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June 2011

A briefing note from the President of the Australian Army Apprentices Association.

*Dear Member,*

This briefing would have been more appropriate if it had been worked around my first 100 days in the job. However, time rushes by and 130 days have passed since being appointed by the Committee to hold the reins.

I could have approached this briefing by just reviewing what has happened and I will get to that. But you should have recently received a note from Frank Poole regarding the 2011 Apprentices Together function in Canberra later this year.

### **The 2011 October Together**

So, at the outset I would like to give a significant 'push' to the 2011 Apprentices Together function which is scheduled for the 27th to 31st October in Canberra. The Association is seeking to provide a venue for all intakes from Balcombe and Bonegilla to get together in an environment which offers us all the opportunity to go 'across' our intake and do things together as an Association. At the same time we can join with our individual intakes for a 'catch up' and renewal. This is a great format which we're hoping will become a two or three year cycle. From my standpoint I hope it will encourage the younger intakes to get involved in what is, by any measure, a unique and immensely rewarding fraternity.

As the promo says 'pack up your gear and the rest of your intake' and come to Canberra in October. Details are on the website [www.austarmyapprentice.org.au](http://www.austarmyapprentice.org.au).

### **To the 'other' job at hand.**

When I took this role on; I made it clear to the Committee, and I have been actively pursuing that objective since; that we have to be more forward looking and more particularly looking to encourage participation by both sides of what seemed to be a divide. Balcombe and Bonegilla members have a huge amount in common but we also carry different cultural memories. In addition there is also the significant impact of the differences brought about by where, and at what stage, we are in our lives.

The younger of us have to face the issues of careers, asset formation, young families and the pressures of a life where the velocity of events seems to just get faster. There's no time for much else. At the other end of the scale those of us who have retired and have more time to reflect will be facing the problems of ageing and doing the best we can with what we have learned, accrued and held on to for our retirements. Our family concerns are of a different nature and for some of us slowing down has become mandatory. For some it is a blessed relief and a chance to enjoy life; for others, it is a particularly difficult process.



Notwithstanding all of that the overriding value in the Association is what binds us together. I was reminded of that recently. I heard from someone who had carried the responsibility of operational command in two theatres. Not an Army Apprentice.

He said "One thing that stands out in my mind is the maxim that if I ever wanted to get the job done and an ex Army Apprentice was either doing it or getting it done, it would get done."

We all, I say again, all, share that reputation. It seems to be our hallmark and for most of us it came from our time at Balcombe and Bonegilla. I suggest that we took from those places a solid dose of ability combined with resourcefulness and resilience. Those of us that are at the upper end of the age scale have reflected upon that and added to those attributes the lifetime of friendship. Those of us at the younger end will reflect on that in the years to come. They too will find it is that which binds us.

### *Now where have we been in the last 130 days?*

#### **The New Badge**

Frank Poole and Frank Maloney have been driving the agenda to a large extent because the October get together just doesn't happen. The work that goes on behind the scenes is routinely underestimated but I can assure you it is real and somewhat frenetic at this time. In addition to the program the Association will be releasing some newly badged memorabilia and promotional items.

The new badge which is shown here is the product of your Committee's resolve to ensure that both Balcombe and Bonegilla were seen to be as one in the Association. This called into question the merit or otherwise of our key symbol; the Army Apprentice's badge.

In this day where communications are the key to success the lack of definition in the old badge and limitations on its use were an impediment.

These limitations were real enough to justify getting to work on updating and changing the badge sufficiently to give it meaning and much more utility as a symbol of the Association .

As a result we now have a new badge which has been warmly welcomed by all who have seen it and it has received positive reviews across quite a number of intakes.

The construct of the badge is obviously based upon the original Army Apprentices' badge and as such it carries the symbolism of the cross and the torch of learning. The 'gear wheel' in the new badge was modelled upon the driving gear of a Centurion AFV. The "Cent" was in current usage when the Vehicle Mechs were first put into the field and as such it has an historical aspect. The number of exposed points on the wheel is now determined and that makes the use of the badge a little more practical.



The overarching change is the inclusion of the words "Balcombe and Bonegilla" on the inner rim and the driving gear. If symbolism is your thing then you will see that the wheel was driven by both. The colours were taken from both the traditional green and yellow and the black was taken from the TAC sign for the Army Apprentices School or School of TAFE.

Finally on this topic; we didn't have to pay for the artwork it was donated. It is a valuable asset and is available to any intake that cares to use it as an Association Badge and it will be able to be ordered in a form that that can be used as a car sticker on your rear window with your intake number under it. We will all know what the numbers mean before we have to hit the brakes.

We hope you will agree it is a step in the right direction.



### *The Committee at Work*

The Committee is made up of good people giving their time and energy freely in support of your Association. Much is done on a day to day basis that goes unseen and unheard.

The Committee is asked from time to time to get involved in larger issues. Matters of pension indexing and Vet Affairs in general that fall outside of our charter. Your Association does not have the resources or critical mass at this time to do much more than offer support, or guidance in some instances, on resolving some of the issues. We can only such support as we can through other organisations who are much more focussed and better equipped than we are to provide effective outcomes in these instances.

The upcoming Constitutional changes will have some impact on making us more efficient. But the key point that warrants mention in this update is that we're looking for members of the younger intakes to become participants in the process.

We can make allowances for the pressures of your lives by encouraging you take on a 'shadowing' role for a given Committee position. It is a form of succession planning and if you're interested we'd love to hear from you. Skype and Iphones overcome the tyranny of



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distance. So it doesn't matter where you are we can keep you involved. At the next Committee meeting we will be looking at the issue of communications and the possibility of a social network with strict controls so that, here again, the younger generations can relate more easily to the work of the Association.

### **The Constitution**

The Committee has been ably led by Jeff Heron in conducting a review of the Constitution and the process of considering the proposed changes will be furthered by the next Committee meeting at the end of July. The membership will then be notified of the proposed changes and a vote of the membership will be called for at a special general meeting to be held in September in time for final adoption at the AGM in October.

### **The Memorial**

The Memorial and the Museum at Bandiana is a regular calling point for Apprentices of all ages. It is the centre point of the Association's achievements to date and quite a few have now taken the opportunity to mark their passing by using the engraved pavers and plaques on the site itself.

We have received approval to move the plaque marking the loss of those Army Apprentices lost on active service from the RAEME memorial to the Apprentices Memorial site.

The site is under the watchful eye of Jim Hislop and the other members of Memorial Sub Committee.

If you're in the area and can take the time to see the Museum and the Memorial you will see why we call Bandiana's Gaza Ridge Barracks our 'home base'. If you haven't had that opportunity you will be impressed by it and how it gives your family another dimension to which they can relate now and into the future.

### **The Balcombe Military Heritage Committee**

Next year the refurbished site will be re dedicated and it is anticipated that it will take place in May. The Sub Committee has been successful in obtaining \$10,000 from the Government as a grant toward the refurbishment of the Gates, Plaques and Walls. The Mornington Peninsula Shire Council have been extremely supportive and will provide oversight of the works that will see the placement of four new plaques on the site. These plaques will mark the site as being the home of the School of Sigs; The School of Survey; The Army Apprentices School and the School of Music.

In addition the site will have four or five stainless steel panels that will be laser etched with graphics and the 'story' of the site from its inception in 1896 to its closure and the transfer of operations to Latchford Barracks at Bonegilla.



The Balcombe boys will be amused to hear that at a recent meeting with the local residents on site I was addressing a small crowd of parents and students of the Balcombe Grammar School about our plans. When question time came. I was asked by one of the young users of the oval;

"Is it true that the Army Apprentices buried an army tank still with its guns in the middle of Mace Oval?"

Don't you just love the way that legends are made.

We're looking for a good turn out on the dedication day and it will be a fine affair with a great deal of significance for all of those that did the 'yards' down there.

#### **Latchford Barracks Memorial trees and plaques.**

We have ongoing issues here and access to the site is difficult for those who wish to visit the avenue and other significant parts of the former Army College of TAFE. It will gather more profile in the future. In the meantime we're struggling to ensure that what trees are left are kept alive.

#### **The website and newsletter.**

Most people recognise that these two functions are the principal means of communicating with our membership and both need a spring clean. I see that as a priority and as the rest of my year goes by it remains work in progress with a clear objective. Watch this space.

#### **Finances and Membership**

Both of these functions are run by able people in Owen Reynolds, under the watchful eye of our auditor Greg Mulcahy and the membership secretary Craig Malcolm.

We have good financial reserves and our operating costs are kept under close scrutiny as will be seen at the AGM and in the Annual Report.

We need more members, then again which Association doesn't? but there are a lot people out there who carry the mantle of being an Army Apprentice. We need them in the Association. The more we have the more we can do for the members as a whole. Can you nominate some one that we can approach. If you can then drop me or the membership secretary a enote through the website. We'll be pleased to respond.

#### ***The Retirement of the Patron from active duty.***

We have congratulated Ken Gillespie on two occasions in recent times. The first being on the award of the Companion of the Order of Australia (AC) and second upon his reaching retirement.



Ken Gillespie has been and continues to be a stalwart of the Association and for my part has been source of sage advice, encouragement and guidance. I thank him very much for that.

For the time being at least Ken has agreed to remain at his post as Patron of the Association and on behalf of all Army Apprentices we wish both Ken and Carmel a well deserved, long, happy and satisfying retirement.

#### **Post script**

We were informed recently through our contacts in the UK that they operated 4 Army Apprentices Schools. We were further informed with some pride from the UK end that they had put over 71000 Army Apprentices through their training.

We responded with the politeness and decorum that so characterises Army Apprentices when dealing with such things. We quickly did some clever arithmetic and added in a bit of research upon the subject. We then put it to them that the total number of Army Apprentices around the world both past and present must therefore number around 80,000.

"Yesss, we suppose that must be so", they said.

It was then that we felt compelled to inform them that from our research it also meant that the highest ranking Officer in both Armies that can claim the heritage of being an Army Apprentice is ours. We haven't heard from them in a while.

Keep safe and as well as you can. We want to see you in October

On behalf of your Committee

Barry Teal

President Australian Army Apprentices Association.