



QUEENSLAND NEWSLETTER

Way back in May the OFC decided that there could be no more functions until after the various members return from overseas. Consequently there would be nothing to write about. However, the truth of the matter is that July is the final very important month in the history of the BSAP and, as the semi-official representative of Queensland, semi-official because the Branch did not sponsor me, because that contribution to my fare was paid by Will Keys and his fellow lawyers to whom I once again say my grateful thanks and am so sorry that he and Jackie are not going to be with us too.

That is all by the by, as it may just be possible for John and Mary Gold and Mike and Ginny King to be at the Unveiling on the day. That is now just a few days away but, in the meantime, I thought you might be interested in the lead-up to the unveiling.

Saturday 16th July dawned and we commenced our journey at 0900 to Brisbane Airport, where we were dropped; made our way to the protective luggage point, where our two suitcases for the hold were cling wrapped, taken to the check-in counter and, as both were underweight, were shipped off into the wide blue yonder. A pleasant wait in the Departure Lounge broken by a Security Check of our carry-on luggage and persons, where I triggered the alarm, and had to disrobe my outer garments because some metal, probably the cell phone, was the cause.

At 1250, Air Brunei 074 took off for the seven-hour leg to Brunei for a very comfortable flight where there were only a few passengers, so we were not crowded and were well fed and entertained by the in-house entertainment on board.

At Brunei the Cabin Crew decided that we were too wobbly to cope with Dubai Airport so they stuck a "Red-Card" on our outer garments, which meant that on arrival there we would travel to the Transit Lounge, another security check and back to the Aircraft by wheelchair, which turned out to be a blessing in disguise as the distance to be covered at Dubai was more than we could have handled.

Having gone for a painful few weeks before departure to ensure that I had a full set of teeth to smile at the camera I took off with dentures that fitted but both were causing ulcers, even though I had been back to the dentist on several occasions for adjustment. The top plate ended up fine but the lower is still not right, which is causing discomfort. That, combined with a reduction in mobility

of the left hip and knee as well as the right ankle has meant that I am glad I took my walking stick and very grateful for the wheelchair assistance. I can only hope that I hold out until the next weekend, as I want to look as well as presentable as possible as your representative, even though I have truly joined the ranks of the wobblers.

Thirty-two hours after leaving our doorstep in Shailer Park we arrived at my sister's home in Sevenoaks, Kent. Tired, but conscious of the fact that even though the aircraft from Brunei to the UK stopping at Dubai was full, we were again comfortable, well fed and well looked after. I can certainly recommend this airline.

It was raining when we took off from Brunei and it started raining after we landed at Heathrow but cleared up very quickly and turned into a fine day.

Sunday was memorable for the lunch of pate (2 types), crab, prawns, crayfish tails and a truly tasty and succulent salad followed by raspberries and cream accompanied by suitable wines; an afternoon watching a South African Louis Oosthuizen win the British Open Golf at St Andrews, then a light supper of Lobster Bisque, pate and more wine.

Monday was a shopping expedition where the fruit and vegetables were easily recognisable and cost the same as in Australia except the currency was marked with the £ sign as opposed to the \$! Other items were similarly priced as I got a new metal expanding watchstrap for £8 that would have cost me \$15 at the Logan Hyperdome so, while the fruit and vegetables are more expensive, other items are cheaper as I bought a new leather belt for \$4.99 whereas the cheapest in Oz was \$24.

Lunch at a pub The Swan on The Green in West Peckham Kent was a Seafood platter of the most scrumptious selection for £12.50 accompanied by two glasses of "scrumpy". The scrumpy was very refreshing but stronger than the beer.

Travelling back to Sevenoaks on the B roads was interesting as they are very narrow and one has to take a lot of care when passing. One is reminded of the charm of the English countryside when for mile after mile you drive through leafy tunnels, the shade of which hides some small potholes.

The weather has been hot and dry for the past few weeks that has resulted in the lawns looking very dry and flower beds full of wilting plants that means lots of watering. In some parts of the country they even have water restrictions!

That evening we watched a tape produced by the BBC titled a Day to Remember covering the First World War in which there was a film clip of The Lancashire Fusiliers about to go over the top in 1916 which shows my father as an officer about to lead his troops. I have long known about this clip but only have a brief section of the programme whereas this time I saw the full Part 1 of a 2-part series on the Great War. In the course of this programme they discuss the plight of a Sgt who was executed for desertion, whereas in fact he had been following an express order from his severely wounded commander who had told him to

run back to Battalion HQ and warn them of his being shot. This programme does not show the British Generals in a particularly good light and the incident of the execution is a shameful blot on Haig!

Tuesday found Rosemary doing some more shopping with my sister Felicity then we met up at an Italian Café, “Café Nero” in the High Street then back home for a repeat of Sunday’s lunch plus a platter of Scottish Mussels in Cream and White wine a Crab Pate and Crab Terrine!

Wednesday dawned and we were driven to Sevenoaks Railway Station to travel to Derby and after being loaded on to the train we were unloaded at Charing Cross where we took a taxi to St Pancras Station, as we weren’t able to make the journey by tube with the load of luggage we were taking.

On boarding the train we found that our booked seats and those of other passengers were not displayed in the carriage but everyone found somewhere to sit; then the start was delayed when the announcer told us that the train hadn’t got a driver, which caused us some mirth and, when the driver arrived, we actually left only 8 minutes late. Half way, an announcement was made that there were no more hot drinks available in the Buffet Car but the rest of the journey was smooth and we arrived at Derby only 8 minutes late!

We were met by Rosemary’s brother and wife, driven to Nottingham where we were well looked after over the next two days and on Saturday morning around lunchtime they drove us to Whitwell, booked us into the Barnsdale Lodge where we saw other faces from the past and having unpacked they then took us to the Whitwell Conference Centre where the reunion was being held.

Having obtained our name badges we wandered around the premises starting with the room containing memorabilia. Among the items on display was a photo album, which was looking the worse for wear, and I suggest that you, Barry Henson, if you read this, find a volunteer to re-fix the photos to the pages.

After that it was to find some coffee for Rosemary, some hot chocolate for me and to locate the bar. They were all in the same room, which was the obvious meeting place for everyone as they arrived at the party.

There was plenty of food to go around the 216 people present and two large braais were available for the “wors” and other meats. Everyone found somewhere to sit and chat and make the rounds. We all bought raffle tickets for the large quantity of gifts on display but unfortunately my luck deserted me and I didn’t win anything! It was a time for catching up with people we hadn’t seen for many years but I will keep the names for the official function on Sunday.

The party started to break up around 2200 and Rosemary and I were kindly driven back to the Lodge by members of the Henson family.

Sunday breakfast was shared with Jock Pirrett who had stayed up late chatting to friends and was looking a bit wan at the table and then we took a taxi to the Conference Centre where we caught a Coach to travel to Alrewas. Some 112

members and families travelled in two Coaches to the National Memorial Arboretum where it was quite obvious that there had been two other ceremonies during the morning judging by the large numbers of police senior officers in uniform and scores of “bikies” in their leathers.

It is an enormous site and we had to ask the way to the place where a large marquee was erected where we obtained copies of the Last Parade programme and queued for a very pleasant finger lunch of snacks and light refreshments.

At 1345 a bugle call sounded the command “Fall In” when members, who wanted to march, paraded in three ranks behind the banner bearer Parry Jones. The rest of the gathering, the wobblies, including me, the wives, children and other guests made their way to the Memorial Site where we were seated in a Mobile Stand erected on the site.

The Parade commanded by Takkie MacIntosh, who was 80 on 4 July, but certainly didn’t look it, was addressed:

“Attention By the Right Quick March”

The members, at least at Company Strength, wearing Badged Blazers, or Lounge Suit, with Regimental Tie and Medals marched off proudly and courageously with medals jingling while, if not in the manner of the Coldstream Guards, they were still a stirring sight, to the strains of martial music provided by speakers pounding out the music from the rear of a SUV driving in front of the Parade. Parry Jones proudly leading the way with the Banner flying high.

On arrival at the Site, Takkie commanded:

“Parade Halt; Right Turn, Shuffle Up, Form 4 ranks, Stand at Ease, Stand Easy”. He performed this duty as well as he had done many times in the past the only difference being that the last syllable, which is usually drawn out by all military drill commanders, was made in such a manner that it sounded as if someone had been squeezing the family jewels.

The Ceremony opened with the British National Anthem and privately I thought it was a pity that we didn’t have the Rhodesia National Anthem too, but was just a personal thought!

Peter Phillips, Chairman of the UK Branch addressed the gathering and gave us the history behind the project. It appeared that my Squad Instructor Bill Earle had made a private visit to the Arboretum a few years ago, where he conceived an idea to plant a tree with a Memorial Plaque. He put this idea to the Committee who discussed it fully and enhanced it to the idea of the Memorial as we see it today. The Memorial, constructed of Cotswold stone and standing almost seven feet high, was erected on site and Winston Hart, living in New Zealand, was invited to create the four bronze memorial plaques which grace each side of the Memorial.

Peter went on to cover the fundraising aspect in which Queensland got an honourable mention as being the first external branch to respond. The size of our donation was also mentioned, as was the donation provided by Jock Pirrett, Chairman of the Transvaal Branch (Gauteng). The cost of the project amounted

to £25,000 and, as the Committee was still short of the required funds, further donations were welcomed. Sadly Bill Earle died a few months ago.

Peter handed the Unveiling over to General the Lord Walker of Aldringham GCB CMG CBE DL, born in Salisbury in 1944, the son of S/A/C Bill Walker. He lived in various towns and cities of Rhodesia, educated at Milton School before completing his education in the UK. Joined the British Army in 1966 and rose to become Chief of the Defence Staff in 2002. On retiring in 2006 was created a Life Peer as Baron Walker. He is Patron of the BSAP Trust.

His speech covered the value of the BSAP to Rhodesia and extolled the virtues of that great country. He then unveiled the Memorial.

The Reverend Terry Mesley-Spong CLJ (4600) then dedicated the Memorial and the Roll of Honour, which will be placed in a memorial casket and 'laid up' in the Arboretum Chapel.

The Final Address was made by Peter Allum, the last Commissioner of the BSAP. He looked a little frail but otherwise able to stand and deliver his address.

This was followed the Poem THE REGIMENT composed by Dave Blacker and read by Barry Henson, which is repeated below:

THE REGIMENT

Our numbers dwindle now and fade
Will history prove a mark we made?
I doubt we'll merit but a line
Just memories, which are yours and mine
But in our hearts we thought it right
To make a place for Black and White
Our cause thought just, our spirits strong
Oh History, can you prove us wrong?
Let men deride and have no care
We can with pride state "I was there..."

There was a presentation of a bouquet of flowers to Lady Walker and engraved glass beer mugs to the General, Peter Phillips, the Reverend Mesley-Spong and Winston Hart.

Takkie gave the final commands to the Parade. "Parade attention, British South Africa Police – Dismiss" at which the Parade turned right, marched three steps and broke away to the Regimental March 'Kum a Kye'.

Every photographer in sight then descended on the Memorial to read the plaques and members be photographed with various friends or groups.

I was photographed with the only other member of Squad 5/51 on Parade, Cliff Rogers; with Winston Hart and Peter Dewe as the members present of the NI Team at the cross border raid on Chimoio; with Roger Capper and Ian McLaren as the present members of the CIO Technical Branch; with Mel O'Brien as the two members of Rhodesia Athletics that took a Junior Athletics Team to the UK

during the sanctions years in 1973 when we took the opportunity to attend a course at Loughborough University, to become Senior British Athletics Coaches. Elsewhere at Whitwell I met up with and was photographed with Jeannie May, widow of Ricky May, who was present with her daughter Sue Trenchard the only other person from Queensland besides Rosemary and me; Jennie Bradshaw widow of Tony Bradshaw of Njuzi fame when we paddled down the Zambezi for seven weeks in 1968 from Kariba to the Indian Ocean.

I was also pleased to meet up with one of my army colleagues from Operation Hurricane Col. Vic Walker; Special Forces and Hurricane Col. Dave Heppenstall, COMOPs Group Captain Peter Petter-Boyer and another Army contact Alistair Christie.

Both Rosemary and I were made very welcome with hugs and kisses from many of the children, now grown up with husbands and wives, of members with whom I had served and the whole weekend was a very memorable occasion.

Other members present that I met and chatted to included Jim McEvoy, Tim Weimer, Clive Shelley, Chris and Helga Sewell, Bev and JB Jaboor, Joyce and Alan Best, Peter Allum, Lord Walker, Winston Hart, Peter Dewe, Roger Capper and his family, Peter Dancer, Fred Punter, Alan Toms, Alan Lane, Barry Henson, Jeanie and their stunning daughters and husbands, Jock Pirrett, Dave Patterson, Peter Biddulph, Parry Jones, Jim Hazlett to whom I gave an interview towards the DVD of the proceedings, Robin and Carol Harvey from Ireland, Willie Cornell from the USA, Terry Keen from Canada, Andy Field and his charming wife from Harare, Raoul Gilbert and a lady friend from Mallorca accompanied by his daughter Debbie, Murray and Mavis Harrison from Ibiza and others too numerous to remember.

One interesting facet of the chats was the number of enquiries about the welfare of David and Jean Clinker, Mike and Ginny King, John Gold and Will Keys. Take heart, even though you live in Queensland you are still remembered by your friends and ex-colleagues.

It was a fantastic weekend and as the Coaches pulled away at 1600 to return to Whitwell I was proud to salute the men and women of the force.

In closing I must pay tribute to the members of the Committee of the UK Branch who laid on a splendid weekend and a fitting ceremony for the Last Parade and the Unveiling of the Memorial to the Force.

Best wishes Mike Edden