



Newsletter

*Royal Australian Survey Corps Association
of South Australia*

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Still wrapped in red tape

Fate of Fortuna Villa remains undetermined

For those members who spent many years working at Fortuna, and perhaps remain interested in what has happened to the old building, the following extracts from the 'Bendigo Weekly' of early December 2011 would be of interest.

"The future of Bendigo's grand historical mansion is bogged so deep in political bickering and buck-passing, all hope of an outcome any time soon has gone. This week, there were more conspiracies floating around than in a Dan Brown novel: mysterious cabinet documents that nevertheless sit on an opposition politician's desk, and commercial-in-confidence letters that are also bandied about and quoted when it suits.

Meanwhile, the big ornate Fortuna Villa sits on its prime Bendigo site, the outbuildings an asbestos hazard, the grounds contaminated by untreated mine tailings, costing a shade under \$1 million every year in security and basic upkeep."

A Business Plan or Feasibility Study commissioned in May 2010 has been described as that—"back of a beer coaster, cobbled together document, thin on planning, outcomes, costs and where millions in ongoing funding was supposed to come from". So there you are, don't hold your breath as to an outcome it appears.



Keeping up-to-date on Defence matters

Allan Adsett would like to draw everyone's attention to a recent article in the Adelaide Advertiser concerning a new Defence Website. It is called the Defence Alumni Network. The article states that;
"A new website to enable ex-navy, army and airforce personnel to keep in contact was launched recently. The Defence Alumni Network website will enable members to share photos and stories and to keep across current defence events. It will also provide the opportunity for Defence to keep in touch with its alumni

and reengage with people who may want to rejoin the service. The network can be accessed by visiting www.dan.gov.au"

And for those of you who miss the old Army newspaper each second Thursday, it too can be found on-line and it is in a much fancier format than it was back in our time. It can be found at :

http://digital.realviewtechnologies.com/?xml=defencenews_army.xml

Seniors Progress Abroad 2011 Style

Alex Munro runs the gauntlet of bogus cops, passionate kissers, dancing girls with high heels, Heathrow Terminal 3, and an Archbishop as he and Joan sweep across Europe.

Reading about travel trips can be a very boring matter especially when they are a blow by blow account, so this will be a series of recollections and impressions in no particular order.

Joan and I left in mid April this year flying by Qantas to Frankfurt via Singapore, and returned in mid July again by Qantas through Singapore from London, away from Adelaide for three months less one week. We toured cities through Germany, Italy, Switzerland, France, Czech Republic and the United Kingdom, not touring as much as we had hoped for, but time ran out and so did the muscles in our legs and feet.

International airports are huge, crowded, a bit bewildering and nerve wracking, all of which is just not my opinion. Railway advertising often quoted airport stress as a good reason for travelling by high speed train, just rock up and step aboard. I must admit though that the second time through is a bit better. We had experiences that tested our patience and tempers at Singapore, Frankfurt, Rome, Stansted, Prague and Heathrow, so make sure you arrive at the correct terminal, otherwise time lost getting to the right one could mean a missed flight and goodbye fare.

Weather is so important on tour, and we had fairly mild and fine weather for the entire trip. There were a few exceptions, without being a nuisance, such as the famous damp weather of Edinburgh in Scotland. We were fortunate that Europe experienced the driest spring/summer weather for many years.

Germany was a very impressive country—seemingly a country of fine museums, castles, palaces, first class multi-lane highways, wind turbines, good hotels, huge tracts of green green forests excepting the Black Forest, beautiful and majestic cathedrals—some still bearing scars from WWII bombing raids, very colourful and artistic and even quaint centuries-old architecture, monuments and statues in abundance, bright and well presented shop displays generally better than seen here, including an undertakers.

Food served throughout was very good, particularly the local breads, but beware the national delicacy of sauerkraut, delicious to many but leaving an uncomfortable feeling in the backside for others. Ordering a meal was not a problem as most restaurants had a menu printed in English.

The outskirts of Rome looked a bit weary after Germany, but spruced up a bit in some areas by the street signs which intrigued me, being made of marble, with the name machined in and attached to the wall of each corner building. Rome must have been the marvel of the ancient

world at one time, after inspecting the ruins of the immense colosseum and civic buildings with such striking architectural design, which even using modern building practices would present considerable challenges to reproduce today. The magnificence of the Sistine Chapel and Vatican were not seen at their best when in the company of several thousand other tourists, which was a pity. Taking a late afternoon walk in the vicinity of our hotel, we were stopped by two plain clothes police officers in an unmarked car, one flashing an identity card which might have been genuine, however, the conversation went something like—'What are you doing here?'—'Going for a walk'—'What's in that pocket, hashish?'—'No, my glasses'—'What's in that pocket?'—'My wallet'—'Where are your passports?'—'Back at the hotel', all of which set Joan on the offensive, accusing the man of being a bogus policeman which we had been warned about in Australia and giving her opinion of him in no uncertain manner. Definitely on the back foot by now, the man raised his hands in a defensive posture and requested Joan to calm down, before both drove away. Hotel management later confirmed that they were most likely bogus, as their conduct was contrary to police practice.

Meals served were fine, providing pasta in numerous forms was your favourite dish, or meat or fish served with only a spoonful of spinach; no such thing as meat and three veg.

The Italian countryside reminded me a lot of the South Australian landscape, when travelling north from Rome. Photographs of the leaning tower of Pisa in no way do justice to the actual building when standing alongside, nor did the sight of dozens of tourists at any one time being photographed while pretending to hold the tower upright. A nearby museum had a marvellous display of ancient artifacts I would have spent another hour with, had time permitted, meaning our part day was not enough by far.

The same in the beautiful city of Florence, one day was not sufficient, as we loved the place and were sad to leave with so much more to see, and would definitely visit again if possible.

Old Venice must have been something special centuries ago, judging by the still impressive palaces and buildings along the narrow winding canals. The alleyways in between are perhaps not much more than two metres wide, separating hundreds of narrow fronted restaurants, cafes and shops selling designer (perhaps) clothes, watches and sunglasses all at very expensive prices. We visited a workshop that produced the famous Venetian crystal ware and glass jewellery, to see a display of glass blowing by a master of the

(Continued overleaf)

(Seniors Progress continued)

craft. Blowing molten glass into exquisite objects with apparent ease, showed a rare skill. Later, an American woman in our group was alone with the same glassblower, when he embraced her with an amorous and passionate kiss she later described as full on, something she laughed off as a joke fortunately for him.

The scenery was superb when travelling through the Alps enroute to Lucerne, a lovely city which must truly be the watch and clock capital of the world, judging by the number of shops that retail huge amounts of both. Paying for articles in euros but receiving the change in francs was a local phenomena, so using all francs before leaving the country was a bit of a nuisance but not hard. We went by cable car to visit a multi-storey tourist complex atop Mount Titlis to see views of the Alps from the top, but with the temperature down to -11°C and constant falling snow that was not possible. Lucerne must be the only place where all domestic and industrial rubbish is not processed locally, but is transported to another country for disposal.

I read very recently that Prague is considered the most beautiful city in Europe, a sentiment that Joan and I wholeheartedly agree with. We booked in for five days but in hindsight should have made it several days longer, we loved the place and will return again if ever the opportunity arises. Our hotel was a small establishment in the old city, where breakfast was the special meal of the day even to complimentary champagne provided, very civilised indeed. All other meals for the day were served only in your room, should you wish. Food quality was excellent throughout, the beer is the best in Europe and the cheapest, service provided was tops, concerts every night, beautiful churches, museums and not enough time to enjoy it all. Language problems in the various European countries was minimal, as English is widely spoken, often with such quality that I was surprised at times.

Paris is a city with style, visible in great public buildings and numerous monuments and statues, bearing the

input of Napoleon I strongly suspect. The huge dimensions of the Eiffel Tower can only be appreciated by standing underneath, but should you prefer a very entertaining variety show, then visit the Lido, including acts of tall dancing girls wearing high heel shoes and large hats, but not much else other than loads of stylish feathers. A visit to the Palace of Versailles to see the elaborate and excessive grandeur of the interior and the vast gardens, showing the immense gap in living standards at that time between the aristocracy and the impoverished poor, surely must have been a direct cause of the French Revolution, something that both Joan and I formed the same opinion about.

Huge ferry ships depart very regularly from Calais to cross the English Channel to Dover, taking around two hours for the journey each way but entry documents must be completed with British immigration staff at Calais before boarding. With the weather being on the damp side, the White Cliffs of Dover appeared more of a grubby grey colour.

We stayed with friends in London during our time in the UK, using their place as a base for our travels, so got to meet and appreciate a fair amount of London local society, the quaint hotels for a meal and a drink with new friends, the parish churches that often had records showing an unbroken line of serving clergy going back for many centuries, the varied housing styles so different from Australia and the underground rail system we used so often.

Inner London is a place of diverse cultures, Indians, Pakistanis, West Indians, Africans, Chinese, European immigrants and illegals, but seems to work pretty well and never shuts down. We both liked London. Joan loved the ambience of the small English pubs, something that surprised me, and didn't need urging to visit a new one so I often had the chance to trial a different brand of beer, and there seemed to be dozens of them.

The most quaint of all was a tiny pub set into a limestone cliff below Nottingham Castle called "Ye Olde Trip



Ye Olde Trip to Jerusalem

to Jerusalem" and reputedly on that site since 1189AD, the oldest pub in Britain. In early times the word 'trip' meant a resting spot, and apparently it was the favourite watering hole for local recruits setting off for the Crusades from the castle above.

When visiting Canterbury one day, we attended Evensong in Canterbury Cathedral, mainly to hear the choir sing, only to see the Archbishop of Canterbury sitting right opposite, which made me feel like an intruder as we were there only to hear the choir.

Just to show we were not racists, we accepted an invitation to visit a Hindu temple in London, late one afternoon. The temple was a magnificent and huge building of exquisitely carved wood pillars, stone masonry, marble and hundreds of sculptures, and is the largest outside of India. Unaware of what was about to take place, we were led into a temple at the start of a Hindu service lasting about 35 minutes, where we did our best to look the part, a bit uncomfortable for me though sitting cross legged on the marble floor, with Joan back in the ladies section. The saffron robed priest conducting the service was just as surprised as I was when we first locked eyes. We met and chatted with some family groups later during our tour, ending a very kind invitation.

With so much to see and do, we hardly scratched the surface, but tried hard. Although we felt fine on returning to Adelaide we slept for the first two days, except for meal breaks .

Even with all the hassles inherent in travel, would we do it again.
YES PLEASE!

Vale

Major BRIAN FITZGERALD

Brian was the son of long-time Director of Survey, Brigadier Lawrence Fitzgerald. He died in Melbourne on 14 April 2011 aged 78. I served with him in PNG in the sixties when he was a Captain in RAASC. He was a real party man and, from my observations at least, the very antithesis of his father in that regard. He leaves behind a family of seven children.

Noel Sproles

FRANK COHEN

Frank Cohen passed away on 7 September 2011. Frank was a long term Member of our Association's 4 Fd Svy Coy Old Comrades and RA Svy Corps Association (WA). During WW2 Frank served with 4 Fd Svy Coy in WA. Later in 1948 he joined the ARA, serving as a Topographic Surveyor. Frank was interned at the Jewish Section of the Karrakatta Cemetery on 8 September.

Brian Mead.

Cpl DEREK TAYLOR

Cpl Derek Robert Taylor passed away on 3 June. He worked at Landgate.

Phil Bray

Cpl ASHLEY BIRT, RAE

Corporal Ashley Birt from 1 Topo Svy Sqn was killed on operations in Afghanistan late October 2011. He is the second Survey battle casualty since WWII and the first to die on operations since 1945.

He was born in Nambour, Queensland in 1989. He enlisted into the Australian Regular Army in June 2007 and was allocated to the Royal Australian Engineers as a Geospatial Technician.

Following his Engineer Initial Employment Training and Specialist Technical Geospatial Basic course in December 2008, he was posted to the 1st Topographical Survey Squadron (1 TOPO SVY SQN) as a Geospatial Technician. He was promoted to Lance Corporal in February 2011 and to Corporal in April 2011.

Corporal Birt was part of Combined Team Uruzgan and is survived by his parents and brother.

LEST WE FORGET

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sproles@senet.com.au

Christmas BBQ



We have to doff our lid to John for his effort in organising the BBQ

Our Association pre-Christmas BBQ continues as a solid tradition and is now into its second year.

Jim Dunn reports that a dozen or so people turned up for the sausage sizzle on the day and that the weather held out despite the Bureau of Meteorology's predictions to the contrary.

John and Pamela Harrison continued with their long history of doing a fine job organising the event and that a good time was had by all as they caught up with each other.

