



The word from the  
**Horse's Mouth**

The Newsletter of the RAEME Association of WA

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## What the Prez Sez

Welcome to the first edition of the Horses Mouth for 2021 and my first as President.

I think it is fair to say that 2020 has been one of those years where it is best left to whinge it about in the boozer, rather than remember it fondly. Despite this we have actually had a surprisingly successful 2020. I deal with the specifics below but we had the largest ever turn outs for the Spanner Weekend at Stino and Kerry's, the AGM at the IBIS and the AGM at the Baysie. Could it be possible that the average spanner actually enjoys a challenge as it gives us a chance to pull together, overcome adversity and still have a good whinge afterwards?

Anyway hopefully 2021 will be a better year. We already have the IBIS booked for ANZAC Day and there is some talk about having a Regi Dinner, possibly at the new ANZAC House. No need to get the new mess dress either as the brass have decided that the all ranks black

one was a mistake and we have moved back to whites and scarlets (OK ours is blue black but you know what I mean) Will stable belts and Patrol Blues make a similar comeback - watch this space (and sorry to the gun plumbers, there are no plans to return to the SLR)

Big things are afoot at 13 Bde. While officially XLH are raising another independent Sqn and the Ginger Beers another troop, this seems to be the thin edge of the wedge with very strong rumours of a large influx of ARA and a real growth of capability for the first time in decades. There is even talk of a Spiderman Exercise to the North West mid next year. Of course the first things we think of in this space is "and how are they going to maintain this stuff" and "tech supports seem back on the table" Time will tell

Any way enough of me, now over to someone who actually makes sense (as he was an ASM before going over the dark side) Dick.

## *From the Secretary*

At the last AGM I was elected as the new Secretary for the association and would like to thank Perry for his work as secretary for the last four years. Also thanks must go to Reg Francis for his continual support of the association with a generous donation with his membership fees. The donation is normally funded by royalties from the books he has written. He currently is working on the history of 101 Field Workshops.

## *AGM*

The AGM was held on Saturday October 31<sup>st</sup> at the IBIS Hotel in Perth. It was a great venue and the largest turnout in years. Not a lot of changes in the Committee apart from Dick and me swapping roles but hopefully we can get some new blood in next year. There are a couple of LTs down at 113 who need to be introduced..... The following members were elected to the committee:

<b>President</b>	Perry Beor
<b>Vice President</b>	Peter Collins
<b>Treasurer</b>	Peter Sills-Ohlsen
<b>Secretary</b>	Dick Fenton
<b>Webmaster</b>	Alex Smithers
<b>Editor Horse's Mouth</b>	Perry Beor
<b>113 Fd Wksp Rep</b>	Graham Coles
<b>Merchandise</b>	Peter Sills-Ohlsen
<b>Social</b>	Phil Pitchers
<b>Committee member</b>	Matthew Simpson

## *RAEME Birthday*

The RAEME Birthday celebration was once again held at the Bayswater Hotel and was a great success with over 40 people attending. A number of members were quite pleased that having a railway station outside the front door made transport considerably easier, especially after one or two... at last count we had 6 ex OCs of 113 attending, four ASMs and enough real spanners to maintain a full brigade's worth of gear

## *RAEME Get Together*

Another successful RAEME Family get together was held at Chateau Stinson in Barragup near Mandurah over the weekend Fri 25th Sept – Sun 28th Sept 2020. The event was well attended over the weekend. Some people stayed for the whole weekend with others paying day visits to fit in with their busy schedule.

The weekend started off at the Pinjarra RSL on Friday evening where a few drinks and stories were told. It was great to see so many RAEME from different decades and even different services (We felt bad for the Navy MT Clanky... so we let him play with us for the evening... I mean everyone is allowed to make a mistake every now and then! Right????).



We were all fortunate enough to be entertained by a Bush Poet that was arranged by the RSL. The Poems and music were very entertaining. The show was unique and not something many folk will have the opportunity to experience again, which is sad. A big thank you to the RSL for supporting our get together.

After returning to the Chateau, a few more bebies were sent down range... not too many... I think? We all retired at a respectable hour early Saturday morning.

Saturday morning saw us up early for a beautiful, cooked breakfast. We all shuffled off to a Private Museum of military memorabilia. This little treasure is located in a secret location not far from Pinjarra. Chris, the curator (see image below on the right) who put together this little gem was kind enough to allow us to go poking around the treasure trove of equipment he has collected over the years. It was brilliant to see some of the equipment in the museum that was last operated in WA.







We then moved onto the new Pinjarra War Memorial that was initially planned to be officially opened this Anzac Day however due to Covid, it has now been deferred to Armistice Day. We then moved onto the suspension bridge that was constructed by 22 Construction Engineers in 1985... Believe it or not... it is still in use!



We all returned to the Chateau for christen Grant Stinson Birthday/Father's Day present. A sensation outdoor fireplace which pays homage to the Army and its Corps. This was followed by a cooked dinner and we all settled in to catch up with old acquaintances and share a couple of be vies...



A great evening was had by all! As good RAEME folk we are, after we sated our thirst and listened and told stories we called it quits early Sunday morning.... The following morning was met with plenty of coffee and another cooked breakfast... A dam good way to start a Sunday! We said our goodbyes and are looking forward to the next get together.

A very big thank you to Grant & Kerry Stinson who arranged and put us all up for the weekend. It was another successful get together. Grant & Kerry are looking to do another weekend same time next year and would love to see more RAEME folks together. So keep an eye out for the next invitation.

<https://wa.raeme.org.au/index.php/publications/photo-gallery/raeme-family-get-together-2020>

## *Anzac House*

THE official opening of ANZAC House Veteran Central was a great success, with a full capacity of 180 VIP guests, Sub-Branch representatives and other veterans in attendance.

The Governor of Western Australia, Hon. Kim Beazley AC and WA Premier, Hon. Mark McGowan MLA, gave impressive speeches endorsing RSLWA as the national pioneer of one-stop shop Veteran care. Federal Minister for Veterans Affairs, Darren Chester, also sent through a special video message to support the Veteran Central model. The new plaque was officially unveiled by the Governor and RSLWA State President, Peter Aspinall AM.

While ANZAC House Veteran Central is now open, it will take the start of the New Year for all Veteran service providers to be up and running, given the delay in the completion of the building and fit-out. That said, Veterans and their families will be able to access a range of support services including, but not limited to:

- 🕒 Medical
- 🕒 Dental
- 🕒 Mental Health and Wellbeing
- 🕒 Advocacy and Welfare
- 🕒 Hearing
- 🕒 Physiotherapy
- 🕒 Financial Counselling
- 🕒 Transition & Employment support

The planned Poppy Café on the ground floor is expected to be ready for opening by Christmas and will be a great place for Veterans and family members to relax in an inclusive environment.

## Anzac Club

THE new ANZAC Club is open for business and there has already been a steady stream of Members and guests enjoying the new facility. It's located on the First Floor of ANZAC House, with lovely views of the Government House gardens.

Access the ANZAC Club website (<https://anzacclub.org.au>) for details. For phone bookings, please call the ANZAC Club on 9287 3777.

## Listening Post

**The Listening Post** is Perth's only radio program especially for Defence Force personnel, past and present, their families and friends, **broadcasting each Monday from 6-8pm** from **Capital Radio 101.7 FM & Capital Digital, and worldwide on [www.capitalcommunityradio.com](http://www.capitalcommunityradio.com)** (UTC/Zulu + 8 hours international time).

*So, get up close to your radio, sip on a cuppa in your favourite chair; or perhaps plug in your mobile phone earbuds and take the dog for a long walk; or relax by your pond or pool with a loved one, or just lie back with your eyes closed, remembering the times when radio and imagination were the television of the mind.*

### ***The Listening Post – Your Listening Pleasure***

Many of the interviews heard on *The Listening Post* and Saturday morning's *Capital Events* are now available as podcasts on [www.capitalcommunityradio.com](http://www.capitalcommunityradio.com).

## Spanner Packs

At the AGM we voted to donate \$2,000 to the Spanner Pack fund, which was gratefully received as below:

*On behalf of the Spanner Pack Team I wish to thank you and your members for the wonderful donation to Operation Spanner Pack.*

*The donation will go a long way to lifting the moral of our Corps members on operations where ever they are globally,*

*The RAEME Associations nationally are the backbone of the financial support for Spanner Pack and to date we have dispatched over nine ton of groceries and merchandise in the last twelve years.*

*This program will continue as long as our members are on operations OS.*

*Your support encourages others to contribute to this worthwhile program.*

*Thanks again  
Raymond.G. Norman*

## RAEME History Page

Reg Francis is currently writing a history of 101 Fd Wksp and would welcome any contributions.

# *RAEME Album*

If you have any "respectable" pictures of RAEM activities from your archives, please do not hesitate to post them on our Website - with a caption to say what is going on and whose it is. Some of us look a bit different from when some of these photos were taken

## *Listening Post*

The Association is running one last batch of 75th Anniversary RAEME Spiced Rum and American Bourbon with intent to deliver in time for our Corp birthday. The orders will be from a different batch and will take approximately six weeks from order to delivery. Please note that we have a cut-off date as the 1<sup>st</sup> of November. Orders placed after mid-October may be delivered after 1<sup>st</sup> of December.

## *???Did You Know???*

Deep in suburban Perth, only 6km from the CBD and 600m from Great Eastern Hwy lies a major WWII installation which has continued to fulfil a critical role in the protection of WA through a number of major role changes for over 70 years, but still remains very recognizable to the WWII veterans who once worked there.



## **History**

Despite being at War since 1939, the early part of 1942 brought the war focus right back to our shores. Singapore had fallen to the Japanese, Darwin has been bombed, followed by Wyndham and Broome, was Perth to be next? The 3<sup>rd</sup> Australian Corps had been stood up in WA with 3 full divisions and close on 100,000 personnel, Fremantle had become the major submarine base in the southern hemisphere and Fortress Fremantle was fully operational with well over a dozen large calibre guns covering all seaward approaches.

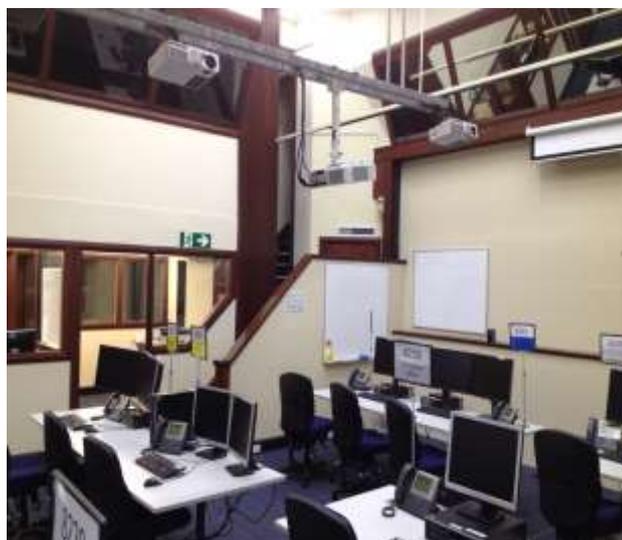
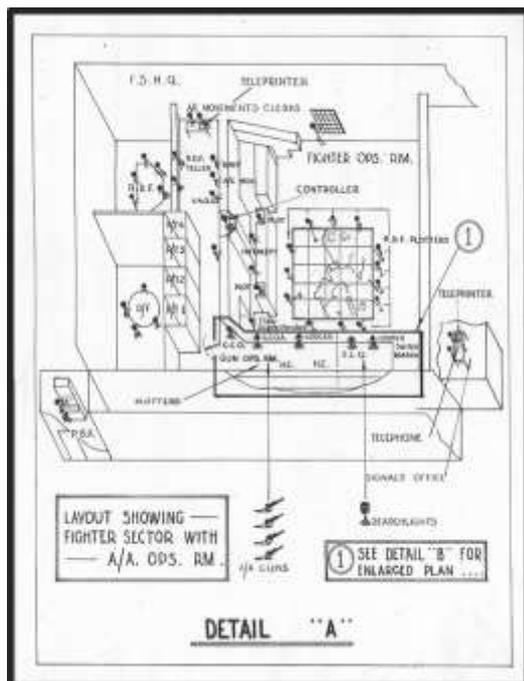
The co-ordination of the Kittyhawk and Spitfire squadrons based around Perth and the numerous anti-aircraft batteries which constituted its Air Defences was not neglected either with the formation of #6 Fighter Sector HQ in April 1942 in the Masonic Hall in the inner-city suburb of Mt Lawley. Concurrently planning commenced for a more permanent facility. By mid-1943, land has been acquired close to Perth Airport and construction commenced on a semi-underground HQ bunker.

This was completed in late 1944 at a cost of £36,000 (against an original estimate of £20,000) and was declared fully operational on 14 Mar 1945. This new facility co-ordinated all fighter, radar and anti-aircraft operations over Perth and its approaches, working in conjunction with Fremantle Fortress HQ.

With the war's end six months later, the need for this level of co-ordination ceased and by mid-1946 the bunker on a care and maintenance basis.

In February 1965 the bunker was declared surplus to requirements and was transferred to the Civil Defence and Emergency Service of Western Australia, being officially opened as the Civil Defence State Operations Centre on 24 Nov 1965.

An extensive interior refurbishment was carried out in 1967-68 to better suit this new role. The facility continued to operate in this manner for the next 40 years until newer purpose built facilities were constructed elsewhere, though it remained a fully functioning backup facility. In 2013 it was again rolled as Simulation Centre for the Department of Fire and Emergency Services, though continuing as a live backup for the 000 emergency calls.



## Details

The Bunker is 100ft (30m) long and 55ft wide (16m), semi underground, with reinforced concrete walls 4ft (1.2m) thick, and a 6ft (1.8m) thick roof. As originally built, it also had further 3ft of soil over the roof.

It follows the RAF/RAAF standard Ops Centre plan of a central operations room with overlooking galleries on all sides surrounded by ancillary rooms, with the upper storey being primarily for offices and the lower story for plant, equipment and accommodation. The Bunker was entirely self-contained with its own generator (still operational), kitchen, independent water supply and fully gas tight with an integral air conditioning.

It was one of fourteen operational Fighter Sector Headquarters established in Australia and PNG during WWII. Of the four purpose-built FS HQs (Perth, Bankstown, Townsville and Darwin) it is the only one which has remained in continuous use, though a similar bunker has been recently refurbished in Townsville for use by the local SES.

It is also the only one with a resident ghost, being supposedly haunted by the spirit of an RAAF aircraftswoman who took her own life in the cellar following the breakdown of a relationship.

## Rebuilds

1944 - the bunker was originally equipped as a Fighter Sector HQ controlling operations from the various RAAF and USAAF (USAF) airfields, radar and anti-aircraft installations.

1967 – Removal of Squadron Ops readiness boards and replacement by map boards and installation of a false floor in the operations room, installation of additional telephone and telex lines into the facility, upgrading of the radio facilities and aerials, enclosure of the viewing galleries, upgrading of the kitchen and connection to mains water and sewerage.

1990s – fit out of computer cabling and upgrading of communication feeds and equipment

2013 – installation of multiuse projection screens in the ops room, installation of a VR suite for individual training, provision of dedicated HiCom and LoCom networks for simulation exercises, upgrade of computer fit out and installation of the live backup “000” facility

2020 – upgrade of the generator switchgear and associated plant to meet current safety and regulatory requirements.



## Current Capability

The SimCen has the capability to provide tailored exercises up to and including multiple major incidents at a State level to test incident management teams, and more importantly inter-service incident management at the most senior levels for both training and discussion purposes. It also provides via a VR suite, fire and rescue training at an individual or team level. This facility is not only limited to DFES but is available to other agencies, either collectively or on a stand-alone basis to test and refine their procedures.

## Conclusion

The Bunker has maintained its usefulness in its many guises for over 70 years, by virtue of being the right place at the right time. While the basic structure has remained intact, the ancillary services required to run the facility in its evolving roles have changed considerably over time – with copper telephone lines being replaced by computer cabling and in turn that being replaced by fibre optic equivalents or Squadron readiness boards, being supplanted by map boards to the smart screens of today . In each iteration, the capability of the facility has increased manyfold, as have the complexity of the fitout and the increasing issues of legacy services.

Despite this the facility has continued to operate because the underlying engineering was sound. It was built as an operational command facility and despite its many changes in roles; it has always maintained this function. The heritage aspects of the facility are preserved precisely because they still do what they were intended to do, back in those far off days when war looked very likely to come to Perth.

