



The word from the  
**Horse's Mouth**

The Newsletter of the RAEME Association of WA

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## What the Prez Sez

Welcome to a short Christmas edition of the Horses Mouth.

On behalf of the Committee and myself I'd like to wish you and your families a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. We are looking forward to seeing a lot more of each other in 2022.

Enough of me, now for the good oil....

# *The Christmas Truce*

Since the dawn of warfare, the “digger on the ground” has often felt closer to his opposite number, than to the “higher ups”. Often this has resulted in unofficial fraternisation, swapping foodstuff, souvenirs and the like. In our own case, will anyone ever really know what went on between the 7 Div and Afrika Corps recce mechs in the Western Desert?

The most noteworthy of these unofficial truces was the Christmas Truce of 1914. Trench warfare was still new, and with the big battles of 1915 still months off, the thoughts of the men on both sides turned to home and loved ones and Christmas.

As the story goes, the Germans placed candles on their trenches and on Christmas trees, then continued the celebration by singing Christmas carols. The British responded by singing carols of their own. The two sides continued by shouting Christmas greetings to each other. Soon thereafter, there were excursions across No Man's Land, where small gifts were exchanged, such as food, tobacco, alcohol and souvenirs, such as buttons and hats. The artillery in the region fell silent. The truce also allowed a breathing spell where recently killed soldiers could be brought back behind their lines by burial parties. Joint services were held. In many sectors, the truce lasted through Christmas night, continuing until New Year's Day in others.

All in all, over 100,000 Commonwealth and German troops were involved in these informal cessations of hostility along the entire Western Front, with similar experiences on the Eastern Front as well.

While it has never been officially confirmed, up to 29 impromptu football matches were held in no man's land – the most famous being between a Scottish and a Saxon regiment, which the Germans won 3:2. On the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the truce a number of memorials were unveiled in a number locations to commemorate the day when the Diggers of both sides decided to “pull a sickie”.



# *RAEME Get Together(s)*

Another great RAEME Birthday get together was had at the Baysie on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Almost 40 of us rolled up - some of whom had not seen each other for 20 years. It was a great night catching up with old friends and comrades – and some of the stories were actually true.



Also at the Basie last week was a reunion of the XLH LAD (TSSU) from the last days it was a full regiment. 19 of them met up with a range of service at the Regiment from 1958 to 1981. I daresay with a quick soldier's five they could show the young'uns a thing or two on how to maintain the new kit.



## *Check out the New Kit*

CO 13 CSSB has invited the Association and its members to attend the CSSB's Family Day in March 22, 2022.

The purpose of the day is to have a relaxed, fun environment where members can bring family and friends to show them where they work and what they do. The day offers you a chance to have a good sticky beak at all the new kit and a wander round the workshop

Although not all the details have been confirmed yet, the key points for now are as follows:

**When:** 12 March 22, from 1000 - 1400

**At:** Irwin Barracks, 113 Workshops

**Who:** all Association members, 13 CSSB members, their family and friends

## *Promotions*

It is with great delight that I can advise that Shaun Fenn has been promoted to Lieutenant Colonel. Shaun was OC 113 2015-2019 (and incidentally one of my 2LTs the second time I had the Workshop) He is off to Cadets for his apprenticeship as a LTCOL and we expect big things of him in the future

## *OC 113*

Last month Duncan Powrie handed over the reins of 113 to Jason Striegler

Jason, for those who don't know is an MP. We will have a more detailed bio in the next Horse's Mouth, but in the meantime no questions about the Great Cultana Choofers Massacre, the Haunted Thunderbox of Hill 917, or the Strange Case of the Humble Tankie.

And of course, we know JJ and the lads will steer him on the Spanner Road of Righteousness (with the occasional side trip to find blinker fluid and a left handed torque wrench)

We wish Duncan every success at Staff College and hope to see him back one day - proper learned up.

## *New Guns for the Drop Shorts*

The Australian Government has announced a \$1 billion defence contract for new Self-Propelled Howitzers for the Australian Army has been awarded to Hanwha Defense Australia. The contract signing was witnessed by Prime Minister Scott Morrison and President Moon Jae-in of the Republic of Korea.

Based in Greater Geelong, the contract will procure Self-Propelled Howitzers and Armoured Ammunition



Resupply Vehicles, under the LAND 8116 Phase 1 project. The initial contract covers 30 Self-Propelled Howitzers, 15 Armoured Ammunition Resupply Vehicles, and weapon locating radars that help find enemy artillery, collectively referred to as the Huntsman family of vehicles.

## *BRIG Bert's 100<sup>th</sup>*



Happy Birthday to Brig Bert Barker, who celebrated his 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday on 13 Dec 21.

A Foundation member of the Corps, Bert had a full day of celebrations with friends and family, which included a presentation a Unit Commanders Flag on behalf of COL COMDT QLD, and a call from the Deputy Chief of Army, MAJGEN Anthony Rawlings, who spoke to him for about 20 minutes about his long service in RAEME.

**BRIG Herbert "Bert" W Barker** joined the Army in 1941, following completion of the second year of a Bachelor of Electrical Engineering course at Melbourne University. Although he didn't complete his degree, he had previously completed a Diploma of Mechanical Engineering, and as a result, he was allocated to Australian Army Ordnance Corps (AAOC), as a Private. He then attended an Infantry Officer Training Course at Bonegilla.

Bert was commissioned in June 1942 and appointed to raise and command 320 Aust LAD attached to a major Signals unit at Balcombe, Victoria. A short time later, while attending an Ordnance Mechanical Engineering Wireless Course at the AAOC School, Broadmeadows, Victoria, he was transferred to the newly formed AEME Corps on 1 Dec 42. He celebrated his 21st birthday on 13 Dec 42.

Lieutenant, and later, Captain Barker, spent most of WW2 at Oatlands Golf Course, Parramatta, then the Atherton Tablelands (1943) before heading to New Britain in 1944, where he served with 1 Infantry Troops Wksp till War's end.

Post WW2, BRIG Bert continued his service in several workshop postings in Australia until 1950, when he was sent to UK for two and a half years, to attend the Long Electronics Engineering Courses at REME Training Centre, Arborfield. He attended Army Staff College, Queenscliff, Victoria, in 1956 and was appointed CO & CI RAEME Training Centre from 1959 - 64.

After three years as DDEME Eastern Command, Bert was promoted to Brigadier and appointed as Chief Superintendent Army Design Establishment (ADE), Maribyrnong, Victoria. He served for a further three years until resigning from the Army in 1974. During his time at ADE, he took part in the Rapier trials in Darwin.

In his subsequent civilian career, BRIG Bert worked as Regional Engineering Manager for STC, 1975, the Boy Scout Jamboree Executive Officer and CEO of Australian Fire Protection Association, each for about a year before relocating from Melbourne to a warmer climate in Northern NSW in late 1977.

He served as Colonel Commandant 1 Military District from 1980 to 1984.

Bert married Nona in 1944 and they have three daughters, five grandchildren and eight great grandchildren. He and Nona live in Darlington Retirement Village, Banora Point, NSW. Whilst Nona receives full time care, he enjoys semi-care in the same facility, and is still driving his car and routinely attends local RAQ events.

## *Feedback on Spanner Packs*

As you may remember we donated \$2,000 to the Spanner Pack fund late last year. Good to see the money was well spent

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*Dear Raymond,*

I just wanted to take some time to write to you in regards to 'Operation Spanner Pack'.

First and foremost, a personal thanks to you and all members of our wonderful Association for my own spanner pack. The pack provided a great spread of treats as a 'pick me up' when needed, and of course it is always good to have more Corps paraphernalia to display. The stubby coolers in particular always make it easy to identify a fellow Bluebell on bar night.

As perhaps the last EMEWO in the Middle East Region (who knows what the future holds in that regard) I would also like to say thank you on behalf of all the RAEME members that have received a Spanner Pack over the years. To every member (past and present) of our fine Corps that have contributed to the Spanner Packs via the RAEME National Network, state and Territory RAEME Associations and the RAEME Corps Committee, thank you. Your efforts have been greatly appreciated by a generation of RAEME members while they have served here in the Middle East Region on various Operations.

Secondly, to you, Raymond, on behalf of our current generation of tradies thank you for your efforts over many years in providing these Spanner Packs and your efforts in support of our Corps in general.

Arte et Marte.

Kind regards,



Mark Warde  
Warrant Officer Class One  
HQJTF 633 J4 EMEWO