



# "Sitrep, Over!"



Official Newsletter of the Royal South Australia Regiment Association, Inc

**AUGUST 2015**

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## RSARA MEMBERS TO GET WET. (WTTS)

As in previous newsletters, we are still finalising the time and date for our visit to the WTTS Facility at Warradale Barracks. At this time we have 11 members who wish to go, so if you would like to be included, you need to act fast. Only 15 places available. The next shoot for our members will be in 2089, and you will need to bring both grandparents and their parents!

To register contact the Secretary RSARA Inc on the numbers on Page 8 of this newsletter.



Weapon training simulation system (WTSS): an electronic range which enables soldiers to train on various weapon systems not limited to the F88 or F89. Soldiers can practice marksmanship principles and fire control orders. The system can also simulate different weather conditions, giving the firer the opportunity to improve their shooting in preparation for heavy rain, fog or wind.

Thank you to David Mercer from our brethren cavalry unit SAMRA and CPL Mark Blondell from 10/27 RSAR for giving me the correct acronym for this simulation facility. We're never too old to learn, and I've got truckloads to learn!

## RSAR Association Presidents Report 9th August, 2015

To say that the past year has been busy yet rewarding for the Association would be somewhat of an understatement.

With the strong support of our secretary and committee, we have not let the 100 year anniversary of our Regiment's involvement in the First World War go un-noticed.

We sponsored a church service in St Peters Cathedral to honour the date our troops departed in 1914, and built a memorial garden at Keswick. We worked closely with the 10<sup>th</sup>/27<sup>th</sup> Battalion to organise and attend a Gala Ball, attended by his Excellency the Governor of South Australia at the Torrens Training Depot.

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### RSARA Member at the Battlefields of Europe

Phil Brookes is a QLD based former member of 10 RSAR, and runs Battlefield Tours to South East Asia and Europe. He was in Europe for the Centenary of Gallipoli and took his tour group to some of the places where Australian soldiers fought and died during WW1.

On Page 8 of this issue Phil has written a poignant story of one of our own 10th Battalion AIF soldiers who never made it home. Along with visiting Private Olden's resting place, Phil has also researched the life of this brave soldier, and shares it with us today. A grand effort on Phil's behalf.

Further stories and pics from Phil's tour of the Europe battlefields will be featured in future issues of "Sitrep, Over!"

## Just Soldiers

## WO2 Noel Eric Bolton-Wood

## Part 3

'What do you think, Bob? Should we give it a go?' Eric asked his brother. But Bob was not a fan of these 'ships of the desert' and promptly replied, 'You can keep your camels, mate, I'm staying here with the battalion'.

Eric decided to remain with the 13th, but again sickness struck the young Digger. Whilst in the hospital both his brothers came to see him. 'Well, mate, this is it. We're shipping out sometime next week so I guess we'll see you in France.' 'Yeah, right, but don't finish the war until I get there,' Eric jokingly replied. In August of that year, the padre visited Eric. 'I'm sorry, Corporal, but I have some bad news for you. Your brother Robert has been killed at Pozieres.'

'Is there any news of my other brother Albert, Sir?' asked Eric.

'Yes, he's been slightly wounded but he's OK. And by the way, he's been awarded the Military Cross for his actions at Pozieres.'

'That's good. Mum'll be very proud. Thanks, Padre', Eric replied as he struggled to present a brave front.

'I know it's hard but is there anything I can do for you, Eric?' the Padre asked. 'No Sir, I'll be right thanks', the boy replied.

As the padre left, Eric headed for the orderly room. 'Eh! Sarge! Do they still need blokes for that camel corps outfit?'

On arrival at the camel lines, Eric faced the smelly, slobbering beast that had been assigned to him. 'Well mate, it's going to be you and me in this together, so we might as well be friends right from the word go.'



**AWM P00190.004. Camel Corps crossing the River Jordan on pontoon bridge built by the Australian engineers.**

Eric was a natural soldier and soon after being posted to the corps he was promoted to the rank of sergeant. At the tender age of only 16, Eric reputedly would be the youngest sergeant in the AIF. Following their success at Romani, the Imperial Camel Corps and their light horse brothers were in hot pursuit of the enemy as they withdrew across northern Sinai. It was just before Christmas 1916 when the Diggers moved into position around the sea-side town of El Arish. In the early morning light they moved forward, rifles at the ready, only to find the

main enemy force had withdrawn earlier.

The remnants of the garrison offered no resistance and were soon rounded up. For the Desert Column, there was no time to rest. They must now close with and destroy the enemy forces before the Turks had time to prepare their defences. A couple of brigades of light horse headed south towards the fortified village of Maghdaba, while the remainder of the light horse and the camel corps probed up the coast towards the border town of Rafa.

By early January 1917, the Desert Column was poised to strike at Rafa. Eric displayed a cool, calm efficiency, far beyond his years, as he deployed his troop to the south-west of the town. The ensuing battle, which at times went right to the wire, saw the Allied forces prevail. The Column was now in Palestine and rallied for an assault on the vital seaport of Gaza.

Continued next page

The RSAR Association are planning a weekend day trip in the near future to the **Port Pirie RSL** for lunch and to visit their very widely publicised RSL Museum, which includes an Iroquois "Huey" helicopter. We are to be hosted by the Pt Pirie RSL for lunch and the Association will provide a free 21 seater bus leaving from and returning to Keswick Barracks. We already have a number of expressions of interest, so seats are limited. Our question. Do you want to go and what day would you prefer? Saturday or Sunday? Reserve your seat now by contacting the Secretary by email on [davidlaine49@bigpond.com](mailto:davidlaine49@bigpond.com)

Sickness again struck Eric in February 1917, and for weeks his life hung in the balance as a severe fever racked his body.<sup>2</sup> However, this setback may well have been a godsend for Eric as he was unfit to take part in the first and second battles of Gaza, conflicts which inflicted terrible casualties amongst the units of the Desert Column. Eric rejoined his cameleers in time to participate in the attack on Beersheba.

The Imperial Camel Corps' mission was to act as a blocking force to the north—to cut off any retreat and deny enemy reinforcements access to the town. In a classic eleventh hour charge, regiments of the Australian Light Horse seized the vital wells of Beersheba. After watering their beasts and replenishing their water bottles, the Camel Corps moved out towards Tel el Khuweilfe. Less than a week later, Eric was informed that his brother Albert had died of wounds suffered during combat on the Western Front.

As the Allied mounted divisions continued their push towards the coast, the Turks fought a fierce rearguard action. The light horsemen and cameleers were equal to the task as they moved closer to their prime objective and the jewel in the crown of the desert campaign—Jerusalem. Just as Eric was preparing to celebrate his 18th birthday, he was notified by his company commander that he had been promoted to staff sergeant.

PART 4 next month

*By courtesy Darryl Kelly and ADCC Publications. Kelly, Darryl 2004, Just Soldiers, ADCC Publications, Brisbane, pg 27 to 34*

## RSAR Association Presidents Report 9th August, 2015 ....continued

I was honoured to be asked to present awards to several outstanding serving soldiers on behalf of the Association at the Battalions end of year stand down ceremony.

We enjoyed the camaraderie amongst members at the Keswick Barracks Sergeants Mess for our Christmas BBQ in December.

No doubt, the highlight of the year was breaking with tradition and marching immediately behind the serving members of the 10<sup>th</sup>/27<sup>th</sup> Battalion with our banner flying proudly on Anzac Day. There was a very strong turn-out considering there were no serving members in our ranks.

The Association laid a wreath at the Dawn Service at the Cross of Sacrifice. I felt this was significant as there was only one other association (from the Naval reserve) to do so.

The Association has continued its support of the 10<sup>th</sup>/27<sup>th</sup> Battalion throughout the year. We entertained 4 Reservist soldiers from New Zealand on exchange, and they appreciated our involvement.

We have sponsored the Battalion Band for a concert at Murray Bridge and been able to provide funds for the maintenance of their instruments.

We were asked to feed the troops returning from Exercises at Cultana in May and this we did with enthusiasm and expertise that triggered many superlative quotes from the hungry diggers.

At the end of the year, we will see a changeover of COs, but not before we participate in an evening at Warradale Barracks involving Weapons Electronic Training Systems and a visit to 3 Field Squadron. This is open to all members.

In closing, I wish to thank the current Commanding Officer 10<sup>th</sup>/27<sup>th</sup> Battalion, LTCOL Graham Goodwin for extending the hand of friendship to me three years ago, and for making our support of the Battalion run much easier than expected. His successor has big boots to fill. I appreciate that the past year has been "hectic" to say the least, and we will wind this back a bit for the coming year.

Finally, I acknowledge and wish to thank the secretary, David Laing, and ALL members of the Committee of Management for their support throughout the year.

*Rod Beames*

*President  
RSAR Association Inc  
Pro Patria*



## NEW SOLDIER JOINS 10/27 RSAR

On 26th May this year the new Representative Colonel of the Regiment, His Excellency, The Honourable Mr Hieu Van Le AO was presented with his new Rank Slides at a ceremony at Warradale Barracks. The REPCOL was then shown around the Barracks and was treated to a number of displays by personnel of 10/27 RSAR and 3 FD SQDN.



Presentation of Representative Colonel Rank Slide - Left to Right: BRIG M. Burgess, His Excellency, The Honourable Mr Hieu Van Le AO, MAJGEN (Retd) N. Wilson, LTCOL G. Goodwin, WO1 T. Logan.



ABOVE: Introduction to Protected Mobility Vehicle (PMV) - His Excellency, The Honourable Mr Hieu Van Le AO

LEFT: Introduction to 81mm Mortar F2 - Left to Right: GNR E. Vatovec, CAPT N. Skinner, LTCOL G. Goodwin, BRIG M. Burgess, His Excellency, The Honourable Mr Hieu Van Le AO

All Photos courtesy of Department of Defence and Cpl Mark Blondell, 10/27 BN RSAR



## His Excellency, The Honourable Mr Hieu Van Le AO, Representative Colonel



His Excellency, The Honourable Mr Hieu Van Le AO



Introduction to Engineers Metal Detector - Left to Right: LTCOL G. Goodwin, His Excellency, The Honourable Mr Hieu Van Le AO



LEFT: Presentation of Representative Colonel Rank Slide  
Left to Right: BRIG M. Burgess, His Excellency, The Honourable Mr Hieu Van Le AO

ABOVE: Introduction to F88 Austeyr - Left to Right: WO2 L. Meulengraaf, His Excellency, The Honourable Mr Hieu Van Le AO

**FULL AGM REPORT IN NEXT ISSUE OF THIS NEWSLETTER**  
**WATCH THIS SPACE**



**Letters to the Editor****from a Member**

Good morning David,

Just like to pass on my thanks for organising the luncheon at the Hackney Hotel. What a great venue and meal they provide.

Having that private room makes it so much better for our guest speakers and what we had yesterday was really exceptional.

I never knew anything about the Boer War, well, I had seen the memorial on North Terrace and that was about it, but there is so much more history attached to that memorial and the events that occurred here in South Australia in 1900.

I know these social events for the RSARA just don't happen and it takes some organising so could you pass on my appreciation to all of those involved in putting such a good occasion on.

Regards,

*Chris Acton*

**Letters to the Editor****from a late Members son**

Hello David

My name is Darren Gill and I am writing to you to thank you for speaking at my father's (Allan Gill's) funeral.

As I'm sure you would be aware the last year has been quite difficult therefore I apologise for the delay in writing to you.

My father often spoke fondly of his time in the army (national service, reserve and teaching cadets) and his involvement with the RSAR Association.

He and I have been present at ANZAC Day for many years now and I have marched on a number of occasions in Legacy and in 10th Battalion along side his mates.

This year I proudly wore both my father's and grandfather's medals and visited Torrens Parade Grounds. The Violet Day display at TTD this weekend was amazing.

Thank you once again for speaking at my dad's service. I know he would have been proud.

Thank you for your time.

*Darren Gill*



**Private Gomad reckons.....**



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## 2015 Secretaries AGM Report

by David Laing

My report this year starts a bit differently, in that I go back to the past. I'd like to produce an extract of my 2010 Secretaries report for the 2010 AGM.

1. *During my first 3 months in this position, the biggest return I have had from this Association is the friendship of 50 new mates. Most of these people I had never met before, but they have made me more than welcome, and have even overcome my trepidation of taking on this task.*

2. *The support and guidance I have had from Alan Hook has been boundless, and I ask Alan now to keep supporting me in the manner to which I have been accustomed.*

That was FIVE YEARS AGO!

That request hasn't diminished, apart from the fact I am now supported by Rod Beames and a very strong committee, of which 3 are serving members of the Regiment. This is very significant, in that these young men, Jesse Humphrys, David Portakiewicz, Mark Blondell and their colleagues will be the RSAR Association of tomorrow.

Long after you and I have stepped down from these important positions, these serving members will take our association into the future. As long as there is a Royal South Australia Regiment as part of the Australian Army, there will be an RSAR Association.

As I now enter my 7<sup>th</sup> year of a ONE YEAR position, I can report that we now have a membership of 207 members. This includes members in all states of Australia, plus New Zealand and the UK.

Our website is accessed every day by people who are interested in what we do and of what we have done. I thank Frank Morony for setting up and maintaining this very important weapon in our armoury, and I thank Jesse Humphrys for continuing and improving on Frank's valuable work.

Our Facebook page is still viewed by many people who are seeking to learn about the Regiment and its members, and we must not overlook social media as a way to expand our group.

The past years have been easy for me, as I've followed in the shadow of Rod Beames and before him Alan Hook, and I thank you both for your commitment and support of the Regiment and its goals. Supporting the Regiment has never been more important in these days of financial uncertainty, and the conduct of the 10<sup>th</sup>/27<sup>th</sup> Bn Band Concert in Murray Bridge was testament to that. Nearly \$2,000 was raised for the purchase of musical instruments and the maintenance of current instruments for the 10/27 Bn Band, and a further \$2,000 was given to the Murray Bridge RSL Building Fund. A grand effort and fantastic result all around.

The concert was so successful we are now in negotiations with the band and the Battalion for a 2016 concert at Murray Bridge.

We have enjoyed unprecedented cooperation with the Battalion, and have supported them in many ways throughout the year, and I put this down to the excellent liaison between Rod Beames and LTCOL Graham Goodwin, the Battalion CO. Both have worked towards a common goal, and the soldiers of the 10<sup>th</sup>/27<sup>th</sup> have reaped the benefits. Graham moves on at the end of the year, so his successor already has a firm link to the RSAR Association, thanks to Graham and Rod.

This year I wish to open up the Secretarial role to anyone who has a bit more foresight than I. I have other priorities in my life that are more time consuming and closer to home, so it is now time for me to consider handing the reigns of my role to someone else. A late friend, Bill Hately, former editor of the SE Branch newsletter once said to me in a telephone conversation "I don't want to keep on doing this until I die....." Three months later he passed away suddenly, and left his unfinished work for someone else to carry on. I want to heed to Bill's words.

I will assist a new secretary 100% for as long as it takes, and make sure they can fulfil the position. I look at how easy it was for Jesse Humphrys to take over from Frank Morony, and I see my position going the same way. All the ground work and data bases have been completed, all we need is someone to take over. I have our future on a USB Flash Drive.

I know there will be a lot of trepidation in someone taking over from me, however it's not that hard, as all the ground work is done. We just need someone to keep the ball rolling. I'm waiting for your calls!

*David Laing*

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We're also on the Web!

*Find us at:*

[www.rsara.asn.au](http://www.rsara.asn.au)



Private Olden's Grave at  
Dernancourt Commonwealth  
Military Cemetery

## IN MEMORY OF PTE J P H OLDEN, 10<sup>TH</sup> Bn 1<sup>ST</sup> AIF

by Phil Brookes, RSARA QLD member

So many cemeteries, so many graves of young, and not so young men who had given their all. It was at Dernancourt, where many South Australians fought, that I specifically sought a grave of a 10<sup>th</sup> Bn – *the Fighting Tenth* - soldier. It was my grandfather's unit and one that I served in generations later.

I paused at many graves and wondered about these men, most in the prime of their youth, who travelled so far. Was it adventure? But one grave caught my eye; that of 1140 Pte John Peter Henry Olden, a photographer from Ballarat who, at 44 years and 11 months, enlisted at Keswick Barracks on 4 January 1916. He was not married and his mother, living in Ballarat, was his NOK.

We would wonder why a man of middle age, would forgo life in Australia to go to war. Maybe it was a photographers natural curiosity; we will never know; or was it some latent martial spirit as John Olden had spent five years in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Victorian Regiment, whose forerunner was the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ballarat Infantry. His brother was also a military man, Lt Col O L Olden, whose address was shown as C/- Naval and Military Club, Hobart. Interestingly, John Olden was initially rejected for military service; his military record giving the reason for the rejection as 'teeth'; no further explanation. Did he have too many, not enough, none at all or were they yellowed canine fangs, upsetting to the tidy military mind? However, he obviously overcame this deficiency as he was soon on his way to France.

Pte Olden was initially posted to 43 Bn and then to B Coy, 10<sup>th</sup> Bn, embarking from Adelaide's Outer Harbour on 9 June 1916 and disembarking at Marseilles on 20 July 1916. Less than four months later he would be dead. We can imagine Oldens' initial images of France; they would have delighted his sharp photographic eye as he travelled by train through the South of France to Paris. Beautiful villages, rolling bucolic countryside and the colour and romance of Paris would role past in kaleidoscope of a brilliant French summer. It was only a short train ride further north; that hellish nightmare of the Somme; *Dante's Inferno* could be no worse.

There is very little In John Olden's military record that gives us a hint of the man resting in that peaceful cemetery. His conduct sheet is clean, which you would expect of an older, mature man. The flush of youth had passed him by and he no longer had that nonchalant cockiness and disdain for rank of his younger, more feisty comrades. Maybe he was a calming fatherly influence on these boisterous colonials.



Dernancourt Commonwealth  
Military Cemetery

The entry of his death states: '*Died of wounds after an evening air raid*'. The location was 3 Field Ambulance, 1<sup>st</sup> ANZAC Rest Station. He died on 11 November 1916; exactly two years later the Armistice would be signed. We can only assume John Olden was resting out of the line after a 'stunt', as the rest station would have been in the rear echelon. His mother received a pension of two pounds per fortnight; she died in 1921; no doubt her heart broken by the loss of her son, so far away and unable to visit his grave. It was his brother, Lt Col Olden, who ensured a poignant and final epitaph was placed on John Olden's grave;

*"He lived and died for others"*

And, for a short time on ANZAC Day 2015, a later comrade from your Battalion paused, placed an Australian flag at your feet and said a silent prayer. You are in good company.