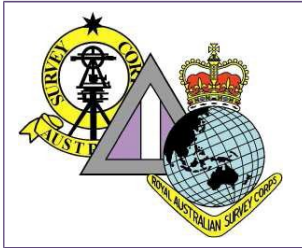


Royal Australian Survey Corps Association



ACT Newsletter

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Issue Note – New President

Congratulations to Peter Jensen, the new President of the Canberra Survey Corps Association. Peter has also agreed to take on the role of editor/publisher of the Canberra Newsletter. Accordingly, this is my last issue and I thank all those who have contributed in the past and sincerely hope that members will continue to support the newsletter with content into the future.

I also wish to thank Charlie Watson for his considerable efforts as Secretary of the Canberra Association and note that Charlie will continue in this role.

Regards and thanks
Rob McHenry

Governor General's 100th Anniversary Address

Address By His Excellency General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC (Retd) On the occasion of the Centenary of the Royal Australian Survey Corps Wreathlaying Ceremony at The Australian War Memorial, Canberra 1 July 2015

Good morning.

On this day, 100 years ago, the Australia Survey Corps was formed. And today we lay wreaths. To remember. To pay tribute. And to honour those surveyors who served and gave their lives in conflicts around the world.

As any soldier will tell you, maps are fundamental to warfare. In the 1700's the Prussian King Frederick the Great put it well when he said that '*knowledge of the country is to a general what a rifle is to an infantry man*'. In the Peninsular War the British forces led by Arthur Wellesley and John Moore used reconnaissance officers to spy out land in the path of the enemy and to develop map detail that proved crucial in battle.

So it has always been the case that maps are of great tactical importance in the battlefield. They inform good decision making. And they save lives. And I have seen this first hand. In Vietnam, the A section of the 1st topographical Troop served with distinction and provided a level of support well beyond what was planned or expected. These men were widely renowned as dedicated, tough and great innovators. They worked in testing conditions and with basic equipment—but they always produced whatever was asked of them, quickly and accurately.

But it was the outbreak of the First World War that heralded the establishment of the Australian Survey Corps and what would become 80 years of service in a range conflicts around the globe. Serving with the AIF—and some with the Royal Engineers—Survey Corp members were active on the Western Front and in the Middle East. And proudly, two soldiers Sgt William Stafford RAE (*Royal Australian Engineers*) and WO2 Alan Murray were awarded DCMs, second only to the VC, for gallant performance of their survey duties. Today, Murray's medals take pride of place in the Survey Corps Museum.

The advent of World War II saw a huge expansion of the Corps as it reached a full strength of 1700, its largest size in its 81year history. Altogether, some 1400 different maps were produced during the war with roughly half of them being within Australia. Units served with distinction in many theatres, from Palestine and Lebanon to the South Pacific and New Guinea. In recognition of this service the title 'Royal' was granted to the Corps in 1948. On the Kokoda track, the great contribution of surveyors is remembered at Owers Corner, named after Lieutenant "Gerry" Owers, Australian Survey Corps. And today the surveying tradition continues, with ADF surveyors most recently serving in Afghanistan.

Apart from active service, it is also appropriate that we acknowledge the peace time contribution the Survey Corps made to our nation. The Corps produced almost half of the general purpose mapping required by Government for the national development and defence of Australia. And its members provided the initial mapping for big national projects like the Snowy Mountains Scheme and the Woomera Rocket Range.

But it is the active service, the sacrifices and the contributions made by the men and women of the Royal Australian Survey Corps that we commemorate here today. On this 100th anniversary, we pay tribute to those whose skill and passion for surveying became integral to the work of the Australian military. And of course we offer our deepest respects to the 20 men who have given their lives serving with the Survey Corps or as members of the ADF on military survey operations.

It was their duty to serve and it is our duty to remember them—and that is what we do today, and every day.

Lest we forget.

Wikipedia page – Royal Australian Survey Corps

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Australian_Survey_Corps

By Peter Jensen

If you are reading this newsletter via the Corps' Association world-wide-webpage it is highly likely that you are aware of Wikipedia the popular public free encyclopaedia website that includes thousands of pages, one of which is titled *Royal Australian Survey Corps*. In fact a Google search of 'Royal Australian Survey Corps' will return the Wikipedia page as the top hit. This page, in the standard military organisation template, was started in 2006 by someone not known to me but who apparently started a page for all Australian Army Corps, former and present, at about the same time. In 2010 I became aware of the page and began to edit it, adding and amending content, learning about Wikipedia and how it works as I went. At the moment more than 95% of the content is mine and I do have it on my 'watch list' receiving alerts when the page is edited. In the past five years I have not found any vandalism on the page.

A Wikipedia page is not a platform for original research, but it is a narrative of a collection of existing research, and so references to the source materials are essential. Indeed, if there are insufficient references a warning is sent to the editor to that effect and the edit may be removed if references are not included. In essence it is a peer reviewed document.

Wikipedia is managed by a governance structure of rules, some of which are obvious and others which an editor learns by editing and making mistakes which 'expert' editors pick up. An example is uploading and inserting images which have to be tagged with permission and copyright information or the image can't be used.

As a public free encyclopaedia anyone can edit the page (no permission restrictions), using either a User Identifier and Password or not logging on. If you do not log on your computer Internet Protocol address will be recorded and shown as the editor. Most User Identifier names are anonymous but I chose to use a name (JensenPeterA) that some readers would recognise as being someone who served in the Survey Corps and knows of its history. This is something which I would encourage all former Survey Corps member contributors/editors to do. There is also a 'talk' facility for logged on users for each page to discuss content, but I have not tried that thus far. I do regularly keep a MS Word snap-shot of the page in the event of a major editing catastrophe.

There is a great deal of publicly available existing information about the activities of the Survey Corps although much of it is still in paper form and in many, many places. This will never all be digitised and certainly not in a single narrative form freely and easily available. However, Wikipedia as a free public platform for interested and knowledgeable contributors/editors and billions of world-wide-web browsers and researchers alike (English version), is probably now the best way of easily adding to the readily available public knowledge of the Royal Australian Survey Corps. I encourage interested contributors/editors to have a go and I am more than willing to help anyone who would like to participate but is not sure how to get started (pajmjensen@gmail.com).

Surveying NSW – The Pathfinders Project

The Senior Surveyors Group of the Institution of Surveyors New South Wales Incorporated is producing an archive of those surveyors who assisted in the development of New South Wales since 1788. The archive is being compiled by Emeritus Surveyors Brian McCloskey and William (Bill) Moore. Enquiries -- Contact Ken Green - Email k.w.green@bigpond.com Phone 61 2 9528 3454

We have received permission to publish the entry for [Vance, Thomas Alexander \(Major\)](#). However, as his entry is currently 23 pages long, publishing the whole thing in this newsletter is not practical. I have therefore selected the following excerpts from “Pathfinders” that may be of interest:-

Thomas Alexander Vance

A brief description of the recently formed Survey Corps and the proposed mapping of West Australia by a new survey section, headed by [Lieut. T. A. Vance](#) as survey officer, appeared in *The West Australian* dated Monday 26 July 1915:

Australian Ordinance Maps. - Operations In Western Australia. - Survey Section Established.

Among the passengers who arrived in this State on Tuesday by the R.M.S. Mongolia, was Captain C. V. Quinlan, head of the Survey Corps of the Commonwealth Military Forces, who in a conversation with a "West Australian" representative on Friday, furnished some information regarding the great work upon which his department is engaged, and his present mission to Western Australia. Captain Quinlan explained that the Survey Corps is a comparatively recently organised branch of the Australian military establishment, and its immediate work is to lay a sound foundation for the subsequent detailed mapping of the country for military purposes. The work is at present only in its infancy, and owing to the utmost accuracy, and the wealth of detail required, it is necessarily slow. The only State where substantial progress has yet been made is Victoria, where work was commenced about 18 months ago, and some 2,000 square miles of country has now been surveyed. The method adopted is that of theodolite triangulation. The whole scheme is planned in squares, the edges of each of which must fit exactly to those surrounding it. For mapping purposes each square measures three minutes of latitude by three minutes of longitude, and contains an area of 900 square miles, four of these maps, when fitted together, making a degree square of 3,600 square miles. The most scrupulous accuracy is necessary of the co-ordination of the various sections of the work, and Captain Quinlan has a staff of officers expert in this particular branch of surveying, who have carried out difficult and intricate duties on frontier and boundary commissions, and other important surveying enterprises in various parts of the world. The survey section will produce maps in five colours, showing all the prominent topographical features of the country, on scales of one inch and half an inch to the mile. Dealing with the great advantage of having absolutely accurate

and detailed maps for use in active military operations, Captain Quinlan said that this had never been more emphatically demonstrated than in the present war in Europe. The wonderfully complete and accurate knowledge which the Germans possessed of the topography of the French country in which they were operating had proved of immense advantage to them, as they knew all the points of vantage, and had not the slightest difficulty in picking up any required range for artillery purposes. Lack of proper maps had also greatly hampered the British forces in the Boer War, and had contributed greatly to a number of the disasters which befell them there. It was imperative that any system of military mapping must be established on a proper basis, and the Canadian authorities had become alive to the fact that it was necessary to reconstruct the whole of their system, owing to the unreliability of its foundation. Captain Quinlan's present visit to Western Australia is for the purpose of initiating the work of his department here, and he is accompanied by the staff of a survey section which will be established as a permanent unit in this State. This is in charge of **Lieut. T. A. Vance** as survey officer, and includes two warrant officers, a company sergeant-major, a sergeant and two corporals, while the necessary temporary labour will be engaged locally. As there is no accommodation available at District Headquarters for the housing of the new unit, an office will be secured for it in the city. For the present, at least, the work of the section will be confined to the coastal districts, and the rate of progress will, of course, depend largely upon, the nature of the country. As a beginning, Captain Quinlan has been investigating the data available in the State Lands and Surveys Department, in relation to its value in connection with the operations of his department, and he paid a warm tribute to the work of the West Australian surveyors. Their work, he said, appeared to be of a higher class than had been done in any of the Eastern States, and it would be of very great assistance as a starting point for the operations of his staff. Before the active work of the new section is started, Captain Quinlan and his officers intend making a preliminary reconnaissance of the country to be dealt with, by automobile. He expects that his initial work will keep him in Western Australia for about six weeks, and he will then visit New South Wales for the purpose of inaugurating a similar undertaking in that State.

The following details regarding T. A. Vance's military career have been taken from *Australia's Military Map-Makers* by C D Coulthard-Clark:

T. A. Vance was appointed Lieutenant in the Australian Survey Corps on 13th July 1915 to take charge of operations in Western Australia. He was a qualified surveyor in civilian life who had experience in New Guinea and the New Hebrides. He had also worked on the transcontinental railway across the Nullarbor Plain and the border of the new Federal Capital Territory (Canberra).

Thomas enlisted in the Australian Survey Unit of the Australian Imperial Force on 2nd January 1918. He declared that he was born in Malmsbury, Victoria on 17th November 1882; his trade or calling was 'Officer, Permanent Forces' (Lieutenant); he had been articled to G. W. Ellis, Mines Department W.A. between 1900 & 1905; he was married and his next of kin was his wife, Christina Elizabeth Vance - address c/o H. A. Ellis, Malmsbury, Victoria (this was also given as his permanent address); previous military experience included the Goldfields Infantry for 3 years and the Australian Survey Corps for 2½ years.

Military records from the Australian War memorial website <http://static.awm.gov.au/> show that Thomas embarked at Sydney NSW, per HMAT A18 "Wiltshire" 2nd February 1918, for the War in Europe.

The following details regarding T. A. Vance's military career have been taken from *Australia's Military Map-Makers* by C D Coulthard-Clark:

He embarked for Europe and after attending training in Southampton, England, he served briefly on the Western front (1918). At the end of World War 1 he attended an eight week special course, in Southampton, on the latest survey and lithographic reproduction methods. After returning to Australia he worked on completion of seven map sheets near Perth, Western Australia. He was then sent to Queensland in 1921 to undertake surveys for the mapping of parts of that State. By 1927, due to difficulties of surveying in rough terrain, the use of aerial photography was requested.



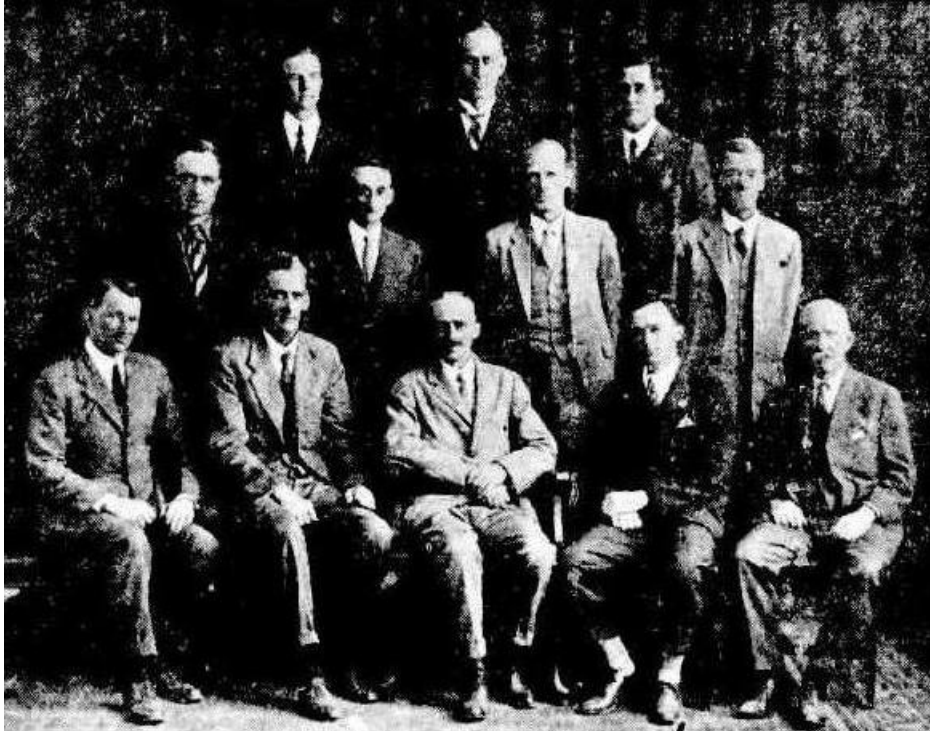
“With T.A. Vance in South Australia, June 1914”

Part of the collection: Postcards from South Australia

Back Row, left to right: J. Maxwell-Moffat, A. Bagot, E. Dowling.

Front Row left to right: C.R. Scrivener (Director L&S), T.A. Vance (Surveyor), G.F. Dodwell (Govt Ast. r.S.A.)

<http://nla.gov.au/nla.pic-vn3534314> - Donated by Mr. Colin Fuller.



The Council of The Queensland Institute of Surveyors (Incorporated), 1928.

Back Row (Left to right): - Messrs. G. Newman, T. H. Jensen, Capt. T. A. Vance.,

Second Row: - Messrs. E. H. Belson, S. G. Palmer (Secretary), J. P. Harvey, C. H. Baird.

Front Row: - Messrs. R. A. M'Innis (Hon. Business Manager), A. W. Manning (Vice-President),

J. E. G. Stevenson (President), A. R. M'Comb (Past President), F. J. Heussler (Hon. Treasurer)

National Library of Australia 'Trove' website - <http://trove.nla.gov.au/>

The results of Thomas' mapping work in Queensland became available to the public. *The Brisbane Courier* announced this change in government policy in its edition dated Friday 27 June 1930:

Military Notes. - Sale Of Defence Department Maps.

Military maps hitherto have been regarded by the Defence Department as confidential, and have been issued out-side the department only to Government departments and educational institutions, provided certain under-takings were entered into with respect to their custody. This policy has been changed, however, and the maps, with the exception of a few sheets considered of importance from a defence point of view, are now available for sale to the public. They are drawn to a scale of one inch to a mile, with a 50ft. contour. They are similar to the ordnance survey maps of Great Britain, and are particularly valuable to the landholder desirous of ascertaining levels, to the geologist, and to the engineer for water conservation schemes. Available maps of districts adjacent to Brisbane are

of Beenleigh, Tamborine, Flinders, Ipswich, and Redcliffe. The maps, which have been made by the survey section of the Royal Australian Engineers, commanded in Queensland by **Captain T. A. Vance**, mark a new experiment, as an aerial photographic party from the R.A.A.F. is coming to Queensland to cooperate with the survey section by providing aerial photographs, from which topographical details will be obtained. This is the first attempt of the kind in Australia, and suitable methods will have to be evolved for local conditions and requirements.

A re-location to South Australia for Thomas was noted in *The Advertiser* (Adelaide, SA) of Friday 12 January 1934:

.... **Captain T A Vance**, of the survey section Royal Australian Engineers, arrived in Adelaide on Monday. He has been conducting a military survey of Queensland for some years and will be occupied in a similar duty in South Australia. It is expected that he will be five years in this State. He is being assisted by Warrant Officer A. T. Smith. Australian Survey Section (Engineers).

In *Australia's Military Map-Makers* by C D Coulthard-Clark, it is noted that on 1st March 1936 **Captain Vance** was transferred to Melbourne as OC of the Survey Corps with a promotion to the rank of Major. Although his position was mainly administrative, he continued with some field work and in early 1937 undertook a survey of country in the North Midlands district of Tasmania.

After having undertaken surveys in almost every state on the Australian mainland, Thomas finally headed to Tasmania - a report of his work appeared in *The Mercury* (Hobart, Tas) of Friday 19 March 1937:

Military Survey - Mapping Of Midlands Area

Personnel of the Headquarters of the Australian Army Survey Section of the Defence Department in Melbourne under the command of **Major T. A. Vance** are engaged on a military survey of a training area of 600 square miles of terrain in the Midlands. The area is about 20 miles wide astride the main Hobart-Launceston road, and stretches from Campbell Town northwards to the vicinity of Longford. Complete topographical information concerning the nature of the country, communications, rivers and habitation is given in the military maps, which are of assistance to State departments, municipal authorities, and landowners. The work will be linked with the trigonometrical survey of Tasmania, and beacons are being erected on prominent hills, to ensure the absolute accuracy of the map, which will take some months to complete. In order to obtain the exact positions of the new map extensive astronomical observations of the latitude and longitude of the datum (or starting point) at Loch Maben have been carried out. Modern methods are being adopted by the adaptation of aerial photographs, which have recently been taken by the Royal Australian Air Force.

A conference to discuss improvements of Australian mapping, to include appropriate topography for aviation purposes, included Thomas among its committee - *The Argus* dated Saturday 8 July 1939:

Hills, But No Mountains - Maps of Air Routes

In some of the official maps of Australian air routes, hills of 700ft are shown but mountains 2,000ft high are omitted. The Minister for Civil Aviation (Mr Fairbairn) who flies his own plane and has had personal experience of the inadequacy of such maps, was able to give first-hand evidence of their shortcomings when he opened a conference yesterday to devise means of improving aerial maps, not only for commercial flying but also for the Air Force. Sir Herbet Gepp, chairman of the Geological and Geophysical Survey of Northern Australia, presided at the conference which is

expected to continue next week. Mr. Fairbairn told the conference that its job was not so much to decide what it would like to do but what could be done with the resources available. "The trouble which faces most authorities in this country" said Mr Fairbairn, "particularly those responsible for civil aviation, is that we have to provide for a huge continent with resources somewhat like those of a Balkan State. That applies to mapping as much as to anything else. I presume that you all have theories as to how you could map this country adequately if the Government could make available sufficient money. The problem, however, is how to provide adequate maps where they are most urgently needed with the limited amount of money which can be made available". The committee comprises Sir Herbert Gepp (chairman), and Mr. A. C. Smith (Geological and Geophysical Survey), Major T. A. Vance and Squadron-Leader A. G. Carr (Defence Department), Mr. A Percival (Commonwealth Survey Committee), Messrs F. L. Hatfield and W. J. Sear (Department of the Interior), Mr. H. S. McComb (Australian Survey Committee), Messrs A. R. McComb, D. Ross, W. E. Pyke, I. A. Angus (Civil Aviation Department).

On 3rd September 1939 Australia joined Britain in declaring war on Germany. The future of the Survey Corps was assured in respect of the necessary, emergency strategic mapping of parts of Australia. Major Vance was the senior officer of the Australian Survey Corps. On 12th February 1940 a Survey Directorate was formed with Major Vance holding the title of Assistant Director. In September 1940 the War Cabinet approved of greatly increased resources for military mapping of the nation. Major Vance was provisionally promoted on 3rd September 1940 to lieutenant-colonel and then on 1st January 1941 his designation was changed to Director of Survey and head of the 'Survey Service' at AHQ - based in Melbourne. By 1942 the AHQ had been changed to an LHQ in Brisbane where Lieutenant-Colonel Vance relinquished his position - five months from his sixtieth birthday. On 18th November 1942 he was formally retired with the honorary rank of colonel.

(Australia's Military Map-Makers by C D Coulthard-Clark)

The Australasian of Saturday 5 July 1941 contained the following detailed history of the Australian Survey Corps and its work - both in war and in peace:

Destruction is the chief aim of almost every branch of any army, and little of the work done during war by an army is of any use when the war ends. However, there is an exception to this rule. The men of the Survey Corps destroy nothing, and their work in wartime is good for all time.

Like members of the Australian Signals Corps, members of the Australian Survey Corps are distributed throughout the various formations of the Army and are directed in their work by the intelligence sections of the units. Their job is to make accurate and detailed maps of the areas in which the Army is likely to be fighting. The Survey section abroad with the AIF has done valuable work in Palestine and Libya and shared the dangers and discomforts of the Anzacs in Greece and in Crete. When they were evacuated from Crete members of the Survey section were forced to leave all their equipment and valuable maps, but fortunately the valuable air cameras and mobile printing presses had been left in Palestine and Egypt and were safe.

Good Maps Essential

In modern warfare movement is so rapid that it is essential that an army should have good maps of the country far behind the enemy lines. The Survey sections, with co-operation from the RAAF, can provide these maps in a very short time. From a measured base line within their own territory the

surveyors take sights on and fix accurately several outstanding geographical features behind the enemy lines. The planes are then sent over to take aerial photographs of the terrain to be mapped. The photographs taken by the air camera overlap, and with the use of triangulation on the fixed points can be arranged into one large photograph of the whole area under survey. Using the stereoscope, which gives the picture depth, the draughtsmen can mark on their map the contours of the country and the positions of houses, roads, and geographical features. These field sheets are then sent to the cartographers, who draw the detailed map and print it.

Meanwhile, sections of the Survey Corps in Australia continue with the work for which they were originally formed - the preparation of strategical and tactical maps of Australia. In 1907 the Australian Intelligence Corps was formed and given the task of mapping Australia. The maps produced were based on the cadastral plans published by the Lands Department of the various States. Contours and other topographical details were added to the original plans, but as these had no trigonometrical base they were unsatisfactory.

Qualified Surveyors

After a year's work along these lines the magnitude of the task became evident, and, after a Government inquiry, the work was handed over to the permanent military forces. The Survey Section of the Royal Australian Engineers, directed by the Australian Intelligence Corps, was allotted the task. Qualified surveyors were enlisted in the section, and the work was begun. Until 1915 the Survey Section was part of the Royal Australian Engineers, but in June of that year the Australian Survey Corps was formed and given an establishment. The men who formed the old section were transferred as a body to the new corps. Work in Australia came to a standstill during the war, as the majority of members of the corps went oversea on war service. These men did excellent service with various survey and mapping units. After the Armistice, 4 of the officers of the Survey Corps spent 8 weeks at a course conducted at the Ordnance Survey, Southampton, one of the greatest mapping schools in the world. They returned to Australia in 1919, and in the reorganisation that followed the Survey Corps was forgotten, and members were transferred back to the Survey Section of the RAE.

Many members returned to civil practice after the war, but they were gradually replaced, and the progress of the Survey Corps in the intervening years has been remarkable. The job ahead of the corps was the completion of a strip of geodetic triangulations from northern Queensland, down the east coast, across southern Victoria, and into South Australia. The strip was broken by the great desert, and the mapping of Western Australia was undertaken independently. Improvements in technical methods were also introduced, and the standard of reproduction of maps now satisfies the requirements of the section. In 1932 the Survey Section RAE reverted, in title, to the Australian Survey Corps. In the period since the war no one had known what was the correct title of the section, and it had been given so many names that the adjutant-general was finally asked to clear the matter up. He decided that the Order in Council of 1915 by which the Survey Corps was established had never been abolished, and the section was still the Australian Survey Corps. Considerably expanded since the outbreak of the present war, the Survey Corps, in addition to supplying units abroad, is carrying on the vital work of mapping Australia for defence purposes. There are now 4 field Survey companies, one attached to each of the military commands, a HQ Survey Co. and a HQ Cartographic Co. in Melbourne. **Lt.-Col. T. A. Vance** is Director of Survey and Maj. J. J. Raisbeck is Deputy Director and O-C HQ Survey Co. Both men are veterans in the service of the corps.

Thomas Alexander Vance retired on the 18th November 1942 at age 60 and died in 1959, at Yackandandah, Victoria, aged 76.