



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 autumn edition of the Horse's Mouth.

First off I'd like to formally thank everyone who made all our ANZAC Day activities such an outstanding success – the committee for all their organising and you for making the effort to turn up for what was one of our largest ever. (apart from Dave Flint of course, whose movie on our Facebook page of us marching made me look fat and balding)

This is quite a bumper edition as it provides reports on all our ANZAC day activities, our next RAEME grog sale, a farewell to one of our Life Members and some news on new blood coming into the Corps in WA, with the usual strange and arcane stuff at the end (lots on tanks this edition). Read on and enjoy over a cuppa (or something stronger).

113 Open Day

13 CSSB held its open day on 12 March with all the new kit on show for families and friends. We had a dozen or so members drop down to catch up with old mates and review the latest vehicles (lots of comments of the gees-how-do-you-repair-this-with-a-roll-of-fencing-wire and-a-12" shifter-in-the-bush type but all agreed it is a welcome change from the existing kit which is getting a bit long in the tooth (like most of us)

Many thanks to CO 13 CSSB for inviting us

RAEME Vigil

Over a dozen of us met up for the RAEME Vigil at the Sandakan memorial in Kings Park on ANZAC Eve.

In a moving ceremony, with the able assistance of Padre Kim Kuchell, we remembered and celebrated the 5 Craftsmen and 1 Corporal, foundation members of the Corps, who were captured at Singapore who perished on Sandakan and on the Thai-Burma Railway.

As is our tradition, a tot of rum was "issued" to each of them and CFN Elder, McKenna, Prior, Jones, Bailey and CPL Swans were recorded on 113's roll for ANZAC Day and marked as "present".



ANZAC Day - March

We had one of our biggest turnouts in years with over 40 marching. Dick and Snow, of course, leading the push. Excellent weather, excellent mates, a band which was in time, huge crowds – it doesn't get better than this.



ANZAC Day - Catch-up

A huge turnout at the after march function in the Rubix Bar and Restaurant at the IBIS Hotel. We had over 70 Spanners past and present turn up and even some RAFFies by mistake (we let them stay after they forked out for membership). Many thanks to our VP's daughter Bella who staffed the door and Esso who was on hand to sell merchandise

Phil ran the raffle with his usual iron fist – ASMs' never lose their touch do they? Over \$1300 was raised. He just gets better with age!

Once again the main prizes were courtesy of **Chris Irwin** of **Custom Metal Features**, who also did the massive Centrepiece everyone saw on coming in



RAEME Grog

Once again we are going to do a run of Anniversary RAEME Spiced Rum and American Bourbon – this time for our 80th Anniversary.

These bespoke small batch spirits are produced locally by The Grove Experience in Western Australia (<http://www.thegroveexperience.com.au>). The normal sale price for these spirits at the distillery is normally \$90 per bottle. We are offering the spirits to our members at the sale price of \$75 per bottle, plus \$5 for postage. Further details are be on the Website



Vale – John (Jan) Klein

John (Jan) was born on the 26th of February 1928 in Utrecht Holland to Hendrick & Josina the eldest of 6 siblings. He joined the Dutch army at the age of barely 17 during the liberation of Holland serving with the Princess Irene Brigade who were the Dutch component of the Allied troops.

He then trained in Aldershot and became part of the “Expeditionary forces” to move to Indonesia, but ended up remaining in Holland and around 12 months later met Tina the love of his life, eventually marrying her in 1951.

He served approximately 7 years in the Dutch Army and then went on to join the Dutch equivalent of the Commonwealth Police for a further 2 years, before making the decision to emigrate to Australia.

Tina and John arrived in Fremantle on the MS Johan Van Oldenbarnevelt on the 1st of February 1954 to start their new life together.

John joined the Australian Army in 1957 as a tradesman and was transferred into RAEME and after a spell at Bandiana was posted to Broadmeadows with 3 Base Workshop and then the 1 Armoured Regiment in Puckapunyal. In 1966 he was transferred to 21 Construction Squadron serving in Sabah, North Borneo for 7 months during the road construction, and after returning was promoted to SGT. Tina and he then settled in Adelaide with Ricky being born in 1958, Johnno in 1960 and Kat in 1964.

Between 1967 - 1968 John did two tours of Vietnam, and upon return was transferred to 2/15 Regiment and did a further posting to PNG before ending his time in the ARA at Perth Workshops Company, where Tina and he decided to settle. He then transferred to the Reserves for a further 8 years, alongside his daughter Kat and finished his Army career as a Warrant Officer.

John was generous to a fault and this was evident through his community service with DVA, counselling ex-servicemen, the RAEME Association President and later Life Member, Lions as a Lifetime Member, the RSL and may other community interests alongside Tina. John and Tina were together for 70 years until she passed away 18 months ago and now he is re-united with her and their two sons.



Newcomers

As part of 13 Bde's engagement with BHP we are getting people from there fast tracked into the system. To this end we have just scored 3 new RAEME DEO LTs with another 5 on the way. As we were down to 2 LTs and a CAPT, it is a welcome relief. Now to get an ASM to "teach them proper" (evil chuckle)

As a bit of an introduction, the first is Lieutenant Vignesh Ramasubbu who joined in October last year. He has a Masters from the School of Mines and got his first Mech Eng degree from Anna University in India. He works in Value Management and Assurance (Business Improvement) for BHP who he has been with for ten years. He is married with two young daughters

Lieutenant Vipu Mathew joined at the same time. He works FIFO in their Newman Operations as a Lead-Reliability Engineer and has over 17 years of experience in the maintenance from steel plants and copper smelters to iron ore fixed plant maintenance.

Lieutenant Aarunya Dave is the third of the trio. He started at BHP as a graduate Mech Eng straight from Curtin University. Since then he has worked FIFO at various iron ore mining operations focusing on maintenance engineering and bulk materials handling processes.

Welcome Vigg, Vipu and Aarunya to God's Corps

Did you know?

Australian Tanks

We have all heard of the Australian designed and built Sentinel tank in WWII and may even have seen one of the survivors in Pukka, but the full story is rather more interesting.

Manufactured by the New South Wales Railway Company, fabrication took place at Sydney's Chullora Tank Assembly Shops with serial production vehicles emerging in August 1942. The design used existing parts where available from other tank designs, simplified where necessary to match the machining capacity present in Australia. The hull was cast as a single piece, as was the turret; a technique not used on the hull of any other tanks of the era.

The Sentinel was designed to mount either a QF 2 pounder or a QF 6 pdr (57 mm, 2.25 in). However, as the production order for 6 pounder tank guns had not been acted on, none of these were available and the first 65 tanks were built with the 2 pounder. Two Vickers machine guns were carried as secondary armament, one in the hull and a second mounted coaxially beside the main gun. The preferred engines were not available within Australia, so the Sentinel was powered by the combined output of three Cadillac V8 engines – petrol car engines with a displacement of 346 cu in (5.7 L) each. The three engines were installed in a clover-leaf configuration (two engines side-by-side to the front and a single to the rear) with all feeding power to a common gearbox.

Sixty-five production vehicles had been completed by June 1943. The completed Sentinel tanks were used for evaluation purposes only and were not issued to operational armoured units. The programme was terminated in July 1943 with large number of US tanks due to arrive.

In 1943, the 3rd Army Tank Battalion was equipped with a squadron of AC1 tanks that had been modified to resemble German tanks. These tanks were used in the filming of the movie *The Rats of Tobruk*. This appears to have been the only time a squadron of Sentinels was used for any purpose.

The Sentinel was to be succeeded by the AC3 Thunderbolt, a much improved design with better armour protection, and most importantly increased firepower with the introduction of a 25 pounder (87.6 mm, 3.45 in) gun-howitzer. This necessitated a quick redesigned of the gun-howitzer as a tank gun, work that would later prove useful for the design of the Short 25 Pounder.

In an effort to further improve the firepower of the Australian produced tanks, a new turret was built and placed on the first of the earlier development vehicles to assess the vehicle's ability to mount the British 17 pounder (76 mm, 3 in). This was achieved by mounting two 25 pounder gun-howitzers that, when fired together, would significantly exceed the recoil of a 17 pounder. It was later fitted with a 17 pounder and after successful gunnery trials the 17 pounder was selected for the AC4 tank

AC1 – Sentinel

- 28 tonne,
- 65 built 1942-43
- 2 pounder gun, 2 x 0.303 Vickers guns (the AC1A was to be fitted with a 6 pounder)
- 3 x Cadillac V8s in a clover leaf configuration (two side by side in the front, one to the rear with a common gearbox) 330 hp

- 3 survivors
 - RAAC Museum - Puckapunyal
 - Tank Museum - Bovington
 - Australian Armour and Artillery Museum - Cairns



AC3 - Thunderbolt

- 29 tonne,
- 1 built 1943 (1 subsequently “assembled”)
- 25 pounder gun, 1 x 0.303 Vickers guns
- 3 x Cadillac V8s mounted radially off a common crankcase 397 hp
- 2 survivors
 - Australian War Memorial - Treloar
 - Private collector



AC4 – “Woomera” (not official)

- *As above but with a larger turret mounting a 17 pounder (definitive)*
- 1 x prototype - originally with 2 x 25 pounder, later with 17 pounder
- 1 “survivor”
 - Australian Armour and Artillery Museum – Cairns (assembled from an AC1 hull with an AC3 turret)



Australian Fighters

Not to be outdone, the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation - apart from the not-to-be lamented Comair busses, also produced a very hot fighter - the CA 15. Originally designed as a replacement for the P51 Mustang, due to wartime production priorities the prototype did not take to the skies until 1946. Powered by a 2,035 hp V12 Griffon Mk61 it reportedly clocked 502 mph in a shallow dive over Melbourne in 1948. By the time it was ready for production it was realised jets had far greater potential and it was scrapped in 1950.



British Panzerkampfwagens

Recently the Tank Museum in Bovington (UK's Pukka) decided it was time repaint it's Jagdpanther. Of course the tankies went into conniptions over the correct camo scheme, until one of the Tech Spt crew pointed out that by rights it should be British olive drab as this particular Jagdpanther was assembled by 823 Armoured Workshop REME post war for trials. In fact they also delighted in irking the tankies by pointing out that their Panther was also a REME build in the original factory. Of course it goes without saying that the REME folklore is that they performed considerably better than the Nazi production version.



German Tank Problem

Our REME brethren also had considerable input into what was known as the German Tank Problem. In early 1944, the Allies thought that the Panther with its high velocity, long-barrelled 75 mm/L70 guns, would only be seen in northern France in small numbers, much the same way as the Tiger was seen in Tunisia and, as such, standard Shermans would be OK as they would generally be facing Panzer IIIs and IVs. Shortly before D-Day, rumours indicated that large numbers of Panthers were being used.

The REME crews going over the only two captured Panthers in the UK noted that the road wheels were sequentially numbered from each production mould. From this an estimate was made of the number of wheel moulds that were in use and in turn the number of wheels that could be produced from this many moulds.

Analysis of wheels from two tanks (32 road wheels each, 64 road wheels total) yielded an estimate of 270 tanks produced in February 1944, substantially more than had previously been suspected and went in part to the rapid introduction of Sherman Fireflies and Comet tanks to armoured formations with 17 pounder guns.

German records after the war showed production for the month of February 1944 was 276.