



# The RAEME Association Tasmania Newsletter

**November 2007**

**Issue 7**

The RAEME Association (Tasmania) Inc.

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## Welcome

Welcome Bluebells to our seventh edition of the RAT Newsletter.

We are nearly to the end of another year which means that the RAEME birthday is to be celebrated once again. This year we will be celebrating the birthday in the north and south, members would have received a flier on this by now.

The second half of the year has been reasonably quiet. The mid year function at the Claremont has been and gone, once again a good night and it was good to see

some old facers from the past. There is a report and photos later in the newsletter.

Most members would not be aware that Colonel Terry Beaton our COL COMDT tendered his resignation in September this year, I'm not sure who his replacement will be but he sure will certainly have big shoes to fill and he will be sadly missed by the Rat's.

Have a great Christmas bluebells and see you on the 9<sup>th</sup>.

ARTE ET MARTE

## Colonel Commandant's Report – 2007

Greetings to All,

It was with the deepest regret that I tendered my resignation as both the Colonel Commandant (RAEME) -Victoria and Tasmanian Region and as Corps Historian to BRIG David Welch on Saturday, 1 Sep 07, effective from 30 Sep 07, due to health and welfare demands of ageing parents.

BRIG Welch reluctantly accepted my resignation on Monday, 3 Sep 07, but requested that my departure be delayed until the end of October 2007, to permit my attendance at the Corps Conference, where he intended to deliver a vote of appreciation to all departing Colonel Commandants. Unfortunately, I was unable to accept this kind offer due to my current domestic situation. Moreover, I felt that my earlier departure would permit another volunteer to be elected, who could then attend the Corps Committee Meeting and Conference, thereby being in a better position to continue the rebuilding of "Corps Ethos" within this Region.

Unbelievably the passing of my Mother on 25 Jun 07, set of a string of deaths touching our family, as well as health and welfare issues associated with ageing "outlaws" and friends. It has "knocked me for six" and drained me of enough willpower and motivation for me to recognize that I can no longer give the same level of commitment to the Corps, nor dedicate myself to the role of Colonel Commandant; especially as I have never been content to just be a token figurehead - which has sometimes upset former Corps members.

As a volunteer looking after the Veteran Community, we are taught that family comes first and as such I must now concentrate on my family before "the Corps".

Termination of my duties at the end of this month will still enable me to complete my current obligations with two activities associated with 3 Recovery Company.

Having recently enjoyed the warm hospitality and friendship of the RAEME Association of Tasmania at their Annual Dinner, I cannot think of a better Victorian unit of "Bluebells" with whom to end my time as Colonel Commandant.

I sincerely hope that all the hard work by everybody over the last three years will continue.

I urge everybody to support the Victorian Association's 2007 RAEME Corps Dinner on 30 Nov 07 and hope that the annual "RAEME Day of Remembrance" will be continued by Regional Groups, despite my departure as its instigator.

Hopefully when things settle down on the domestic front, I will be able to offer my support again to help "Corps Brothers" and their families.

I wish everybody good health, happiness and safety, and truly thank all those who have diligently supported me throughout my thoroughly enjoyable and very rewarding time as Colonel Commandant.

Yours – "With skill"

Terry Beaton

**Colonel**

**Colonel Commandant (RAEME)**

**VIC & TAS Region**

On behalf of the RAT Association we sincerely thank Terry and wish him well - Ed

### **Rat's mid year dinner**

Once again the mid year dinner was held at the Claremont RSL on Saturday the 7<sup>th</sup> July 2007.

The numbers were up this year with 47 members and partners attending an outstanding night. From all reports everyone had a great night.

Once again our COL COMDT Colonel Terry Beaton attended as well as LT COL Michael Buldo Directorate of Technical Regulations –Army. Both passed on their appreciation and thanked everyone for their kind hospitality.

I have attached photos at the end of the newsletter for perusal.

### **RAEME Birthday**

By now you would have received your invitation for 65<sup>th</sup> RAEME birthday on **Sunday the 9<sup>th</sup> December 2007.**

As mentioned this will be celebrated in both Hobart and Launceston, and, hopefully with a bit of luck in Devonport at the RSL.

Numbers were down last year could all members make an effort to attend the birthday.

### **RAEME Day of Remembrance**

As a reminder the RAEME Day of Remembrance will be held on Sunday the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 2008. A flier will be sent out in January regarding the venue.

### **Weekend at the Fort**

I know it has been mentioned before, but it is on next year, a weekend at Fort Direction. It is proposed to book the

camping site around mid March possibly the 15-16.

It is also proposed to extend an invitation to the Engineers Association, who has indicated that they would like to have combined functions with. A flier will be sent out closer to the venue.

### **Calendar 2008**

The RAT calendar will not be distributed till early January 2008.

### **12 Field Squadron RAE 20 year reunion.**

12 FD SQN had a 20 year reunion during the weekend 16-17 Nov 07. As most of you would be aware the SQN was disbanded in Nov 87 to make way for the formation of 12/40 RTR.

On the Saturday night ex-members attended a dinner at the Polish Club which included viewing of all the old memorabilia. I was advised that 100 persons attended the dinner which included partners.

I was fortunate enough to attend the Engineers reunion at "The Lair" on Sunday the 17<sup>th</sup> November 07. I had not seen some members for over 20 years and believe me, the stories got bigger and better.

### **6 LSC Jottings December 2006 to June 2007 – WO1 Tony Rich - ASM**

6 LSC have been busy plodding along doing the usual array of workshop tasks. It is pleasing to note that the workshop attendances are improving and as such we are trying to distance ourselves from the mundane admin short notice tasking that come out from Battalion HQ and concentrate more on production. To this end we have been most successful in completing quite a few vehicle repairs over the last few months.

We have also reached a milestone agreement with our cousins JLU V H (down the bottom) which will only improve the speed of which 2 FSB can get its equipment repaired. If it is likely to be a long delay before TTDL can action this then we are looking at loan pool action. This is a terrific turnaround and thanks to Shane Rollins and Dave Bachelor for this. The other point in question with the vehicles is that of being 22 years old we don't have to make them new just being able to comply with Tasmanian State road law as well as the TRF is enough to keep the fleet with its user base.

Keeping the 44 Transport Squadron soldiers in their trucks is our game, if they have a few outstanding tasks, well so be it. We will keep them with the owners/users for as long as possible with catch up work later. This will allow TTDL to "catch up" and keep 2 FSB soldiers in their trucks.

We have recently started the replacement plan for the Mack R Series wheel studs, this is an Australian fleet wide change, as over the years the amount of stud breakages has been cause for real concern During the last 3 weeks 6 LSC have completed three Macks with 44 Workshop north completing two. It is a fairly involved job but nothing the use of a large hammer does not fix.

During the last few months the LSC has deployed with 44 Transport Squadron again on their activities which has been of great benefit to the truckies. This was even more so when the Transport Squadron hosted a quiz night from all the sub units in attendance and the Blue Bells came through in first place. Unfortunately the question of "Who is the Head of Corp RACT?" with the answer by the ASM of "Who Cares" was not really allowed. But we still trumped them even though the questions were truckie orientated.

During the last two weeks we have completed a Land Rover 6 x6 course (Geemers) which has given the workshop 4 new drivers. This means that the likes of Knobby and the ASM don't have to drive any more, hooray.

With a sad note it is time to farewell WO2 Nige Bellette and CPL Steve Browning, Nige is of for a demotion to Captain at ALTC Development wing and Steve is of to Townsville to 3 CSSB. We wish them well. As a part of this report is Nige and Andies Club Timor story. Makes great reading, but the pictures are better.... Especially of Andy Mcshane.....

Any way that's all for now, with skill and by fighting.

### **ANDY AND NIGE'S EXCELLENT ADVENTURE IN TIMOR LESTE**

What has an ARA RAEME Warrant Officer and a GRES RAEME Captain really have in common? One thing is a desire to serve the nation and deploy to sometimes undesirable places to perform their duty, as well as being brothers in the Corps of course.

In March 2007 Captain Andy McShane and myself, WO2 Nige Bellette, both of 6<sup>th</sup> Logistic Support Company, 2<sup>nd</sup> Force Support Battalion did just that by getting a gurnsey on Operation Astute, the ADF's Stabilization force in Timor Leste. Andy is an ex ARA WO and now a Tasmania Police Officer by trade and I am the Training WO for 6 LSC.

Andy was originally slotted to deploy as a watch keeper for the Joint Task Force 631 HQ and I was deployed into Contract Management Cell as the vehicle planner. We were both excited to be going overseas, Andy had deployed to Timor before in the INTERFET days and this was my first deployment.

As with all deployments a force preparation course was conducted, in this case we had to go to Townsville to learn all about Rules of Engagement, get a country brief and to do some language training.

Then it was back to Hobart for a couple of days before heading to Darwin and on to Timor Leste. Andy had to wait for just over a week before following me as there were a number of small admin problems to sort out.

Timor Leste had come a long way since the INTERFET days with relative stability and free elections occurring. However in March 2006, those West Timorese members of the Army (the FFDL) deserted because they believed they were being discriminated against by the Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri. This, the murder of a number of police officers by the Army, as well other political factors, resulted in widespread violence and the displacement of around 100 000 Timorese people. Dili was again the scene of many atrocities. Australia's response was to send in a Stabilization Force of Kiwis and Aussies to restore order under the banner of Operation Astute.

When I first landed I was issued Ammunition, Body amour and Helmet and taken to what was to be my home for the next six months, Camp Phoenix, which was located in the South East of Dili near the palace of Ashes and Dili Stadium. Living conditions consisted of air-conditioned containers and my workspace was in reality a huge grass hut. I had a two day handover/takeover and then hooked into my job. This was, in essence, as a liaison officer between the Army workshop at the heliport and the civilian contractor, in this case Patricks Defence Logistics (PDL). PDL was basically the Third and Fourth (or for all those old blokes, the Base repair)

line maintenance facility. So I would visit PDL workshops a couple of times a day to collect the quotes for work and to generally ensure that they were doing the right thing by us. A secondary task was to manage the hire vehicle fleet for the Commander. When I first arrived there were about 30 or so civilian 4x4 hire vehicles that had been leased to allow certain units to move around the AO easier due to a shortage of green fleet vehicles and licensed drivers. This soon rose to 60 plus and was costing around US\$200 000.00 a month so it quickly became a full time job. There were two RAEME soldiers running the maintenance section and my offsider was a reservist from Brisbane.

When Andy arrived he was, due to some ongoing admin issues, re-tasked with being the Liaison Officer to the Commander of the JTF, BRIG Mal Rerden. This consisted of preparing briefs, organizing appointments and generally making sure the Brigadier was kept informed of all the issues happening within the JTF. Andy got to go to all the big government functions, travel all over Timor Leste and generally swan around, not bad for a RAEME bloke who was supposed to be doing what was essentially eight hour radio piquet's as a watch keeper. As is normal for Andy he received glowing reports from everyone on the job he did for the Boss.

When Andy was finally placed into his deployed position as a watch keeper he was able to organize his shifts so that he could fill in for either me or my offsider when either one of us was away on leave. So we started knocking around together and generally getting up to the kinds of mischief that only RAEME blokes can. This included but was not limited to the mass production of slingshots, finding the cheapest DVD shops and organizing many BBQs. At around the three and a half month mark of our six month tour, my

offsider had to return to Australia for work reasons so Andy was asked to juggle two jobs and ride with me full time.

So our day would start at 0700 with an hour of PT, then breakfast and the compulsory orders groups etc. At around 0900 we would be on the road with weapons, body armour, helmets and a brand new Pajero to start our first round of visits. Normally we would start with the PDL Workshop and normally would drop our washing off to a Timorese girl who would wash, dry and iron our stuff for \$2.50 a load, which was a good deal in any language. After moping around the workshop for a while we would need to go to RENTLO the hire car company and check on the servicing, washing and serviceability stats of our hired fleet. The two nice looking office assistants had nothing whatsoever to do with us frequently dropping in to RENTLO.

RENTLO, incidentally, was owned by Sebastio and Sandra. Sebastio was Timorese and Sandra was Timorese/Portugese and seemed to spend more time in Australia shopping than in Timor. We would spend a couple of hours at RENTLO socializing and maybe having lunch before popping over the road to the DVD store for our daily look at what new movies were in. As we were RAEME we were tasked with running the brew club so Andy and I were always on the lookout for bargains in the soft drink, chips and chocky departments around Dili and we spent many hours finding little out of the way shops and bargaining for a good deal. Some days we would drop into the Heliport or to the Airport where the 'Special' boys were to see how they were going. The RAEME blokes at SF were doing the Corps proud too with nothing too hard for them to achieve to keep their particular heavily modified civilian fleet on the road.

Later in the afternoon when we had finished all the work and socializing we would drop into a local restaurant/ bar for a coke or two. Alcohol was off limits and despite being tempted Andy and I did not touch a drop.

Often there would be trips outside of Dili with the Engineers and we ended up traveling all over the country to outlying Forward Operating Bases, basically on escort duty, but it was a good way to see things. One trip involved us flying with the Kiwi Air force to the Eastern end of Timor up around Los Palos to deliver a battery for one of the hire fleet. We did some awesome tactical flying through creek beds etc and everyone was fine but when we started flying straight and level Andy decided he didn't really want his lunch and donated it to his bush hat which then escaped out the door on top of a Timorese mountain. Also of concern on that particular trip was that it was only as we were just taking off that we both realized that it was Friday the 13th and the co-pilot was a trainee having his first bash at tactical flying!

There were some real jobs to be done as well as the bludging off. Both Andy and I were involved in controlling a number of rock fights and in one particular instance administering first aid to a local who had been shot in the eye with an arrow whilst rocks and I assume other arrows were being hurled around us.

My tour ended in early September and Andy's about a fortnight later. Having never been to Timor Leste before I found it great for the first couple of months as it was all new and exciting, after that though it did drag on a bit and eventually I was glad to be home. Andy found the changes in and around Dili quite large as the last time he was there the place was fairly messy.

To wrap it up, both Andy and myself thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. It was evident that the work we were doing in Timor Leste was producing real benefits for the Timorese people as even in the six months we were there the incidents of violence, murder and crime dropped considerably. As RAEME soldiers it was great to be appreciated for just that and it was a nice feeling when other Corps would come and see the Spanners because they knew we had the resourcefulness to find strange items, hunt out the best DVDs, organize a beach trip or BBQ and to, god forbid, give sound technical advice when required.

#### ARTE ET MARTE

#### **23<sup>rd</sup> Class Army Apprentices 40<sup>th</sup> Reunion**

On Australia Day 2008 the 23<sup>rd</sup> class of Army Apprentices (1968 – 1970) will gather in Hobart for their fortieth reunion. The local committee comprises Paul BARRATT, John LENNOX, Danny REID, Jon ATKINSON, Nev THOMAS (all RAEME) and Steve BRAMICH, Russ MONTGOMERY and Gary EVANS (RAE).

The committee has had an overwhelming response and to date over 60 ex apprentices and their partners are traveling down. Notable among the group is Ken GILLESPIE a former bricklayer now Deputy Chief of the Defense Forces. We anticipate further replies nearer the event.

The Tassie Committee have gone to great lengths to make this a memorable event and have arranged social events at “The Lair”, Claremont RSL and Tolosa Park. In addition they have created two very special mementoes for each participant. Because of the RATS newsletter circulation, these cannot be revealed at this time.

JL will provide a report on the reunion in the next newsletter – ed.

#### **10<sup>th</sup> Class Army Apprentices Reunion**

In mid December the 10<sup>th</sup> Class will gather in Albury Wodonga for a reunion.

Col Fogarty, a well known RAT member, has been active in organizing the reunion is looking forward to renewing old acquaintances.

Col will provide a report on the reunion along with photos in the next edition of the newsletter.

#### **Australian Army Apprentices Association (AAAA)**



Firstly, let me apologise for this very delayed Update, I do try to communicate with members (and others who care to read these ramblings) at least every couple of months. In my case, I have had my wife Val to care for following a couple of rather traumatic operations on her leg which has meant for the last 6 months she has been wheelchair bound and completely dependant upon me. Unfortunately, the situation does not show any sign of improvement in the near future. On top of that, I have had a hectic workload I have been trying to keep up with. Anyway, enough of my problems, I know that there are many of you out there in a worse situation.

The AGM was held in August and although understandable numbers were not high, we still had a reasonable turnout. Unfortunately, half an hour before the start

I had a call from my daughter that she had just called the ambulance to take Val, who was at home recovering from an operation, into emergency for what turned out to be a broken femur. President of Vice, Jack Westernhagen ably took the reins and the meeting proceeded smoothly. General Ken Gillespie, our Patron opened the meeting with an update of trade training in the Army today, followed by a presentation by Jack to the Association of a President's gavel. The proceedings, reports and motions that followed can be found in the Association web page ([www.austarmyapprentice.org](http://www.austarmyapprentice.org)).

At the last Committee Meeting, a number of issues were discussed:

1. Sponsorship and funding for the SPAASSM project (the digitising and cataloguing of apprentice images, film and print previously stored at the Army Museum but deteriorating from lack of resources. Now been passed to the Association under Peter Thorton and his Working Group and has been moved to the AWM were we have been given a work room);
  - a. Submissions have been made to the National Library of Australia grant program. (Missed out).
  - b. Peter is looking for a couple of additional workers to help out on the sorting and digitizing. This will only entail a half day a week or less. Anyone who can help Peter should contact him on

[peterthornton@grapevine.net.au](mailto:peterthornton@grapevine.net.au)

- c. We are waiting for the results of a submission to Chief of Army by our Patron for financial assistance to assist in commercially digitizing the collection.
- d. Ian will investigate the possibility of a loan of a suitable scanner from Cannon. (Cannon have now loaned a scanner for use in digitizing the collection if funding does not eventuate)
- e. If any apprentice can assist Peter in sponsorship please contact him with details so that a package can be negotiated.
- f. Funding has been made available to our Welfare Officer Russell Evans to have printed special sympathy cards from the Association and to cover his mailing costs. It is an unfortunate fact that we are seeing an increase in deaths from our ranks. Please let Russell know if you are aware of any seriously sick member, a death or if a member or spouse requires assistance in



- finding their way through the welfare web. If you find that the Vale Page of our web site is out of date please let Russell know.
- g. Membership procedure has been streamlined with the Treasurer Ray Wilson receiving applications, and issuing receipts and membership packages, then forwarding applications to Secretary Stephen Hladio for entry into the membership program.
- h. In the next 12 months the Constitution will again be visited in line with motions from the AGM to separate routine issues such as duty statements and membership procedures and include them into by-laws.
- i. Memorial. I reported on the initial approach to the Trustees of the Memorial Park at Bandiana as directed at the previous Committee Meeting. It would appear that there are no difficulties and I will be visiting the Park in early December
- with other Apprentices to select a site and to then prepare a submission to reserve the site. Our next steps will then be the design, costing, approval, fund raising, building and dedication. This site was selected as it provides a secure, maintained and permanent location appropriate for a memorial as it has other corps memorials in the park. It is also located across the road from the Army Museum that holds the Army Apprentice collection/display and has picnic and BBQ areas as part of the park.
- j. The reprinting of brochures and car stickers was approved as was a new run of membership badges. It was decided not to continue with the numbering of the badges and to investigate a slightly larger badge.
- k. Jack Westerhagen reported that the on-line memorabilia shop was open on the web page.

Chris Moon, our Heritage Officer has identified that the Balcombe back gates,

that were built by apprentice blacksmiths and are now located at the entrance to Bonagilla, and that Bonagilla now has no connection with Army Apprentices and indeed may be sold off. He has suggested that we look at their relocation to a more suitable site.

Coincidentally, our Promotions and PR Officer Frank Maloney has identified that 2008 marks 60 years of graduating Apprentices and has noted that this will probably be the last meaningful anniversary event that will be able to be attended by our early intakes. (Age takes its toll) Consequently, he has suggested that we should hold a 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration.

A straw poll indicated that this would be favorably received and initial planning has started with a working committee of Frank Maloney (Chair), Chris Moon, Bill Merton (Social Officer) and Ian Morris. Initially, it is envisaged that the major event will be held in October/November 2008 with the dedication of the Apprentice Memorial site at the Memorial Park, perhaps incorporating the gates, plaques and the trees/cuttings/plaques from the Latchford memorial drive (Time will determine what can be achieved). Much to be done and not much time but we will keep you updated by these Updates and the Web site. Funding is another factor and a separate sub-account has been opened specifically for memorial donations –HINT, HINT!!

I have suffered a major melt down on my computer and have lost, among other problems, my complete contact list of the apprentices that I send these updates out to, some 400 names. Consequently, in future I will only have our membership list to email out to and the posting to the Web site, so non-members will have to rely on the forwarding through the intake contact lists and on reading the web page. (Or of course they could actually join the Association!!)

The 10<sup>th</sup> intake are celebrating 50 years in December with a big reunion at Lake Hume, with visits the Army Museum and local Apprentice landmarks, plus BBQs and dinner. Barry Teal has worked hard to organize the function and it looks like about 70 will attend. Congratulations and good luck to the 10<sup>th</sup>.

Well that about it for me for now. Again my apologies and I hope to have the next Update out in January with planning information on the 60<sup>th</sup> celebrations.

Merry Christmas to you all and to your families and a happy and healthy 2008.

Frank Poole  
President  
Australian Army Apprentices Association Inc.

### **New Commanding Officer 2 FSB**

2FSB will have a new CO in December. LT COL Andrew Herbert (Herby) will assume command of 2 FSB. Herby is **RAEME** and has just returned from a six month tour in Iraq to take up his command.

I was fortunate enough to work with Herby in East Timor in 2001 as his ASM. Herby was a Captain at the time gained the respect of not only me, but all members of the WKSP, except the boys did get sick of CCR in the tape of his Landcruiser and climbing Herby's hill every Friday afternoon.

On behalf of the Rat's we wish Herby good luck in his new command.

### **VALE**

**67405 CFN Ernest Charles BARRETT  
1943-2007**

RAEME lost one of its old soldiers on the 30 June 2007, Ernie Barrett.

Ernie joined the CMF on the 21 May 74, initially with the RAA, he then joined 6 EME PL as a welder and served with the unit in Launceston until his discharge in 1988.

Ernie was always happy and had a permanent grin. He was well known for his bright civilian attire (a red suit if I remember). The troops always had to stand clear of Ernie after returning from the shower, he had a habit of spreading the powder, everywhere, and I mean everywhere (old powder puff).

Ernie will be sadly missed by the Rat's and in particular ex members of 6 EME PL.

Our condolences to Ernie's wife and family

### **Midlands Military Meet and Rendezvous 22-24 March 2008 at Campbell Town— a report by our Historian John Lennox**

It has been chairing a committee that is planning this major event in Easter 2008. It has taken on a life of its own and looks like being a boon to our tourist and locals alike.

Definitely on the programme are,

- A German Mountain Gun and crew
- Light Horse re enactors
- 702 AA Battery of 40mm Bofors with pyrotechnics (3 guns)
- 25 pdr gun and crew
- Over 20 veteran Military vehicles
- Numerous collector and club displays
- A varied speakers programme
- Southern Tas. Volunteer Artillery display and 6pd ML gun

- Competition events with old rifles on the range
- Dealer and trade displays
- Food stalls
- Cadets from all three services with varied displays, band and gun drill team

Negotiations are also continuing to determine the level of participation of Defence but hopefully that will include a M2A2 gun and detachment, an Infantry Section, Recovery Vehicles and Tasmania Police are in discussions with the organizers.

The whisper is there just might be a couple of A vehicles as well.

### **Summary**

I hope you have enjoyed some of the stories bluebells, Andy and Nigel's trip to Timor Leste reflects in my opinion the RAEME soldier. I hope that Herby can provide us with a report of his posting to Iraq in the next newsletter

Have a great Christmas.

### *Arte et Marte*

### Mid year function 2007

