



AUSTRALIAN ARMY APPRENTICES ASSOCIATION INCORPORATED
ACT Incorporation No A04404
GPO Box 2072, CANBERRA, ACT, 2601 www.austarmyapprentice.org
Patron: Lieutenant General Ken Gillespie, AO, DSC, CSM, Chief of Army

PRESIDENT'S UPDATE FOR DECEMBER 2009

1. I should like to start by wishing all of you and your families from Val and I, the very best Christmas and a 2010 that brings you all that you could wish for. In particular, I hope that you and your loved ones all enjoy good health and happiness through the New Year. We will be particularly thinking of those of you at this time of the year that have sickness in your families and praying for a rapid recovery.
2. Since the AGM in October at Bandiana quite a lot has happened. With many new committee members time has been spent in settling in to new roles and working out responsibilities. We have two new major projects that have been set up. I have outlined below details on all our current projects.
3. **Committee**
 - a. The new committee sees members now spread across Qld, NSW, ACT Victoria and SA. This is a desirable trend as it ensures better representation of members and avoids the "Canberra Club" syndrome.
 - b. Unfortunately it also has its downside with the need to restrict attendance of members to Committee Meetings due to the costs involved. To try to even this out Committee meetings will alternate between Canberra, Melbourne and Bandiana. Key Office Bearers will attend all meetings along with committee members who have particular interest in agenda items that cannot properly be dealt with by email or correspondence.
 - c. The new Committee, including Regional Representatives, is up on the website.
 - d. I would like to publicly thank all those outgoing officers, particularly Ray Wilson and Rod Eagleton, who so generously gave their time to support both me and the Association; thank you all.
4. **Projects**
 - a. **SPAASSM**
 - i. This is ongoing and involves the digitalization of over 9,000 images and items and their captioning (where possible) and their cataloguing. These are part of the Army Museum collection that were stored indefinitely in boxes as there were no resources to catalogue or long term store them.
 - ii. Initially set up and chaired by Peter Thornton who has had to step down because of illness, Ian Morris and Bill Merton have continued the work and can now see the light at the end of the very long tunnel.
 - iii. The original images and items are now in museum standard albums and have all been digitised, cross referenced and computer catalogued. The Albums will be returned early in the New Year to the Apprentice collection at the Army Museum.
 - iv. We intend to progressively place the collection on the Association web site for members to try to identify the images and so caption more of the images. The cataloguing allows sorting by a number of keys but without more information on the images the "sortable" images are a very small part of the SPAASSM collection. This makes your ability to recognise and caption images an important part of cataloguing our history.
 - b. **Army Apprentice Memorial**
 - i. I feel sure that you would all be proud to see the memorial at Bandiana. It is truly a lasting reminder of the role that the Army Apprentice played in supporting the Army and of the place many took in community and commercial leadership and social responsibility.
 - ii. The memorial is nearing completion with just BALCOMBE and BONEGILLA to go on the wing walls, the interment wall to be built and a plaque placed noting the significance of the elements of the memorial. A photo of the Memorial as it is at the moment can be found on the web site.

- iii. Greg Mulcahy is still trying to find ways to bring down the price of adding a paver to the parade ground courtyard to something near a reasonable cost. Watch the website for the latest.
- iv. It is now possible to have a memorial plaque placed on the wing walls, details and application form are on the web site. Some of you may wish to bring this to the attention of NOK of deceased Apprentices.
- v. When the interment wall is completed it will be possible for Apprentices and their partners to have their ashes interred. This will be a considerable funeral cost saving to families and will ensure that the Apprentice will never be forgotten and that his/hers/their interment will be cared for. Details shortly on the web site.

c. Project Benzene

- i. At the last Committee Meeting it was agreed to undertake a project to investigate the apparent link between the use of benzene products used for wash down and cleaning by earlier Apprentices, particularly vehicle mechanics, and the seemingly high level of cancer among this trade group.
- ii. Jock McWhinney proposed this study and as a Committee Member was appointed to chair the sub-committee to undertake the work. Jock will be contacting VM's shortly with a survey to be completed.
- iii. The terms of reference for the study can be found on the web site on the Project Benzene page.

d. Marine Gates Environs Development

- i. We have just received the support from Mornington Peninsular Shire Council to proceed with the development of the Balcombe Marine Gates environs to recognise all Army units that have links with the Balcombe area. This project was suggested by our Patron LtGen Ken Gillespie.
- ii. The Association, represented by our Heritage Officer Geoff Martin will be the coordinating body and work with other unit and corps associations and the Army History Unit.

e. Web Site Review

- i. The Association owes a great vote of thanks to Rod Eagleton, our first webmaster who set up and ran our most valuable website. During the early years, and now, this is our primary means of communication with members and its importance cannot be stressed too much. Thanks Rod for your contribution and your help and advise to me.
- ii. The Webmaster role has now been passed to Ian Morris. I have asked Ian to review the contents of the web site to ensure that pages are up to date and still relevant.
- iii. A new service has now been established for those seeking work and for those seeking reliable workers. See the web site if you are looking for work or if you think an Apprentice may fill your staff needs.
- iv. I also ask all to check and send updates to the Vale page.

f. Management System Development

- i. Herb Ellerbock started the development of an interactive management system for the Association, which with our now dispersed Committee becomes most important.
- ii. Unfortunately Herb had to discontinue this work, which has been developed to a fair degree. We were fortunate that Ian Branch has offered his services and is continuing to progress this project. Thanks Ian.

g. Update of Apprentice Records

- i. Wally Rotow is working on the update and correction of Apprentice records. To date a large number of errors have been found in regimental and personal details and in the omission of many Apprentices who did not complete their training or completed it outside of the Schools.
- ii. The project to date has also unearthed boxes of records, including trade training record books, at both Bandiana and Geelong.
- iii. When complete, this project will be a most valuable contribution for all Apprentices.

h. Apprentices Together 2011

- i. Planning is progressing on Apprentices Together 2011 that will be held in Canberra in October 2011.
- ii. Highlights will be the facility to hold intake reunions in conjunction with the National get together, a wreath laying service at the Australian War Memorial with morning tea and tours, a gala dinner at the Southern Cross Club, an Army Today at Duntroon with presentations on what the Army is doing today with plenty of questions and demonstrations and a static display of latest equipment to crawl over.
- iii. Details will be progressively placed on the web site.
- iv. Don't forget, if you are thinking of an intake reunion over the next three years it would be appreciated if you could take advantage of Apprentices Together 2011 and plan on including your reunion as part of this event. Please advise Frank Maloney, Events Manager frmal@bigpond.com if your intake will be taking up this opportunity.

i. Intake Trees at Bonegilla

- i. Geoff Martin, our Heritage Officer, is endeavouring to have some care and attention paid to the intake trees and plaques at Bonegilla. Many of the trees have died or are obviously sick. The drought in the area can be partly to blame but neglect has also paid a part.
- ii. Now that Latchford is a secure Defence site, it is no longer possible for the casual visitor to inspect the trees and plaques and if nothing can be done for the trees it may be more appropriate to remove the intake plaques and place them in the rose garden of the Apprentice Memorial. Intakes will of course be consulted before this is done.

5. Membership

- a. The strength of your Association and our ability to undertake work for members is very much dependant upon membership. Your fees are our only source of revenue and your numbers are our source of influence.
- b. As our Patron LtGen Ken Gillespie, Chief of Army said at Albury last year, "We are members of a very exclusive Club, and one of which we can be justly proud".
- c. Please promote membership at every opportunity; Membership and Renewal Forms are available from the web site.
- d. Our Membership Secretary Craig Malcolm is now issuing a certificate and a membership details data check with each new and renewed membership. The next batch of Membership Renewals will be sent out in February.
- e. A list of current members is available on the website in the "Members Only" page.

6. In Conclusion

- a. There are other activities being carried out by the Association and a regular check of the web site will keep you up to date.
- b. Again, from all the Committee, a VERY MERRY AND SAFE CHRISTMAS AND A GREAT 2010.

Regards to all,

Frank

Frank Poole LTCOL(R) RAE(tn)
President