



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

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The Australian Survey Corps formed on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 1915 from the then existing Survey Section, Royal Australian Engineers. The embryonic Survey Corps comprised only one officer and 18 other ranks – the smallest of all Corps. In 1948 the Corps was granted the right to the 'Royal' prefix, becoming the Royal Australian Survey Corps. The Corps was disbanded in 1996 having served the nation for 81 years carrying our geodetic survey and mapping extensively on the Australian mainland, its Territories of Papua and New Guinea and mapping aid programs in much of Indonesia and the South West Pacific independent nations. The Corps also served with distinction in both the first and second world wars and the war in Vietnam. Associations of retired and ex-RA Svy members have maintained the traditions and spirit of the Corps in each State since the 1996 demise of the Corps to the present day culminating in the celebration of the centenary of the formation of the Corps in Canberra at the Australian War Memorial on the 1<sup>st</sup> July and then the following weekend in Bendigo, the home of the AHQ Cartographic Company/Army Survey Regiment from 1942 to 1996.

The following description of the Canberra Celebrations by Rob McHenry is taken from the ACT Newsletter released a few days after the event. There was a splendid roll-up of Queensland Association members and I have tried to capture as many as possible in the photographs that follow Rob's excellent description.

**PART 1 – 100TH ANNIVERSARY CANBERRA CELEBRATIONS**



**At the Australian War Memorial**

it was cold but otherwise calm as over 150 ex members and partners/family assembled for a wreathlaying ceremony in recognition of the service and sacrifice of members of the Royal Australian Survey Corps over the 81 years it existed. The ceremony commenced with a welcome by

Dr Brendan Nelson, the Director of the Australian War Memorial who briefly noted the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the commencement of the Corps and our contribution to Australia and Australia's defence.

His Excellency General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC (Ret'd), Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, followed Dr Nelson with his commemorative address. The Governor General touched on many aspects of the history of the Corps and the critical nature of what we did in war and peace. He also noted a few examples of his first hand operational knowledge and experience with our products and the fact he had visited one of our operations in the Halmahera Islands (Op Pattimura) in his earlier Army days.

Wreaths were laid by The Governor General and Lady Cosgrove, BRIG Finney on behalf of Chief of Army, our two surviving Directors – Don Swiney and Simon Lemon, and also by Greg Ledwidge from Surveying and Spatial Sciences institute on behalf of all surveyors.

The Canberra Brass Quintet and the Australian Rugby Choir helped to make the occasion a most memorable event with their version of the Corps marching tune - *Wandering the Kings Highway*.

***Ed***; *One must also mention the short religious component offered by past Corps (Litho Sqn) member Gary Kenny given in his magnificent ecclesiastical voice – not too short; not too long and highly relevant. Good work Gary!*

### **At the National Library of Australia**



*Entering the map display room*

After lunch we attended the National Library for a display of Survey Corps maps from 1915 through to the demise of the Corps in 1996. The map display was generously supported by the National Library who provided the rooms for the event. The reception was sponsored by The Institution of Surveyors NSW, the Seniors Group and the Cumberland Group of surveyors NSW as well as the Institution of Surveyors, Victoria and the Surveying and Spatial Sciences Institute. This sponsorship enabled members to enjoy a glass of wine and some savoury tartlets prior to entering the map display room.

The Curator of Maps at the library, Dr Martin Woods, welcomed everyone to the event and gave a brief introduction detailing the importance of the contribution of RASvy to their overall map holdings. Approximately 80 maps had been selected for display covering the period from shortly before the formation of the Survey Corps to just prior to the amalgamation with RAE. The “Faces of the Corps” images produced by John Mobbs were rear projected onto a large screen at the end of the exhibition room.



**Ed** – A personal note: Many of the maps on display struck chords of memory, ones that I can recall having some part in. None more so than the mint-copy of the very first map we produced in Vietnam – Hoa Long (Special) produced by the Troop in Vietnam at its first location, completed on the 29 July 1966. The map was printed by 569 Engr Co (Topo) (Corps) at Nha Trang. 1200 copies were printed.

### At the Lobby Restaurant



Dr Chris Coulthard-Clark addressing the gathering. At the table are Don and Glenys Swiney (Don part obscured) and Rob McHenry

To finish off the day - warm and pretty snug with 136 people attending our final event at the Lobby Restaurant. After the main course the guest speaker, Dr Chris Clark, highlighted the genesis of the Corps as being the Boer War. He explained that as a result of this disastrous campaign, military planners became more aware of the critical requirement for accurate and up to date mapping for all military operations. Accordingly, the fledgling Australian government took notice, realised the almost total lack of national mapping coverage and established the Survey Corps in 1915 as a means of addressing the problem.

During the evening “Faces of the Corps” was screened on two TV sets and proved to be very popular. Neil Taylor made a very generous donation of five bottles of Royal Australian Survey Corps 70th Anniversary Liqueur Muscat on the night and four of these were given away as a door prize. With 133 names in the hat, surprisingly Peter Bates-Brownsword's name was selected twice! Peter subsequently donated the contents to the attendees. The fifth bottle was presented to Chris Coulthard-Clark along with a bottle of Shiraz in appreciation for sharing the 100th anniversary evening with us. This bottle was also consumed in situ...

**Ed:** *A word about the 'Lobby Restaurant'.... the Lobby Restaurant began its life in 1968 when parliamentarians at the old parliament house, over the road, decided they needed a place to entertain visiting constituents. The "eating establishment" when it was built turned out to be a fine dining restaurant called the 'Lobby'. The shocked M.P's had to force the Department of Administrative Services to attach a small cafe so they could buy their long-awaited pies for their constituents.*

*Since then the Lobby has been the scene of countless political intrigues performed over long lunches and even longer dinners. Politicians from all sides are regulars to events, as are lobbyists, senior public servants, diplomats, business people and journalists. The lobby restaurant has maintained its rightful place as one of Australia's finest venues and the most political of eating establishments.*

## **CANBERRA – A GALLERY OF PHOTOS – At the AWM**



*His Excellency General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC (Ret'd), Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, addresses the gathering*



*The audience in rapt attention*



*Brigadier Finney representing Chief of Army, Dr Brendan Nelson, the Governor General Sir Peter Cosgrove, Lady Cosgrove and Rob McHenry – all in fine voice in rendering a rousing chorus of the Corps marching song – ‘Wandering the Kings Highway’*



*A section of the audience – there’s Wendy and Bob Skitch with Dawn Laing in the front, T.J. Wicker (behind Wendy) Peter Eddy looming in the middle, Barbara Bates-Brownsword in her green WRAAC beret and many others.*



*In the crowd – Barbara & Peter BB*



*Alex Cairney*



*Bob Skitch & Dawn Laing*



*Don and Glen Swiney*



*Bill Boyd – doing his own photography*



*Dr Gary Hunter (from the wilds of Africa)*



*Rob McHenry – our organiser extraordinaire*



*Past Corps Directors Don Swiney and Simon Lemon placing the wreaths*



*Wreaths placed on the Armistice Day memorial stone backed by the Canberra Brass Quintet and the Australian Rugby Choir*

## PART 2 – CELEBRATIONS IN BENDIGO – ‘Back to Bendigo’

By various means, following the Canberra celebrations the 160 or more past Corps members made their way to Bendigo by air, by road, some on Thursday and some on Friday to join the ever swelling number from other parts of Australia and of course, those who served most of their Corps career at Fortuna, settled in Bendigo and never left the old city. Some staying with friends of old; and others in the hotels and motels around the city – quite a few at the *All Seasons* where the grand dinner was to take place on Saturday night.

Wendy and I flew Canberra to Tullamarine (a Qantas ‘Dash 400’ turbo-prop aircraft) then took the commuter bus to Bendigo arriving mid afternoon. We were booked at a unique and unusual hotel – the *Schaller Studio Boutique Hotel* that featured the very creative art of Mark Schaller that has to be seen to be believed, ranging from huge wall hanging collages to ‘chain-saw’ sculptures at the entrance. If the rooms were small they were well designed and comfortable; a little like staying in an art gallery.

The Friday night entertainment was at the Havilah Road RSL – something of a tradition from previous ‘back to Bendigo’ occasions. Wendy chose to remain at the *Schaller* and I must confess, I found Havilah Road all a little over-whelming. I reckon there must have been at least 200 there. How can you meet and recognize faces of all that many? I seemed to drift from one to another – it was the first of many great events over the ensuing weekend. A buffet of beef, roast chicken or battered fish was served but after a day of travelling my spirit was flagging and after an hour and a half I returned to the *Schaller*.

### Civic Reception at the Town Hall

Saturday morning at 10.30 or a little before we were at Bendigo’s grand Town Hall, piped in by the *Fortuna Pipes and Drums*. Once inside we collected our names and ‘Faces of the Corps’ devices (what do you call those things). The gathering was immense, completely filled the hall. We were addressed by the very affable and down-to-earth Mayor of Bendigo, Councillor Peter Cox. Many photos were taken both privately and professionally, especially of the various State Association groups as well as other identifiable groups such as Vietnam Veterans and the ladies of the WRAAC. Our Queensland Association was certainly the best represented State group (other than Fortuna itself) – we had difficulty fitting everyone onto the elevated dais. Morning tea was laid out on side tables – but you had to be quick – I wasn’t! What more can one say? It was an absolutely grand occasion and Gary and his committee (Tracey and John Phillips notably) did an excellent job, organising this and all that followed.

### PHOTO GALLERY – 1



Fortuna Pipes and Drums – our welcome to the Town Hall Civic Reception





Inside the Town Hall – State Association banners at the back



Our Queensland Association



Survey Vietnam Veterans



Survey Vietnam Veterans



The Fortuna organising committee – Rear: John Phillips, Stuart Symonds, Bob Thrower  
Front: Don Swiney, Phil Smalley, Gary Warnest, Tracey Phillips



The Mayor of Bendigo – Cr Peter Cox



Past Corps Director Don Swiney MBE



Colin and Rhonda Laybutt and Wendy



John and Sue Collins – from UK  
John wearing his resplendent CBE  
(Captain Collins RE was our UK exchange officer 1975-77)



Yvonne and John Bullen with Alex Cairney



Cr Peter Cox and members

### Open House at the Carpenter Street WRAAC Barracks

I was quite keen to visit the old WRAAC Barracks and Gary kindly included me. Like lots of young blokes serving at Fortuna during the 1950s and 1960s I had fond memories of the ladies hospitality on several occasions, particularly in 1959. Then when I arrived at Bendigo in 1977 I found 'Turriff' had been closed down and the girls were living on the ground floor of the other ranks barrack block at Fortuna – not entirely satisfactory. I discussed this with the WRAAC officer (our Admin Officer) and she whole heartedly agreed to re-opening *Turriff* but first some basic re-furbishing work had to be done – grounds tidied up and I am not sure what else. The Works Department undertook the work and *Turriff* re-opened towards the end of 1977. There were never more than six to ten girls living there; I think our WRAAC officer chose to do so at least initially. I was certainly aware that the closure resulted from the number of live-in girls falling to one or two and there was some concern for security. Nevertheless, the re-opening was a popular decision at the time.

It was a very pleasant afternoon with the owners Dale and Belinda O'Meara providing a lavish afternoon tea. Also attending was Valerie Lovejoy, author of *'Mapmakers of Fortuna'*.

### PHOTO GALLERY – 2



The dining room and our PM tea



Owner Belinda O' Meara welcoming us to her home  
(Note the open fire)



Our ladies of the Women's Royal Australian Army Corps (WRAAC) (taken at the dinner at the *All Seasons*)

### **Dinner at the All Seasons Function Centre**

Our final function for Saturday was the well attended dinner at the All Seasons Function Centre in Mclvor Road. Indeed; it needed to be the final function – what else could follow on that day? Attendance was in the order of 400 plus and one could only marvel at the quality of the meal that was served to so many and the efficiency of the operation. Two courses was certainly enough. Following the dinner it was time for speeches. Our final Corps Director Colonel Simon Lemon was the official guest speaker and Simon gave a very polished performance, reflecting on the Corps' achievements. (Simon's address is at the end of this account)



Gary Warnest welcomes the guests



Don Swiney presents an Association Plaque To Peter Jensen for his remarkable effort In producing the Corps Nominal Roll.



The Mayor has a few words –Gary remains attentive



Rob McHenry presents an Association Plaque to John Mobbs for his untiring effort In creating 'Faces of the Corps'



Bill Boyd reflects on the Corps in poetry ( Bill's very moving poem is at the end of this account)



The Litho Push – never to be forgotten

### **BBQ lunch at the *Goldmines Hotel***

As a young bloke at Fortuna I was never a great attender at the *Goldmines Hotel* although many were and I suspect it was a favourite watering hole for the members of Litho Squadron. For many, the

*Goldmines* was almost an extension of Fortuna itself, being just over the back fence and owned by Eddie Esposito and his wife Marge. Eddie was the Sergeant electrician at the Regiment and continued on as a civilian after retiring from uniformed service. He alone understood the complexities of the electrical wiring of the old Villa and his service was indispensable. Eddie's wife Marge ran the *Goldmines* and you didn't step out of line when Marge was behind the bar.



The *Goldmines Hotel*

We gathered at the *Goldmines* at midday in the gardens at the back and again there were huge numbers, occupying every nook and cranny of the hotel's award winning beer garden. Sizzled sausages, buns and salads prevailed.





The *Goldmines* award winning beer garden and everyone

### **Unveiling the Story Board within the grounds of Fortuna**

At about 2.30 pm word went around that it was time to move from the *Goldmines* to Fortuna. The walk was to be itself part of the celebration – all together, not actually marching but walking in ‘column of blob’ headed by a piper from the ‘*Fortuna Pipes and Drums*’ – not by the most direct route but taking in an extra block if only to entertain a few of the Golden Square residents. We entered through the back gate of Fortuna and continued past the Villa to the memorial cairn below the parade ground, straight up from the front gate. Some seating had been provided and at 3.00pm the ceremony commenced.

One hundred chairs had been provided but these soon filled and many stood behind and on either side of the seated gathering and on the high ground behind the memorial cairn. The memorial service opened with an introduction by Gary Warnest with the following words....

*Today we remember those original members of the Corps who in 1915 although small in number set the example for all who came after to follow in service, loyalty, quality of achievement and ‘esprit de corps’. Whilst we are proud of their achievements and sacrifices I am sure that they likewise would be proud of what the Corps went on to achieve during its existence. Today’s service is to honour the*

members of the Survey Corps and their achievements and to record for future visitors the story of those who served at this site since 1942.

The Reverend John Smith, an ex Survey Corps Major opened the service reading an appropriate scripture verse from the Book of Joshua....The men went on their way to map out the land after Joshua had given them this instruction 'Go over the land and map it out and come back to me. And then here in Shiloh I will consult the Lord for you.....'

Our last Corps Director Colonel Simon Lemon then unveiled a plaque on the Cairn – the opposite side to the 'Diggers Mark' placed when the Cairn was built and dedicated at the closure of the Army Survey Regiment in 1996 with the words – 'to acknowledge the achievements of the Royal Australian Survey Corps and as a memento of this gathering to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of its foundation'.

Past Commanding Officer of the Army Survey Regiment (1977-80) Lieutenant Colonel Bob Skitch reminisced on his early service at Fortuna and later as Commanding Officer. Bob's few words are at the end of this account. The Story Board was then unveiled jointly by The last Commanding Officer of the Regiment (1994-96) Lieutenant Colonel Duncan Burns and Bob Skitch.

Padre John South concluded the ceremony with a prayerful dedication of the memorial, plaque and Story Board reciting the Corps Prayer, a Prayer for Remembrance and a blessing.

Gary Warnest then acknowledged the sponsorship of the *Surveying and Spatial Sciences Institute (SSSI)* and the *Mapping Sciences Institute, Australia (MSIA)* and the presentation of the heritage Bench Seats by Mr Lindsay Perry, Chair of the National Land Surveying Commission of the SSSI and thanked Mr Paul Banks, the now owner of Fortuna Villa who was present at the ceremony.

We then moved to the Print Room (the old 'Battery') for afternoon tea, the cutting of the Centennial Birthday Cake by Rosemary Bowman (who served as an AWAS at Fortuna during WW2) and Litho's unique contribution to the event – the opening of the Litho Time Capsule. that had been placed by Bob Coote OC Litho at the time the new print room was built. Unfortunately the Port Crock had been broken and had spoilt some of the contents of the capsule.

Many of us then took the opportunity to take the walk through the lower floor of the Villa at the invitation of Paul Banks – the Entrance Hall, the Music Room, reception room and down the passage way, the rooms we knew as the Orderley Room, 'G'Branch, the Adjutant's office. the CO's office (George Lansell's Bedroom), the marble bathroom, the bath in the cedar cupboard and the 2IC's office then out of the window door to the Roman Fountain.

It was by then late afternoon and time to depart, this last look at Fortuna Villa that had been a significant part of many of our lives.



The march from the 'Goldmines to Fortuna  
Departure



Arrival



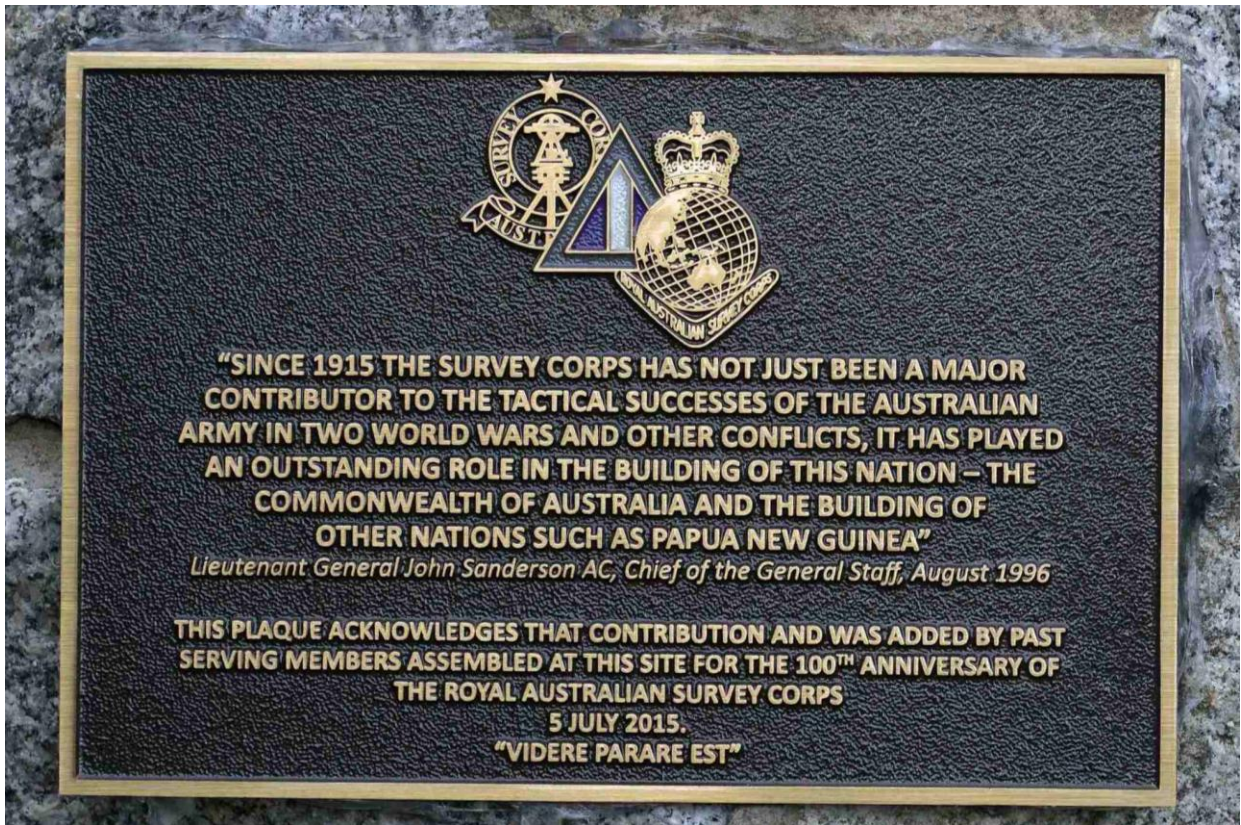
The gathering at the Cairn



The participants – L-R Rev John South, Bob Skitch, Duncan Burns, Mr Lindsay Perry, Mr Paul Banks



The Professional Institutions bench seat at the cairn



The 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Plaque



Bob – speach making



Bob & Simon and the new plaque



Bob and Duncan unveil the Story Board



Mr Paul Banks welcomes the gathering



A brief history of Fortuna. This board was originally created in 1979 when afternoon tours commenced on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays. It was not sign written but a one-off screen print on a metal plate. I believe it is the original screen printed board but perhaps it has been re-done with the same wording.



The gathering in the beautifully restored Print Room



The Centennial Birthday cake being cut by Rosemary Bowman AWAS, member of the Land Headquarters Cartographic Company 1942



Bob Skitch and Greg Tolcher – after the event

**ADDRESS BY COLONEL SIMON LEMON – Director, Royal Australian Survey Corps ( 1991-96**

Distinguished guests, past members, families and friends of the Royal Australian Survey Corps. It is an honour to speak on the occasion of the 100th Anniversary of the formation of the Survey Corps. Looking around at those gathered here tonight I see that I am in august company. Sadly, many of those who wore the Survey badge are no longer amongst us in person but I sense their spirit is with us. Indeed, we are the privileged few who are left to witness this significant event in Australia's mapping history.

I congratulate and thank all those who organised the celebrations of this week. I have been asked to speak on the contribution made by RASvy to mapping in Australia. In many ways our contribution speaks for itself. It is already well documented and recognised by the thousands of maps in Australia's topographic data base which bear the Corps badge and some even the Corps motto. I have no doubt that much of the data published by the Corps will survive at least another 100 years!

It may be true that from the outside, the Corps was judged by the products it published. If maps were available when needed then we were invisible to the user. In fact I can recall many a senior officer and politician whose eyes would glaze over whenever the technical requirements of map making were explained. They simply were not interested in the science behind the maps. However, if a map was unavailable there was a line up of disappointed punters at the map store which often culminated in a call to the OC even the Director of Survey by someone in authority from HQ or even the PM's Office. Oh! and they wanted the map for free too, especially if it was for a fishing trip or that outback camping adventure. However, our published maps do not tell the whole story of the contribution made by the Royal Australian Survey Corps.

There are many ways to tell the story and several have been written and published; for that we should be grateful. But as a past Director of Survey I can best provide you with my personal if somewhat biased perspective of the contribution the Corps made to Australia. I saw the effort that went in to making the maps. I shared the good times and some hard times so I saw the Corps as its people; its heart and soul. A body of individuals with a huge collective talent of knowledge and skills which was broader than that required of producing maps: they included illustrators, photographers and projectionists. These people were dedicated to their task, talented in what they did, eager to embrace new technology and proud of their achievements. They were also subject to the frailties of the human condition requiring succour, encouragement, recognition and respect. Their contribution of service and sacrifice is what I see as the unsung history. Collectively, the men and women of the Survey Corps provided Australia with a dedicated and first class military survey & mapping capability for more than 80 years.

It is fitting that these celebrations are being held at Bendigo this weekend, for it was here that the Land Headquarters Cartographic Company grew to become the jewel in the crown of the Survey Corps. It was a fortunate decision to choose Bendigo as a home. Here in relative isolation from other Army units the Regiment was allowed to flourish. The people of Bendigo played a vital supporting role in the success of the unit, largely unknown to outsiders but greatly appreciated by those who served here. The respect shown to the Regiment by the citizens of the City of Bendigo is evident by the right of Freedom of Entry given to the unit. Fortuna was to become Australia's premier mapping establishment. Its technicians were at the top of their trade across the entire range of mapping skills. Those who served in the Army Survey Regiment made an outstanding contribution to the Australian Army and Australia's mapping effort for a period of over 50 years.

The Regiment may have operated in relative isolation but its achievements were not made alone. Many people and many organisations throughout Australia and indeed the world, supported the Royal

Australian Survey Corps in its endeavours. We were privileged to be part of the Australian Army and enjoy the support both it and the wider Defence organisation provided. Also we were well supported by the civilian mapping community; professional bodies, scientific organisations and academia. We were extremely fortunate to have these resources available to our mapping effort which no other mapping organisation in Australia and many others world-wide could boast.

Of course there were those who were openly critical of the Corps; they included the “flat earth” people who clearly knew not what they said or did and those who were jealous of the Corps, of its achievements and might I say, even of its existence! It is understandable then that some Directors became prickly to unjustified criticism of the Corps and took it personally - I apologise on their behalf. Fortunately the critics did not detract from our rightful place in history; rather they added to the esteem in which the Corps is held. It strengthened camaraderie within the Corps where lifelong friendships were made. Great times were had while working and playing hard. After listening to many stories told this week the good times we shared appear to be bigger and better than I remember!

What did the Corps achieve in 100 years? I say we contributed more than just the maps we published; we left an indelible mark on Australia's mapping landscape. Rightly or wrongly let history be the judge. To all those men and women, both soldier and civilian who have wandered the King's Highway over the past 100 years, you have served your country with distinction; you have done your duty and left a legacy which has already become a legend.

Videre Parare Est.

**Response to Simon Lemon RASvy 100<sup>th</sup> Bendigo 4July 2015 by Warrant Officer Class 1 (ret) William R.(Bill) Boyd, OAM**

*Thank you Gary.*

*Colonel and Mrs Lemon, Mayor of the City of Greater Bendigo - Councillor Cox and Mrs Cox - fellow excorps members and your guests. It gives me great pleasure to address you tonight if - for no other reason than - I am having a last say in what might be called a corps forum.*

*I remember a conversation at the School of Military Survey at Bonegilla in 1976. On my appointment to the WO1 instructor position of the school, I moved into a shared office with – Captain - Lemon. After organising my desk and filing cabinet, I sat quietly for a while and eventually said to my officer, office mate, “Well what am I supposed to do?”. Captain Lemon's immediate reply was “Who am I to tell a Warrant Officer Class 1 what to do?” To those of you who may have had some misgivings about my attitude at some time since then, - It was all Simon Lemon's fault!*



## A CORPS REFLECTION by WO1 William Boyd (ret)

***This is a celebration! The bugler has not blown retreat!  
Survey's halls of memory - echo to many feet.***

We mapped for all Australians - army, air force and the navy,  
The black and red of cities - contours brown and wavy.  
Shorelines blue - black mud and rocks and where the rivers flow,  
Names and notes with symbols - so they'd all know where to go.

Our corps - saw the light of day in last century's fifteenth year.  
World War 1 was raging. Dire need of maps, was clear.  
In 1996 we combined with Engineers.  
The loss of our identity caused - perhaps - some tears.

In the nineteen years that's followed, there's still something left to see  
Of our corps that was. - ***Our members*** – left a treasured legacy.  
The vastness our nation, ***we*** – surveyed, ***we*** - drew, ***we*** - printed.  
From that basic information, untold fortunes have been minted  
We paid our way with service, in war time and in peace.  
Integrity of product meant demands would never cease.  
Battle maps and azimuths, Snowy River's feasibility,  
Mapping ours and other sovereign states, demonstrated our ability.

The world has changed in our time - my friends. We were - in a front row seat  
To view the digital changes - to ***our*** lives – and of others we meet.  
The technology of each era is the stuff of history made,  
***But - the calibre of our people - is the starch that made the grade.***  
To be brief – *The older we get - the better we were.*

It's a long way to come for a feed you know - ***it's a long way to come for a feed!***  
Did you come so far just to eat - my friends - or - to fill a much deeper need?  
The need to relive the feelings - that spark when youth's ***trappings*** are nigh.  
To again be eighteen or twenty - with that same bright fire in your eye.

We all had our heroes - and villains lurked too – they shaped us in ***some*** way - ***or more***.  
The hindsight of age - perhaps tempers our views of events - and relations of yore.  
To relive the trials of your youth - to enjoy again your success - to feel at home with the friends of the  
days  
When you walked tall and straight – looked out for a mate - and met life in so many ways.

We have scattered since leaving the corps - my friends. Most of us, live far away.  
We've all journeyed on with our lives since then - but we've come back - ***together*** - ***today***.  
So - ***a toast*** - to all those who've travelled – who have driven and flown from afar,  
And a toast to us all who are travellers - who still follow our own guiding star.

## A REFLECTION AT THE UNVEILING OF THE FORTUNA PICTURE BOARD

### Lt Col Bob Skitch (Ret)

Thank you Gary for allowing me this privilege.

I first laid eyes on this place we call Fortuna in late 1955. My Basic Survey Course, the 7/55 came from Balcombe in a creaky old Army bus, a trip that seemed to take most of the day. We arrived in the late afternoon. It was a cold gray afternoon and there behind the shrubbery was this grey old building, sort of forbidding and not at all welcoming. I wondered 'what on earth!' The verandas were all enclosed – roughly enclosed. We entered up the front steps and once inside I could see some traces of original grandeur. We were welcomed by the Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel Lindsay Lockwood and the RSM Warrant Officer Des Moore. We were led around the reed covered lake overhung with large trees and up the steps to our accommodation hut, called the 'long hut' at the end of the parade ground and we more or less settled in for an overnight stay. There were tents permanently erected down one side of the parade ground accommodating a dozen or so Nashos. Dinner was in the adjacent kitchen and other ranks dining room after which we filled in the night. The next morning we paraded in our KDs wearing boots AB with their hob nail soles and gaiters, not on the parade ground because it was raining but in the parquetry floored ballroom. It is amazing what that parquetry floor put up with, Then followed a tour around the old building – Cartographic Squadron up stairs, map compilation in the music room and Litho Squadron in the Battery and the associated rabbit warren of small rooms. There was sleeping accommodation upstairs in what I later knew as the template room and later proving and editing. Multiplex was in a darkened room adjacent to the CO's office and of course we were shown the marble bathroom and the bath in a cupboard in what was then the CO's office. Also the mysterious tunnel We departed by bus mid afternoon with many differing impressions, almost surreal of all we had seen and had a late arrival back at the School of Survey.

I will now fast forward twenty two years to the time I was privileged to serve as Commanding Officer. In 1977 much had been done to the old building by successive Commanding Officers, both within the building and in the gardens. Colonel Lockwood was a gardener and during his long tenure as CO he did much to restore the gardens. I well remember turning out on a Friday afternoon in a work party to do an hour's weeding in the lawn. Frank Buckland did much to restore the building itself and miraculously managed to recover the cast iron veranda balustrades that had fallen victim to wartime metal collections – to be turned into guns and whatever. Fortunately they were in store somewhere.. Gradually the Villa had been tidied up, repainted internally and externally but without any thought given to its heritage values. What were they? Little was known about the history of the place. We were vaguely aware that it had been the home of George Lansell Esquire – after all, his statue was down town in Rosalind Park.

There was always a great deal of local interest in Fortuna Villa and past COs tried to meet the frequent requests to visit by holding the occasional open day. The last one before my arrival had apparently been near disastrous, gardens trampled, congestion on stairways, fittings broken off and souvenired and litter everywhere. My predecessor strongly recommended that we do not take it on again. There was also the vexed question of insurance cover in the event of an accident and personal injury. I was effectively dissuaded but nevertheless to maintain and develop better rapport between the Regiment and the Bendigo community I believed there must be a better way. I won't go into the detail of how it developed but the Regiment's Regimental Fund Committee entered into an arrangement with the then Bendigo Trust to arrange tours for up to twenty visitors three times a week, Wednesday afternoon when most of the soldiers were playing sport, Saturday and Sunday afternoons. The tours would be conducted by the duty staff, usually a young sapper or corporal who certainly rose to the occasion and could lay on some pretty interesting stories. The ghost of George Lansell kept popping up everywhere. We charged a small amount for the tour, it may have been \$5.00 and split the proceeds with the Trust who arranged the tours and controlled the numbers. Having researched the early history we produced a souvenir booklet with coloured plates of the salient features and the carefully planned route of the tour

which of course finished up with the tunnel. Our share of the proceeds went into Regimental funds for the express purpose of purchasing fittings and fixtures appropriate to the building – gasoliers light fittings to replace the old dangling light bulbs, heritage style wall paper. We had good advice from the the Carneys of Eaglehawk Antiques. That was the start of things.

The next step occurred about a year later. Commonwealth Works Department painters arrived to give the building its ten year coat of paint – battleship grey and white, more of a blue grey I think. Again my good friends, the Carneys of Eaglehawk Antiques came to the rescue with appropriate advice on the sort of colours that would be appropriate to a 19<sup>th</sup> century building. I found I had an ally in Colonel McBride, Chief Engineer in HQ 3 MD in Melbourne, an Englishman who had a personal interest in heritage buildings and thought Fortuna one of the best. With his support I called off the painters who hadn't actually started. Colonel McBride arranged for an expert in old buildings from Ballarat to visit for a few days to provide appropriate advice on heritage colours. Our paint expert crawled all over the building scraping back layers of paint to reveal what lay underneath and a week later produced a detailed colour guide. With a few modifications it was adopted and result is what you now see.

The Army started to take an ongoing interest in the building, or perhaps it was Commonwealth Works. I looked out one day to see masons working on restoring the Roman Fountain. Over the years much was done, inside and out. The restoration of the lake and the surrounding gardens undertaken by my predecessor Peter Constantine was a major achievement. All this came to an end in 1996 when the Army Survey Regiment with the rest of our Royal Australian Survey Corps disbanded and the Regiment became a Commonwealth Public Service organisation. Many in the past made significant contributions to Fortuna and we can be thankful that it is once again in good hands and has a bright future. Congratulations Paul on acquiring this magnificent property and may your venture be a very successful one.

The Story Board about to be unveiled tells the story very succinctly of the Royal Australian Survey Corps and that of Fortuna during its fifty two years of army occupation. I suspect that had Fortuna not been taken over by the Army in 1942 it would not have survived the destructive post World War Two years of the 1950s and 60s when Bendigo lost several of its late colonial buildings – in one instance to be replaced by a service station.

The last Commanding Officer of the Army Survey Regiment Duncan Burns is with me here and together we will reveal this quite magnificent board that tells the story, our story, of The Royal Australian Survey Corps and the Army Survey Regiment here at Fortuna Villa.

I will finish with the words of the last verse of our Corps marching song – '*Wandering the King's Highway*'. Somehow they seem appropriate to our many older members who once served.

*Nights are cold, maybe I am growing old !  
Yet I thrive and the mates I meet, make it good to be alive.  
Comrades farewell, what if we never meet again  
The memory will stay  
As I go, rain or snow,  
**Wandering the King's highway.***