



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

The Newsletter of the RAEME Association of WA

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**Colonel Commandant
Western Region:**
Colonel Mark Sweetman

What the Prez Sez

Welcome to the summer edition of the Horse's Mouth for 2025.

We had our first Committee meeting on the 10th of March in which we firmed up the first of our activities for the year. No surprise that our RAEME Vigil in Kings Park is first up followed by the ANZAC Day march and get together at the IBIS.

Kim Kuchel our Padre has moved on however the new Padre at HQ 13 Bde, John Crosby has agreed to support our vigil. He and in particular his wife has a special linkage to the event.

She's the granddaughter of CPL William Swan, one of the Diggers we commemorate. Should make for a moving event. Hope to see you there.

RAEME Vigil

The RAEME Vigil will be held as usual at the Sandakan memorial in Kings Park on ANZAC Eve. We will meet up in the car park at the back of the tennis club at 1900 and move forward from there, under the direction of our Piper – Rob Reeves and the Padre - Kim Kuchil.

Remember this is our "RAEME" event commemorating the foundation members of the Corps who were captured at Singapore and perished on Sandakan. The four Craftsmen and one Corporal are the only members of the Corps commemorated with plaques at Kings Park and it is our duty to remember them. Details of where we will retire are to be decided.

ANZAC Day

We still have not received our notification on our position in the March, but it is expected to be much the same as last year. Once we get the information we will let you know.

All RAEME Association of WA members and families are however invited to attend the after march function in the Rubix Bar and Restaurant at the IBIS Hotel, 334 Murray St. Please note a special license will be obtained (subject to approval) to open at 1000 h.

Cost: As per last few years - Free for members (Fees can be paid on the day) and \$20 for guests, Food will be available.

Social Functions

The committee is looking at the possibility of some additional social functions for the year. These include:

- A visit to the SASR Museum.
- A visit (and possibly lunch) to RAAF Museum to see new Ex RAF Tornado and Ex RAAF Hornet display
- A visit to Leighton Battery and dinner at the Albion Hotel

Our Banners and Flags

The Banner, Pennant and Australian flag which we carry each ANZAC Day have quite a bit of history.

RAEME VETERANS BANNER

The history of our banner goes back twenty-five years. The banner was modelled on the RAEME Vietnam Veterans Association banner that was produced in Victoria and paraded every ANZAC Day and Vietnam Day (formerly Long Tan Day) by the RAEME Vietnam veterans in Melbourne.

After forming the RAEME Vietnam Veterans Association WA Branch, our banner was produced and paraded for the first time on ANZAC Day 1988. At the time, the RSL sub-branch and the Vietnam Veterans' Association were hassling as to who should march in front of whom on the ANZAC Day parade. Both were separate entities and both believed they had the honour of marching first. The compromise was, that they march side by side on the parade. Because of the problems this was causing the RSL, they were in no mood to negotiate with what they termed a "breakaway group".

After much communication with the RSL, we were told we could parade our banner, but it had to be directly behind and part of the Vietnam contingent with no gaps. On the day of the parade, we stepped off (with very short steps) and opened a gap between RAEME and the other conglomeration in front. As we neared the first corner, a Parade Marshall saw the opening, held up his hand and inserted a band between us and the others.

Thus, the tradition began.

We were the FIRST to parade a Corps Banner on the ANZAC Day parade in WA. The following year, the Tankies followed suit and today there are a very large number of Corps parading their individual banners.

About 20 years ago, the RAEME Vietnam Veterans' Association WA, saw the need to expand its horizon as there was a number of veterans from conflicts other than the Vietnam war who were being left out on ANZAC Day, they had nowhere to march. A meeting was held by the Vietnam veterans committee and they decided to drop the words "Vietnam" and "Association" and invite ALL RAEME veterans to march behind the banner. The Banner was then updated so that it reflects ALL conflicts involving this great Corps of ours.

OUR AUSTRALIAN FLAG

At the Welcome Home Parade held in Sydney on the 3rd October 1987, the RAEME Vietnam Association was presented with five Australian flags, one for each member of the corps who died in Vietnam. These flags were to be distributed to the next-of-kin of the deceased members.

After the Welcome Home Parade, there was a second get together by Vietnam veterans. This was a Dedication Parade for the opening of the Vietnam National Memorial in Canberra. There was a need to raise funds for the occasion. An Australian flag was to be given to any organisation who raised a certain sum of money (believed to be \$1000). The RAEME Vietnam Veterans raised enough to be granted two flags, one of which was brought to WA as part of the birth of the

Association in this state. The flag has an insignia attached that reads "In appreciation to RAEME Vietnam Assn Australian Vietnam National Memorial".

This flag has been proudly displayed on every ANZAC Day parade and Vietnam Day ever since and was for many years carried by Snowy Whykes who was one of the original members of the fund-raising group.

RAEME TRI-COLOUR PENNANT

Apart from the RAEME Vietnam veterans, there was another contingent of WW11, Malaya and Korean RAEME veterans who marched on ANZAC Day. They marched under the RAEME Pennant. A number of the veterans who served in Korea and Malaya also served in Vietnam, so those members marched under the Vietnam banner. This left the numbers marching behind the RAEME Pennant very small indeed. The number got down to one, when Ian Stewart (The Honorary Colonel at the time) asked the lone digger if he would like to march with us, he accepted the invitation, but unfortunately, he passed away before this could happen. So we inherited the Pennant, which is also proudly paraded on ANZAC Day and any other day that is appropriate.

Vale and RAP

Please let us know anyone who is crook or has recently passed on and we can put something in the newsletter.

??Did You Know???

Nungarin Antics - World War II in the Wheatbelt

Not many people appreciate just how important Western Australia was to the Allied war effort during the War. Apart from Fremantle being second only to Pearl Harbour as the busiest Allied submarine base, fully a third of the Australian Army - approximately 100,000 troops were based in southern WA – the 2nd and 4th Infantry divisions and 1st Armoured division as part of III Corps under Lieutenant General Gordon Bennett of Singapore fame.

What is of interest was that the Corps stores were based at Nungarin, 270 km east of Perth which was considered out of enemy carrier aircraft range. This facility, 5 Base Ordnance Depot consisted of numerous very very large warehouses and supporting buildings and was constructed 1942-44 at a cost which today would be in the vicinity of \$300 million. The only surviving building is the old workshop, which is still one of the largest timber clad buildings in the southern hemisphere and was used for many years as the Shire works depot.

In 1994 the building was refurbished and turned into an agricultural and military museum and then the collecting started... So far it has two Stuarts (one running) a couple of Grants being restored and numerous Blitz wagons, Studebakers, Chevs and Whites. In fact, examples of practically everything

we used during the war. A few of us have been up there and recently and got their 48" (1600mm) coastal defence searchlight up and running



This time we were asked to put the engines back in a T17E1 medium armoured car – better known as a Staghound. It was an ex 10LH vehicle and was in running order until relatively recently. The motors/transmissions/t-cases were removed and restored a few years back and the museum staff needed some help getting them back in. 113 olds and bolts to the rescue! Alex, Brycey, Colesy Taffy, Nindy, and Perry decided to lend a hand as well as Brett – a spanner who just happened to be passing through the area on a round Australia trip and was missing getting grease on his hands.



The Stag was an innovative design that incorporated some advanced features. It had two rear-facing 6-cylinder 97hp (72kW) GMC 270 engines with automatic transmissions (4 forward and 1 reverse gears) feeding through a transfer case to drive both axles. Either two or four-wheel drive could be selected and either engine could be shut down while in motion and taken out of the drive train.

What this meant in practice was we had to bolt the torque converter/transmission and T-case back on the engine and then sling it into the engine bay, virtually vertically and then, while slung, tilt it up to horizontal while simultaneously pushing the whole thing forward under the turret. 3 hrs, much inventive language, lots of bar work and the biggest bloke standing on the tranny to push it down and in went the right hand engine.

We called it quits then as it was 1930 and went to the pub, though there was a 70th birthday party at the museum and a couple of lads of “suitable age” made enquiries about any unattached..... Once a CFN, always a CFN!

The next day, remembering we were RAEME, we just took to the engine bay with a 9" grinder and it all became much simpler with the left hand engine. All that's left now is rebuilding the engine bay, connecting up the drive shafts and other bits – such as intercooler, radiators, fuel tank, etc, etc, and she's a goer

The other noteworthy running exhibit is an M3 Halftrack – one of over 54,000 built by the Diamond T Motor Company in 1941-45. With a 148 hp (110 kW) White 160AX engine, the 8 tonne M3 was driven through a manual constant-mesh (non-synchromesh) transmission with four forward and one reverse gear, as well as a two-speed transfer case at a top speed of 45mph (70km/hr). The front suspension uses leaf springs, while the tracks use vertical volute springs. While braking is hydraulic assisted, the steering is manual.

We went for a very enjoyable tour of the complete site standing the back and I daresay more than one of us was channelling James Mason in the "Desert Fox".



The next time a mob is going up is for the Vintage Rally and searchlight party on the 5th. While this is not an Association sponsored event, if you are interested, contact Alex Smithers.

A year back at the Workshop

Oh No – Not You Again!

Here I was having lots of fun doing the last Regi job of my career as 2IC of WAUR and looking forward to moving gently into the twilight before CRA when the phone rings.... it was my Career Advisor (and fellow subbie from 113 in the 90s)

"G'Day mate, what you doing next year?"

"As of 5 minutes ago I was staying as XO WAUR"

"Shaun needs someone back at 113. He hasn't anyone for next year" Shaun Fenn was a subbie under both of us as OCs and now CO 13 CSSB.

"Have I any \$#%^& choice?"

"Course not, you know the drill"

So once again back into harness. 4th time lucky.

All too soon I was getting a handover, forgetting the CO had a first name (apart from Sir) and boning up on the current crop of acronyms.

The poor ARA staff didn't know what to make of me at first – this old bloke who seemed to know everyone, but professional as always, gave me a bit of the benefit of the doubt. After a few weeks, I knew I was back on track when walking back from a Bn OGRP one night.

We passed by a flash new Ford owned by one of the truckies

“Guys I am thinking of getting a retirement car at the end of the year, what do you reckon is good value?”

“New or Classic?”

“Classic – I want to drive not run a computer”

“Ford, Holden or Valiant”

“Whatever has a Red Motor”

“Monaro or Torana?”

“Toranas have always been overpriced, even when they were new”

“HG or HQ?”

“That's what I am asking you”

A spirited discussion then ensued over the relative merits of the 327 Small Block Chev as opposed to the 308 Iron Lion. It was good to be home!

We started with the usual FPT weekend, where I was able for the first time to do the Pensioner's BFA, much to the amusement of the rest of the Bn, but as I retorted, we are not called 113 Walkshop for nothing!

The next weekend was where the fun began. We had the lead for an adverse driving weekend in the sand dunes at Lancelin. Getting back into the swing of convoy orders, deployment orders and just how fine the Lancelin dune sand is. As we took the truckies along we took it easy for the first day and the night drive with NVG, (how can you get lost on a single track with no turnoffs?) but things got interesting on day 2 on the beach.

One of the tyrebiters stated categorically that you can't bog a Land 121 vehicle. Harry and Jamie, the two Wksp WO2s just looked at each other “Challenge Accepted - hold my er.....lemon barley water”. Two minutes later, – job done!



We ended up having the 45 and both the 42s with multiple rigs working hard to get the crock out (though it may have just been the towrags shown off their kit). Of course we could have simply backed it out but we didn't tell the truckies that. A few more recoveries up and down the sand dunes and we called it a day. Good old fashioned RAEME fun.

The next weekend we took Mogzilla out for a proof of concept test. Mogzilla is a rolling Mog cab/chassis with a roll cage from hell. Fully CAD designed and built to withstand the most deranged wrecymech training scenario. The crew had great fun trying to roll it sideways down a hill, but the straight sides of the frame (since corrected) did not allow it so they had to be content with placing it upside down in a gully at the bottom of a rockface. Recovery from this and a number of even more convoluted positions (we have some WO2s and SNCOs with very evil minds) tested the towrags to their limits. The language was loud, descriptive and very colourful, but they had a ball. Unfortunately, the Mog's steering assembly was not to the same standard as the roll cage – but it has now been reinforced and towrags are looking forward to the next trial weekend like a 10 yr old kid on Christmas eve.



The annual range shoot was a real blast with buku ammo and great efforts being made to ensure everyone was current with the EF89 and the M4. I almost got away with avoiding the latter by mentioning my M16 qualifications, but the ASM happened to be walking past and just gave me "the look".

Comments like "Sorry sir we haven't a 0.303 for you", died a natural death when I pointed out I was actually Bren qualified (Ok it was the very last Bren shoot ever but I have the piece of paper). Some people even took me seriously when the Boss asked everyone on the end of the weekend whether they preferred the EF88 or the M4 and I said the SLR.

Many of the troops have never done combat shooting by day and night over a full weekend before and many manic grins were seen. (23 rounds on a WTSS is no comparison to getting hot brass in the neck on the mound). There was considerable shock when the Wksp OC and 2IC spent their non-shooting time doing non techs and picking up brass – apparently no one had seen RAEME officers helping in the field before.

The big event of the year was Austral Shield 24. – two weeks at RAAF Curtin. We got dirked to command the CSST and the RSD – said a bit for our reputation. The RSD was the first large 13 Bde Convoy north since the Spiderman Exercises of the 1990s - 2,500 km of roadhouse pies and redbull. Actually it wasn't quite that bad with stops each night planned at the local speedways (No, you cannot take the '45 on the track and try to drift it) and hot meals laid on. 84 vehicles left Karrakatta and we only lost two on the way up and one on the way back – having new vehicles rather than 20yr old Mogs and Landrovers helped.

Of course, a week of driving around RAAF Curtin with fine pindan sand and drivers unfamiliar with the conditions had its effect and the ASM decided that a number probably wouldn't make it back so the convoy down was a bit smaller than the one up, though some judicious loading (what dump truck?) meant we got everything back we were asked to.

Still some vehicles needed a bit of TLC on the trip back and on one night the FRT had to stop short in a night loc in a truck park on bitumen to effect some repairs, but strangely enough the fridge truck with meat packs and the BBQ were on hand. I will leave it there!

One of the more amusing episodes of the year was when the museum wanted their Mk 2 Ferret moved to the car park to be picked up for a strip and repaint. It would have been a nightmare to try to get a '42 or a '45 around the back of the building to where she was parked (though I did think about 113's old F1 Twinboom which used to be there on display, but it had been sent over east the month before), so we went old school – lots of soldiers, pushing. 3.7 tonne of A Veh with half flat tyres. Getting it up the hill at the back of the museum was fun, stopping it running away from us on the other side was even more so, but we managed it with ease, the (very light) truckie we bunged in the driver's seat even steered it perfectly into a parking space. I was all for putting a Mk2 Ferret competency in her blue book but the RSM kyboshed it.



Like everyone we then attempted to come to terms with ERP and its course requirements but managed to have a break one weekend with F89 scenario shooting on the WTTS (what do you mean we can't shoot down helicopters with the F89 from the hip – I just did) and assisting the truckies with a small convoy drive (what only ONE bakery!).

The year did end on a high note with the Bn as a whole is helping out with some general clean up work at the Veterans Transition Centre in Jarrahdale. What we thought of a dry overgrown pond full of fallen trees and bush litter ended up being a set of concrete lined swimming pools with proper stairs, surrounds and overflows etc. The Wksp's chainsaws got a workover and we cut enough firewood to keep all the chalets supplied for all of next winter. The CO and OC even got their hands dirty bogging in like everyone else. This bushland setting provides a real service to vets and the fact that they let us have our wind up there was simply icing on the cake.

Alas all too soon my 12 months was up and it was time to pass on the baton to another one of my former subbies, Rob Reeves. As an avid craft brewer, piper and classic car aficionado - having a number of classic Mustangs, Minis, MGs, and Beetles (just in case you needed to cannibalise er... carry out a controlled parts transfer) and a Stingray, he will fit in a treat. Also, unlike some of our current set of vehicles (no names but you know which ones I am referring to), all his cars run.

I have been uniquely favoured/cursed in the Corps by getting 4 stints commanding a field workshop, which is the greatest job a RAEME Officer can ever aspire to. As I look toward the twilight of my career, I will reiterate my final words to the workshop on my handover.

"I have already said goodbye to this workshop on three occasions, fully expecting never to return, so rather than saying goodbye, I will simply say – until next time, Arte Et Marte"