



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 52

APRIL 2013

**CALENDER 2013**

**25 April – Anzac Day** – Dawn service at Enoggera (location TBA) and City march.

**26 May – Gourmet BBQ at the home of Tony & Loretta Gee (to be confirmed)**

**27 June** – Colonel Alex Laing Memorial Dinner at the United Service Club.

**7 September** – Annual Reunion and AGM (location TBA)

**December** – Drinks at I Topo and Derek Chambers Award presentation.

**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 – now relocated temporarily to the vicinity of the old 8/9 Battalion area. The previous 2CER buildings including the Sportman's Club fronting Samford Road have been demolished for re-building. Our President Alex Cairney is to place the Association wreath. Further details on Dawn Service location will be emailed to Brisbane based members later.

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 Air Force leading, then Navy then Army.. RASvy Association is listed as number 63 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. Dave O'Shannessy is confirmed as our leader. This year and maybe here-after the great theodolite will be carried by a fit young member of 1Topo in the usual regimental manner immediately behind our leader and in front of the Banner – also 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 2.)

**IT'S ON – PROBABLY THE LAST HURRAH FOR BALCOMBE**

**And it's called**

**BALCOMBE BARRACKS COMMEMORATION – 2013**

**3 to 5 May 2013**

(Full details on last page of this Bulletin)

## COMMITTEE

<b>Patron</b>	Lieutenant Colonel	E.U. Anderson MBE	Ph 3408 9179
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<b>1 TOPO SVY SQN</b>			
<b>Squadron OC</b>	Maj Stephen Wright		
<b>Squadron SSM</b>	WO1 Diana Soutar	Ph 3332 7564 mob 043 817 5977	email: <a href="mailto:diana.soutar@defence.gov.au">diana.soutar@defence.gov.au</a>

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

## NOTICES

### 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.

### 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

### 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.

### 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.

### 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

### 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. We suggest that paying three or more years in advance is a good idea.

## I TOPO AWARDS PRESENTATIONS



The 1 Topo awards presentations took place at the Murray Bar on Friday 7th December 2012 and of course that included the Associations Derek Chambers Award to the sapper or junior NCO who had displayed outstanding Esprit de Corps throughout the preceding year. This year the presentation was made by Bob Skitch Derek's Vietnam OC, to Sapper Terry Tucker. 1 Topo SSM WO1 Stephen Hill had this to say about Terry.....

*Sapper Terry Tuckey is our nominee for the Derek Chambers Award for*

*2012. Terry, a Multi Media Technician posted to the 1st Topographical Survey Squadron, won the award for his can-do attitude, willingness to go above and beyond for the members of the Squadron's Regimental Trust Fund as the unit Social Member. Terry is known as a bit of a larrikin with a cheeky, cheesy grin and was the driving force behind the fundraising for the Regimental Trust Fund and the esprit de corps of the Sqn. We consider him a very deserving recipient of the award.*

Recognition was given and awards made to many in the Squadron who had been promoted, were departing the Squadron or had won sporting competitions

- Those being promoted were: Captain Kreis, Sergeant Peall and Lance Corporal Cox
- Those being farewelled by OC Major Strphen Wright were WO1 Stephen Hill, WO2 Paul Bolton and Corporal Elrington
- Lance Corporal Folkard was presented with his Australian Defence Medal by Lieutenant Colonel Mat Galton (CO 6 ESR)
- OC Major Stephen Wright announced the winning team for the annual cricket match (which was the Officers, Warrant Officers and senior NCOs against the rest.

All of this was carried out with due pomp and circumstance.

Association members attending were our President Alex Cairney, Bob Skitch, Grant Small, John Smith, Peter Bates-Brownsword, Barry Lutwyche, Greg Ellem, Ian Hutching, Jamie Lyle, Greg Knight. (Apologies to anyone I Have missed).

## PERSONALIA and other Jottings

**Ed Anderson** our Association patron and one of only three WW2 veterans in our Queensland Association celebrated his 92<sup>nd</sup> birthday recently. Ed is elated that his driving licence was renewed for a further five years – not bad for a nonagenarian. Ed has a good deal of family contact and he is well looked after in his 'Waverley' retirement village at Buderim on the Sunshine coast hinterland. I know I have said it before but it is worth saying again. Ed came into the Corps through 4 Field Survey Company in WA in 1940 at a very young age. 4 Coy was deployed into the north-west Kimberley region at the time of the fall of Singapore when it was seen that a Japanese incursion into that then very lightly inhabited region was more than a possibility. Ed and others were heading for Bougainville when the war suddenly ended and Ed found himself in Queensland and, as they say, the rest is history.

**Bob and Wendy Skitch** attended the wedding of their youngest daughter Liz in Melbourne on the 24<sup>th</sup> November to Donald Stewart. Their son Christopher and his wife Sharon and infant grandson Thomas came from London to attend the wedding and escaped the particularly bleak and cold winter London is experiencing with three weeks at Caloundra on the Sunshine Coast. Thomas (15 months) experienced the pleasures of walking on soft beach sand (with trepidation initially) and the quiet sea water of Pumicestone Passage. As many would know, Liz is a performer and her Melbourne burlesque show '*Moulin Beige*' is proving very popular. Donald, her now husband is a musician specialising in Trombone. Liz returned from Japan in September after performing in her children's theatre production 'Hurry up and Wait' with the Kazemoka Children's Theatre.

**Bob** is having a bit of a health set-back. The melanoma he had removed and radiated on the back of his hand has metasised to his spleen. Who needs a spleen anyhow? Bob's was removed on the 13<sup>th</sup> March. Time will tell how good that is.

**Bulletin Post-out**, Bulletin No 51 post-out, or should I say 'email-out' suffered a setback when the deep trenches being dug for the NBN near secretary Greg's home and office filled with water during a storm causing total interruption of all telephonic and internet services. In effect Greg was totally isolated for the best part of two weeks. Bulletin 51 contained details of the end of year 1 Topo function at which the years internal awards are handed out including our Association's Derek Chambers Award. Not to worry; advice went to all and a good Association roll-up at the function on 7 December took place. The event is reported elsewhere.

**Ken Shaw**; Christmas is a time of contacting old friends and a few days before Christmas I had



a phone call from Ken Shaw. Ken is making a slow recovery from the loss of his dear wife Nance – if one ever recovers from the loss of one's wife of near sixty years. Ken is now eighty eight and if his overall health is not so good he copes well with the aid of his family and especially his eldest daughter. Ken told me the extent of his family and I can't remember the exact number but the include children, grand children and great grand children – quite a dynasty! Ken loves to reminisce on old times recalling his Corps colleagues over his

thirty odd years of service. He enjoys the occasional drop-in and he told me the surprise he had when he answered the front door bell to find two blokes dressed like astronauts confronting him. They turned out to be Bill Boyd and Dave Thompson in their cycling outfits – all the latest on bicycles that looked as though they would power themselves. He enjoyed a visit from Peter and Irene Blaskett some time before and also Stan and Helen Campbell. Ken recalled those periods of annual regimental training at Spring Gully out of Bendigo and many of the old timers of Fortuna in the 50s and 60s.

**John and Sue Collins:** Christmas also brings Christmas greetings of a more general nature to all of us and this arrived by email from John and Sue Collins, one time British Exchange Officer at the Regiment and South Australia

Wishing you a joyous Christmas and a peaceful and healthy New Year!

To the Royal Australian Survey Corps family friends in Australia, wishing you all well for 2013.

John and Sue Collins, 5 Saffron Street, Royston, Herts, SG8 9TR, UK

**Kym Weston** Kym emailed ....Faye and I leave for the USA and Canada in 3 weeks on 20 March and will not be back until mid August. We are concentrating on the west coast this year as we expect to return next year. The motor home is awaiting us in San Francisco and we plan to head south via Las Vegas and Arizona first before turning north again. Only have a rough itinerary as we usually make it up on a daily basis. We expect to catch up at the AGM.

**'The Ranger' – Journal of the Defence Surveyors Association** (Summer 2012 issue): This



beautifully produced publication is hyperlinked on the home page of our website [www.rasurvey.org](http://www.rasurvey.org) as are all previous editions. It contains many interesting articles on military surveying and mapping, some dealing with current technologies and others being historical reflection of past practices. In this issue is the article on Vectographs and Polarising Projectors by Colonel (ret) Mike Nolan who brought a Royal Engineers detachment to Australia in 1970. (see Bulletin 44 March 2011). Vectographs have been aired in several previous Bulletins because one of the only clear reference to their use on the battlefield comes in a report by then Major Bruce Lambert on the 1945 OBOE operations in Balikpapan, Labuan and Brunei reproduced as an annex in Lawrence Fitzgerald's *Lebanon to Labuan*. Mike Nolan reproduces the relevant paragraphs of Lambert's report dealing with the use of Vectographs at the start of his article then goes on to discuss their use on the OBOE operations and their development. It is a fascinating study of a rising

technology that clearly had an important military application but which after WW2 went nowhere with very few if any references in post WW2 literature.

From 2013 'Ranger' will no longer be published in hard copy due to cost but will continue to be available electronically on the Defence Surveyor's Association website hyperlinked to our own website.

**Graham Rosen** (Received 10/09/11).....Hi Bob; I just stumbled across the website. As a National Serviceman (2<sup>nd</sup> intake) I spent my time in Survey Corp. After basic training I went to the Survey School at Bonegilla, then Bendigo. After that I spent the rest of my time in

Queensland. I was the only one from the 2<sup>nd</sup> intake that came to Qld. I had a great time during my time in Survey Corp and served with some great people. It would be great to catch up with some of the unit members from that period. Cheers.....Graham Rosen; Phone: 0424 544 576

**Norman McMurtrie** has organised a get-together for any Association members who may be in Melbourne on the 26<sup>th</sup> April this year, that is, the day after Anzac Day. Peter Mansell has forwarded on Norman's email...

*Happy New Year and I hope this finds you well. There, I have caught up on about the last 20 years.*

*On the weekend of 25th - 28th April, Ken Jeffery, Rob Langley, Greg Grace and a couple of others are making the annual pilgrimage to Melbourne. As this year for the first time, this annual event occurs near Anzac Day, we thought it would be nice to catch up with all those people we talk about a lot, but never do anything with.*

*To rectify this situation, we hope to have a small reunion of ex-Survey Corps people like yourself on the Friday night. Wives/partners are welcome and it will be at the Montmorency RSL in Petrie Park Montmorency commencing around 6:00pm. They have a great family oriented bistro, and the food is great.*

*The boys and I would be delighted if you can come, even if only for a small amount of time to share a belated drink and meal with us.*

*Could you please pass this invitation on to others who may be interested.*

Best contacts for me are: Mobile: 0427 123 008, Email: [norman@mcmurtrie.com.au](mailto:norman@mcmurtrie.com.au).

Love to hear from you, and look forward to seeing you at Monty RSL



**Chris Dahlberg** put this beautiful piece of navigation equipment onto Facebook with the comment.... *Hasn't been out of the box since the Cairns Port Moresby Yacht Race in 1988. Good dark glass for looking at the sun. Maybe he used it for observing the transit of Venus. Follow Chris's adventures on Facebook if you are a subscriber.....Bob Skitch*

**Ted Morris** passed away a few years ago and his daughter Shayne is enquiring of Ted' Vietnam service. Shayne emails....

I am enquiring about my father who served during the Vietnam War and would like to know if you may direct me to anyone or a museum where I may obtain copies of materials, readings and photos of the A Section, 1st Topographical Survey Troop. My father's details are:

Name: Edward Morris, DOB: 08/06/1925, Service No: 29608, Service period: 17/01/1968 to 14/01/1969  
Unit: A Section, 1st Topographical Survey Troop, Rank: Sergeant  
Kind regards.....Shayne Morris

## VALE

**John Rupert Cattell** died at 5.00am on Sunday 24 February of cancer after a long and regressive illness. He was cremated after a private funeral attend by all nine members of his extended family.

John was a National Serviceman in the mid 1950s then corps enlisted into the Survey Corps in 1957 undertaking the Basic Survey Course at Balcombe in 1958. In 1959 he was posted to the AHQ Survey Regiment to be selected for officer training at OCS Portsea graduating in June



This great photo of John was taken at his OCS class reunion at Tanunda SA in 2010

1960. He attended RMIT in Melbourne obtaining degrees in surveying and cartography. Postings followed to Central Command Field Survey Unit and the AHQ Survey Regiment. In 1965 John was appointed OC of the forward base in PNG, in the Sepik/West Irian border region and north coast of New Guinea, engaged on Aerodist operations. From 1969 to 1971 John was the Australian exchange officer to MCE at Ottawa in Canada and was a survey party chief on the west coast in British Columbia undertaking mapping with the British exchange NCO. John's innovative talents were to the fore on that project and the innovation became known as the Cat-Mac operation. On return to Australia John was appointed OC of Air Survey Squadron at the Army Survey Regiment and again his talent for innovation served well in developing the system known as 'semi-direct scribing' for PNG maps so overcoming the 'log jam' in the production of the PNG 1:100,000 series. The process became standard procedure and a paper on it was presented to the Five Nations Directors Conference that year. In 1976 John was posted to 5 Field Survey Squadron at Karrakatta, Perth, Western Australia. John retired in 1978 to become Director of Mapping with the Tasmanian Department of Lands.

**Kyn Weston** who had a parallel appointment in Tassie Forestry well recalls John's time as Mapping Director....

*'I was saddened to hear of John Cattell's death. I first met John when he returned from Canada and took over as OC of Air Survey Sqn in Bendigo around 1971/72. I was a SNCO and although we spoke regularly about work I had little other interaction with him.'*

*In 1986 I applied for a job with Forestry in Tasmania. I knew John was the Director of Mapping in Tasmania so I gave him a call. He gave me a little information and apologised that he could not say more as he was to be on the interview panel. I was actually offered the job on the day of the interview, and then spent some time with John as he generously told me about the pros and cons of working in Tasmania. That was the first of a working relation we developed over the following years. I can say that John's continuing advice made my transition to civilian life and the public service in particular, much easier than it could have been.'*

*John ran a very efficient organisation and was very aware of what mapping cost, but not in a*

*penny pinching sense. He had an entrepreneurial streak, especially compared with most other public servants, and he encouraged this in others. Besides work we also served together in the Institute of Cartographers and on the School Board of the School of Surveying at the University of Tasmania.*



*Until John retired we only had occasional social contact, but on retirement he commenced a rebuilding project on a beach front house at Tarooma and I started to visit him at home to watch and discuss progress as he excavated by hand tons of granite, after breaking it up by first using fire and water and later using chemicals. When finished the original house was unrecognisable compared to the final product, with sunken lounge, mezzanine office and huge full glass windows overlooking the Derwent River. John did most of the work himself. After I retired to Queensland I continued to do consultancy work for Forestry and a couple of times a year I would visit John and Sally and we would talk about all sorts of things, the Army, working in Tasmania, family and building, often over afternoon tea or dinner.*

*John and Sally later moved to Queensland and while we dropped in on them a couple of times, unfortunately we lived a 100km north of Brisbane and they lived 100km south.*

*John had many friends and was well respected in Tasmania and I hope this remembrance will give some of his Army colleges a some insight to a small part of his life in Tasmania. John was a complex yet generous person and I will not forget him.*

**Bob Skitch** recalls...I visited John and his mapping establishment in Hobart somewhere in the late 1980s. It was quite remarkable. With a staff of less than 50 John had all but mapped Tasmania at a scale of 1:25,000, certainly the eastern half. He was of course hands-on, compiling, scribing, the lot. He created his own specification and produced all sorts of derivatives for the tourist industry. John created and produced the first bound street atlas of Tasmania. He literally had the lot in the palm of his hand. As one would expect his techniques were innovative and much of the finished product was taken directly from the compilation plot sheets. His interests extended beyond his work place where he undertook and provided leadership in community projects. In 'retirement' (did John ever retire?), at his and Sally's retirement village location at Nerang he designed and built the front entrance with a built-in waterfall, He weeded and planted trees along the riverbank and lake – all fourteen acres, and much more. Sally expresses it very succinctly with "*Where ever my love was, he left a legacy*". Tributes have been received from two of John's Canadian colleagues, Dave Carney and Bill Czuboka.

John's contribution to the Corps over the years he served was by any estimation outstanding. He was incredibly hard working, inspired loyalty in those who worked for him; he was innovative and could think 'outside the box' and furthermore make it happen. John was a unique individual.

John is survived by his wife Sally, daughters Rebecca and Helen, grandchildren Maddison, William, Amelia and Max.



## Phill Boyle



Hello everyone. You don't know me, but I'm Phill's partner Helen Crowe. I am writing to tell you that Phill passed away. I found him on Tuesday. He died of a sub-dural haemotoma. The funeral was held Friday 1st Feb at 3pm at the Norwood Park crematorium, Mitchell ACT

Afterwards drinks and light snacks were held at The George Harcourt Inn, Nicolls

**Ed:** A comprehensive obituary on Phil is published in the Canberra March Newsletter.

## VX100897 John Austin Yarra From Charlie Watson, Canberra Association

Sadly John/Jack Yarra who was the last WW2 member of our Canberra Survey Corps Association passed away on 2 Nov 12.

John's life was celebrated at St Ninian's Uniting Church, Lyneham on Friday, 9 November 2012. I have attached a brief outline of John's war service. John worked at NATMAP after the war and rose to the level of Chief Cartographer. John was an expert with the air brush for depicting hill shading. The 1:5m map of Australia (hill shaded) was one of his fine achievements. Many of us will remember John riding his motorised scooter in the Canberra Anzac Day parades in recent years. John's service record reads....

Enlisted CMF Sept 1941, 3MD Royal Park, Vic, served with LHQ Carto Coy.

Transferred to AIF Sept 1942, served with 1 Aust Mob Litho Unit, Northern Australia.

Transferred to 2/1 Fd Svy Coy RAE, AIF 1943, later renamed, 2/1 Aust Army Topo Svy Coy, served

SWPA 1943-1945, New Guinea, Dutch New Guinea, Morotai, Halmahera Gp.

Returned to Australia November 1945.

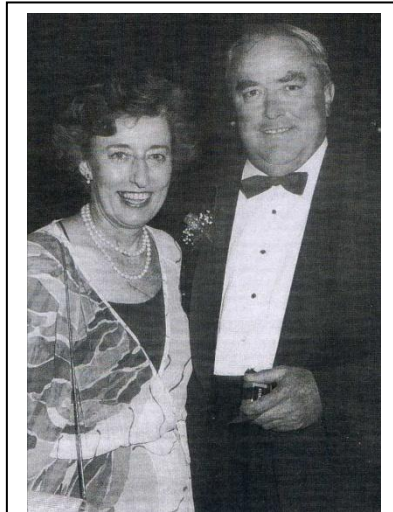
Deployed to LHQ Carto to accumulate discharge points and await discharge.

Discharged from AIF April 1947.

Trade, Photogrammetrist, Topographic Draftsman, Field Survey Assistant (as required)

Rank on discharge, Sergeant.

**Kevin John Davies died** in palliative care on the 29<sup>th</sup> December 2012 after battling cancer for several months.

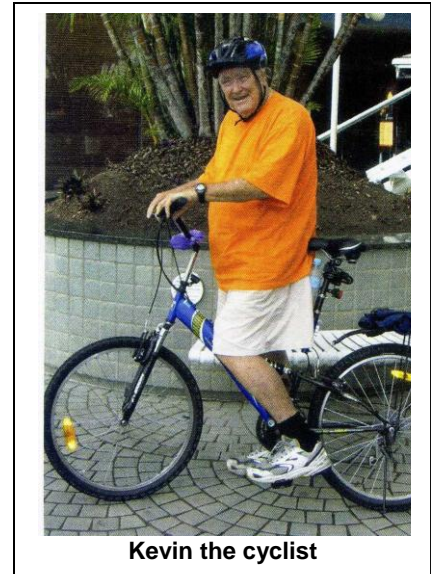


Jill and Kevin – as many would remember them.

Kevin was Surveyor General of Queensland from 1982 to 1990 and had great respect for the work of the Royal Australian Survey Corps. Kevin came into the newly formed Queensland Department of Mapping and Surveying in 1978 from private survey practice as Director Division of Administration and Technical Development This was entirely appropriate because Kevin was a visionary and had an ebullient optimism for the future. He saw that this newly formed and quite small Government Department could play a significant role in the future development of the State. He succeeded Mack Serisier as Surveyor General in 1982 and steered the Department into digital mapping and the development of the Digital Cadastral Data Base (DCDB). This was a concept unique in Australia at the time based as it was on standard series cadastral maps themselves based on the topographic maps of the Royal Australian Survey Corps and the Division of National Mapping.

It was a data base to plotted map accuracy and subject to accuracy update as precise survey data became available. Retiring from the position of Survey General in 1990 Kevin moved into an advisory role until taking the appointment of Director General of Public Works in 1996 retiring from that appointment in 1998 having reoriented that Department into a computerised future. Kevin Davies took a great interest in the education of surveyors and gave a great deal of support to the rationalisation of the UQ and QUT surveying degree courses. He was appointed a Deputy Chancellor of QUT a position he held for many years. Away from work Kevin had many interests. He had a great love of the Johnsonian Club and became its President for a term in the 1990s. He was a good golfer but his great love was fishing. If there were fish to be caught Kevin would catch them. In later years Kevin took to cycling.

Kevin’s apparently gruff exterior belied a remarkably generous nature. His wife of 57 years Jill predeceased Kevin by only a few months. Kevin is survived by his children Elizabeth and Kevin both of whom spoke movingly of their father at Kevin’s well attended funeral service in St Ignatius Church, Toowong on 3 January 2013. Our Association member Dr Ken Lyons addressed the service on Kevin’s active interest in developing the profession through academia and practice.



**Kevin the cyclist**

**A TRULY REMARKABLE VEHICLE – The Johnson Ground Elevation Meter (J-GEM)**



**Corporal John Hook and Sapper Lyn Thompson with the GEM**

Paul Wise a retiree of the Division of national Mapping has researched and written the story of the Johnson Ground Elevation Meter – known to most of us as the GEM. A good deal of Paul’s story has been provided by our own John Hook and Paul gives and much of Paul’s account and certainly many of the great photos comes from John. Paul’s

story of the GEM is on the website – <http://xnatmap.org/adnm/docs/recolls/recolgem.htm> . It is titled '*Recollections...A (J) Gem of a Fleet*'.

The GEM provided a form of fourth order levelling to be undertaken with an error of less than 10 feet (3m) in 50 miles (80km) at 15 miles an hour (25kph) on reasonably good road surfaces, averaging 100 miles (160km)/day.

The GEM is described in Pauls account as...

*The (Johnson) Ground Elevation Meter was a modified General Motors Corporation (GMC), four-wheel drive vehicle. In addition to automatic tyre pressure monitoring, four wheel steering, and airconditioning (for the on-board electronic equipment and not the crew) it had a special, smaller 'fifth' road wheel. Further, a 'bar' between the front and rear axles had an electronic pendulum attached. The 'fifth' wheel accurately measured the distance travelled during operations by generating signals at a frequency proportional to the speed. Simultaneously, the longitudinal angle of the vehicle was continuously measured by the pendulum generating a current proportional to the sine of the angle of tilt. The on-board computer combined the two measurements and provided the height variation at any point in the run on a paper printout.*

As well as John Hook others in RA Survey who were associated with operating the GEM were Alex Cairney, Sam Chambers, Bob McDonough and Lyn Thompson. I am sure that listing is not comprehensive. Paul writes...

*RA Survey's John Hook recalls that "in 1969 the boss said to me – here is the JGEM and here is the manual. Nobody knows anything about it. Go and learn! I drove it for the next 3 years. Each 1:250,000 scale map required 36 points (9 runs of photography and 4 points across [RA Survey used an analytical block adjustment technique]), and I can remember the 6 x 1:250,000 scale map areas that I did (refer Figure 1). I don't think it was used much after that. They got me back to the Survey School [then Bonegilla] in about 1985 to run a course on the GEM but I don't know if they did any production work after that".*

Paul Wise's account of the J-GEM with all its photos is to be included in the Canberra Association's forthcoming Newsletter on our website [www.rasurvey.org](http://www.rasurvey.org) – click on ACT.

**Ed:** Many more excellent pictures on the website and in the Canberra Association Newsletter (March 2013).

**MANSION BUILT ON GOLD GOES ON SALE** by Nino Bucci - June 16, 2012 Fortuna Villa.  
Photos.: [www.fortunavilla.net.au](http://www.fortunavilla.net.au)



**Bendigo mansion Fortuna Villa: "Part of our national story."** Photo: Daryl Pinder

It was the biggest house in Australia, an opulent 19th century mansion eccentrically decorated by a man with unbridled wealth and questionable taste.

Now it's on the market for the first time in more than 70 years. Fortuna Villa was made famous by decades of extensions and decoration by gold baron George

Lansell and his wife in Bendigo.



The property will be sold by the Defence Department after months of bickering between state and federal governments about whether they could afford it.

A \$20 million Brumby government plan to redevelop the villa collapsed - along with the possibility of Fortuna staying in public hands - when Labor lost the 2010 state election.

Defence, which had occupied the site since 1942, will put the property on the market within 12 months. It was valued at \$3 million by the state government.



During the late 1800s, the villa boasted a ballroom, picture gallery, music room, conservatory, gymnasium, marble bathrooms and three billiard rooms, all decorated with Lansell's gaudy flourishes. The 6.5 hectares of landscaped gardens included five lakes, a boatshed and tennis

courts. It is also said to be haunted.

Lansell migrated from England in 1852. While a butcher he researched deep quartz reef mining and when surface gold became rare, bought unused mines cheaply and started accumulating his fortune.

Goldfields historian Weston Bate said it was terrible the villa was being sold privately as it represented the ingenuity of those who helped shape the Australian identity. "It's part of our national story. People could come to Australia and do anything, if they were determined," said Mr Bate, who is also a former president of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria.



**Fortuna Villa – circa 1900 – Bendigo Historical Society**

Construction of the house was begun by the successful miner Theodore Ballerstedt in the mid-1850's. Lansell, who owned the adjacent Fortuna Mine according to the National Trust, bought the property in 1871. The calibre of guests hosted by Lansell at Fortuna, gives an indication of both his status in society at the time and the opulence of the home itself. That list includes royalty, governors of Victoria and Dame Nellie Melba according to the National Trust.

"Fortuna is architecturally important as an impressive mansion, built over a considerable period, and incorporating a number of complementary styles, orchestrated by some of the Bendigo district's finest architects, including Vahland, Getzschmann and Beebe. It successfully combines Victorian Italianate with later Federation style additions" according to the statement of cultural heritage significance document.



With his continuing success in deep mining, Lansell undertook major extension to his home and in fact continued this expansion and decoration of Fortuna until his death almost 40 years later according to the Villa Fortuna Action Group.

The National Trust adds that *"after his death in 1907, his second wife Edith carried on with improvements, creating a house and grounds developed over 50 years. The attached mine also contributes to its significance, being one of the richest mines in Bendigo, and at one stage probably the deepest gold mine in the world at 3176 feet"*.



Major features of the property include a basement; on the ground and on the first floor there were rooms designed, not only as the bedrooms, bathrooms and dining/kitchen rooms but also a billiard room, a ballroom, a conservatory, a music room, along with the entrance hall and formal reception room.

Stained glass, elaborate ceilings, grand cedar and blackwood staircase, a solid marble bath, extensive acid-etched glasswork (conservatory) are some of the architectural features that contribute to the outstanding 'feel' of the structure.

Of course, in the days of the Lansell family's presence there was the extensive decor of valuable paintings, statuary, objects d'arte, in addition to the functional and unusual furniture items.

The Fortuna grounds cover some 7.5 ha. and feature an ornamental lake, garden, a 'Roman-Bath' and the 'Pompeii Fountain'. The original quartz-crushing battery building, stables and coach house remain close to the main villa.

## BENDIGO'S EAGER BEAVERS (From the Bendigo Advertiser )



When Jeff Willey joined the Bendigo Woodturners club in 1998, he was planning for his retirement. But 14 years later, Mr Willey is now the president of the group and was recently made a life member at the club's 25th anniversary celebrations. "I just wanted to do some woodwork and, by accident, fell into the wood-turning side of things," he said. "I hadn't done anything (when I joined). I had no experience whatsoever."

Mr Willey spent 23 years in the army with the survey regiment at Fortuna. He then transferred to the public service for 15 years, before retiring last year.

"You can plan for the financial side as much as you want, but that's only half of it," Mr Willey said.

"You need at least one hobby, if not two. "I'm also with the Bendigo Fly Fishers, so I've got an outdoor and indoor hobby, as well as a couple of kids and four grandkids. So my time's well spent doing more of what I want to do."

Mr Willey said the amount of experience and quality of teachers in the club made it easy to learn the art of wood-turning. With 115 members, including 26 ladies, the club is constantly busy giving demonstrations to community groups or turning out items for organisations such as Palliative Care, St John of God Hospital, the CFA, scout troops and schools. "A lot of the ladies are eager to learn new skills. Some are the wives of members who see what's going on and say, 'I can do that' and off they go," Mr Willey said. "They are very good at the fine work that goes into the items. "We had a lady join recently. We helped her make a jewellery box and now she's right into it, despite the little experience she's had."

The group is also busy making toys for St Vincent de Paul and to send to East Timor. "Quite a few items go into raffles – we run a huge one over Easter, including stuff like a miner's couch or a rocking chair," Mr Willey said. "About 100 hours worth of work goes into stuff like that."

Mr Willey said the wood-turners only used wood that had fallen down. They never cut down trees for themselves. "People ring up and say they've got a tree cut down and we go and get it, put it through the slabbing machine, air dry them at the club and cut them into what we want to make," he said.

The wood-turners can be found in Eaglehawk Road, in a building that was once the Hopetoun Band Hall. They have spent a great deal of time renovating and extending the building, which is owned by the Department of Sustainability and Environment.

"We've been lucky to get a number of grants from various governments and programs," Mr Willey said.

"We put about \$30,000 of our money into it and spent about 7000 man hours working on it."

## VIETNAM VETERANS COMMEMORATIVE WALK, The story of Luscombe Bowl

High Street, Seymour Victoria Australia  
[www.vietnamvetswalk.org.au](http://www.vietnamvetswalk.org.au)



A replica of the Luscombe Bowl was completed in March 2011 as part of Stage One of the Vietnam Veterans Commemorative Walk in Seymour. In wanting to find out more about The Bowl, I discovered that its history hadn't been recorded. And so the search for information began.....

### Excavation of the Luscombe Bowl Amphitheatre



Luscombe Airfield was constructed in 1966, with allowance being made for an over-run at the eastern end which could later be converted to extra runway, should it be required. In the first half of 1967, the plant operators of 21 Engineer Support Troop, attached to 1 Field Squadron, RAE, excavated the eastern end of Luscombe Airfield to create a massive amphitheatre which was to be used as an aircraft over-run and turning circle. Under orders from Task Force HQ, Maj Brian Florence, OC of 1 Field Squadron, had the amphitheatre enlarged during the excavation to allow for the building of a concert stage on its southern perimeter, and requested that the embankment be specifically shaped in order to accommodate an audience of more than 1,000 troops. 1 Field Squadron's diaries note the airfield over-run as being 100% completed on 23 July 1967. The amphitheatre soon came to be known as Luscombe Bowl.

## Building of the Luscombe Bowl stage 1



During April/May 1967 Capt Graeme Hellyer, Florence's 2IC and a qualified engineer, did the structural design for the stage then handed this on to Sapper Jim Collett, a qualified architectural designer and draftsman, to produce the working drawings for the construction of the stage. (Hellyer was never to see the stage completed as he was severely injured in a helicopter accident on 2 June 1967 and medevaced home to Australia.) Under the supervision of S/Sgt "Darby" Munro, 9 and 10 Troops of 17 Construction Squadron, as well as tradesmen from 1 Field Squadron when available from operational duties, began building the concert stage in late July 1967, with the pine and oregon timbers being supplied by the US Military. 1 Field Squadron's diaries first mention the stage in their work sheets on 27 July 1967 as "Concert Stage 5%" (complete).

*"The construction was boxed beamed portal frame at the front with boxed beams spanning from rear to front. The intermediate wall gave mid-span support to the beams." Timber purlins went across the beams to take the corrugated iron sheeting The frame was then lined with ply, weatherboards used to finish the exterior, and the stage floorboards polished until they shone like mirrors'..... Fred Abbot, 9 Tp, 17 Const Sq*

*"... I remember standing on the roof of the stage when two gunships 'buzzed' us. We nearly fell off the roof in fright." Alan Rothwell, 17 Const Sq*

"The stage took awhile to build", Peter Allen recalls. "We had many other jobs to complete during that time at the Dat". Alan Rothwell also remembers the stage being low priority, to be used as a "filler" when other jobs couldn't be carried out

## The Entertainers



.Brian Florence recalls that the entertainers had certain requirements for their acts: special lighting and some other amenities had to be flown out from Australia via the Engineers in Vung Tau, in order to put the finishing touches to the Luscombe Bowl concert stage. As a result, it took almost eight weeks to build the stage, with 1 Field Squadron's diaries recording it completed on 18 September 1967. The water tank and toilet facility were added at a later date.

The concert stage very quickly came to be named after the Luscombe Bowl amphitheatre in which it resided, although the troops promptly nick-named it "The Dust Bowl" due to the thick red clay dust which blanketed the area during summer.

The first concert was held on the stage the very next month - October 1967. Hundreds of Australian entertainers volunteered to go to South Vietnam and they brought a few hours of



normality, and a taste of home, to our troops. Although the entertainers received security, transport and basic accommodation, their time in Vietnam could be very difficult. Conditions were often dirty and uncomfortable, the humidity rotted their clothes and equipment and the pace was arduous, with several performances each day interspersed with long trips by road or air. In addition, travel orders had to be correct and were rigidly enforced by the Vietnamese Military Police, who were in charge of all civil matters. The concerts, however, were greatly appreciated by the troops, giving them badly needed respite from the stresses of war. They could be sure to see a variety of acts, including bands, dancing girls, comedians, jugglers and singers.

Prior to the building of the Luscombe Bowl stage, most concerts at Nui Dat were held on the back of flatbed trucks or on a canvas-covered, impromptu stage in an area close to Task Force headquarters. This was where the Col Joye/Little Patti concert was being held on the 18th August 1966 when the Battle of Long Tan took place. Adrian Roberts, OC of 3 Tp, 1APC Squadron at the time, recalls: "... *heavy artillery fire beginning just to the right, and almost over the top of the troops in the concert audience*". He then slipped away to find out what was going on. He remembers having to pull his men away from the concert when he was ordered to pick up A Coy, 6RAR in his APCs and go to the aid of D Coy, 6RAR on the battlefield.

Some of the other famous performers of the time include Johnny O'Keefe, the ABC Show Band and Dinah Lee. A couple of the more popular songs with the troops were 'These Boots Were Made for Walking' and 'We Gotta Get Outta This Place', and Lorrae Desmond was well-known for her soulful rendition of 'Leaving On A Jet Plane'. The entertainers also made time to give small, intimate performances to the sick and injured in the hospitals.

"One of the interesting things I remember about The Bowl was that everyone took a chair... and their rifle!" *Gordon Taylor*

.. we sat on the ground in the heat/rain/monsoonal weather just to attach oneself to a bit of Aussie!"  
*person unknown*

### **Other Uses of the Luscombe Bowl**

Luscombe Bowl also served other purposes, as well. It was used for the awarding of military medals and citations at the end of tours, and many veterans have memories of Christmas Mass held at the Luscombe Bowl by the Task Force Chaplains. Vin "Jerry" Neale remembers Christmas '69 when hundreds of men attended, weapon in one hand, folding chair in the other and a couple of cold ones, as well.

*"What a sight! There were drunken diggers all over the stage and all around the altar (... taking communion). Some were serious in their befuddled intent, and others just following the crowd. But it was all goodhearted... the Spirit of Christmas in all its forms was in ample supply."*

*Luscombe Bowl, the concerts, the entertainers... hold wonderful memories for Vietnam Veterans. By their very presence, the entertainers lifted the morale of the Australian troops and reminded them that they were supported by their families and friends back home.*



Stage Two of the Vietnam Veterans Commemorative Walk opens in just a few weeks, on the 9th of March 2013. The photo above shows just a small part of the 80 metre long, 6 feet high, double-sided curving digi-glass wall which showcases a photographic history of the Vietnam War along with the name of every Australian veteran who served in Vietnam. The Wall is framed by trees and gardens representative of rubber plantations and rice paddies, with winding paths and various interesting artefacts and storyboards throughout.

*We'd love to have you visit!*

### BATTLE OF LONG TAN – REMEMBERED BY A SURVEYOR....Bob Skitch

#### **Under enemy fire – mortars**

On 17 August at 0240h the Task Force area was mortared. Mortars (82mm) fell mainly in the maintenance and reinforcement unit areas directly east of Nui Dat hill some two or three hundred metres to the north and east of the Task Force headquarters and our own Troop location. Perhaps the Commander's policy of total light extinguishment at night and the heavy rubber tree canopy had concealed or at least confused unit locations to the Viet Cong. Most mortars fell and exploded harmlessly and from memory it was only the postal clearing tent that received anything like a direct hit. Lieutenant Colonel Charles Mollison's account in his *Long Tan and Beyond* of the mortar incident speaks of mortars falling within the 6RAR position. Mollison's Alpha Company was harbouring six kilometres west of the Task Force base on the northern knoll of the feature known as Nui Dat 2. From his position he could well hear the pop of mortars and was able to take compass bearings at right angles to their direction of flight. This in effect gave an intersection with the line of the incoming mortars to give an approximate mortar base plate position. This enabled both artillery and the 6RAR mortar platoon to return fire. The Viet Cong mortar barrage lasted less than half an hour and initial estimates of the number of incoming mortars range from 100 to 200. The official figure in the record is 87. Twenty four personnel were wounded as a result of the attack, two seriously. The Divisional Locating Battery

whose specific role was to locate and establish the trajectory of incoming mortars through its radar locators and supporting computing technology was unable to provide data – its rather antiquated equipment was down – under repair!

It was my own first and only experience of being under enemy fire. I awoke soon after the first few rounds came in. The explosions seemed fairly distant. It quickly dawned on me that we were attracting enemy fire but the sound of the exploding mortars some two or three hundred metres away was muffled by the rubber trees and the ground was very wet and boggy after the evening down pour. I could see the occasional flash of an exploding mortar round reflected on the wet trunks of the rubber trees, somewhat confirmatory of what was happening. I felt a degree of unreality. It was a moonless night – not that even a full moon effectively penetrated the canopy of the rubber trees – and it was totally dark; visibility simply non-existent. My own protection pit had a foot of muddy water in the bottom and I was reluctant to get into it. I think my field phone rang after 10 minutes or so to confirm the incoming mortars and I should take cover and remain where I was. I had some concern for the Troop's accommodation lines – warrant officers and sergeants some 50 metres away and sappers and corporals some 100 metres away – but the telephone message said to the effect that they were under control. Both storeman (Carew and Johns) were sitting on the side of their bunks. I told them they should take cover. Sapper Johns with his Korean War experience was pretty blasé about what was happening, Corporal Carew a bit panicky. I think I left them to it – perhaps not an appropriate action for an OC. By that time the fall of mortar shells had moved further to the east but our own artillery had opened up firing directly over our heads on an apparently low trajectory and the noise of the guns with the whistle of 105mm shells tended to shatter the senses. By 0400h silence had descended, broken only occasionally by the 105s sending out a few harassment rounds. I slept fitfully until first light then dressed and as soon as stand-to was over (we no longer had to actively participate in stand-to but movement was discouraged during that half hour period) I walked over to the warrant officers and sergeants lines. Dave Christie had been up and about already (I think he may have walked over to our work area even before I left) and he assured me that all was fine. Together we walked down to the corporals and sappers lines and they all seemed unconcerned at the night's activities. The day then continued as normal. I recall delaying start of work by an hour suggesting that a reassuring letter home might be appropriate given that the Australian press would beat it up in an alarming fashion – it did! Our unit letter box filled rapidly that morning. In the afternoon I prepared a Troop Routine Order Part 1 (Serial 5) that contained an instruction 'Procedure on Mortar Attack'. The Routine Order is included as Annex G to this account. So 'routine' was it that the same order details postal procedure.

While we all tended to treat the mortaring incident somewhat lightly there was underneath a real concern that we might be assailed by a full frontal Viet Cong attack at our very thin perimeter to the south east. That concern seemed justified by the events that were to follow.

### **Dispersal and a concert**

18 August started like any other day at Nui Dat. It was overcast and hot and as the day progressed the humidity under the rubber trees increased. It was a day of anticipation. At midday the Col Joye concert party featuring 'Little Pattie' was arriving to perform on a stage to be erected on Kangaroo helipad, 100 metres north of the Task Force Headquarters – not so much for the convenience of HQ personnel attending but because it was a cleared area as central as possible within the defensive 'egg' of the Task Force. Also the ground there had consolidated somewhat and was less boggy. Units had been allocated a time to attend and the time allocated to the Troop was early afternoon. However, the morning produced some unwelcome news. Camp Commandant, Captain Dave Holford had called a meeting of all minor

units within the inner perimeter, most within 100 metres of the Task Force HQ to advise them that the Commander had directed that we were to disperse outwards. The ability of the Viet Cong to bring mortars into the central areas of the Task Force had been amply demonstrated and the fact that they may have been off-target did not mean that were it to happen again they would not be better targeted. Dispersal is a basic principal of warfare and even I could see that our mutual closeness was unwarranted. Captain Holford advised that he would visit affected units individually and direct them to their new locations. There was to be some movement of larger units but this was revealed only by their physical movement in the weeks following, i.e. SAS moved to the top of Nui Dat hill and the Engineer Field Squadron moved to where SAS had been.

I received my visit from Dave Holford soon after the meeting. I had not passed this information on to Troop personnel at that point. I wanted to give the matter some thought before doing so. In fact the news had hit me like a sledge between the eyes. We had put such effort into developing both our work and accommodation areas to make them as safe and as pleasant as possible for both working and living. It would have to happen all over again while at the same time maintaining our production through-put and meeting our work commitments. Now in retrospect I feel mildly ashamed of the concern I felt at the time. It was inconvenient; perhaps we had become too comfortable and being aware of the grossly inferior living and working conditions of both officers and soldiers in the outer units, the battalions, the artillery batteries and engineers, I had little to complain about. Thankfully I didn't complain; at least I had sufficient sense not to. Dave Holford took me for a walk up Ingleburn Avenue (the central east west road running past the Task Force HQ) to its eastern end to a location on rising ground that was a little gravelly. This location was 200 metres east of the headquarters. I immediately saw one huge advantage; I would be able to relocate all of our living accommodation to be adjacent to our work area on this rising ground. At that time I did not realise the extent to which I was to tread on the toes of others. The battle for real estate was to commence.

But of course, Thursday 18 August was significant for a battle of much greater significance. The day itself had been notably hot and humid; more or less overcast and in the late afternoon heavy thunderheads started to lift above the horizon. I wandered over with a folding chair to the Col Joye and Little Pattie concert and sat for a while watching their very professional performance. The only number I remember was Col Joy singing 'I've been everywhere man' with Australian towns and place names substituted into the lyrics. In this remarkable performance he seemed to get his tongue around just about every town in Australia. It brought the 'house down' if you could call it that. Little Pattie was hugely popular with the audience, many of whom had just returned to base from patrols. The performers – there were a number – seemed so fresh and clean, as if they were unaware of the heat and humidity and yet the performance I saw must have been about the third for the afternoon. Almost immediately after that last performance they were all choppered back to Vung Tau. It may have been that the Viet Cong contact with 6RAR that developed into the Battle of Long Tan had happened and the artillery barrage had commenced; some subsequent reports suggest this but it is not my recollection. I don't know whether they had a further performance in the ALSG; I doubt it and I suspect the concert party was returned to Saigon fairly quickly.

## **Contact at Long Tan – Operation Smithfield<sup>1</sup>**

It was the eve of the most significant and defining battle of the Vietnam War for the Australians. In the late afternoon company screen patrols from 6RAR encountered a major enemy force five kilometres east of the Task Force base, one kilometre north of the now destroyed village Xa Long Tan.

Of course I was unaware of what was happening five kilometres east of the Task Force base. Delta Company of 6RAR, commanded by Major Harry Smith, having relieved Bravo Company in following up trails left by the Viet Cong mortar platoons on the previous morning of the 17<sup>th</sup> made contact at 1600h. It took little more than 15 minutes for the contact to develop into a major battle with Delta Company incurring heavy casualties.

At Nui Dat the rain had started, a torrential downpour backed by ear splitting claps of thunder. Under the canopy of the rubber trees the noise of the rain striking the heavy leafed canopy is in itself deafening. And above all that the artillery had opened up in the heaviest barrage I had heard to that time. The drenching rain continued. I made my way to the Commander's briefing to find that it had been cancelled. Jackson was in the TOC looking white faced and grim. David Harris was with him and a collection of his senior officers including the CO of the Artillery Regiment (Lieutenant Colonel Cubis) and the recently appointed Deputy Task Force Commander, Group Captain Peter Raw, RAAF. There was no place for me and I headed back to my tent in the Troop work area, now well aware that something major was happening. It wasn't until I went across to the mess tent that I picked up some of the detail of the battle. Delta Company had had a heavy contact and had incurred severe casualties. Harry Smith's name was being bandied about. The 'incident' still had not been given a name – it wasn't in the usual sense a planned operation. Delta Company had walked into the contact. Although thought to be an ambush subsequent assessment showed that it was certainly not a planned ambush but more a collision with the enemy. I heard the name 'Operation Smithfield' – someone had already called it that – because that was the name of the Adelaide suburb where Harry Smith lived. The artillery continued to thunder across our heads. I remained in the mess tent where at least I could get some idea of what was going on. Did I know that Alpha Company under its OC Captain Charles Mollison had been despatched with two or three troops of APCs to the battle front? I am not sure, perhaps not until the following morning.

It is an odd feeling to be so close and yet so far from an event you know is significant, defining, and yet have no part in it. Certainly by 2100h I was well and truly aware that Operation Smithfield was the biggest thing that had happened so far. Was it to be an indication of our future involvement? The artillery bombardment continued late into the night after the ground battle had ceased. It might have been the following day that I learned that a North Vietnamese regular regiment (from the PAVN 5<sup>th</sup> Division<sup>2</sup>) had been involved as well as D445, the provincial Viet Cong Battalion and the 275<sup>th</sup> Viet Cong Regiment although I am not sure that there had not been some mention of this in the preceding days. It has developed into a much debated issue, a debate that continues today amongst the armchair critics. I certainly know that at the battalion level a lot of evidence had been accumulating that North Vietnamese forces had entered Phuoc Tuy Province and one assumes that our Task Force Commander was also fully aware of this.

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<sup>1</sup> The contact that developed into 'The Battle of Long Tan' has been called an ambush although that description implies something that had been carefully planned (by the enemy that is). However, the contact made by Delta Company most likely surprised the Viet Cong as much as Delta Company. Had Delta Company walked into a planned ambush their casualties, high as they were, might have been much higher.

<sup>2</sup> PAVN – Peoples Army of Vietnam – the regular army of North Vietnam. It was believed that Long Tan represented the most southerly penetration of the North Vietnamese regular army.

The role of O.D. Jackson in the battle – it was only the press that was calling it the Battle of Long Tan – has also been a matter of debate. I am not aware of any public statement made by Jackson himself in his own defence – if in fact there was any real need to defend himself – but some of the statements made that he left the TOC and ‘skulked’ to his tent are scurrilous and totally untrue and unwarranted. I believe that by the time he withdrew from the TOC the die had been well and truly cast. The contact had been broken; the enemy forces had withdrawn and our own troops were in relatively safe harbours. It was by then a battalion action; the battalion Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Colin Townsend, had deployed with his headquarters and the Task Force Commander had no part in the ground battle. Perhaps Jackson had read the intelligence signs correctly; we were a very thin force on the ground. Some days before, planned battalion operations further from base had been terminated and all units drawn back to base. Protective screen patrols had been deployed to the north (5RAR) and the east (6RAR). I am not a tactician and I should make no further comment other than to say that I held our Task Force Commander, Brigadier O.D. Jackson, in high regard and still do.

It was an uneasy night. The artillery bombardment continued until at least midnight. The rain had ceased and coolness spread over the rubber plantation. Everything was soggy in the extreme. My own fellows were largely unaware of the battle. I was told that the warrant officers and sergeants had been holed up in their mess tent becoming increasingly shickered and making a dickens of a noise which didn’t impress the Commander too much – his accommodation tent was only about thirty metres away. He had them paraded the next morning and by then the very chaste group opted to go on the dry for a month rather than face more formal military discipline. Nevertheless, all reported for work the next morning and life proceeded as normal. I think it might have been then that I briefed the Troop on our plans for relocation.

### **Smithfield – the days that followed**

There was a good deal of activity within the Headquarters area throughout the day with APCs and RAAF Iroquois helicopters bringing in captured VC weapons including a Viet Cong wheeled gun that now resides in the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. The press corps was also showing a good deal of interest in the Task Force and it was probably at about that time that we started hearing of the Battle of Long Tan<sup>3</sup>.

Task force personnel at Nui Dat were often less than generous in comment regarding their Vung Tau ALSG colleagues. Perhaps the Long Tan incident changed all that. With every gun firing at Nui Dat 105mm ordnance soon ran out and resupply from Vung Tau became urgent. Apparently every soldier in the ALSG regardless of rank was queuing to offer their help in loading ammunition for Nui Dat. Those that had ventured into the city after work by word of mouth were returning to their units to be on hand to help their mates up north in any way they could.

I don’t recall exactly when it was – a few days later – that we had a visit from the great man himself, General Westmorland. I attended a morning tea at which he was present and gazed in awe at his very impressive and commanding figure. Jackson looked quite diminutive next to him. He was in and out of the Task Force in well less than an hour. A few days later Air Marshal

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<sup>3</sup> ‘Time Magazine’ gave a column to the Battle of Long Tan. It was incorrect in most details. They placed the battle just north of Vung Tau. The column was headed something like ‘Aussies have major contact’. Of course ‘Long Tan’ was small beer compared with the bloody conflicts of the US Army to the north in I Corps. I think it was the only coverage our Australian involvement in Vietnam ever got in that illustrious magazine.

Ky, the US appointed President of South Vietnam visited the Task Force with quite an entourage. Ky was something of a show pony, dressed in his black flying outfit with a mauve cravat. From all accounts he lived like a prisoner in a heavily bunkered area of Tan Son Nhut with heavy US protection around him at all times. A lunch was provided in the officer's mess marquee and he was taken around by Brigadier Jackson and introduced to all those present. I returned to my office tent feeling more than a little depressed. So this is why we are here – to support this up-jumped Vietnamese Air Marshal – what was it really all about?

## FROM THE OTHER STATE ASSOCIATIONS

### Canberra Association NL – March 13

- 100 years ago – Survey Section RAE (Perm) in 1913 – Peter Jensen.
- Balcombe Barracks Commemoration in 2013.
- Radio broadcast on Balcombe – Community Radio in Tasmania.
- Navigation – Great Sandy Desert. A comprehensive account of an expedition to trace the route of the surveyor/explorer Lawrence Wells by its navigator, Peter Jensen – a 'must read'.
- Recollection of a (J) GEM of a fleet by Paul Wise (Ex Natmap). Many references to RA Svy GEM operations..

### South Australia Association NL – March 13

- Better late than never – editorial and update by Alex Munro.
- Corps Birthday function – many names mentioned.
- Harrisons move to country SA from suburbia.
- George Timmins annual fishing expedition on the Darling.
- Anthony Stephens (I knew him as Tony), air balloonist of renown, runs Adelaide Map Centre, produced a map of the Kokoda Track.
- People who pass through Adelaide – Bill Black, Tom Sawyer, Peter Rossiter, Evan Allanson, Stan Stephens, Bob Cooper.
- Sick list – T.J. Wicker, Tony Balauskas.
- Vale – Phil Boyle, John Collins, Lawrence Hazelwood, John Cattell.

### Ex Fortuna Association – Magna Carto November 12 – Vol 2-31

- Fortuna Villa sale nearer.
- Vale Bill Porter.
- Remembrance Day observance.
- Military Pension indexation – Tony Abbott and Bob Katter support.
- *'Here, There and Away'* – Dawn Laing.
- *Fred Brown visit.*
- Not a plane table but what is it?
- From Gary Phillips – 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary or 1 RAR depolyed to Vietnam – 2015 and Vietnam Veteran's Walk – Seymore.
- Engineer School to move to Holsworthy – modern accommodation planned.
- Launch of official RAE Association website.
- Bendigo Happy Hours – Gold Mines Hotel, Marong.

### NSW Association NL – December 12

- Flash spotting in the Middle East in WW2 – from James Stevenson.
- Fairer Pensions Bill.

- *Here, There, Away* – Service Wives Tales.
- Safety Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988 – review and effect on veterans.
- Richard Jackson-Hope in a snowstorm in the mountains.

### March 2013

- Anzac Day march details.
- 9 Topo Reunion – 40<sup>th</sup> birthday
- ADSU media statement on army pensions.
- Last Hurrah at Balcombe.

**IT'S ON – PROBABLY THE LAST HURRAH FOR BALCOMBE  
and it's called  
BALCOMBE BARRACKS COMMEMORATION – 2013  
3 to 5 May 2013**

The Mornington Peninsula Shire Council (MPSC) have over the years done a considerable amount work to preserve the Balcombe military heritage precinct as part of their plan to recognise areas of historical significance of the Mornington Peninsula. The Australian Army Apprentice Association (AAAA) together with MPSC has undertaken to advance this concept by the addition of storyboards and plaques relating to the units that occupied Balcombe in the last century, and at the same time refurbish those existing items that are so desperately in need of upgrade and maintenance. Balcombe has a very colourful history not only for those that soldiered there but also for the local community that so willingly supported them over the best part of the last century.

A few years ago AAAA Patron Lt Gen Ken Gillespie when serving as the Chief of Army suggested that perhaps more could be done in this regard and asked that the AAAA to consider developing a plan and approach the MPSC. This occurred fairly quickly with good results but as time and circumstances revolved and despite the best efforts of our people initially, the project stalled.

It has since been reactivated, is now a goer and we are delighted to be able to advise where we are at right now. The MPSC is a strong supporter of the project and jointly with the AAAA sub committee and the Balcombe Grammar School, detailed planning is well underway to make it happen.

2013 also represents the 70th anniversary of the 1st Div USMC being repatriated to Balcombe after their successful Guadalcanal campaign. The 4th of May 2013 marks the 71st anniversary of the start of the Battle of the Coral Sea. The Australian Army Apprentices took part in the annual celebration of this battle for many years by being the Army component in the allied forces contingent that marched through the City of Melbourne.

It was decided that all of this activity would attract many “Balcombe Old Boys and Girls” who would wish to be a part of the proceedings. So AAAA Events have come up with a number of activities to make this a most memorable few days, and probably the last time that Balcombe, Mornington and the district as a whole will appear on our radar.

This gathering is inclusive of all those units and personnel that served in Balcombe Barracks ie, Apprentices, Signals, Survey, Music, US Marines, WRAAC and including staff. The Registration Form for this “final” event can be downloaded from [www.austarmyapprentice.org](http://www.austarmyapprentice.org)

**THIS IS AN EVENT NOT TO BE MISSED.**

**Ed: Interested in attending? Open website**

<http://austarmyapprentice.org/Balcombe%20Barracks%202013.htm>

**For programme and registration details.**



## HUMOUR

**A Christmas recipe from a cousin** Once again this year, I've had requests for my Vodka Christmas Cake recipe so here goes. Please keep in your files as I am beginning to get tired of typing this up every year! (Made mine this morning!!!!)

**Ingredients:** 1 cup sugar, 1 tsp. baking powder, 1 cup water, 1 tsp. salt, 1 cup brown sugar, Lemon juice, 4 large eggs, Nuts, 1...bottle Vodka, 2 cups dried fruit.

**Method:** Sample a cup of Vodka to check quality. Take a large bowl, check the Vodka again to be sure it is of the highest quality then Repeat. Turn on the electric mixer. Beat one cup of butter in a large fluffy bowl. Add 1 teaspoon of sugar. Beat again. At this point, it is best to make sure the Vodka is still OK. Try another cup just in case. Turn off the mixerer thingy. Break 2 eegs and add to the bowl and chuck in the cup of dried fruit. Pick the fruit up off the floor, wash it and put it in the bowl a piece at a time trying to count it. Mix on the turner. If the fried druit getas stuck in the beaterers, just pry it loose with a drewscriver. Sample the Vodka to test for tonsistency. Next, sift 2 cups of salt, or something. Check the Vodka. Now shit shift the lemon juice and strain your nuts. Add one table. Add a spoon of sugar, or somefink. Whatever you can find. Greash the oven. Turn the cake tin 360 degrees and try not to fall over. Don't forget to beat off the turner. Finally, throw the bowl through the window. Finish the Vodka and wipe the counter with the cat.

### A TRULY REMARKABLE PICTURE

**A dust storm approaches on 01/09/2013 west of False Island near Onslow in Western Australia.**

