



# The Apprentice About

Newsletter for the Australian Army Apprentices Association Inc

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August 2010

## From the President

Greetings all. I am pleased to present, at long last, the first of our quarterly newsletters that we have titled "The Apprentice About". For the newsletter to continue and to flourish we will need input from you all, so please help by contributing. Intake news is especially welcome as well as snippets of personal news.

I have been away travelling around northern and central Australia for the past eight weeks so consequently my contribution to association matters has been less than usual. What a great country we have!! I took the opportunity of calling on Norm Jagger in Mt Isa and enjoyed a drink with Dave Cooper in Darwin, Geoff Arnold in Katherine and Chips Carpenter in Alice Springs.

You will find that The Apprentice About will have more news and a more diverse subject matter than I was able to include in my President's Updates. Your ideas for further inclusions and comments will be most welcome. Regular contributors will be especially welcome.

Our latest project, the redevelopment of the Balcombe Gates environs to commemorate the many units and schools that have passed through the area is proving to be quite a major job. A report on progress is included in this issue and can be found on the web site.

I have had a number of questions posed to me on whether there was any significance to the various elements that make up our Memorial. There certainly is and these are explained on the website. A more detailed report will be included in the next newsletter.

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## AUSTRALIAN ARMY APPRENTICES ASSOCIATION INCORPORATED

ACT Incorporation No A04404  
GPO Box 2072, CANBERRA, ACT, 2601  
[www.austarmyapprentice.org](http://www.austarmyapprentice.org)

**Patron:** Lieutenant General Ken Gillespie, AO, DSC, CSM, Chief of Army



## What the badge means

The Cross which forms the spokes of the wheel (the basis of the badge) represents the Christian virtues and the development of character.

The Torch of Learning, which is superimposed upon the Cross, represents that desire to go on learning, which should be the aim of every School to implant in the hearts and minds of all its sons.

The Crossed Swords remind us, as soldiers, of the military qualities of Courage and Discipline and the importance of a high standard of Physical Fitness.

The Wheel, of course, represents the trade and technical training carried out at the School, whilst the Crown expresses Loyalty to Queen and Country (and therefore to superiors and comrades alike) and Devotion to Duty.



Finally, I would like to publicly acknowledge the tremendous help that Maj Graham Docksey, as manager of the Army Museum, has been to our Association and Apprentices generally in preserving our heritage in the Army Museum Bandiana. This Museum is (in my view) second only to the War Memorial in Canberra in the exemplary display of a mass of vehicles and equipment and in particular the Army Apprentices corner, which is also the domain of, and credit to Jim Hislop. I congratulate Capt Phil Craig on his appointment as the new Museum Manager and Phil has already agreed to serve on the Memorial Management Committee.

I hope to see you all at Apprentices Together 2011 in October next year and don't forget to promote membership.

*Frank*

Frank Poole LtCol(R) RAE(tn)  
President

## From the Webmaster

Since taking over as webmaster late last year, the website has occupied much of my time. This may not be reflected in changes on the website but there has been, and still is, much to do and to learn. Routine changes such as Vale listings, membership listings, posting of notices etc are quite time consuming but I am sure my productivity will gradually increase in the coming months. One small development activity has been the **Benzene Project**. There has been a fairly limited response to the questionnaires that were posted and the future of the project is currently under review. Nevertheless from a technical viewpoint it was a successful project.

Lt Col Wally Rotow (18<sup>th</sup> Radio Mech) completed a mammoth task of updating the **Apprentice Intake listings**. Thanks to Wally we now have a definitive list of all entrants to the AAS including those that did not graduate. The updated listings will be posted to the website, in intake order, over the coming weeks.

An important, but underused, feature of the website is the **Forum** (or Bulletin Board). The forum provides a simple way for members to keep in contact, post notices, run discussions, find old mates, advertise etc. There are a large number of topics which can be added to according to the wishes of members.

Jeff Heron (21<sup>st</sup> Radio Mech) has kindly volunteered to act Moderator for the Forum. Jeff will generally keep a watch on the Forum, keeping it current and can answer questions on its operation. I urge all members to have a look at forum the next time you logon to the website and see how you might use it.

[www.austarmyapprentice.org/forum/](http://www.austarmyapprentice.org/forum/)

Ian Morris

Webmaster

## Benzene Project

Anecdotal evidence suggests that there is a correlation between the incidence of cancer in Australian Army Apprentices who undertook vehicle mechanic training and the use of benzene for cleaning and wash down. There is an apparent higher incident of cancers within this group, particularly from earlier intakes, and the general community.

The Association has commissioned a study to determine the incidence of cancers within the Army Apprentice community.

If you would like to participate in this study, visit the website at  
<http://www.austarmyapprentice.org/benzproj.html>

Jock McWhinney  
Benzene Project Chair

## SPAASSM Update

A function was held at the Australian War Memorial (AWM) on 3/5/10 to mark the end of the cataloguing phase of the project. The purpose of this function was to thank the AWM staff, Project SPAASSM Team members and the Army Museum for their support. The function was well attended and included VIP guests Lt Gen Ken Gillespie and Maj Gen Steve Gower.

All project SPAASSM material has now been removed from the AWM and handed over to the Army Museum Bandiana on 7 Aug 2010. Assessment of the video material is being undertaken by Peter Thornton.

Publishing the Project SPAASSM images on the website will be the next major activity. However progress may be slower than what we might have hoped due to amount of work required.

The Project SPAASSM page on the Website will continually be updated to reflect the current status.

Ian Morris  
SPAASSM Project Manager



## Balcombe Marine Gates Project

Some twelve months back our Patron Lt Gen Ken Gillespie suggested that the Association may like to coordinate some form of commemoration of the service history of the Balcombe/Mt. Martha area, as he suspected that it had significant military importance. Our Heritage Officer, Geoff Martin was tasked for this.

The Peninsula Council was contacted for their support which was given and contact officer nominated. VicRoads have also been contacted and advised of our proposal.

The Army History Unit, through Lt Gen Gillespie provided a very detailed history and list of units. This history surprised everyone in that the area had been used prior to Federation and by a range of units from all three services including such notable units as Z Special Force, the raising of two brigades for WWII, Clandestine Training School, as well as being the initial site of the Armoured and Signals Centres and many more units.

On 29<sup>th</sup> April, the Apprentice Association invited all interested parties to meet at Balcombe to consider the best way to develop the site. As the area immediately behind the left wall and leading onto Mace Oval is already flat and grassed and has two tables and benches, toilets and a rubbish point, it was agreed that a Rest Area” should be developed with facilities for unit plaques and history boards. A plan of action was agreed to by all interested parties and will focus on the following:

- The walls, gates and Marine plaques should be refurbished, including replacement of the original plaques now held at Mt Martha House.
- Some form of recognition of Mick Mace be linked with Mace Oval
- Approach to Balcombe Grammar School to see if they would like to be involved and be “caretakers” of the site.
- Units contacted to determine if they would like a unit board or just be included as part of the general history.
- I US Marine Division contacted to determine their involvement
- Approach Army History Unit for assistance
- Relocation of plaques from Citation Oval to this area.
- Nominations for suggestions for a name for the site.
- Approach Rotary to see if they can assist with the construction of a shelter/BBQ/table structure that will also house the unit plaques and history board.

These will not all happen overnight and it is estimated that it will be 2012 before the dedication can take place. This would also be a great occasion and location for reunions!!

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## Army Apprentice Memorial

The Memorial at Bandiana continues to be developed with only the Memorial Wall behind the gates to be built. This wall will silhouette the gates and provide a repository for the ashes of Apprentices and their partners

Many thanks to all who included a contribution to the Memorial fund with their last membership fees; we have some very generous Apprentices out there.

## Memorial Plaques

Memorial plaques may now be placed on the respective school wall (Balcombe or Bonegilla). It would be appreciated if members could make it known to mates and the next of kin of departed Apprentices of the facility to mount a remembrance plaque on the walls. Details can be found in the web site.

## Memorial Wall

Soon to be completed - the Memorial Wall will hold ashes of Apprentices and their partners. In these days of high funeral costs this represents a saving of at least \$3000 over a burial and has the assurance of perpetual care and of being remembered by all Apprentices visiting the site. An appropriate ceremony will be arranged for each interment. Details will be on the web site.





## **.CALENDAR OF EVENTS - REUNIONS**

Do you have a reunion or event that you would like to announce to the membership?. If so, please let us know.

### **36<sup>th</sup> Intake reunion - Jan 2011**

Place: Rottnest Island – Western Australia

Time 13 – 17 Jan 2011

Contact Tom Esze [tom@eszeberryman.net]

### **Apprentices Together - 2011 Reunion**

Planning is now well underway for our next major national Association event that will be held in Canberra over the period **27<sup>th</sup> October – 30<sup>th</sup> October 2011**

The Association, in recognising that the Intakes were and still are the bonding focus of the AAS, intends to provide a "function umbrella", so that intakes are able to conduct individual reunions, and at the same time come together in a display of combined mateship from days past to the present. This gathering will cover four days and provide the flexibility that will allow the Intakes to do their own thing, plus plenty of time to enjoy all that Canberra has to offer for visitors. The Association will organize key functions to ensure that the reunion maintains its momentum, purpose and solidarity. A draft breakdown of the daily events can be found on the website.

For more information contact Frank Maloney, the Association Events Manager ([frmal@bigpond.com](mailto:frmal@bigpond.com)) and watch the web page at <http://www.austarmyapprentice.org/armyapprenticestogether2011.html>

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## **LOST & FOUND**

### **Lost "Crab Day" memorial**

This is a plea for help in locating the whereabouts of the "Crab Day" memorial that was dedicated to the two 21st Intake Apprentices (P.K. Russell and A.J.T. (Jo) Pearce) who lost their lives on Crab Day 1968. As far as can be remembered, there was a flag pole, a small gun and a plaque erected between two of the (then) C Coy huts near the top of the road that led to the northern end of the Parade Ground.

It appears that the memorial was disassembled during the move to Bonegilla in 1982/3 and that the plaque was relocated to the stairwell at C Coy HQ at Latchford Barracks. It was last seen around 1994. Current evidence are the four holes where the screws were on that stairwell, but there is no trace of the plaque. Anyone who can remember what happened to the plaque after 1994, or can shed any light on its whereabouts, is requested to contact any member of the Committee. You may remain anonymous if you wish.

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## **AROUND THE STATES AND REGIONS**

### **North QLD**

In an attempt to establish contact with apprentices in the NQ area, I have contacted the RAEME, RAE, RASIG and AABC Associations and a number of apprentices that I know in the area. The associations have been great (although I have not heard back from the AABC Association) and have distributed my details and that of the association to their members. As yet I have had only a few responses, all of which have been very positive and helpful. There have also been a couple of people who have joined and/or pledged membership.

My goal is to establish a contact network of Apprentices which will hopefully culminate in an active NQ Area branch of the association. From responses so far, I believe this may be a slow process to start off with. I am hopeful the 2011 reunion in Canberra will be a springboard for this.

### **Upcoming social events in NQ that I know of are:**

NQ RAEME Association – NQ Spanner Club function at Joint Logistics Unit Lavarack Barracks Townsville on 13 Aug 2010 and the NQ RAEME Association annual dinner at Townsville RSL Club on 1 Oct 2010.

### **General Interest**

The skills shortage continues to hound us with the industry that I am employed in (Underground Coal Mine) experiencing severe shortages of fitters and electricians, so if there is somebody that wants a change in career, this may be a good opportunity. Just be prepared to come in on the ground floor and have to work your way into the position you want.

*Dave Young 30 F&T*



## South QLD

The Annual Reunion of the Army Apprentices South East Queensland was held once again at Bulimba Barracks BRISBANE on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2010.

This was the 11th year of the reunion and although the day was a bit cool, the area of the old Sgt's Mess on the river was still superb for our Reunion. Numbers were down a little this year, but those who came enjoyed themselves immensely. Amongst those attending were Roly Pritchard and Peter Snowden from the 9th, Garry Swan, Phil Lattimer and Bri Bailey from the 11th intake, through to Mark Horn from the 36th, Peter Matthews and Shad March from 37th, and with a spread of many intakes in between.



There was a good role up from the 14th, and as a special treat we had Col Hill who has been attending for a few years now and was a 3rd Intake Workshop Apprentice. Col served in Korea as a rifleman, the result of walking through the wrong door, and when it was found out that he was a tradesman was quickly sent to a workshop. Col served with many who were in the first few intakes from Balcombe.

The reunion is always on the Sunday of the Queens Birthday weekend in June, and hopefully at Bulimba Barracks for a few more years yet.

*Brian Daley 14th MV*

## B Company Reunion on the Gold Coast June 2010

After the 60th Reunion in Albury a group of us decided we should organise a reunion for those who were in B Coy at Balcombe from 1966 to 1968. This included Bricklayers, Carpenters & Joiners, Clerks, Musicians and Plumbers from the 19th, 20th, 21st, 22nd and 23rd Intakes.

I accepted the task of organising this function and it was finally decided to hold it at the Twin Towns Services Club on the Gold Coast from 1-4 June 2010. This was an ideal venue as the adjoining Outrigger Resort is owned by the Club and provides excellent facilities for reunions and is also close to Coolangatta Beach and provides easy access from the Gold Coast Airport. In helping me organise this function Mrs Chrissie Thomas, Conference & Convention Manager, Twin Towns Clubs and Resorts was first class and everything we had agreed on went off like clockwork over the four days. Similarly, the staff at both venues provided excellent assistance and service.



Classmates and their partners were invited and we had representatives from all Intakes attend. As can be seen from the photo a wonderful time was had by all. There were minimal organised functions and lots of time to just sit and chat and remember 'the good old days at Balcatraz' and old mates. People, some of us had not seen for over 40 years, were almost instantly recognised and old mateship's rekindled. We have agreed to have another reunion in two-three years time where, hopefully, those who could not make it this time because of work or family commitments will be able to join us.

*Rob Fry 21st Bricklayers*

PS A Bricklayer was the 1st BSM of AAS and the current CA is a 23<sup>rd</sup> Bricklayer; there must be something special about us Brickies aye.... LOL



## APPRENTICES' TRADE PROFICIENCY PRIZE MEDAL

A recent enquiry from a lady who came across one of the Medals caused the Association Committee to conduct some basic research into the origins of the Medal. Images of a Medal awarded to Mal Cock, 12th Intake, have been on the Association Website for some time.



Anecdotally, and from some documents, evidence is that the Medals were awarded for excellence in trade progress, sport, regimental training, and qualities of leadership. The Medals were awarded annually, at least from 1956 to 1979 and were awarded to junior, intermediate and senior intakes. In some years, there may have been only one Medal awarded per trade per intake and, in other years, two Medals (silver and bronze) were awarded. The Medals were engraved with the winner's name, the year and the type of award.

The obverse features the Apprentices' badge (less the scroll and with the "King's" crown). Two Commonwealth stars are balanced either side of the crown. The reverse includes a laurel wreath and the words "AWARDED TO" towards the top of the wreath and the maker's name "STOKES" at the bottom. The recipient's name (and sometimes regimental number and/or year or class) are separately engraved in the centre of the wreath (along with the award type at the top).

This is by no means a final or complete description of the Medal. Anyone with further evidence to support or expand the description is encouraged to contact the Committee.

## MEMBER PROFILE

**Name:** Gibson McMillan Owen

**Intake:** 10<sup>th</sup>

**Nickname at Apprentice School:** Gib

**Trade:** Vehicle Mech

**Current Occupation:**

Intellectual Property Lawyer

**Interests:**

Some years ago I began learning the shakuhachi bamboo flute. It takes many years to develop a reasonable sound never mind the Japanese musical notation reading from the right and down the page. My teacher already had a Masters Degree in Performance of the shak. and has now left to live in Japan to further study from two grand masters. I developed a throat condition some two years ago and was being treated by an ENT specialist. This doctor directed that I forthwith cease playing the Shak. I walked out of his clinic and across to Cash Converters and purchased a violin for \$100.00 which turned out to be a good quality Chinese version of a Strad, with a good quality bow. I forthwith engaged a young lady teacher and have now been working for four weeks playing scales and learning to play Twinkle Twinkle. I recommend doing away with the TV and finding a young lady who can teach the playing of (not with) an instrument.



**Places lived:** Upper Kumbucta West, Balcombe, Singapore

Lived in Sydney since discharge except for a one year (1984) holiday in UK, Europe and Ireland.

**Current Town:**

Currently live in Chatswood near Sydney

**Best Memories of Appy School:**

Best memory was suspending Scrooge Irwin's bed and body over the water jump whilst he slept whilst at Balcombe. Lots of fun at all times especially at Moorebank 2 Base Wksp in our fourth year. We just looked for trouble and found it each pay day. At the end of my nine years I was posted to a one man LAD at Myambat near Singleton and had a peaceful time reading War & Peace and consigning all motor vehicles to outside contractors. I was twice refused officer training as I did not demonstrate leadership qualities. Each time I studied for my matriculation I was moved away from the Tech College.

I needed a nine year holiday and certainly got one.

The Apprentice About is published quarterly.

If you have any items that you would like to include in "The Apprentice About" newsletter, please contact

[membership@austarmyapprentice.org](mailto:membership@austarmyapprentice.org)

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