

Royal Australian Survey Corps Association



ACT Newsletter

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Issue Note

By Rob McHenry

As we near the end of another year I would like to thank those who have contributed to this newsletter. Reflecting on the passing of our members as we inevitably get older, I can't help feeling that a lot of interesting stories (even if they are only interesting to us) are lost with each passing.

As this is the last newsletter for 2012, I would like to wish all members and their families a merry Christmas and a happy, healthy and prosperous new year.

Regards to all.....

Ex RASvy in Afghanistan

The following has been cut, pasted and generally extracted from Gary Hunter's newsletters.

Dr Gary (Blue) Hunter is currently in Afghanistan employed as a contractor to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) working on a project called ELECT (Enhancing Legal and Electoral Capacity for Tomorrow) - effectively about helping Afghanistan run its parliamentary elections. Gary works with an Afghan staff member to provide technical advice and assistance in setting up the GIS and mapping capability in the Election Commission. He will finish his six month contract in December this year.

From Gary - *In each of the previous elections they relied upon other agencies such as the NATO International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to do the mapping. But of course that approach doesn't leave any mapping capacity behind in the country after everyone flies out*

Me, pictured with my Afghan GIS specialist named Rohiullah.



of here in 2014 (when the next elections are going to be held). So the idea is for me to help build the Election Commission's capacity to do all its own mapping when the next elections occur. Fortunately, Afghanistan has a strong group of young, highly training GIS professionals - who are as good as any in the world - and I have an excellent Afghan GIS officer working with me at present. He's worked on the past elections and really knows his stuff.

Because we are UN contractors we get to travel around in nice, clean white armoured Toyota Land Cruiser vehicles with the blue UN labels on them. The drivers are Afghans and are quite good at their job.



These are our own UN vehicles that we use for daily transport. All have armour plating and bulletproof glass.



Being driven to work in an armoured UN Toyota Landcruiser

Kabul lies at 6,000 feet above sea level (about 2,000 metres), so it's like the high desert type of landscape you find in the US around Las Vegas. It's very hot and dry, with the highest temperature being in the mid-30s. However, it's nowhere near as hot as in the south and west of the country (e.g. Kandahar) which lies about 1,000 feet above sea level and can get to 50 degrees. In any case, Afghanistan always seems to be a dusty place. Everywhere you go seems to be surrounded by high security fencing topped with barbed wire. Not just government offices and compounds, but also private homes and companies - and everyone employs armed guards. The most impressive feature about Kabul's scenery is the surrounding mountains - and some to the north of us are still topped by snow even though it's the middle of summer.

What our Independent Election Commission compound looks like in Kabul. It's several hundred metres long and contains a number of large warehouses plus our offices. We are about to build a large training centre plus our own helipad. The helipad is used to transport ballot papers safely around the country, plus on election day it's customary for President Karzai and other senior people to drop into the IEC to see how the election is progressing.



Inside the IEC compound looking north. Gary's office is arrowed.



Entrance to the UN compound

Inside the Independent Election Commission compound with a few of the white armoured 4 ton Toyota Landcruisers



Downtown Kabul



Here's my helmet and assembled body armour. I get into it by undoing one of the velcro side panels and slipping into it sideways - it is not at all comfortable.

My UN-issued PPE (personal protection equipment). It consists of the dark blue Kevlar helmet plus the body armour. The body armour consists of a cloth vest which has lots of pockets and adjustable shoulder and side tabs. Then there are the hard and soft armour panels. The hard armour panels are made of a special Kevlar about 1cm thick - and quite heavy (although not as heavy as the older steel amour plates). You insert the two hard panels into pockets in the front and back of your vest. Then there are soft armour plates that are also inserted into the vest between your body and the hard Overall, the body armour weighs about 15 kg - so it is certainly not lightweight. Of course, you see police wearing 'bullet proof vests' on TV outside their shirts and the vests look quite comfortable. Well they are to a point, mainly because they weigh just 2-3 kg and are only rated for

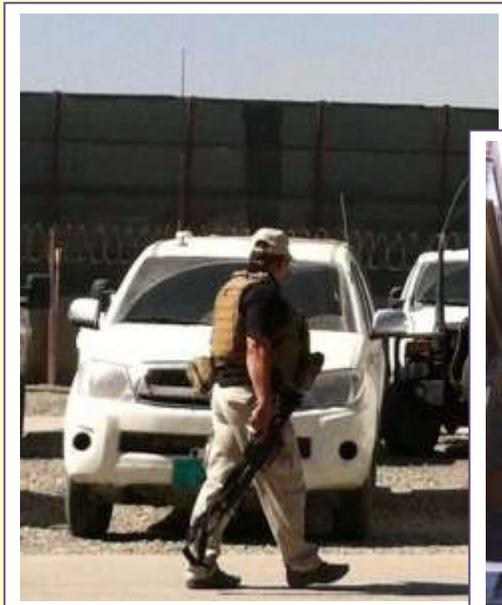
protection against small handguns - not automatic rifles, like the ones we are issued with here. As an aside, I've never had to wear the body armour and helmet here yet.



These are the type of accommodation huts we live in. These ones are used by a security company that is based here and they are fitted out with extra communications

Gary initially lived in a secure accommodation compound called "North Gate" which is similar to "Green Village" where he lived for much of his time while there in 2011. There are about 250 international contractors in this compound and most of them are private security staff working for a company called DynCorps International.

Gary's initial accommodation



Private security contractor on his way to work

Gary's new accommodation



Typical US Army vehicle in Kabul. The tall electronic jamming device on the roof stops all mobile phone reception in the area as they pass by.

As of late August, Gary moved out of his initial North Gate compound accommodation and into a private guest house run by a small international electrical engineering company.

From Gary: There are two 3-storey buildings in the compound and you can see an image of the one I am occupying. We have good kitchen and recreation facilities, and our rooms have their own bathrooms and cooling/heating. Our meals are prepared by cooks in the other building and they bring the food over to our dining room. All in all, it's quite a good arrangement and the cost is far, far less than the US\$4000/month I was paying for my room at North Gate.

You can read more about the UNDP ELECT project by looking at its website at:

http://www.undp.org.af/demo/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=105&Itemid=57

WW2 Survey Deaths

With thanks to Peter Jensen, Charlie Watson and Brian Mead

I received an email recently from Brian Mead regarding Spr Markey L. C. who was accidentally killed at Crawley, Perth in 1942. He was hit by a trolley bus at night - subdued lighting as per wartime "Black Out" regulations. Markey was a member of 4 Fd Svy Coy based at Karrakatta. During WW1, he served at Gallipoli and in Egypt with 10 Light Horse.

Brian advised that Spr Markey, along with about 30 other former soldiers from Toodyay who died on active service, were to be honoured by the citizens of Toodyay as part of an RSL dedication ceremony on 7 Oct 2012. Brian's information came from Warren Hall, a present day resident of Toodyay and an active member of the local RSL branch. Warren served with RASvy for 20 years in Bendigo and Perth.

The above information reminded me of the Australian War Memorial Roll of Honour which lists our Corp's WW2 dead. The Roll of Honour shows the following 14 Names under the heading of 'SURVEY'.

| Regt No | Rank | Surname | Initials | Enlist | Death | Comment |
|----------|------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| VX122955 | SSGT | Andean | D. A. | 27 Jan 43 | 13 Sep 46 | Accident |
| W29145 | SPR | Bangay | F. W. | 1 Jan 40 | 22 Feb 41 | Illness |
| NX160210 | SPR | Barnsen | H. C. | 1 Jan 40 | 10 Dec 45 | Accident |
| Q15104 | CPL | Berglind | R. | 14 Jan 42 | 6 Oct 43 | Illness |
| VX72938 | SPR | Frost | W. G. | 6 Feb 42 | 5 Mar 43 | Illness |
| VX73163 | SPR | George | R. | 7 Feb 42 | 20 Jun 43 | Accident |
| VX110274 | SPR | Johnson | J. F. | 1 Sep 40 | 28 Dec 42 | Illness |
| VX106525 | SPR | Keefe | E. C. | 1 Jan 40 | 25 Nov 45 | Accident |
| NX26455 | SGT | Keeler | F. T. | 1 Jan 38 | 24 Jun 42 | Injuries |
| W27375 | SPR | Markey | L. C. | 4 Oct 40 | 18 Apr 42 | Injuries |
| VX17633 | WO1 | Meldrum | G. E. | 12 Jun 40 | 31 Jul 43 | Illness |
| VX89865 | CPL | Ryan | B. J. | 30 Jul 42 | 27 Sep 45 | |
| VX31619 | CPL | Thorpe | E. J. | 18 Jun 40 | 17 Jan 44 | Wounds |
| VX55869 | SSGT | White | G. A. | 15 May 41 | 15 Jul 46 | Illness |

Two other members are also on the Roll of Honour but under different headings. Appleton C. W. is listed under 'HEADQUARTERS AND HEADQUARTERS UNITS'. Kemp B. W had transferred to 2/5 Battalion from 8th Section at Wau and before that, 3rd Field Survey Company, one month before his death.

| | | | | | | |
|----------|-----|----------|-------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| VX44196 | SPR | Appleton | C. W. | 15 Jul 40 | 25 Apr 41 | Lost at sea |
| VX110657 | SPR | Kemp | B. W. | 19 Mar 41 | 19 Jul 43 | Wounds |

Coulthard-Clark's *Australia's Military Map-Makers* (P 106) advises that only two members died as a result of enemy action; CPL Thorpe and SPR Kemp. Thorpe died of wounds after a minefield incident near Sio in PNG on 16 Jan 44 (P 98).

Spr C. W. Appleton was presumed dead after the ship carrying him from Greece was sunk on 25 Apr 41 (P 70). Three other members died on active service as non battle casualties.

Interestingly, Barnsen H. C. was a caterer attached to 2/1st Company and was accidentally killed at Ambon after the end of hostilities (P 106).

The many serving soldiers who died of illness or accident in training camps in Australia during WW2 are on the AWM Roll of Honour because their death was war related.

Cape York Peninsula Mapping Project 1961 (Part 3)

From a disc provided by Don Swiney

These final photos follow on from those in the last two newsletters and are a small section of 112 total images supplied by Don. Those selected are in chronological order and follow those previously shown from Coen to Archer River (Part 1), Moreton, Arakun Mission, Albany Island (Part 2) and finally, Bamaga, Thursday Island and Tuesday Is.

THE TEAM

| | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| OC: Captain T C (Clem) Sargent | Sapper Peter Sadler |
| Zic : Captain 'Tommy' Tomlinson RE | Sapper Darryl Parker |
| Lt Larry Abaro (Philippines Army) | Sapper Andrew Warwick |
| WO 1 Ron Newman | Sapper Dave O' Hara |
| WO 2 Len Davies | Sapper Don Swiney |
| WO 2 Joe Farrington | Sapper Bruce Cockburn |
| WO 2 Harry Wright (part) | Sapper Brian Rodgers |
| Sgt Jack Waller(SQMS) | Cook : Pte Col Bryant |
| Cpl Ian Bryan | RAEME : Cpl Ted Parker |
| Cpl Mick Symmons | RASigs : Sig Paul Nitske |
| Cpl Peter Bates Brownsword | Heli Pilot : Bill Parry |
| Cpl Bill Jeffries | Heli Mech |
| Cpl Lloyd Harvey | Cessna Pilot |



Crossing the Jardine River



Higginsfield Airstrip

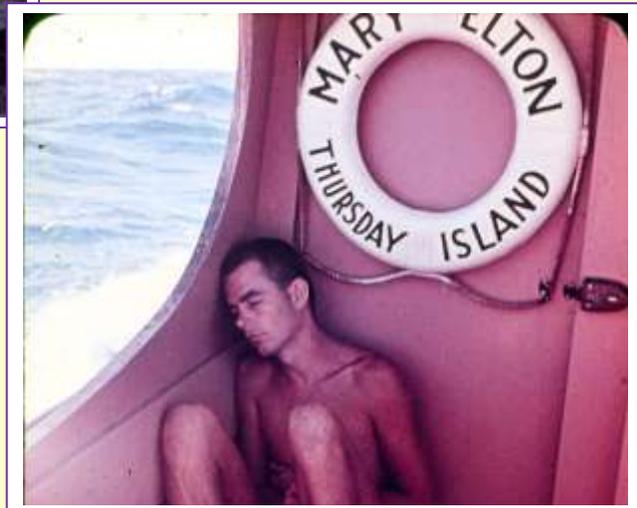
Bill Parry and washing



Typical Survey load



Seasick Don Swiney on the way to Thursday Is

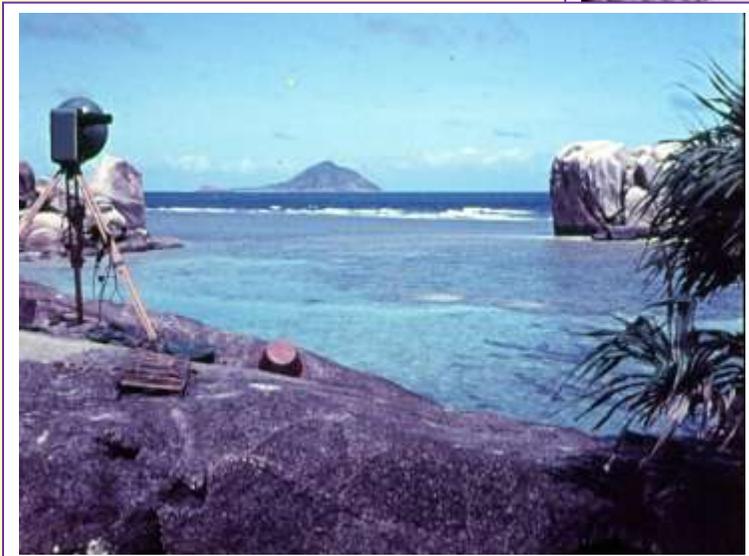




*Ian Bryan & Peter Bates Brownsword
onboard the Mary Elton*



*Peter Sadler & Paul Nitske on the deck of the
Mary Elton moored at Thursday Island*



*Pole Island looking toward Mt Earnest
Island*



HMS Herald GM - Tuesday Is

Thursday Is from the lookout



Tall Tales & True

THE 1/86 SUBJECT 4 FOR SERGEANT COURSE

From Col Cuskelly

During the 1970's, the systemised approach to training was introduced. In our world this became known as the Army Training System (ATS). The old School of Military Survey (SMS) was one of the first Army training institutions to fully embrace the ATS and an enormous amount of work was put into SMS training packages during the mid to late 70's. This is probably because we had ex Education Corps Officers running SMS at that time. And some very dedicated staff who did all the work.

The first courses to become ATS compliant were the Basic, Intermediate and Advanced Carto and Svy Courses. These became Initial Employment Training (IET), Subject 4 for Corporal and

Subject 4 for Sergeant courses respectively. At around the same time the old Carto, Survey and Field streams were merged to become Carto Techs; so this new trade training was systemised almost from the start. The more specialised, and run less often, courses such as the Engineering Survey, Advanced Photogrammetry, Air Camera, GD Drafting, Map Edit Courses, and the like, took a while longer to become completely systemised.

In those halcyon days of the late 70's a Carto Tech IET course commenced every six weeks, irrespective, with whatever students that had arrived via Kapooka, North Head, Corps transfer or re-enlistment available to start. Subsequently, a little later, numerous Sub 4 courses had to be run to further develop these RASvy Corps members. These 'Subject' course were typically run several times a year.



Staff & Students 1/86 Subject 4 Sergeant

Back Row L-R: Graeme Priestley, Pat (Fuji) Drover, John Martin, Dave Longbottom, Perry Burt, Trevor Poll, Sandy Craig. Front Row L-R: Greg Honan, Dave Murphy, Bob Hayden, Bruce Keely, Colin Cuskelly, Neil Jones, Mick Ferris

Generally members were panelled for Sub 4 (Cpl/Sgt) with their cohort; some high flyers earlier, and some others, for a variety of reasons a little later. These delay reasons may have been operational, where members were required for operational duties while their cohort group attended a Sub 4; they may have been behavioural where a member was not panelled because he/she had some 'form' that precluded attendance. Sometimes health issues, members or family, or posting cycles dictated a non-attendance. If you were unlucky enough to make it into the 'Black Book' you had little or no chance of attending a Subject Course, much less ever being promoted.

Over time most members successfully completed their ATS Subject requirements, however, a few missed out. The 1/86 Sub 4 for Sgt Course was panelled with a high number of those who had missed courses during the preceding years. Under the ATS each training component was structured to a written plan and most lessons commenced with a few basic revision questions related to previous lessons and/or presumed knowledge. The lesson typically finished with a test of objectives which would be the start point of the next lesson or further study 'in your own time'.

I was the 'Course Mother' for the 1/86 Sub 4 Sgt Course and on Day 1 Week 1 was in the classroom to commence the training. As was the norm, after the initial introductions, the lesson about advanced grid reference systems commenced with some general questions about the Australian Map Grid (AMG), the UTM grid system, grid zones, true and false origins, 100,000 metre ident letters and the like, all of which were of Sub 4 Cpl standard. After a number of what I thought were straightforward simple questions, none of which elicited a satisfactory response, I said in a somewhat exasperated tone "Come fellows, this is only Revision!" This drew more blank looks, and a few unhappy mutterings.

Further questioning quickly revealed that almost all of the students had not attended an ATS Sub 4 Cpl course and did not have the prerequisite levels of knowledge to commence Sub 4 Sgt at that standard. Because the Course was fully structured to the ATS, and there were

fixed course objectives to be met, there was no available time to go back to Sub 4 Cpl level and start the training from there. Lesson timings were fully booked for the duration. We decided among ourselves to overcome this training/knowledge deficit by scheduling additional ad hoc lessons outside of normal classroom hours. This additional training was done without official approval in case the course was cancelled with students not deemed to be at the required entry level. For some time we worked in the evenings and on weekends to get everyone up to speed on a variety of Sub 4 Sgt subjects. Some students found it was a bit of a battle to reach the required levels, due to limited prior training and/or experience, but in normal RASvy coursemanship they teamed together to get everyone through.



As was the norm in those days, the students designed and printed (with Bob Scadden's help) a course tee shirt as a reminder of their course. This shirt represents a snake (Sub 4 for 'snake'), in this case a cobra (Course Of Bloody Reprobate Arseholes or Course of Backward, Rejected Arseholes) and a paraphrasing of the words about it all being revision. Needless to

say it was quite an experience to be associated with the C.O.B.R.A.'s. There were some interesting characters in the group.

THE CUNNING THIEF

From Don Swiney

1977 and it was the second year of Operation Cenderawasih and about the midpoint of the deployment. We had reoccupied the campsite on the South side of the airstrip and next to the Kantor Pos (the Post Office). The camp was bordered by a five foot barb wire fence and guarded by Indonesian Air force rangers. At about midpoint of the operation we started to get a spate of thefts from wallets. We were an easy mark because we all slept in army steel beds with an added wooden pole on each corner from which we suspended our mosquito nets. Everyone, me included, when we took off our pants, with our wallets still in the back pocket, before going to bed would hang them from one of the poles at the end of the bed. It was easy for anyone who was a bit light fingered.

I refused to believe that anyone from amongst us would steal from his mates so I asked Major Soetrisnoe, my JANTOP opposite number to smarten up the Airforce rangers as I suspected that someone was coming in from outside. Soetrisnoe responded by not only snarling at the guards but also got a police inspector to give an opinion. He came, looked around and sagely announced that it was 'one of your soldiers'. It was time to take things in our own hands so I got the Ross Burns, the 'camp sarmajor' to have the fence repaired and tightened up and advised everyone to sleep with their wallets under their pillow.

It just so happened that Bill Hook had come up from Survey Directorate for a visit. Bill was a civilian although he had done his time in the corps as a draughtsman and had been on the same basic course as me. He was responsible for all the aerial photography for the corps but that being so he had never actually witnessed the photography being taken. He slept in my hut opposite me but Bill had never been in the tropics before and was having trouble sleeping. He was only half asleep when he became aware of someone going through his trouser pockets. He yelled and woke me in time for me to clearly see this individual in the moonlight run out the door of the hut. I was trying to get my thongs on and give chase as he ran out turned left, tripped over the guy ropes of the flight following radio antennae and headed off to where there used to be a gap in the fence where the wire had been quite loose. Ross had been at work and he ran straight into eight strands of barb wire. I heard him cry out and roll off and then sprint off to the corner closest to the airstrip with me half-heartedly after him.

The next day I summoned Soetrisnoe again and advised him of the developments who in turn summoned the police inspector who once again had a bit of a stooge around and this time announced that we had been the victim of a 'cunning teef' (Javanese have problems with the 'th'). I did expect a bit more vigilance from the police but did not expect to hear any more. A couple of nights later, the police inspector turned up with a very sorry looking Irianese who had obviously been given a working over. "I have your 'cunning teef' he announced triumphantly. It wasn't the same person I saw and in particular he was much shorter. We had some discussion about his identity as the poor Irianese was up against the wall of my office with a policeman's bayonet in his mouth. I eventually convinced them but the Police Inspector wasn't phased and announced the he must have been the cunning rapist and left.

One evening a couple of weeks later, we were showing a film and about mid way through, Soetrisnoe's vehicle roared into the camp with Soetrisnoe yelling for some rope. Not knowing what the emergency was, the rope was quickly found and Soetrisnoe took off with absolutely no explanation. Bemused, we went back to the movie but some hour later Soetrisnoe returned yelling 'I got him' as he clambered out of his vehicle. We went to have a look to find an unfortunate individual lying on the floor of the truck with a bullet wound to the back of his knee. We got a stretcher and got him to the RAP where our Doctor attended to his wound. As he lay on the stretcher, I could see the unmistakable scars caused by strands of barbed wire across his chest. Soetrisnoe eventually took him away to what we thought would have been an uncertain fate at the local hospital.



The Base Camp at Biak

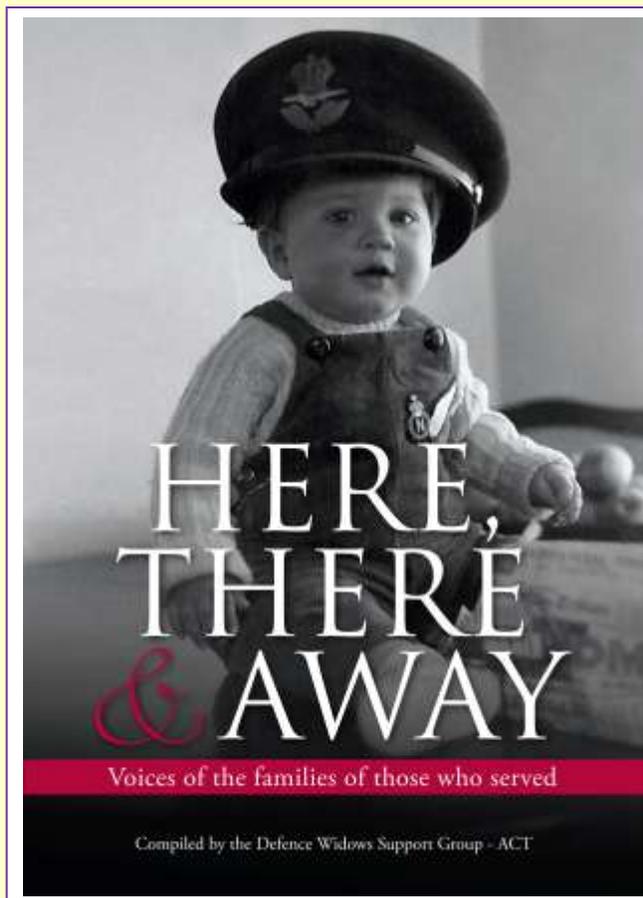
After some coaxing we eventually got the full story from Soetrisnoe. It seems that Biak had it's own resident sorcerer who had set up shop on the Eastern edge of town. He had employed two apprentices and he had sent one off to Sorong (on the 'bird's beak') to another sorcerer to get some 'special oil'. This oil had very special qualities and if you were to rub some on your forehead and entered a room everyone in the room 'is unconscious'. The two apprentices evidently put the oil to good use, one going to the Indonesian Army married quarters when the soldiers were away and so became known as the 'cunning rapist'. The other targeted us and was doing quite well until sprung by Bill.

Soetrisnoe was incensed that someone would dare steal from his Australians and decided to take matters into his own hands. He and his officers, obviously more effective than the police tracked both the sorcerer and his now only one apprentice to a hut on the East of town. With the hut surrounded, Soetrisnoe burst in through the door but the apprentice was hiding in the roof. He pushed the thatch aside jumped out on the roof and then to the ground and was running off into the jungle. Soetrisnoe fired one shot and brought him down with a shot behind the knee. It was a miracle shot, more so the miracle that the pistol fired at all.

Soetrisnoe took pity on him and he and his officers paid his medical expenses but I did hear that he died later from blood poisoning. I thought the oil might be useful and put in an order with Soetrisnoe for a 200 litre drum of the stuff but it was never forthcoming.

Here, There & Away

Detail supplied by Dawn Laing



In the Dec 2011 newsletter, I included a request on behalf of the Defence Widows Support Group in the ACT for input to a collection of the stories of wives, partners and widows of ex-service personnel. Dawn Laing now advises that this project has been successful and that the book is now at the publishers. Of the almost 70 authors from all three services, five of them have Survey connections.

Dawn advises that the book is a unique collection of heart-warming and entertaining stories from the families of ex-servicemen across the three branches of the Australian Defence Force.

The stories cover the period from World War I to more recent times, and celebrate the love, care and support given by and to members of the wider defence family as well as the resilience these families required in diverse locations and situations.

Some stories tug at the heart strings, while others are funny in the extreme.

From the gates of Changi, through the Malayan Emergency and Operation Babylift in Vietnam, to a mercy flight disaster and the day Australia lost its Prime Minister, the stories are a mixture of the surprising, enlightening and intensely emotional.

Here, There & Away paints a vivid picture of the ups and downs of everyday life for military families, but the stories also reflect many aspects of life that we can all relate to. A literary first, this collection is also an important contribution to Australian social and military history.

Cost is \$19.99

Pre Order now for a Christmas delivery
(Official release into bookshops is early 2013)

ACT residents can pre-order (and avoid postage) by contacting Dawn Laing:
dlaing@bigpond.com.au Mobile: 0417688711. PO Box 3088, BELCONNEN BC ACT 2617 She will arrange delivery to you.

Pre-orders can also be made through the Big Sky Publishing Website:
www.bigskypublishing.com.au Postage of \$6.95 will be charged for one or two books ordered through the website or directly from Big Sky Publishing. However, for orders of \$50+, postage is free.

We've Heard it all Before

From Bob Katter's media release

29 October 2012. Federal Member for Kennedy Bob Katter today introduced legislation that requires the Federal Government to bring defence veterans' pensions in line with aged pensions within six months.

"We are moving today that our service men and women get the same deal as everyone else in Australia. I cannot see how anyone on either side of this Parliament can hold their head up straight or look a soldier or an ex-soldier in the eye unless they support this proposal. We do not do this to blow our own trumpet. We would have been most happy for the Government or the Opposition to have moved this. I am quite sure the crossbenchers will very strongly support this bill. It will be voted upon and we hope that everyone votes for it. We very strongly commend the bill to the House."

The Bill stipulates that indexation of the Defence Force Retirement Benefit Scheme (DFRDBS), the Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefit Scheme (DFRDBS) and the Military Superannuation and Benefits Scheme (MSBS) be calculated using the same methodology as the Pensioner and Beneficiary Living Cost Index under the Social Security Act 1991.

This method of indexation is the same as the Australian Age and Service Pensions, which are currently based on the greatest of Consumer Price Index (CPI), the Pensioner and Beneficiary Living Cost Index (PBLCI) or the wages-based measure of Male Total Average Weekly Earning (MTAWE).

Vale

JOHN DAVID COLLINS

548706 John David Collins passed away after a brief illness on 14th September. John served with 5 Fd Svy Sqn during the 1970's as the Tpt SGT. He served 25 years with RACT and retired as an RSM.

LEONARD SUTTON DAVIES

36096 Leonard Sutton Davies passed away on 13 Oct in Toowoomba. Len served just short of 30 years and retired in Feb 1981. Len was a member of the 1961 Peninsula Mapping Project covered earlier in this and previous newsletters.