

RAEME ASSOCIATION NSW INC NEWSLETTER

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ARTE ET MARTE

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PRESIDENTS REPORT



The National Launch of our Corps History was held at the Australian War Memorial (AWM) Canberra on the 9th September. On a perfect Spring day in Canberra, one of the biggest gatherings of personnel from our Corps assembled at the AWM for the Last Post ceremony. Following this introduction to the Launch, everyone moved to one of the AWM function rooms to hear HOC Brig Mathewson open proceedings and invite Chief of Army, LT GEN Angus Campbell, DSC,AM to perform the official launch.

The event and the setting was everything we hoped it would be. For those who did not have the opportunity to witness this special occasion first hand, a full report and photo gallery is featured in this edition.

The traditional Reserve Forces Day Parade in Sydney drew a better response from members of our Corps this year and our thanks especially to our loyal and trusted Standard Bearer and Banner Party. The parade featured the unveiling of a new Standard to commemorate the Anzac Forces at Gallipoli.

Our Corps Birthday/Christmas party is only next month and we urge you to gather with your colleagues to enjoy this function at Smithfield RSL on Sunday 15 November. The RSVP timing is a little tight so please do not delay if you are planning to attend. Your invitation should already have arrived.

Our first casual lunch was held in August and results were pleasing. Read the report later in this edition. Let us know if you would like to have a gathering at your favourite club or venue.

We are fortunate to have another author amongst our ranks. MAJ Roland Millbank (RET) has released a book on the history of the Australian Instructional Corps (AIC). A promotion for this book is included in this edition along with a fascinating story of Roland's trip to Sri Lanka. You will be amazed, as he was, on how this mission was played out.

Arte et Marte

Brendan Robertson

T'was Good While it Lasted!

MAJ Roland Millbank (Ret)

For the past 10 years I have been the honorary secretary and public officer of the Royal Humane Society of New South Wales. The Society founded in 1877 seeks to recognise civilian bravery when saving or endeavouring to save life.

For the past century plus the Governor of New South Wales has been the Patron of the Society. The Vice Regal Patronage is acknowledged each year at an investiture held at Government House, Sydney. This is where the Governor presents the medals and certificates to very brave members of our community who, in many cases, have risked their lives to save others.

The Society has connections with other officially recognised humane societies throughout the Commonwealth of Nations and accordingly has regular correspondence with these organisations.

During the past several years I have been in contact with the Foundation for Civilian Bravery Sri Lanka (previously known as Ceylon) and the Society regularly receives an invitation to their annual awards ceremony. Last year the Society became aware that 2015 was to be an important year for the Foundation, which was to celebrate its establishment 21 years ago. Understanding that civilian bravery is not a concept really well understood in South East Asia (i.e. there were no words in Sinhalese to describe civilian bravery) the Society determined strong support would be welcome. Following an invitation from the Foundation the Council of the Society resolved that I go to Sri Lanka to represent the Royal Humane Society of New South Wales as the Guest of Honour at the Foundation's annual ceremony on 16 June 2015 in Colombo.

The Society had agreed to assist me with my airfare while the Foundation organised my accommodation. It was this latter arrangement, which was to completely change my lifestyle while in Sri Lanka. Unknown to me, until about 2 weeks before I left Australia, on the Board of the Foundation is Major General Ube Medawela, currently the Security Commander for Southern Sri Lanka (a 2 star divisional commander).

While I was in regular correspondence with the Foundation President, Mr. Kasun Chandraratne, suddenly I start receiving emails from General Medawela advising arrangements for my stay in Sri Lanka, which involved some travel after the ceremony. Probably the email which caused some panic arrived about 2 days before I was due to fly out requesting that I address the final year cadets at the Sri Lanka Military Academy! Now we all know a request from a General is just a polite way of saying, "This is going to take place whether you want it to happen or not". There was a flurry of emails backwards and forwards to agree on dates, times and subject matter as I scrambled to get my head around this astounding request. To be truthful, with so little time available before leaving Australia my preparations were less than adequate but I did what I could.

The flights to Sri Lanka involved 9 hours to Kuala Lumpur and then a further 4 hours to Sri Lanka. I had been able to sleep on the journey so arrived in a reasonable state. My last email from the Foundation President stated the Army would meet me at the airport and he would see me at my hotel. That seemed all very straight forward, or so I thought.

I collected my luggage and got through customs and there to greet me is a car, corporal driver and a signals captain advising that I will be dining with General Medawela that evening! The journey through Colombo to my hotel was less than 20km but it took us 2 hours. To say it was frenetic is less than adequate, less attention to road rules I have seldom observed anywhere in South East Asia, this was no exception. At least they drove, theoretically, on the left hand side. The masses of three wheel vehicles (“Toot Toots”) added to the confusion (I almost said general confusion but that was to come later...).

The rest of the day went quite quickly. After talks with the Foundation President and unpacking it was 7 o’clock. General Medawela arrived to take me to dinner at an upmarket hotel. We got on well; he seemed most appreciative that I had made the trip. It was only later I began to understand how isolated Sri Lanka is on the world scene. The dreadful civil war that went on for years just about ruined their tourist industry and their major industry, the tea trade also suffered as a result.

I had the next morning to myself, organising speeches and preparing for the ceremony on the following day. In the afternoon General Medawela took me shopping and sightseeing. He told me, “I have a surprise for dinner this evening”. That was the understatement of the year! At precisely 19.00hrs we arrived at the Sri Lanka Army Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (EME) Directorate where I was the guest of the General. We were met by the Colonel Commandant, the Director and the CI of the School. The Colonel Commandant kept calling me, a major, “Sir”; the other senior officers took their cue from him. After formal introductions and a short presentation to me on the Sri Lanka Army EME (very similar organisation to us) we got down to the serious stuff. Drinks were taken on the terrace overlooking the lake, with the full regimental band playing in the background. Fortunately, I had brought some Australian Army badges to distribute otherwise I would have felt dreadful. Then there was a sit down dinner in the Corps Officers Mess (lots of Sri Lankan dishes) followed by gifts and having to sign the Visitors Book. In my gear I had taken a RAEME tie for my presentation at the Military Academy. This I promised the Colonel Commandant I would present to him at the completion of my visit.

The next day the presentation ceremony took place. Again a car, driver and escort officer to the Defence Services Children's' College where it took place. Representing the Society I was a Guest of Honour, the other (I thought much more distinguished) guests included the Australian High Commissioner and the Assistant Defence Minister. The Foundation’s ceremony is quite different to that of the Society except in the vitally important work of recognising brave acts very worthy of the certificates and medals that were presented. I actually presented certificates of merit to two soldiers who had saved people from drowning. The Foundation then made a presentation to me, totally unexpected and I was at a loss for words. At this point I should mention the ceremony took place in three languages, Sinhalese, Tamil and then English (my speech was translated).

That evening there was more hospitality for me from General Medawela. We visited his divisional HQ; the main barracks for Colombo before a private dinner at his personal bungalow within the very large barracks compound. A memorable day for me but much more

was to follow, as I was to discover in my travels into the interior of the island in the next few days.

Friday was another warm day in Sri Lanka (32 degrees plus). Promptly at 9.00hrs my car and driver arrived complete with an Armoured Corps Lieutenant who was to be my escort officer for the rest of my journeys. The General had provided me with the Standard Bearer from his regiment; I was to be most grateful for this consideration during my journeys. All I had to do was turn up; everything was “on tap”. I had only to suggest something and it was taken as an order...

We spent two days on trains going right up into the tea growing plantations almost in the centre of the island (1,800 metres). At Kandy where we stayed the night there was dinner in the Regimental Officers Mess. The next morning the EME 2ic at the EME School had us to breakfast at his mess before putting us on the train. When we finally arrived at our destination there was a car, corporal driver and Artillery Major who advised me he was my state liaison officer! We were billeted in a bungalow belonging to the Corps of Military Police (“Coppers Cove”).

The next morning it was off to the Sri Lanka Military Academy. I was met by the Deputy Commandant who apologised that the Commandant was in Colombo and therefore unable to greet me. I would like to report great success as a visiting lecturer talking about the “Ethos of the Australian Army” but that was truly not the case. The final years cadets were within two weeks of graduation and I was, I believe, an unwanted distraction. They were polite but not happy to ask questions in English which is their second language. Not having questions flooded me. Fortunately afterwards in the anteroom we had refreshments and the questions came then.

We had “free time” in the afternoon and went sightseeing in the district. Then, in the evening, it was back to the Military Academy where a cocktail party and dinner had been arranged in my honour. Again fortunately I had gifts of badges and books otherwise I don’t know what I would have done. The cocktail party and dinner were to be my last formal engagement of the visit.

The following day I said goodbye to my Artillery Major who had been an excellent host (I have to send him an Artillery officers hat badge with the moving wheel) and we, my escort officer and I, set out on the ten hour rail journey back to Colombo in one of the most iconic train journey in the world (through 54 tunnels for example).

On my last day in Sri Lanka General Medawela came to my hotel to say goodbye. I had a slouch hat to present to him for his kindness and hospitality. Little as it was from me he genuinely seemed delighted. Promptly that evening my escort officer came and had dinner with me before he, the car and corporal driver delivered me at Colombo Airport to commence the long journey home.

As I said at the commencement of this short article, T’was good while it lasted. This was an incredible journey, with unbelievable hospitality, and wonderful memories.

Corps Birthday /Christmas Party 2015

Please ensure you forward your RSVP and payment to us no later than 23 October 2015 to ensure we have the correct numbers for catering arrangements. **Also please let us know if you have special dietary requirements for the function.**

This is a great opportunity to catch up with your mates. See you there

The Rebirth of “ACE”- a World War 2 “Matilda” Infantry Support Tank.

It is probably not widely known that there is a fine Museum in Parramatta which is owned by the New South Wales Lancers, it is staffed by a very committed group of volunteers who repair and restore all manner of armoured vehicles and museum displays.

There are 3 Ferret Scout Cars, a Centurion Main Battle Tank, 3 Land Rovers one being a Gun Rover, a Bren Gun Carrier, A Dingo Scout Car, a Staghound Armoured Car, an Austin Champ, and, a Covenanter Bridge laying Vehicle.

All these vehicles are either roadworthy or are in the process of being made so.

With this in mind the museum is always on the lookout for any vehicles which served in the Australian Armoured Corps during previous conflicts, which may be able to be restored to running condition. This brings me to the subject of this article.

In 1997 rumour was circulating around the groups interested in such things that there existed a Matilda Tank somewhere down in the Southern Highlands. Two of the volunteers Dave Crisp and Gordon Ayres from the museum decided to travel down to Moss Vale to see if they could find it and see if it was worth rescuing and if it was, was it for sale? After spending some time searching without success they decided to return to Sydney but not before visiting the local pub for a bit of refreshment, well one thing led to another and they got talking to some of the locals who knew of the tank and put them on the right track.

Dave and Gordon visited the farm, spoke to the owner and viewed the Tank. Apart from being half full of water and just about everything else from the surrounding bush, it appeared to be reasonably complete although the turret was missing. The farmer was interested in selling so the boys, took some details from the tank, paid a deposit and returned home.

At the next Committee meeting they relayed the details to those present and were dumbfounded to hear the Association President, Les Betts, say “ that’s the tank I drove in Borneo (Kalimantan) during the war! There followed a quick trip back to the farm with the rest of the money and she was transported to SME (School of Military Engineering) for storage whilst money was raised for her restoration. Our thanks to the Army for the transport of the tank.

“ACE” served with the Royal NSW Lancers during the South Pacific Campaign against the Japanese 1943-1945 in New Guinea and Borneo. It took part in the largest combat deployment of Australian Armour at Balikpapan in July 1945.

When restoration is complete, “ACE” is to become a memorial to the Lancers who lost their lives in the defence of Australia in the Pacific.

It is believed that “ACE” was the last tank to be returned to Australia at the end of the war.

It took some time to raise the amount of funds required to begin the restoration however this was achieved and work began in earnest in early 2011 and has progressed steadily to the present time. I am very pleased to relate that completion is close at hand. More on this in the next newsletter.

Paul Martyn-Jones JP 12th Class VM Army Apprentice



Reserve Forces Day Parade – Sydney 5 July 2015

On a perfect winter's morning, members of the many unit and formation associations assembled in Hyde Park in anticipation of the annual Reserve Forces Day Parade. As final preparations were being made in the assembly area, the Association Standard Bearers, with their partners, were attending a morning tea at Government House. This function was hosted by the State Governor; representatives of State and Federal Government and senior defence officers and recognised the contribution and dedication of the Standard Bearers.

Additionally, a numbers of Reservists were presented with their WW I descendants medallion.



With orders for the associations to form up in College Street being effectively drowned out by the bells of St Mary's Cathedral, there was much shuffling as contingents moved to their allocated positions in the parade column using auto-pilot from yester years.

Preceded by a selection of heritage armoured vehicles and a detachment of the Historical Mounted Troops the parade marched into Macquarie Street before wheeling back to halt in front of the Government House.

The Reviewing Officer was the NSW Governor, GEN David Hurley, AC, DSC (Ret).

A feature of the ceremony was the unveiling of a new Standard to commemorate the ANZAC and the Gallipoli Campaign.

Thank you to those members of our Corps who attended to be part of this event. Special thanks to Julio Cibilis, our Standard Bearer, our Banner Party; Lyall Iddles and George Whieldon and Mrs Jamieson who so kindly secured our banner accessories during the march.

Arte et Marte



CHP Book Launch







Photos by Stefan Hreszczuk

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Report on RAEME Luncheon 13th August

Something new

The Committee decided to try something new as a way of a social gathering for Corps members their families and mates. The basis of the idea was for a person to volunteer to coordinate a venue for lunch and with the assistance of the Association invite as many people as we could contact.

I was the first volunteer and arranged for a lunch on Thursday 13 August at the Camden Country Club. I approached the Club, of which I am a member, and they were very supportive of the idea and did all they could to assist.

Cost

The cost of the afternoon was entirely up to the individual, you paid for what you ate and drank.

Acceptances/feedback

The idea of the function was well received, with 50 responses of support and with inabilities requesting they be kept in the loop for future functions.

The event

For our first attempt we drew 27 people, made up of Association members, non -association members, their wives/partners and a couple of mates. It was a very successful afternoon with the essential ingredients of, good company, good food and cold beer.

We were blessed with a beautiful day and great views over Camden Valley, with my wife and I providing commentary on the fastest growing area in NSW and the fast expanding housing and industrial estates.

Future events

We are thinking 3 such functions a year would be a good idea. But that is entirely up to you. We need your feedback,

- is it a good idea,
- what is the best day of the week
- how often, and
- any other suggestions you might have.

Next volunteer please

So if you want to volunteer to coordinate the next get together, and get some brownie points with your Club or Pub let us know.

We will settle on a date far enough in advance to allow for advertising, and assist you wherever possible.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Winston Coles OAM
Vice President

Corps History - Post Script

Tunza Gutz

While doing my initial perusal of the Corps History, I was taken by a story out of the Vietnam era regarding a particular recovery vehicle.

The story of the battle for Fire Base Coral in May 1968 is well known as one of the epic battles by Australian Forces in the SVN theatre. For members of our Corps, the part played by recovery vehicle ; “Tunza Gutz” (Truck Wrecker 5 Ton GS M543) and its tenacious crew is the stuff that legends are made of and has been faithfully retold in the Corps History.

The story in the Corps History concludes with the caption that “*Following her repatriation Tunza Gutz rendered valued service in various parts of Australia before retirement and now resides in the Bandiana Army Museum*”

To add a personal postscript to this story, in the late 1970’s I was posted as OC 2 Recov Pl - 2 EME SVC UNIT. One of the unit recovery vehicles was none other than Tunza Gutz. However the final irony in this story was that my WO2 Training was WO2 Ian Rowe, who as Craftsman Rowe, crewed Tunza during the battle for FSB Coral and was part of the amazing job of restoring the vehicle to operational condition despite the very extensive damage sustained during a mortar attack.

Tunza was an invaluable resource for training the personnel of 2 Recovery Platoon and it was a sad day when she was finally retired and relocated to the Bandiana Museum. A fitting end to an amazing tale.

Arte et Marte
Brendan Robertson

CONTACTS FOR YOUR ASSOCIATION

Please remember to contact us if you change your postal or email address. Any of the following contact points will enable you to notify us of any change in your details. Or, just drop us a line to let us know what information you might like in the newsletters or just have a chat.

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