



# NOTICE TO MARINERS

## Newsletter 32 Small Ship Squadron Association Incorporating RAE Tn Patron: Colonel K L Duncan (RL) President's Message

It has been a most successful year for our Association when you consider that a number of committee positions are still vacant but we manage to keep sailing.

Events of the year

- Plaque dedication ceremony at anniversary dinner
- Approval of our submission for Commemoration program subsidise the plaque dedication
- ANZAC Day
- The production of the first NTM
- 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary dinner at deployment of the Royal the memorial service at the RAE Vietnam Memorial, SME Steele Barracks
- 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan memorial day at Springwood



the Australian War Memorial and the 40<sup>th</sup>

a grant under the Australian Government's Saluting Their Service for \$1,900.00 to ceremony and dinner

in full colour

Campbelltown R.S.L. to commemorate the Australian Engineers to South Vietnam and

the memorial service at the RAE Vietnam Memorial, SME Steele Barracks

40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan memorial day at Springwood

Again the Corps was well supported by the salty sappers at the RAEVN40 functions in August. Jack Peel did a magnificent job as Chairman of the organizing committee, along with Ross McMurray, Ian Johnston and committee members from other sapper associations. The events over the three day period were very memorable and went off without a hitch. On behalf of all of us I would like to thank those who contributed to its success. It was also a fitting occasion to see the Sovereign's Banner paraded at the anniversary dinner. Well done!

For those of you who may think of visiting the Australian War Memorial the Association plaque is located in position 97 in the Memorial's Sculpture Garden on the BCOF Memorial side of the Western Courtyard.

On a very sad note I have received a letter from Mr. Max Schaefer, advocate at Redcliffe R.S.L. in Queensland who is trying to obtain a war widow pension for a Mrs. Patricia Evans who is the widow of Terrence Evans (Reg. No. 311443). Terrence was ex-Navy before joining 32 Small Ship Sqn. and sailed on the AS John Monash on the following voyages to South Vietnam – 11 April-9 June 1966, 29 July-20 September 1966 and 17 February-5 April 1968. It is believed post traumatic stress disorder contributed to his death. If anyone can help with memories of Terrence would you please contact me or Ross McMurray.

I have found the website of DVA very useful – [www.dva.gov.au/pensions/SOPS](http://www.dva.gov.au/pensions/SOPS) - for information relating to ailments or injuries caused during service in submitting a claim to DVA and I would suggest you use a professional advocate.

On a more cheerful note I would like to thank those members and their wives/partners and families for attending the above functions and supporting your Association and thank those who have taken the time to write to the committee.

The Patron, committee and I wish you all the best for a happy Christmas and successful New Year.

Ocka



This has  
and the C  
Dedication  
Memorial which wa  
“glossy” newsletter wa  
those on email. This  
plaque commemorating

2006 is the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of  
RAE units to Vietnam and Ope  
series of events conducted over  
the School of Military Engineer  
Campbelltown RSL Club. These e  
below.

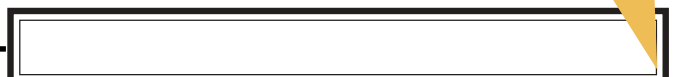
**Day One.** Wednesday 16 August 2006 was  
day at Campbelltown RSL Club. Over 100 pe  
up to register and meet up with old friends ove  
and a beer before moving to their accommodati

**Day Two.** Thursday 17 August 2006 was quite a  
day. We started off at SME where we where directed to  
the main display area and shown the current equipment,  
tools and machinery operated by engineers. Here we  
had a first hand look at the new Floating Support Bridge  
and the Bridge Propulsion Boat that assists in assembling  
the bridge in the water. Most impressive! Following this  
we were treated to a demonstration by sappers of the  
Initial Employment Training Troop (the old FE3 Course)  
on the various equipment they trained with and the  
techniques learnt. This included the demolition of a  
bridge using explosives, breaching a minefield, building  
a section of a Medium Girder Bridge, and using



In the event  
attended the C  
RSL Club. Near  
guest was Lieuten  
CSM, Vice Chief  
included Colonel M  
Command Engineer  
Colonel David Rye, Com  
Wayne Schoer, Regimental  
number of Wing Sergeants  
directors of the club also at  
General John Baker, AC, DSM  
Defence Force and Patron of RAE  
attend due to illness.

Guests were piped into the dining room  
Ingleburn RSL Club Pipes and Drums. P  
down, the Sovereign's Banner was marched  
armed escort party. Dinner music was provide  
band of the University of NSW Regiment.



This wasn't a bad thing because we had to front up again at SME the next day. Our Association was well represented with four tables (38 people) and it was good to see such a large turnout.

**Day Three.** Friday 18 August 2006. Long Tan Day. At 1045 hrs we assembled at the RAE Vietnam Memorial at SME for the Memorial Service. After a welcome from the Commanding Officer SME and introductory prayers, the Honour Roll was read out.

This was followed by an address, given again by Lieutenant General Gillespie. He spoke of the initial deployment of RAE members who served with the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam, and subsequent build up of the RAE units from 1966. He also spoke of the many casualties suffered; mainly from 1 Field Squadron Group as a result of mines laid in the infamous barrier minefield and its subsequent removal. A very moving and heartfelt speech, indeed.

The Officiating Chaplain was Reverend Richard McCracken, a Chaplain to our Association and was assisted by the SME Chaplain, Captain Christine Digby. Wreaths were laid by Lieutenant General Gillespie on behalf of the Corps, by General John Baker on behalf of the Corps Committee, and by Lieutenant Colonel Rye on behalf of SME. Wreaths were also laid on behalf of the following unit associations: 1 Field Squadron, 17 Construction Squadron, 32 Small Ship Squadron and Tn units (laid by our President, Ocka Murray), 55 Advanced Stores Squadron and Australian Army Training Team Vietnam. The Ode was then recited by Jack Peel followed by the Last Post by Sergeant Stephen Johnson of University of NSW Regiment and the Lament by Pipe Sergeant Peter Jakobsson from Ingleburn RSL Club Pipes and Drums. SME provided the Catafalque Party. The service was a fine tribute to our mates who paid the ultimate sacrifice.

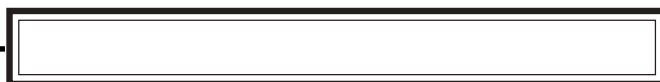
After the service, (and another look around SME, Chapel, Museum etc for those who missed out yesterday), we were invited to the Sportsman's Club for an excellent barbeque lunch and a few drinks to finish off a marvellous three days worth of commemorations and nostalgia.

dangerous and difficult missions world-wide. SME is understaffed and extremely busy in training sappers to send to units for deployment to these areas, and having seen first hand the high level of training achieved, we really appreciate the efforts the staff undertakes to ensure these standards are met.

**Participants.** The following members of our Association participated in some or all of the events:

George and Judith Cosis (NSW), Glenn Daly (NSW), Charlie and Iris Deans (WA), Ken and Dawn Duncan (NSW), Gary Everitt (NSW), Bruce and Helen Glossop (ACT), Dave and Helen Gray (VIC), Ken Hull (NSW), Ian Johnston (NSW), Bill and Val Maddocks (VIC), John Martyn (VIC), Norm Mason (NSW), Michael and Ellen McCartney - Lees (VIC), John McGregor (NSW) and his son, Iain (NT), Rev Richard McCracken (NSW), Ross and Jenny McMurray (NSW), Graham and Beth Murray (NSW), Max and Denise Neill (NSW), Lance Northey (NSW), Jack and Carole Peel (NSW) along with their daughter, Amy and her husband, Lynton, and their son (Jack and Carole's - not Amy and Lynton's) Tim and his wife, Emma (NSW), Bruce Reilly and Rina Ross (NSW), Vaughn and Ursula Ruddick (VIC), Speedie Sarhariv (ACT), Ken Shannon (NSW), George Stubbs and his son Peter (QLD), Peter and Susan Tierney (NSW), Brian and Val Waites (NSW), and Alan White (NSW). Ralph Pridmore intended to participate but could not attend due to illness. All up, about 250 people attended over the three day period, so our turn up of nearly 50 was quite significant. Thanks again to all those who made it. I think I've got everyone but please advise if I've omitted any names and I'll correct it and apologise in the next edition.

**Postscript.** Jack Peel was Chairman of the RAEVN 40 Committee and John Pendergast was the tireless NOVEMBER Secretary. Other committee members were Peter Allen, Doug Maddison, Ian Johnston and Ross McMurray. At our final meeting it was agreed that this committee would stay on to coordinate a memorial service to be held at the RAE Vietnam Memorial annually on 18 August. Details of this will be advised in upcoming newsletters.





**ADDRESS AND TOAST BY THE VICE CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE FORCE  
LIEUTENANT GENERAL KEN GILLESPIE, AO, DSC, CSM  
AT A DINNER COMMEMORATING THE 40<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEPLOYMENT OF  
MAJOR RAE UNITS TO VIETNAM  
CAMPBELLTOWN RSL CLUB  
17 AUGUST 2006**

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

IT IS AN HONOR TO BE HERE TONIGHT, AMONGST FELLOW SAPPERS, AND TO PARTICIPATE IN YOUR 40<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY FUNCTIONS. WE ARE GATHERED HERE ESPECIALLY TO COMMEMORATE THE SEVERAL THOUSANDS OF SOLDIERS WHO SERVED IN VIETNAM.

USUALLY AT FUNCTIONS SUCH AS THIS AND AT ANZAC ADDRESSES REFERENCE IS MADE TO THE ANZAC SPIRIT AND TO THE TRAITS THAT OUR MILITARY FOREBEARS DISPLAYED AT GALLIPOLI AND AT ALL THE CONFLICTS IN WHICH AUSTRALIA HAS BEEN INVOLVED OVER THE PAST 90 YEARS. THOSE TRAITS OF IDEALISM, HANGING IN THERE, A FAIR GO FOR ALL, COMPASSION, COURAGE AND MATESHIP ARE ALL OF COURSE COMMON TO OUR SAPPER COMMUNITY AND HAVE BEEN DISPLAYED BY SAPPERS THROUGHOUT OUR MILITARY HISTORY. WE HAVE A VERY FINE TRADITION OF SERVICE

SACRIFICE AND SUCCESS AND THAT TRADITION WAS ENHANCED IN NO SMALL WAY BY THOSE SAPPERS WHO SERVED IN SOUTH VIETNAM.

FORTY YEARS AGO THE TWO MAIN ENGINEER UNITS OF 1 FIELD SQUADRON AND 17 CONSTRUCTION SQUADRON DEPLOYED THERE, BUT A YEAR BEFORE THAT OTHER SAPPER ELEMENTS WERE PRESENT.

THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ENGINEERS INVOLVEMENT IN THE VIETNAM WAR COMMENCED WHEN AN ELEMENT KNOWN AS THE RAE DETACHMENT AUSTRALIAN LOGISTIC SUPPORT COMPANY (RAE DET ALSC), COMMANDED BY CAPTAIN MATT KING, ACCOMPANIED 1ST BATTALION, THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN REGIMENT GROUP (1 RAR GP) TO VIETNAM IN JUNE 1965. THE BATTALION GROUP WAS UNDER COMMAND 173RD AIRBORNE BRIGADE BASED AT BIEN HOA, NORTH-EAST OF SAIGON. THE RAE DET ALSC'S ROLE WAS TO PROVIDE BASIC CAMP NECESSITIES FOR THE BATTALION GROUP, WITH PRIORITY TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF SCALE A ACCOMMODATION.

ON 28 SEPTEMBER 1965, 1 RAR GP WAS REINFORCED BY *FORCE TANTON*, WHICH INCLUDED 3 TROOP, COMMANDED BY CAPTAIN ALEX MCGREGOR, FROM 1ST FIELD SQUADRON.





THE TROOP'S TASK WAS TO PROVIDE ENGINEER SUPPORT TO THE 1ST AUSTRALIAN LOGISTIC SUPPORT GROUP (1ALSG) ON 8 MARCH 1966, THE PRIME MINISTER ANNOUNCED HIS COMMITMENT IN VIETNAM, BY INCREASING THE TROOP TO A CONTAINED TASK FORCE OR BRIGADE GROUP. THE TROOP WAS LOCATED AT NUI DAT IN PHUOC TUY PROVINCE. THE 1ALSG WAS A LOGISTIC SUPPORT GROUP (1 ALSG) LOCATED AT VUNG TAU.

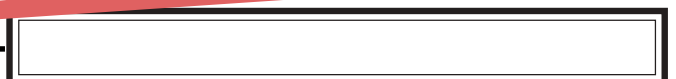
**RAE'S THREE MAIN TASKS WERE:**

- ENGINEER SUPPORT TO COMBAT
- CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE
- DEVELOPMENT OF THE 1ALSG

A FOURTH TASK WAS TO PROVIDE SUPPORT TO THE 1ALSG IN VIETNAM AT SAIGON AND THE TROOP WAS TO SUPPORT THE SAPPERS IN SUPPORT OF INFANTRY

**FOLLOWING TASKS:**

- THE CLEARANCE OF NARROWS
- THE SEARCHING OF ENEMY POSITIONS AND THE RETRIEVAL OF ENEMY WEAPONS
- THE DESTRUCTION OF ENEMY POSITIONS AND UNINHABITABLE AREAS
- THE DESTRUCTION OF ENEMY POSITIONS AND UNINHABITABLE AREAS
- CLEARING AND MAINTENANCE OF ROADS
- ASSISTANCE TO THE 1ALSG IN THE SECURITY OF TOWN SITES
- DETAIL TO THE 1ALSG IN THE SECURITY OF TOWN SITES
- PREPARATION OF TOWN SITES
- DURING THE TROOP'S







SAPPERS WERE ALSO INVOLVED IN MANY CIVIC ACTIONS INCLUDING:

- THE BUILDING OF SCHOOLS, ADMINISTRATION BUILDINGS, HOSPITALS AND MARKET PLACES.
- THE PROVISION OF ENGINEER SERVICES FOR CIVILIAN COMMUNITIES SUCH AS WATER SUPPLY, ROADS, BRIDGING, SEWERAGE DISPOSAL, DRAINAGE AND ELECTRICITY.

IT WOULD BE REMISS OF ME IF I DID NOT MENTION THE INFAMOUS BARRIER MINEFIELD. IN MARCH TO JUNE 1967 SAPPERS FROM 1 FIELD SQUADRON, WITH ASSISTANCE FROM 5 AND 7 RAR, 17 CONSTRUCTION SQUADRON AND 1 FIELD SQUADRON RAEME WORKSHOPS LAID OVER 20 000 M16 ANTI PERSONNEL MINES FROM DAT DO TO THE COAST. I WON'T GO INTO SPECIFICS OF THE MANY REASONS WHY IT WAS BUILT, BUT THE COMMANDER 1 ATF CONSIDERED IT WAS NECESSARY IN ORDER TO RESRICT ENEMY ACCESS TO THE LOCAL POPULATION AND TO THE VAST FOOD RESOURCES OF THE PROVENCE. LATER IT WAS SHOWN THAT THE MINEFIELD WAS NOT SUCCESSFUL FOR VARIOUS REASONS AND IT WAS CLEARED TWO YEARS LATER. MANY SAPPERS AND INFANTRYMEN WERE KILLED OR WOUNDED EITHER DURING THE MINELAYING OPERATION OR LATER AS MANY MINES WERE LIFTED AND RELAID BY THE VIET CONG. IT MUST BE SAID HOWEVER THAT THE PROFESSIONALISM OF THE SAPPERS WAS SECOND TO NONE, AND HAD NOT THIS NOT BEEN THE CASE THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN EVEN MORE CASUALTIES.

1 FIELD SQUADRON PROVIDED INTIMATE COMBAT SUPPORT TO ALL INFANTRY BATTALIONS DURING THE VIETNAM WAR AND WAS BEST SUMMED UP BY THE CO 3 RAR IN 1968 WHEN HE SAID "IN MOST BATTALION OPERATIONS, THE ENGINEER COMBAT TEAMS OF 1 FIELD SQUADRON WERE EITHER AN INTEGRAL PART OF AN INDIVIDUAL RIFLE COMPANY OR WERE HELD IN READINESS AT BATTALION HEADQUARTERS TO BE INSERTED IN SUPPORT OF COMPANIES WHEN CALLED FOR. THE TASK FOR WHICH THEY WILL BE MOST REMEMBERED FOR BY THE BATTALION, HOWEVER, WAS THEIR TASK OF CLEARING CUNNINGLY CONCEALED AND POTENTIALLY LETHAL MINES AND BOOBY TRAPS".

SIMILARLY DURING ITS DEPLOYMENT 17 CONSTRUCTION SQUADRON CARRIED OUT MANY HAZARDOUS AND DIFFICULT OPERATIONS AND AS IS THE CASE OF ALL ENGINEER UNITS IT WOULD TAKE TOO LONG TO MENTION THEM ALL. ONE TYPICAL EXAMPLE WAS THE CONSTRUCTION OF





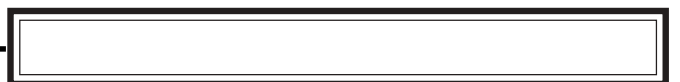
AN AMERICAN M4T6 CLASS 60 FLOATING BRIDGE. THIS OCCURRED AS A RESULT OF VIET CONG BLOWING A FORTY METRE GAP ON THE ROUTE 15 BRIDGE OVER THE RACH DO RIVER ON 2ND AUGUST 1969. 17 CONSTRUCTION SQUADRON WAS TASKED WITH THE CONSTRUCTION OF A REPLACEMENT 240 METRE BRIDGE PROVIDED BY THE 100<sup>TH</sup> US FLOAT BRIDGE COMPANY, US ARMY ENGINEERS, WITH AN OFFICER AND EIGHT SERGEANTS TO ASSIST. AN LSM BROUGHT AN AUSTIN-WESTERN CRANE FROM VUNG TAU TO LIFT THE PANELS THAT WERE MORE THAN A SIX MAN CAPABILITY. IT WAS A COMPOSITE OPERATION WITH THE US TECHNICAL ADVISERS ON ONE HAND AND WORK PARTIES PROVIDED BY 17 CONSTRUCTION SQUADRON – WITH ELEMENTS FROM NUI DAT PROVIDING THE NORTH BANK PARTY AND ELEMENTS FROM VUNG TAU PROVIDING THE SOUTH BANK PARTY. WITH ALL THAT COMPETITION IT WAS A WONDER THAT IT WAS EVER BUILT AT ALL! HOWEVER, TO EVERYONES SURPRISE IT WAS BUILT ON TIME WITHIN TWO DAYS AND THIS OPERATION ENHANCED THE REPUTATION OF 17 CONSTRUCTION SQUADRON AND WAS ONE OF MANY EXAMPLES OF THE SUCCESSFUL COOPERATION BETWEEN THE TROOPS OF 17 CONSTRUCTION SQUADRON, THE US ARMY ENGINEERS AND RAE. **NOVEMBER 20065 Notice To Marine**

THE TRANSPORTATION ARM OF THE CORPS INCLUDED A NUMBER OF UNITS AND SUB-UNITS.

DET 11 MOVEMENT CONTROL GROUP COORDINATED ALL TROOP, VEHICLE AND EQUIPMENT MOVEMENTS ENTERING, DEPARTING AND WITHIN THEATRE. THEY WERE BASED IN SAIGON, NUI DAT AND VUNG TAU.

30 TERMINAL SQUADRON CARRIED OUT TERMINAL OPERATIONS FOR THE AUSTRALIAN FORCES, AND IN SOME CASES FOR THE US ARMY. THIS INCLUDED STEVEDORING INVOLVING LOADING AND UNLOADING SHIPS AND AIRCRAFT.

32 SMALL SHIP SQUADRON PLAYED AN IMPORTANT PART IN DEPLOYING AUSTRALIAN TROOPS AND EQUIPMENT TO VIETNAM AND SUPPORTING OUR OPERATIONS THERE. ALL FOUR LSMs AND THE CARGO SHIP, “JOHN MONASH” SERVED IN VIETNAM WITH AT LEAST ONE SHIP BEING MAINTAINED ON STATION AT ALL TIMES. THE SHIPS’ FIRST PRIORITY WAS TO SUPPORT AUSTRALIAN FORCES BUT WHEN THEY COULD FIND THE TIME THEY WERE KEPT BUSY ON US MILITARY TASKS.



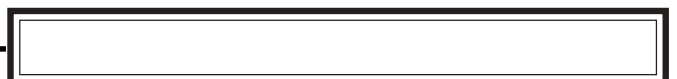




THE “VERNON STURDEE’ AND “JOHN MONASH” ARRIVED IN VIETNAM FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MAY 1966 CARRYING PERSONNEL AND ENGINEER EQUIPMENT. “VERNON STURDEE’ REMAINED IN THEATRE, AND AMONGST MANY OTHER TASKS, MADE 18 HAZARDOUS TRIPS ALONG THE SAIGON RIVER UNDER CONSTANT THREAT FROM VIET CONG ON THE BANKS, MOVING 1 RARs STORES AND EQUIPMENT FROM BIEN HOA TO VUNG TAU. DURING THIS PERIOD, THE “VERNON STURDEE” UNDER COMMAND OF CAPTAIN JOHN BONNET WAS ALSO REQUIRED TO MOVE HEAVY ENGINEER PLANT UP THE NARROW, AND DIFFICULT TO NAVIGATE SONG DINH RIVER TO WHERE THE TASK FORCE ENGINEERS WERE DRIVING AN ACCESS ROAD TO THE NEW BASE AT NUI DAT. THE LSM WAS THE ONLY PRACTICABLE WAY TO GET THE PLANT TO WHERE IT WAS NEEDED. THE US NAVY HAD PROMISED AN ESCORT AND HELICOPTER GUNSHIP SUPPORT, BUT BOTH WERE WITHDRAWN AT THE LAST MINUTE. THE AUSTRALIAN TASK FORCE COMMANDER ORDERED THE OPERATION TO PROCEED ANYWAY, EVEN THOUGH THE COUNTRYSIDE WAS LARGELY CONTROLLED BY THE VIET CONG. THIS WAS A REALLY HAZARDOUS OPERATION, BUT FORTUNATELY IN THE EVENT THERE WAS NO VC INTERFERENCE. THE TASK FORCE INTELLIGENCE CELL LATER SUGGESTED THE LOCAL VC WERE TAKEN TOO MUCH BY SURPRISE AND SHOCK TO MOUNT THE FIREPOWER NEEDED TO TACKLE A VESSEL OF SUCH SIZE AND APPEARANCE. THE SYDNEY DAILY TELEGRAPH WROTE UP THE INCIDENT UNDER THE HEADLINE – “BIGGEST BLUFF OF THE WAR”.

THE LIST OF RAE UNITS THAT DEPLOYED TO VIETNAM IS EXTENSIVE AND INCLUDED:

- **3 FIELD TROOP (1 FD SQN) 14 SEP 65 - 31 MAR 66**
- **1 FIELD SQUADRON 1 APR 66 - 18 NOV 71**
- **17 CONSTRUCTION SQUADRON 1 APR 66 - 12 FEB 72**
- **DET 55 ADVANCED ENGINEER STORES SQUADRON  
1 APR 66 - 16 FEB 68**
- **DET 55 ENGINEER WORKSHOP & PARK SQUADRON 17 FEB 68 - 12 MAR 72**
- **DET 198 WORKS SECTION 9 JAN 67 - 1 MAR 67**
- **198 WORKS SECTION 2 MAR 67 - 23 DEC 72**
- **21 ENGINEER SUPPORT TROOP 1 APR 66 - 9 DEC 71**
- **30 TERMINAL SQUADRON 9 JAN 67 - 12 MAR 72**
- **DET 11 MOVEMENT CONTROL GROUP 1 APR 66 - 12 MAR 72****N**





**DIVISION POSTAL UNIT 1 APR 66 - 8 NOV 67**

**COMMUNICATION ZONE POSTAL UNIT 19 OCT 66 - 23 FEB 72**

**SHIP SQUADRON WITH CARGO SHIP 'JOHN MONASH', LANDING SHIPS  
'LEVEL', 'BRUDENELL WHITE', 'VERNON STURDEE' AND 'CLIVE**

**SARV WITH DISTINCTION IN THE AUSTRALIAN ARMY  
TRAVEL IN CIVIL AFFAIRS UNIT.**

**DUPLICATED INVOLVED IN THE VIETNAM WAR, RAE  
MAINTAINED AUSTRALIA'S**

**THE VETERANS IN  
VIETNAM FOLLOWED.  
IT WAS EMPLOYED**

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# ANNIVERSARY DINNER AT CAMPBELLTOWN RSL.



The Sovereign's Banner being marched into position.



Jack Peel addressing the audience.



Gary Everett and George Cosis



Ian Johnston and fellow committeeman, Peter Allen. (not OUR Peter Allen).



Val and Brian Waites, with Bruce Reilly and Alan White.







His Excellency Major General Michael Jeffery AC CVO MC GCSI  
Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia

**A Message  
from**

**His Excellency Major General Michael Jeffery, AC, CVO, MC (Retd)  
Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia**

**for  
The 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Deployment of Major  
Royal Australian Engineer Units to Vietnam  
18 August 2006**

Congratulations and welcome to all those gathered here to mark the 40th year since the major units of the Royal Australian Engineer Corps deployed to South Vietnam. What a tremendous milestone for one of Australia's most impressive and diverse Corps.

The deployment to Vietnam of members of the Royal Australian Engineers (RAE) actually began more than 40 years ago with the deployment of the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam, 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Logistic Support Unit and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Field Troop Royal Australian Engineers, but your numbers were relatively small then when compared to deployments from 1966 onwards.

In March of 1966 the Australian commitment to Vietnam was expanded from a Battalion Group to an Independent Task Force of two battalions numbering over 4,500 men. In support of the Task Force was the 1st Logistic Support Force which included nearly 500 Sappers from the then Royal Australian Army Service Corps. During the height of the Vietnam conflict, this figure grew to over 850, all of whom served with great distinction in a range of corps and non corps units.

I well remember my own personal experience as an infantry company commander with my splendid engineer "splinter team" and the dangerous work it did in finding and 'de-lousing' anti-tank and anti-personnel mines. It saved so many lives. Later, as a brigade and divisional commander, it was my pleasure to command various squadrons of the RAE; tough, highly trained professionals, with no task too much or too hard to undertake.

During the last 40 years, the School of Military Engineering (SME) has provided with innovation and dedication, the necessary skill sets, qualifications and training for all RAE soldiers. SME has always been the true spiritual home of the 'Aussie Sapper' and I am sure this sense of identity with Casula will always remain in the memories of those who served there, notwithstanding the current plan to re-locate the School to Puckapunyal. In reality your celebrations over the last two days represent the last significant opportunity for the Sapper Vietnam Veterans to farewell their home at Steele Barracks and I trust you have all done so with great enthusiasm, tinged, I have no doubt, with some sadness.

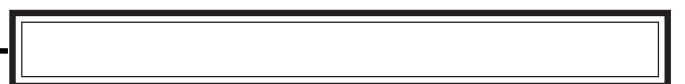
Marlena and I send our very best wishes to you all on this important occasion, and we hope the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations will long be remembered as both significant and enjoyable. Congratulations to the RAE Vietnam Veterans for your outstanding service to our country. I wish you and serving members of the Royal Australian Engineers every success in the future.

I remain very proud of you all.

(Michael Jeffery)

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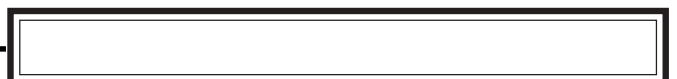




## VIETNAM VETERANS AND ASSOCIATED FORCES MEMORIAL DAY

The 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the battle of Long Tan was held at numerous venues across the nation and overseas, and once again we participated in the memorial service, not only at SME, but at our annual pilgrimage to Springwood NSW. On Sunday 20 August 2006 a large contingent of veterans, the families, friends and citizens attended this event. The Guest of Honour was again Lieutenant General Ken Gillespie, AO, DSC, CSM, Vice Chief of the Defence Force. He gave a very moving address on the battle but instead of only concentrating on the courage and tenacity of Delta Company 6 RAR, he gave a situation report on what the supporting arms and services were doing before, during and after the action on 18 August 1966. These included United States and New Zealand forces, RAAF, Artillery, Cavalry, Medical and other elements that made up the big picture. I don't think a speech of this nature this has been done like this before now and it was very well delivered and received.

Our Association was represented by our Patron, Colonel Ken Duncan, President Ocka Murray, Ken Boyle, Ian Johnston, Dave and Helen Gray, Hans Kumpel, Ken Hull (with his shiny red Ford Mustang), Ross McMurray, Brian Waites, Kerry Stuart, Jim Patterson, Bruce Reilly and Rina Ross and Cec Weekes, Secretary of the Army Water Transport Association (AIF). Peter Caradus, ex-1 Field Squadron, also marched with us. After the ceremony light refreshment was taken at various locations including the Royal Hotel where we were treated to the usual top shelf fare by the manager, and Association member, David Younan. A great day all round.





## PANDANUS PARK 2006

You will recall that in the December 2005 edition of the newsletter Dazz Graney wrote a very informative and detailed article about his visit to Pandanus Park which is situated at Kalpower on the banks of the Normanby River – about 80 km north of the town of Laura and in a bit from Cooktown. Dazz said that about six years ago some Vietnam vets, led by Les Hiddens, the “Bush Tucker Man” got together to see if they could find a place where veterans could get away from it all and offer each other mutual support. Anyway, Bob Gunn, David Perham and Tony Harris decided to make the trip themselves. This is Bob’s story:

“After many hours of research (done by David Perham) into our intended trip to Pandanus it was decided unanimously to ship my vehicle along with all our camping equipment by car carrier to Cairns. We would instead fly Brisbane - Cairns and ensure our arrival at the correct destination. This option also worked out to be the most cost effective. I tend to get the wanders when I travel and usually don’t get to the correct destination within the right time frame.

We arrived in Cairns, collected the vehicle from ‘Joe’s Lockup’ and on 14 August 2006 headed for Pandanus. First stop was Mt. Molloy where we had a great lunch at the pub and checked out the motorcycle riders who were doing the same (lunch). These guys were returning to Cairns after a ride to the tip of Cape York and back. (You would have to be extremely fit to accomplish this.) Our next stop was Lakelands where we chose to take a cabin (or should I say two cabins) for the night at great expense to us both (\$20.00 each). However, before we set out on this trek, it was decided that David would be chief in charge of cooking, and I would be the driver and navigator. The last being a bit of a worry as my adventurous spirit and map reading skills were at odds with the task at hand. We did, whilst at Lakelands, begin to consume our liquor supplies, thinking the total purchased would be sufficient for the entire trip. Next morning we headed off to Laura which would be our last bit of civilization for the next few days. There we refueled, had lunch and a few rum and cokes for me then on again north to Battlecamp Road and Old Laura before taking the left fork, past New Laura Station and on to Lakefield National Park.

Lakefield is a top camp site with toilets and showers (this time we didn’t stay), then onto the Kalpower Crossing which on this occasion had water flowing over it, although not deep enough to cause any problems. Actually, this time I found the road from Lakelands to the crossing in excellent condition, compared to the time Annie and I traversed it in 2002. Just a few kilometers further on we began to see signs of life and the odd camp and unit signs here and there. Then a familiar face appeared from a very smart looking off road van. It was Tony Harris. I would recognize that body anywhere. So that was where 32 Small Ship Squadron made their camp. As it turned out, we were the only Small Ship guys there, and with me navigating it was a wonder we were there at all!

We had a basic camp consisting of one two man tent, a toilet and a dwindling supply of liquid refreshment. The cans seemed to be evaporating very fast, even in the cool of the evening. Day two, and David was informed that one of our number was departing as he had forgotten to bring fuel for his generator which was intended to run his 240 volt system. David, in all his wisdom offered to lighten their load by purchasing any refreshments they may have had remaining, as they were headed back to civilization and had no need to carry it all the way out again. He was told - by she who must be obeyed - that she had packed said cans away and was not unpacking them for anyone, and that was that. But luck was just around the corner. A heavily laden Toyota flat top arrived not far from our camp and as we watched these two guys unpack (or should I say throw) their gear off the truck and set up a huge tarp, leaving two VERY large containers on the vehicle. Later these two gentlemen approached David and I and introduced themselves as George and Arthur. George then asked for help to lift these two VERY large containers off the truck as Arthur had a bad back. We then inquired what was in these VERY large containers and were told “beer, rum and more beer”. Well, how about that? Firstly, we all decided the lift had to be lightened, as we didn’t want to injure **our** backs, did we? We knew there was an RAP but we also knew that there was no Medic and we didn’t want to return south to our loved ones in anything but Al condition, as we may not be allowed out again. A great afternoon was had by all. Oh! By the way, we did eventually get the VERY large containers off the vehicle. At 4 pm the RAP opened and was attended by most. What an eye opener that was. There was a yank there who had hitch-hiked all the way from Mt Molloy to attend and tell his story. Many a great joke was told and it was a good opportunity to meet people and chat with other vets. How come they all looked so old?







We had great fun and after a wonderful camp dinner we headed for the nights entertainment - some guy singing, a bit of moving poetry and films followed by the long trek home in the dark with a wobbly boot. Actually, they were both wobbly, but we made it back to camp safely and were up bright (eh! maybe not quite bright) and early for the big day's 7am parade. We all assembled up around the flag pole and memorial for the service (not a lengthy one) but quite moving, with wreath laying etc. then afterwards a communal breakfast which was very appetizing, The remainder of the day was spent downing more cold cans as our supply seemed to have increased especially with our new, very best friends, George and Arthur. As we were leaving the following day we couldn't

see George and Arthur straining to get those VERY large containers back on their vehicle all by themselves so we gave them a hand.



**The Three Amigos - Bob Gunn, Dave Perham and Tony Harris at the Memorial at Pandanus Park.**

Our return trip out was incident free. We got a great photo of a large 'salty' basking on the edge of Catfish Waterhole. David wouldn't venture out of the vehicle to take a photo, and I have no idea why! We eventually got back to the Laura pub for a few icy cold rum and cokes in the new hotel. The old pub burnt down just after Annie and I were there in 2002 and the replacement just doesn't have the same feel about it. I suppose this happens all the time, but it's sad. The next stop was Mt. Carbine. Another top pub with ice cold rum and coke, excellent food and a night spent in dormitory style accommodation at the caravan park. It was better than setting up the tent for one night. Then it was back into Cairns where we had the chance to catch up with John Purcell at the RSL for a couple of cold ones.

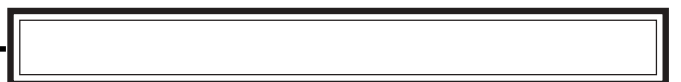
Back home now, in the big smoke, where one has to watch ones consumption! This was an experience I will never forget and I highly recommend it to all, including wives, children and grandchildren. It's definitely TOTAL BUSH CAMPING, but seeing and mixing with other veterans is just so special and should not be missed".

Gunner.

Thanks Gunner for that great story. Good to hear that you maintained a healthy thirst and those refreshments were always miraculously "not far away". We are also pleased that you had a safe and virtually trouble free and exciting journey. Well done!

Dave, (probably saying to Tony), "Yeah, I know Gunner just shaved in this water but it should be OK to boil the spuds in".







## AT 2700 JOE MANN – AN UPDATE ON AN ARMY 56' TUG

**T**he tug, AT 2700 JOE MANN and her sister ship AS 2701 THE LUKE, entered service in 1963 – JOE MANN with 35 Water Transport Squadron at Woolwich and THE LUKE with 34 Water Transport Squadron at Bulimba. Both were sold in the early 1990s. Up until now their fate was pretty well unknown until Garry McIvor spotted the JOE MANN in Sydney. He explained his sighting as follows:

“I don’t know if the Association is aware, but I was boating on the Georges River at the weekend and came across the Joe Mann looking as though she was being looked after pretty well. As we were pulling away, a chap came down to the wharf and told us that she belonged to a Richard Paget. I don’t know if anyone knows him – he’s apparently ex-Navy. Just thought I’d mention it in case anyone was interested. She’s moored at the Lugarno Seafood Restaurant at Lugarno and the bloke said that Richard Paget is on board most week days.”

Many thanks for that piece of info Garry. I’m sure quite a few members served on her and would be pleased to know that she’s still in good shape. Does anyone have any news of what happened to THE LUKE?



Wishing everyone a  
**MERRY CHRISTMAS**  
and a safe and prosperous  
**NEW YEAR.**



# Committee Members

This committee of the Association meets on the third Tuesday of each month.

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## Property for Sale

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 Assc. Aniversary Plaque.....\$25.00  
 Assc. Patches..... \$8.00

LSM Badge.....\$12.00  
 Collar Badges.....\$6.00  
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