



Royal United Services Institute of Victoria Inc.

Promoting National Security and Defence

A Constituent Body of the Royal United Services Institute of Australia

PATRON: The Governor of Victoria,
John Landy AC MBE

Defence Plaza
9th Floor
661 Bourke Street
Melbourne, Victoria, 3000

Telephone: (03) 9282-7498
9282 7392

Fax: (03) 9282-3362

Email:

rusi.vic@defence.gov.au

ABN 46 648 764 477

Editor: Martin Holme

RUSI-VIC NEWS

ISSN 1446 - 4527

Volume 5 Issue 4—September/October, 2004

Office Bearers

President: AIRCDRE Mike Rawlinson RAAF (retd)

Vice Presidents: MAJGEN Ian Freer CB CBE
MAJ Ian Rainford OAM ED JP
MAJGEN Mike O'Brien CSC

Immediate Past President:

BRIG W.H. (Mac) Grant OAM RFD

Secretary: Capt Martin Holme

Hon. Treasurer: FLGOFF Neville Wright

Chairman Library Committee:

MAJGEN Mike O'Brien CSC

Dates for your Diary

30 September – Speaker Meeting, SGM and AGM
Defence Plaza Building

14 October – Annual Dinner – **Naval & Military Club**

10 November – Council Meeting

25 November – Speaker Meeting – **Defence Plaza**

Luncheon Speaker Meeting

**** Thursday, 30th September, 2004 ****

Dr David Saunders

Research Leader – Surface Platform Systems

Defence Science and Technology Organisation

The topic for the Luncheon address will be:-

“Warships – An Operations and Technology Revolution”

Dr Saunders is a senior and much respected scientist with the Maritime Platform Division at DSTO. He has specialised in the vulnerability and survivability of RAN vessels to underwater shock, missile strike and fire. His research influences the design and structure of future warships. Dr Saunders will illustrate his talk with some fascinating and gripping video footage of our Navy at sea and under operational conditions. Those who have seen this presentation are full of praise.

Note the Venue: Defence Plaza Time : 1130hrs (Tea/Coffee); Address : 1230hrs, following the Special General and Annual General Meetings which commence at 1200hrs.

Admission : \$3.00 - Lunch may be purchased from the adjacent “Armoury Bistro” afterwards.

Please advise the Office on 9282 7498 if you and/or any guests intend to be present.

**** Thursday, 14th October, 2004 ****

**Annual Dinner
Naval and Military Club
27 Little Collins Street**

(See enclosed Invitation for further details)

**With the Annual Dinner being held in mid-October there will be no Lunchtime
Speaker Meeting at the end of October.**

The next Lunchtime Meeting will be on Thursday, 25th November, 2004.

Further Details will be mailed out nearer the time.

Vale – We record with deep regret the passing of:

Mr Howard J. Glover – Geelong.

RUSI VIC CYBERLINKS

For your information we publish below the following Cyberlinks:

RUSI of Australia (inc Victoria) <http://www.defence.gov.au/rusi>

Department of Defence <http://defence.gov.au>

RUSI for Defence Studies Whitehall <http://www.rusi.org>

Australian Strategic Policy Institute <http://www.aspi.org.au>

Australia Defence Association <http://www.ada.asn.au>

From the President – Air Commodore Mike Rawlinson

On 30 August I attended the annual National Conference of the Defence Reserves Association at Simpson Barracks. The conference was sponsored by the Victorian Branch of the DRA, with which RUSI VIC has a number of members in common.

There was a line up of excellent speakers including Chief of Army, LTGEN Peter Leahey, and Assistant Chief Reserves MAJGEN Neil Wilson, but no single Service speakers from the RAN or RAAF. Navy and Air Force were also noticeably under-represented in the audience. This was unfortunate, as a tri-Service Reserves policy influenced by Army for Army is unlikely to satisfy the needs and requirements of the Navy and Air Force. Despite the acknowledged existence of the other two Services, 'jointery' was not to the fore and 'Total Army' held the floor over 'Total Force'.

Perhaps understandably given the audience and the location, there was a discernible yearning for the return of the 3rd Division.

Since the late 1990s Reserves have assumed a new importance for Navy and Air Force. Downsizing of direct and indirect uniformed support elements and contracting-out, has been accompanied by an increased tempo of operations, particularly for Navy. Navy would have been unable to sustain the increased tempo of operations in recent years without use of Naval Reserves in full-time sea-going billets.

In the 30 years prior to the 90s Air Force only paid lip service to maintaining its Reserve Squadrons and general (stand-by) reserve pool. The downsizing of the RAAF from about 23,000 to 13,000 personnel has made the employment of Reserves an essential part of sustaining squadron-sized deployments for prolonged periods. This is over and above the RAAF's long standing requirement for Reserve specialist officers. Although always small, the size of the RAAF Reserve has

increased significantly during the 90s, and has a current target of 6000 personnel.

Of course, the bulk of the ADF's Reserves are Army, but there has been less immediacy, than in Navy and Air Force.

The Defence White Paper of 2000 changed the strategic role of the Reserves from mobilisation to meet remote threats to that of supporting and sustaining current operations. The 'clear priority of the Reserve will be to provide fully-trained personnel to our ready frontline forces deployed on operations'. 'They will greatly enhance our capacity to sustain forces on operations for extended periods.' 'Given the likelihood of frequent and concurrent operations, the Reserves will be the most efficient way of providing sustainment and surge capacity.'

The White Paper required 'the Army to ensure that we will be able to sustain a brigade deployed on operations for extended periods, and at the same time maintain at least a battalion group available for deployment elsewhere.'

All commentators I have encountered agree that this is not an unreasonable level of capability for Australia.

However to deliver this capability, at its current size, the full-time Army must draw upon Army Reserves for rotation. Neil James of the Australian Defence Association (resplendent in an RUSI tie) reminded us of the Army's inability to mount multiple rotations for a brigade and a battalion group. To achieve this, the Army Reserve needs more personnel, equipment and training.

As the initial deployment carries a higher government imperative than does prolonged sustainment, which may not be necessary, the Army Reserve has a secondary priority when allocating scarce resources. Army funding in addition to the status quo arrangements is unlikely to be directed to the Army Reserve unless there is a priority to do so. As urgency

capability requirements, or an explicit requirement of government that funds be earmarked for the Reserves. This latter suggestion is not as far-fetched as it may seem. The Reserves have appeal for our national leaders as a major link between the defence force and the community which results in an exchange of military and community values that is beneficial for the nation. Ken Aldred (also a RUSI VIC member) presented a report on behalf of the Victorian Liberal Party, which recommended a doubling of the Army Reserves.

Recent years have demonstrated that contingencies can arise with little warning. We should be able use our Reserves at relatively short-notice. The enabling legislation underpinning the new role of the Reserves has been passed, what is now required is for the Reserves to be properly funded. This is a matter for government not the Services. The defence budget needs to be increased to fund Reserves that are capable of fulfilling the new role

From The Secretary - Martin Holme

Those who braved the bleak mid-winter and stormed the ramparts of Victoria Barracks were privileged to hear two excellent lunchtime speakers. Aldo Borgu, from the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, delivered a powerful and thought provoking address on "Reshaping The Australian Defence Forces". We now have a hard copy of the words which can be sent to interested Members on request.

Brigadier Ian Lillie, the last Commander of ADF Bougainville, gave a fascinating talk on the historical background to the troubles on that island highlighting the delicate and diplomatic niceties required in commanding the peace keeping forces there.

We look forward to welcoming as many Members as possible to the Special and Annual General Meetings on 30th September, which will be held in the Defence Plaza Building. The talk afterwards on "Warships - An Operations and Technology Revolution" by Dr David Saunders of DISTO will be illustrated by a spectacular video.

These events have been advertised in the Flyer that accompanied the papers covering the Meetings.

You will note there is an invitation to attend the Annual Dinner on Thursday 14th October, enclosed with this Newsletter. The Dinner will once again be at the Naval and Military Club and will mirror last year's most successful occasion. Arrangements are well advanced and Members are urged to respond as soon as possible. It will be a memorable evening.

A half day seminar, preceded by lunch, planned for late November, at Simpson Barracks, Watsonia, has had to be postponed, due to an activities clash. We intend to re-position the event for early next year, with the likely topic being "Terrorism and National Security".

Our wonderful helper in the office, Marj Minns, has been off sick for a few weeks but is making a good recovery and is returning gently to work, which is splendid news - especially for me!

Overdue Subscriptions

Despite some gentle reminders, there are still quite a few outstanding Annual Subscriptions. The RUSI is very dependent on its subscription base so please check your records.

The Keith Charles Batiste North African War Diary

There follows the second extract from the above diary. It is from the last pages of the document as the Battle of EL Alamein commences. (*I have been asked to advise that Lt Keith Batiste's Army Number was - VX 14004. Ed*).

19th October 42. Our O.P. on .33 is shelled fairly heavily - we are not very happy; there are only two of us in it; myself & a Signaller; can't afford to have the Sgt there as well in case Jerry gets a direct hit. The shelling continues on & off all the morning; but he doesn't get us. Receive orders to report to Van Der Kelen[1] for secret orders. Wait until dark & then go back to B.H.Q. The O.P. is very uncomfortable; you can barely crouch in it & cannot even stick your head outside the camouflage net; we have to urinate in beer bottles & then throw them out; the flies are terrible.

See Van; who goes over the plan of the forthcoming offensive with each of us separately. The Army Commander has laid down that Rommel will be destroyed together with his forces; in their present positions; his plan is not to drive him back but to destroy. There are to be two Corps; the 30th & the 13th; we (the 9th Aust Div) come under command of 30th Corps. The forces to be employed are 9th Aust Div, 51st Highland Div; 50th Div; South African Division; New Zealand Div; a Brigade of Free French, th Indian Division & 64th Division. The 40th & 10th Armoured Divs 7th Armoured Div & - ?? In all we have 1200 tanks including a large number of Shermans & Grants; new types of mobile guns & a few other hush hush surprises for the old Hun. In all six Infantry Divisions; as against the German 8; one of which - the 90th Light Div - is motorized. The 21st Panzer and 25 are split up with the Italian armour & are fighting in three battle groups each comprised of part Italian Armour; with Panzer units to back them up. It is estimated that Rommel has only 600 Tanks under his command; which gives us a numerical superiority of two to one. Some of the Itie divisions are their best

troops i.e. Pistoia; Littorio & units of the Bersaglieri.[2]

Our main objective is to make Rommel think the attack is going to come from the South; whereas in reality it will come from the North; our sector. And the Australians are to be given the job of making the "break through". It is estimated that the enemy have sufficient petrol; oil & lubricants; food etc to last him 12 days; after which he will be hard pressed to supply his mechanized forces with food, petrol & other essential commodities.

There are to be three phases in the operation; firstly the "breakthrough"; secondly the "mopping up" & once our armour has been passed through his anti-tank screen & minefields; the break out of our armour into the open country beyond Rahman. It's going to be a hard scrap but we have; at long last; guns & tanks - and aircraft which are at least the equal if not better than Jerry.

20th October 42. Our guns move to postn "A". Back at the O.P. very little to do; our guns are not to fire & disclose their new positions.

21st & 22nd October 42. Final preparations. Zero hour to be 2140 hours tomorrow night. Go down to the guns to give a hand. Our Inf. move up and lay in trenches camouflaged all day.

22nd October 42. Zero hour; a terrific roar & a blinding blaze of light runs around the horizon as far as the eye can see as 800 of our guns open up; the noise

is terrific; for the first 20 mins. We concentrate on the German Artillery. A low rumbling in the distance is our barrage landing on him. It must be sheer hell over there.

For 30 mins the strafe goes on & thousands of shells scream away toward the Axis lines. Then there is a sudden silence of an hour; our Infantry are taking up their positions for the attack; nothing is happening over the German side; he must still be bewildered at the sudden hail of shells that hit him. Away in the distance gun-flashes light the sky; we wait; then there is a scream & a roar & we all dive flat; several heavy shells throw large columns of mud into the air; a 75 whistles over us & bursts about 20 yards behind right in line – too close for comfort, shrapnel thuds into the ground; Tin Hats go on; out in front tracer bullets flash across the dunes. The German Artillery is coming to life now & heavy shells come over at regular intervals. Time for our barrage; order fire; & again the terrible cacophony of sound seems to press you into the earth; behind us a Bofors gun fires streams of tracers across .25 to show the Infantry the direction of attack; Mortars flame into action & hundreds of machine-guns open fire; an American War Correspondent comes sliding down the side of a dune; the blast from one of our guns sends his tin hat sailing into the air & deafens him; he nearly walked into the muzzle!

One of Jerry's batteries are ranging on to us and every few minutes a shell wails overhead & bursts in the graveyard behind us; several pieces of shrapnel drop around us; a jeep comes tearing up with coffee to keep us awake – as if anyone could go to sleep!

In an area of about 1000 yards square are our 36 guns; we have one gun for every 60 yards along the whole front (later officially given as 1 gun to every 23 yards of the front) down to the Qattara Depression.

A truck comes careering past full of white-faced Italians; ambulances come up; Ammunition trucks arrive; already along the front 500,000 shells have been

fired. Hill 33 is being shelled fairly heavily by enemy guns further up the coast. A searchlight has been erected in front of our gun position as part of a deception plan; it is to shine on some dummy figures in the hope that Jerry will think the attack is coming along the sand dunes. The searchlight is switched on & we curse it thoroughly; as it is bound to "draw the crabs". A Stuka dives down & plants a stick of bombs out in the flat; apparently he was aiming at our gun-flashes. Parachute flares blaze out across .25; as our bombers wade into him; we can hear the rumbles of the explosion. More Jerry bombers come over in an effort to knock our guns out; some of them drop "Molotov Breadbaskets" & the small fragmentation bombs go off like a lot of fire-crackers.

There is a large flash of flame as one of our medium guns has a premature; it blows up & wipes out the crew; across on Jerry's side of the line there are several large fires burning; think we must have hit some of his vehicles.

The barrages and concentrations continue through the night. No sleep. At dawn Jerry counter-attacks; we laze away on defensive fire tasks.

24th October 42. Tactical situation very confused; 24th got about 200 Jerry prisoners – don't think they took too many; a lot killed. Aircraft everywhere; our planes are literally blasting the Luftwaffe out of the air.

Our troops consolidate ground won; hear casualties very heavy; German counter attacks only small scale affairs at this stage; tonight we attack again; Two of our lanes shot down; one in flames; our bombers are blasting hell out of him. Fighters strafed the Jerry guns behind 33 which have been shelling us.

The Barrage goes down again; the sky as far as the eye can see is lit up by the flashes of hundreds of guns of all calibres; again the Infantry go forward; some Germans are reported to have given themselves up as prisoners to the Dummy figures out in the flat!

Stukas dive-bomb the mediums. We hear all objectives have been partially taken; the South Af's; N.Z.s missed on a couple of small patches; 9th Aust Div also missed one position. Ammo coming up regularly.

A German 75 Battery (Italian?) shell us but all rounds land plus of us though directly in line; all night German bombers arrive overhead dropping bombs at the gun-flashes; our night fighters shoot one down. Stuka rear gunner fires a burst of cannon shells into us; we grovelled in a trench & cursed him soundly; landed all around; but no one hit; no sleep. German Artillery blasting hell out of our Infantry; our bombers go over regularly every two hours in batches of 18 or 36; the Rahman track & supply line is a mass of dust & smoke as they unload their bombs. German 88 gets a direct hit on one of our bombers; he comes down in flames; our O.P. opens fire on the German "Flak" guns.

25th October 42. German counter-attacks increasing; later we hear that in all he launched 33 counter attacks; full scale shows; & numerous small ones rather hastily organised. As soon as he comes over the top our guns concentrate on him & lay down a wall of bursting shells which he can't pass through to get at our Infantry. Those who do get through are quickly accounted for by the machine-guns.

Text Box: A German 88mm gun dug in. Photo by Keith Batiste, with the annotation 'best gun of the war in anti-tank role'. One of "U" troop's guns received a direct hit; one man killed; Jerry 88 & 105mm guns shelling along the flat; one of our ammo trucks receives a direct hit and all the shells on it blow up – what a firework display; there is nothing we can do but watch it; it's just in front of "B" troop's gun; the gunners are all laying flat in their pits with shells flying everywhere.

Blaze away nearly all night; have three hours sleep; Jerry again bombing our gun-flashes; can't hear the bombs

coming down above the roar of the guns; prisoners now up to 700 on the 26th Brigade front; dead Germans everywhere; more counter attacks; all repulsed.

26th October 42. John Lord contracts dysentery; go up to the O.P. on 33 & take over. The tactical situation is so confused that we don't fire on any targets out in front. Ring through to Battery Command Post for a corrected fighting map – they don't know the situation themselves, even R.H.Q. are in the dark; see a convoy of about seven vehicles coming in behind a dune from the direction of the front, can't make out whose they are, according to the map they should belong to the 90th German Light infantry division. Lay the guns on them as we had previously registered a target in the same area. Ring for permission of HQ to open fire. Not granted, think it might be the 2/2nd Pioneers, who cut through to the coast.

They were the 90th L.I. Word has just come through that the whole Division has pulled out, smashed their way through the Pioneers & with the help of a few tanks of the 15th Panzers, made good their escape, leaving only a small rearguard. A large smoke screen has been thrown down by our mortars, out beyond it there is a hell of a scrap going on between our tanks & his. Can count six tanks on fire – look like ours but they are so mixed up it's hard to say. Visibility practically zero, though salient features discernable are occasional flashes from Jerry's 88mm air-burst shells ranging onto the supporting Infantry. Fighting goes on through the night. Jerry harassing fire on O.P. area.

[1] VX13933 Captain Peter Winston Van Der Kelen, born 2nd December 1915 in Armadale, Victoria, enlisted 2nd May 1940, discharged 19th February 1946.

[2] Described elsewhere by Lt Batiste as 'a famous (?) Italian regiment that did everything at the trot (double) including surrendering!'

ROYAL UNITED SERVICES INSTITUTE OF VICTORIA Inc

OFFICE BEARERS AUGUST 2004

PATRON

The Governor of Victoria, John Landy, AC MBE

VICE PATRONS

Major General Peter Haddad, AO
Air Commodore Rod Luke, RAAF
Captain R.W. Richards, RAN
Brigadier Wayne Dunbar, CSC RFD

President

Air Commodore Mike Rawlinson RAAF Retd)

Immediate Past President

Brigadier W H (Mac) Grant, OAM RFD

Vice Presidents

Major General Ian Freer, CB CBE
Major Ian Rainford, OAM ED JP
Major General Mike O'Brien, CSC

Secretary

Mr Martin Holme

Councillors

Dr. Colin Brown GM
Lieutenant Colonel Stuart Bryan, MBE
Brigadier Keith Colwill, CBE
Lieutenant Colonel David Ellson, RFD ED
*Mrs Marie Martini
Brigadier David Noble, CSC
Major Robert Prewett, RFD
Lieutenant Colonel Mark Richards

Service Representatives

Defence (JLC) Commander Joh Rienks, CSM RAN
RAAF Wing Commander Warren Madsen
Squadron Leader Don Stebbins

Treasurer: Flying Officer Neville Wright

Honorary Auditor: Colin Kirkwood, Chartered Accountant

- Mrs Martini is also the representative from the Geelong Branch.

Councillors Emeritus

Lieutenant Colonel Dennis Fallon; Commander Hugh Jarrett RAN; Lieutenant Commander Tom Kilburn MBE VRD RAN; Flying Officer John McPhee MBE; Colonel John Pilbeam AM ED; Major General John Stevenson AO CBE; Lieutenant Commander Eric Thompson VRD RANR; Lieutenant Colonel D.I. MacLeod RFD ED; Brigadier Rob Vial DSO ED