BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ARMY APPRENTICE SCHEME, THE ARMY APPRENTICES SCHOOLS AND THE AUSTRALIAN ARMY APPRENTICES ASSOCIATION

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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to identify and describe some of the main events that defined the Army Apprentices Scheme and the Army Apprentices Schools (AAS) and their locations, and to provide a brief introduction to the Australian Army Apprentices Association (AAAA). It has been published to coincide with the 40th Anniversary of the move of the AAS from Balcombe, Victoria (VIC) to Bonegilla, VIC in December 1982 to January 1983.

There are thousands of resources where detailed histories of the Army Apprentice Scheme, the Balcombe and Bonegilla Camps, the AAS, and the AAAA can be found. At the end of this document are lists of the resources used in compiling the document, including the book, *From Boy to Soldier*, by Sid Cheeseman, a 4th Intake Vehicle Mechanic, which covers in detail the period from 1948 to 1998.[1]

There are also many other events that could be recorded here, but the aim is to keep the list short enough to allow people to read it all in a reasonable time, but also comprehensive enough to ensure that the major events have been captured.

The first section deals briefly with the two locations of the AAS: Balcombe and Bonegilla. Then the AAS and Army Apprentice Scheme are introduced, followed by events from 1948 to 1982 at Balcombe and then from 1982 to 1995 at Bonegilla. The document then lists events at Bonegilla after 1995 to 1998, before dealing with final events at Balcombe, and then the lead-up to incorporation of the AAAA in 2006. The formation and operations of the AAAA are then covered, followed by a final section listing more recent events from 2019.

Balcombe Military Camp and Bonegilla Military Area

Initial use of the Balcombe Military Camp[2]

Balcombe is the estuary area south of Balcombe Creek running east from Port Phillip Bay to Nepean Hwy and about 60km south of Melbourne.

Balcombe was the pastoral holding [from 1846] of Alexander Balcombe, who was born on the island of St Helena when his father was the Governor in charge of Napoleon [who was in exile from 1815]. While his quarters were being built, Napoleon lived with the Balcombes in their family home 'The Briars'. As a successful pastoralist, Alexander needed property about halfway between Mornington and Melbourne where he could rest his stock overnight before heading to the Melbourne markets. He bought the land bounded by what is now Balcombe Rd and Warragul Rd, stretching from the Nepean Hwy down to Mentone Beach. His homestead opposite what was to become Balcombe Camp was and still is named 'The Briars'.[3]

Nearby is Mount Martha, the area south of Balcombe Creek and including Esplanade to the west, Nepean Hwy to the east and bounded to the south by Glenisla Drive. Balcombe Camp was a short distance ["*a stone's throw*"] from Mount Martha Beach.

Prior to the Second World War (WWII), Balcombe Camp was used initially for Militia bivouac purposes, often en-route to other areas such as Bittern and for Militia training camps of several weeks' duration using 12ft x 12ft tents, and with semi-permanent support facilities such as water and latrines.

During WWII, usage included: semi-permanent accommodation in purpose-built huts for Australian Imperial Force (AIF) recruit and other military training; for the Armoured Fighting Vehicle School and 14th Australian Armoured Regiment; for infantry basic training including live firing of small arms and grenades (some out to sea); for equipment trials of Bren Gun Carriers and amphibious craft; for US 1st Marines Division and 19 US Construction Battalion (Seabees); for RAAF accommodation and training; for classified and covert unit training (Special Z Units); for Army female accommodation [at Mount Martha House – including 30 Women's Royal Australian Army Corps (WRAAC) Barrack from 1950 until 1978]; for Italian POWs; and non-government organisations such as orphaned groups.

The first full-time use of the camp was by the Army Headquarters School of Signals, which relocated to Balcombe in 1945. Building upgrades and new facilities were developed after WWII and, in 1946, the 1st Signals Depot Battalion co-located before, in 1947, the two units combined as the Army School of Signals, which relocated to Watsonia in1970.[4]

Initial use of the Bonegilla Military Area[5]

Bonegilla is a rural locality within the City of Wodonga local government area, 10km east of Wodonga and some 390km north-east of Melbourne. It is a short distance from Lake Hume, a major water supply for the region offering a haven for recreational boaters, skiers, swimmers and anglers.

The first portion of the Bonegilla Military Area was developed for the 23rd Infantry Brigade relocating from Seymour in August 1940, and the 2/23rd Infantry Battalion, "Albury's Own", relocating from Albury. In late September, the 2/21st and 2/22nd Infantry Battalion travelled on foot to Bonegilla from Trawool, VIC, a 235km march. They concentrated with the Brigade Headquarters and the 2/23rd Battalion, and more complex training continued until 23 March 1941.

During WWII, other units at Bonegilla included: 2/2nd Australian Pioneer Reinforcements, Medical Reinforcements, elements of Armoured Division, 143rd General Transport Company, Signal Training Units including two groups of Australian Women's Army Service, 67th Dental Unit, the RASC Training Brigade, some Citizen Military Forces (CMF) troops, American officers and engineers who underwent specialist training at the Royal Australian Engineers (RAE) Bomb Disposal School, Officers Training School (1941), the School of Mechanisation, and the School of Small Arms, commanded by LTCOL Latchford [after whom Latchford Barracks were named].

The Bonegilla Military Post Office operated from 1940 to 1947 and from 1983 to 1998 when it was relocated to Bandiana.

After the War, the camp was used as a Migrant Reception Centre from 1947 until 1965, when the School of Military Survey relocated from Balcombe. The Survey School had hosted a RAASC Transport Group, the School of Catering in 1969, and a detachment of the Survey Regiment in 1970.

In 1971, the entire Bonegilla Camp was handed back to the Department of Defence, but only CMF units used its major facilities between then and the building of Latchford Barracks.

An Army Apprentices School and the Army Apprentice Scheme

29 October 1947 – the case for the establishment of a military technical training school

In 1947, LTGEN Sydney Fairbairn Rowell, Vice Chief of the General Staff (VCGS) set out the case for the establishment of a military technical training school for consideration by the Military Board.[6]

9 December 1947 – selection of Balcombe for the Army Apprentices School

After investigation on likely sites for establishment of the AAS, the Balcombe Military Camp was finally approved by the Military Board.[7] LTCOL FB Oldfield ED BSc, Australian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (AEME) [later RAEME] was appointed as the first Commanding Officer (CO), and the first Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM) was WO1 LR Sergeant, Royal Australian Infantry Corps (RA Inf).[8]

May 1948 – Ministerial assent for an Apprentices' School

A proposal to establish an AAS, modelled on similar lines to schools in Britain and adapted to Australian conditions, to meet the post-war demand for skilled tradesmen, received ministerial assent. The hutted camp, occupied by the US Marine Corps (USMC) during WWII at Balcombe on the Mornington Peninsula, was selected as the site for the AAS.

June 1948 – School of Military Survey

The School of Military Survey commenced at Balcombe, later transferring to Bonegilla in 1965.[9]

14 July 1948 – approval to commence the Army Apprentice Scheme

On 14 July 1948, approval was given for the selection of 63 Army Apprentices [some references state 62, but there are 63 names in the official roll maintained by the AAAA] to be enlisted for nine-year engagements in the Australian Regular Army (ARA). Approval was also given for the enlistment of AEME apprentices still serving as such, who had reached 18 years of age, and who were enlisted under certain specified provisions.[10]

August 1948 – Army Apprentices School Balcombe

2 August 1948 – commencement of the Army Apprentice Scheme

Delayed by a month due to floods in New South Wales (NSW) and Queensland (QLD) that interfered with the selection of candidates[11], the Army Apprentice Scheme commenced, and the AAS was raised at Balcombe on 2 August 1948 under the command of LTCOL FB Oldfield ED BSc.

The 1st Intake of 63 Apprentices were to receive instruction in seven different trades.[12] **Note:** There are nine trades listed for the 1st Intake in the official roll maintained by the AAAA, i.e. Blacksmith, Bricklayer, Carpenter & Joiner, Electrician (Construction Electrician (CE)), Electrician (Vehicle & Plant (V&P)), Fitter & Turner, Motor Mechanic, Plumber, and Telecom Mechanic.

20 August 1948 – official opening of the Army Apprentices School

Eighteen days after the AAS commenced on 2 August 1948, the Minister for the Army, the Honourable Cyril Chambers, MP officially opened the School in the presence of the largest gathering of senior officers assembled in Australia since WWII.[13] LTGEN Vernon Sturdee, Chief of the General Staff (CGS) and LTGEN CA Clowes, General Officer Commanding (GOC) Southern Command were among the guests.[14]

July 1949 – Army Apprentices School "King's" badge[15]

The Apprentices were initially issued with the Australian Commonwealth Military Forces Rising Sun badge, "Third Pattern" (collar badge size) for wearing on berets and blues caps. There is evidence that the larger hat size badge was also issued for wearing on berets. The shiny gilt "Fourth Pattern" Rising Sun was issued later. Specification MGO (Master-General of the Ordnance) 991, Appendix 1 was issued, including the original AAS "King's" badge.

At the apex of the badge is the Imperial or Tudor Crown of England, expressing allegiance to the Sovereign, superiors, duty and country.

Superimposed on a cogwheel representing trade and technical training is the English Cross of St George depicting Christian virtues and development of character. The St George Cross is overlaid with crossed, double-edged swords, representing the military qualities of courage, discipline and physical fitness.

Superimposed on the swords and Cross is a flaming torch of learning.

At the base is a furled pennant with the words: "ARMY APPRENTICES SCHOOL AUSTRALIA".

Although approved in 1951, this badge was not issued in large numbers until 1953.

23 September 1949 – German measles epidemic

An epidemic of German measles at the AAS had a beneficial sequel in community service, when 80 Apprentices who had earlier contracted the disease donated blood at the Royal Melbourne Hospital. The serum made from the blood was available to the Fairfield Infectious Diseases Hospital for expectant mothers suffering from German measles to protect the health of their future children.[16]

1950s

1950 – formation of the Army Apprentices School Education Wing

To reduce the problems with insufficient general education instructors, the School's Education Wing was formed in 1950 with three instructors.[17]

27 May 1950 – first Army Apprentices School rugby union teams' debut

Two rugby union teams from the AAS made their debut in the Victorian Rugby Union competition on 27 May 1950, competing in the Third Grade series for that year.[18]

12 June 1950 – Balcombe car race

On 12 June 1950, a one-off car race was held at Balcombe. Conducted by the Light Car Club of Australia, the event was used to raise money for the Army's canteen fund.[19]

1951 – Mace Oval

SGT Raymond Charles (Mick) Mace MM BEM, while an instructor at AAS, borrowed a D4 bulldozer and literally demolished a hill in order to construct an oval for the Apprentices. He carried out this work in his free time, after normal hours with the assistance of Apprentices.[20]

30 May 1951 – funeral of Field Marshal Sir Thomas Blamey GBE KCB CMG DSO ED

The first major public appearance by Army Apprentices was for the funeral of the late Field Marshal Sir Thomas Blamey on 30 May 1951. Apprentices, resplendent in their new battledress, accompanied the thousands of other servicemen, band members, officers and public officials, in the cortege.[21]

An early surveillance film by ASIO, established in 1949, shows the funeral procession, including the Apprentices in their battledress and wearing berets. Other servicemen and the bands also wore battledress. Many dignitaries can be seen in the film, including the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies as well as many senior officers from the three services, plus Australian and Victorian Government Cabinet and Opposition members.[22]

June 1951 – first Apprentice Company Sergeant Major

Robert Johnstone Scott, 1st Intake Bricklayer was appointed as the first Apprentice WO2 Company Sergeant Major (CSM).[23]

12 July 1951 – announcement of the Governor-General's Medal and associated prizes

The Governor-General's Medal was included in a list of prizes for annual competition announced for the AAS on 12 July 1951 by the Minister for the Army, MR Josiah Francis.[24]

15 December 1951 – award of the first Governor-General's Medals

The Governor-General's Medal was awarded to the most outstanding Apprentice of the graduating class in consideration of trade and educational subjects, regimental training and ability and qualities of leadership. In 1951, this was initially a silver medal, awarded to the Apprentice who gained the highest aggregate marks in trade, education and regimental training on graduation.

On the first graduation parade for the 1st and 2nd Intakes, recipients of the Governor-General's Medal were Apprentices Robert Johnstone Scott, 1st Intake Bricklayer and Kevin Thomas Williamson, 2nd Intake Fitter & Turner.[25]

15 December 1951 – first Army Apprentices School graduation

The first graduation parade for forty-three 1st Intake and forty-eight 2nd Intake Apprentices was held. The Reviewing Officer was the CGS, LTGEN Sydney Fairbairn Rowell.[26]

Early graduation parade – LTCOL Frederick B Oldfield ED BSc, Commandant (COMDT) – in Blues [photo source unknown]

January 1952 – commencement of Junior Musician training

The Junior Musician training scheme was started in January 1952 by CAPT [later LTCOL] RA Newman MBE[27] at Kapooka, NSW, and then in April 1952 moved to Woodside, SA. In October 1952 it was redesignated as the Band Boy Training Centre (BBTC).[28]

June 1952 – Rubella epidemic

Another rubella (German measles) epidemic at Balcombe in 1952 caused the cancellation of all mid-year graduation celebrations for the 3rd Intake. Invitations to relatives and friends were also cancelled and the graduation was reduced to a brief ceremony in the Theatre, ANZAC Hall, when the parade was cancelled due to heavy rain that washed out the march-past.[29]

1953 – movement of Band Boys to Balcombe

In early 1953, the BBTC was moved to Balcombe and attached to the AAS. Band Boys were later, in early 1954, designated as Apprentice Musicians.[30]

January 1953 – first Women's Royal Australian Army Corps member to teach servicemen students

LT Miriam W (Ria) Olson, the only female on the AAS Education Wing teaching staff at the time, became the first woman to teach servicemen students. She had completed her officer training in December 1952 at the WRAAC Officer Cadet School (OCS) in Mildura, VIC prior to being posted to Balcombe. She instructed Apprentices to intermediate level in English and Social Studies.[31]

January 1953 – first Intake to swear allegiance to the Queen

With King George VI's death in February 1952, the first intake to swear allegiance to the Queen instead of to the King was the 8th Intake, in January 1953.

May/June 1953 – first Apprentice WO1 Regimental Sergeant Major/Battalion Sergeant Major[32]

Some weeks prior to his graduation in June 1953, Ross Bland, 5th Intake Fitter & Turner was promoted to Apprentice WO1-RSM to mark the now battalion strength sized school. He was the first Apprentice WO1-RSM [later titled Battalion Sergeant Major (BSM)]. Ross passed away on 17 October 2021.

June 1953 – 5th Intake graduation in ANZAC Hall

The June 1953 graduation ceremony for the 5th Intake was also held in the Theatre, ANZAC Hall.[33]

ANZAC Hall, Balcombe [SPAASSM Collection Phase I Image 00465]

June 1953 – graduation of the last Apprentice Welders

Between 1949 and 1953, eight Welders from the 2nd to the 5th Intakes graduated from Balcombe.[34]

1 October 1953 – Army Apprentices at the Southern Command Coronation Tattoo

Apprentices from Balcombe were among the Defence contingent who performed at the Southern Command Coronation Tattoo at the Melbourne Showgrounds. Their "*well-drilled physical training display was accompanied by their own volunteer band.*"[35]

December 1953 – graduation of the first Apprentice from Officer Cadet School, Portsea[36]

In December 1953, the first Apprentices selected for officer training graduated from the OCS, Portsea. Between 1953 and 1985, 263 Apprentices were successful in obtaining a commission from OCS. The most senior of these was LTGEN Ken Gillespie AC DSM CSM, a 23rd Intake Apprentice Bricklayer, who graduated from OCS in 1972 and was appointed as Chief of Army (CA) on 4 July 2008. LTGEN Gillespie was Patron of the AAAA from its inception until October 2010.

The last Apprentices who attended OCS graduated in 1985. After that, the Royal Military College (RMC), Duntroon assumed sole responsibility for training Army officers. Another Apprentice, BRIG David Luhrs CSC, 35th Intake Apprentice Carpenter & Joiner served as COMDT RMC from 2011-2013. BRIG Luhrs was Patron of the AAAA from October 2010 until October 2014.

24 November 1954 – Balcombe Gates

The Balcombe Memorial "Marine" Gates were erected by the Australian Army and dedicated on 24 November 1954. They were built to commemorate the contribution by the 1st Division USMC in WWII to the defence of Australia, and to demonstrate the appreciation of the USMC for the friendship and cordial hospitality extended to the officers and men of the 1st Division USMC by the people of the area.

This photo depicts some of the dignitaries from the ceremony for the opening of the Memorial Gates on 24 November 1954.

Pictured together (L-R) are:
* LTCOL Cecil B Ives OBE (COMDT AAS)
* LTGEN Sir Sydney Fairbairn Rowell KBE CB (CGS)
* GEN Lemuel C Shepherd Jr (COMDT USMC), behind whom is the Hon Minister for the Army MR Josiah Francis and MRS Francis.

The gates were built mainly by George Harris, 8th Intake Bricklayer (brickwork) and Barry James Moore, 8th Intake Blacksmith (metalwork), who was killed in action in Vietnam, on 16 November 1967.

Under the guidance of Craftsman (CFN) Don Christopher (1st Intake Blacksmith) and MR Jim Nuttall (civilian instructor), two (sets of) gates were made. The second set went to the WRAAC Barracks in Mosman, Sydney (and later to 1st Recruit Training Battalion, Kapooka NSW).

A third set was made later and installed adjacent to Metal Trades Wing. These gates were later relocated to Bonegilla when the School moved from Balcombe.

SPAASSM Collection Phase II Binder 1 Item 04 Image 00049

January 1955 – inclusion of Apprentice Clerks and Architectural Draughtsmen

The 10th Intake in 1955 included Apprentice Clerks for the first time. The course at Balcombe was initially 12 months, followed by a six-month posting to units in Puckapunyal, VIC to gain practical experience before qualifying as Army Clerks.[37] This changed to 18 months from about 1960.

The 10th and 11th Intakes in 1955 and 1956 respectively were the only two intakes to include Architectural Draughtsmen. Of the 19 who enlisted, 12 graduated, mostly from the 11th Intake.[38]

Shortly after the 11th Intake graduated, the Army restructured the RAE trades, including removal of the need for Architectural Draughtsmen. Those who had graduated as Apprentice Architectural Draughtsmen were given the option of transferring to the Survey Corps or taking discharge.

January 1955 – commencement of the first Apprentice Musicians at Balcombe[39]

Until Band Boys were designated Apprentice Musicians with the 10th Intake, the AAS Band comprised Apprentice tradesmen who were proficient as drummers and instrumentalists. In the 1956/57 Journal, we read that graduating with the 9th Intake were "*eight Bandboys who entered in January '55*".[40]

1955 – manufacture of the "Top" Gates at Balcombe

Apprentice Blacksmiths Barry John Moore (8th Intake), Raymond John Mitchell (10th Intake), and Arthur John McWhinney (10th Intake) manufactured the Metal Trades ("Top") Gates which were installed in 1955 towards the southern end of Balcombe Camp, adjacent to Metal Trades Wing.[41]

These gates were subsequently restored and relocated when the AAS moved to Bonegilla in December 1982 to January 1983, with funds raised by "*Ex-Balcombe Apprentices*" at a reunion held at the Swan St Training Depot in Richmond, VIC on 10 December 1982.[42]

Metal Trades ("Top") Gates, Balcombe [photo source unknown]

December 1955 – first award of the Gullidge Memorial Medal

The Gullidge Memorial Medal was awarded each year from 1955 to 1982 (when the School of Music moved from Balcombe to Watsonia) to the most outstanding Band Boy and then Apprentice Musician

for musical proficiency, regimental training, general ability and qualities of leadership. The first recipient was Peter McBain, 9th Intake Musician.[43]

November 1956 – Melbourne Olympic Games

Army Apprentices helped to line the streets of Melbourne for the arrival of HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.

Under the supervision of CAPT JHS Temple RAASC, Senior Instructor Clerical Training Wing, and WO1 DJ Callahan RAE, Instructor Electrical Trades Wing, 35 Apprentices were selected to act as Designation Board Bearers for the Olympic teams at the 1956 Opening and Closing Ceremonies. The chosen Apprentices "*quickly became identified with their teams, and many of them have mementos of the event in the form of presents and medallions bestowed on them by the members*".[44]

In the years leading up to the Games, Apprentices had also been employed to assist the runners through traffic in the testing of the marathon course during the Victorian marathon championships in 1953 and 1954.[45]

Apprentices preparing to line the streets for the Melbourne Olympics
[SPAASSM Collection Phase II Binder 30 Item 1 Image 00031]

January 1957 – replacement of Electrician Apprentices by Electrical Fitters and Mechanics[46]

For the 12th Intake, Electrical Fitters and Electrical Mechanics replaced Electricians (V&P and CE respectively), 88 of whom had graduated by 1958.

June 1957 – Women's Royal Australian Army Corps Clerical Training[47]

June 1957 saw the inception of WRAAC training by the Clerical Wing. A series of 8-week courses trained members of the women's service to the standard of Clerk (General Duty (GD)) Class II. Clerical training for AAS WRAAC staff had already occurred in 1955 and for CMF WRAAC personnel in 1956. A 6-week Class I course was held in 1958 and courses for WRAAC personnel continued until at least 1960.

22 February 1958 – opening of the Matthews Club

The Matthews Club at Balcombe was named by David Matthews after his father, CAPT Lionel Colin Matthews GC MC (15 August 1912 – 2 March 1944).[48] The Club was officially opened on 30 May 1958 by LTGEN HG Edgar CB CBE, GOC Southern Command.[49]

CAPT Matthews was the most-decorated officer in Royal Australian Corps of Signals (RA Sigs) during WWII. He was awarded the Military Cross while in captivity in Singapore, was executed at Kuching, Sarawak, in March 1944 and, after the war, was posthumously awarded the George Cross in recognition of his gallant and distinguished services while a POW in Japanese hands.[50]

David Matthews received his father's Military Cross from the Governor-General, William McKell, at Government House, Adelaide, in late November 1947, and also received his George Cross from the Governor of South Australia, LTGEN Sir Willoughby Norrie, in Adelaide on 4 October 1949. Lionel Matthews' George Cross, Military Cross and service medals are displayed in the Hall of Valour at the Australian War Memorial (AWM) in Canberra.[51]

Matthews Club, Balcombe [SPAASSM Collection Phase I Image 04385]

16 January 1959 – first Apprentice to die on operations

The first Apprentice to die on operations was CFN Bruce Dudley Henderson, 8th Intake Vehicle Mechanic, while serving with A Field Battery, Royal Australian Artillery (RAA) Light Aid Detachment (LAD) in Malaya.[52]

Plaques listing all Army Apprentice Graduates who died while on overseas active service have been placed on memorials at Bonegilla near the Chapel of St Peter, and at Bandiana at the Australian Army Apprentices Memorial.

31 March 1959 – a new gymnasium

The new AAS gymnasium, adjacent to Mace Oval was constructed by 2 Troop, 21 Construction Squadron, RAE and handed over to the AAS on 31 March 1959. It was one of the very few brick buildings ever built at Balcombe.

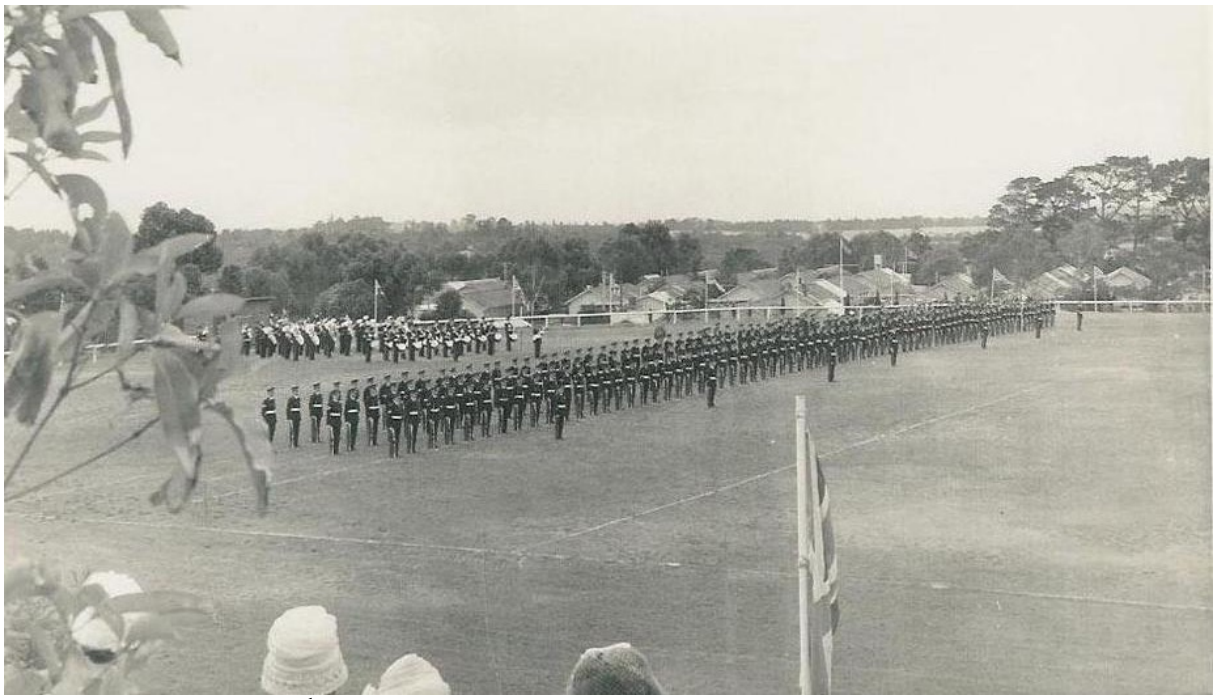
The image below may be from the official opening of the gym in 1959. The speaker would then be LTGEN HG Edgar CBE, GOC Southern Command. The officer at the top of the row behind the speaker appears to be LTCOL WT Cramp, RAEME (CO AAS from May 1958 to January 1962).

Opening of the new gymnasium (possibly) [SPAASSM Collection Phase I Image 01540]

1960s

10 December 1960/December 1961 – first graduations with the Self-Loading Rifle

The 7.62mm L1A1 Self-Loading Rifle (SLR) was introduced into the Australian Army in 1959. In December 1960, the 13th Intake was the first to carry the SLR on their graduation parade. The weapons were subsequently withdrawn for Vietnam War emergency use but reissued in time for the 14th Intake's graduation parade in December 1961.[53]



13th Intake graduation parade, first with SLR, Mace Oval
[photo source Norm Wells, 14th Intake Vehicle Mechanic]

May 1962 – Coral Sea Day, Melbourne

Commencing in 1954, the AAS regularly attended the annual Coral Sea Day commemorations and May 1962 was no exception. Apprentices, led by School staff, marched through Melbourne city past the Saluting Base at the Town Hall in Swanston St.[54]

July-August 1962 – Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War

Arrival of the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam (AATTV) in South Vietnam during July and August 1962 was the beginning of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War.[55] Sixteen Apprentices, including members from the 1st to the 21st Intakes served with the AATTV.[56]

1962 – visit by Thai Apprentices School Commander

A visit by the Thai Apprentices School Commander, Thai Navy COMD Sanit was received by the AAS.[57]

1963 – Indonesian Confrontation

In January 1963, Indonesia's Foreign Minister, Dr Subandrio referred to the "Confrontation", Indonesia's efforts to destabilise the new Malaysian Federation with a view to breaking it up. The actual war began when Indonesia launched a series of cross-border raids into Malaysian territory in early 1963. While Australians were initially kept out of the war, members of 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (3 RAR) were involved in 1964, with a battalion deployed in 1965.[58] Sapper (SPR) Anthony John Colohan, a 13th Intake Apprentice Electrical Mechanic, serving with 21 Construction Squadron, and CPL Peter Joseph John West, 6th Intake Bricklayer, serving with 4 RAR were two of the 23 Australians killed during the Confrontation.[59]

1963 – upgrades to Apprentices' accommodation

It appears that other significant events for Apprentices in 1963 included [at least for the then A Company]: replacement of the straw mattresses with plastic-covered foam mattresses, lino on the hut floors, and upgrades to the hot water systems.[60]

1964 – announcement by the Commanding Officer of the future for the AAS[61]

At the time of the 1964 graduation, the CO, LTCOL CP West, RA Inf made some announcements regarding the future of the AAS. Firstly, he stated that the largest Junior Intake in the history of the School – 200 – were scheduled to march-in in January 1965. They would be the first to see the inauguration of a two-stream education system, where 30% would commence study at the Victorian Technical Leaving Certificate level, while the remainder would study for the lower level First Class Certificate (Technical).

His final announcement was that "*Planning for the rebuilding of the School at Balcombe* [was] *proceeding on schedule and detailed master planning* [would] *commence* [in 1965].

19 December 1964 – proposed Regimental March – Army Apprentices School

The 1964 Graduation Booklet reported on a proposed Regimental March for the AAS, based on "Advance Australia Fair" and the "Marines Hymn". The March was arranged by the School of Music Bandmaster, WO1 A Henderson. It was to be played during the Graduation ceremonies.

"*This tune was selected because its concept of a young Australia moving to a bright future is reflected in this School where young men train to become the skilled technicians and tradesmen of tomorrow. Also included in the arrangement are extracts from the "Marines Hymn" which is the march of the United States Marine Corps whose First Division was quartered at Balcombe during World War II. The inclusion of these extracts is intended to commemorate this wartime association and to honour those thousands of young Americans who trained here and went forth to die in the defence of this country in the anxious days of 1942-43.*"[62]

11 June 1965 – graduation of the last Apprentice Clerks

With the 19th Intake, the last of 120 Apprentice Clerks graduated on 11 June 1965. The Clerical trade had been first introduced with the 10th Intake, although one 8th Intake and one 9th Intake Apprentices graduated as Clerks.[63]

December 1965 – School of Military Survey

During the 1960s, investigations had commenced to locate a suitable site for a new training facility for the Royal Australian Corps of Survey (RA Svy). The School of Military Survey transferred to Bonegilla in December 1965.[64]

18 December 1965 – first graduation parade on Citation Oval

With prior graduations being held on Mace Oval, on the Parade Ground or, when poor weather intervened, in ANZAC Hall, the first graduation on Citation Oval occurred with the 18th Intake on 18 December 1965.[65]

May/June 1966 – funeral of Lieutenant General Sir Vernon Sturdee KBE CB DSO

Apprentices were called on to provide a firing party and escort for the state funeral of LTGEN [not MAJGEN as stated in the reference] Sir Vernon Sturdee KBE CB DSO, who died on 25 May 1966.[66]

21 February 1967 – first Apprentice killed in action

The first Apprentice killed in action was Michael Damien Poole, 17th Intake Musician, while serving with 5 RAR in South Vietnam, aged 20. He enlisted on 2 July 1962 and was posted to 5 RAR for its first tour in 1966. As a Stretcher Bearer with 5 RAR Battalion Headquarters group and B Company, he died from the blast effects of a massive land mine in the Long Hai Hills.

Eight other soldiers were killed and 22 were wounded.[67]

1 June 1968 – presentation of the Officer Cadet School Colours[68]

The Army's OCS Portsea was presented with its Queen's and Regimental Colours by Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh at the South Melbourne Cricket Ground. On that very cold Saturday, 1 June 1968, the AAS was tasked to "hold ground" by providing enough Apprentices to completely encircle the Cricket Ground.

The OCS Colours were laid up on 23 March 1986 in the RMC, Duntroon Chapel alongside RMC's old Colours.

About July 1968 – Hong Kong flu pandemic

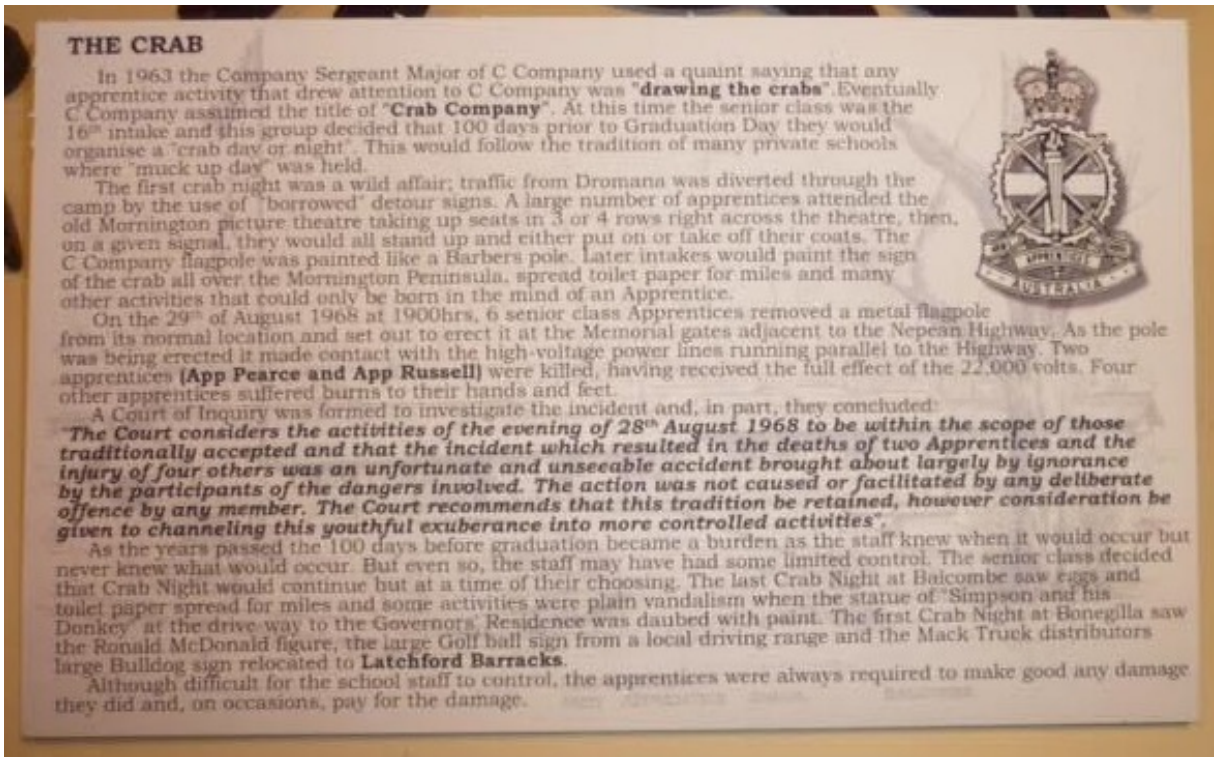
The Hong Kong flu pandemic in 1968, caused by an H3N2 strain of the influenza A virus, killed more than a million people globally. The AAS was not spared, with many Apprentices infected and isolated in huts allocated for the purpose.

29 August 1968 – "Crab Day" accident

Apprentices Athol Pearce and Peter Russell, 21st Intake Radio Mechanics were killed accidentally when a flagpole they were erecting outside the Marine Gates struck the overhead high-voltage power lines. Four other Apprentices were injured.[69]

"Crab Day" had become a traditional "muck-up day", probably five years before with the 16th Intake. It was usually held 100 days before graduation, at the end of August. Some indications are that the tradition started at least a year later with the 17th Intake, but the image below from the Army Museum at Bandiana supports the 1963 version.

In spite of the 1968 incident, the tradition continued until the last intakes graduated from Bonegilla.



THE CRAB

In 1963 the Company Sergeant Major of C Company used a quaint saying that any apprentice activity that drew attention to C Company was "**drawing the crabs**".Eventually C Company assumed the title of "**Crab Company**". At this time the senior class was the 16th intake and this group decided that 100 days prior to Graduation Day they would organise a "crab day or night". This would follow the tradition of many private schools where "muck up day" was held.

The first crab night was a wild affair; traffic from Dromana was diverted through the camp by the use of "borrowed" detour signs. A large number of apprentices attended the old Mornington picture theatre taking up seats in 3 or 4 rows right across the theatre, then, on a given signal, they would all stand up and either put on or take off their coats. The C Company flagpole was painted like a Barbers pole. Later intakes would paint the sign of the crab all over the Mornington Peninsula, spread toilet paper for miles and many other activities that could only be born in the mind of an Apprentice.

On the 29th of August 1968 at 1900hrs, 6 senior class Apprentices removed a metal flagpole from its normal location and set out to erect it at the Memorial gates adjacent to the Nepean Highway. As the pole was being erected it made contact with the high-voltage power lines running parallel to the Highway. Two apprentices **(App Pearce and App Russell)** were killed, having received the full effect of the 22,000 volts. Four other apprentices suffered burns to their hands and feet.

A Court of Inquiry was formed to investigate the incident and, in part, they concluded:

"The Court considers the activities of the evening of 28th August 1968 to be within the scope of those traditionally accepted and that the incident which resulted in the deaths of two Apprentices and the injury of four others was an unfortunate and unseeable accident brought about largely by ignorance by the participants of the dangers involved. The action was not caused or facilitated by any deliberate offence by any member. The Court recommends that this tradition be retained, however consideration be given to channeling this youthful exuberance into more controlled activities".

As the years passed the 100 days before graduation became a burden as the staff knew when it would occur but never knew what would occur. But even so, the staff may have had some limited control. The senior class decided that Crab Night would continue but at a time of their choosing. The last Crab Night at Balcombe saw eggs and toilet paper spread for miles and some activities were plain vandalism when the statue of "Simpson and his Donkey" at the drive way to the Governors' Residence was daubed with paint. The first Crab Night at Bonegilla saw the Ronald McDonald figure, the large Golf ball sign from a local driving range and the Mack Truck distributors large Bulldog sign relocated to **Latchford Barracks**.

Although difficult for the school staff to control, the apprentices were always required to make good any damage they did and, on occasions, pay for the damage.

"The Crab", from the Apprentices Corner, Army Museum Bandiana, VIC

2 August 1969 – Freedom of the Town of Mornington

The AAS was granted Freedom of the Town of Mornington on 2 August 1969. On Saturday 23 August 1969, the Apprentice Battalion, comprising the 22nd, 23rd and 24th Intakes, assembled on Main St Mornington in the vicinity of the then Mornington Bush Nursing Hospital and marched through the town, conferring the Freedom.[70]

30 August 1969 – Army Apprentices School Governor-General's Banner[71]

The Governor-General's Banner was presented to the AAS by His Excellency the Right Honourable Sir Paul Hasluck G.C.M.G., K.StJ. during the 21st Birthday celebrations of the School on 30 August 1969.

The **obverse** of the Banner depicts the Standard of the Governor-General of Australia and is a symbol of loyalty to the throne.

The **reverse** depicts the insignia of the AAS.

6 December 1969 – last graduation parade on Citation Oval

The last graduation parade on Citation Oval was for the 22nd Intake on 6 December 1969.[72]

1970s

21 February 1970 – founding of the first Army Apprentices Association

Max Lockwood, 8th Intake Electrician and Jack Westernhagen, 3rd Intake Vehicle Mechanic founded the first Army Apprentices Association with the aims of: fostering and maintaining esprit-de-corps and comradeship, providing contact and social interest for members, and providing assistance at times of need for members and their families.[73]

June 1970 – departure of the Army School of Signals from Balcombe

During 1969 to June 1970, the Army School of Signals was progressively moved from Balcombe to Simpson Barracks, Watsonia, VIC.[74]

27 October 1971 – last Apprentice killed in Vietnam

The last Apprentice to be killed while on overseas operational service, in Vietnam, was SSGT John Hall, 11th Intake Clerk, serving with 12 Field Regiment, RAA.[75]

December 1971 – technical training responsibility of the Victorian Education Department

In December 1971, the Victorian Education Department assumed responsibility for technical training of Army Apprentices and trade training commenced under the control of the Principal appointed by the Education Department. MR RL Delarue was the first Principal in 1972.[76]

7 December 1971 – graduation of the last Apprentice Bricklayers

The last of 52 Apprentice Bricklayers graduated on 7 December 1971, ending with the 24th Intake. A 23rd Intake Bricklayer became the highest-ranking Apprentice to date, namely LTGEN Ken Gillespie AC DSC CSM.[77]

5 December 1972 – combined graduation of two intakes again[78]

The 1972 graduation was the first where the traditional training system of three years at the AAS then one year in a workshop (3 + 1) was replaced with a 2 years plus 2 years system (except for Radio Mechanics – later Electronics Tradesmen – which remained at 3 + 1).

As a result, the 25th Intake was joined by the 26th Intake as graduates 21 years after the first combined graduation parade was held for the 1st and 2nd Intakes on 15 December 1951. Many other intakes also graduated together, e.g. 18A (mid-year) Intake Musicians and 19th Intake Clerks on 11 June 1965, as well as the Radio Mechanics then Electronics Tradesmen who graduated with each later intake once the 2 + 2 system commenced.[7980]

5 December 1972 – graduation of the last Apprentice Blacksmiths

The last of 61 Apprentice Blacksmiths graduated on 5 December 1972, ending with the 25th Intake.[81]

2 August 1973 – Army Apprentices School right to Freedom of the Town of Mornington

"COPPED…But it's all in the best military tradition.

The long arm of the Mornington law – Police Sergeant Murray McDonald – was checking the right of the Army Apprentices School to march through the city with fixed bayonets and swords drawn.

It was the highlight of a ceremonial parade through the town to mark the school's 25th Anniversary."

Halt! [SPAASSM Collection Phase II Binder 35 Item 01 Image 00001]

2-28 January 1974 – 29th Intake Induction at Benalla

After an experiment with the 28A Intake Musicians in July 1973, the 29th Intake commenced initial training at Benalla Airfield Camp, 21 Cadet Battalion. The aim was to conduct this training before they came into contact with the earlier intakes.[82]

24 August – 6 September 1974 – Adventure Training at Canungra

In a first for the AAS, the 29th and 29A Classes completed a 2-week sub-unit course at the then Jungle Training Centre (JTC), Canungra. Adventurous and field training occurred regularly at Canungra after that.[83]

17 April 1975 – funeral of Lieutenant General Sir Sydney Fairbairn Rowell KBE CB

The AAS was represented at the Melbourne funeral of ex-CGS LTGEN Sir Sydney Fairbairn Rowell KBE CB by APP BSM Craig Jones and APP BQMS Leonard McKenna, both 28th Intake Electronics Tradesmen, and MAJ A Weaver, RA Inf, Staff Officer Training AAS. "*The funeral marked a milestone in the history of the AAS in that it was a final and fitting tribute given to a man whose wide and far vision was responsible for the formation of this School as far back as the immediate post-war years.*"[84]

LTGEN Rowell had been the Reviewing Officer at the first graduation parade on 15 December 1951, and was CGS during the dedication of the Marine Gates at Balcombe on 24 November 1954, shortly before his retirement on 15 December 1954.[85][86]

For his services at the War Office in London, Rowell was appointed a Companion of the Order of the Bath (CB) in the 1946 New Year Honours and, for his services as CGS, he was created a Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire (KBE) in the Queen's Birthday Honours in 1953.[87]

Sir Sydney had also been the Patron of the earlier version of the Army Apprentices Association.[88]

29 April, 26 May, 18 September and 22 October 1976 – senior officer visits and Melbourne Royal Show opening[89]

The AAS was often called on to provide Guards of Honour. The year of 1976 was no different. On 29 April, a Guard of Honour welcomed MAJGEN JW Norrie, GOC Training Command. During this visit, MAJGEN Norrie also presented Meritorious Service Medals to three AAS staff members, two of whom had been 8th Intake Apprentices: WO1 William Rollason, Fitter & Turner; and WO2 Noel Scott, Electrician.

A familiarisation tour of Army units on 26 May by Chief of Defence Force Staff (CDFS) GEN Francis George Hassett included AAS and the Army School of Music, where he inspected an Apprentice Guard of Honour. A similar visit by MAJGEN JS Whitelaw, Chief of Personnel also received a Guard of Honour.

Another event requiring a Guard of Honour was the Royal Melbourne Show, which was opened on 18 September by the Governor of Victoria, Sir Henry Winneke.

8 March 1977 – Queen's Jubilee Parade

Queen Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh visited Australia between 7 and 30 March 1977, as part of the Queen's Silver Jubilee, marking 25 years on the throne. On 8 March the Queen presided over a meeting of the Privy Council, met High Commissioners based in Canberra, opened Parliament in the afternoon, inspected the Jubilee Parade, which included an RAAF flypast, had dinner at Government House, and then returned to Parliament House for a reception in the evening.[90]

Witnesses to the Jubilee Parade in Canberra included the AAS RSM, WO1 Norman Herbert Goldspink MBE, who was the Jubilee Parade Sergeant Major, and two members from the Army School of Music. The Band Sergeant Major Gregory Carter, 31st Intake Apprentice Musician carried the AAS Governor-General's Banner; and RSM WO1 Lindsay Raymond Wilkins MBE trained the Combined Services Band of 100 musicians, as well as being the drum major for the Parade.

WO1 Wilkins had also been present at a parade before Her Majesty 25 years earlier as Drum Major of the Southern Command Band.[91]

1977 – Antique Engine Club

Many clubs operated over the years of the AAS. One such was the Antique Engine Club, first raised in 1977. "*The club was raised by a man whose love of old engines could only be described as unbelievable.*" That man was SGT Salt [Robert Salt, 21st Intake Vehicle Mechanic]. The Club's engines were mainly from Victoria with two from South Australia. In 1985, the Club joined forces with the Jeep Restoration Club due to low numbers.[92]

30 June 1978 – Bonegilla (Stage 1) Project Brief

The Bonegilla (Stage 1) Project Brief was prepared by the Director General of Accommodation and Works – Army. The Brief described the provision of new facilities at the Bonegilla Military base (3rd Military District) to "*provide residential, living, working, recreational and instructional facilities for the: Army Apprentices School, School of Military Survey and WRAAC School (Recruit Training) – TBA*".[93] **Note:** Ultimately, the WRAAC Officer Cadet School remained at George's Heights, Sydney, NSW until the WRAAC was disbanded in 1984.

1978 – Latchford Barracks Bonegilla

In 1978, much of the existing Bonegilla site was demolished and preparations commenced for the relocation of the AAS from Balcombe.[94]

June 1979 – early graduation of 33rd Musicians at the Peninsula School, Mount Eliza

In June 1979, an early graduation of seven of the 33rd Intake Apprentice Musicians was held in order to help overcome a shortage of Musicians in the Australian Army Band Corps (AABC) at the time. The event was held at the Peninsula School, Mount Eliza, VIC as part of an evening concert for official guests and the public. The remaining 33rd Intake Musicians graduated in December 1979.[95]

Early 1980s

20 June 1980 – graduation of 34th Intake Musicians at the Peninsula School, Mount Eliza

Another graduation concert was held at the Peninsula School, Mount Eliza for 34th Intake Musicians.[96]

13 August 1980 – Bonegilla Trade Wings to be clad in corrugated iron

As a cost saving measure, it was announced that the new Trade Wing buildings at Bonegilla were to be clad in corrugated iron rather than bricks. This was aimed at keeping the cost of the new School within the 1978 estimate of $29.5 million.[97]

1981 – Apprentices drum and fife band

For the first time, 21 Apprentice Musicians were trained as a drum and fife band to add colour and variety to the Beating Retreat ceremony at the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne. In addition, 10 Apprentices joined with the 3rd Military District (3 MD) Band for the ceremony.[98]

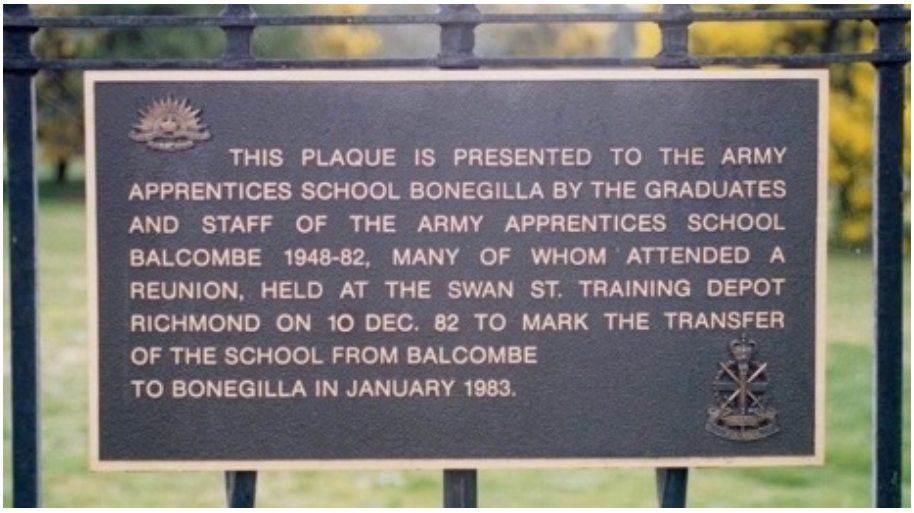
June 1982 – appointment of the first Army Apprentices School Commandant

LTCOL DR Lawrence AM, Royal Australian Armoured Corps (RAAC), CO AAS was promoted to COL and appointed COMDT of Headquarters Training Command units in Bonegilla.[99]

10 December 1982 – Balcombe Apprentices Reunion Richmond, Victoria

Over 700 people attended a reunion at the Headquarters 6 Construction Group Drill Hall in Swan St, Richmond, VIC under the patronage of the then only still serving 1st Intake Apprentice, MAJ Geoff Hawker. The "Top" (Metal Trades) Gates from Balcombe, manufactured in 1955, were restored and relocated to Bonegilla with funds raised during this reunion.

Four plaques were placed on the gates and their supporting pillars: a reunion plaque and a restoration plaque on the right- and left-hand gates, and two replica plaques of those on the Balcombe Marine Gates on the brick pillars. Remaining funds were allocated to a hymn board for the Chapel of St Peter.



Bonegilla gates plaque [SPAASSM Collection Phase I Image 02896)]

From December 1982 – Army Apprentices School Bonegilla

December 1982 to January 1983 – move of the Army Apprentices School to Bonegilla

In January 1983, the AAS completed the move from Balcombe to Latchford Barracks at Bonegilla. At the same time, the Army School of Music moved to Simpson Barracks, VIC.

The Balcombe Camp was closed and land control was assumed by the Mornington Shire.

1 February 1983 – redesignation of Apprentice Musicians to Adult Trainees

The 37th Class Musicians were redesignated Adult Trainees on 1 February 1983 and were the first participants in the Army Trainee Musician Scheme, which selected personnel between the ages of 17 and 26 to qualify as Musicians Grade 2 on an 18-month, self-paced course.[100]

25 September 1983 – official opening of the Army Apprentices School, Bonegilla

The $44 million Latchford Barracks complex at Bonegilla, including the new AAS, was officially opened at a parade to mark the event by The Honourable Gordon CD Scholes MP, Minister for Defence.

At that time, Latchford Barracks also housed the School of Military Survey, 6th Camp Hospital, 19 Dental Unit, and the Central Food Preparation Facility, Royal Australian Army Ordnance Corps (RAAOC).[101]

10 December 1983 – first graduation parade at Bonegilla

The first AAS graduation parade at Bonegilla was for the 37th Class Apprentice Tradesmen (less the Electronics Tradesmen) who had commenced their training at Balcombe.[102]

January 1984 – commencement of the first female Apprentices

The first six female Army Apprentices commenced training at AAS with the 39th Intake, five of whom commenced as Electronics Tradesmen and one as a Motor Mechanic.[103]

In total, 118 female Apprentices were enlisted, of whom 69 graduated in four trades: Electronics Tradesman, Motor Mechanic, Fitter & Turner, and Carpenter & Joiner.

21 November 1984 – dedication of the Chapel of St Peter, Bonegilla

The Chapel of St Peter was dedicated at Bonegilla, witnessed by the 37th Intake Electronics Tradesmen, and the 38th and 39th Intakes.[104]

Chapel of St Peter, Bonegilla [SPAASSM Collection Phase I Image 04365]

8 December 1984 – first full-term Bonegilla graduates

The 38th Intake (less the Electronics Tradesmen) were the first full-term Bonegilla graduates in December 1984.[105]

December 1984 – end of initial construction

The year 1984 also saw the finish of initial construction of the new Bonegilla Camp, and the departure of the last of the contractors.[106]

20-27 April 1985 – Project Walhalla 39th Intake Carpenters & Joiners

The Project began as a response to a request from the Walhalla Mechanics Institute Committee to assist in the rebuilding of the Mechanics Institute which had burned down for the second time in 1945. The first time was by a major fire in 1888. Nineteen 39th Class Carpenters & Joiners participated.[107]

December 1985 – departure of Lieutenant Colonel Jim Hislop from Army Apprentices School

At the end of 1985, Chief Instructor (CI)/Deputy Commandant LTCOL James Glen (Jim) Hislop saw out his final year at AAS. His tenure at the School commenced at Balcombe in 1982 but, of course, he had been there before, albeit as a 9th Intake Apprentice Fitter & Turner.[108]

2 August 1986 – Freedom of the City of Albury

The AAS was granted Freedom of the City of Albury on 2 August 1986. Distinguished guests were: BRIG B Wade, Commander of 3 MD, His Worship the Mayor of Albury, and Alderman JL Roach and the Mayoress.[109]

1987 – The Queen's Medal – Sergeant LW Nayda

From 1924 until replaced by The Champion Shot's Medal in 1988, The King's or Queen's Medal for the Army's best shot has been awarded. The Medal was conducted annually over a three-day period and the winner for 1987 was SGT Lance Nayda, a Platoon Commander from B Company, AAS.[110]

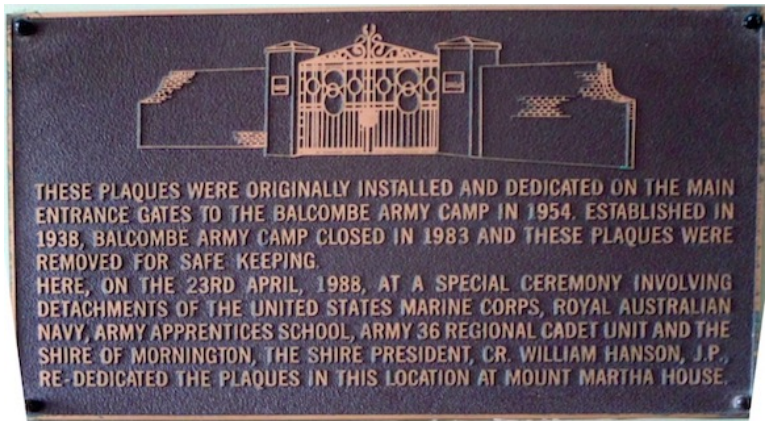
17 December 1987 – graduation of the first female Electronics Tradesmen

The first three female 40th Intake Electronics Tradesmen graduated from Bonegilla. This also marked the end of the Senior Apprentice Company (SAC) system, which had been instigated after the apprenticeship scheme changed to 2 years plus 2 years in 1972 (for all but Electronics Tradesmen, which had remained at 3 + 1).[111]

23 April 1988 – re-dedication of the original Marine Gates plaques[112]

The original Balcombe Marine Gates plaques were removed to Mount Martha House when the Camp closed in 1983. The plaques were re-dedicated at a special ceremony involving detachments of the USMC, RAN, AAS, Army 36 Regional Cadet Unit, and the Shire of Mornington. **Note:** Mount Martha House Historical Collection (MMHHC) aims to collect, preserve and protect the people, history and heritage of Mount Martha House and community and make it available to everyone.

Original Balcombe Marine Gate plaques [photo source unknown]



Balcombe Marine Gate plaques dedication [photo source unknown]

26 November 1988 – reopening of the Walhalla Mechanics Institute

Over the past four years, Building Trades Wing AAS was involved in rebuilding the Walhalla Mechanics Institute, which had burned down on two occasions. On 26 November 1988, the 42nd Class represented the School at the reopening, exactly 100 years after it was first burned down.[113]

August 1988 to 1989 – restoration of the Armstrong 12-pounder Gun[114]

In August 1988, a project to restore the Armstrong 12 Pounder Rifled Breech-Loading Gun that was located near Deniliquin, NSW commenced at the AAS. At the unveiling of the restored gun in late

1989, COL CJ Brewer, COMDT AAS said: "*The major part of the task was undertaken by the staff and apprentices of Metal Trades Wing led by SGTs Rayment and Arendt and Mr Neil Brown. Building Trades Wing provided the carriage work. The Deniliquin RSL the wheels, 4 Base Workshop, ancillary support. Numerous other units and individuals provided an incredibly wide range of assistance – down to Dental Technicians of 16 Dental Unit cleaning the sight units.*"

Other participants in the restoration activity were: Staff members SGT SJ Ninness, SGT R Bohn, SGT R Murphy, MR P Stachowicz, SGT AD Brunton, SGT B Francis, WO2 J Box, WO2 A Weight, and MR R Holt; 43rd Class Fitters & Turners; and 4 Base Workshop Battalion facilities.

The gun is displayed, alongside its box carriage and projectiles, in a custom-made, climate-controlled structure at the Deniliquin RSL.

December 1990

15 December 1990 – last graduation as the Army Apprentices School

The 44th Intake and 43rd Intake Electronics Tradesmen were the last to graduate from the AAS on 15 December 1990.[115]

From 1991 – Army College of Technical and Further Education

1 January 1991 – renaming Army Apprentices School to Army College of Technical and Further Education

The AAS was renamed the Army College of Technical and Further Education (TAFE) (ACOT). The COMDT at the time was COL SB Bramah, ex-RA Inf, the CO/CI was LTCOL L Shearwin, RAAC, and the RSM was WO1 BT Boughton OAM, RA Inf.[116][117]

14 December 1991 – first graduation at the Army College of Technical and Further Education

The first graduation under the new title of ACOT was held on 14 December 1991 for the 45th Intake, including Electronics Tradesmen. For the first time, Adult Trainees also graduated with the Apprentices.[118]

5 September 1992 – Beating Retreat, Deniliquin, New South Wales

The ACOT and Army Band Melbourne were invited to present a Beating Retreat Parade at the Deniliquin High School as part of the city's 150-year heritage celebrations. Poor weather threatened the preparations but, by the time for the parade, clear skies prevailed.

After the parade, the BSM Alan Luke Bartley, 46th Intake Carpenter & Joiner received a presentation of a red gum thermometer.[119]

9 March 1993 – opening of the Motor Vehicle Trade Wing Extension

The new extension to the Motor Vehicle Wing for the Heavy Road Transport syllabus was officially opened by MAJGEN JC Hartley AO, Director Defence Intelligence Organisation (DIO), and ex-COMDT of the AAS.[120]

17 April 1993 – Freedom of the Town of Corowa, Victoria

ACOT was granted Freedom of the Town of Corowa, VIC.[121]

21 May 1993 – 50th Anniversary of presentation of awards on Citation Oval

On 21 May 1943, three USMC Veterans of the Guadalcanal Campaign in WWII received the Congressional Medal of Honour on Citation Oval at Balcombe.

On 21 May 1993, a 50th Anniversary commemoration was held involving representatives of the USMC, the 1st Marine Division and the Shire of Mornington.[122]

16 June 1993 – Freedom of the Municipality of Deniliquin, New South Wales

ACOT was granted Freedom of the Municipality of Deniliquin (Edward River Council) on 16 June 1993.[123]

On 13 November 1993, the College exercised its right to Freedom of the Municipality of Deniliquin in a ceremony at the Deniliquin High School grounds before marching through the town.

ACOT members march past the Deniliquin Cenotaph, 13 November 1993.
[SPAASSM Collection Phase I Image 03610]

From December 1994 – the end of the Scheme

16 December 1994 – announcement of the end of the Army Apprentice Scheme

Army Office Staff Instruction 30/94, signed by MAJGEN JP Stevens, Assistant CGS – Personnel, determined that Army's requirement to attract suitable candidates to undertake training as Apprentices was no longer viable, as a trend not restricted to Army alone, but a general change in society and the other services at that time. To address this shortfall, and to attract candidates from a larger demographic, merging the Army Apprentice Scheme with the Adult Trade Scheme and adopting a single model for the conduct of technical training was to be introduced, known as the Army Technician Scheme.[124]

16 January 1995 – last Apprentice Intake

On 16 January 1995, the last 112 Apprentice enlistees [later recognised as the 50th Intake] and other trainees occupied the A Company Lines, ACOT, Latchford Barracks, Bonegilla to commence basic military training prior to commencing their trade training.[125]

8 April 1995 – cessation of the Army Apprentice Scheme

The Army Apprentice Scheme was formally replaced by the Army Technician Scheme. The final Apprentice graduation parade was held at Bonegilla on 8 April 1995, reviewed by MAJGEN SN Gower AM, GOC Training Command who, in his address, paid tribute to the more than 6000 Apprentices who had graduated from the Scheme. "*Apprentices from both the School at Balcombe and Bonegilla had achieved and maintained a very high standard in both military and technical skills*".[126]

From December 1995 – Army Logistic Training Centre

1 December 1995 – formation of the Army Logistic Training Centre

ACOT was included in the formation of the Army Logistic Training Centre (ALTC) when the nine logistic, health and personnel services schools, and the ACOT were amalgamated. A parade was held to mark the event with the 50th Intake of Apprentices participating.[127] The COMDT at that time was COL CM Sharp CSC, Ex-RAEME, the CO/CI was LTCOL AM Hodgkinson, RAA, and the RSM was WO1 BJ Hatfield, RAAC.[128]

December 1995 – retirement of the Director Army College of Technical and Further Education

MR Stan Kokkin, Principal and then Director ACOT retired after 11 years at the College.[129]

1 July 1996

By the mid-1990s, the operational assets of RA Svy were considered too small to exist as a separate corps. On 1 July 1996, the Corps was disbanded[130] and the School of Survey was integrated into the School of Military Engineering (SME) as the Geomatic Engineering Wing, Holsworthy, NSW.[131]

29 November 1996 – laying up of the Banner

After a parade to celebrate the first birthday of ALTC, the AAS Governor-General's Banner was laid up in the Chapel of St Peter, Bonegilla, VIC on 29 November 1996.[132]

Governor-General's Banner in the Chapel of St Peter [photo source unknown]

Post-1996 – events after the end of the Scheme

13 February 1997 – recommendation by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for development of facilities for ALTC[133]

On 19 September 1996, the House of Representatives recommended that proposed works to develop facilities for ALTC and the Bandiana Logistics Group (BLG) be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works. The conclusions from the considerations and report relating to the proposal included:

"*1. There is a need to:*

- *upgrade several administrative facilities for the BLG;*
- *rationalize training facilities to support the creation of the ALTC;*
- *rationalise messing in North Bandiana; and*
- *further upgrade Engineering Services.*"

The Committee recommended the development of facilities for ALTC and BLG "*at an estimated out-turn cost of $16.081 million.*"

1998 – 50th Anniversary parade and reunion[134]

The 50th Anniversary reunion of the commencement of the AAS was held in Albury Wodonga. The parade held at Bonegilla recognised the [then] 49 intakes of the AAS with more than 6000 graduates. The organising committee for the reunion included the following:

From Sydney	From Albury Wodonga
Mal Campbell, 22nd Intake Electrical Fitter	MAJ John Lord, 16th Intake Electrical Fitter
Sid Cheeseman, 4th Intake Vehicle Mechanic	MAJ Doug Gammon, 16th Intake Fitter & Turner
Bob Clark, 22nd Intake Vehicle Mechanic	Charlie Myhill, 9th Intake Fitter & Turner
Keith Lowe, 22nd Intake Fitter & Turner	Brian Kelly, 10th Intake Musician
Clive Connor, 9th Intake Fitter & Turner	John Wild, 17th Intake Vehicle Mechanic
Dick Kearnan, 28th Intake Fitter Maintenance	Jim Hislop, 9th Intake Fitter & Turner

August 1999 – relocation of the last Balcombe Camp hut

As late as 1999, the last remaining hut from Balcombe was relocated. This left only a few of the original camp buildings remaining, the largest of which had been the Signals Corps Officers Mess, constructed in 1955/56.[135]

In addition, the Memorial Gates, Parade Ground and Mace Oval were being considered by the Mornington Peninsular Shire Council for heritage protection.

Ex-Signals Corps Officers Mess, Balcombe [SPAASSM Collection Phase I Image 002892]

4 September 2000 – Memorial Gates, Parade Ground and Mace Oval

The Mornington Peninsula Shire Council recommended that:
"*Council acknowledges the historical and heritage importance of the Balcombe Memorial Gates, carpark (Parade Ground) and adjoining playing field (Mace Oval) at the entrance to the former Balcombe Army Camp at Mount Martha and the need for these … to be retained at their current site in perpetuity.*"[136]

17 February 2001 – Army Apprentices School memorial plaques

A dedication service was held to unveil two plaques to commemorate the history of the Balcombe Army Camp. Over 400 people attended, including the Mornington Peninsular Shire Mayor, CR Judith Couacaud Graley; Shire officers; MR Peter Reith AM, Minister for Defence; representatives of the former USMC Association and AAS; senior representatives from the Army; and a military band.[137]

AAS and Mornington Peninsular Shire plaques

The AAS plaque was mounted on a stone near the entrance to Mace Oval (this plaque was later damaged and was removed in 2013 prior to the Balcombe Barracks Commemoration).[138] The Mornington Peninsular Shire plaque was mounted on a stone outside the Memorial Gates.[139]

June 2002 – promotion of Brigadier Kenneth James Gillespie AM DSC CSM to Major General

Promoted to MAJGEN in June 2002 and appointed Head of Strategic Operations, Ken Gillespie, 23rd Intake Bricklayer was to become the AAAA's inaugural Patron when it was formed in 2006. Prior to that, in 2004, MAJGEN Gillespie AO DSC CSM was appointed Land Commander Army.

2003 – Royal Australian Engineers Transportation Service plaque, Australian War Memorial

Frank Poole, 10th Intake Architectural Draughtsman attended a ceremony to place a plaque commemorating the services of the RAE Transportation Service at the AWM, providing the idea for an Apprentices plaque at the AWM.[140]

October 2004 – agreement by the 10th Intake to research an Army Apprentices School plaque[141]

At a class reunion, the 10th Intake was canvassed on the idea of installing an AAS plaque at the AWM, in remembrance of the service that graduates gave to the Army, and remembering those who died or were injured in the line of duty.

The AWM response was that the request had to be submitted by a legal entity, and so commenced the process for a legal body to be formed to facilitate the request.

October 2005 – seeking expressions of interest on the forming of an Apprentices Association

The intent was to seek assurance that there was sufficient interest from the Apprentice network to ensure that time and effort wasn't being wasted. A total of 150 expressions of interest were received in six days, a clear indication of the degree of interest.[142]

From 2006 – the Australian Army Apprentices Association

24 January 2006 – first Australian Army Apprentices Association Advisory Group

Frank Poole, 10th Intake Architectural Draughtsman emailed the list of people selected as the Advisory Group for the AAAA.[143]

12 April 2006 – incorporation of the Australian Army Apprentices Association

The AAAA was incorporated in the ACT, Association Number A04404.[144]

22 July 2006 – Australian Army Apprentices Association inaugural meeting[145]

The inaugural meeting was held to officially form the AAAA. Inaugural Committee Members were:

President	Frank Poole, 10th Intake Architectural Draughtsman
Vice-President	Jack Westernhagen, 3rd Intake Vehicle Mechanic
Secretary	Stephen Hladio, 27th Intake Musician
Treasurer	Ray Wilson, 15th Intake Plumber
Membership Secretary	Les Sutton, 32nd Intake Electronics Tradesman
Public Officer	Greg Mulcahy, 10th Intake Electrician
Promotions & PR Officer	Vacant
Welfare Officer	Russell Evans, 23rd Intake Musician
Heritage Officer	Chris Moon, 32nd Intake Carpenter & Joiner
Social Officer	Bill Mertin, 22nd Intake Vehicle Mechanic
Webmaster	Glenn Jones, 28th Intake Carpenter & Joiner
Committee Members	Andrew Bishop, 46th Intake Fitter & Turner
	Jeff Heron, 21st Intake Radio Mechanic
	Ian Morris, 12th Intake Radio Mechanic
	Tim Wilde, 40th Intake Plumber & Gasfitter

22 July 2006 – inaugural Patron, Lieutenant General Ken Gillespie AO DSC CSM[146]

Kenneth James Gillespie, 23rd Intake Apprentice Bricklayer was appointed Patron of the AAAA at its inaugural meeting on 22 July 2006 and represented the Association until October 2010. In that period, he served as Vice Chief of the Defence Force (VCDF) from 2005 to 2008 and then as CA from 2008 to 2011.

30 August 2006 – Vale Don Dalton

Don Dalton, the inaugural Trustee of the AAAA, passed away, aged 76. Don served at the AAS from 1957 to about 1960 as a CSM, and then from 1970-1972 as the RSM.[147]

November 2006 – rejection by the Australian War Memorial of a plaque request

An apologetic letter was received from the Director of the AWM explaining that the AWM had not realised at the initial meeting that their charter only allowed them to recognise "units" and the AAS was not classified as a "unit". The AWM offered assistance with any wreath-laying service the Association may like to conduct, but were not permitted by their charter to consider the request for a plaque.[148]

Early 2007 – commencement of Project SPAASSM[149]

SPAASSM Collection material – source SPAASSM Project

In late 2006, Peter Thornton, 35th Intake ET discovered a large quantity of photographic material and documents relating to the AAS at the Army Museum, Bandiana, VIC. Items included photographs, slides, negatives, video tapes, movie films, journals, graduation booklets, standing orders, handbooks and histories. The overall quality of the material was in good condition but the storage location (dexion shelving) was less than ideal.

The material is owned by the Army History Unit through the Army Museum, Bandiana. The items were rescued by LTCOL Jim Hislop (Retd) (9th Intake Fitter & Turner) from almost certain destruction at the closing of the AAS, and given to the Museum.

Peter Thornton decided that, in order to preserve the material, it needed to be surveyed, digitised, catalogued and put into archival standard storage. To achieve this, Project SPAASSM, (**S**pecial **P**roject for **A**rmy **A**pprentice **S**chool **S**pecial **M**aterial) was established by the AAAA with the generous support of the Patron, LTGEN Ken Gillespie AC DSC CSM, 23rd Intake Bricklayer.

The aims and scope of the Project were to:
* survey all AAS written and photographic material
* once surveyed, decide what material is worthy of preserving, cataloguing and scanning
* catalogue material into a format acceptable for longer term management
* further develop the AAAA Website to enable interactive access – this is yet to be completed.

27 August 2007 – Army Apprentices Memorial project

The first AGM of the AAAA endorsed the concept of developing an Army Apprentices Memorial in lieu of a plaque at the AWM.[150]

4 July 2008 – Lieutenant General Kenneth James Gillespie AO DSC CSM, Chief of Army

LTGEN Ken Gillespie AO DSM CSM, 23rd Bricklayer was appointed CA. He was VCDF and inaugural Patron of the AAAA when it was raised on 22 July 2006.[151]

LTGEN Gillespie was promoted to Companion of the Order of Australia (AC) in the Australia Day 2011 Honours List for eminent service to the Australian Defence Force (ADF) as VCDF/Chief of Joint Operations and CA.

24-26 October 2008 – 60th Anniversary of the commencement of the Army Apprentices School

The 60th Anniversary of the commencement of the AAS and the first AAAA national reunion were held in Albury Wodonga. The reunion included a meet & greet function, a service to dedicate the newly-constructed Australian Army Apprentices Memorial, and a reunion dinner.[152]

26 October 2008 – Australian Army Apprentices Memorial

The Australian Army Apprentices Memorial was dedicated at the Memorial Park, Gaza Ridge Barracks, South Bandiana, VIC to all Apprentices who supported the Australian Army in war and peace and, in particular, to those killed in action or who lost their lives while on overseas service.

The Memorial allows all Apprentices and their families to permanently record, by means of inscribed pavers or plaques, their place as an Army Apprentice.[153]

The Memorial design incorporates icons of Apprenticeship days, i.e.: the walls and support columns represent the Apprentice-built US 1st Marine Division Memorial walls at Balcombe, each wall representing Balcombe and Bonegilla; plaques for departed Apprentices; the gates which are copies of the original “Top Gates” relocated from Balcombe to Latchford Barracks; the paved area represent the Schools’ parade grounds; the engraved pavers represent the thousands of Apprentices who spent hours on these parade grounds; the flagpole supporting the Australian or the Apprentices School flags, reminding us of our pride, loyalty and honour to our country and our mates; the central pit with the AAS badge sculpture and dedication plaque represents a weapons pit to remind us that we were all bloody good soldiers; the AAS badge signifies the excellent education, trade and military training received by Army Apprentices; and the garden with long-lasting evergreen conifers reminds us of the green of the jungle in which so many Apprentices found themselves serving.

Army Apprentices Memorial Bandiana, VIC

24 October 2009 – new Australian Army Apprentices Association Webmaster

At the October 2009 AGM, Ian Fred Morris, 12th Intake Radio Mechanic was ratified as the replacement for Rodney Gordon Eagleton, 24th Intake Fitter & Turner who was the inaugural Webmaster for the Association.[154]

3 May/7 August 2010 – completion of Project SPAASSM

A function was held at the AWM on 3 May 2010 to mark the end of the cataloguing phase of the project. This was to thank the AWM staff, Project SPAASSM Team members and the Army Museum for their support. The function was well attended and included VIP guests LTGEN Ken Gillespie AC DSC CSM, AAAA Patron and MAJGEN SN Gower AO. All project SPAASSM material was handed over to the Army Museum Bandiana on 7 August 2010.[155]

August 2010 – first edition of The Apprentice About

The first edition of *The Apprentice About* (TAA), the Newsletter for the AAAA Inc. was published.[156]

29 October 2011 – Patron, Brigadier David Luhrs CSC

David Michael Luhrs, 35th Intake Apprentice Carpenter & Joiner was appointed as AAAA Patron. He represented the Association until October 2014, while serving as COMDT RMC, Duntroon.[157]

27-30 October 2011 – Apprentices Together in Canberra

The Apprentices Together reunion was held in Canberra over the weekend of 27-30 October 2011. The reunion included a registration and meet & greet function, AWM Annex tour at Mitchell, a wreath-laying ceremony at the AWM, an AGM (a ladies gathering was held while the AGM proceeded), a church parade, and a reunion dinner.[158]

26 May 2012 – Apprentice gathering in Perth

An ex-Apprentice afternoon gathering was conducted in the SAS Association "House" at Campbell Barracks Swanbourne. With no starting contact list, local members Brian Cooper, 9th Intake Vehicle Mechanic and Norm Wells, 14th Intake Vehicle Mechanic beat the drum and spread the word for the

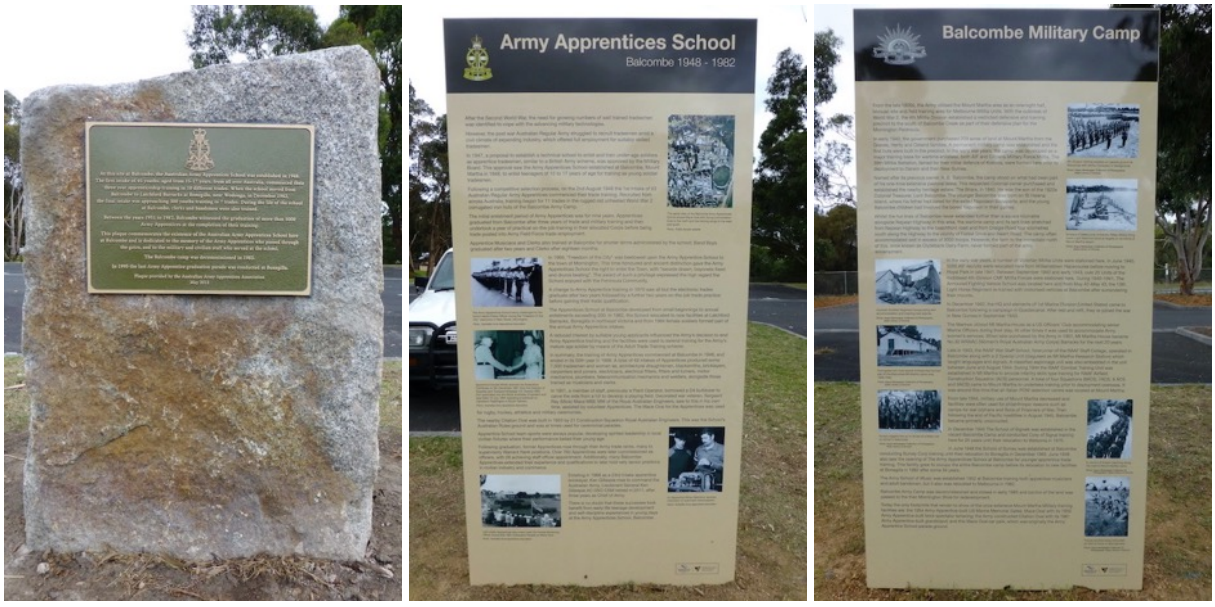
planned family day which resulted in an attendance of over 75 people, of whom 43 registered as past Army Apprentices ranging from the 3rd to the 48th Intakes.[159]

26 November 2012 – Defence Abuse Response Taskforce

The [Defence Abuse Response Taskforce (DART)] *Taskforce was established on 26 November 2012 to assist complainants who had suffered sexual abuse, physical abuse, sexual harassment and workplace harassment and bullying in Defence prior to 11 April 2011. Ministers have recently extended the operation of the Taskforce from 1 April to 30 June 2016.*[160]

3-5 May 2013 – Balcombe Barracks Commemoration

On the 71st Anniversary of the start of the Battle of the Coral Sea in WWII, on what was the AAS Parade Ground, the refurbished Memorial Gates, Parade Ground and Mace Oval, and new plaques and story boards telling the history of the major units that were the 20th century tenants of Balcombe Barracks, were unveiled and re-dedicated. The damaged AAS plaque that had been unveiled near the entrance to the oval in 2001 was replaced by these plaques and story boards. A dinner was held on the Saturday night with 470 people attending and, on the Sunday, a march through Mornington was followed by a memorial service at the Mornington Memorial Park.[161]



Plaques and story boards – Balcombe Parade Ground

19 June 2013 – request for public access to the Army Apprentices School Governor-General's Banner

In June 2013, the AAAA wrote to the CA, LTGEN DL Morrison AO requesting that consideration be given towards relocating the AAS Governor-General's Banner from the Chapel of St Peter, Bonegilla, VIC. The argument was that the lack of public access to the Chapel at Latchford Barracks due to security reasons was not satisfactory when considering the heritage aspect of the Banner to former Army Apprentices.[162]

6 August 2013 – response to request for access to the Army Apprentices School Governor-General's Banner

CA, LTGEN DL Morrison AO responded to the AAAA's letter of 19 June 2013 advising that the decision had been taken for the Banner to remain in St Peter's Chapel at Latchford Barracks. The argument was that its current location was more appropriate, as it allowed the Army School of Electrical and Mechanical Engineering (ASEME) to educate and train current serving soldiers on RAEME customs and traditions, while maintaining the AAS's proud heritage and lineage. He continued that public access to Latchford Barracks was available on provision of appropriate photographic identification in the same manner as access to Bandiana was currently provided.[163]

18 December 2013 – Vale Jack Leonard Westernhagen

Jack Westernhagen, 3rd Intake Vehicle Mechanic, passed away. He was founding Vice-President of the current version of the AAAA in 2006.[164]

26 February 2014 – Vale Frederick William Millar[165]

The Honorary Trustee of the AAAA for six years from 2008 to 2014, and known as "the first Army Apprentice" who enlisted on 10 July 1939, aged 16, LTCOL Fred Millar passed away. He served at Milne Bay during WWII before returning to Tasmania Command Workshop in Hobart.

Fred Millar was commissioned in 1953 and served in Malaya between 1960 and 1962, where he invented the "Millar Bridge", a method of bridging obstacles with vehicles using steel wire ropes. After two years as OC Armament Wing RAEME Training Centre, Bandiana, VIC, he served as OC A Company and SI of the Vehicle Wing at AAS from 1964. He retired as a LTCOL in 1969.

In civilian life, Fred held senior positions as a stockbroker and merchant bank manager, and state service manager for Mazda Victoria and Tasmania, before starting a number of his own companies, including a water technology company specialising in water purification for third world countries.

2 April 2014 – appointment of a new Trustee

The President AAAA reported, "*I am pleased to confirm that LTCOL Jim Hislop has agreed to be our Trustee and requires the usual fee expected by Apprentices ...*".[166]

Regimental No 58606, James Glen Hislop OAM, 9th Intake Fitter & Turner, enlisted in 1954 and graduated in 1956. In The Queen's Birthday 2020 Honours List, on 7 June 2020, Jim Hislop was awarded the OAM "*For service to veterans and their families.*" The biographical notes for Jim's award include his roles in ex-service welfare, Legacy, AAAA, and Australian Army, retiring at the rank of LTCOL in 1987. He was CO/CI of the AAS at that time.[167]

October 2014 – Patron, Major General Andrew Mathewson AM

BRIG Andrew John Mathewson, 35th Intake Apprentice Fitter & Turner was appointed Patron of the AAAA.[168] He represented the Association until October 2017. In that time, Andrew served as Project Director, Multi-Role Helicopter, as Head of Corps RAEME, and was promoted to MAJGEN in September 2015 in the role of Director General, Army Aviation Systems.[169]

10 March 2015 – update of the Australian Army Apprentices Association Website

After much effort, a new version of the AAAA Website went live at about 1100 hrs 10 March 2015.[170]

16 March 2015 – Vale Arthur John McWhinney

Arthur John (Jock) McWhinney, 10th Intake Blacksmith passed away. Jock was one of three Apprentices who manufactured the Metal Trades ("Top") Gates which were installed in 1955 towards the southern end of Balcombe Camp. Jock also manufactured the bench at the Army Apprentices Memorial at Bandiana, VIC.

25 March 2015 – Vale Sidney Harold Cheeseman AM JP

Sid Cheeseman, 4th Intake Vehicle Mechanic passed away. As an author and lover of military history, Sid was a prolific writer, writing the Army Apprentice history, '*From Boy to Soldier – A View of the Army Apprentice Scheme 1948 to 1998'*.[171]

23-25 October 2015 – 20th Anniversary of the closure of the Army Apprentice Scheme

A reunion to commemorate the 20th Anniversary of the closure of the Army Apprentice Scheme was held in Albury Wodonga. Reunion events included: a meet & greet function, AGM, a march through Albury, a visit to Latchford Barracks, a reunion dinner, and a church service followed by lunch.[172]

28 April 2016 – Vale Malcolm McDonald Campbell

Mal Campbell, 22nd Electrical Fitter and ASM of C Company in 1969, passed away on 28 April 2016. Mal was one of the main organisers of the 50th Anniversary parade and reunion of the commencement of the AAS, which was held in Albury Wodonga.[173]

11 October 2016 – Vale Mick Mace MM BEM

WO2 Raymond Charles (Mick) Mace MM BEM (10 June 1922 to 11 October 2016), an instructor at AAS, passed away at the Mornington Rehab facility – aged 94. He was instrumental in the construction of Mace Oval at Balcombe. "*Sergeant Ray (Mick) Mace BEM (M), MM, an instructor at the Balcombe Army Apprentices School, borrowed a D4 bulldozer and literally demolished a hill in order to construct an oval for the apprentices. He carried out this work in his own time, after normal hours.*"[174]

August 2017 – Army School of Electrical and Mechanical Engineering adoption of the Army Apprentices School badge[175]

When AAS was rolled into the ALTC in 1995, it became ASEME. ALTC adopted the AAS emblem as an element of its unit emblem in the same year.

In August 2017, ALTC changed its emblem to better represent its functions and structure, freeing up the use of the design components of the old AAS emblem for ASEME's use.

The emblem is worn on the unit shoulder patch of ASEME staff and On-the-Job Trainees but is not worn as a badge on any forms of dress.

October 2017 – Patron, Major General Andrew Freeman AM

Andrew William Fraser Freeman, 40th Intake Apprentice Electrical Fitter was appointed as AAAA Patron.[176] At that time he was serving as Commander 17 Combat Service Support Brigade. He was promoted to MAJGEN and was appointed Head of Defence Staff – Washington in January 2020.[177]

February 2018 – Australian Army Apprentices Association Member No 1000

Kevin Dale (Dale) McKeough, 24th Fitter & Turner became Member No 1000 of the AAAA, when there were 739 current members: 333 Ordinary, 393 Retired and 4 Life Members, and 9 Associates.[178]

10 April 2018 – Vale Frank Stewart Poole[179]

Frank Poole, 10th Intake Architectural Draughtsman, passed away.

At Frank's eulogy, Harry Hoger, President AAAA stated: "*Since 2006, Frank's contribution can be followed through our committee meeting minutes, AGM minutes and reports. He was the first President of our Association from 2006-2011. Since then, he had been the Chair of our Memorial Sub-committee to the present time. For his contribution to our Association, he was elevated to Life Member in 2011.*

Next week we are conducting our National All Intakes Reunion here in Canberra, for which the planning started 18 months ago. Frank was heavily involved in this process and was all teed up ready for our Anzac Day March participation until his illness."

24-26 April 2018 – 70th Anniversary of the commencement of the Army Apprentices School[180]

The 70th Anniversary of the commencement of the AAS and a national reunion were held in Canberra. About 900 Apprentices led the Anzac Day march at the AWM. This was said to be the largest contingent ever to march at the AWM.

The program for the event included: a registration and meet & greet function at the National Convention Centre Canberra (NCCC); the Anzac Day Dawn Service and Gunfire Breakfast, the

National Anzac Day March and Service, and the Last Post Ceremony at the AWM; and a Reunion Dinner at the NCCC for about 1100 officials, Apprentices, and their partners and guests.

15 June 2018 – Mace Oval commemoration

Around 20 Apprentices, some Vietnam Veterans, members from the RAE Association, representatives from the 22nd Engineer Regiment, and staff and students from Balcombe Grammar School gathered with the three daughters of WO2 Mick Mace to witness the unveiling of a plaque commemorating Mick's work by the creation of what is called "Mace Oval".[181]

Mace Oval plaque

From 2019 – recent events

September 2019 – new host for the Australian Army Apprentices Association Website

In mid-September 2019, the Association Website was transitioned to a new hosting service, significantly improving the Website's response time. This was followed by a gradual redevelopment of the Website, leading to an improved interface, members-only sections, automated membership functions, and a merchandise shop.

19 October 2019 – recognition of the 50th Intake of Apprentices

At the 2019 Annual General Meeting in Canberra, the 50th Intake of 112 Apprentices who enlisted on 16 January 1995 was recognised, and they were to be afforded the same rights and privileges of Ordinary Membership of the AAAA.[182]

October 2019 – establishment of Master Artificers[183]

In the 2020 edition of the RAEME Craftsman magazine, the Head of Corps (HOC) announced the establishment of Master Artificers for each of the RAEME trades, initially selected and announced at the Army Maintenance Effects Conference in October 2019. Their role is to assist the HOC ensuring that RAEME trades are appropriately represented, and that the Corps remains modern and relevant.

The inaugural Master Artificers included four Apprentices, i.e.:
ECN 146 – Fitter Armament WO1 Michael Waters, 42nd Fitter & Turner
ECN 412 – Technician Avionics WO1 Tony Jenner 50th Electronics Tradesman

ECN 418 – Technician Electrical WO1 Wayne Davis 50th Electrical Fitter
ECN 421 – Technician Electrical Systems CAPT Roger Smith 38th Electronics Tradesman.

7 November 2019 – the Mick Mace Club, School of Military Engineering

Mick Mace MM BEM was honoured during a ceremony at the SME, at which the Golf Club was renamed to the Mick Mace Club. Mick's daughter Anne was present at the event. Also announced was the creation of an award titled the "*Warrant Officer Class 2 R.C. Mick Mace MM, BEM Excellence in Engineering Award*", which is to be presented annually by the SME to the "Most Outstanding Junior Non-Commissioned Officer (Australian Regular Army)".[184]

January 2020 – Australian Army Apprentices Association Website redevelopment "go-live"

After the Website was operated since 2006 using Association resources as Webmasters, a new Web services provider was engaged in mid-September 2019, to take advantage of the new hosting service. This resulted in a new, more consistent site, including the long-awaited eCommerce section allowing members to subscribe to the Association, to renew their memberships, and to shop electronically for merchandise items.[185]

23-24 October 2020 – cancellation of the 25th Anniversary of the closure of the Army Apprentice Scheme, Maroochydore, Queensland

As a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the AAAA Committee was left with no alternative than to cancel the planned 2020 Maroochydore reunion. The venue pre COVID-19 had a function capacity of 600, but the best they could legally accommodate on the scheduled date was only 170 – less than the number of confirmed registrations at the time.[186]

1 December 2020 – WD Prenter Building, South Bandiana

During the RAEME 78th Birthday celebrations at Bandiana, VIC, the Battle Management System – Command & Control (BMS-C2) Maintenance Training Facility building at ASEME was named in honour of Apprentice William Douglas (Bill) Prenter, 3rd Intake Telecom Mechanic who passed away on 7 November 1997. In attendance were a number of Army Apprentices.[187]

Apprentices at the WD Prenter Building [source Paul Bond, 22nd Electrical Fitter]: L to R: Jim Hislop OAM, 9th Fitter & Turner, AAAA Trustee; Dave Martin, 19th Electrical Fitter; Brian Jones, 19th Radio Mechanic; Wally Rotow, 17th Radio Mechanic; Paul Bond, 22nd Electrical Fitter; WO1 Wayne Davis, 50th Electrical Fitter, AAAA Committee Member; and Herb Ellerbock, 18th Radio Mechanic

17 October 2021 – Vale Ross Frederick Bland, 5th Intake Fitter & Turner

Ross Bland passed away on 17 October 2021. He was the first Apprentice [WO1] RSM in 1953 when the Apprentice strength was approximately 250. He received the Governor-General's Gold Medal, awarded to the most outstanding Apprentice of the Graduating Class considering trade and educational subjects, regimental training and ability and qualities of leadership.

9 January 2022 – the Chic Henry Summernats Grandstand[188]

"Summernats" is an annual car festival held every year in Canberra, Australia since 1987, except that the COVID-19 pandemic caused its cancellation in 2021.

The event's founder and promoter was 19th Intake Apprentice Blacksmith Anthony Robert (Chic) Henry. He sold the event in 2009. Chic received the honour, at Summernats #34 in January 2022, of having the Burnout Masters Grandstand named after him, to recognise not only that he was the founder, but his contribution to the high-performance industry in Australia. Chic Henry passed away only three months later on 14 April 2022.

[Image used with permission from Street Machine Magazine]

19 March 2022 – Vale Francis Roch Maloney, 13th Intake Vehicle Mechanic[189]

Frank 'Speed' Maloney served in Vietnam from 16 April 1969 to 16 April 1970. He retired from the Army in 1979 after 21 years' service. Frank was a founding committee member of the AAAA, serving as South QLD Regional Representative, Promotions & Public Relations Officer, Chair of the Events Sub-committee, and Events Manager. He managed three major AAAA events: the 60th Anniversary of the AAS in Albury Wodonga in 2008, the 63rd Anniversary Apprentices Together in Canberra in 2011, and the Balcombe Barracks Commemoration in 2013.

25 May 2022 – Vale Barry Alexander Teal, 10A Intake Clerk[190]

Past-President, Barry Teal passed away on Wednesday 25 May 2022. Hey was President in 2011 after the founding President, Frank Poole, 10th Intake Architectural Draughtsman had to step down due to personal reasons. Barry then stood down himself prior to the AGM in October 2011. In the short period Barry was President, he contributed in other, significant ways to the Association. Firstly, he developed the Association badge, which we use today. Secondly, Barry was one of the main organisers of the very successful Apprentices Together 63rd Anniversary Reunion in Canberra in October 2011. And thirdly, Barry was heavily involved in the early days of the SPAASSM Project. He received an Association Certificate of Appreciation in 2019 for his role as President and for developing the badge.

22 June 2022 – last-serving Apprentice Musicians farewelled[191]

Farewelled at the AABC Dining-in-Night at the RMC SGTs' Mess on Wednesday 22 June 2022, and marking the end of ex-Apprentice Musicians in the ARA, were: MAJ Nigel Davy, 34th Class, WO2 Graeme Hey, 34th Class and MAJ Lindsay Mee, 33rd Class.

23 January 2023 – Vale Geoffrey John Hawker AM, 1st Intake Fitter and Turner[192]

Geoff Hawker enlisted as a 1st Intake Fitter and Turner in 1948. After graduation, he served in 14 units until he was commissioned in 1964. He served as an officer for 21 years in a broad range of 17 EME command and staff appointments before his retirement in Canberra. Amongst his postings, he served as ASM of Metal Trades Wing at AAS, was OC 1 FER Wksp, and ADC to DGEME. His

achievements and services were recognised by the award of Member of the Order of Australia in the Military Division in the Queen's Birthday Honours List in 1984 "for service to workshop equipment and facilities engineering in the Australian Army". Geoff served in Vietnam with 17 Const Sqn Wksp from 19 May 1967 to 9 April 1968.

15 March 2023 – Vale Colonel David Robert Lawrence AM, first Commandant of the Army Apprentices School from June 1982 until 1984[193]

COL Lawrence graduated from the Officer Cadet School in 1959 and was allocated to the Royal Australian Armoured Corps (RAAC). He served with 1st Armoured Regiment, 3rd 0Cavalry Regiment, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 1st/15th Royal New South Wales Lancers, 2nd/14th Queensland Mounted Infantry, and 4th/19th Prince of Wales Light Horse. He completed a tour of Vietnam from December 1968 to December 1969 as a Temporary Captain in A and B Squadrons 3rd Cavalry Regiment before being posted to the RAAC Directorate on his return to Australia. He attended Staff College in 1972 and was then posted as OC of an independent cavalry squadron. He was an exchange instructor at the US Army Armor School at Fort Knox from 1975 and then served as a member of the Directing Staff at the Australian Staff College. He assumed command of the AAS in January 1981, and guided the move of the School from Balcombe to Bonegilla. In the Queen's Birthday Honours of 1984, David became a Member of the Order of Australia in the Military Division for service as the Commandant of the AAS.

28 April 2023 – Vale John Hedley (Jack) Gamble, 4th Intake Carpenter and Joiner[194]

Our dear friend from the 4th Intake, 90-year-old Jack Gamble passed away at 1000 hrs on 28 April 2023 in the John Hunter Hospital (Newcastle) after a short illness. Jack was an avid supporter of the AAAA, and he will be remembered by many particularly for his poetry prowess. Rest in Peace Jack.

20-22 October 2023 – 75th Anniversary Reunion Commemorating Formation of the Army Apprentices School[195]

Over the weekend 20 – 22 October 2023, a commemoration was held for 75 years since the 1st Intake of 63 Army Apprentices commenced their training in August 1948 at Balcombe, Victoria, thus establishing the Australian Army Apprentice Scheme and the AAS. Concurrent with this commemoration was recognition that, in December 1982/January 1983, trade training for Apprentices began at the newly-built AAS at Latchford Barracks, Bonegilla, Victoria. The Albury Entertainment Centre was the venue for the first two days' events (Meet & greet, AGM and dinner), with the third day's events (wreath laying ceremony, museum visit and BBQ lunch) held at South Bandiana.

January 2024 – First Tier C ASM – WO1 Andrew Beaman OAM, 46th Intake Motor Mechanic[196]

The RAEME Corps' first Tier C ASM and the first non-regimental Tier C Warrant Officer, was WO1 Andrew Beaman who, as of January 2024 took on the role of ASM Land Worthiness within Land Capability Division. The appointment highlights the importance of senior enlisted technically qualified personal reaching pinnacle appointments in order to provide expert advice on Land material.

Conclusion

This document remains a work in progress as there will be more events of significance that could be recorded here. We welcome suggestions for inclusion from Apprentices and Association members. Please forward all information to our Secretary, preferably via email to *secretary@austarmyapprentice.org*.

Bibliography

Each of these references was the sole source of information for one or more events but, of course, many of the events can be found in many of the references:

- https://austarmyapprentice.org/archive/: Army College of TAFE Journal 1995
- *SPAASSM Collection*, including: AAS Journals, graduation booklets, other program documents, studies and reports, briefs, minutes of meetings, letters, photographs, newspaper cuttings and scrapbooks, recruiting brochures and guides, staff handbooks and information guides, sports programs, certificates, etc
- https://austarmyapprentice.org/agms/: *AAAA AGM minutes*
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- https://austarmyapprentice.org/newsletters/:
  AAAA President's Updates, from December 2005 to April 2012
  The Apprentice About – Newsletter of the Army Apprentices Association, from August 2010
- *AAAA and other Reunion programmes and reports*
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  The Australian Army Apprentice Scheme 1948-1995
  The Australian Army Apprentice Hat Badge
  AAAA History of Units at Balcombe
  AAAA History of Units at Bonegilla
  AAS High Achievers
  AAS Staffing, Appointments and Awards
  AAS Graduation Parades
  AAS Fast Facts
  Apprentice Proficiency Awards
  The Army Apprentices School Governor-General's Banner

This initial version prepared by Jeff Heron, 21st Intake Radio Mechanic, 6 July 2024.

Endnotes

The Endnotes provide specific references for events throughout the document.

[1] *From Boy to Soldier, A View of the Army Apprentice Scheme 1948 to 1998*, SH Cheeseman AM JP, The Army Apprentice History Committee – NSW, 2003

[2] *AAAA History of Units at Balcombe*, AAAA Web document

[3] *Vincent 'Jerry' Neale, 20th Intake Plumber*, personal communication

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[7] *The Army Apprentices School Balcombe, The First Commanding Officer – Colonel F.B. Oldfield, The Apprentice About – Newsletter of the Army Apprentices Association, Volume 1 Issue 4, September 2011*

[8] *Commanding Officers and RSMs Boards*, Army Museum, Bandiana

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