

NOTICE TO MARINERS

Newsletter 32 Small Ship Squadron Association Incorporating RAE Tn

Patron: Colonel K.L. Duncan (Rtd)

President's Message

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The passing of Major Walter of ANZAC Day took the shine Hill R.S.L. Sub-Branch

In this edition of NTM the articles on the life of Wally ANZAC Memorial Chapel of



(Wally) Blumenfeld in the afternoon off the reunion luncheon at Hunters Memorial Hall.

Editor has published a number of and his memorial service at the St Paul RMC Duntroon.

I have visited the RMC occasions but never entered afternoon 5 May I drove to RMC to familiarise myself with parking at the Chapel. What I discovered was the Chapel was two Chapels within one – one for Catholics and also one for Anglican and other Protestant denominations.

campus at Duntroon on many the Chapel before. On Thursday

The Anglican/Protestant Chapel seats 550 and includes a side Chapel. The Catholic Chapel seats 350. Detailed plans were prepared by the architects in 1964 and construction began in 1965. RAE undertook the works and the building was completed in 1966. The ANZAC Memorial Chapel is the first Australian Army Chapel to contain two naves for separate worship and is considered the focus of the Christian ministry to the Australian Defence Force.

Across the road is the Changi Chapel – National Prisoner of War Memorial. In 1988 it was agreed by the Australian Government that the Changi Chapel be reassembled after 40 years in storage at the Australian War Memorial.

The restoration work was carried out by the Corps and financed by public subscription. The Chapel was dedicated on 15 August 1988 at the exact time of Changi liberation.

Next time you are in Canberra or at the Australian War Memorial make the effort to visit RMC.

Ocka

JAMAIS ETRE REMORQUE



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SYDNEY MARCH AND HUNTERS HILL REUNION LUNCH

Once again we had good weather for the march and lunch. Gary Smyth and Dave Clarke led the procession assisted by Sappers of 8 Engineer Regiment who provided the Banner Party and ensured that most of us were in step. This year the contingent marched down Elizabeth Street and not George Street and Martin Place because George Street being closed for the construction of the light rail project. There was a bit of confusion at the start but it settled down and the march was pretty good. Those who marched included: Gary Smyth, Ray Mazurek, Jim Brown, Graham Stenner, Jack Peel, Lance Northey, Bob Tait, Peter Neville, John Gerber, Norm Mason, Arnold van Leeuwen, Bruce Reilly, Adrian McMillan, Geoff Summergreene, Bob Freeman, Dave Clarke, Michael Blumenfeld, John McGregor, Angus McKinnon, Garry McIvor, George Lambert and Bruce Davenport.

The reunion lunch was attended by over 50 people. This year being the 50th anniversary of the first deployment to Vietnam by *AS3051 John Monash* and *AV1355 Vernon Sturdee*. *AV1356 Clive Steele* replaced the *Sturdee* in June 1966. There were also detachments from 30 Terminal Squadron and 11 Movement Control Group, who both played important and vital functions in the theatre until Australian Forces were withdrawn.

The lunch was quite good. Everyone who attended enjoyed the food and drink and especially the company. Tall tales and true were canvassed around and all of them were believable. Special thanks go to Anthony Murray who attended the bar and Kaye Shannon who organised and supervised the caterers. Speeches were made from Warren Barsley who skippered the *Monash* to Vietnam in 1966 and Ken Duncan recited the address from John Bonnett who skippered the *Sturdee*. Unfortunately, John could not make it to the lunch. Their speeches were very well received and are published later on in the newsletter.

Unfortunately, during lunch it was learned that Wally Blumenfeld slipped and fell, hitting his head, before the Sydney march he was to attend, and passed away that day. This brought a sad pause to the afternoon. His funeral was conducted a few days later and a memorial service was held at the chapel of the Royal Military College, Duntroon on 6 May 2016. Details of this are shown further in the newsletter.

The raffle was a great success and the winners are:

1st Prize - 6" Ships Clock won by Don Kennedy, ticket number 3684

2nd prize - 5" Ships Barometer won by George Lambert, ticket number 2151

3rd prize - 5" Ships Clock won by Ray Winter, ticket number 1556

Congratulations to the winners and many thanks to everyone who purchased tickets. Your support is very much appreciated.



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ATTENDANCE AT THE ANZAC DAY LUNCH AT HUNTERS HILL

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Warren Barsley, Duffy ACT | Scott Barsley, Duffy ACT |
| James Brown, Runaway Bay QLD | Gary Carne, Mt Druitt NSW |
| Bob Clarke, Glenorie NSW | Sue Low, Glenorie NSW |
| Dave Clarke, Ashfield NSW | Bruce Davenport, Mosman NSW |
| Les Dennis, Toongabbie NSW | Bob Freeman, Dubbo NSW |
| Brian Goodes, Moss Vale NSW | John Gerber, Quakers Hill |
| Lyn Gerber, Quakers Hill NSW | Grant Gerber, Quakers Hill NSW |
| Jenny Gerber, Quakers Hill NSW | Zach Gerber, Quakers Hill NSW |
| Rhiannon Gerber, Quakers Hill NSW | Tianne Gerber, Quakers Hill NSW |
| Brian Hart, Bunyah NSW | Warren Hoult, Somerville VIC |
| Carol Buren, Somerville VIC | Ian Johnston, Colyton NSW |
| John McGregor, North Avoca NSW | Norm Mason, Woronora NSW |
| Joan Mason, Woronora NSW | Graham Murray, castle Hill NSW |
| Anthony Murray, Silverdale NSW | Bruce McLean, Great Western VIC |
| Ray Mazurek, Forster NSW | Les McFadzen, Alexandra Hills QLD |
| Amy McFadzen, Alexandra Hills QLD | Ross McMurray, West Pymble NSW |
| Jenny McMurray, West Pymble NSW | John McMurray, Holsworthy NSW |
| Allan Reading, Engadine NSW | Margaret Davidson, Engadine NSW |
| Nancy Long, Engadine NSW | Frankie Plummer, Texas USA |
| Geoff Summergreene, Mosman NSW | Jackie Hardie, Mosman NSW |
| Kaye Shannon, Carlingford NSW | Garry Smyth, Baulkham Hills, NSW |
| Dick van Leeuwen, Glenorchy TAS | Brian Waites, Yarramundi NSW |
| Val Waites, Yarramundi NSW | Charles Watson, Dungog NSW |
| Margaret Watson, Dungog NSW | Ralph Pridmore, Turramurra NSW |
| Peter Tierney, Saratoga NSW | Fred Seidenkamp, St Clair NSW |
| Ken Duncan, Balgowlah NSW | Bill Holbrook, Newtown NSW |
| Bruce Reilly, Camden Park NSW | Rina Ross, Camden Park NSW |



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ANZAC EVE CEREMONY AT HUNTERS HILL TOWN HALL

Each year on the Friday evening before ANZAC Day a memorial service is conducted by Hunters Hill Council and Hunters Hill RSL Sub-Branch. This year was the 93rd service and it started at the RSL Hall where a newly constructed memorial wall was dedicated. After this ceremony ex-servicemen and women marched to the Town Hall for the service.

The Guest Speaker was Colonel Ken Duncan, our Patron, who spoke about the history of Morts Dock at Woolwich, the raising of water transport units during World War II and the history and operation of 32 Small Ship Squadron and its links to Woolwich and Hunters Hill. His speech was very educational and entertaining. He was assisted by having Ian Johnston's model of *AV1354 Brudenell White* nearby so he could describe its function and give the audience a practical demonstration of its capabilities. His speech is on the next five pages.

Colonel K.L. Duncan gave this speech at the Hunters Hill Town Hall on 22 April 2016.

Mr Mayor, distinguished visitors, men of 32 Small Ship Sqn, Ladies and Gentlemen

The Anzac address traditionally evolves around such qualities as Service, Loyalty, Comradeship and of course Bravery – whether at home or on active service. Tonight, I plan to take a different approach and talk historically about a unique feature of Hunters Hill, The Dock and a specialist group of soldiers who came to reside and work in this community and to go to war from here.

In taking this approach, I want to bring the service and activities of a group of your soldiers to the notice of a generation that is probably not aware of this recent history. In particular, those attributes I mentioned, Service, Loyalty, Comradeship and Bravery are well evidenced by the soldiers from Woolwich of whom I shall speak. Nevertheless, to set the scene, I need to go way back in history.

Throughout the 1800's the Mort's Dock and Engineering Company operated a very successful ship repair and dry dock facility at Balmain but, in order to expand, they purchased a site here in Hunters Hill. Commencing in 1898 a local company excavated hundreds of tons of sandstone to construct a new dry dock.

When it opened in December 1901 Woolwich Dock was the largest dry dock in Australia. Because of the huge size of the dock pumping equipment had to be brought



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out from England, so great was the amount of water to be pumped from the dock.

Over the years, the dock was extended from the original 188 metres to the present 260 metres, particularly, as I understand it to accommodate the bowsprit of the larger sailing vessels. Hence, the cave like appearance of the western end of the dock proper today.

The busiest times for the dock were of course during the two world wars when passenger ships were converted to armed troop ships and also repairs were carried out to battle damaged vessels. In 1917, the company employed some 1500 men here in Hunters Hill and was an icon in the ship repair business. So great was the local respect for the company that the entrance road, Franki Street was named after the Managing Director of the company at the time Mr James Franki.

In the 1940's during the Second World War the dock was again fully committed to the war effort, however, with the end of the war in 1945 and with the rapid decline of the coastal shipping trade, the Woolwich dock quite suddenly ceased operations 1958.

However, what has a dry dock got to do with the soldiers and why was our Army involved with Woolwich Dock?

With some more history, let me take you back to 1941 The Second World War was at its height and Australian troops were fighting in the Middle East. In Tobruk, the Australian Garrison was surrounded and all resupply by land was cut off. The wharves and piers of the Tobruk harbour had been destroyed by the enemy, who controlled the skies with their fighter and bomber aircraft. Naval vessels could enter the harbour at night, laden with supplies and ammunition for the garrison, but could not berth to discharge their cargo.

Soldiers from the Corps of Engineers volunteered to try to activate some captured Italian tugs and lighters in the port, so that the ships could be unloaded in mid harbour and depart before sunrise, when the enemy fighters and bombers would return. The soldiers were successful and this method of cargo handling allowed the garrison to survive and later break out against the axis forces.

Now, let me bring you closer to home, to the north of Australia, where in 1941



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enemy forces had captured Malaya, Singapore and most of the now Indonesian islands. They were well established in Papua New Guinea and other islands to our north. Ports and roads were virtually non-existent throughout this whole area and the Army was facing great difficulty in supplying and maintaining their forces in contact with the enemy.

Army Headquarters asked Navy to urgently provide and operate small, shallow draught vessels for the logistic resupply of the troops on the ground and also to provide casualty evacuation facilities. Remember, this is all before the days of the helicopter. Anyhow, Navy responded that it would take them at least two years to commence such a capability.

The Engineer in Chief, at the time, Major General Clive Steele remembered the soldiers working the tugs and lighters in Tobruk and accepted the responsibility to provide small ships, landing craft and the like, using soldiers of the Royal Australian Engineers. Hence, a Water Transport organization was born into the Australian Army and grew to some 15,000 men and 1,000 watercraft by the time the war ended in 1945.

These Army small craft operated around Australia, around the coasts and rivers of Papua New Guinea and on into Borneo. Later they were deployed with the occupation forces in Japan and with the United Nations forces in Korea.

At this time, the early 1950's a new threat was developing in SE Asia, communism!

Because of this threat, National Service was introduced and Australia purchased Centurion tanks from Britain, however once they had been delivered to Puckapunyal in central Victoria, due to their size and weight, our Nation lacked the means to move them north to counter the perceived threat.

Again, the Corps of Engineers was challenged to find a solution to the problem, which resulted in the purchase of four Landing Ships Medium or LSM's from the US Navy. These vessels were ocean going landing ships, sort of like a mini LST, with which some of you will be familiar.

These ships had seen service in the Second World War and were in a state of preservation, or mothballs, in Japan, having been out of commission for some 12 to 14 years. Australian Army crews were flown to Japan to re-activate the vessels and steam them back to Sydney.



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The LSMs were 62 metres in length, with a beam of 10.5 metres and a normal carrying capacity of 300 to 400 tons. They carried a working crew of 38 soldiers. Primarily designed to carry tanks, they could also transport heavy bulldozers, cranes, combat troops and of course general cargo such as trucks and ammunition. They had a unique beaching capability, needing just one metre of water forward and two metres aft, which generally meant an almost dry landing for their cargo.

This outstanding scale model of an LSM was constructed by a crew member, WO Ian Johnston BEM, who is with us tonight and indicates some aspects of this unusual ships design.

Due to these ships being larger than any previously operated by our soldiers there were problems in finding a home for them. In 1963 the Army purchased the then semi derelict and overgrown Mort's Dock property down the road here at Woolwich Dock. Thus began a long and generally very happy relationship between the soldiers of the Army's Landing Ships and the people of Hunters Hill.

These ships and their soldier crews were a major asset to developmental projects around Australia and New Guinea. Operating from Woolwich, they moved everything from oil drilling rigs to stud cattle around our north and in the New Guinea area native troops, trucks and road building plant into inaccessible areas.

And yes, even the Centurion tanks were moved from Puckapunyal in Victoria to North Queensland for major exercises.

Another big role was to support our Army surveyors in remote areas. As an example of this work, in 1964 surveyors were working along the border between New Guinea and Indonesia. An LSM was tasked to support them and journeyed up the Sepik River on the north side of New Guinea. It steamed some 600km or 370 miles inland from the ocean to the junction of the Sepik and May Rivers

The ship spent 26 days, or almost one month in the river, so I hope you can imagine the difficulties with maintenance, fresh water, food and other necessities in such a remote situation.

Also in 1964 two LSM's sailed from Woolwich laden with bulldozers and other Engineer plant and equipment for Borneo in support of our troops during the Confrontation operations against Indonesia.

In 1966 the Army Small Ships were committed to warlike operations again



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with heavy lifts to South Vietnam. This year, 2016, is the fiftieth anniversary of this deployment for the Squadron as, on 11 April 1966, the LSM “Vernon Sturdee” and the Army cargo ship “John Monash” sailed from Woolwich fully laden with bulldozers, cranes, ammunition and other general cargo. All four of our LSM’s and the “John Monash” served in South Vietnamese waters, operating between Woolwich Dock and Vung Tau, Vietnam and at least one vessel always remained on station from 1966 to 1971. Our ships operated around the Vietnamese coast and along the major rivers in support of Australian, Vietnamese and US Forces. Two vessels sustained damage from enemy fire and rockets while operating on the Mekong.

After completing our withdrawal from Vietnam, the ships really had begun to show their age. Built in the 1940’s and still operating in the 1970’s they had served us well. Ships that suffered the stresses of running up onto beaches to load and discharge cargo as well as the stresses encountered in heavy seas with vessels of such a shallow draft had taken their toll and in the early 70’s they were all disposed of.

This really ended a close relationship between the Army Mariners and Hunters Hill but the qualities of the original ANZAC’s, Service, Comradeship, Loyalty and Bravery are remembered by all who served with or had close contact with this unusual group of soldiers.

In my research for this address, I came across a statement, made to the British Parliament in 1915 by Field Marshall Lord Kitchener, the British Secretary of State for War. He made the statement:

“Navy men are all more or less the same. They go through almost the same experiences during their service and come from commanding a ship, to commanding a fleet to the Admiralty Board. In the Army, you rarely get two soldiers who think alike on even the most fundamental Military questions, as, during their service, they have all had totally different experiences in the totally different services that exist.”

His statement exemplifies the work and men of the Army small ship organization of which I have spoken tonight.

In conclusion, I would like to remind you all that today we still have members of the Australian Forces quietly going in harm’s way in many parts of the world. They are receiving little publicity or praise for the work that they are doing, but on this Anzac evening, we should just pause to think of our men and women serving



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overseas, far from home, their families and their loved ones.

Our military forces are currently operating in Afghanistan, in the Solomon Islands, in Iraq and in Southern Sudan, as well as in peace monitoring roles as a part of Australia's commitment to the United Nations in the Sinai Desert, Israel and Jordan.

Thank you for the opportunity of speaking with you this evening, in particular of an Army unit that resided here in Hunters Hill and served our Nation with great distinction in time of conflict. On this ANZAC Eve, please remember with pride the service of our sailors, soldiers and airmen in the protection of our Nation, both in past conflicts and in today's troubled world.

SYDNEY ANZAC DAY PICTURES



Brian Goodes, Ken Duncan and Jim Brown



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Warren Hoult and Carol Buren



Dave Clarke and Ocka Murray



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Geoff Summergreene and Allan Reading



Margaret Watson, Charles Watson and Ocka Murray



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Angus McKinnon and Jack Peel.



Ray Mazurek, Garry Smyth, Bruce Reilly and Jack Peel (again).



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Rina Ross and Norm Mason

This speech was given on ANZAC day at the Hunters Hill RSL hall by Colonel Ken Duncan in John Bonnett's absence. John commanded the *Vernon Sturdee*. Warren Barsley's account of the voyage of the *John Monash* follows this one.

ANZAC Day 2016

To begin with, my apologies for not being with you today, but my thoughts certainly are.

Much to my surprise, old age is now my greatest problem and one for which the only cure is quite positive, but not willingly sought. But 50 years ago we were all young, fit and immortal. I had been in Australia less than 12 months and my first job, as skipper of the *Harry Chauvel*, was to represent the Australian Army at the Hobart regatta and to exercise with the Army Reserve Tasmanian Regiment on Maria island off the west coast of Tassie.

'This is not a bad job', I was thinking as I sailed back through the heads in march. 'Haggis wants to see you', I was told as soon as we'd made fast. I remember his words quite clearly because there weren't many. 'You're going to Vietnam', he said.

I must confess that the thought had crossed my mind that Vietnam was a distinct



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possibility but it was sooner than expected. I also changed LSMs and became skipper of the Vernon Sturdee. I can still see the Bofors being craned onto the fo'c'stle. And then there were a couple of machine gun mounts fitted on each quarter; we all made our wills, were issued with ID tags and lined up to have injections in each arm, all at the same time.

Suddenly it was very serious and the Hobart regatta quickly became a distant and largely irrelevant memory. We sailed on 11 April 1966 with families on the jetty and many young kids who had no idea what was going on but all of whom are now over 50 (how time flies). There was engineer plant on the cargo deck, some construction personnel as passengers in the aft accommodation and Haggis in the wardroom. I know that Warren would dearly have liked to have had Haggis on John Monash but for some reason Haggis insisted on travelling with me. He was a good passenger; never interfered, could be very social, but never missed a trick.

I was given three clear tasks. First, to accompany (I was going to say 'escort', but as John Monash was a far more seaworthy craft than any LSM I didn't think it was the right word) John Monash to Vietnam. Second, to deliver road building equipment of 17

Construction Squadron, plus some of its personnel to Vietnam, and third, to assist 1 RAR then at Bien Hoa, to move to Phuc Tuy province, by taking its heavier equipment from Saigon down the river to Vung Tau.

The voyage to Vietnam was fairly uneventful. The weather was kind and we were able to practice with our new armaments. Targets are not easy to find in the open sea and the odd empty paint can lobbed over the bow for the .50 cal's to have a crack at, caused some frustration. As I recall there was talk by the Bofors crew about aiming in the general direction of 'John Monash', but we soon put a stop to that!

Before leaving Sydney we had received orders that all brass remaining from live firing was to be retained and brought back to Sydney. We thought it was a daft order and ignored it. One of the highlights of the voyage for me was the trip through the Barrier Reef. To the newly arrived pom who had never been there before, it was, and remains, for me, a magic place. From there it was off to Manus island for refuelling and then to Subic bay before sailing across to Vung Tau.

King Neptune appeared, of course, on the way to Subic, and you wouldn't believe how many of the crew had never crossed the line. King Neptune was quite exhausted and had to be significantly refreshed before he was able to return to the ocean.

There was a small incident in Subic Bay when some of the local lads stole some bits



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and pieces off John Monash. Haggis appointed me as Investigating Officer, a term I had not heard of before, and a position whose duties I was completely unaware of. There was some frantic reading to get up to speed on what was expected of an investigating officer but Haggis was a great help and told me what my conclusions and recommendations should be!

And so off to Vung Tau where, on arrival, no-one seemed to be expecting us. Once our arrival had been acknowledged, however, and the task to assist move the Battalion identified, for the most part it became routine. We were based in Saigon and usually berthed on a hard standing. We loaded overnight and were off the hard at daybreak, arriving at Vung Tau about noon then getting back to Saigon before dark. There was a fair bit of enemy activity along the river at that time, hence we aimed only to operate during daylight hours. The Viet Cong successfully sank a cargo ship offloading downstream at Nha Be one night. Although the job of our duty picquets in Saigon was primarily to stop rats coming up the ramp.

Haggis stayed in theatre long enough to make sure that we were accepted and looked after and he had returned to Australia before we were given a task which gained quite a bit of publicity but which has only ever been half told. I'd like to tell the rest of it now. The task was to take engineer plant up the Song Dinh river in order to by-pass a bridge deemed incapable of taking the weight of the equipment needed for the construction of the task force base at Nui Dat. I was told that the river ran through VC held territory, but not to worry because there would be an escort from the US Navy plus close chopper support. I was offered the opportunity to do a surface and air reconnaissance. I accepted. The surface reconnaissance was with the US Navy. In a small patrol boat we went up the Song Dinh river like a bat out of hell and in a sheet of spray, weaving in and out of fish traps. I noticed the fish traps but couldn't see anything else because of the spray. So I asked the coxswain to slow down. 'Sir', he said, 'We ain't allowed to go no slower because we attract enemy fire'.

I thought carefully about the maximum speed of an LSM compared to the boat I was in but reassured myself that all would be well because we would most likely be surrounded by patrol boats when we made the trip. The aerial reconnaissance was made in an Australian army Sioux chopper. As you may recall a Sioux was rather like an oil rig with a bubble on the end. We flew gently up the river at what seemed to be an inordinately high altitude. It was obvious that fish traps and shoals could be a bit of a worry and I asked the pilot if he could go lower so that I could have a closer look. 'Sir', he said, 'We're not allowed to fly any lower because we attract enemy fire'.

I thought carefully about the zero height an LSM could fly but reassured myself that there would be close chopper support when we made the trip. Three or four days



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before the trip I received a message that the US Navy would not be escorting us up the Song Dinh because they considered it too hazardous. 'Never mind, I thought', 'we'll still have close chopper support which is probably enough.'

The following day I received a message to say that the close chopper support had been downgraded to 'on call'. I then undertook, without really knowing it, my first military appreciation. I reasoned that if a naval patrol boat capable of travelling at over 20 knots thought it too dangerous to escort us, and choppers were not prepared to at least be in sight of us, and if the river banks were infested with VC, then the latter stood a good chance of doing us considerable harm.

I sent a message to army movements to say I wouldn't go. I was called ashore to a phone call that afternoon, picked up the phone and said, 'Captain Bonnett speaking'. 'Mackay', said the voice at the other end. Now you must remember that I hadn't been in Australia and the Australian Army for very long. The only people I really knew were those in the squadron. I had absolutely no idea who 'Mackay' was although based on past experience someone who spoke like that obviously expected the listener to know who he was. 'Yes Sir', I said, which was very fortunate as it was the force commander, Major General Mackay. 'I believe you have some reservations about the Song Dinh task', he said. I outlined my concerns about the withdrawal of close support and the possibility of losing the LSM with significant casualties. He said that the task had to go ahead because construction of the task force base depended on it. 'Of course, sir', I said.

There was very little preparation for the trip after that, other than to anchor off Vung Tau the night before, something we had carefully avoided doing previously. Floodlights were slung over the side and picquet issued with hand grenades and given orders to lob one over the side (but not too close!) if they saw bubbles approaching, or saw seaweed moving against the current. We loaded the engineering equipment at daybreak the following morning. I have no idea what it was, and it only half filled the cargo deck.

Just before we sailed, sappers from the Field Squadron poured on board armed with just about every weapon one could think of. I have no idea who told them what was going on, but I have been forever grateful. There were M60s, grenade launchers, SLRs of course and sundry other sinister looking items which I didn't recognise. I think they also brought sandbags, but they certainly spread themselves around the upper deck. The gun crews closed up and every member of the crew was armed and prepared for an interesting morning. And off we went.

I was convinced that it was probably going to be my last day on earth. But what happened next is now reasonably well known. We went upstream on the rising tide, and navigating fish traps required a bit of concentration. There was an enormous



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amount of activity on each bank, both on the way up and on the way back. We discharged quickly and returned as fast as we could. Not a shot was fired, not a life lost, and the task force base was built. We were told that the VC had not seen a boat the size of an LSM up the Song Dinh before and were unsure of its capabilities. We were lucky.

After we'd finished the Battalion move we were ordered home via Singapore to collect a cargo of damaged Australian army trucks. We sent appropriate signals to the appropriate authorities and sailed from the mouth of the Saigon river at night before turning right for Singapore. No sooner had we done so than a stream of tracer crossed our bow. We stopped, as one does. The US Coast Guard had not received our signals and boarded us with significant aggression before withdrawing with abject apologies.

We picked up the trucks and were just entering the barrier reef when we received orders to turn back to Rabaul to escort an LSM with generator problems back to Sydney. We sailed through the heads on 27 July, just in time to take part in Exercise Barra Winga.

As far as I'm aware Vernon Sturdee was the only LSM to sail to Vietnam, operate in theatre and return to Sydney with the same crew. And it was a great crew many of whom are no longer with us, but my memory of each and every one of them will always be with me. Their faces are clear even if their names are now more difficult to remember. I most certainly will never, ever, forget.

For those of us remaining the journey ahead is uncertain and unpredictable, but, however it turns out, to each and every one of you, bon voyage.

John Bonnett

25 April 2016

AV1355 VERNON STURDEE - FIRST SVN TRIP - 11 APRIL TO 27 JUL 1966

| Appointment | Regtl No. | Rank | Name | Initials | Comment |
|----------------|-----------|------|---------|----------|----------|
| Master | 38594 | CAPT | Bonnett | J.T.G | |
| Squadron OC | 57537 | MAJ | Wilson | J.S | Deceased |
| Squadron SM | 4211 | WO1 | Neville | M.C | Deceased |
| First Mate | 14601 | LT | Alcock | K.M | |
| Chief Engineer | 21440 | LT | Thorn | F.W | Deceased |
| WO1 WK Deck | 1481 | WO1 | Maggs | K | Deceased |
| WO2 WK Deck | 2411233 | SGT | Hider | R.H.W | Deceased |
| WO2 WK E/Room | 215269 | WO2 | Burrows | T.O | Deceased |
| SSGT SQMS | 3900359 | SGT | Sansom | K.E | |
| SGT WK E/Room | 18540 | WO2 | Reimers | J | RAEME |



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|-----------------|---------|-----|-------------|-------|-----------------------------------|
| SGT WK E/Room | 213403 | SGT | Walker | G.A | Deceased |
| SGT Bosun | 6410099 | SGT | Gadd | V.J | |
| SGT Sigs | 27051 | SGT | Flint | C.R | |
| SGT Medic | 54181 | SGT | Harbinson | L.P | |
| SGT Storeman | 310968 | CPL | Gallagher | W.J | Deceased |
| CPL Radar mech | 243227 | CFN | Boyle | KJ | |
| CPL Cook | 36878 | PTE | McLean | S.G | |
| CPL Sigs | 15798 | CPL | Moll | W.D | Deceased |
| CPL Electrician | 214309 | CPL | Summerhayes | W.E | |
| CPL Clerk Admin | | | | | |
| CPL Seaman | 61473 | Cpl | Blazely | C.E | |
| CPL Seaman | 37149 | CPL | Pefferini | R.C | |
| CPL Seaman | 21493 | CPL | Boettcher | N | |
| CPL Seaman | 55015 | SPR | Parker | R.K | |
| CPL Fitter | 243191 | SPR | Atkinson | P.E | |
| Cpl Fitter | 1410889 | SPR | Stapleton | R.J | |
| Cpl Fitter | 1410913 | SPR | Billingsley | J.W | |
| SPR Seaman | 4410706 | SPR | Miller | D.M.B | |
| SPR Seaman | 216106 | SPR | Stennar | C.A | |
| SPR Seaman | 216187 | SPR | Crane | S.R | |
| SPR Seaman | 2782089 | SPR | Ross | M.E | |
| SPR Seaman | 6708269 | SPR | Schwan | G.F | |
| SPR Seaman | 3411483 | SPR | Daphne | B.J | |
| SPR Seaman | 18708 | SPR | McIntosh | D.A | |
| SPR Seaman | 216018 | SPR | Keenan | H.F | |
| SPR Fitter | 3786889 | SPR | Bott | W.E | |
| SPR Fitter | 2781627 | SPR | Jackson | K.H | |
| SPR Fitter | 48616 | SPR | Howells | D.G | |
| PTE Cook | 24803 | PTE | Donaghey | L.L | |
| PTE Sigs | | | | | |
| Gun Crew | 31275 | WO2 | Johnstone | L.J | RAA |
| | 6708308 | SPR | Hope | G.G | |
| | 6708266 | SPR | Richardson | D.R | |
| | 5713994 | SPR | Wyness | D.W | |
| | 4717665 | SPR | Ford | K.P | |
| | 38696 | SPR | Bowman | F.E | |
| | 243284 | SPR | Inglis | G.E | |
| | 243227 | CFN | BoyLe | K.J | |
| | 2412321 | SPR | Howe | P | V/S 11-30 Apr J/M 1 May-30 Jun |
| | 1731100 | SPR | Creighton | I.J | V/S 11-30 Apr J/M 1 May-30 Jun |
| | 4717787 | SPR | Sellentin | G | J/M 11-30 Apr |



Notice to Mariners July 2016

**32 SMALL SHIP SQUADRON ASSOCIATION
ANZAC DAY ADDRESS 2016
FIRST TRIP TO SVN ON AS3051 JOHN MONASH**

INTRODUCTION

As the first commitment of vessels from 32 Small Ship Squadron to the Vietnam Conflict was in 1966, this year marks the 50th anniversary of that commitment, and I, as the Officer Commanding JOHN MONASH on that voyage have been asked to give a talk on the events of that trip.

Before I begin I would like to tell you of my association with Morts Woolwich Dock, which was eventually purchased by the Army and became Woolwich Barracks in 1964, the home base of 32 Small Ship Squadron and 35 Water Transport Squadron. When I chose a maritime career, at the age of 16, little did I know that I would join my first ship, the BHP iron ore carrier IRON WYNDHAM, on 3rd August 1954, which was in dry dock at Morts Woolwich Dock. Thus I began my first sea voyage, from Morts Woolwich Dock, I believe that I am the only member of 32 Small Ship Squadron who had ever seen the dock dry and walked the dock floor.

MONASH TRIP TO SVN

I joined 32 SSS in August 1965 and was given command of the MONASH in January 1966. After returning from a CMF training voyage with 6 Troop 32 Small Ship Squadron, to Port Stephens, to Coffs Harbour, Lord Howe Island and back in February 1966, I was warned out that JOHN MONASH and VERNON STURDEE were shortly to undertake a trip to SVN.

CARGO LOAD

We loaded engineering and other camp equipment and stores belonging to 17th Construction Squadron RAE (17 Const Sqn) as the Australian Force had been given land at Vung Tau to establish a Logistic Support Base (1ALSG) and getting the construction equipment to that location was a priority. STURDEE carried the heavy engineering plant and the MONASH carried camp and other equipment. We also had equipment for 6th Battalion Royal Australian Regiment (6 RAR) as they were relieving 1 RAR Bn Gp, which had been in country serving with the US Army for 12 months. 6 RAR were moving into Vung Tau pending the move into the designated Task Force site at Nui Dat.



Notice to Mariners July 2016

Prior to departing Sydney, MAJ Wilson ('Haggis' to all, providing that he was not within earshot), informed me that as more than half his unit was on this trip, he would take the trip as well. Fortunately for me he sailed on the STURDEE. I was not going to go into details as to why 'Haggis' made that decision but, 'Ocka' Murray asked me to include those details in my talk, also what happened in my cabin in Subic Bay, as he had already heard one story. So:

'Haggis' informed me that he would be sailing to Vietnam on the MONASH and that he was to have my cabin and that I could find myself another cabin. I objected to that arrangement and told him so as there was communications from the bridge to my cabin, should I be required. His decision stood.

I then asked if he was to command the ship or was I still the ship's Commanding Officer? He replied that I was still the ship's Commanding Officer. I then reminded him that according to the Law of the Sea, all aboard a ship had to obey the ship's Captain and I asked him if this still applied in this case, to which he replied - Yes.

I then informed him that he could have my cabin, and he thanked me. However, I said that by the time that we had cleared Sydney Heads and that I came off the bridge, I wanted him out of my cabin and in the cabin which I would assign to him.

He then stormed off and told John Bonnett that he would be travelling to Vietnam on the STURDEE. One 'X' against my name.

**AS3051 JOHN MONASH
FIRST VIETNAM VOYAGE ITINERARY**

| DATE | DEPARTED | DATE | ARRIVED |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 11 APR 66 | SYDNEY | 21 APR 66 | MANUS ISL |
| 22 APR 66 | MANUS | 29 APR 66 | SUBIC BAY |
| 1 MAY 66 | SUBIC BAY | 5 MAY 66 | VUNG TAU |
| 10 MAY 66 | VUNG TAU | 10 MAY 66 | SAIGON |
| 13 MAY 66 | SAIGON | 13 MAY 66 | VUNG TAU |
| 14 MAY 66 | VUNG TAU | 17 MAY 66 | SUBIC BAY |
| 23 MAY 66 | SUBIC BAY | 31 MAY 66 | MANUS ISL |
| 31 MAY 66 | MANUS ISL | 9 JUN 66 | SYDNEY |



Notice to Mariners July 2016

CREW LIST

| AS 3051 JOHN MONASH - FIRST SVN TRIP - 11 APRIL TO 9 JUN 1966 | | | | | |
|--|------------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Appointment | Regtl No. | Rank | Name | Initials | Comment |
| Master | 216554 | CAPT | Barsley | W | |
| First Mate | 38867 | CAPT | Hogg | J.W | Deceased |
| Engr Officer | 216864 | CAPT | Bryant | J.K | |
| WO1 Wk Deck | 24274 | WO1 | Iffla | D.M | Deceased |
| WO2 WK Deck | 213012 | SGT | Sullivan | N.W | |
| WO2 WK E/Room | 21557 | WO1 | Bennett | R | Deceased |
| SSGT SQMS | 23318 | WO1 | Holdsworth | N.W | Deceased |
| SGT WK E/Room | 52875 | WO2 | Affleck | F.A | |
| SGT WK E/Room | 17776 | LCPL | Perham | D.K | Deceased |
| SGT Bosun | 311347 | SGT | Jackson | A.J | |
| SGT Sigs | 311107 | SGT | Robinson | K.L | |
| SGT Medic | 37858 | SGT | Wiseman | J.S | |
| SGT Storeman | | | | | |
| CPL Radar Mech | 36879 | SPR | Haddow | R.G | |
| CPL Cook | 54794 | PTE | Christie | W.J | |
| CPL Sigs | 23260 | CPL | Thom | F.A | Deceased |
| CPL Electrician | 27709 | SGT | Elphick | D.J | |
| CPL Clerk Admin | 18836 | SPR | Smith | D.V | |
| CPL Seaman | 311443 | CPL | Evans | T | |
| CPL Seaman | 42806 | LCPL | Groundwater | N.D | |
| CPL Seaman | 5411400 | LCPL | Fitzsimmons | B.W.V | |
| CPL Seaman | 3787646 | SPR | Bailey | R.I | |
| CPL Fitter | | | | | |
| CPL Fitter | 18399 | SPR | Cox | T.J | Deceased |
| CPL Fitter | 215465 | SPR | Murray | J.G | |
| SPR Seaman | | | | | |
| SPR Seaman | 1410991 | SPR | Abrahamson | K.R | |
| SPR Seaman | 216351 | SPR | Morley | K.F | |
| SPR Seaman | 37651 | SPR | Nolan | T.J | |
| SPR Seaman | 2782290 | SPR | Rogers | J | |
| SPR Seaman | 5713945 | SPR | Scott | T.R | |
| SPR Seaman | 2782821 | SPR | Swanson | P.L | |
| SPR Fitter | 311317 | SPR | Pilkington | F.D | |
| SPR Fitter | 37848 | SPR | Foster | A.V | Deceased |
| SPR Fitter | | | | | |
| PTE Cook | 214601 | PTE | Reeve | G.A | |
| PTE Sigs | | | | | RAN Sailor |
| | 4717787 | SPR | Sellentin | G | V/S 11-30 Apr |
| | | | | | J/M 1/May-14 Jun |
| | 1200294 | SPR | Geraghty | B.F | V/S 11-30 Apr |
| | | | | | J/M 1/May-14 Jun |
| | | | | | |
| | 2412321 | SPR | Howe | P | J/M 11-30 Apr |
| | | | | | V/S 1 May-30 Jun |
| | 1731100 | SPR | Creighton | I.J | J/M 11-30 Apr |
| | | | | | V/S 1 May-30 Jun |
| | | | | | |
| Notes: | | | | | |
| 1. Appointments for junior ranks may not be accurate. | | | | | |
| 2. Compiled from old 32 SSS LSM Leave Record Book | | | | | |
| 3. Names checked against DVA records. | | | | | |
| 4. Gun crew provided by 16 LAA Bty RAA | | | | | |



Notice to Mariners July 2016

RAN COMMUNICATOR

As we were to be under Operational Control of the RAN once we departed Sydney Heads, the RAN supplemented our crew with a LSMN Sigs so that we were able to maintain RAN communication and reporting procedures and also to train our own Sigs personnel in those procedures. We also carried signals cryptographic equipment and he was crypto cleared and qualified.

ARMAMENT

For service in SVN the MONASH was fitted with a 40mm Bofors gun on the forecastle and a 0.50 cal Machine Gun on either side of the aft bridge deck. As well, we were armed with the standard personal weapons of SLR and 9mm pistol.

GUN CREW

On the first trip the crew was supplemented with 1 x SGT and 9 x Gun Numbers from the 116 LT AA Bty RAA. Apart from manning the Bofors gun, this complement also trained the ship's crew in the use of the weapon.

SYDNEY DEPARTURE

On departing Sydney, our convoy was led by the STURDEE and the MONASH was to sail line astern. We sailed to Manus Island, north of Papua New Guinea (PNG) where the RAN had a shore station, HMAS TARANGAU. We arrived at Manus on 21st April where we refuelled and took on further rations and foodstuffs, which had been sent there by air from Sydney. We departed Manus on 22nd April. For Subic Bay, an American Naval Station at Subic Bay, north of Manila in the Philippines. The reason for this voyage plan was due to the Indonesian Government not granting us clearance to transit Indonesian waters because we were going to Vietnam.



Subic Bay, Philippines



Notice to Mariners July 2016

When passing through the San Bernardino Straits in the Philippines, the STURDEE took a short cut, which I considered not safe for the MONASH owing to the depth of water, so I did not follow, line astern, but chose my own safer course. This immediately caused ‘Haggis’ to jump on the radio and order me to follow the STURDEE, which I refused to do. After a short conversation where I explained my position and ‘Haggis’ got over excited, I reminded him that according to his orders we were to maintain radio silence and that I was turning off my radio. Second ‘X’ against my name.

We arrived at Subic Bay on 29th April and had to wait for a Port Pilot as I did not know the harbour, which was immense, or where we would be berthing. Also the USS ENTERPRISE, a United States Navy (USN) aircraft carrier and the largest ship in the world at that time, was berthing at Cupi Point, the fleet air arm base. The ENTERPRISE had ten (10) tugs assisting her to berth. When she had berthed one of the tugs came over to the MONASH and had our Pilot on board. The tugs were so large that this tug was only about 20ft shorter than the MONASH and the Pilot stepped straight from the bridge of the tug onto the bridge of the MONASH. He asked me if the MONASH was a converted tug, and I told him that the MONASH was the largest ship in the Australian Army fleet. He said that as we dealt in Port and Starboard, as opposed to the USA left and right, and we also went ahead and astern, as opposed to the USA forward and back, he would show me the berth and I could command the MONASH and berth her.

After I berthed, John Bonnett came to see me and told me that ‘Haggis’ was coming to see me and that he was furious.

When ‘Haggis’ arrived I had Jim Hogg and John Bryant in my cabin. ‘Haggis’ barged in and ordered Jim and John out of my cabin. I reminded ‘Haggis’ that this was my cabin and that he could leave and extend me the courtesy of knocking on my door, and that Jim and John would not be leaving and anything that he had to say to me could be said in front of them. He then left, knocked on the door and came back in and proceeded to berate me about my action in the San Bernadino Strait. I then replied and said that; ‘the safety of my ship was my responsibility and my decision’ and the – ‘conversation’ ended. Third ‘X’ against my name.

‘The USN had assigned host ships to us during our visit and the Captain of our host ship came on board and invited us to visit his ship. He was the Commander, Landing Ship Squadron One (COMLANSHIPRONONE) and was embarked on a LSM Rocket Ship.

These were LSM’s with a top deck fitted with a number of rocket launchers, and no doubt underneath,



Notice to Mariners July 2016

in what we know as the tank deck, was additional accommodation and ammunition storage for the rockets.

USS ENTERPRISE carried 120 aircraft and when coming into Cupi Point she used to fly off most of her aircraft before berthing. To unload the remainder of her aircraft, about half of one side of the ship opened up like a huge ramp, onto the wharf and the remaining aircraft were wheeled out.



USS ENTERPRISE

On arrival in Subic Bay we were met by a representative from the Australian Embassy in Manila, bringing with him a quantity of US Dollars to pay the crew. I also received quite a few thousand US dollars as I had to pay cash for the fuel we took on board, and also the rations.

Rations were provided from the USN Supply Depot in standard size packages and any odd quantities or extras had to be purchased at the PX. I went to the PX with my Quartermaster Sergeant (QMS) WO Norm Holdsworth, to buy the fresh and tinned rations that we needed. When we were pushing a number of trolleys out of the PX, loaded with foodstuffs, an American lady remarked: 'you look as though you are feeding an Army, to which Norm replied: 'we f— in are'. Norm was not one to hold back. USN Officers and sailors hosted our crew that night and by all accounts a great time was had by all. Many of the crew visiting the infamous local village of Olongopo.

The US Navy Officers took our Officers to visit a number of the Officer's Club's that were within the base. On the way back to our ship's it looked like a rugby scrum, with Jim Hogg and I as front rowers and 'Haggis' the hooker. This was because 'Haggis' had consumed a few Scotch's. I thought that it was a sign that 'all was forgotten' and that we were on a friendly footing once again. One 'Tick' against my name.



Notice to Mariners July 2016



US NAVAL AIR STATION CUI POINT, SUBIC BAY

We departed Subic Bay on 1st May bound for Vung Tau, arriving on 5th May 66. That part of the voyage was uneventful. On arrival at Vung Tau I had to find a safe anchorage where I could unload the MONASH into the STURDEE. However, 'Haggis' selected the anchorage for the STURDEE and I was told to anchor close by. We were met by Tom Sawyer, one of our ex-Brit Mariners who, instead of coming to 32 SSS, was posted to 11th MC GP and was one of the MCO's in South Vietnam. Tom never did come to 32 SSS as he spent all of his time as a Movements Officer.

The STURDEE found a suitable beach and landed to discharge her heavy plant and equipment, which was then used to improve the beach for a number of landings she would make in discharging the MONASH.

The STURDEE stayed in South Vietnam for four (4) months providing support to our force, while I took the MONASH up river to Saigon, to back load personnel effects and equipment belonging to personnel of the 1RAR Gp, which were on their way home as soon as they handed over to 6 RAR.

VISIT OF COMAFV

While I was at anchor in the Saigon River, a launch pulled alongside and I saw an Army Officer climbing our rope ladder. As we had no ship's gang way. This Officer had a 'Red' band on his cap and strange epaulettes on his shoulder. Being relatively new to the Army, I called over WO1 Doug Iffla my senior Warrant Officer, and I asked Doug what was the 'Red Band' and the rank of the epaulettes, to which he replied, that is a Major General. So I was graced with a visit from Major General Ken McKay, Commander, Australian Force Vietnam. He welcomed me and asked if he could have a tour of the ship. I suggested that before a tour perhaps he might like a refreshment, and offered tea, coffee, or a cold Fosters Lager. The General's Aide piped up that the General would have a coffee, whereupon the General said that the Aide could have the coffee but he would have a Fosters.



Notice to Mariners July 2016

RETURN TRIP

We departed Saigon on 13th May for Vung Tau where we had to give our spare anchor to the STURDEE as she had lost her stern anchor in Vung Tau Harbour. Then on 14th May we departed Vung Tau for our return voyage to Sydney.

We arrived in Subic Bay on 17th May and were warned of an approaching cyclone. Some of the USN vessels were heading to sea to ride out the cyclone or get away from it. We had to stay at anchor. While we were at anchor we kept normal watches with the duty watch patrolling the decks. Little did we know until later on that a boat must have approached our stern and, unbeknown to us, someone had managed to climb the stern and enter the steering flat and helped themselves to some of our engine room spares. The cyclone hit Subic Bay and I had to pay out more anchor cable as we were dragging across Subic Bay. During the height of the cyclone we had the full length of our cable out, 10 shackles or 150 fathoms about 900 feet, and the engine going at dead slow ahead, to maintain position and not drag any further.

This was my first experience of a cyclone since I was 3rd Mate on the British India ship CARPENTARIA, between Fremantle and Singapore in March 1959. The difference being that when we were hit by the cyclone on the CARPENTARIA, we were at sea and could take some evasive action, In Subic Bay we were at the mercy of the cyclone which fortunately we survived without damage or injury to any person. We departed Subic Bay on 23 May for Sydney via Manus Island, arriving Sydney on 9th June 1966 after an uneventful return trip.

I was berthing the MONASH inside the Woolwich Dock when 'Haggis', who had flown home from Saigon, came storming onto the Dock telling me to hurry up. I said that I was considering safety and that I will visit his office when I have secured the ship in the Dock. It was about 1200hrs when we were secure and I visited MAJ Wilson in his office.

He broke the news that I was to be in Canberra the next morning at 0800 hours, so I enquired for how long and he said two (2) years. He told me that he was asked to provide a Captain for the Directorate of Movements (DMOV) and he had chosen me. I guess that, like an elephant, 'Haggis' never forgot.

Thus ended my first posting as a Troop Commander at 32 Small Ship Squadron. However, it exposed me to the Army field of Staff Movements and Movement Control, as well as a new and lasting friendship, as in DMOV, I was working for Major Ken Duncan, now Colonel Ken Duncan, retired, and Patron of our Association.

I returned again to 32 Small ship Squadron in 1968/69 to command the CLIVE STEELE in South Vietnam and then returned to DMOV. I again returned to 32 SSS on 5th December 1969 as the Officer Commanding, after the Courts Martial and then removal of then Commanding Officer, and I remained in that position until 30th September 1971 when the unit was disbanded.



Notice to Mariners July 2016

VALE - WALLY BLUMENFELD

30 July 1930 - 25 April 2016

Major Walter Michael Blumenfeld, RAE died on ANZAC Day 2016 as a result of a fall, hitting his head while preparing for the Sydney march. He was admitted to the Sydney Hospital but unfortunately didn't regain consciousness. Wally was a much loved and respected member of 32 Small Ship Squadron and our Association.

He was heavily involved in volunteer work in the ACT where he lived. After 37 years with the ACT State Emergency Service, he retired in March 2016 at the age of 85. He responded to countless emergencies since he joined in 1979 including the 2003 Canberra fires. Even after he retired he remained on the list of reserves for the SES.

Wally also worked for the St John Ambulance, the Snowy Mountains Ski Patrol and was a guide at the Australian War Memorial.

A history of Wally's life follows this article but his Army service started in April 1964 when he enlisted and was posted to 32 Small Ship Squadron. A month later he skippered LSM *AV1353 Harry Chauvel* to Borneo on active service. In 1965 he was detached to Army Headquarters, Canberra for six months before being returned to 32. In August 1966 he skippered *AS3051 John Monash* to Vietnam, and returned in 1968 on *AV1358 Clive Steele* and again in 1970 with *AV1354 Brudenell White*.

One of Wally's other remarkable feats was in 1964, after returning from Borneo, he skippered *AV1354 Brudenell White* in Papua New Guinea 370 miles up the Sepik River to the May River junction surveying the river. The LSM was carrying routine resupply for the Pacific Islands Regiment but was redirected to assist the AHQ Survey Regiment in surveying the Sepik. A running marine survey of the river and a reconnaissance of beaching and berthing sites were carried out. A chart was compiled and it was the first time a continuous record of the river depths had been made.

The LSM completed the survey in 26 days. No other ship of this size had sailed this far up the Sepik; a record that still holds today.

In 1969 he attended the RAAF School of Languages for a year.

This was followed by a posting to 11 Movement Control Group for six months and then back to 32. In 1971 he was posted to 10 Movement Control group for two years. While there he served in Thailand for a short time.

He then resigned from the ARA and immediately joined the Army Reserve and had postings at Army Headquarters, Headquarters Logistic Command and the Reserve Staff Group.



Notice to Mariners July 2016

Wally's son, Michael put together the following obituary for Wally, and included it in the program for his Memorial Service. I have summarised it and have included a couple of the many pictures of Wally that Michael had in his program:

A TRIBUTE TO WALLY FROM HIS SON, MICHAEL

"Born in Berlin Germany, from loving parents Martin and Elsa Blumenfeld, he was an only child. The family escaped World War Two, and went to England where he had relatives and stayed for nine months. They then had an opportunity to go to America or Australia for which they chose the latter.

After a lengthy journey by ship, they landed in Sydney, staying in Bondi, until transferred out to a country town Wyong, where his Father was put to work on a farm, and his mother worked in the guest house.

This was a huge adjustment as Walter came from a family of professional back grounds, however this was their opportunity to survive their past war torn Germany, and start a new life in Australia.

Walter being the academic that he was, did not have the appropriate schooling for a boy of his intellect. He then made a decision to join the Navy, at the age of 16, against his parents' wishes, however they granted him one year to try it.

Walter always had a strong desire to have a career at sea, however it was very hard to get a position around 1947.

His first job was in a garage but he later managed to join the Australian coastal vessel *Iron Warrior* as a deck boy, and later served four years as a cadet officer on board Australian Shipping Board vessels plying the Australian coast - and with one trip to India.

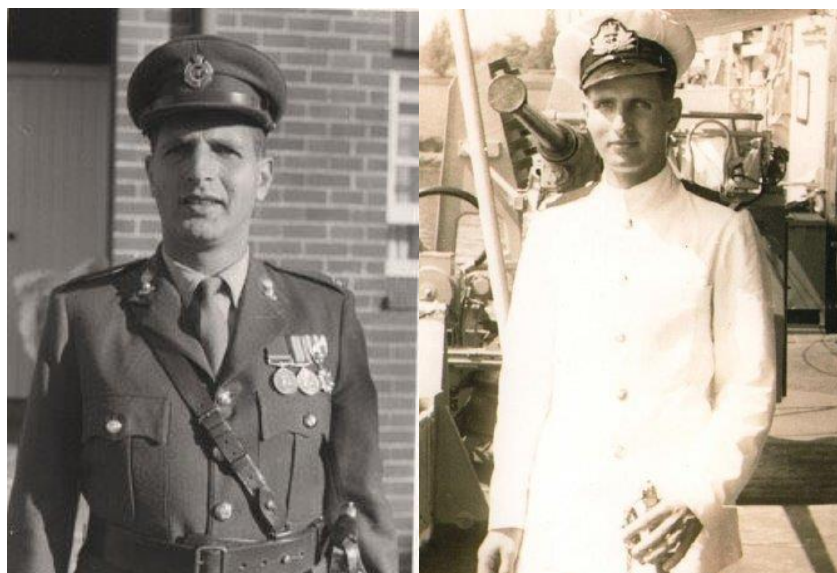
He then studied at a Sydney marine college and received his 2nd Officers Foreign Going Certificate. He again joined a coastal vessel as Third Officer before serving with the bank Line which took him to America. He then travelled to the UK and joined the Blue Star Line which traded between UK, South America and Australia. In 1953 he passed his 1st Officers Foreign Going Certificate and joined the Danish Eastern Asiatic Company. In 1957 he passed his Captains Foreign Going Certificate.

Walter left the Merchant Navy, was commissioned into the Australian Army and posted to 32 Small Ship Squadron in 1964. In the same year he skippered *AV1353 Harry Chauvel* to Borneo. On returning to Australia he took *AV1354 Brudenell White* to PNG and up the Sepik River to the May River junction - some 595 km. In 1965 he took *AS3051 John Monash* to



PNG and in 1966 took it to Vietnam. In 1966 he took *AV1356 Clive Steele* to Vietnam and also *AV1354 Brudenell White* to Vietnam in 1970. He then left the Army and worked for the Marine Operations Centre in Canberra until he was 65 years old"

Thanks Michael - a good account of Wally's life; and a fine tribute to his memory. Our condolences to you, your mother, Helen and sister, Monique.



Wally in 32 Small Ship Squadron As a Sub-Lieutenant in the RANR aboard HMAS Warramunga.



Wally's Memorial Service at RMC with members of 32.

Left to right, back row: Jim Brown, Mike Heal, Warren Barsley, Ocka Murray, Gary Smyth, Jack Peel, Peter Atkinson, John Sahariv and Brian Goodes. Front row, left to right: Dennis Collins, Neil Hurst, Bruce Reilly, Michael Blumenfeld and Bruce Glossop.



Notice to Mariners July 2016

3 - Tuesday, March 29, 2016

The Chronicle

ACT STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE

Walter volunteers to retire – at 85

By Amanda Copp

After 37 years of volunteering for the ACT State Emergency Service, Walter Blumenfeld has retired at the age of 85.

Since he joined in 1979, Mr Blumenfeld responded to countless emergencies, including the 2003 Canberra fires and was met by Governor-General Peter Hollingworth after the tragedy.

In typical Canberra style, Mr Blumenfeld was working for the government when he came across an advertisement in the paper for SES volunteers.

"I went along to a session, enjoyed it, and decided I would join. I was working shift work, so decided I'd give it a go," he said.

Mr Blumenfeld said one of the most memorable times in his service was the Canberra bushfires.

"We were not only helping the bushfire services with setting up dams for their tankers and providing food, but there was a lot of storm damage at the time that was never really publicised," he said.

"The strong winds generated by the fires, in the suburbs not in the fire zones, but away from the fires, there was a lot of roof damage, that sort of thing; we were flat out there as well," he recalled.

Mr Blumenfeld was thanked by the ACT SES chief officer Conrad Barr last Wednesday.

Mr Barr said work by people like Mr Blumenfeld had recently resulted in many applications for volunteer positions.

"In the latest recruitment process the agency received 362 applications for 28 volunteer positions," he said.

Mr Blumenfeld said he would



Walter Blumenfeld has retired from the SES at the age of 85.

Photo: Mark Hallam

miss the people he met during his service most, and the camaraderie that comes with shared experiences of working through emergencies.

"It's a way of life I suppose," he said.

Mr Blumenfeld also works for St John Ambulance and is a guide at

the Australian War Memorial. Even at the age of 85, Mr Blumenfeld remains on the reserves list for the SES.

Here's a Canberra newspaper article published on 29 March 2016 advising Wally's retirement from the ACT State Emergency Service after being with that organisation for 37 years.



Notice to Mariners July 2016

VALE - MAL CAMPBELL

1951 - 2016

Bob Clarke advised the passing of Malcolm Campbell, RAEME. Mal was a 22nd intake Army Apprentice and graduated from Balcombe as an electrical fitter in 1969. He served in 1 Watercraft Workshop. Ocka Murray advised that Mal served in 40 Water Transport Squadron (Heavy) and was the Corporal Electrician on *L126 Balikpapan*. During June - November 1973 the vessel did a protracted voyage north covering the Leopard tanks and M60 evaluation trials. It then sailed to Cooktown where it was involved with Operation Plastic Banana which was to follow Lieutenant James Cook's survey of the Torres Strait. It then sailed to Papua New Guinea for items for the Admiral Nimitz Museum. One of these was a Japanese Zero aircraft where the crew retrieved it from a lagoon. There were other items recovered including field pieces and a tank.

Bob Clarke attended Mal's funeral and sent the following report:

"Mal Campbell's funeral was held at Lake Macquarie Memorial Park on Friday 6th May 2016 after his protracted battle with Leukaemia. There were about 150 people in attendance to show support for his wife Barbara and their two sons Andrew and Daniel, representing different parts of his life and career including various associations, sporting organisations and industry committees that he was involved in.

The Association was represented by Bob Clarke and there were approximately twenty ex-Army Apprentices, including ten from God's chosen few (the 22nd), some of whom had travelled from as far away as Albury and Melbourne, such was the respect for the man.

The service was conducted by Keith Lowe who did an outstanding job considering the close association the two of them have had since joining up together in 1967. He delivered a great narrative of Mal's life including his time before joining the Army, the time and mate-ship he experienced during his nine years in the Army and the consequent life after in his various businesses.

Both of Mal's sons Andrew and Daniel delivered very heartfelt eulogies describing their time growing up with their father and eventually working in the business with him. It was evident that they had both lost not only their father but also very good mate.

May he rest in peace."

Thanks for that Bob. Our condolences to Mal's wife, Barbara and sons, Andrew and Daniel. Mal was a much respected and popular member who will be missed. Barbara thanks the committee and members for their support.



Notice to Mariners July 2016

VALE - MICK FESTING

1945 – 2016

It is with regret that we advise that Sergeant Michael Charles Festing, RAE / RACT died on 13 April 2016 after a long illness. Mick lived at Bracken Ridge QLD with his wife, Virginia. He served aboard *AV1355 Vernon Sturdee* in Vietnam in 1967.

At Mick's funeral service in Brisbane his daughter, Sharon gave an eloquent and heartfelt obituary, which is summarized below.

Mick was born in Hobart and grew up in Bellerive. He was an avid sportsman; played rugby and AFL at representational level including his Army service. He was a National Amateur Golden Gloves boxing champion. He was also a keen sailor even though he couldn't swim. In 1965 he joined the Army and after completing recruit training at 1RTB and Corps training at SME he was posted to 4 Water Transport Troop and then to 32 Small Ship Squadron. He married Virginia in 1968 and had two children, Sharon and Natalie.

Mick experienced true mateship on *AV1355 Vernon Sturdee* in Vietnam and throughout his Army career, something he said many civilians couldn't understand.

After leaving the Army Mick tried his hand at various jobs before becoming the head of security for the Brisbane South Bank Development Project after Expo 88. He continued as a security guard at the Brisbane fuel refineries until he retired at 55 years of age.

Mick was a good sailor and sailed with his father in Hobart, and at age 16 completed his first Sydney to Hobart race, one of many he competed in. He was much sought after because of his experience as a helmsman. He also competed in Sydney to Suva and Brisbane to Gladstone races. He sometimes raced on *Anaconda II* and *Sangaree*, both maxi yachts.

He loved race and rally car driving and did a lot of rally driving when he was posted to PNG, and he never missed a Bathurst race week end.

Mick was an outdoors man and lived life to the fullest. He would often be away camping with his family or going fishing, hunting and boating up north. He was sociable and friendly, and could always enjoy a cold beer on a hot afternoon.

He was diagnosed with a brain disorder about four years ago which caused serious and progressive problems with control of walking and balance, eye movement, thinking and speech. His condition deteriorated and he moved to a nursing home at Lawnton three years ago, and his family were very grateful for the care and support they provided for Mick.

It had been a difficult and emotional journey. He was a true soldier and fought to the end, but is now free.

After completing Recruit Training at Kapooka and Corps Training at SME he was posted to 4 Water Transport Troop at Woolwich. Shortly after this he was posted to 32 Small Ship Squadron. Other units he served with include 10 Movement Control Group, 10 Movement Control Group Northern Territory Detachment, 10 Movement Control Group PNG Detachment, PNG Movement Unit, Australian Defence Assistance Group (PNG), Australian



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Defence Cooperation Group (PNG), 1 RTB, 5 Transport Company, 1 Division Transport Regiment (5 Transport Squadron), Liverpool Transport Unit and 11 Movement Control Group. Mick also served in Fiji in 1978. He retired in 1985 after 20 years' service.

Angus McKinnon represented our Association at Mick's funeral service in Brisbane on 18 April 2016. Members of the local RSL Sub-Branch and the Queensland Sappers Association also attended.

Our condolences to Mick's wife, Virginia and daughters, Sharon and Natalie.



Mick Festing as a Sapper in 32



...and in later years prior to his illness



Notice to Mariners July 2016

VALE - PHIL MCLEOD

1947 - 2016

Bob Freeman recently advised the passing of a good mate, Lance Corporal Phillip McLeod, RAE on 26 May 2016. Phil was a highly respected elder of the Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community. Wreck Bay is part of the Jervis Bay Territory (JBT). He was also a member, and founder, of the Wreck Bay Fire Brigade.

Phil has not been in good shape over the last few years. He had a leg amputated, had contracted diabetes and was recently in hospital with heart and artery problems. His wife, Mary, died about five years ago and he was being cared for by his children, Jeff, Kaylene and Kylie.

Phil volunteered for national service in 1967 and after Basic Training at 1 RTB , Corps Training at SME and Seamanship training at the Transportation Centre he was posted to 32 Small Ship Squadron. He sailed on *AV1356 Clive Steele* twice to Vietnam in 1968 / 69. After discharge he enlisted in the CMF and served in 4th Battalion, Royal New South Wales Regiment for nearly two years.

Warren Barsley attended Phil's funeral and reported as follows:

FUNERAL SERVICE FOR EX 2790132 LCPL PHILLIP JOHN McLEOD, RAE

It was with a deep sadness that I, along with Bob Freeman, John and Carrol Spindler, Billy Martin, David Fryer and Bob Saunders, attended the funeral service held at All Saints, Anglican Church, Nowra on Thursday 2nd June 2016 for our former esteemed colleague, Phil McLeod.

Bob Freeman, Bob Saunders and I, all served together in Vietnam with Phil on board *CLIVE STEELE* in 1968/69.

The church was overflowing with mourners, to the extent that the service was broadcast to an adjoining room, which was also full, and also to many people standing in the grounds outside of the church.

There were many tributes paid to Phil by family and friends. I spoke of Phil's service record and awards and of the time in Cam Ranh Bay when we were guests of the US Air Force Base for a Lucky Grills concert, when Lucky called Phil up on stage and together they sang; 'My Boomerang Won't Come Back'. This resulted in a lot of laughter from Phil's family and friends.

Bob Freeman, who I recognised as Phil's 'Best Mate', then spoke of his friendship with Phil within 32 Small Ship Squadron and afterwards.

A representative of the Huskisson RSL, where Phil was a member, presented the story of the 'Poppy', and the Service personnel and ex-Service personnel in attendance were invited to place a 'Poppy' on the casket. The Last Post and Reveille were played and the Ode was recited.

Phil was very well respected by the aboriginal community of Wreck Bay and it was said that he told his community that he was a 'Wreck Bay boy and would be until the day he died', and so he was.

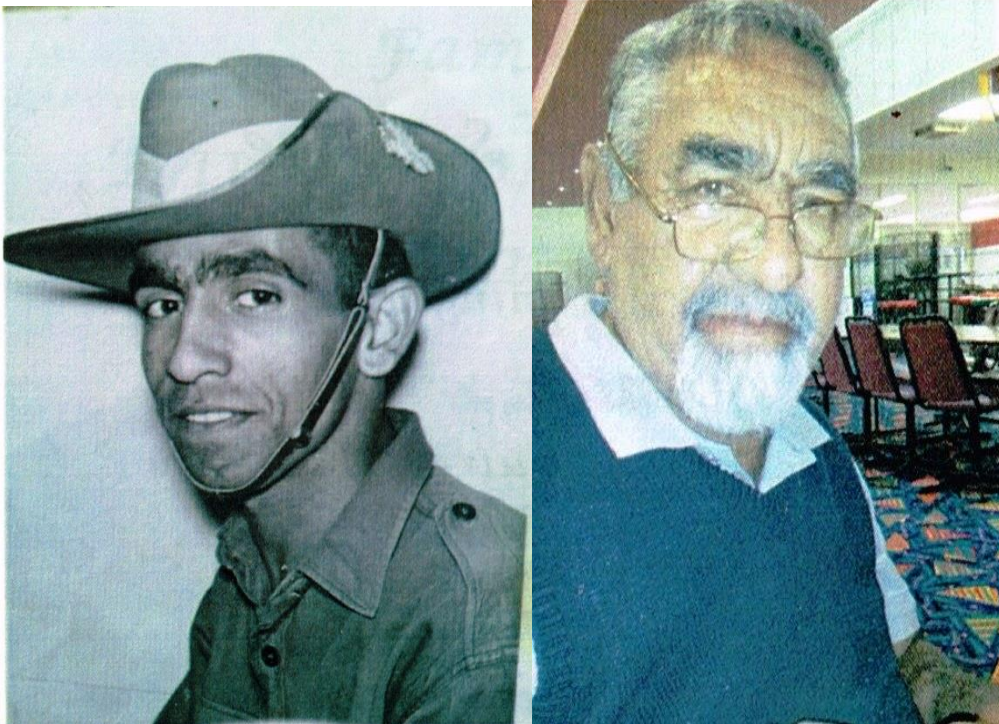
Phil will be sadly missed by his Wreck Bay Community as both a loving friend, family member and one who strived for Aboriginal rights.

Phil was one of thirteen children and he is survived by three brothers, two sisters, four children and three grand-children.



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Vale Phillip John McLeod 19 July 1947 – 26 May 2016



Sapper Phil McLeod as a young digger Phil as an Elder at Wreck Bay

VALE - ALAN RIX

Dick van Leeuwen advised that Corporal Alan (Lofty) Rix, RAE died on 29 May 2016. He had been in ill health for a number of years and succumbed to cancer. John Gadd visited him in hospital recently and said he was not in good shape. He was privately cremated. Lofty lived at Opossum Bay near Hobart.

Lofty served in 32 Small Ship Squadron on all four LSMs and went to Borneo in 1964 on *AV1353 Harry Chauvel*.

Our condolences to Lofty's wife Helen and their family.

VALE – JOHN BRYDEN

We have just been advised of the death of John Bryden who died on 4 July 2016. Because we are going to print shortly his details will be published in the next newsletter.

SICK PARADE

Col Wright of sandstone Point Qld is not travelling well at the moment. He's having breathing problems and hopefully he will be back on his feet soon.

Graham Berry has had problems with his knees over the last few years. He has a form of arthritis that causes crystals to be present in his kneecaps. He recently underwent procedures in the Royal North Shore Hospital, Sydney and has had a good response to the treatment.



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DONATIONS

Many thanks to the following members who have made donations to your Association:
Bill Bott, Ken Burchill, Bruce Barwick, John Bonnett, Jock Balfour, Bob Clarke, Brian Clulow, Phil Cameron, Gary Carne, Ken Duncan, Jerry Davey, Gerry Dunn, Les Dennis, Wayne Evans, Keith Ford, David Fryer, Tom Gilchrist, Charles Gillman-Wells, Ross Hayes, Fraser Hethorn, Jack Lawson, Bruce Levy, Brendon McCormack, Angus McKinnon, Bruce Mansfield, David Miller, James Mulligan, Noel Norton, Peter Nodin, Jack Peel, Len Ramsay, Fred Seidenkamp, Pat Scott, John Spindler, Michael Schultz, Bob Tait, David Tooes, Don Weimer, David Walker, Ray Winter, Ian Wilson, Jim Wright, Ron Watson, Neil Hurst, Kenny Loadsman and Terry Zajer.

Thank you all for your generosity! Because of you we are able to operate more efficiently and assist some organisations who are worthy of support. If you have donated and your name isn't mentioned here please contact me and I'll put it right in the next newsletter.

VIETNAM VETERANS' DAY – SYDNEY

Vietnam Veterans' Day in Sydney will be held at SME, Steele Lines, Holsworthy at 1000h Thursday 18 August 2016. Luncheon will be \$25 per head and a cash bar will operate. You must be registered to attend, so please email the committee at vietmemorial@tpg.com.au or drop a note to PO Box 165, Moorebank NSW 1875. Details required are names of guests – they must have photo ID (drivers licence, passport etc) and registration number of the vehicle. Prepayment is required by cheque, money order or direct deposit (BSB 803205 Acct No 20765047). Close off date for registration is 13 August 2016. Arrive early to avoid the long security procedures and enjoy a coffee when you get there.

We look forward to seeing to seeing you on this 50th anniversary of Long Tan.

NEW MEMBERS

We would like to welcome aboard the following new members:

Alan Surjan lives at Coolbellup WA. he has served on the tugboat, *AT2700 Joe Mann*, various LCM8s and workboats. He has also served in the following units: 113 Field Workshop, 2 Base Workshop Battalion, 8/9 RAR, 5 EME Services Unit, ACT Workshop Platoon, 1 Watercraft Workshop, 35 Water Transport Squadron (70 TptTp), Army Maritime School, Sydney Logistics Company (Marine Section), Defence National Storage and Distribution Centre (Marine Section), Maritime Wing Army Logistic Training Centre, 13 Combat Service Support Battalion, 10 Force Support Battalion (35 Water Transport and Marine Section), 8 Combat Service Support Battalion and Joint Logistic Unit (North).

Well done, Alan - a lot of long words there mate!

Roderick Stewart lives at Hunters Hill NSW. He started life in the Army as a Staff Cadet at the Royal Military College. After graduating he was allocated to RAE and had postings to Headquarters Southern Command, 3 Field Engineer Regiment, 21 Construction Squadron, 1 Field squadron, Army Headquarters (Engineer in Chief's Office) and back to RMC as a lecturer. He has had operational service with 1 Field Squadron in Borneo and Vietnam.



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Rod is the President of Hunters Hill RSL Sub-Branch which is very supportive of our Association. Some of our members have joined the Sub-Branch primarily to increase its dwindling numbers. So if anyone wishes to do this please let me know and I'll send an application form.

Warren Houl lives at Somerville VIC. He served on LSM *AV1354 Brudenell White* and various LCM8s. He's had postings to the Transportation Training Centre, Chowder Bay and PNG Transportation Squadron RAE at Port Moresby, PNG.

Robert Flack lives at Tocumwal NSW. He did his Corps Training at the Transportation Centre and served in Vietnam with 30 Terminal Squadron.

Graham Stenner has re-joined the Association. He lives at Scotland Island NSW. He served in the following units: 1RTB, SME, 32 Small Ship Squadron, Transportation Centre, 4 Water Transport troop, 35 Water Transport Squadron, PNG Water Transport Squadron, HQ 10 Terminal Group, 42 Amphibious Squadron, Army Recruiting, 18 Transport Squadron, PNG Landing Craft Squadron and HQ PNG Defence Force. He served in Vietnam in 1966 aboard *AV1355 Vernon Sturdee*.

Norm Drury lives at Doctors Gap, near Lithgow NSW. He's served at 1RTB, Transportation Centre and 30 Terminal Squadron.

Michael Blumenfeld (son of Wally) is a Senior Firefighter with ACT Fire and Rescue and lives at MacGregor ACT.

ONLY A NAVIGATOR WOULD THINK OF SUCH THINGS

Ralph Pridmore sent in this historical marine gem...

The passenger steamer *SS Warrimoo* was quietly knifing its way through the waters of the mid-Pacific on its way from Vancouver to Australia.

The navigator had just finished working out a star fix and brought the master, Captain John Phillips, the result. The *Warrimoo's* position was latitude 0 degrees x 31 minutes north and longitude 179 degrees x 30 minutes west. The date was 30 December 1899. "Know what this means?" First Mate Payton broke in, "we're only a few miles from the intersection of the Equator and the International Date Line".

Captain Phillips was prankish enough to take full advantage of the opportunity for achieving the navigational freak of a lifetime. He called his navigators to the bridge to check and double check the ships position. He changed course slightly so as to bear directly on his mark. Then he adjusted the engine speed. The calm weather and clear night worked in his favour. At midnight the "*Warrimoo*" lay on the Equator at exactly the point where it crossed the International Date Line!

The consequences of this bizarre position were many. The forward part of the ship was in the Southern Hemisphere and the middle of summer. The stern was in the Northern Hemisphere and in the middle of winter. The date in the aft part of the ship was 30 December 1899. Forward it was 1 January 1900.

This ship was therefore not only in two different days, two different months, two



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different seasons and two different years but in two different centuries - all at the same time.



In its late years the SS Warrimoo operated as an ANZAC troopship and war cargo carrier in the Mediterranean Sea, where it sunk after colliding with a French destroyer off Tunis.

My last trip on the TARAKAN

By Jack Madden

In about 1979 I was posted to 2 Field Engineer Regiment. I still held my diving supervisor qualifications from my Tn days and just for a joke I submitted a bid for Watercraft Support to take the Army divers up to the Great Barrier Reef for a week of “diver training”. Well, to my amazement my request was approved and we were allocated HMAS Tarakan, now being operated by the Navy Reserve. When the pussars heard about this trip the Diving Supervisor of the Navy Reserve asked if the Reserve Divers could come also. No problem.

Off we headed north with all of us divers sleeping in Navy supplied caravans in the well deck and a couple of flat bottom assault boats (that one of the LSMs had problems with in Vietnam). Arrived at Heron Island with its crystal clear waters but the LCH was too big to get into the boat harbour so they reluctantly gave us permission to anchor on the reef. Naturally as soon as the pick went down the cooks had the fishing lines out. They were doing well until someone from the island noticed that we were fishing where the tourist hand fed the fish.

The weather kept changing and Queensland University, who have the research station on Heron Is asked us to move and not damage the reef. So back to Great Keppell Island. We had to go to the mainland to pick up more diving air so the skipper of TARAKAN invited all the young ladies on Great Keppell to come for the ride. Imaging what would happen if the anyone in the Army did that!



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Property for sale

| | | | |
|---|----------------------|-----------------|---------|
| Ties | \$25.00 | LSM Lapel Badge | \$12.00 |
| Association Book by Wade Morris | \$30.00 | Collar Badge | \$6.00 |
| Association Woven Patch | \$8.00 | Car Stickers | \$5.00 |
| Association Cap Navy Blue | \$15.00 | | |
| Association 50 th Anniversary Plaque | \$40 plus \$9 P & H | | |
| Book "Rolling through 32" | \$25 plus \$15 P & H | | |
| Association Polo Shirt (navy blue only) made to order | | | \$30.00 |

Please contact Kaye Shannon 02 9871 4667 or property@32smallshipsqn.org.au or through the 'Q Store' on the Association Web page (www.32smallshipsqn.org.au)

Disclaimer

Views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Editor or the Committee of 32 Small Ship Sqn RAE Association Incorporating RAE Tn.

Contributions

Contributions are welcome from members and their families of anything that is of interest of members. So, if you would like to contribute please email it to:

editor@32smallshipsqn.org.au

or to

32 Small Ship Squadron RAE Association Inc RAE Tn.

Box 33

12 Philip Mall

WEST PYMBLE NSW 2073

Email and Postal Addresses

Please let the Association know if you get a new email address or change your current one. The same goes for your postal address. Remember, we want to keep in touch with you!



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