



ROYAL AUSTRALIAN SURVEY CORPS  
ASSOCIATION  
Queensland Branch  
**BULLETIN**

PO Box 5784 Stafford Heights 4053

Website: [www.rasurvey.org](http://www.rasurvey.org)

ANZAC EDITION – No 48

APRIL 2012

**VALE - CPL ASHLEY BIRT - KIA**

It is with deep regret the Australian Defence Force confirms that Corporal Ashley Birt was killed on operations in Afghanistan on 29 October 2011.



Corporal Ashley Birt was born in Nambour, Queensland in 1989. He enlisted into the Australian Regular Army in June 2007 and was allocated to the Royal Australian Engineers as a Geospatial Technician.

Following his Engineer Initial Employment Training and Specialist Technical Geospatial Basic course in December 2008, he was posted to the 1st Topographical Survey Squadron as a Geospatial Technician. He was promoted to Lance Corporal in February 2011 and to Corporal in April 2011.

Corporal Birt was part of Combined Team Uruzgan and is survived by his parents and brother.

His colleagues describe him as being a proud and well-liked soldier of the 1 TOPO SVY SQN. He maintained a very high level of physical fitness and played hockey at the highest levels. Due to his natural leadership style, maturity, hard work ethic and dedication to his specialist trade, he was quickly promoted through the ranks.

He was a great mate to his many colleagues and well liked by all. He was a larrikin and someone who was always smiling. His mates remember him as a great bloke, a distinguished sportsman and an excellent soldier. He will not be forgotten and will always remain a part of the sapper family.

Corporal Birt has been awarded the following honours and awards:

- Australian Defence Medal
- Australian Service Medal with Clasp Solomon Islands II
- Australian Active Service Medal with clasp International Coalition Against Terrorism (ICAT)
- Afghanistan Campaign Medal
- NATO Non Article 5 Medal with clasp – International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).

For his efforts on OPERATION FLOODS ASSIST, he was nominated for a soldiers' medallion.

During Corporal Birt's service in the Australian Army he deployed on the following operations:

- Operation ANODE (Solomon Islands) – July 2010 – September 2010
- Operation QUEENSLAND FLOOD ASSIST (Australia) – January 2011– February 2011
- Operation SLIPPER (Afghanistan) – May 2011 – October 2011.

## CALENDAR 2012

**25 April (Wednesday):** March with your mates next Anzac Day..

**28 June (Thursday):** Annual Dinner at the United Service Club honoring Colonel Alex Laing

**1 September (Saturday)** Annual Reunion and AGM – most likely at the Kilcoy RSL

## ANZAC DAY

Join your mates for our Anzac Day celebration on Wednesday 25 April. Again we start with the Dawn Service at 0500h at the Enoggera Engineer Memorial – always a truly moving event. This year our President Alex Cairney is to place the Association wreath. For those really early birds the traditional gun-fire breakfast will be on during the hour preceding. For the rest of us a good army breakfast (bacon, eggs, baked beans, sausages etc) will be provided in the Sportman's Club afterwards.

WW2 veterans will march 'in block' at the front with those who cannot march following in busses or vehicles. The City parade commences at 1000h with the Navy leading, then Army, then Air Force. RASvy Assn is in the post WW2 group, which means we should step off not later than 1030h but best be there by **1000h**. We are positioned immediately after the Aust Water Tpt Assn and before the RASigs Assn. FUP is in George St. between Charlotte and Elizabeth Streets. Keep an eye open for our distinctive Banner. Bruce Gordon is confirmed as our leader this year. Dave O'Shannesy has the honour and pleasure of carrying the great theodolite in a regimental manner immediately behind our leader and in front of the Banner – carried by stalwarts from the Topographical Squadron.

Post-march reunion is confirmed as being at the Alderley Arms Hotel with finger food/snacks being provided (funded by the Association). The bar opens at 1300h. Alderley railway station is very close by and the Council bus route goes past the hotel. Ample parking is available at the rear of the hotel. (enter the hotel from the car park) 1 Topo Svy Sqn members are particularly welcome.

**Please note** - All transport is by private arrangement.

**March Protocol** – Refer back to Bulletin 41 (Mar 2010) to refresh on March protocol.

**Berets:** Don't forget to wear your Association purple beret. Alex Cairney will be carrying beret stock for those yet to make a purchase. (See notice page 3.)

## COMMITTEE

<b>Patron</b>	Lieutenant Colonel	E.U. Anderson MBE	Ph 3408 9179
<b>EXECUTIVE</b>			
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<b>1 TOPO SVY SQN</b>			
<b>Squadron OC</b>	Capt Stephen Wright		
<b>Squadron SSM</b>	WO1 Stephen Hill, CSM	Ph 3332 7564 mob 043 817 5977	email: <a href="mailto:stephen.hill1@defence.gov.au">stephen.hill1@defence.gov.au</a>

**Note:** Refer Veteran's Affairs matters to Peter Bates-Brownsword and Stan Campbell

## NOTICES

### **BERETS – BERETS – BERETS**

Our stocks of our ever popular beret are now nearly depleted. However, stocks are held at Christie's in Sydney. Be distinctive in the RA Survey Association headdress. Contact Alex Cairney email [alex.cairney@hotmail.com](mailto:alex.cairney@hotmail.com)

**Note:** Christies can be contacted as follows:  
Unit 4D; 1-7 Unwin Bridge Rd, St Peters, NSW 2044.  
Phone 02 9519 0784

### **MAPMAKERS OF FORTUNA**

Copies may be purchased from the Ex-Fortuna Survey Association (PO Box 865 Bendigo 3552) at \$60.00 plus postage of \$11.50 which includes cost of a padded postal bag.

### **VIETNAM – A TECHNICAL TOUR by Bob McMillan-Kay.**

Copies can be obtained from Bob McMillan-Kay at a cost of \$36.00 including postage. We commend this highly successful book of Bob's Vietnam experience. Bob's address is 14 March Lane, Maryborough, Qld, 4650.

**RA SURVEY HISTORY by Dr Chris Coulthard Clark** – copies are still available. Contact Secretary Greg Knight for details.

### **ASSOCIATION TIE or SCARF & BADGE**

Cost of tie or scarf is \$25.00 plus postage. Association badges are still available from the Queensland Association. Place your order with the Queensland Association. Phone or email Secretary Greg Knight

### **POST OUT OF BULLETIN**

Our post-out by email continues with only about twenty members requiring hard copy. Keep in mind if you require hard copy let Secretary Greg know and hard copy will be sent.

**OUR WEB SITE** – [www.rasurvey.org](http://www.rasurvey.org) remains a 'work in progress' but it is still active and appears to get a number of 'hits' – some quite unexpected.

### **OUR HISTORY PROJECT – WHAT DID WE DO, 1946 – 1996?**

Our 'What Did We Do' project remains open for further contributions. Have a look and see if you can fill a few of the gaps. Email your contribution direct to Bob Skitch [bob@skitch.me](mailto:bob@skitch.me) or enter your data on our website – [www.rasurvey.org](http://www.rasurvey.org).

### **MEMBERSHIP**

Keep your membership alive. Paid-up status for Ordinary Members terminates with the AGM on the first Saturday in September. Annual subscription is \$15.00 per year. Paid-up status of members was published in our December Bulletin. If your name does not appear on that listing it means your membership has lapsed. We suggest that paying three or more years in advance is a good idea.

## **CORPORAL ASHLEY BIRT MEMORIAL SERVICE**

**From: Troy Francis, Major, OC, 1 Topo Fd Svy Sqn** *"On behalf of the Officers and Soldiers of the 1st Topographical Survey Squadron, I would like to pass on my thanks for your well wishes and heartfelt condolences. Your prayers and thoughts have done much to help this Squadron grieve during a time of such heartache and sorrow.*

*I can assure you that your kind words have also help alleviate some of the pain and anguish that the Birt family are experiencing. The Birt family wish to pass on their thanks to all well wishers, Ashley's mates and those who were fortunate enough to serve with him.*

*Our time of morning has become slightly easier to bear knowing that such a large number of people have made a conscious effort to reach out and make contact with the Squadron. Ashley was an energetic and well respected member of our Unit, and it is a testament to his wonderful character as a man, as a son and as a soldier, that so many people would be touched by his passing.*

*I would like to invite you to attend the memorial service that will be held a Gallipoli Barracks on Wednesday 9th November 2011 at 1100 hrs at the 2nd Combat Engineer Regiment Sapper's Memorial and then afterwards at the Squadron Murray Bar, to rejoice in the short but memorable time we were able to share with Ashley."*

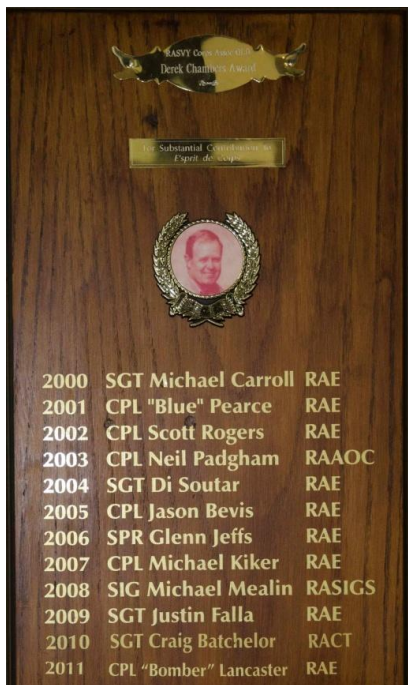
The service was conducted at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Combat Engineer Regiment Sapper's Memorial on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2011. Association members and ex-survey personnel attending were our President, Alex Cairney, Greg Knight, Percy Long, Ross Smithwick, Ian Fitzgerald, Bruce Bowers, Brian Cosford, Allan Virtue, Peter Cross, Peter Bates-Brownsword. President Alex laid the wreath at the memorial. In the Courier Mail the following day one could see quite a number of purple berets in the foreground.



**MEMORIAL SERVICE AT 2 CER**



**PRESIDENT ALEX CAIRNEY PLACING THE ASSOCIATION WREATH**



### **DEREK CHAMBERS AWARD PRESENTATION –2011**

The Derek Chambers award presentation took place in 1 Topo's Murray Bar on the 9<sup>th</sup> December 2011. The recipient was Cpl Jasper Lancaster who carries the obvious nickname of 'Bomber'. The award was presented by Lorraine Chambers with supporting comments from Bomber's OC, Major Troy Francis and Squadron SSM WO1 Stephen Hill. Our Association was well represented with our President Alex Cairney (who also said a few words on the origin of the award) Stan Campbell, Peter Bates-Brownsword, Bruce (Stretch) Gordon, Tony Gee, Jim Beard, Barry Lutwyche, Ian Fitzgerald and others. Bob Skitch was an apology (in UK). Awardees receive from the Association an inscribed Association plaque and a copy of the Survey Corps history. Non-survey technicians may choose a book of their own interest rather than the Corps history. The awardees name is also entered on the large plaque displayed in the Squadron's foyer.

The Derek Chambers award is the Association's annual award to the young soldier who has contributed significantly to the Squadron's *esprit de corps* during the previous 12 months. The award was first made in

the year 2000 and recipients since then are:

2000 – Sgt Mick Carroll RAE	2004 – Sgt Di Soutar RAE	2008 – Sig Michael Meelin RASIGS
2001 – Cpl Mick Pearce RAE	2005 – Cpl Jason Bevis RAE	2009 – Sgt Justin Falla RAE
2002 – Cpl Scott Rogers RAE	2006 – Spr Glen Jeffs RAE	2010 – Sgt Craig Batchelor RACT
2003 – Cpl Neil Padgham RAOC	2007 – Cpl Mike Kiker RAE	2011 – Cpl Jasper Lancaster RAE

**CPL Jasper (Bomber) Lancaster.** He is always the first member to put his hand up for undertaking the man challenges at the Squadron Boozer parades (no matter how bad they are), he always gets into the spirit of dress up events, (as was evidenced by his team and their outfits at Wet 'n' Wild last year. Pink hot pants, G-String, braces, a pink hat and spray tans, not a very pretty site). That alone gave everyone a great laugh and boosted the morale of the Squadron, as his outfits always do at all functions. He always competes with full energy in all the sports competitions the Squadron enters and he goes as hard as anyone else in the Squadron at PT. The diggers all look to him and his sidekick for the lead on Squadron activities. He has also done a great job as the Bar Person, always looking after everyone's interests to get in the stock they want, although some times with too many different varieties, but the soldiers were happy the way he organised the bar. He was a very popular choice amongst the diggers and that itself highlights that it was a very good choice for the award.



Lorraine presenting prize to Cpl 'Bomber' Lancaster



Lorraine and Bomber



President Alex congratulates 'Bomber'



OC Maj Troy Francis, SSM WO1 Stephen Hill, Ian Hutchings, Stan Campbell, Jim Beard

**Letter of Appreciation from Commander PNGDF**



Dear Lt Col Skitch (ret)

I received your letter of appreciation for attending the unveiling and dedication of the memorial plaque at Ela Beach.

On behalf of the people of Papua New Guinea, I would like to thank you for your services as members of the Australian Survey Unit in PNG, and the wonderful job you have done to put PNG on the map.

Kind regards

**Office of the Commander** Francis W. AGWI, DMS, CBE  
Brigadier General  
Commander PNGDF

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**Ace Evans** emailed on 8 Nov ....Both (Trudi and I) are struggling these days with back problems and Trudy's memory is shot to pieces. Other than that we are hanging in. I may have to have facet injections into the spine once again as they worked well 3/4 years ago.

**Ed:** Our best wishes are with Ace and Trudi

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**Arty McClure** phoned concerning Nev Fisher's passing in early November . Artie now 93 remains fairly fit. His partner Anne Innes, however, is not well. Artie exercises on a tread mill and still does a bit for Rotary selling raffle tickets. He has two great grandchildren.

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**Dennis Gregor** advises that his email address is now [dennis\\_gregor@bigpond.com.au](mailto:dennis_gregor@bigpond.com.au). Be warned that there is an underscore between dennis and gregor.

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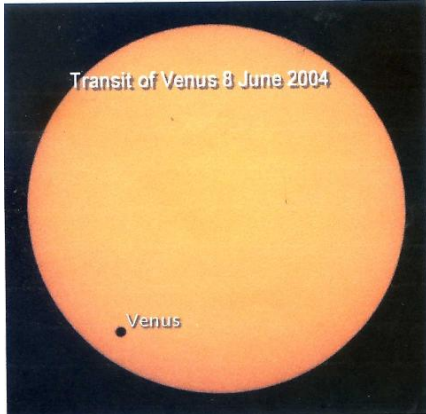
**The Canberra Survey Corps Association** conducted their Remembrance Day Dinner on Friday 11 November 2011 held at the Courtyard Restaurant of Olims Hotel (Cnr Ainslie & Limestone Avenue Braddon) All former members of RASVY and their partners are welcome. We Queenslanders trust it all went well with a good roll-up. Charlie Watson appears to have been the organizer.

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**Les (LVJ) Smith** reflects on another Survey Corps identity of the past – **Warrant Officer Frazer Matthews** who served in the Corps in the late forties and early fifties. I never met the gentleman personally but in my early years I used to hear quite a few stories about Frazer. He was a meticulous surveyor and I think it was Joe Farrington who told me about his working with Frazer as a young sapper just off a basic course on the Diggers Rest aerial farm in 1956.

LVJ recalls another job with Frazer at Mount Moriac west of Geelong, where rabbits were first introduced to Australia. Others in the party were Mike McCarthy and Jock Campbell. Apparently they were staying at a pub where the publican had just bought a brand new car, a Ford Pilot that was his pride and joy. For those that don't recall the Ford Pilot it was a British Ford, the first to come to Australia after WW2. It resembled a pre-war car, protruding mud guards and a running board, well finished for cars of that time. The publican had it parked in front of the pub on a busy road that carried lots of coal trucks hauling coal from the Whittlesea coal mine to the west Melbourne power station. Inevitably one of these coal trucks managed to wipe off the mudguard of the Ford Pilot to the absolute chagrin and despair of the publican. After that the publican parked in a more secure location at the back of the pub and that is where Frazer had their Jeep and trailer parked – Frazer always drove not trusting anyone

else – he was the most careful of drivers. It was Army driving regulation that Jeeps with their left hand drive were not to be driven at speeds over 30mph and Frazer never did, even when he was driving on open highways where the speed limit was 60mph to the frustration of those following him. Anyhow, it had to happen. Our publican's Ford Pilot turned out to be no safer parked securely at the back of the pub than it was at the front. Frazer backing out the Jeep and trailer wiped off the mudguard on the other side of the Ford Pilot. What a bummer! LVJ doesn't recall how they got out of that one.

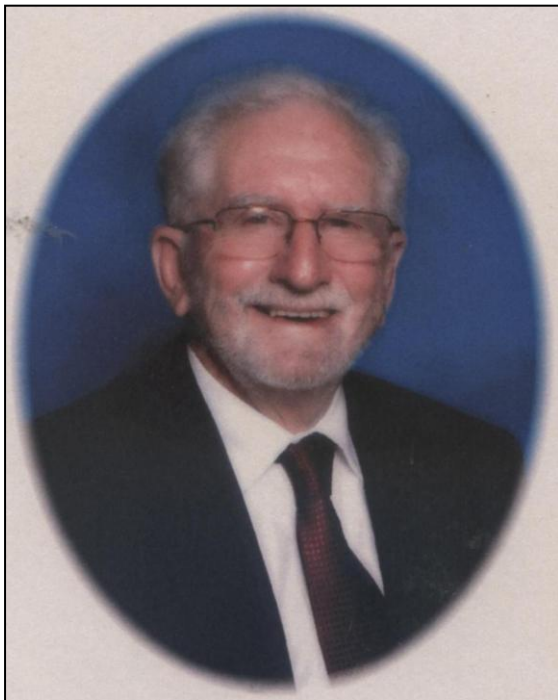


**Transit of Venus** takes place this year on Wednesday the 6<sup>th</sup> June. Transits of Venus are rare and historically important events. Most of Australia is well positioned to witness the next Transit of Venus. The Surveying and Spatial Sciences industry in association with the Astronomical Association of Queensland has produced a brochure that tells the story of past and present Transits. An abridged version of the brochure is at the end of this Bulletin – Page 17.

Also access the comprehensive website [www.transitofvenus.com.au](http://www.transitofvenus.com.au)

## VALE

**Neville Walter Trenton Fisher** passed away on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2011 at age 86 years after battling with emphysema for many years. His funeral took place at Nambour. Nev is survived by his wife Nada, sons Jeffrey, Terry, Mark and daughter, Tania.



In a phone call, Nada said that Nev was proud to have served in the Australian Survey Corps and that the Annual Reunion and AGM ceremony at Kilcoy in September 2010 where he was presented with the Association Plaque had been a highlight of Nev's retired life. It has since occupied a prominent position in Nev and Nada's Kilcoy home.

### **Paul Legge–Wilkinson**

Charlie Watson emailed to advise that Paul aged 84 passed away on 28 October 2011. Paul is probably not well known to many. Entering the Corps as a licensed surveyor he served in the early 1950s in N Comd Fd Svy Section and was on Project Xylon, the shore-ship survey of New Britain with Spencer Snow, Don Ridge, Malachy Hayes, Snow Rollston and many others. Paul continued at the AHQ Cartographic Company (later AHQ Survey Regiment) for a short while and after leaving the Corps, perhaps sometime after, he joined the Department of the Interior in Canberra. He is survived by his wife Beryl and their six children. A service for Paul was held at St Benedict's Catholic Church, Tallara Parkway, Narrabundah on Wed 2 Nov11.

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**Wayne Jennings** (aged 66) passed away peacefully on 1 December 2011. The funeral notice read....Late of Kobbie Creek, formerly of West End. Loving Husband of Rhonda and Sharn (dec'd). Devoted father of Ashley and Laura, Brett and Penny, Craig and Bernadette, Rhys and Maria and Janna. Much loved grandfather of Tiahna, Zachary, Lachlan, Abby and Xavier. A service in celebration of Wayne's life was held in a Chapel at Mt Gravatt Crematorium, on Thursday 8 th December 2011.

Wayne started his surveying career as a cadet and transferred his articles to George Enever, a well known master surveyor in Queensland. Wayne came into the Corps as a lieutenant in August 1968 and left in April 1973. Apart from the School of Military Survey in the early 1970s I have no record of his service in other units....Bob Skitch

### **A LETTER FROM NEV FISHER**

It is to be hoped that you can decipher this poor writing – you see, I am almost blind, but that's another story.

Remembrance Day (*Ed: Nev means our Kilcoy Annual Reunion*) was a great thrill to me, not only to meet so many ex-Survey and serving personnel, but to see Artie McClure after so many years.

My service with the 5<sup>th</sup> Field Survey began after a Survey school in Bachus Marsh and a motor school in Bandiana were complete, and I walked through the gate at the Ingham Showground in '44. From there we established a beaut camp at Wongabel near Atherton. Being a driver I gained a considerable amount of off-road four wheel driving experience of which I have availed myself up to losing my sight (about four years ago).

From Wongabel we departed from Townsville to Moratai until the peace treaty. At that time we were given the opportunity to volunteer to go to Japan as the occupation force. Somehow in the draw I was with a small group sent to Ambon where we released the POWs from prison and replaced them with their previous captors.

A long and exhausting search began to collect information concerning atrocities committed by the Nips on the POWs and also from the Ambonese people. We established the proof that the Nips had executed hundreds of prisoners just prior to our arrival but we could not find their graves. Only by taking out work parties (*of Japs*) every day and ordering them to DIG did they finally show us the areas adjacent to the Laha airstrip where we located the graves. There were well over 200 bodies – most of which were beheaded.

The war trials began and I was part of the escort to bring the accused to the courtroom.....(*Ed: unfortunately there is a page of Neville's letter missing at this point, however, the appended newspaper interview covers this gap*)



.....(Nada and I have been) extremely happy for some thirty odd years to date, during which time we've travelled around Australia by car and caravan three times until I lost my sight together with some other health problems.

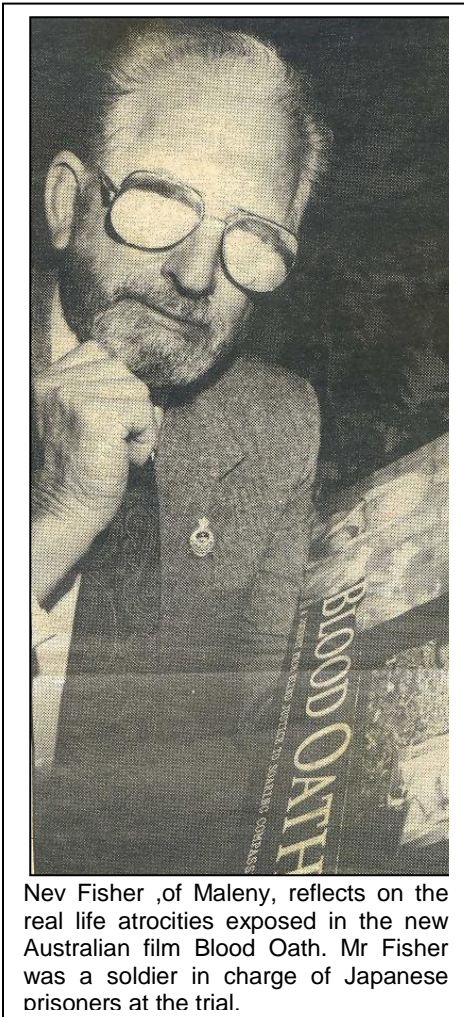
It does seem that fate did intervene three years ago resulting in the sale of our lovely home in the Maleny area to purchase this home in Kilcoy to make it easier for me to walk to shops etc instead of relying on my wife to drive me. Ironically, having learnt of the recent death of Andy Steen, the oldest WW2 member of the 5<sup>th</sup> and my reconnection with that unit as I was to my knowledge the youngest of the WW2 members.....(Ed: perhaps another missing page)

Having written this with the hope that you have been able to read it (*Ed: Nev's writing is excellent – better than mine*) I would like to finish with a request: that I would be able to purchase a 'beret' and the relative badge.

Kind regards....N.W. Fisher

*Ed: Nev completed his military service in the 63<sup>rd</sup> Australian Infantry Battalion as a result of the Ambon tour.*

## FILM HAUNTS NEV WITH HORRIFIC MEMORIES OF WAR



Nev Fisher ,of Maleny, reflects on the real life atrocities exposed in the new Australian film Blood Oath. Mr Fisher was a soldier in charge of Japanese prisoners at the trial.

A MALENY man's visit to the cinema this week brought back a flood of memories of more than 40 years ago. The year was 1945. The place was the tiny Malay island of Ambon, about 1045 kilometres north of Australia.

Nev Fisher had just arrived on the island as part of an infantry battalion sent to free Australian prisoners-of-war held captive on the island by the Japanese during World War Two. Mr Fisher opened the gates to the prison camp, setting the prisoners free. Of the 1100 soldiers held captive by the Japanese, only 300 had survived.

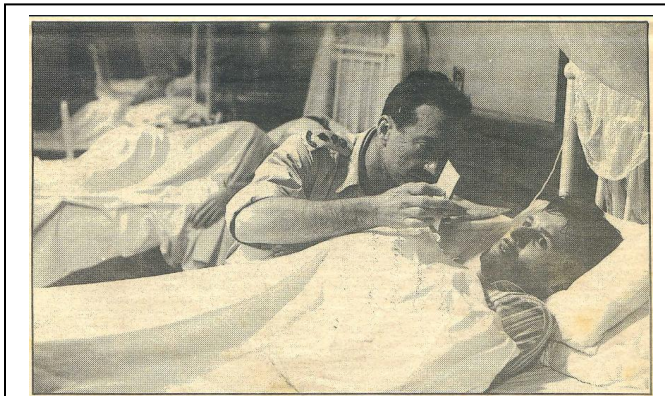
The agony and suffering endured by the prisoners was revealed in the war trials held on the island soon after. Mr Fisher, as a soldier in charge of guarding the Japanese prisoners, saw and heard most of the evidence at Ambon. Those trials and the true life experiences of an Australian military lawyer form the the basis of a new Australian movie starring Bryan Brown - Blood Oath.

On Sunday, Mr Fisher relived part of that experience when he saw Blood Oath at the Nambour Civic Centre Cinema. "Ninety-five per cent of Australians would know nothing about Ambon. But the atrocities were prolific," he said.

Film-goers will find it hard not to despise the Japanese, with gripping courtroom accounts of Australians being tortured, starved, beheaded and shot to death. The beheaded or bayoneted bodies of 300 soldiers were discovered buried in a mass grave underneath an airstrip on the island. Bryan Brown takes centre stage as Captain Robert Cooper, the attorney who tries the

Japanese war criminals. Brown gives his career best in a film that not everyone will appreciate.

Mr Fisher was about the same age as a private played by Jason Donovan in the movie when he attended the trials. "It (the movie) captured the feeling towards the Japanese at the time. The Japanese at that time would die for the Emperor and would do anything in their line of duty," he said after seeing the film.



Actor Bryan Brown as Captain Robert Hooper tries to stir the memory of Private Jimmy Fenton (John Poisson) in Blood Oath.

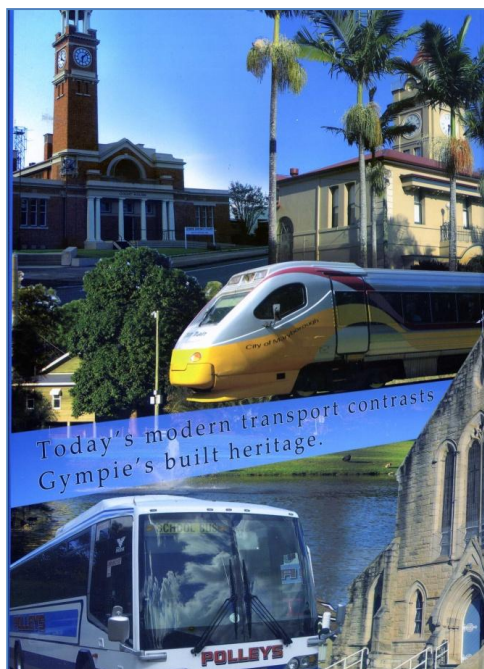
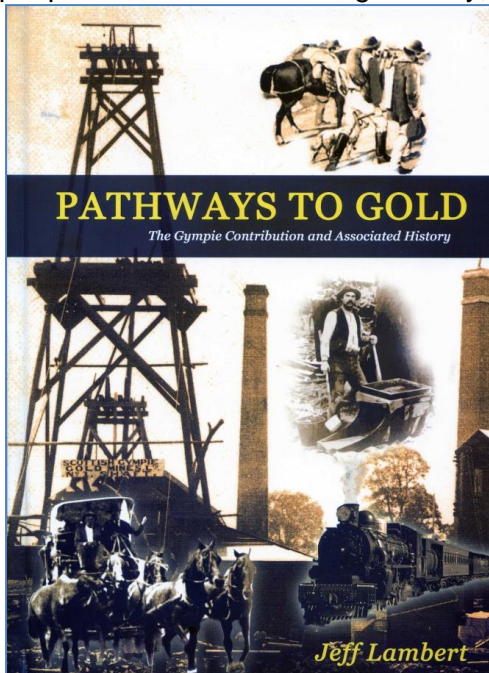
"There were some Japanese who risked their lives to smuggle food from the stores for the prisoners - but not many. Once they were under orders, they obeyed them."

The film was shot at Roadshow Studios on the Gold Coast. To the uneducated, the set looked authentic but Mr Fisher said that he was "sorry" the film had not been shot on the island.

Mr Fisher hopes to return to Ambon in a couple of years to show his wife Nada the island that held his memories at the end of the war.

**PATHWAYS TO GOLD.....Jeff Lambert**

Jeff Lambert served in RA Survey during the 1950's – early 60s, much of the time in the Northern Command Field Survey Section and later on the instructional staff at the School of Military Survey, achieving the rank of WO2. In 1957 the field survey section was engaged on inch to the mile mapping in the gold bearing area of Charters Towers and the old town of Ravenswood. Ravenswood became very significant in Jeff's life since he met his wife Judith Nutley there, the young daughter of the publican Snow Nutley. From those early days Jeff developed an intense interest in the story of gold and whenever the opportunity presented Jeff would be out with his pan and into any convenient stream that might be nearby panning for those alluring specs of gold. Jeff has often written of the many amusing incidents that occurred working with the section in the Charters Towers-Ravenswood area, of the people we would meet along the way; many have been published earlier issues of this Bulletin



In retirement Jeff's writing skills have been directed to more serious topics and a few years ago he wrote and published *'The Traveston Story'* dealing with the contentious issue of the proposed dam on the Mary River at Traveston. Jeff and Judith live at Traveston in a beautiful home called 'Eaglecrest' with magnificent views high on a ridge.

Following his continuing interest over a lifetime in the story of gold, Jeff has now published *'Pathways to Gold'*. I can do no better than to reproduce the press release leading to its launch by the Mayor of Gympie on 22 October 2011.

*'This hardcover edition is well illustrated and in addition contains thirty one maps within its 173 pages. The author takes his readers with him on a journey back in time along the tracks leading to the first major gold discovery in the then new-found Colony of Queensland.'*

*To prepare you for the journey and to appreciate the atmosphere of the era leading to the gold strike, the author commences the journey with the establishment of tracks in what was then the northern limits of settlement in the Colony of New South Wales -- Moreton Bay.*

*From there pathways are many and varied, including the maritime efforts to capture the trade to the goldfield, the Cobb & Co service to the gold field and the coach service displacement by the more efficient and economical steam train service into the Gold City. To bring further interest to the story the associated history leading to the establishment of Queensland and the subsequent history relevant to the gold rush, is intertwined with the pathway definement, bringing with it the reasoning and justification of major road-and rail infrastructure positioning in the south east of the Colony.'*

Learn more from the website [www.pathwaystogold.com](http://www.pathwaystogold.com) . Jeff's email is [jeff@pathwaystogold.com](mailto:jeff@pathwaystogold.com). Price is \$30.00 with postage to anywhere in Australia \$10.00. For those in the Gympie to Cooroy areas delivery can be arranged for \$5.00.



## 1ST TOPOGRAPHICAL SURVEY SQUADRON 6TH ENGINEER SUPPORT REGIMENT – 2011 REPORT

**Editors Note:** *This is an abbreviated version of the Squadron's full report. Copies of the complete report can be obtained from Bob Skitch*

### Flood Assist operations

The year 2011 started with soldiers from the 1st Topographical Survey Squadron being recalled from



**The clean-up**

leave to deploy on Operation Queensland Flood Assist; the operation to support disaster management agencies during the floods of central and southern Queensland. Support was provided in the form of Geospatial Intelligence detachments working with the Brisbane City Council and disaster management agencies, the conduct of imagery capture and processing over affected areas and the provision of soldiers and equipment to Defence Aid to the Civil Community activities in the Lockyer Valley region.

Squadron members were recalled during the period of 12–13 Jan 2011.

On 15 Jan 2011, a Squadron Task Force was deployed to Grantham to support the search and recovery operations. Tasks included cleaning up local houses and yards, the recovery of property and the search for bodies along creek lines and in the township of Grantham. A geo-intelligence detachment was attached to the joint task force and provided products such as planning and road network analysis, rapid damage assessment, reconstruction planning products, infrastructure geocoding and VIP briefing to the Premier, the Lord Mayor and the commander of the Joint Task Force. In addition to these, an Imagery Collection and Exploitation detachment supported the Queensland Reconstruction Authority, Emergency Management Queensland and the Queensland Department of Environment and Resource Management through the use of an Aerial Digital Imagery Acquisition System mounted in a modified RAAF B350 King Air.

The Squadron was able to deploy effectively and utilise nearly the entire suite of Squadron capabilities. Numerous foot patrols were conducted and cleared a large portion of the houses in Grantham while imagery was captured from fourteen areas including Maryborough and Gympie in the north, out west to Roma, Condamine and Kingaroy, the Lockyer Valley, Toowoomba, Ipswich and Brisbane. As well as these tasks, this year the imagery detachment has also captured imagery over Broome for the next Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting.

### **A new initiative – the Geospatial Imagery Analysis Troop**

This year the Squadron was directed by the Deputy Chief of Army to raise a Geospatial Imagery Analysis Troop. The Troop consists of two imagery analysis detachments manned by Australian Intelligence Corps soldiers and two manned by RAE soldiers. It is commanded by an Intelligence Corps Captain with both Intelligence Corps and RAE WO2s. This Troop is unique in that it fully integrates Intelligence Corps and RAE personnel.

Until recently, Imagery Analysts have typically been members of the RAAF or civilian members of the Defence Imagery and Geospatial Organisation - DIGO. Intelligence Analysts are responsible for the analysis, interpretation and manipulation of imagery and generation of Imagery Intelligence, in order to support a commander's ability to most efficiently direct and utilise assets available to him. Traditionally, Intelligence Analysts support the strategic and operational planning and rarely venture down to tactical level support. However, with the introduction of tactical unmanned aerial vehicles into the Army there is an increasing role for imagery analysts in the conduct of tactical operations.

In late August, Imagery Analysts from 1 Topo Svy Sqn conducted 'Full Motion Video' training with No. 5 Flight, 82 Wing at RAAF Amberley. The training was in preparation for the introduction of the Army's new Shadow 200 Unmanned Aerial Vehicle simulator. The data set used for the training at Amberley used imagery captured in Afghanistan over the past 18 months.

This year, 1 Topo Svy Sqn imagery analysts have deployed to Afghanistan. Imagery analysts are situated in the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Ground Control Station and provide advice on Unmanned Aerial Vehicle imagery on tasks such as route reconnaissance and surveillance of compounds of interest. Our imagery analysts were also situated in Bagram air base where they supported sensor based Counter-Improvised Explosive Devices missions.

The inclusion of a dedicated imagery analyst troop will mean significant changes for 1 Topo Svy Sqn. As the data and output used and produced by imagery analysts is at such a high level, new and more secure buildings are required as part of the \$16.8 million expansion of the Squadron's facilities in 2012. The new role for the Squadron geospatial technicians and the inclusion of imagery analysts will evolve with more opportunities for deployment and different roles across the army.

### **Local exercises**

An all Corps skills training week was run in and around Gallipoli Barracks in March 2011 in order to test and enhance individual's basic soldier skills and challenge the nine core behaviors of being an Australian soldier. The exercise tested teamwork, leadership and battle craft skills at all levels using

activities which were both physically and mentally challenging. The exercise consisted of theory and practical lessons and included Improvised Explosive Devices awareness, vehicle check points, first aid, all arms call for fire and navigation, The exercise culminated on Bribie Island in another activity called Exercise Sand Tiger. This was a Squadron teamwork and morale building activity and was a reward for



members' efforts on the flood relief operation. The activities conducted were touch football, beach soccer, beach cricket, ultimate Frisbee and beach/flag sprints.

A Squadron level technical certification exercise was conducted in early June 2011. The exercise tested the squadron's ability to deploy to a regional 'hot spot' at short notice. During the exercise, the Survey Section conducted an existing feature survey of the Caboolture and Wide Bay area.

This year the Survey Section also conducted reconnaissance for the Army Aboriginal Community Assistance Program (ACAP) in

Cape Leveque, Lombadina and One Arm Point. They also supported 17 Construction Squadron in building a Forward Observation Base at Woomera, conducted a site survey on mock villages at Wide Bay and surveyed potential bridge sites.

Selected force elements from the Squadron in July and August provided geographic intelligence, imagery analysis and data management support to the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Brigades. A Geographic Intelligence Section with HQ 7<sup>th</sup> Brigade and a geographic intelligence and imagery analysis detachment supported the Armoured Reconnaissance Helicopter Battle Group.

### **Timor Leste**

Support to operations in Timor Leste continue with the Timor detachment supporting Joint Task Force 1 out of Camp Phoenix in Dili. This is a two man detachment commanded by a corporal that is supporting the planning process with the production of district maps and navigation products. The Squadron also continues to fill the Chief Geospatial Officer Regional Command–South position in Afghanistan while the Combined Team Uruzgan provides geographic intelligence support in Tarin Kowt.

### **Courses and conferences attended**

During the year, Squadron members have attended a significant number of courses and conferences overseas. The Australia/New Zealand Bilateral Geospatial Relationship Meeting was held in Auckland in March. The meeting discusses strategic and operational level geospatial issues affecting Australian and New Zealand defence organisations and establishes actions to address geospatial issues for resolution. The OC and Technical Warrant Officer also attended the U.S. Army Geospatial Intelligence Conference in Washington DC earlier in the year. In September, the Squadron Operations Officer attended the NATO Geospatial Orientation Course in Germany. This course prepares Majors and Senior Captains for future deployments to Afghanistan.

### **Visits**

During the year the Squadron hosted visitors from the US and Japan. These visits allowed Squadron members to display the products we produce and capabilities we have. Major General Mary Legere, the Commanding General of US Intelligence and Security Command in Australia visited in April. Major General Shigeru Kobayashi from the Japanese Defence Force visited in March in order to discuss opportunities for data sharing and training. The Director of DIGO Mr Steve Meekin also visited in August. .

### **Sporting activities**

A few members of 1 Topo Svy Sqn have been selected to represent ADF sporting teams this year. Sapper Kelly Hall and Sapper Peta Capararo represented the ADF women's South East Queensland Basketball team and were selected to represent the women's ADF national team. Captain Stephen Wright was selected to represent the ADF Rugby Union team and ADF Zumba team, Sergeant Lonnie Robinson was selected to represent the ADF Touch Football team, Sergeant Graham Symes will be representing the ADF hockey team at the Australian Masters Games and Sergeant Matthew Ciszewski will be representing the ADF men's netball team. Corporal Mike Kiker, our Reserve Multi Media Technician is the national ADF ladies netball coach. His team played a three test series against the New Zealand Defence Force over the ANZAC week this year. The ADF team won the series 2 - 1 after losing the 1st by 2 goals in Sydney. Last year Corporal Kiker coached the South Brisbane Wildcats in the State League. A section from the Squadron also participated in the 7<sup>th</sup> Brigade obstacle course competition which was commanded by Corporal Langley, finishing second.

### **Community relationships**

1 Topo Svy Sqn maintains a solid relationship with community organisations such as the Kilcoy RSL and the Royal Australian Survey Corps Association of Queensland. This was the 11th consecutive year that the Squadron marched at Kilcoy on ANZAC Day. Squadron members also attended a remembrance ceremony at Kilcoy RSL on Vietnam Veterans Day and will be providing a catafalque party for them on Remembrance Day. The Kilcoy RSL is supporting Squadron personnel by funding and organising care packages to be sent to all members of the unit who are deployed on operations. 1 Topo Svy Sqn is very grateful for the support from Kilcoy RSL and looks forward to maintaining this strong relationship in years to come. The Royal Australian Survey Corps Association of Queensland also supports the unit by presenting the annual "Derek Chambers" Award for the soldier that had the most substantial contribution to the sub-unit's esprit de corps. Last years' recipient was SGT Craig Batchelor.

### **Personnel movements**

The Squadron has had a number of people move on this year. WO1 Morrison-Evans is now working with the Queensland Fire Service though remains a Squadron member as part of the Reserve Troop on Tuesday nights. Sergeant Penny Knott retired earlier this year and will be travelling around Australia as a Grey Nomad. WO2 Paul Boulton and Sergeant Kim Baker will take long service leave then discharge from the Army. The Operations Officer, Captain Stephen Wright has been posted up the road to HQ 1 DIV and the OC, Major Troy Francis will be posted to Military Strategic Commitments and promoted to Lieutenant Colonel.

### **The future**

The future for 1 Topo Svy Sqn looks busy with the raising of the Imagery Analysis capability adding extra commitments to exercises and operations. The Squadron is still heavily committed to operations in Timor Leste and Afghanistan and will continue to provide tactical geographic Intelligence support to planners and war fighters wherever it is required.

### **A VISIT TO LONDON.....Bob Skitch**

Bob and Wendy Skitch returned from London on 25 January having had nearly two months with new and first grandson Thomas Oliver Rex, the reason for their being in cold and bleak London in the middle of winter. In fact, it wasn't all that cold and bleak – London had its warmest December for some years with the temperature hovering around 10 degrees on some days. Cold enough for Bob. Son and daughter-in-law Christopher and Sharon live at New Cross Gate, part of Deptford, once a sea-faring boisterous part of London, just off Old Kent Road that runs straight as an arrow from the heart of

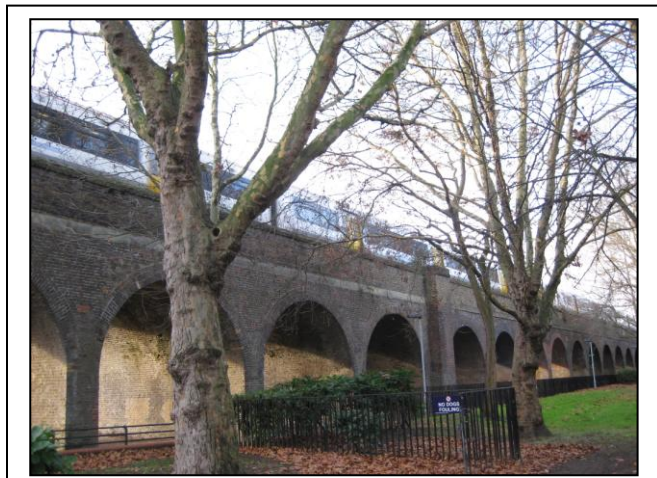
London to Dover – the old Roman road. Next suburb along is Greenwich, a little more up-market than Deptford.

When one thinks of London and its history one tend to dwell on Westminster, the ‘City’ and all the



wonderful buildings palaces, museums and parks; the famous street names like Oxford Street, Regent Street, Whitehall and Piccadilly Street but wherever one goes in London there is history, recent and ancient. The terrace home that Chris and Sharon have bought was once part of the estate owned by the Royal Guild of Haberdashers that goes back to the sixteenth century. The Guild exists to this day as a very well funded charitable organisation and in the New Cross Gate area they own and run schools ranging from kindergarten to secondary colleges with a high reputation in education. People move house to be within their collection zone.

I did many walks around Deptford, the incredible market street – Deptford High Street, the south bank of the Thames and the old wharves and of course the very modern new and expensive development on both sides of the Thames. Greenwich, the National Maritime Museum and the Royal Observatory were only a forty minute walk away. I spent a fascinating few hours in the Royal Observatory, especially with the remarkable development of the John Harrison chronometer which solved the problem of longitude in navigation (and of course surveying). The tourist interest here is the zero longitude line attractively presented by the laser-lit ‘night line’, defined by Airy’s Transit Circle in 1851 and from 1884 the Prime Meridian of the world (to the chagrin of the French). However, there are three zero meridians at Greenwich, that most recent resulting from the GPS type data located in a park about 100 metres west of the Observatory.



**Bridge of 1000 Arches – London Bridge (Sta) to Greenwich Viaduct**

A structure that I found fascinating was ‘the Bridge of a Thousand Arches or more specifically the London to Greenwich Viaduct. It is built entirely of red bricks and its length is 3.45 miles. Although know as the Bridge of One Thousand Arches the actual number of arches is 878. It is still the largest purely brick structure in all of Europe. The structure itself was engineered and supervised by Colonel Landmann of the Royal Engineers and it was opened in 1835. Through sheer coincidence I met his great grandson doing rubbish removal in a nearby street. Any job is a good job in London these days.

That part of London along Old Kent Road from Elephant and Castle to Lewisham, Deptford, and New Cross Gate is very cosmopolitan; in fact very

Jamaican and African. Interesting; and that is London these days. All the bums and yobos I saw had white skins!

I visited the Imperial War Museum – lots of militaria and old hardware, some good displays of WW1 and WW2 but not in the same league as the AWM. In the park fronting the IWM is a Peace Park funded by the Buddhist organisation and opened by the Dalai Lama. It is very beautiful and thought provoking.

London must be the theatre capital of the world and at any one time there may be between 50 and 100 separate live performances to select from. Wendy and I attended two – ‘39 Steps’, an absolutely hilarious farce on the classic John Buchan novel and the ‘Lion in Winter’ with Johanna Lumley as Katherine of Aragon and Robert Lindsay as Henry II – that is, the Robert Lindsay of the soapy comedy ‘My Family’ and Johanna Lumley of ‘Ab-Fab’! Wendy, Sharon, Sharon’s mum and one other went to the musical ‘Legally Blonde’ – bit girlie for me!

Grandson Thomas was baptised in the nearby Church of England – All Saints New Cross – a very old and very ‘high’ C of E. That was New Years Day; a date to be remembered. Wendy and I with Chris visited Canterbury Cathedral where lots of things have happened over the centuries. Where that ‘meddlesome priest’ Thomas Becket was murdered. Right next door to the entrance to the Cathedral Courtyard is – a Starbucks! We also visited Westminster Abbey and attended the Christmas Carol Service at St Pauls – pretty good!



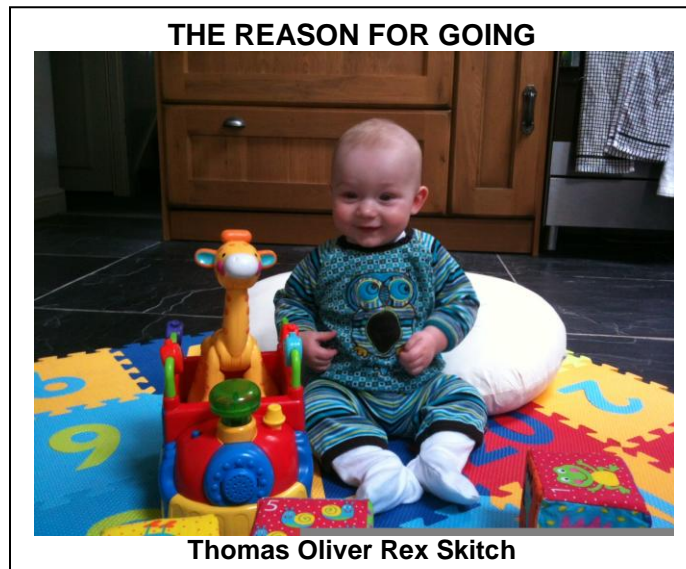
A highlight for us in London was meeting with John and Sue Collins who generously took Wendy and me to the very august Army and Navy Club in Pall Mall for lunch. My recollection of John was limited since we overlapped at the Regiment in 1977 by only a couple of months. John and Sue visited Australia in April 2011 and there is an excellent account of his visit in the SA Newsletter of June 2011. John had tracked me down at our New Cross Gate address through my son Christopher’s email address, coming through on voice mail at home one morning. Sharon took the call thinking it was a work call for Christopher – trying to hush me because I was clanging around doing the washing up after breakfast – a call that became rather

confused. But finally it became apparent that the caller wanted to speak with me. John knew Wendy and I were in London through reading our last Bulletin which he does from time to time by entering our website. One gathers that John, a Sandhurst graduate, and Sue’s time on exchange in Australia was a highlight of his military career although I am sure there were others. We had a pleasant time together yarning about old times and personalities. As stated in the SA Newsletter, John on leaving the army became an officer of the Westminster parliament in the interesting role of ‘Deliverer of the Vote’, a very ancient position. It is obviously one of considerable responsibility because on retiring he was awarded a CBE –that’s an honour just one short of a knighthood. If you would like to see a photo of John in his regalia, and receiving the CBE from Prince Charles refer to the SA June Newsletter.

Wendy and I took the train to Lymington to visit my cousin Jeffrey Skitch and his wife Stella. It turned out to be a somewhat epic journey It was on a Sunday afternoon (people have since warned us not to travel by British Rail on a Sunday). We had booked first class – Wendy needed a bit more space – (the only difference between first and no-class is that the seats are blue in 1<sup>st</sup> Class and red in no -class) Our destination was Lymington via Brockenhurst – Brockenhurst is main line and Lymington a branch line. At Eastleigh – just short of Southampton – we were turfed off the train. An announcement was made just before that track work had not been completed and British Rail would provide buses to take us to our destination. We found our way – the whole train load – to the spot where buses were to be provided and after a wait two suburban type buses turned up, one a double decker. People had big suitcases, strollers, car seats and babies. It was a battle to get on the bus but Wendy and I made it. The buses took us to ‘Southampton Airport Parkway’, a distance of about two miles. We left the bus assuming that there would be further transport to take us to Brockenhurst – no way; we were left to our

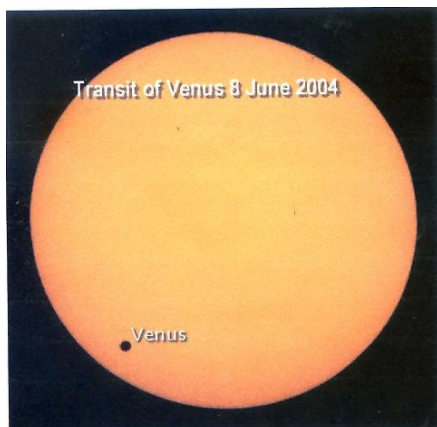


own devices. I went into the British Rail office and asked 'are there any more trains that can take us to Brockenhurst?'. The British Rail bloke behind the counter replied 'how would I know mate'. I looked up expectantly at the monitor on the wall and he said 'I wouldn't take any notice of that mate – ask someone out on the platform if there is anyone there'. I walked out to the platform and there was a worker there in British Rail uniform and I asked him if there were any more trains coming through. He said there should be in ten or fifteen minutes over on platform three. So we humped our bags over to platform three and waited and waited. Yes – a train eventually turned up and we finally made it to Brockenhurst. My cousins were to meet us at Brockenhurst to take us by car to their Lymington home but we didn't have their mobile phone number. Fortunately son Christopher's number had been programmed into Wendy's mobile so through Christopher we managed to get a message to our cousins not to wait but return home and we would arrive eventually. At Brockenhurst the connection was late and then it had to wait another forty minutes for another main line arrival from the opposite direction. Finally we got to Lymington where cousin Jeffrey was waiting for us on the platform. I should add that the outside temperature was about zero degrees with a stiff breeze blowing.



Maintaining my shattered faith in British Rail a few days later I trained to Andover and had a pleasant 24 hours with old RE friend Phillip Robinson and his wife Mary. Phillip is still involved in locating, entering and making safe the tunnels of WW1 in northern France. Mary seems philosophical about that.

Well – that was pretty much the end of our visit to London. Returning to Australia, on Qantas of course, we indulged in a week in Singapore at our once home away from home – the Tanglin Club and now it is back to reality.



## ***TRANSIT OF VENUS in Australia 6th JUNE 2012***

[www.transitofvenus.com.au](http://www.transitofvenus.com.au)

(From the brochure of this name produced by Surveying & Spatial Sciences Institute of Australia and the Astronomical Association of Queensland)

Transits of Venus are rare and historically important astronomical events. Most of Australia is well positioned to witness the next transit of Venus on Wednesday 6th June 2012. The Surveying and Spatial Sciences industry in association with the Astronomical Association of Queensland (AAQ) is providing resources to enable students to participate in a re-enactment of a great scientific endeavour and in doing so learn valuable lessons in science, mathematics, history and geography.

**Warning: Never look directly at the sun or you may cause serious and permanent damage to your eyesight.**

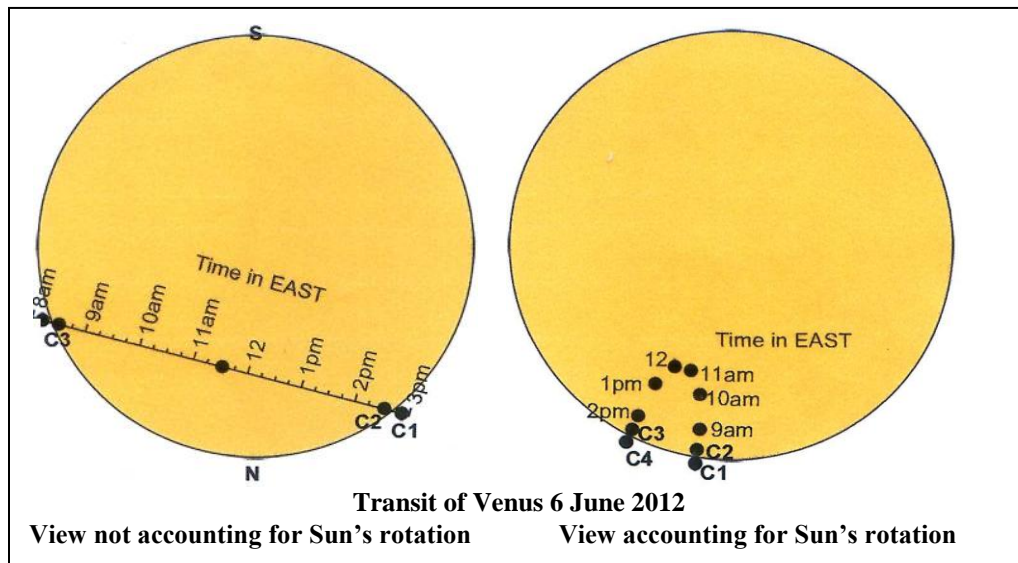
## ***What is a Transit?***

A **Transit** of a planet occurs when the planet passes directly between the Earth and the Sun so that as seen from the Earth, the planet appears to pass across the face of the Sun. Transits can only occur with planets whose orbit is between that of the Earth and the sun, that is, Mercury and Venus. A transit of a planet is similar to a solar eclipse but the planet appears to be much smaller than the Moon so it cannot cover the Sun and looks like a small black disc slowly crossing the sun.

## ***How often do Transits occur?***

Transits of Mercury occur quite regularly (with about 13 each century) but they are difficult to observe due to the very small apparent size of Mercury. **Transits of Venus** are much rarer and are more interesting due to the larger apparent size of Venus and due to their historical connections Transits of Venus occur in a pattern that repeats every 243 years with pairs of transits eight years apart separated by gaps of 121½ years and 105½ years. Venus and the Earth are aligned in the same direction out from the Sun about every 584 days (this is called in conjunction), however a transit does not occur each time because Venus's orbit is usually above or below the Sun in the sky.

Since the phenomena was first recognized there have only been six transits of Venus - 1639, 1761, 1769, 1874, 1882 and the most recent one in 2004. The 6th June 2012 transit is our last opportunity to observe a transit of Venus, as the next event occurs on 11th December 2117



## ***Historical significance of transits***

Jeremiah Horrocks was the first person to successfully predict and observe a transit of Venus in 1639. Observations of the transits of Venus became scientifically important when in 1716 Edmund Halley proposed that observations from different locations on the Earth could be used to determine the distance between the Sun and the Earth (called the **Astronomical Unit**); and the scale of the solar system could be subsequently determined by applying Kepler's third law of planetary motion. At that time there was great uncertainty about the size of the solar system and by extension the size of the universe. Many scientific expeditions were sent around the globe to observe the 1761 transit and there was great competition between nations to solve what was called the noblest problem in astronomy". Unfortunately difficulties in accurately timing the transit led to conflicting results, and consequently an even greater effort was mounted for the 1769 transit. Combined results from the two transits produced a better understanding of the solar distance, but further refinement was undertaken in later transits.

The 1769 transit has a vital historical connection to Australia. Lieutenant James Cook was dispatched to Tahiti on HMS Endeavour to observe the transit. After a successful observation he was directed to search for the "great south land" thought to exist in the South Pacific Ocean and following that search he discovered and charted the east coast of Australia.

Scientific expeditions were spread across Australia to observe the 1874 transit and again for the 1882 transits, with many of these successfully recording the event.

## ***The Transit of 6th June 2012***

For the transit of 6<sup>th</sup> June 2012, Venus will take a little over six hours to travel across the face of the Sun. Venus must be above the horizon for the transit to be visible. Australia is one of the best places on earth from which to observe the transit as the entire transit will be visible from eastern and central Australia. The transit will have started before sunrise for those observing from Western Australia.

The predicted path of Venus across the Sun's disc is shown in the diagrams above for locations on the east coast of Australia. Venus will travel in a straight line across the Sun. However, because the Sun appears to rotate as it crosses the sky, Venus will appear to move in an inverted "U" shape when viewed from Australia.

Timing for the transit is given in terms of "contacts".

**First Contact (C1)** Venus first touches the Sun.

**Second Contact (C2)** Venus is just inside the Sun on the way "in" (ingress).

**Third Contact (C3)** Venus is just inside the Sun on the way "out" (egress)

**Fourth Contact (C4)** Venus last touches the Sun

The table below gives the times of the transit for major Australian cities.

Location	Ingress		Max	Egress	
	C1	C2		C3	C4
<b>Adelaide</b>	7:46 am	8:04 am	11:01am	1:57 pm	2:15 pm
<b>Brisbane</b>	8:16 am	8:34 am	11:30am	2:26 pm	2:44 pm
<b>Canberra</b>	8:16 am	8:34 am	11:31am	2:26 pm	2:44 pm
<b>Darwin</b>	7:45 am	8:03 am	11:01am	1:58 pm	2:16 pm
<b>Hobart</b>	8:16 am	8:34 am	11:31am	2:27 pm	2:45 pm
<b>Melbourne</b>	8:16 am	8:34 am	11:31am	2:27 pm	2:45 pm
<b>Perth</b>	Before sunrise		9:32 am	12:29 pm	12:47 pm
<b>Sydney</b>	8:16 am	8:34 am	11:30am	2:26 pm	2:44 pm
<b>Townsville</b>	8:16 am	8:34 am	11:31am	2:27 pm	2:45 pm

## ***Timing of the transit and the "black drop"***

It is now possible to predict the timing of the transit contacts with great precision, because we now have accurate information on the distance to the planets and the Sun. When early astronomers were trying to measure the distance to the Sun, it was necessary to time the transit contacts as accurately as possible. However they had great difficulty with this because of what has become known as the "**black drop**" effect. This effect occurs immediately after second contact and again immediately before third contact when Venus appears to be connected to the Sun's limb (edge) by a narrow dark zone. The black drop effect is thought to be due to image blurring from atmospheric distortion and equipment diffraction coupled with solar limb darkening.



**Black Drop" at second contact**

**Transit of Venus 2004**

## ***The Scientific value of Transits***

The original benefit of observing transits of Venus was to assist in determining the Astronomical Unit. Later on, transits were used to examine Venus's atmosphere using spectroscopy.

Currently there is a great deal of scientific effort directed towards the search for **exoplanets** (planets outside the Solar System) and planetary transits across distant stars are the main method used to search for them. The 2004 and 2012 transits of Venus are providing a valuable benchmark and comparison with a known planet transiting a known star.