Issue Note – Faces of the Corps

By Rob McHenry

Just a short reminder about the project to produce a “Faces of the Corps” presentation. The idea is to get a photo of as many Corps members as possible. To date, response has been less than stellar so I urge members to check out their Corps people photos and send them to John Mobbs for collation. My thanks to the 20 contributors who have provided about 250 faces so far. I’m sure everyone has at least one photo of themselves or some fellow Corps members that they can provide. Please don’t leave it up to others if you can contribute. There is much work required to identify many of the people in the photos and try to sort them into a presentation so it would be helpful if images could be provided sooner rather than later.

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Update - 100th Anniversary of Survey Corps - Canberra

By Rob McHenry

Planning is well under way to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Corps.

- Approval has been granted to conduct a Wreathlaying Ceremony at the Australian War Memorial (AWM) on Wednesday 1 July 2015 at 11am in the Western Courtyard adjacent to the Survey Corps plaque. Further information will be provided once details of the dignitaries and other high level representatives/guests have been finalised in conjunction with the AWM. A photographer will be provided.

- Approval has been granted by the National Library of Australia (NLA) to hold an afternoon reception on 1st July. Subsequent to the disbanding of the Corps in 1996, the NLA became the primary national repository of RASvy mapping. In conjunction with the very helpful staff at the NLA, access to and display of relevant Corps historical mapping, records and production information will be provided. It should be noted that this activity is a work in progress and is subject to acquiring successful sponsorship for catering.

- A well established, centrally positioned Canberra restaurant has been identified and tentatively booked for the evening of the 1st July. The plan is to provide a three course, sit down (alternate plate) dinner including drinks and to keep pricing below $100 per head. A noted guest speaker with a significant connection to the Corps has accepted our invitation to attend.

- Around mid-year, I will be seeking an initial commitment to attend the dinner so that the booking can be confirmed. Later on in the year, I will provide details of payment options. Obviously, the restaurant is not prepared to hold a total booking for any particular night without a deposit. At the moment planning is progressing on the basis that there is adequate interest from members across Australia and in some cases, overseas.

Noting that the Corps has been disbanded for 18 years and that none of us grow younger, I believe the 100th anniversary since the Corp’s inception realistically represents a ‘last hurrah’ opportunity to celebrate what was a world-class, technologically innovative military organisation. I look forward to sharing a red or two with as many old mates as possible.

DFRDB Indexation – The Story Continues

The following has been extracted from a letter dated 20 Dec 2013 out of the Office of the Hon Stuart Robert MP, Assistant Minister for Defence. Reads well but we’ll see what happens.....

The Australian Government is committed to ensuring fair indexation is applied to DFRB and DFRDB retirement pay for recipients aged 55 and over. The Government will ensure that fair indexation will be delivered and funded in the Government’s first budget with the new
measure to apply from 1 July 2014. DFRB and DFRDB retirement pay recipients aged 55 and over will see their retirement pay indexed in the same way as age and service pensions.

Legislation will be introduced into the Parliament in 2014 to give effect to the Government's commitment.

Commemorative Plaque – Survey Corps Units

In the Western Courtyard of the Australian War Memorial at 11:00 am on Monday 9th July, 2007, the then Governor General of the Commonwealth of Australia, His Excellency Major General Michael Jeffery AC CVO MC, presided over the dedication of the Commemorative Plaque to recognise the sacrifice and service of the members of the Survey Corps units.

Although the position for the plaque had been selected, the plaque was not placed at the time of the commemoration but was embedded in the Western Courtyard of the Australian War Memorial a couple of weeks later.
The red arrows on the above plan and photo show the approximate position of the Survey Corps Units Commemorative Plaque. The plaque is cemented into the edge of the garden (currently being replanted) in the Western Courtyard.
100 Years Ago – Survey Section Royal Australian Engineers (Permanent) in 1914
By Peter Jensen

In 1914, mapping for military purposes in Australia had been underway for more than six years, four years of which the work had been undertaken on a full-time basis by the Survey Section Royal Australian Engineers (Permanent) which was formed for that purpose in early-1910. Before then, military mapping was undertaken as a part-time endeavour by militia officers of the Australian Intelligence Corps which was formed in 1907 being responsible for ‘preparing strategical and tactical maps and plans’ and gathering information and maps for ‘operations in any part of the Commonwealth’.

Lieutenant Cecil Verdon Quinlan RAE continued to command the Survey Section RAE (P) throughout 1914. In June, the Military Board decided to disband the Australian Intelligence Corps and form Intelligence Sections of the General Staff which would operate as militia units in the Military Districts. Effectively the operational control of the work of the Survey Section then came under the General Staff through the Intelligence Sections. This went part of the way towards Quinlan’s desire of being independent of both the Intelligence Corps and RAE and being solely responsible to the General Staff.

The imbroglio of how military mapping (then one-mile-to-one inch) was spatially controlled was resolved in 1914. From its formation in 1910, the Survey Section continued the Intelligence Corps method of using parish and cadastral maps to control topographic mapping by plane tabling (other equipment - alidade, clinometer, box and prismatic compass, aneroid barometer) where State trigonometric survey networks did not exist or were inadequate. This method of adding contours and military significant details to the parish maps was initially adequate when the mapping effort was part-time and progress very slow, but the practice did lead to unsatisfactory quality maps and internal and external map misjoins. This was notwithstanding that the militia officers of the Intelligence Corps who were seconded from the State Governments to the Military District Headquarters to control the work of the Survey Section were all surveyors and draughtsman in civilian life.

The ‘parish plan’ method was supported by Lieutenant-Colonel John Monash (later General Sir and Australian Corps Commander in France in 1918), an engineer by profession and the senior militia Intelligence Corps officer in Victoria. He saw mapping from coherent large trigonometric survey networks as unnecessary and being akin to the work of the UK Ordnance Survey which was largely a civilian pursuit. However, the argument by Lieutenant Quinlan and Major Cyril Brudenell White (later General Sir - Chief of the General Staff), Director of Military Operations, who had sought independent expert advice, that all military mapping should where practicable be based on triangulation survey networks to ensure consistent good quality mapping over large areas and across State borders, was approved by the General Staff.

Consequently, in early-May 1914 the Survey Section was reorganised to form a triangulation survey sub-section (under Warrant Officer John Lynch) from the existing establishment. Work began around a triangulation network baseline measured at Werribee, near Melbourne, which was a re-measure of the 5 mile long colonial survey baseline of 1860, which determined the scale of the Geodetic Survey of Victoria 1858-1872. Much of this earlier triangulation was observed by Royal Engineers.
Survey camp for the Werribee baseline - described by Lieutenant Quinlan as The First Camp of the Military Survey of Australia

The allowable horizontal angle misclose per triangle was five arc-seconds or less than 20 centimetres in position. Within a year the geodetic sub-section had completed triangulation surveys for four one-mile-to-the-inch military maps Ballan, Sunbury, Meredith and Melbourne. Sunbury was probably the first map produced from this triangulation survey. This initial network which covered the coast and about 60 miles inland extended west to Warrnambool. It covered an area of about 2,000 square miles. It was later extended further west-wards to South Australia and north to New South Wales.

Lieutenant Quinlan said that from the survey camp the tents and first canvas hangar of the fledgling Australian Flying Corps at Point Cook were visible. Quinlan noted that this coincidence was remarkable given the close relationship between the two Corps and Services when mapping from aerial photography later replaced the topographers plane table.

Trigonometric Beacon (1914), Mount Warrion, Lake Colac
It was during this year that it was decided that all final cartographic draughting would be completed by the draughting sub-section in Melbourne. Another technical evolution at this time was in map printing technology at the Victorian Government Printing Office where printing changed from using stone blocks to zinc plates. All military maps were subsequently printed by this method.

When the First World War broke out in August 1914, the Survey Section draughting sub-section was quickly tasked to produce a strategic briefing map of France and Belgium at scale six-miles-to-the-inch. The Section printed 2000 copies of the five colour map in two weeks. Other tasks followed being mainly manoeuvre exercise mapping for the Australian training camps of the First Australian Imperial Force (AIF). At that stage of the war it was not seen that a Survey Section was required at any level of the AIF and the Survey Section continued with its military topographic mapping of the high priority areas of Australia, mainly around the capital cities and ports.

The Survey Section manning increased (net) from 15 to 17, with one soldier discharged and three recruited. In January 1914 Sergeant Rupert Uriah Hoddinott, who had transferred into the Section in early-1913 from RAE (P), was discharged. The 24 year old from Mornington, Victoria then became the first former Survey Section RAE (P) member to enlist in the AIF. He enlisted as Regt No. 25 Sapper Hoddinott in the AIF 1st Light Horse Brigade, 1st Signal Troop only two weeks after the war started. He declared ‘surveyor’ as his profession on his AIF enlistment form. In May 1915 he was discharged from the AIF in England and commissioned Lieutenant in the British Royal Field Artillery and later attached to the Royal Air Force. He survived the war.

New recruits for the Survey Section in 1914 were surveyors/topographers Corporal Adiel John Lupton Anderson from Toolamba Victoria, Corporal Douglas Blaikie (only 17 years old) from Murchison Victoria and Corporal Oswald Watson from Sydney. All later enlisted in the AIF Survey Draft in November 1917, serving in France in 1918. In August 1917, Anderson enlisted as a Private in the Australian Flying Corps but was still at Laverton, Victoria when the AIF Survey Draft was assembled and he transferred back to the Australian Survey Corps as a Sergeant to embark for active service in December 1917.

There was a survey element of the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force sent in September 1914 to capture, hold and administer the German colonies in the Pacific, but the survey tasks were related to land administration rather than topographic mapping and no Survey Section officers participated.

The officer who accepted the German surrender at Rabaul, Nauru and the Admiralty Islands was Captain RJA Travers who had been a militia Intelligence Corps officer (by profession a NSW Lands Department survey draughtsman) appointed to the Survey Section RAE in 2nd Military District from July 1912 to June 1914. For his actions in New Guinea he was Mentioned in Dispatches. He went on to the AIF where he was wounded in action at Gallipoli serving with the 17th Australian Infantry Battalion, was promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel, at age 29 years, commanding the 26th Australian Infantry Battalion in France where he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order and Bar and again Mentioned in Dispatches. He survived the war.

The Australian Intelligence Corps militia officer who supervised the Survey Section work around Newcastle in 1910 was Captain JMC Corlette, by profession a local government engineer surveyor. He transferred to RAE in 1913 and then to the AIF three weeks after the start of the war, and as second-in-command 1st Field Company Engineers landed at Gallipoli on 25th April
1915. He went on to command that unit at Gallipoli, and as Lieutenant-Colonel he commanded 4th Australian Pioneer Battalion and 2nd Division Engineers in France. He was made a Companion of the Order of St George and St Michael and awarded the Distinguished Service Order and Mentioned in Dispatches three times. He also survived the war.


Vale

FRANK EDWARD THOROGOOD


From Rob McHenry

I didn’t know Frank Thorogood well, hardly at all actually, but I did work for him for a very short while soon after being commissioned. As a new Lieutenant I remember a number of lunchtimes sitting in the mess at the Regt keeping as low a profile as possible while Frank, the CO at the time, would chat to his Majors about matters of deep import. Of course, Lieutenants didn’t speak unless it was unavoidable at which time one would be made to feel a complete nitwit. However, my impression of Frank was of a logical person who was not interested in blowing his own trumpet but was interested in getting things done. My impression of Frank and the respect with which I regarded him were enhanced on a couple of occasions when, during a typical lunch hour, a breathless minion interrupted the CO’s lunch to inform him that the Director (NRJ) was on the line. This was evidently enough to make lesser men drop everything, immediately begin to wonder what they had done wrong and inevitably break out in a serious sweat. Not Frank. To my surprise, Frank merely turned to the bearer of the message and advised him that he was having lunch.

Now, I’m not sure whether this was the message that was actually conveyed to the Director but either way, I considered it pretty ballsy.
Photo Gallery
Photos, old and new, related to RASvy Corps activities.

Some old photos courtesy of Danny Galbraith:-

Cenderawasih 77. Irian Jaya, Enorotali up in the mountains, at a forward base from Biak. Can’t remember who the other Aussie is but he may have been RAEME. Other two are local Police.

Old Polaroid is an island off the north or Irian jaya - Wadke. Pat Drover, Jamie Lyle, Paul Leskovic and me. This place was the scene of a big battle between the Japanese and the USA, it contained three side by side runways in its heyday. We found the name plate from a Boomerang aircraft built in Australia that had 15 hours on the engine counter and was a month old at the time of the invasion. Short life.
Operation Gading 2.
District officers from Kuala Enok north of Djambi in Sumatra. They travelled for two days to have their photo taken.

The boys, Bugis St style, on a rest Day in Singapore.