

## **2RAR Association National Reunion (Adelaide): 22 to 25 April 2014 After Action Report**

The focus of the Reunion was on two special events; a Commemorative Service and the Unveiling and Dedication of the 2nd Battalion Memorial.

The weather during the four days of the reunion was spectacularly warm, dry and sunny with cool, pleasant nights.

We were honoured by the attendance of the Commanding Officer 2RAR, LTCOL Michael Bassingthwaite, DSM, members of V and W Companies of both tours of Vietnam and many other distinguished guests over the four day period of the reunion.

### **Program Review**

#### **Tue 22 April**

**Meet and Greet** at the Walkerville RSL, 98 Walkerville Terrace, Walkerville.

#### **Review**

We packed out the small RSL Club and had a wonderful night of meeting and greeting, some for the first time in decades. President Leo welcomed everyone and Secretary Gordon gave details of the days to come. Arthur made some significant sales of our merchandise, particularly the ties. The new ties of which we had about 70 to sell, sold out in minutes. The new tie was quite conspicuous over the next few days. Those that missed out can order simply by letting us know by email and we will take it from there.

A great start and a great night was had by all and after the RSL bash, we left for local restaurants for dinner.

#### **Wed 23 April**

**Commemorative Service** was held at the Vietnam War Memorial, Torrens Parade Ground, Cnr King William and Victoria Drive, Adelaide.

#### **Review**

This was a significant venue for the Commemorative service: the historical site of the parade ground and the Vietnam Memorial. The families of the 6 whom we were commemorating joined us:

1. Stan Radomi was represented by his sister Mrs Lorna Cross and brother Trevor Radomi and accompanied by Gordon Stevens
2. Hedley Pohl and his wife Jan represented Dennis Nelson and Terry Dinneen accompanied them.
3. Ray Binning was represented by his brother Mervyn and his daughter Jane and they were accompanied by Peter Langford.
4. Graham Norley was represented by his brother Darrell and by his sister Mrs Jan Whitehorn and accompanied by Barry Corse.
5. John Rogers was represented by his brothers Ken and Dougald and they were accompanied by Vic Anderson
6. Rodney Chapman was represented by his brothers Bruce and Doug and accompanied by John Church.

The Service was supported by the Army Band Adelaide conducted by Captain Nigel Davy. The Guest of Honour at the Service was the Lieutenant Governor of South Australia, Mr Hieu Van Le, AO who was accorded a Vice Regal salute on his arrival accompanied by Leo Van De Kamp.

The Padre arrived late to a resounding cheer from the boys !!!

Mr Hieu delivered the Commemorative Address. His speech was breathtakingly inspiring and extremely poignant. It is not my intention to provide a complete synopsis of his speech here. However this is part of his introduction at the Service:

*"Mr Hieu was born in South Vietnam, just south of the border with the north. As a schoolboy he witnessed the horrors of the war first hand. He never knew his father who was killed just before Mr Hieu was born. In 1977 at the age of 23 he and his wife Lan, escaped from Communist Vietnam in a boat, and they arrived in Darwin as refugees. Mr Hieu is a wonderful example of someone who has made an incredible success out of a life that began in very humble and tragic circumstances. He has embraced his adopted country with a passion. He has a sad, but wonderful story to tell, and a very powerful message for us all"*

I am safe in saying that there was hardly a dry eye in the audience after his speech. Absolutely a knockout!! A copy of the speech will be available in the near future. During the Valedictory, Alf Handley said the Ode to the Fallen. He recited two verses, which gave meaning to the Ode (one verse) that is normally recited. Alf tells me it is a 2RAR tradition. We will note that for future services. The Service was an outstanding tribute to the fallen 6 South Australians commemorated and everyone who attended came somewhat closer to the families they left behind.

### **McLaren Vale winery tour**

The McLaren Vale winery was conducted in the afternoon of 23 April. All who attended had a fun time.

### **Thu 24 April**

**Unveiling and Dedication Service of the 2RAR Memorial** was held at the Kintore Avenue end of Pathway of Honour located at the rear of Government House on the upper northern perimeter of the Torrens Parade Ground.

#### **Review**

This was the unveiling and dedicating of the first ever stand-alone 2nd Battalion public memorial in Australia.

9 young South Australians have lost their lives whilst on active service with the battalion, and the roll of honour reads as follows:

KOREA 1953	Pte. L.J.L. DAWES
VIETNAM 1967/68	L/Cpl. R. M. WOOLFORD
	Pte. D. E. NELSON
	Pte. S. E. RADOMI
	Pte. J. C. RIVETT
	Pte. R. P. BINNING
	Cpl. G. L. NORLEY
	Pte. J. ROGERS
VIETNAM 1970/71	Pte. R. S. CHAPMAN

Greg Lockhart delivered the Dedication Address. He wrote the book "The Minefield – An Australian Tragedy In Vietnam", and we the former members of the battalion have good cause to relate to this important book.

The most senior former member of the 2nd Battalion living in South Australia unveiled our Memorial. Patrick Forbes was a young Lieutenant in 2RAR in Korea in 1953. He was the platoon commander of assault pioneer platoon. He was awarded the Military Cross at The Hook in July 1953. The Memorial was draped in the 2RAR Regimental flag. After the ceremony, a Poppy Ceremony was held where those present at the service were invited to place a poppy on the memorial in memory of those whom it represents.

**Memorial Service for Tom Young was held** in the Drill Hall at the Torrens Parade Ground following the Dedication Service.

- Gordon Hurford introduced the service

- Padre David Harding said prayers for Tom and his family
- Max Ingles read his Eulogy (mainly military life), which had originally been presented at Tom's funeral.
- The Last Post, Ode and Rouse were observed.
- Padre closed the service with further prayers

It was a simple service, well received by Tom's family and the rest of those attending.

**Reunion Dinner was held** at the Buckingham Arms Hotel, 1 Walkerville Terrace, Gilberton

**Review**

This was a great night and the buffet style was most welcomed. "At \$25.00 per person, it was the best feed in town!!!" I was told many times.

**ANZAC Day - Fri 25 April**

**ANZAC Day Dawn Service.**

The Service was held at 6.15am at the Memorial Garden in Church Terrace Walkerville and was followed by breakfast at the Walkerville RSL.

**Review**

Intimate service at Walkerville and there was a large crowd including many young people. Breakfast at the RSL was also well attended with lots of people trying to get into the club. Breakfast got the "thumbs up".

**ANZAC Day March.** We marched as a contingent under the 2RAR banner in the City of Adelaide.

**Review**

We had a very good march through Adelaide. I estimated that there were in excess of 140 marching under the 2RAR banner. The reunion gave us the biggest contingent except for 7RAR who marched as a battalion. The banner was carried by Bob Carrison and William Rawiri (truly ANZAC).

**ANZAC Day Service** followed on from the March at the Cross of Sacrifice in the Cross Of Sacrifice Memorial (Pennington) Gardens.

**ANZAC Day Lunch** was held at The British Hotel, North Adelaide.

**Review**

This was the culmination of the four days. Lots of people crammed into The British, which was Tom's favourite pub. Everyone had a good time. Thank you speeches for Gordon, Tiffany (Tom's wife) and Joanna (Tom's daughter).

**Conclusion**

As a reunion it was highly successful and in commemoration it was emotional and touching.

There are many people to be thanked and that will be done in the days to come.

However, thank you to all those who attended because without you we would not have had a reunion and we would not have been able to remember and honour our fallen mates from South Australia. It was especially important because we had a number of members of Victor and Whiskey Companies in attendance and their efforts to get to the reunion is appreciated greatly.

There were also a couple of first timers – members of the Battalion that had not been to a reunion before and some who had never marched on ANZAC Day before. I am so pleased that we have been able to bring these fellows into the family, which is the 2RAR Association.

Photos will be posted after we get them "developed".

Well done everyone!!!