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The Purple Circle

Editor: Ian Johnston. Contact 9448 5590

Autumn Edition 2015



The building of the new School of Military Engineering

Next Meetings

Our next meeting will be held on 19th April (pre Anzac Day) at the Ryan Club, Karrakatta. Meeting to start at 1100 hrs. Lunch will be provided following the meeting.

After that, the next meeting is planned for 14th Jun.

Sick Parade

Kevin Bruce, a member of 55 Engineer Works and Parks Squadron in Vietnam, has not been well for some time.

Jim Kimberley was laid up for a few weeks before Christmas but is up and about again.

Mick Ryan is having ongoing treatment and still has his good and bad days depending on when his treatment is.

Seamus Doherty is having a long battle with illness. The doctors have found further complications to his ongoing battle.

Peter (Flex) Billington is not travelling to good at the moment. He is in and out of hospital having treatment.

Passing Parade

Paul O'Connor passed away on 2 Mar 2015. Paul was aged 59 years. He was a serving member of 13 Field Squadron in the late 70's - 80's.

Anthony Raymond (Danny) Kay passed away on 11 Mar 2015. Danny was aged 63 years. He was a 23rd Intake Apprentice and served with 22 Const Sqn.

John Romilly (Jack) Hovey passed away on 9 Mar 2015. Jack served with 13 Fd Company during WWII in NT and New Britain. In 2013 Jack reached his 100th birthday milestone. Jack was an Association member.

William Thomas (Bill) Peart passed away on 21 Feb 2015. Bill served in WWII with 4th Aust Fd Svy and 2nd Aust Fd Svy. Bill was an Association member.

Honours and Awards

Geoffrey Pierce SIMPSON was awarded the 'Order of Australia Medal (OAM)' in the General Division. Geoff is the Honorary Corps Commander in Western Australia. Congratulations Geoff, a well deserved award.

IN MEMORY OF

John Romilly (Jack) Hovey



Jack Hovey was born on 8th November 1913 in West Coolup to English migrant parents who settled in Pinjarra. Jack was one of six children (all deceased) and was a keen sportsman excelling in athletics, cycling and football. His first job after leaving school was as a switchboard operator at the Pinjarra Post office. He worked on the railways for a short time before taking a mining job in Kalgoorlie.

Jack met his future wife, Susanna Gilbert from Boulder, while she was working as a housekeeper in Pinjarra. When Jack started work in Kalgoorlie, Susanna followed him and they married on 19th June 1940. The following year, his first daughter Judith was born.

With the outbreak of WWII, Jack felt it was his duty to serve his country, so with his wife and baby daughter, he moved to Perth. Jack wanted to join the RAAF but was told to come back later. Having a family to support and no job, a friend encouraged him to join the RAE as they were looking for experienced workers with farming and mining skills. Jack enlisted on 11th March 1942 and on 16th, commenced his training with 13 Field Coy.

13 Field Coy served in the Northern Territory and in New Britain where, along with general Field Engineer type work, one of their responsibilities was overseeing Japanese prisoners of war. Jack was promoted to Sergeant in June 1945. Not long after, Jack was sent home on compassionate leave when his wife and daughter were involved in a car accident. Whilst on leave, the war ended and Jack did not return to duty.

After demobilisation, Jack and his family moved to Mt Hawthorn and he started work in the hospitality industry, managing the Melbourne Hotel in Perth. In 1946, a second daughter, Susanne was born. At one stage, Jack tried his hand at bore water drilling for farmers but that did not work out, so he returned to what he knew best and worked at the Anzac Club, then North Beach Hotel and finally as Bar Manager at the John Barleycorn Hotel where he worked until he retired. After many house moves, Jack and his family finally settled in Nollamara.

Jack passed away on 9th March 2015 aged 101 years. He is survived by his 2 daughters and sons in law, 8 grand children , 15 great grand children and 3 great-great grand children.

LEST WE FORGET

VALE SARBI

Explosives Detection Dog **SARBI** passed away on Friday 27th March. Whilst in Afghanistan, Sarbi went AWOL after being involved in a bitter battle with the enemy. Some 13 months later, a US soldier spotted a black Labrador in a village near where the battle took place.

A quick check of her microchip by vets in Tarin Kowt, confirmed the dog was Sarbi.



Sarbi and handler David Simpson

RAE getting well deserved recognition



Sapper Ben White and EDD Domino of 1st Combat Engineer Regiment conducting a simulated route clearance as they lead the Welcome Home Parade in Darwin last year

Did You Know

Have you been to Toodyay Lately ???

In April 1942, 4 *Inf Div* arrived from Victoria to defend WA and *HQ W Comd* was expanded to *HQ 3 Aust Corps*. 2 *Inf Div* arrived from NSW in July and 1 *Armd Div* started to arrive in October. General Gordon Bennett had his *CorpsHQ* at Mt Lawley, in relative comfort in what is now Perth College. However he needed an alternate HQ where he could operate in case of an invasion, and he chose Toodyay. In July 1942 a detachment from 22 *Army Fd Coy* moved to Toodyay to construct a Signals Centre and *CoyHQ* joined them in September, while the rest of the company was building bridges at Toodyay, New Norcia and Moora as well as huts at Narrogin and Harvey.

The Signals Centre consisted of the main building which was dug into the hillside and surrounded by a raised bund. Further around the hill were four dugouts which were completely buried and used as a mess (5.6m x 10.9m), two sleeping rooms (5.6m x 6m) and an office (5.6m x 4.9m). These were connected by 77 metres of buried communication trench. The Signals Centre was completed and camouflaged by December and company moved onto other projects.



On 12th December 1942, *Adv CorpsHQ* left Mt Lawley and moved to Toodyay, setting up in the area around the Signals Centre and took over the running of the Corps. They returned to Mt Lawley on 14th and the Standing Orders for such a move were amended to take account of the experience. The Signals Centre was manned on standby until late 1943, by when the chances of an attack on WA were minimal, but it was retained on a care and maintenance basis until the end of the war. To take

advantage of the post war market for building materials, the buildings were offered for auction on 16th February 1946 and the site was forgotten.

Over the years the dugouts have been used to dump rubbish, but the Toodyay Shire has recently cleaned them up, constructed a path through the site and are placing interpretative signs to explain the significance. Hopefully they will highlight the role played by the Sappers of 22 *Army Fd Coy*. So if you feel like a trip to the country, go out to Toodyay, ask at the Tourist Bureau for directions and tell them you are a proud Sapper. While you are there try out the coffee at The Coca Cola Café and Museum,

Some Old Faces



Sapper Peter (Flex) Billington in Sabah, Borneo 1966



13 Fd Sqn Officers & SNCO's - 1988

Sappers at Work in 2014

Army Aboriginal Community Assistance Program (AACAP)



Sappers of 17 Construction Squadron, 6 Engineer Support Regiment, conducted AACAP in the remote indigenous communities of Wutunugurra and Canteen Creek some two and half hours drive east-south east of Tennant Creek. From the picture above of CAMP BIRT, it appears that 'living in the field' conditions have not improved much over the last 40 years.

Some Things Never Change



Sappers of 1 Field Squadron, 1st Combat Engineer Regiment constructing a culvert during Ex Predators Crawl. Typical: 4 workers and 4 supervisors.

General

Moving Day



Preparing to load the 'double-single' Bailey Bridge exhibit for transportation from SME Casula to its new home at SME Holsworthy.

Eating in the 50's

Pasta was not eaten in Australia

Curry was a surname

A takeaway was a mathematical problem

A pizza was something to do with a leaning tower

Rice was eaten as a milk pudding

Calamari was called squid and used as fish bait

A Big Mac was what you wore when it was raining

Oil was for lubricating, fat was for cooking

Tea was made in a teapot using tea leaves and never green

Giving a Helping Hand

MiVAC (mine victims and clearance), set up by veterans of the Vietnam War to clear mines and minefields around local villages in Vietnam and Laos, have undertaken other humanitarian projects in Laos.

Peter Perry is the project manager for one of the latest MiVAC projects to deliver clean fresh water to 9 villages in the Phonsovan region of Laos.



A picture is better than a thousand words - smiling faces of locals in the village of Ban Naxaythong watch as clean fresh gravity fed water reached their village. This is not the end of the work for this village, the next stage is to build a holding tank and to run a reticulation system with water outlet points throughout the town so the villagers can have access to clean fresh water.

Planning is well under way to bring water to the next 2 villages.

Caught by today's technology

He: Hi Babe, what are you doing?

She: Nothing much, I'm really tired. Just going to sleep now. And you?

He: In the night club standing right behind you!

Fund Raising

Over the last 3 years, the Association has been fund raising by manning the sausage sizzle facilities at Bunnings. On Sunday 8th February, we had the privilege of using the facilities at Bunnings, Malaga. Thank you to all the helpers who gave up a couple of hours of their time to help cook and serve hot dogs and a special thanks to those who did a double shift. Even though it was a 41C degree day and trade was slow, the Association raised \$330 on the day.

WW2 Veterans and Widows Luncheon

On Tuesday 31st March, the Association invited our World War 2 veterans, wives and widows to "The Karalee on Preston" bar/restaurant in Como for lunch. A group of 13 including volunteer drivers attended and enjoyed a very nice 2 course lunch. It is a good way to bring as many of our older members together for a chat. Thanks to all the drivers who helped out

ANZAC DAY

As soon as we hear something about the planning for ANZAC Day, members will be notified. 13 Fd Sqn is waiting on word from 13 Brigade as to what the format will be this year. Most likely it will be the same as last year, Brigade Dawn Service on the oval and Engineer's Service after that at the Memorial.

Newsletters

Since sending out the Summer Edition of The Purple Circle, the Secretary and I have been reconciling our membership/ mailing lists and it appears that I may have missed a couple of members in the January mail out.

If you did not receive a copy of the Summer Edition and you would like a copy, please email me on.. ijoh2988@bigpond.net.au , or give me a ring on 08 9448 5590 and I will send a copy out to you.

Included in the Winter Edition will be the Membership Subs renewal form for the 2015-2016 financial year. As a gesture of good will, The Purple Circle will continue to be sent out to all on the old mailing list for the remainder of 2015. Anyone who is not a financial member at 31 December 2015, will not be entitled to a copy of The Purple Circle and will be deleted from the mailing list.

Contact Details

If you move house or change your contact details, please let Mr Secretary or myself know. It makes getting in contact with you much easier.