



TRACK

June 2008



**Royal Australian Armoured
Corps Association Inc.**
Victorian Branch

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CANBERRA CAPERS THE 2008 ARMoured REUNION



Leading the Black Hat Reunion marchers on ANZAC Day in Canberra were the Representative Honorary Colonel - Lieutenant General Laurie O'Donnell AC; Head of Corps - Major General Dave Chalmers AO, CSC and Corps RSM - Warrant Officer Class One Ian Cummings

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Welcome to the Crew

Glen Watson Peter Duncombe Christopher Sharp George Slade (re-joined) Kelvin Robertson

The Rydges Lakeside Hotel was the main accommodation venue and focal point for the majority of activities. The very noisy 'Meet and Greet' was first cab off the rank after registration and was conducted in one of the many function rooms in the hotel complex. Warm welcomes were extended and RAAC Representative Honorary Colonel Lieutenant General Laurie O'Donnell battled manfully with the ignorant ones to deliver a brief update on RAAC unit activity.

The highlight on Thursday 24th April was the official handover to the Australian War Memorial of Centurion Tank ARN 169056 which although located outside ANZAC Hall, forms an integral part of the recently opened Post 1945 Conflicts Gallery (see photo below). It is in good company as it is positioned adjacent to the forward gun turret and bridge of the former HMAS Brisbane. This outstanding display covers Australian military participation in conflicts from the end of WWII until the present day.



This memorial plaque will be located adjacent to the Centurion MBT



*Veteran former RSMs **John Hawton** (left) and **Ivan Maher** were interviewed by local media.*



*Desperadoes in attendance included (from left) **Bill Stanfield**, **Brian Chapple**, **Martin Kies**, **Bob Kennard** and **Mark Reid***

ANZAC Day dawned clear and mild which probably contributed to the record crowd (in excess of 25,000) that attended the Dawn Service conducted in the forecourt of the Australian War Memorial. A very moving service was conducted at what is one of the prime locations in the country for this activity.

The march was conducted at the same location and **the black hat contingent enjoyed the honour of leading the march** past the PM Mr. Kevin Rudd, MP who took the salute. **More than 300 of the faithful marched behind the banner in a great show of strength and unity.** An Aussie style luncheon was enjoyed by many back at Rydges Lakeside following the march. Rest and recuperation was next on the agenda prior to the gala dinner on Saturday night 26 April. Almost 500 people packed into the hotel ballroom for the grand finale of what proved to be **another very successful and well conducted reunion.**



Bud Abbott's mine damaged APC has been immaculately restored by the AWM and forms an integral part of the Vietnam display in the post 1945 Conflicts Gallery



All the way from WA was 'Specs' Fuller (left front) to his right is John Fogarty, Major Mick Bye and Colonel Roger Noble (in cap)

The reunion was attended by a reasonable cross section of the Black Hat community although more from the fifties era, the CMF/Army Reserve and the present day would contribute to a more representative group. The celebration of the 40th anniversary of the battles of Coral and Balmoral in Canberra only three weeks later also took away some numbers. There will probably be a 2011 reunion however a venue and dedicated organising committee have yet to be identified.

The Victorian Branch Gratefully Acknowledges the Following Donors

Ted Acutt, John Crossman, Leo Duncan, Norman Clare, Peter Swinfield,
John Blackwell, Tom James, Simon Williams, M.R. King and R. Dyer.

**CAMBRAI DAY
COMMEMORATION DINNER**

Saturday 22 November 2008

1900 for 1930 hrs

Hopkins Barracks Officers/Sergeants Mess
Puckapunyal

**Guest of Honour
Lieutenant Colonel Roger Symons
Commanding Officer/Chief instructor
School of Armour**

Cost: \$50:00 per head for members
\$55:00 per head for non members/guests

This function is our premier event for the year and as usual we are providing a quality guest speaker for your enjoyment

All enquiries to:
Daryl Pinner (H) 9359 4520
Peter Branagan (H) 5793 8171

On Sunday morning enjoy a sumptuous cooked breakfast
in the world class Army Tank Museum

Dress: Lounge Suit or Reefer Jacket
Miniatures

Tickets posted out early September

RSVP by 10 November 2008
Accommodation is limited

SOCIAL CALENDAR ...

Mark your diary now for the **Children's Christmas Party** at the **Diamond Valley Miniature Railway** Lower Eltham Park (Melways reference map 21 H 10). We have booked Meadmore Junction (hopefully refurbished) for **Sunday 21 December 2008**.

As usual **Santa is timetabled to arrive by train at Meadmore Junction Station at 1300 hrs**. We have booked our first dedicated special to arrive at the picnic area at 1100 hrs with the afternoon service at 1400 hrs. Both these trains travel the extensive layout for 30 minutes and have proven very popular with all ranks in the past. If you miss the first boarding don't despair, the special will return to the Junction on the quarter hour for a change over of passengers. **Rod and Sharon Westgarth** put a lot of effort into organising this fun day, so come out to Eltham and **give the kids (from eight to eighty)** a great day out.

Remember we **provide soft drinks and bagged sweets, you provide a suitably wrapped and labelled present for Santa to give to your children**. We also provide complimentary rail tickets so you can take the family for a ride on their regularly scheduled trains at any time.

The now traditional **sausage sizzle** gives you the option of not having to pack a picnic lunch. Rod and Sharon will be only too happy to flog you a sausage or two! Remember it is a condition of travel on the Diamond Valley Miniature Railway **that all those intending to ride the rails, must wear suitable enclosed footwear**.

**So come along and join the fun on
Sunday 21 December 2008 from 1000 hrs.**

AROUND THE CORPS...

Head of Corps Structure 2008

The 2008 manning of the Head of Corps (HOC) is detailed below:

Representative Honorary Colonel: Lieutenant General Laurie O'Donnell, AC (Retd)

Head of Corps: Major General Dave Chalmers, AO, CSC

Deputy Head of Corps: Lieutenant Colonel Roger Symons (CO/CI School of Armour)

Staff Officer Grade Two Head of Corps (ARA): Vacant

Staff Officer Grade Two Head of Corps (GRes): Major Peter Branagan, OAM

Staff Officer Grade Two Head of Corps (Projects): Major John Baines, RFD

Regimental Sergeant Major RAAC: Warrant Officer Class One Ian Cummings (Corps RSM)

Unit Honorary Colonels

1st Armoured Regiment

Major General Roger Powell, AM (Retd)

2nd Cavalry Regiment

Brigadier Ian Bryant, AM (Retd)

2nd/14th Light Horse Regiment (QMI)

Brigadier Maurie Meecham, AM (Retd)

B Squadron 3rd/4th Cavalry Regiment

Brigadier Rod Earle, AM (Retd)

1st/15th Royal New South Wales Lancers

Major General Warren Glenny, AO, RFD (Retd)

A Squadron 3rd/9th Light Horse Regiment (SAMR)

Major Roger Burzacott, RFD (Retd)

4th/19th Prince of Wales's Light Horse Regiment

Major General David McLachlan, AO (Retd)

A Squadron 10th Light Horse Regiment

Colonel Ken Ashman (Retd)

12th/16th Hunter River Lancers

Lieutenant Colonel Chris Donovan (Retd)

Ralph Eldridge, gentleman, soldier, sportsman, father and family man and, above all a great Australian. So wrote Major General C.M.I. 'Sandy' Pearson, AO, DSO, OBE, MC in his foreword to David Holloway's biographical tribute to the **late Brigadier Ralph Trevelyan Eldridge, OBE.**

This tribute, simply entitled *Eldridge* is a fitting testimonial to the life and service of a quintessential Australian. Your association has a **limited quantity of books available** and are offering them at the **bargain price of \$30:00 including postage and packaging.**



The occasion of the Governor General's visit to Puckapunyal in June 1957 is detailed on page 64 of Eldridge. In this photo from right to left we see: Director of Armour-Lt Col Ralph Eldridge, Governor General - Field Marshall Sir William Slim, retired Warrant Officer Bill Banks RAAF, Major Norm Kollias, Lance Corporal Vin Brennan (our current vice president), Mrs Marita Banks (in hat) and Mrs Dorothy Brennan.

Rush your order to **Godfrey Camenzuli** at P.O. Box 384 Brunswick, Vic, 3056 or email him at glc14@bigpond.net.au get in early and don't miss out on this bargain. A limited number of signed copies by the author **Dr. David Holloway** are still available.

ANZAC Week in Melbourne.....

Vice President Vin Brennan represented the association at the Austin/Repat Hospital ANZAC Day commemoration on 24 April. He reported that the ceremony was held in the Memorial Gardens at the old Repatriation Hospital, an area that has been developed over many years and is quite serene. Large granite stones are placed throughout the area with **plaques dedicated to the RAN, Army, RAAF and Merchant Navy placed on them.** The ceremony was conducted by the CEO Austin Hospital and several chaplains and was **well attended by patients and visitors.**

President Daryl Pinner reported that although our regular numbers were down on ANZAC Day due to the Canberra reunion, **we were boosted by the support of a dozen SNCO's from the School of Armour.** They swelled our ranks both at the march and later at the **Cricket Club Hotel** in South Melbourne.

VALE

3796875 Lieutenant Colonel Gordon Richard Barwell 30 March 1949 – 02 March 2008

Australian Regular Army Supplement (NS)	09 July 1969 to 21 February 1972
Australian Regular Army	22 February 1972 to 02 October 1994

Units:

2nd Recruit Training Battalion	09 July 1969
Officer Training Unit Scheyville	25 July 1969
Armoured Centre	14 January 1970
A Squadron 3rd Cavalry Regiment	26 May 1970
1st Armoured Regiment	28 September 1970
161 Independent Reconnaissance Flight	07 July 1971
1st Armoured Regiment	21 December 1971
- Liaison Officer Medium Tank Trials Unit	
- Tank Troop Leader	
- Tank Squadron Technical Officer	
4th/19th Prince of Wales's Light Horse (Adjutant)	01 December 1975
Armoured Centre (Training Development Officer)	28 November 1977
Australian Army Staff (Washington)	20 February 1980
HQ Training Command (SO2 Schools)	27 June 1981
1st Armoured Regiment (OC Tank Squadron)	24 January 1983
Command and Staff College (Student)	15 January 1985
Malaysian Army Combat Training Centre – Pulada	15 January 1986
HQ 3rd Military District (SO1 Personnel)	21 December 1988
1st Armoured Regiment (Commanding Officer)	15 December 1990
Command and Staff College (Instructor)	15 December 1992

Promotions:

Officer Cadet	25 July 1969
Second Lieutenant	19 December 1969
Lieutenant	02 July 1973
Temporary Captain	14 October 1974
Captain	02 July 1977
Temporary Major	11 January 1982
Major	13 July 1983
Lieutenant Colonel	21 December 1988

Awards:

Australian Active Service Medal with Clasp Vietnam
Vietnam Medal
Australian Service Medal 1945-75 with Clasp SE Asia
Defence Force Service Medal with First & Second Clasp
Australian Defence Medal
Anniversary of National Service 1951-72 Medal
Returned from Active Service Badge

Overseas Service:

South Vietnam	08 July 1971 to 21 December 1971
Malaysia	15 January 1986 to 20 December 1988

The following eulogy was delivered at Gordon's funeral by his lifetime friend retired **Lieutenant Colonel Alan Brimelow** on Friday, 7 March 2008 in the chapel of the **Virginia Veterans Cemetery at Amelia, Amelia County, Virginia USA**.

'I am privileged that Gordon Barwell was a trusted comrade and dear friend to me for the past 38 years.

In July 1969, 20 year old recruit Barwell reported for two years Army service under the Australian National Service Scheme. At the time, Australia was decisively engaged in the Vietnam conflict and needed good men like Gordon. Within two months Gordon was identified as having the qualities required of an officer and he graduated as a 2nd Lieutenant into the Royal Australian Armoured Corps in December of the same year.

From that point on, Gordon embarked on a highly successful and illustrious military career, leaving behind him the dubious distinction of having been awarded a record number of punishment parades at Officer School. This seeming blot on the first page of his record, however, was to prove to be a significant factor in his consummate inventory of leadership skills. Gordon innately understood soldiers and consistently handled his subordinates in a firm, fair and affable way. This was to be a defining factor later in his career.

In 1971 Gordon served his country in South Vietnam with 161 Independent Recce Flight, an Australian Army aviation unit. When Gordon returned from Vietnam, he chose to convert his National Service status to full time military service and served with distinction in a number of armoured units, especially in what became his beloved 1st Armoured Regiment. During the 1970s, it became clear to military commanders that Gordon was highly versatile and demonstrated a particular aptitude as an instructor. An aptitude that was to resurface after his military service.

Gordon's overarching professionalism soon realized his selection to attend a NBC warfare instructor's course in Canada. During post course duty at Fort McClelland, Alabama, he was to meet Felicia, who was later to become his loving wife. I was proud to attend their wedding in New York and, soon after, Felicia moved to Australia with Gordon where he continued to serve as a commander at all levels in the RAAC. In 1986, Gordon attained the highest grade at the Army Command and Staff College and accompanied by Felicia and their young son Gerard, was subsequently posted as an instructor at the Malaysian Combat Arms School.

By now, Gordon's superior leadership and technical skills were well developed and this earned him promotion to Lieutenant Colonel and the much coveted distinction of appointment as Commanding Officer of the only tank unit in the Australian Army – the 1st Armoured Regiment.

His last assignment prior to retirement from the Army was as an instructor at the Command and Staff College at Queenscliff, Victoria, a posting that was reserved for the best. In late 1994, Gordon and his family immigrated to the USA where he was to continue life in the same successful vein.'

Gordon joined the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) in 1997 and was Director of the Local Support Services Division. He previously served as Senior Training and Development Coordinator and Chief – State Plans and Special Projects. He was well liked and respected by all at VDEM.

The Barwell family live in Chester, a southern suburb of Richmond, Virginia. Victorian Branch member Lt Col Craig Burn, currently serving at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas represented the RAAC at the funeral.



Lest We Forget

BACK TO BE'ER-SHEVA

The contribution of Australian service personnel in the Israel-Sinai region in two world wars and subsequent peace keeping operations was honoured on **Monday 28 April 2008** with the dedication of the **Park of the Australian Soldier** in Be'er-Sheva (Beersheba) Israel.

The park is a gift to the people of Be'er-Sheva from **Australian Charity organisation, the Pratt Foundation.**

A highlight of the park is a **new memorial to the Australian Light Horse** – a sculpture by **Peter Corlett** of a **Light Horseman leaping the trenches during the famous charge against Turkish positions at Beersheba** (now called Be'er-Sheva) on 31 October 1917. Melbourne based artist **Corlett** has strong connections with Australia's wartime history. He has designed evocative memorials to **Simpson and his donkey, Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop** and his sculpture 'Cobbers' of a WW1 digger carrying a wounded Australian is the centre piece of the **Australian Memorial Park at Fromelles in northern France.**



A contingent of Australian soldiers from 4th/19th PWLH and 12th/16th HRL led by Lt Col Michael Chadwick (see photo below) represented their illustrious predecessors from the 4th and 12th Light Horse Regiments who charged the Turks on 31 October 1917. A small number of Australian veterans also attended, including Mr Doug Lade, ex 20th Light Horse of Highlands, Victoria.

