



E-Newsletter

Edition No 32 - May 13th 2012



Reunion 2013

Just over 12 months to go. Registrations are building up and we have reached 83 of a maximum of 180 - so register now.

Birthdays 13th May 2012 to 10th June 2012

May

16th Dennis "Tiger" Lyons and Shane Redenbach, 21st Marc Henderson, 21st Mick Kelleher, 22nd Trevor Atkins, 23rd John Wilson, 25th Alicia Kelly, 26th Richard 'Dick' Reu, 27th John Magennis, 29th Brendon 'Rocky' Rochford and Mark Rotherham, 31st Shelgh Bell (nee Tullett), Robert 'Bob' Scari, Robert 'Goldie' Scott, and Chris Jones.

June

1st Murray McIntosh, Lani Wade and Dennis Wally Sweet, 4th Dorothy 'Dot' Brown, 5th Michael Mick Compton, Bruce Wilson and John Kindness, 8th Stephen 'Steve' Friend.

We wish to thank all those that sent in their comments re Frank Gubby Allen and the Nirimba robbery. Read on.....

The Nirimba Robbery

Helen Harrison says: I was the SNRWRWTR (Smith) along with SNRWRWTR Lisa Butler who were the pay officers at the time of the robbery. We were taking the payroll from the pay office to the Apprentices Mess area for pay parade when we were held up. The Supply Officer Cash was Leut Veitch and the Stores Officer stepped in as the second paying officer as the Midshipman was late that morning. I believe the CPOWTR was CPO Douglas.

The pay was held up by someone who had taken the stores vehicle from behind the Wardroom, and stopped us at the end of the road outside the apprentices accommodation blocks. I remember standing there why the robber was waving a gun and demanding the pay boxes be put in the back of the ute, it seemed like ages (but probably wasn't) that the stores

officer (I vaguely remember him being senior to the SO(C)) took both boxes and put them in the back of the ute. The second paying officer then ordered the sentry to run to the Apprentices' accommodation and ring the guard house to get the gangway closed, it later turned out they went out through the back gate/fence. Lisa and I continued to the pay parade and it wasn't until we got to the guardhouse and it was on the radio that it seemed real. The ute turned up at a local shopping centre.

The day before when we had been checking off the pay envelopes when they came back, we had been talking in the pay office that the only time you did a hold-up drill was at recruit school. Following that I was convinced to go on maternity leave, I was about 7 months pregnant at the time and security was ramped up considerably with the QMG's taking over sentry duty with SLR's. And not that long later net pay deposits came out.

Were they ever caught ? Helen adds: “Not to my knowledge. But I do know a lot of people thought it was an "inside" job. Whether an ex member or not, as they would have had to know the daily routine with the car, the payroll was walked to the pay parade the same way every fortnight and that it was a mid year leave pay (so reasonably big) about \$131K. Thankfully as writers we got our pay the day before when it first got to site.”

Andy Siegman adds:

Wow, this happened almost 25 years ago. I drafted in a few months after it happened, and if pissbar talk can be relied upon, this is what happened.

The robbery happened some time in 1988 - in the days of cash pay.

The Paying Officer, Witnessing Officer, Sentry & Scribe were walking from the Pay Office to the pay point at about 0800, when a clearly recognizable Pusser's ute pulled up beside them. The occupant, dressed in Action Working Dress, pointed a weapon (shotgun I think) out the window and instructed the paying officer to put the box of pay envelopes in the back, which he dutifully did. The Paying Officer was LEUT Veitch.

The Paying Officer was unsure what to do next. He returned to the Pay Office then rang the WOCOX to ask if the "exercise" had finished. The WOCOX denied all knowledge and the Paying Officer then turned a shade of grey and explained to the Swain what had happened.

There must have been a fair bit of inside knowledge - the culprit knew that the key was permanently stuck in the ignition of the Victualler's ute, and also knew that this ute was used by the Officer of the Day after hours. The culprit was clever enough to realize that the Victualler's would not miss the ute as they would think the OOD still had it. In fact, the OOD had already returned it to the Victualling Yard. The culprit also knew how to make it look like an exercise so as to delay things for long enough to make a smooth getaway. Apparently, the culprit had earlier cut a padlock on one of the gates but left the gate closed - during the getaway, the Victualler's ute suffered a bit of damage. The Police had found the ute abandoned only a couple of km away from NIRIMBA.

Later, the TV program "Crime Stoppers" came to NIRIMBA to re-enact the robbery. They even used the actual Victualler's ute. To make it look like the ute was bursting through the gate, they took the camera shot from behind and had two people pull on ropes attached to the gate,

but out of camera shot, to make it look like the van was genuinely crashing the gate. Alas, one of the rope-pullers was a fraction too slow and the Victualler's ute ended up back in the panel beater's shop.

Detectives even came to NIRIMBA to look through some personnel files of discharged personnel (the old 75/ files) to see if they could come up with some suspects/clues, as there was clearly a good deal of insider knowledge. However, nobody was ever known to have been charged with any offences. Looks like the culprit got away with it!! Not much was ever known about this incident. Even today, a Google search on the topic does not provide very much.

Final Say from Helen: I read the item that Andy sent in, and the bar talk wasn't far off. She says there was no rank on the action working dress the robber wore. One of the reasons they didn't suspect it was an exercise because if it had been, once the pay envelopes had left our sight, they would have all had to have been rechecked before pay could happen. The officer of the day used the stores vehicle and it was left behind the wardroom with the keys in it - apparently that had been the routine forever. As had the way pay was conducted.

The pay office Chief Writer was CPO Dicky Douglas - I remember him complaining to the LSWTR in the afternoon about the lack of work that had been done that day. Leesa and I had been down the police station all morning and when we got back we went to the bar for lunch - as you could in those days. WO Brian Eagles was the Perso and PO Sandie McKandie was there. But it was 24 years ago - I was pregnant with my son and was pretty much forced out of maternity leave after that.

Anzac Day

Steve Osment in among a drum and pipe band. He's looking well fed and seems to be enjoying life. He's a member of several drum and pipe bands in Adelaide. Somewhat changed from when he was on *Parramatta*. See [Link](#)



Ballarat sent the Ships Company to Changi Memorial/Cemetery for the ANZAC Day Service in 2012 during their visit to Singapore. LSWTR **Lynzey Lake** & ABWTR **Jo Garvie** at Changi War Memorial.



On our left is **Christine Merrilees** with her father **Stew Merrilees** at a recent ceremony up north.





Above: Keith McCrorie and Donna Probyn meet up after 16 years

Group Shot below – Kneeling on left Tim Hogben, Keith McCrorie. Sitting from left Monica Jack, Jo-anne Limbrick, Donna Probyn, Mel Wickman, Nat Brennan, Gabby Foote, Khat Morris and Lorna Brew. Kneeling on right Tanya Davey, daughter McKenzie Davey and Jeannie Roberts.

Darwin Luncheon 13th April 2012

The NT Writer's met for a social lunch on Friday 13 April 12 in Darwin to welcome new arrivals to the Territory and reacquaint old Writers with each other. WOWTR Jeannie Roberts help to organize the get together at Fiddler's Green Irish Pub at the waterfront in Darwin. Over 18 people attended including five children who were on school holidays.

One ex Writer found herself with some of her old students and reminisced about their time at Supply School. Ex POWTR Donna Probyn, who now works as a Public Servant at Robinson Barracks in Darwin, met up again with three ex students – Jo-anne Limbrick, Lorna Brew and Tim Hogben - to talk about what they were doing now and how families had expanded. Lorna reminded Donna on how her dog took Lorna for a walk. Donna's dog was a Great Dane and as big as a horse. Poor Lorna had to be dragged behind it. Donna also caught up with CPOWTR Keith McCrorie and worked out that they had not seen each other for nearly 16 years when they worked together with the Clearance Diving Team in Perth.



Frank 'Gubby' Allen

In our last issue we published some of Gubbys biography we had received. Since then we have had a number of ex scribes send us more information on Frank:

John Kindness is probably the first to meet Frank. He says "The Chief (Gubby) and I joined Platypus in August 1954. He came from HMAS Commonwealth (Japan). He soon let us know he did not like the term 'kippers' in reference to RNER's He told us he was a proud Englishman.

Unfortunately, his baggage went adrift for a while. He only had what he 'stood up in', so he wore the same clothes till he could go ashore and buy some kit to tide him over till his gear turned up.

Mick Randel called him by his nickname, I thought he was saying 'Grubby' because of his appearance, due to lack of clean clothes. He put us straight of the difference!

One night on a run ashore he ended up at Andre's night club. He asked to see the manager and tell him his neon sign was not working properly. He told he the 'W' was out. His reply was in in best Darlinghurst French was 'Monsieur, the name of the club is Andre's NOT Andrews!

The S&S Divisional Officer called the Chief to his cabin and proceeded to give him a lecture on his behaviour and his drinking habits. He did not present a very good image to the Division.

At the end of the lecture, he told the SBLT (Fresh from the college) when he had seen a bit of life had a few experiences and dried out between the ears he would be able to advise him, till then keep your opinions to yourself!

In spite of his social habits, he was always able to carry out his duties. Always available to answer any questions put to him. Many times he was asked to appear as the 'accused's friend'. I found him a model to which I could follow (Work wise). I can't remember when he left Platypus. He was relieved by CPO Lewin, another Chief to follow by example.

I heard of his progress over the years. His promotion to commissioned officer. Sad to read about his social habits and his death under sad circumstances. He will always be remembered."

Terry Young says: Gubby was Captain's Secretary at Harman having recently been promoted to SBLT SDSU W when I was posted there as a Wtr2 in April 63. Dave Keig was the LWTR and Ron Dalgleish the PO.

I really liked Gubby (Dave was a bit harder to take - sorry Dave) and was old school i.e. knew his stuff. Recall he was married to Sandy and was always in strife with her as he loved his drink "whisky" I think and was always late home. He was tough but fair. I remember going through the signals one day and was tearing up the unclassified's and throwing them in the

bin, by mistake I tore up a Secret one. After realising my mistake I attempted to recover it and stick it back together with Sellotape, was not popular but apart from a dressing down escaped unscathed.

Ironically I was later to take the same job as Gubby in the same building in 1974. Yep he was definitely ex-RN, a gentleman with a great sense of humour and to hear of the circumstances of his demise is very sad, there but for the grace of god go all of us.

Les Robert says: I was Secretary to NOICVIC from Mar 1971 to mid 1974 and, from memory, Frank was Secretary to CST and then when NOICVIC split from CERBERUS, he remained as Secretary to CO CERBERUS.

Lindsay Lake says: LCDR Allen was the Base Supply Officer HMAS Tarangau in 1973. Others that were there at the same time were Arthur Skene (CPOWTR), Laurie Mitchell (LSWTR), Jungles Carroll (LSWTR) & John Grantins (LSWTR).

Frank told me over a beer that he was a Acting CPOWTR when he was only 22 years old. He also served as part of the allied occupational forces unit in Japan at the end of World War 2. Frank was called BSO Eye glass by the PNG personnel at Tarangau. He was a great man and very easy to talk to.

Brisbane Drinks 14th April 2012

Attendees were Gary Brazier, Kev 'Thirsty' Drinkwater, Ray Hamilton Laurie Mitchell, Greg Morrison, Neville Clarke, Don Carmichael.



Lest We Forget

We were advised that **Alan 'Stainless' Steele** passed away 7 September 2011. He was 83 years of age. Stainless paid off as a Chief. His bio can be found on our web site. His sea service was in Anzac, Quickmatch and Stuart.

Anthony John Smith passed away 19th April 2012. He served in the RN 1948-1955 before joining the RAN 1958. He had been a CPO before being selected for promotion to SD in 1964. Retired as a Commander.