelaide for a few days to visit his son who lives here.

Blue Blaskett

Blue and Irene now live a life of leisure in retirement in Caloundra Qld, with plenty of fishing to fill out the days.

Bob Love

Bob was in hospital for five days in early May, to undergo prostate surgery. I'm glad to report all went well and he has made a full recovery.

John Nathan

John went to Sydney at the end of April to run in an olympic trials marathon. Seems a long way to go for punishment. He mentioned the diet and training involved, which would certainly be a big no-no for me. Well done John and keep it up.

Ian Thomson

Congratulations are in order for Ian and Clarita, as they were married on 28th January this year. Ian hoped to tie the knot on 28th December, but didn't take into consideration the thirty day wait required by law, after making the initial application. He has sold his house in Innisfail and both now live at Gympie Qld 4570, phone

Dick Small

Dick lives at Yarraman Qld, according to Ian, operating as a produce agent selling agricultural goods. Dick came down from Qld to attend the farewell party when 4 Fd Svy disbanded in 1995.

ANZAC DAY 2000

The March

The weather was again kind to us, being sunny and mild, with no rain on the day for about four years now, thank goodness and touch wood. The roll-up was fairly good, with 21 members forming up to march from our point on North Terrace just west of Pulteney St., although a few more would have been better, so bear in mind for next year.

George Ricketts was able to attend using a wheelchair and Pat Cox was there after an absence with ill-health but still not the best. It was a first time for Jeff Ford and hopefully not the last.

Bob Love led our group this year in lieu of George and Cameron Griggs on leave from his unit in Townsville carried our banner, at short notice, in place of John Wicker who had a shocking cold. Peter Davis carried the corps identity disc, as the usual school cadets were a bit scarce. The group photo taken by Bernie Watson after the march is available thru me on 8277 7074.

The Reunion

Held at the Saracens Head Hotel, Carrington St., City, from mid-day on. Suitable pubs at a reasonably central location are not too plentiful on Anzac Day, but this one fitted our needs. About 28 members attended, but I was unable to record all names, so my apologies to anyone I have not mentioned. The booze prices were usual and a very good lunch was provided at reasonable cost in the dining room. The pub's decor was bright and pleasant, providing a relaxing atmosphere for a drink and to catch up on news. A face out of the blue was John Hook, who was visiting Adelaide at the time. Another visitor for the day was Laurie Coley, an ex-serviceman visiting Australia from South Africa and brought along by Bob Love. A few had to leave early, like George Ricketts and Peter Davis, but most remained for the short AGM just after 2pm, held in a small conference room provided by the pub. We all squeezed in fairly well, but the photo taken by Bernie afterwards was difficult to do, as some members were obstructed or unable to fit in the frame. Prints are available if you contact me on 8277 7074.

Later in the day, I left just after 4pm, leaving about six or so still at the bar, ending a pleasant day.

AGM ANZAC DAY 2000

The following is a brief summary of the meeting, held at the Saracens Head Hotel.

Apologies were received from Colin van Senden, Jim Dunn, Gus Trueman, Dave Collins and George Ricketts. I'm unable to recall one or two others.

The president welcomed to the meeting John Hook visiting from Brisbane and Laurie Coley from South Africa.

During Business Arising, it was reported that the original plaque placed on the old 4 Field Survey building when opened by Gen. Brogan, has been renovated thru defence resources, and reinstalled in the renovated entrance foyer to the building, now occupied by HQ 9 Brigade. It can be sighted anytime during normal working hours.

Items of General Business were:

It was approved that a donation of \$20 be donated annually to support the RSL Anzac Day Appeal.

It was decided to hold our corps birthday dinner at the Rob Roy Hotel on Friday 30th June 00.

It was decided to renovate our banner, with an estimate of costs to be obtained first.

The availability of the Sergeants' Mess at Keswick was to be checked out, with the intention of holding Association functions there.

Association funds available at the 24th April 00 were \$606.10 in the general fund and \$335.16 in the history fund.

With the position of Asst. Secretary/Treasurer being vacant, Bob Mills was nominated and elected to the position, with the usual unanimous clamour from those members not nominated.

Annual subscriptions remain at \$10, so please pay up and make our treasurer a happy man. If in doubt give Dave a ring after working hours on his home number of

BOOK LAUNCH

I attended the launch of John Showers book Return To Roxby Downs at Dymocks Bookshop in Rundle St., last January. With about thirty others, I enjoyed the first class nibbles and wine provided, and also had the pleasure of meeting Jo Showers, John's wife, as well as Robyn Patrick and Anne Beadell. The first segment of the book relates the exploits of a Survey Corps party mapping around Roxby Downs in 1949, mentioning Len Beadell, Frank Cohen, John and many others. The anecdotes raise a chuckle or two, making a good story and easy to read.

BELOW

Chatting before the parade are Bob Love, Bob Cooper and George Ricketts [seated in wheelchair].



ABOVE Group photo after the parade L to R. Bernie Watson, Bill Love, Cameron Griggs, John Whitburn, Dave Collins, Bill Griggs, Peter Elverd, Max Coletti, Jeff Ford, George Ricketts, John Harrison, Bob Love, Stevo Hinic, Bob Cooper, Pat Cox, Peter Davis, Alex Munro, David Bowyer, Bob Griffin, Bob Mills and Alex Czornohalen

BELOW Waiting to form-up for the parade are Peter Elverd, Dave Collins, Peter Davis, John Whitburn and John Harrison.



ABOVE AGM Anzac Day. Sitting L to R. Bernie Watson, John Nathan, Stevo Hinic, Mick Hanson, Bob Cooper, John Wicker, Dave Irving and Bill Love, both obscured, Bob Griffin, Alex Munro, Alex Czornohalan, Bob Love, Laurie Coley [visitor], Pat Cox and John Harrison. Standing L to R. John Jones, Max Coletti, Peter Hammer, Peter Elverd, Bill Griggs, Bob Mills and Bob Dikkenberg. Not shown in the photo were John Hook, Cameron Griggs, Jeff Ford and Steve McGuiness.

The Episode with wooden barge – Rose River 1959

Prologue:

Cpl. Vincent Sutherland and myself – Cpl. Stephen Rose – were at Balcombe on a Sergeants course when the field party departed Adelaide for the annual field season in Arnhem Land. On return to Adelaide we flew up to Katherine, landing at Tindal aerodrome and then had to hitch a ride the 14 miles or so into Katherine and then down to the ‘low level’ bridge where the Survey Regiment had a base camp. Here we collected a Landrover, without a canopy and both side doors removed, for a very dusty 180-mile trip to Mainoru station where our main base camp was situated. Sometime later (I can not remember whether it was the next day, by Connellan’s weekly plane or the charter plane being used by the field party) I flew down to Rose River to join the party responsible for the coastal Tellurometer traverse along the coast of Arnhem Land.

The story:

Exploration, from Rose River, to find a way along the coast, both south and north, showed that the use of vehicles was going to be impracticable due to deep coastal creeks and rivers, that could only be forded at rock bars many miles inland or vast plains subject to flooding and hence bogging. Earlier in May while our Major was visiting us, at Rose River mission, he saw what appeared to be a derelict landing barge in the mangroves near the mission. From the Cessna the barge looked suitable for our work - a solution to the problems. So it was inspected at low tide and appeared to be capable of carrying a Jeep or cargo of about 25 cwt. It turned out to be in a state of disrepair as all the iron fittings had rusted away and the ramp winches had turned into lumps of white aluminum salts.

While the tedious business of negotiations for sale or hire was taking place, over a period of weeks, we in the mean time cleared a path through the mangroves and the barge was moved around to it on high tide before it filled with water. Four long timbers for a new jetty were borrowed for a ramp and the winch of the GMC 6x6 truck pulled the barge up on to it. The ends were jacked up and placed on 44-gallon drums so the ramp could be removed and we could work on repairing the damage to the hull.

There was 3 inches of foul smelling gooey mangrove mud inside the hull to be removed before the bottom could be repaired. This was scraped into baking dishes and slid along to the hatch, through a maze of cross braces and uprights, where it was lifted up to another person who emptied it over the side. When the barnacles were removed from the outside, it was found that the bottom had sprung – (detached from the sides and pushed in) – about two inches at the lowest point, due to the barge having sat on the sand for about two years.

This was repaired using bolts and the wooden bottom was pulled down to its original position. The framework had one big weakness – it didn’t brace the bottom to the sides, only to deck which in turn held the sides. As there was no way of pulling the sides in, mainly through our lack of suitable equipment and material, there was a gap between the planks attached to the sides and along the edge of the pulled down bottom planks. The entire hull was caulked and puttied, a 2-inch semi-rotary pump placed mid-ship at the deepest part of the hull and everything was ready for launching.

44-gallon drums were placed along the outside edges to act as rollers, but the 3-ton barge would not move. So a cable was run around the barge and back to the GMC, while one of the ramp timbers was placed between the front of the barge and truck bumper. The truck then pushed the barge. Four of the party moved drums from the rear to the advancing end as the barge move over them. Others were putting four- foot lengths of 2” pipe (reference marks)

The Episode with wooden barge – Rose River 1959

beneath the front wheels of the truck as it moved across the mud, pulling them out as soon as the wheels had passed over them. At last it floated; there were several fountains inside the barge where the caulking had sprung out in the ½ inch gap. Quickly this was knocked back in and the barge lashed to the old rickety jetty, in a couple of feet of water. For a couple of days the hull had to be pumped out daily until the caulking swelled and the intake of water was only a few gallons a day – mainly through little holes made by mangrove worms (too small and numerous to plug).

As we waited for news of the outboard motors coming up from 'down south', a Jeep was loaded on the barge for testing and the barge was then moved back to the jetty. The next day a native, from the mission, came to our camp at the airstrip, about 1½ miles away from the jetty, to tell us that the barge had sunk. So we all crowded in the Landrover and tore down to the jetty; our luck was out as it was too true. As it was high tide the water was just up to axles of the Jeep. Our Sergeant, panicked and instructed us to bail out the hull although it was underwater with a 3½ x 2½-foot open hatch and a 2-inch open hole where the outlet of the old pump had been. The front ramp was only slats of wood with open sections and the deck scuppers were also under water.

It appears that as the last high tide went out it held the side of the barge up on the bracing timber of the jetty while the other sank on to the sand. As the new tide came in, it was able to enter through the hatch filling the barge before it could float. The barge then slipped off the bracing and was left balancing on the edge of the main channel, only the ropes to the jetty preventing it slipping into deep water.

John Harrison and I had to leave then to go to Roper River mission 120 miles away. The track had been forced through the bush a few weeks earlier by our group with three vehicles and a native guide, taking 4 days due to the bogging of the truck on numerous salt arm crossings. We took the Landrover and trailer, with rope and pulleys in case of bogging. Half the journey was done before nightfall; driving into the sun had slowed us down as in the glare we kept losing the track. When the trailer overturned, we decided to camp for the night as we had a radio schedule soon. A tree trunk was removed from between the axle and body of the trailer. During the night the dew or sea mist descended like a white cloud soaking our bedding.

The following day the timbered terrain opened up into savanna. There were several dry creek crossings. On one of the steepest and the deepest the Landrover stalled as it rose over the edge of the bank. The handbrake mechanism had fouled! Later we came on to the Roper River plains where our track ran for about 25 miles. These are flat, of reddish colour, with fine dust cover, only patches of vegetation or a few scrubs along the channels that interlock the vast area. Nearer the river there are tributaries, which spread the flood waters at king tides or drains the monsoonal waters – at the present the plains were dry. Here it is possible to get up to 40 mph or more, being prepared to brake for a channel. We had one muddy crossing that we had to corduroy; this took about 30 minutes to timber new approaches with timber.

At Roper River we had to wait over night for another party bringing supplies and a crate containing the outboard motor. This was all loaded plus some tower parts left there to lighten the load previously taken from Roper River. The return trip took us 10½ hours driving though several times we had to uncouple the trailer and tow it out by cable, owing to the Landrover bogging in sand in the creek beds or the steepness of the banks.

The Episode with wooden barge – Rose River 1959

The barge, using the outboard motor and a load on board, was given trials up and down the river, these produced about 3 knots. The vibrations broke the iron frame for the outboard motor on the stern as it was rusted to a third of the original thickness. As an ex-carpenter I built a new wooden platform which was then used. Sea trials were conducted in a choppy sea, amidst almost continuous re-caulking efforts.

On one of these trials some of the party was sitting on the Jeep while others were inside it. The person in the driver's seat knocked the vehicle out of gear and it started to move forward, causing the barge to dip forward and increase the runaways speed – it looked like that was going to be the end for Jeep and those on board. It was quickly started and moved back to the rear of the barge by a very shaken culprit. Later Major Buckland and others flew in for a trial run on river.

On Monday 13th June '59 we departed from Rose River on the barge. With 44-gallon drum full of seawater, one 44 of fresh water, one 44 of petrol – all at the rear to balance the load – as the deck sloped forward from the lack of depth of hull at the bows. The load consisted of 40 foot of 'no-bolt' tower and the same of wireless tower, two large boxes containing rigging etc., and four days supplies for four men. We left for Edward Island 18 miles south along the coast at 0730. About 400 yards down stream, at the mouth of river, we had to lasso a channel marker and carry out cleaning of spark plugs, something that was to plague our RAEME representative – Cpl. B. Jeffery. The others on board were Cpl. Mick Thompson, Spr. Ron Weinert, and myself, Cpl. Steve Rose.

At the mouth we had to follow the channel about 1½ miles to sea until we could get enough water above the sandbars for our 30-inch draught which we kept scraping. Although we headed into the wind two native canoes, which left the mission a couple of hours after us, overtook us using lantern sails by midday. At 1400 hours we were chasing them to check our position which we estimated to be near the island (3 knots x 6 hours = 18 miles) only to find we were only half way. Soon we had to head out to sea for ½ a mile to get passed a reef that extended out from a point. We had sheared a propeller pin on rocks early and then had to push the barge into deeper water. We headed straight across the bay towards the island in the middle, some 5 miles south. We had to sound the water with a stick, as it was so muddy, the deepest was 5ft some 2½ miles from all land.

Late that afternoon, we decided to camp in a river, we could see on the aerial photography, directly opposite the island. We scrapped across mud banks and luckily saw the gap in the mangroves silhouetted against the dark sky. Using a 12-volt signal lamp we maneuvered up the winding river to a clear bank, passing a crocodile on the bank - others had dived into the water, here we anchored for the night. Some set about cooking a fish, Mike Thompson had caught, for evening meal, while two of us repaired a fast leak in the hull where some caulking had been wrenched out on the mud bank. Needless to say we all slept onboard that night.

In the morning the tide was out, the sides of the barge were below the top of the bank, which the night before high water had only been about 3 inches below. On our wireless schedule, that morning, it was recommended we stay nearer the coast as at that time of the year offshore winds might spring up, though I didn't experience one during the next 4 months along the coast. The tide was in by 09.00, though not as high as the previous tide so the barge had to be pushed over mud banks, as we could not find the channel in the muddy water. We only had about 3-4 miles to travel across to the island then motor to the NE corner of the island where we were to land.

The Episode with wooden barge – Rose River 1959

Unfortunately at 10.30 a sea breeze was making a heavy swell and surf along the east coast, and stirring up the mud. We had to leave the shelter of the island to round the reefs on the northern end and then attempted to head SE to run in with the swell to the proposed position for the tower. At this stage waves were now coming over the sides and swamped the outboard motor. The area we wanted to come in was now heavy combers, also a reef was visible ½ mile off the east coast so to get passed it we would have had to run side on to the waves until we were level to the landing area. So we headed into the NE corner of the island which was sheltered by the reef. There appeared to be a channel between the rocks where we were headed. Soon the water was shallow enough for the rocks to show through the muddy water, the motor was cut, the waves now pushed us in with a rush to grind to a halt on a large, almost flat, rock. The receding tide left the barge high and dry.

So all the tower parts, about a ton, were dumped over the side on the rocks. The rest of day was spent in moving it 400 yards to the mangroves over the sharp rocks and gritty mud that got into our boots and cut our feet. As the high wind had dropped as the tide went out, we hoped that at the next tide to take the barge out and south for ½ mile to a sand beach, as the present area was all rocks extending out to sea at low tide. At 18.30 the water was deep enough to float the barge off the rock but the anchor was jammed in the rocks and I had to dive to loosen it. We pushed the barge out into deeper water, falling between ugly sharp rocks.

We had hardly got it to the deeper water when the sea breeze came with heavy surf. Slowly pushed us backwards as we struggled to keep the shallow draughted front-end into the seas. The anchor, that had been placed out passed the rocks, was in sand and wouldn't hold; the motor wouldn't start, its propeller protector kept getting smashed into the rocks by the swell. We attempted to angle the motor so it would run in shallower water and also protect the propeller. One of the crescent wrenches was lost in the muddy water and the only other one soon afterwards, while removing spark plugs to clean them, as a gale was now blowing with a heavy swell.

The anchor about 50 foot out was dragging in the sand between rocks until it jammed in rocks, its rope then threatened to pull the side off the barge so the two front side bollards were lashed together and more rope let out. The bottom of the barge bounced up and down on rocks with the swell. Crunching, thump were the continuous sounds of the barge being battered to pieces on the rocks we were aground.

Our present fears were for the night, whether the surf would get worse and move the barge off the rocks into a channel or hole where it might flounder. None of us were keen to have to swim for it through these sharp volcanic clicker type rocks. Cpl Thompson had a hole in his shin, down to bone, by stumbling between rocks while we were trying to hold the barge against the waves. We tried to sleep huddled in blankets in the stern, not very comfortable when there is a large open hatch, three 44-gallon drums, boxes etc. As the four camp beds were already assembled, we lay down on them and slept the sleep of the weary.

In the morning we woke as the tide came in to find the water was 6 inches above the deck at the bows. We had time to place the bedding in waterproof wrappings, with our camera equipment on the top stretcher stacked along the side, with gear in between them, before waves broke over the top of the ram. Wood nailed over the spaces between slats had stopped it coming straight through. The waves as they passed swept up through the deck hatch and then resided; showing us the hull was badly holed. We assembled the radio and made contact

The Episode with wooden barge – Rose River 1959

with base camp but salt water kept short a Morse key plug preventing us hearing or sending at the end of the session.

The swirling water swept the tinned food into the hatch and down into the hull. The anchor rope broke and the waterlogged barge slowly turned around in the onslaught of the waves. The only thing we could do was shelter under bags as the continuous curtains of water broke over us, the wind chilling us. The force of water breaking over the stern and through a tiller slot – 3 foot by 4 inches – was moving the full 44-gallon drums. By now the barge had been swept ½ way back to the shore some 400 yards away.

As the tide went out we prepared to move to the shore for a camp. We took our bundles and rock hopped to dry land. A site for the camp was found on an area of built-up shellgrit about 15 foot above high tide and 600-800 yards from the wreck.

The remainder of the low tide was spent in salvaging the motor, tools, batteries, what remained of the food, several 4-gallon drums of fresh water and petrol. Leaving only some tower parts, the large drums of water and petrol.

The next day was spent in exploring the island for food and water. There was none to found so we had to fish. The following day we received food when a party arrived by helicopter to see if the barge was salvageable or not. They thought it was, but we didn't. As it later proved it wasn't as it was well above high water mark on spring high tides!

Our camp was in the area where it was agreed the tower was to be erected. So for the next couple of days, at low tide, we moved the tower parts over about 100 yards of mangrove mud and rocks, and then 300 yards of sand to the dry camp area. At full low tide we would collect more fresh water from the drum on the barge. The Cessna dropped in more food supplies. After a week the tower was completely erected.

Sgt. Maher came to Edward Island, and then he and Mick were flown to Mt. Daniel, the next traverse station south, as forward party. The central observation party, WO Ted Laker and Sgt. Bill Mitchell, were flown to Mt. Moore, a hill almost surround by a bend of the Roper River.

Whilst I, together with necessary surveying equipment, was flown to Mt. Roper, a high hill in a range straddling the Roper River, as the rear party. Mt. Roper and Mt. Moore were traverse stations established by the Survey Regiment as they traversed up the Gulf of Carpentaria and then up the Roper River valley towards Katherine. The mechanic was returned to Rose River. Unfortunately the tower wasn't high enough to see south across the vegetation on the island to Mt Daniel; so another 18 feet of tower had to be flown in by helicopter, in two loads, and added to the top.

After this part of the traverse was completed we returned to the island by helicopter to demolish the tower and move it ½ mile to the sand beach, before returning to Rose River. An Army catamaran (two tank bridge pontoons and a bridging section) operated by seamen to collect the tower parts. This party, from the naval frigate HMS Gascoyne (our floating base), included a shipwright to inspect the wreck and to attempt to salvage it or at least the petrol that we were short of. This party was marooned on the island for several days by the same sea winds that had wrecked us. Their boat was sunk at least 5 times by the waves. Their water and food ran out and more had to be dropped by the RAAF.

The Episode with wooden barge – Rose River 1959

Epilogue:

The strong sea breezes were to harass the sea and air transport effort regularly for the remainder of season while the surveys were being made in the Gulf of Carpentaria. At change of moon the wind would become extremely strong – too strong for the helicopter to operate safely, and the two cutters and whaleboat, manned by the naval personnel would be swamped and battered on the beaches. The whaleboat was completely reduced to a pile of loss planks after one such beaching!

Cpl. Jeffery, on leaving the Army, joined the Salvation Army. Claimed it was due to the experience of the night of the barge wreck. He served many years in Darwin.

In May 1957 Central Command Field Survey Section departed from Adelaide for Darwin, to begin mapping the Top End, a task that continued for about the next twenty five years. The section of about twenty members was led by the late Major J.K. Nolan, with WO2 Robin Wilson as the SSM. One task was to meet up with an observing party from AHQ Survey Regt., extending a First Order Traverse from the south and across Queensland, to the south-west corner of the Gulf of Carpentaria around the Rose River area. Our section was then to take over and continue the traverse around the coast of Arnhem Land to Darwin. By this time in 1959, Major Frank Buckland was in charge and WO1 Ted Laker had been brought over to help out.

The area was wild and desolate, providing problems to our progress on a daily basis, as well as the weather being unkind on many occasions, so the task overall was a constant challenge. I think Steve Rose's story proves the point. I once overheard a sailor on his return to HMAS Gascoyne from assisting a survey party ashore, tell his mates that he would break a leg rather than do it again.

Steve, sorry about the lack of graphics, but had a few problems there.

VALE

Don Taylor

Don died in Perth at the end of January this year after a long illness. He had a long and remarkable career in the Corps, rising through the ranks to retire as a major, and was involved with mapping operations not only in Australia but also in Papua New Guinea earlier in his career.

Don spent many years at Fortuna in the old Air Survey Squadron, in the plotting and aerotriangulation sections, eventually supervising projects as a WO.1. I can well remember discussing the world at large over drinks with Don, at the regular Friday night sessions in the Sergeant's Mess at Fortuna, with fond memories of those times.

He also served as OC 4 Fd Svy Sqn at Keswick Barracks for a period in the late eighties, so is well known locally. Following his stint here he was posted to Perth, in his home state, prior to retirement.

Don will be missed by his many friends. Condolences were sent to Margaret and family. The news of Don's passing came to me via Frank Bryant, Mick Dempster, Bill Griggs, Ray Sergeant in WA and Barry Lutwyche in QLD, so thanks to all.

Derek Chambers

Derek died in early April this year in Brisbane, succumbing to a leukemia condition suffered over a long period. A tragedy when considering that Derek was comparatively young. He worked on many survey operations around Australia, and also served in Vietnam around 1966.

He was well regarded as a good technician and a keen sportsman but also as a good friend, and served for some years with 4 Fd Svy Sqn at Keswick. Derek retired with the rank of staff sergeant in the early eighties, returning to Brisbane to take up a civilian job. He surely will be missed by his many friends, judging by the large attendance at his funeral. Condolences have been sent to his wife Lorraine and family.

Archie Hancock

Archie died on 7th January this year in Geraldton WA, after a long and debilitating illness, fulfilling his wish to see the new year in. I had the pleasure to speak with Archie by phone for almost an hour only five days before hand, and while we chatted of old times, it was obvious that he had accepted his fate. A real character and good friend now gone.

Ray Sergeant, Frank Cohen and Barry Parker drove up from Perth to attend his funeral. Condolences were sent to Archie's long time partner Meryl Davis.

VALE

Kieth Alexander

Kieth died in Adelaide in December 99. A former WW2 sapper he originally came from Camberwell Vic., but settled here later to work for many years with the Commonwealth Govt. as an architect.

Eric Jewell

Eric died in February this year in Melbourne. An ex-WW2 sapper, he and George Ricketts served together during the war. During a visit to Adelaide about six years ago, Eric marched with our Association on Anzac Day and attended our reunion, so you might remember him.

Samantha Farrington

The daughter of Jan and Joe Farrington, Sam died accidentally a few months back in South Africa, aged about 21 years. I understand she was a staff member with a tour group, when she succumbed to carbon monoxide poisoning from a faulty gas shower unit.

Our deepest sympathy to Jan and Joe with their tragic loss.

Stephanie Henson

The daughter of Barbara and Arthur Henson, she died suddenly in Canberra earlier this year. Stephanie suffered an asthma attack which led to heart failure. Heartfelt sympathy is extended to Barbara and Arthur with such a sudden and tragic loss.

Max Howarth

Max died in WA some months ago. He will be remembered by the hundreds of students who attended SMS at Balcombe and Bonegilla, as the transport wallah for several years, before retiring to Perth.

On two occasions that I can remember, Max helped me reduce the red tape/paper warfare by swapping vehicles damaged by students, from the spare vehicle park at Bandiana.

Dr. Rosenthal

Dr. Rosenthal died fairly recently in Bendigo. As the Area Medical Officer at Fortuna for many years, he would have treated hundreds of members who were posted to the Army Survey Regiment, at the old RAP on the balcony.

ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE

PRESIDENT
BOB COOPER

SOMERTON PARK S.A. 5044
Telephone

SECRETARY/TREASURER
DAVE IRVING

TRANMERE S.A. 5073
Telephone

ASST. SECRETARY/TREASURER
BOB MILLS

SEACLIFF PARK S.A. 5049
Telephone

NEWSLETTER
ALEX MUNRO

COLONEL LIGHT GARDENS S.A. 5041
Telephone