



# REVEILLE

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## RAAANT Newsletter – June 2020 Edition.

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### President's Message

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Greetings everyone from a beautiful, dry season Darwin.

I trust this edition of *Reveille* finds you and yours happy and healthy and that the Corona virus (COVID-19) has not had any impact other than inconvenience and the disruption of your normal (or what used to be normal) day-to-day life. I find it hard to believe that one half of the year has gone already and that Christmas is not all that far away. I suspect the stores will be advertising Christmas 'goodies' soon!

It is with much regret and sadness that I begin this edition of *Reveille* with news of the passing of another of our longer-term members and supporters, Captain Neil Benton. Neil, who I understand was a foundation member of the RAAANT and the then East Point Military Museum passed away at Kempsey, NSW on 21<sup>st</sup> April 2020 after a long battle with cancer. Neil was dedicated to the Association and the Museum and was a friendly, helpful and funny man who had served his country and this Association for many years. He was a good man and a good soldier and will be sadly missed by all who knew him. Our sincere condolences go to Neil's family. We have included a tribute to Captain Neil Harrison Benton in this edition of *Reveille*.

On another tact, it's hard to believe the impact COVID-19 has had on Australia and other parts of the world, including our little bit, but I'm pleased to say the NT has been spared the full brunt of the virus and the control measures as it did in 1918-19. I am not aware of any of our members, staff, contractors or volunteers having contracted the virus and for that we are all truly thankful. The biggest impact on the Association has been the closing of the Museum to the public. The Museum was closed on the 25<sup>th</sup> March following the instruction from the Commonwealth and NT governments. By far the most regrettable component of the closure was having to stand five very good employees down. Secondly, of course, was the fact that the closure ceased all revenue flow but it didn't cease the expenditure flow unfortunately!

Having said that, I'm pleased to report that the Association has been successful in obtaining Commonwealth and NT government funding via various business support programmes to assist in offsetting the loss of income and covering expenditure such as power, water, wages and other operating costs. While I will leave it to the Museum Director to provide further detail on the closure and plans for the Museum to reopen, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the MC members, DMM staff and volunteers for their efforts, support and patience throughout this very difficult and often frustrating period. Nonetheless, we have worked our way through it so far



and will continue to do so with view to reopening as soon as the state and territory borders are reopened and people are moving freely around Australia. The MC has made the very hard decision to remain closed on the basis that 70% of the DMM's revenue is derived from tourists and that, traditionally, the 'locals' have not supported the museum during the wet season for a number of reasons. This means the museum experiences considerable financial loss during each wet season and without tourists, the current dry season would be, in effect, a wet season trading period. Not good for the bottom line I can assure you!

Having said all of that, I'm pleased to advise that the DMM will reopen to the public on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> July – one week after the NT borders will be reopened. I'm also pleased to advise that the decision to remain closed until the NT borders reopened was judicious in that the four-month period of closure was financially beneficial to the Association with the financial loss being minimal and in one month a small profit being made.

On 20<sup>th</sup> June we signed a three-year Defence of Darwin Experience Operating Agreement with the NT government and have had preliminary discussions with various NT government departments re: DMM/DDE reopening strategy and in particular reducing the operating costs associated with power consumption via climate control requirements. The 'journey' has commenced but there is a long, hard road to hoe me thinks. Stay tuned!

Likewise, we have recommenced discussions with NT government regarding the placement of the two 6" guns that were on station here at East Point on 19<sup>th</sup> February 1942. MAGNT and DIPL have given their approval and have advised they are awaiting 'official government approval' for the guns to be placed in the DDE forecourt. We have submitted a funding grant application to the Australian National Maritime Museum to cover the cost of repainting and preparing the guns for their relocation and we await a reply. Even though we are pushing ahead with repainting the guns etc in anticipation of their relocation, I have no idea as to who/whom is to provide/authorise the 'official approval', hence we can nothing other than 'hurry up and wait'!

Guns in the forecourt aside, it's very pleasing to see the Director and our volunteers have been busy with other curatorial projects some of which have now been completed. The 3.7" gun now has weather protection and the Korean War Jeep ambulance and the WW2 US Army mobile workshop have been 'refreshed' externally and have had the appropriate emblems and numbers attached and all look great. Well done everyone involved in these huge projects!

As you know, ANZAC Day services were cancelled across Australia and the RAAANT MC cancelled the planned members' Kapyong Day commemoration on 24<sup>th</sup> April. We supported the notion of commemorating ANZAC day at home with a candlelight vigil in your driveway etc. I don't know how many of our members, staff and volunteers paid their respects in such a manner but I do know Sue, Steve and I did at our homes. Steve and Sue have been kind enough to allow us to publish images of the ANZAC tributes at their houses this year. Well done and many thanks to all who participated in any way, shape or form.

With ANZAC Day 2020 having been and gone, our hopes are high that we will be able to host the Darwin Military Muster and commemoration of the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the end of WW2 and family fun and learning day. It is hoped that those activities will take place at DMM on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> August with a Battle of Long Tan commemoration to be held for members on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> August. We are hoping the ADF will support the activities on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> and the 'plan' is to invite Darwin-based former members of 3RAR to the Long Tan commemoration on the 16<sup>th</sup>. We



are also hoping that 2021 will see us hosting both Kapyong and Long Tan commemorations for our members and invited guests and that the activities will become annual events.

Regardless of the impact of COVID-19, I'm pleased to report that all is well within the Association and that we keep moving forward in terms of the sustainability of the Association and the Darwin Military Museum. As I mentioned in the last edition, (and the one before that I think) we continue to work through what often appears to be a never-ending agenda, and again, I am pleased to report that we are making headway on all fronts with many positive outcomes. Again, I offer my thanks to all members of the RAAANT Management Committee for their efforts and support as without them and the members and our volunteers (some of whom have not become members as yet) there would be no Association.

In the weeks since the DMM closed to the public, our staff and volunteers have been working to prepare and submit government financial assistance to help us through this very difficult period. I will leave it to the RAAANT Secretary and the Museum Director to outline the applications and to provide an update on the progress thereto. Suffice to say we did receive financial support in May and June via the JobKeeper, BAS refund programme and various NT government support programmes. With that support coming in, it is pleasing to be able to report our financial situation remains strong, regardless of the state of the NT's economy and the impact of COVID-19. We were hoping for a good 'tourist season' this year and our plans were well progressed on several activities throughout 2020, but most of those initiatives are now 'on hold'.

In closing, I offer my/our thanks to the Darwin Military Museum staff and volunteers for their untiring efforts on the Association's behalf. Without them, and the effort they contribute, it is doubtful the Association and Museum would be in the situation and condition they are. I also wish to welcome our new members Paul Tewkesbury and Oliver Thompson and to encourage you all to enlist at least one new member this year.

Again, many thanks and I look forward to working with you all throughout the remainder of the year.

**Norm Cramp, President RAAANT.**

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### Secretary's Observations

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Hello everyone.

It's been a very strange, confusing and sometimes frustrating few months since we last 'spoke' via *Reveille* and I'm glad I can report it was all positive and productive – until COVID-19 arrived. Our resident virus aside, the Association's Management Committee continued to meet on the third Thursday of each month with very good attendance and a lot of business being transacted. Unfortunately, I have to report once again that I haven't been 'on deck', in person, for much of it as I have spent much of the time isolated in Queensland and finding it very difficult to get 'home' to the NT. I have however, been able to stay in touch and perform my secretarial duties (with a



lot of help from my MC mates), and I can (once again) assure you that Norm keeps me well informed and 'up to the mark'.

As Norm says, the biggest, saddest and worst news for the quarter apart from the loss of our old mate, Neil Benton, was the closure of the DMM and the standing down of the five DMM staff members. We have tried to keep in touch with each of them but in some cases to no avail. We can only hope that they and their families are okay and that we can make contact in the lead up to the reopening of the DMM on 25<sup>th</sup> July. Talking of which, it is probably opportune that I mention the reopen options that the MC discussed at the May monthly meeting so you can see the range of options and issues that were available and confronting us. In brief, the reopening options put to the MC meeting included those presented below. Please note the options are in no order of merit or recommendation.

- **Option 1.** Reopen DMM as soon as possible (ASAP) and operate at normal dry season criteria (i.e.: 9:30am-5pm 7 days per week with full staffing)
- **Option 2.** Reopen DMM ASAP and operate at normal wet season criteria (i.e.10am-3:30pm 7 days per week with reduced staffing levels)
- **Option 3.** Reopen DMM ASAP on a limited number of days per week (i.e. Friday and Saturday) under wet season criteria and reduced staffing levels. Please note Friday and Saturday have been suggested to include part of the weekend but avoid Sunday trading due to penalty rates applying.
- **Option 4.** Only open DMM for set, short periods of time (i.e. school holidays or long weekends but avoiding Sunday trading) under wet season criteria.
- **Option 5.** Remain closed until the state and territory borders are reopened and open 6 days per week (no Sunday trading) under wet season criteria.
- **Option 6.** Open DMM ASAP on wet season criteria with 1 x staff member (Wed, Thurs, and Fri when Rhonda Purcell is on duty as Admin Officer) and 1 x staff member and 1 x volunteer (Sat, Sun, Mon and Tues) if legal and we can source a volunteer(s).
- **Option 7:** Open DMM ASAP on wet season criteria with NTG paying the shortfall between revenue and expenditure given NT government is keen to have such entities as the DMM open to the public ASAP and the climate control requirements are set by NTG.

At the May MC meeting, it was decided to go with Option 5. Our decision to remain closed until the borders are reopened has been forwarded to NTG and Norm has had discussions with various NTG departments regarding reducing the operating costs of DDE prior to our reopening. The NTG officials were understanding and supportive and have pledged to undertake the necessary investigations and to implement whatever action they can to reduce the operating costs.

Following the Chief Minister's announcement on 19<sup>th</sup> June that the NT borders would reopen on 17<sup>th</sup> July, the RAAANT MC decided at its June meeting to open on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> July. This date was chosen in order to allow the DMM to be 100% tested and made operational and for interstate road travellers time to get to Darwin and settle in.



Norm et al. were very busy preparing submissions for financial assistance from both the Commonwealth and NT governments. Those applications included;

- Commonwealth JobKeeper payments. First payment received on 20<sup>th</sup> May
- Commonwealth BAS fund. First payment received 20<sup>th</sup> May
- NTG Small Business Survival Fund. Payments received 29<sup>th</sup> May
- NTG Immediate Works Programme. Submission preparation commenced but terminated as the programme closed two days after being opened for applications
- Business Improvement via Innovation (light and sound display). Project and process on hold at present.
- Special purpose project grants including a replacement vehicle (application unsuccessful), Military Muster/Family Fun Day (application unsuccessful) and the construction of a (display) shed via Commonwealth and NT government programmes
- Business Hardship grant (power and water concessions). Approved and hardship certificate submitted to Jacana (power) and Power&Water (water)

As I said in the December edition, our plan is to remain involved with the ADF and its family and community networks again this year and provide what support we can. It is anticipated that we will participate, once again, in DVA's members' health and wellbeing week. We have asked ADF for their support of our Military Muster and VJ commemoration and we have received notice that our application is still 'alive' and being processed. As Officers from 1<sup>st</sup> Aviation Regiment have been in touch with Norm re helping out at DMM and perhaps providing some items for display in the Vietnam Gallery, assistance on the muster day, an ANZAC Day event and a regimental function during the dry season. All sounds pretty positive, but as Norm says, 'stay tuned'.

I'd like to welcome our new members, Paul Tewkesbury and Oliver Thompson, and to thank them for joining our small band. My thanks, along with Norm's, to our faithful band of volunteers in Gaynor Lovett, Marina Lach, Roger Harvey, Steve Asher, Peter Blackadder, Rob Harbort, Steve Martin and Chris Lach for their volunteering efforts. It's great to have new members with us, but as Norm (Hawk) said, we need more and I support his request to you all to try and encourage friends, family etc. to 'enlist'. We will continue our membership recruitment drive this year, as we all know attracting and retaining members and volunteers is hard and becoming harder each year – if not month! So, if you know of anyone you consider a 'suitable person' for membership, please have them complete an application form (no fee attached) and forward same to me.

The Museum Director and our Grants Secretary, Mr. Peter Ingman, worked hard during the COVID-19 period and the quarter between Reveille editions at securing grant funding from a wide range of entities including Federal, Territory, local government bodies and other museum entities such as the National Australia Maritime Museum. We have been successful in receiving support funding and as a result the 'bottom line' remains quite healthy.

In closing, I also offer many thanks to the Management Committee members, the DMM staff and volunteers for the great job they are doing and have done. It's great to be a part of it and I look forward to the next half of 2020 when we the restrictions are lifted and I'm back in the NT.

Regards and all the very best for the rest of 2020,

**Ms. Chris Cates. Secretary RAAANT**



**ANZAC Day tribute 2020 at RAAANT member Steve Martin's house**



**ANZAC Day tribute 2020 at RAAANT member Sue's house**





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## *Museum Director's Report*

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Greetings and salutations everyone, wherever you may be.

I hope you and yours are well and happy and that the year so far has been safe and enjoyable, albeit the virus outbreak has made life somewhat difficult and probably a little boring. Let's hope we can get COVID-19 under control soon and that we all stay safe and well in the meantime. Now that the first half of 2020 has come and gone, and the dry season is well and truly upon us, it's time to bring you all up-to-date with the 'goings on' at DMM in the recent past and what's planned for the future.

Firstly, I'd like to take this opportunity to pay my respects and offer sincere condolences to the Benton family on the loss of Neil. I met Neil in 2008/9 when I first became involved with the DMM and our friendship commenced immediately. He was a wonderful, friendly, helpful, generous and supportive man who valued friendship, kin and loyalty above all else. I never saw, or heard, Neil angry or upset and his love of, and commitment to, the 'East Point Military Museum' shone through whenever he was on site or discussing the place. He, along with Allan Ogden, John Johnston and Jim Wright (to mention but a few), were the RAAANT's living 'senior statesmen' having been involved in the museum since its inception. I never heard anyone utter a bad word about Neil and if he made a derogatory statement about anyone, it was generally as part of a story or a particular incident. I am deeply saddened by Neil's demise as I know all who knew him would be – but on the bright side, I had the pleasure of knowing him and being considered and called his friend.

I'm afraid it's more bad news with respect to the DMM's trading record, as it's a rather bleak picture given we closed in late March and have had nil visitors or revenue since then. Although, as the President said we have fared quite well thanks to government financial support for which we are extremely grateful, and overall have suffered a minimal financial impact. As you are aware, one of the highest operating costs is the power consumption via the air conditioning requirements of the NT government. This cost has been sitting at approximately \$200,000 since we installed the solar power system but we're hoping for a significant reduction in cost as a result of the old AC chiller unit being replaced. The old unit has been replaced by two, smaller, more powerful and more economical package units at NTG expense. The new units were commissioned in late January/early February and we saw a reduction in power costs of well over \$2000 per month by mid-March. Following the closure of DMM and the removal of the NTG artefacts in DDE, we shut down the air conditioning systems to the DDE and the CP. This resulted in a significant drop in costs, which, along with the government financial assistance, sees us in a reasonably comfortable financial position.

On the downside, our plans for hosting a members' afternoon on 24<sup>th</sup> April to commemorate the battle of Kapyong, Korea in 1951, were dashed by COVID-19, however, we are still planning for the Military Muster on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> August and a members' function to commemorate the battle of Long Tan on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> August. The Long Tan commemoration will be, essentially, a members' only function but it has been agreed to invite guests and to apply a small 'surcharge' to cover the costs of food and drinks. The ADF has advised it is still interested in supporting the military muster



which will also be a family fun and learning day as well as an opportunity to invite members of the NT community to visit the museum to shake off the 'isolation blues' and support their very own military museum. Private collectors such as Professor Len Notaras, Clinton Bock and our member Steve Martin have confirmed they will display some of their items on the day. Members of the Motor Vehicle Enthusiasts Club have also pledged their support by having a variety of WW2 military vehicles on display and for free, fun rides.

The plan is to host the 'muster' not only in the existing DMM/DDE buildings, but also in tents that will house different displays and outlets. The day will be a mix of 'show and tell' and 'show and sell' with displays covering elite forces, signals, a kids' HQ, a Quartermaster's Store and so on. Planning is well progressed and contact has been made with the new OIC, ADF-JOSS Darwin, Major Steve Bain, regarding ADF (and possibly USMC) support for the activities. There's a lot of work to be done yet, and I'd like to thank Rhonda, Sue and Shane for their contribution toward planning and arranging the event to date. Although not confirmed, it is being considered the last activity on the day will be the surrender of a Japanese national flag by a person dressed in an Imperial Japanese Army uniform to a person dressed in Australian jungle green uniform complete with 1937 pattern webbing etc. Of course the sensitivities are to be considered here. Those issues will be addressed prior to any final arrangements being made.

Our volunteers and staff have been plenty busy on various curatorial projects, notably the refurbishment of the Korean War Jeep ambulance, refurbishment of the WW2 US Army mobile workshop, refurbishment of the 3.7" anti-aircraft gun and its transportation trolley, weed eradication and planting out of Gun Emplacement No: 2, the ongoing updating of the collection database, documenting all maritime artefacts, identifying and listing all badges and medals to mention but a few projects. I regret to advise that one of our volunteers, Peter Blackadder, had an accident at home (his right thumb bumped into a rotating saw blade) whilst working on a DMM project. However, I'm pleased to advise that Peter is now fully recovered and is getting used to his left hand hammer!

While the DMM is closed to the public we are working through our maintenance programme and should any members wish to lend a hand, please give me a call on 0418844682 as, even though we'd welcome your support, we need to keep numbers down and execute the work through the week when others are on site. We also need to be mindful of the social distancing requirements and avoid crowding any work station/site at DMM.

As a result of the virus situation, my planned visit to Canberra in late March was postponed but it looks possible the trip may be possible in August/September. The NTG-sponsored trip was to carry out research at the AWM regarding the book I am writing on behalf of the RAAANT. The book is an extension of the **Worth Fighting For** booklet regarding NT Indigenous men who saw active service from the Great War to Vietnam. Advice to hand from the NT government is that the grant period has been extended without penalty to allow the research to take place. Many thanks NTG!

On the staffing scene, I regret to advise that I/we had to let the following DMM staff members go as a result of the museum closing. Jana Konkolova, Ethan Ashburton, Ronnie Cavanagh, Veronika Smith and Tracey Archer were all stood down as of 25<sup>th</sup> March. However, since the decision to reopen was made Jana, Ethan and Ronnie have confirmed they are available to recommence duty at DMM on 23<sup>rd</sup> July. Veronika and/or Tracey will be contacted in the event additional staff are required. Here's hoping.



### *Other activities and development projects for 2020.*

Some of the 'matters' that have our attention as we move into the second half of 2020 include;

- Complete the restoration projects currently underway before 25<sup>th</sup> July
- Present the inaugural Darwin Military Muster at the Darwin Military Museum in August
- Develop the DMM App
- Complete the DMM website upgrade
- Continue our close alliance with Darwin RSL, Legacy NT and Veterans Australia etc
- Maintain and expand our volunteer base
- Seek additional specific project grants from all levels of government

As can be seen, it has been another busy year at the RAAANT and the DMM so far and will be for the rest of 2020.

In closing, I offer my thanks to the members of the RAAANT MC for their support, faith and confidence in me in offering me another three-year contract that I have accepted. I also offer also offer my sincere thanks to the DMM team of Rhonda Purcell and Jayden Kearney. Thanks also to DMM/RAAANT volunteers Gaynor Lovett, Marina Lach, Peter Blackadder, Roger Harvey, Steve Asher, Steve Martin, Peter Nyuens and Rob Harbort and Grants Secretary Peter Ingman for your support and efforts on behalf of the DMM. You all make it a pleasure working and being involved here, and the progress we're making can't happen without you. Many, many thanks!

Should you wish to contribute to *Reveille*, please forward the script to me at, [norman.cramp@darwinmilitarymuseum.com.au](mailto:norman.cramp@darwinmilitarymuseum.com.au)

**Norm (Hawk) Cramp,  
Director, Darwin Military Museum**

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### *A TRIBUTE TO CAPTAIN NEIL HARRISON BENTON, RFD.*

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Neil Harrison Benton was born at Marrickville, NSW, on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1934, one of four children, two boys and two girls, born to John Christopher and Ivy Harrison Benton. Neil married twice in his life, with the first marriage to Janet producing five children being Christopher, David, Samantha, Peter and Michael and the second to Anna resulting in the birth of Cameron, who is now deceased.

It is not clear as to when Neil arrived in Darwin but it is known that his involvement at East Point commenced in the early 1960s when he enlisted in the Citizens Military Force (CMF) on 10<sup>th</sup> September that year. Neil had a bounty of tales and stories to tell of his early days in Darwin and the CMF, with one of his favourites being when he was a young soldier under the command of Lt. Col. Jack Haydon, the founding father of the RAAANT and its inaugural President. Neil recalled an incident at East Point when he and another soldier came to fisticuffs after an evening parade. He



never said who won the fight other than the always practical, pragmatic, Lt. Colonel who decided the punishment would be for Neil and his sparring partner to start shovelling the dirt off the embankment of one of the 9.2' gun emplacements. This they did until such time as Jack Haydon said 'that's enough. Shovel it back in!'

Neil was quickly promoted to the rank of Corporal serving at that rank with a signals unit at Darwin in/around 1963/64. One evening after a 407 Signal Squadron (Neil's unit) parade, he was approached by an officer who said he was looking for volunteers for an artillery battery the Army was going to raise and deploy around Darwin. The officer said the need for the battery was in case of trouble with Indonesia during the 'Confrontation' between that country and Malaysia.

Neil took up the offer of a transfer and within weeks he was posted to the 121st Light Anti-Aircraft Battery (121 LAA Bty) that had very recently been formed. It was hoped that the battery would be ready for action in a very short timeframe, but there were manning problems as Larrakeyah Barracks could not provide sufficient personnel at short notice to man and operate the guns. Hence, a short, sharp recruitment drive was initiated that resulted in, as Neil said in an interview, 'with at least 70 new people marched into the unit'. Training commenced with some urgency and Neil recalled 'some hairy times' as the tension with Indonesia grew. Gun pits were prepared for the weapons at East Point, Lee Point and Emery Point and the WW2 air raid sirens at RAAF Base Darwin were repaired and tested on a regular basis. Darwin was preparing for war again!

One evening during the 'Confrontation' period when tension was running high and nerves were on edge, the gun crew based at Emery Point to protect Darwin Harbour heard the sounds of a diesel engine coming from the harbour. The gun crew immediately thought the sound was coming from an Indonesian landing barge, or barges, entering the harbour, hence, the gun No: 1, called for the searchlight to activate and to fix on the 'target'. Neil recalled it took about five seconds after the call for 'lights' went out to the searchlight party for the gun-layer to acquire the target and fire. At the critical moment on this particular occasion, the gun No: 1 called 'lights' and the crew sprang into action - only to be stopped by the No: 1 calling 'Stop, stop, stop' as the target was seen to be local, coastal community resupply barge. As Neil said, the barge and its crew were 'within seconds of being annihilated as the gun-layer that night was the best in the battery'.<sup>1</sup> It was a very close run thing that the men laughed about much later, but it was deadly serious business on the night!

Throughout his career in the CMF, Neil served in 130 Corps Locating Battery, 407 Signal Squadron, 121 Light Anti-Aircraft Battery, 4 Field Regiment, Headquarters 7 Military District and Headquarters 7 Military District Training Company. He rose through the ranks of the CMF and while attached to 4 Field Regiment did an 'Officer Visit' to Vietnam between 23<sup>rd</sup> July and 5<sup>th</sup> August 1970 at the rank of Lieutenant. He served in the CMF until 29<sup>th</sup> April 1984, serving in a full-time capacity from 21<sup>st</sup> July 1970 to 18<sup>th</sup> August 1970, and retiring with the rank of Captain. For his services to Australia he was awarded the Reserve Forces Decoration (RFD), Australian Active Service Medal 1945-75 with Clasp Vietnam, Vietnam Logistic and Support Medal, National Medal, Australian Defence Medal and the Returned from Active Service Badge.<sup>2</sup>

During the 50 years plus of his involvement with the RAAANT and the DMM, he served as President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Committee member, volunteer, 'dogs body',

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<sup>1</sup> Cpl. Cameron Jamieson, 'Darwin's mid-sixties defenders', *The Soldier's Newspaper*.

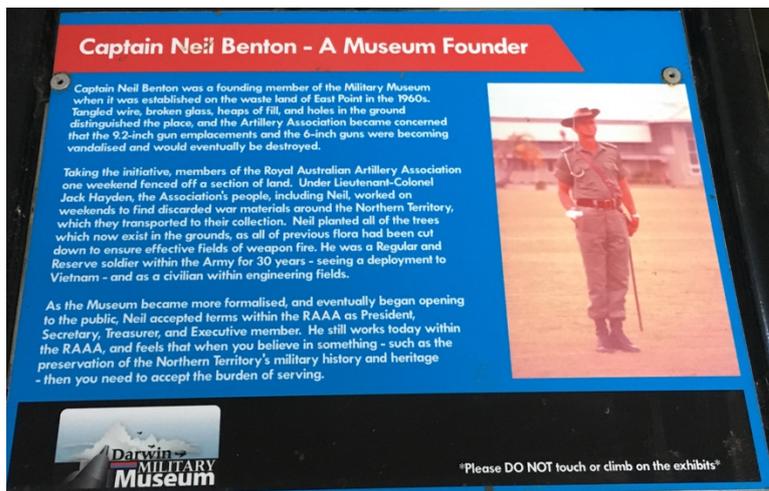
<sup>2</sup> 'Statement of Service: Neil Harrison BENTON, RFD', Department of Defence, Australian Government.



tireless worker and 'Mr. Nice Guy'. He was one of the first members to be awarded life membership of the RAAANT, receiving the award in 2001. As Norm said earlier, Neil Benton was a good man and a good soldier. He was a man of honour and integrity, a great personal friend and great supporter of the RAAANT and DMM. He will be sadly missed by all who knew him and as Louise Ogden, daughter of Neil's friend and RAAANT stalwart, the late Capt. Allan Ogden said, 'another of our family passes away'.

Some years ago, Neil was honoured within the RAAANT and DMM by way of having an avenue named after him and an interpretive sign telling something of the 'Neil Benton story'. At its June 2020 meeting, the RAAANT Management Committee voted unanimously to commemorate Neil by placing a memorial plaque atop a block of East Point sandstone, to be placed adjacent to the existing WW2 memorial wall and the original RAAANT Committee HQ building. The building (aka: shed) wherein Neil, Allan, Maurie Moore, John Johnston and Jim Wright, to mention but a few, planned the museum's development and spent some (limited) time in 'green can dreaming' as Neil and Allan called it.

Members of the RAAANT and staff of the DMM extend their sincere condolences to Neil's family. Vale Captain Neil Benton – job well done!





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## HISTORICAL ITEM

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### ERNEST EDWARD JOLLY. SERN 1758. 1<sup>st</sup> AIF.

#### An Unknown Territory ‘Digger’

By Norman S Cramp

Ernest Edward Jolly was one of two sons and a daughter born to Alfred Edward and Ada Bella (nee Hughes) Jolly.<sup>3</sup> Alfred arrived in Australia in 1877 with 17 shillings in his pocket but by 1883<sup>4</sup> he was able to start the firm of Jolly and Luxton in Bennett Street, Darwin. In 1893 Alfred took the business over and renamed it A.E. Jolly and Sons.<sup>5</sup> A.E. Jolly’s general store was famous in Darwin from before the turn of the Century until the 1940s<sup>6</sup> with the company advertising weekly in the *Northern Territory Times and Gazette* throughout the period 1911-1939.<sup>7</sup>

Ernest was born at Adelaide, South Australia (SA) in 1892 and was educated in that city prior to moving to Melbourne and then Darwin. He and his brother, Alfred William, took over the family business in Darwin in 1908<sup>8</sup> and, except for the period in which he served in the AIF in the Great War, he maintained that participation until the 1940s. The family business covered a variety of enterprises such as owning and operating the S.S. *Wai Hoi*, mining (Pine Creek and Daly River copper mine), battery owners and operators, and the pearling luggers ‘Gem’ and ‘Lightning’.<sup>9</sup> The Jolly brothers were well-known, and apparently well-liked, in Darwin with Ernest being a noted cricket player during the 1914 season and being mentioned quite often in the *Northern Territory Times and Gazette (NTT&G)* newspaper.<sup>10</sup> The store received generous support from the Darwin community and was a prominent building in the town.

At the outbreak of the Great War in August 1914, Ernest was residing in Darwin running the business and it wasn’t until 20<sup>th</sup> December 1915 that he left for Adelaide aboard the S.S. *Tasman* to enlist.<sup>11</sup> However, such enlistment did not occur until December 1916.<sup>12</sup> It appears he returned to Adelaide where he continued to work in the family business before leaving to

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<sup>3</sup> ‘Pioneer Register Number 1421, Ernest Edward Jolly’, Genealogical Society of the Northern Territory Inc.

<sup>4</sup> ‘Classified advertisement’, *Northern Standard* (Darwin), Friday 31<sup>st</sup> May, 1946, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Mepjolly, ‘Message Board’, Ancestry, website,

<https://www.ancestry.com.au/boards/surnames.jolley/393.1mb.shx>, accessed 7<sup>th</sup> October 2017.

<sup>6</sup> ‘Jolly’s - Stocks for Shooting Season’, *Northern Standard*, Friday 16<sup>th</sup> June 1939, p. 1. Also see photograph of the store, circa 1940, in this article.

<sup>7</sup> ‘Classified advertisement – A.E. Jolly’, *NTT&G*, Friday 10<sup>th</sup> January 1908, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> ‘Pioneer Register Number 1421, Ernest Edward Jolly’, Genealogical Society of the Northern Territory Inc.

<sup>9</sup> ‘Classified advertisement – A.E. Jolly’, *NTT&G*, Friday 10<sup>th</sup> January 1908, p. 1.

<sup>10</sup> ‘Cricket Average for Season 1914’, *Northern Territory Times and Gazette (NTT&G)*, Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> March 1915, p. 5.

<sup>11</sup> ‘Shipping – Sailed’, *NTT&G*, Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> December 1915, p. 8.

<sup>12</sup> ‘Attestation Paper of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad’, National Archives of Australia (NAA): B2455, JOLLY ERNEST EDWARD, Service Number (SERN) 1758, p. 1. Hereafter referred to as Attestation to Enlist.



enlist in Melbourne, although it is not clear as to why he did this as there were recruiting stations in Adelaide and elsewhere in SA. At the time he enlisted, he recorded his address as being 99 Riversdale Road, Hawthorn, Victoria.<sup>13</sup> Prior to enlisting he had suffered some 'slight heart trouble,' resulting in shortness of breath. Ernest put this down to a strain he suffered whilst starting a motor vehicle, but in 1919 an AIF Medical Officer surmised the 'trouble' was probably due to an enlarged heart with an 'incapacity of 25%'.<sup>14</sup>

Ernest enlisted at Melbourne on 16<sup>th</sup> March 1916, at which time he recorded his age as being twenty-three years and eight months, that he was single, employed as a 'Merchant (universal providers)' and with no previous military service.<sup>15</sup> He was six feet and three inches tall, weighed one hundred and forty pounds, was of medium complexion with light brown hair and grey eyes and of the Church of England faith.<sup>16</sup> He nominated his father, Alfred Edward Jolly of Brougham Place, North Adelaide, as his next of kin.<sup>17</sup> He embarked at Sydney, NSW, 3<sup>rd</sup> Military District (3MD) on 16<sup>th</sup> July 1917 aboard HMAT *Beltana* (Ship Number A72) and, on 26<sup>th</sup> August 1917, was marched into No's. 1&3 Details Camp, Parkhouse, England. On 4<sup>th</sup> September 1917 he was marched out to Wendover and then to the Australian Flying Corp (AFC) Depot, Halton Camp East (Wendover). On 16<sup>th</sup> November he was attached to 30<sup>th</sup> Squadron, AFC from the Training Depot and on 30<sup>th</sup> March 1918 he was attached to 1<sup>st</sup> Wing Headquarters Tethbury. On 12<sup>th</sup> May 1918, he was taken off strength (TOS) of 1<sup>st</sup> Wing Headquarters, although it is not clear why.<sup>18</sup> His war service record has only just been discovered, and as a result it has been confirmed that the information previously recorded and published regarding Ernest's war service is incorrect.<sup>19</sup>

One publication recorded that 'E.E. Jolly was not a returned soldier, although he had served in a private capacity as an ambulance driver in the Great War, driving an ambulance donated by his father'.<sup>20</sup> This report is partly correct, as Ernest was initially attached to the Australian Army Medical Corp as an ambulance driver before transferring to the AFC.<sup>21</sup> Another work on Territorians in the Great War never mentioned Ernest Jolly at all.<sup>22</sup> Probably, as Steven Farram says, 'because there was nothing to connect him [Jolly] to the NT on his attestation paper'.<sup>23</sup> Correct!

It seems Ernest had a reasonably comfortable war and it is clear that he never served at the front, however, it is not clear as to what role he played whilst attached to the AFC. Still, he did serve overseas and did manage to get himself into trouble by being 'absent from morning parade' at Tethbury on 20<sup>th</sup> December 1918. The war was over, he, along with his mates

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<sup>13</sup> 'Application to Enlist in the Australian Imperial Force', NAA: B2455, JOLLY ERNEST EDWARD, p. 18.

<sup>14</sup> 'Medical Report on an Invalid', NAA: B2455, JOLLY ERNEST EDWARD, p. 13.

<sup>15</sup> 'Attestation to Enlist', NAA: B2455, JOLLY ERNEST EDWARD, p. 1.

<sup>16</sup> 'Certificate of Medical Examination', NAA, B2455, JOLLY ERNEST EDWARD, p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> 'Attestation to Enlist', NAA: B2455, JOLLY ERNEST EDWARD, p. 1.

<sup>18</sup> 'War Gratuity Schedule', NAA: B2455, JOLLY ERNEST EDWARD, p. 22.

<sup>19</sup> Steven Farram, *Charles James Kirkland: The Life and Times of a Pioneer Newspaper Man in the Top End of Australia*, p. 80.

<sup>20</sup> C.F. (Frank) Geddes, *Darwin Returned Service League (RSL): A Concise History of its Concept and Development*, p. 18. Hereafter referred to as *Darwin RSL History*.

<sup>21</sup> 'Statement of Service', NAA: B2455, JOLLY ERNEST EDWARD, p. 4.

<sup>22</sup> Norman Cramp, *From Frontier to Frontline: Northern Territorians in the Great War 1914-1918*. Hereafter referred to as, *From Frontier to Frontline*.

<sup>23</sup> Farram, *Charles James Kirkland*, p. 80.



probably just wanted to go home, but the AIF found him guilty as charged and fined him five day's pay!<sup>24</sup>

He returned to Australia aboard the S.S. *Ventura*, disembarking in Sydney on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1919, following which he reported to HQ 3<sup>rd</sup> MD on 13<sup>th</sup> October 1919. He was discharged from the AIF on 12<sup>th</sup> November 1919, at which time he was residing at the Grand Central Hotel, Adelaide. For his service to Australia he was awarded the 1914/15 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.<sup>25</sup>

In August 1917, moves were afoot to establish a branch of the Returned Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen's Imperial League of Australia, the forerunner of today's Returned and Services League (RSL), in Darwin. At that time, a meeting of returned men was called by the Honorary Secretary, Mr. Joseph (Joe) Wilson.<sup>26</sup> This seems a little odd in that the League had not been 'officially' formed at that stage, yet Wilson had been declared the Honorary Secretary? A second meeting was held on the 6<sup>th</sup> September at which time it was decided to hold a concert and dance to fund the fledgling League.<sup>27</sup>

Once established, the League set about raising funds for a memorial to the Territorians who had fallen during the war, and to construct a Soldier's Memorial Hall (clubrooms) and this is where Ernest came to the fore. A meeting was held in January 1918 to discuss the construction of a 'lasting memorial',<sup>28</sup> at which time it was agreed that such a memorial would be established and that it would be 'made of bronze and be affixed to a wall in the Town Hall'.<sup>29</sup> The plan changed and on Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> April 1921, the Soldier's Memorial, in the shape and form of today's Darwin Cenotaph was unveiled. Eighteen months later, on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> October 1922, the Soldier's Memorial Hall, the forerunner of the Darwin RSL clubrooms, was opened. The building had been constructed (mainly) via public subscriptions but equally, if not more importantly, it was built on land donated by Ernest Jolly, a former 'Digger' himself.<sup>30</sup> Ernest had repaid the citizens of Darwin for their support over the years since his father had opened the business in 1893.

As mentioned previously, the Jolly's business interests were not only focussed on the general store, rather, they had an interest in the pearling industry and operated their own lugger for a period. The Jolly's lugger, named the *Picton*, operated from Thursday Island in 1920s before being sold to the Methodist Missionary Association of Australasia in 1922 to service the missions at Goulburn and Milingimbi Islands.<sup>31</sup> The name was changed to the *J.M. McBride*, but she was often referred to as the '*John McBride*'.

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<sup>24</sup> 'War Gratuity Schedule', NAA: B2455, JOLLY ERNEST EDWARD, p. 32. Tethbury is spelt Tetbury in this document.

<sup>25</sup> 'Transferred to Australian Imperial Force', NAA: B2455, JOLLY ERNEST EDWARD, p. 27.

<sup>26</sup> Joseph Wilson, 'Returned Soldier's Association, Darwin', *NTT&G*, 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1917, p. 15.

<sup>27</sup> Geddes, *Darwin RSL History*, p. 6.

<sup>28</sup> Cramp, *From Frontier to Frontline*, p. 142.

<sup>29</sup> Geddes, *Darwin RSL History*, p. 7.

<sup>30</sup> 'Soldier's Memorial Hall', *NTT&G*, Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> October 1922, p. 2.

<sup>31</sup> 'Territory Stories - A.E. Jolly lugger', Territory Stories, Northern Territory Government, website <http://www.territorystories.nt.gov.au/handle/100070/5574>, accessed 6<sup>th</sup> October 2017.



Ernest married Evelyn Penrose Hyland in St. Matthew's Church, Kensington, Adelaide on 20<sup>th</sup> December 1926<sup>32</sup> but it appears they had no children. His father died in Adelaide on 11<sup>th</sup> August 1933, leaving an estate of £107,890 – a huge sum of money in those days. The beneficiaries were Alfred's widow Ada, Mr. A.W. Jolly of North Adelaide, Mr. E.E. Jolly of Menindie (SA) and Alfred and Ada's daughter Mrs. K.A. Wood (no place of residence given).<sup>33</sup> The business in Darwin was operating in February 1942, albeit the Jolly brothers were no longer residing in the town.<sup>34</sup>

Following the Japanese attacks on 19<sup>th</sup> February 1942, the military controlled the press and the local paper, the *Northern Standard*, was not published until May 1946. On 31<sup>st</sup> May, 1946 A.E. Jolly and Co. ran an advertisement in the paper advising that the 'business will again be operating early in June'.<sup>35</sup> What happened during the war years is unknown at this time.

Ernest Edward Jolly, merchant, benefactor and, until now, unknown Territory 'Digger', died in the Adelaide Hospital, SA, on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1952. He was cremated at Stansbury Cemetery but the whereabouts of his ashes is unknown.

In January 1957, the Commonwealth government named Jolly Street, Woolner, Darwin after Ernest's father Alfred.<sup>36</sup> There is no memorial to Ernest anywhere in Darwin – not even the Darwin RSL before it was destroyed by fire in June 2018.



**A.E. Jolly and Co. general store on the corner of Smith and Bennett Streets, Darwin.  
Date unknown. (Source: NT Library, hdl: 10070/30997).**

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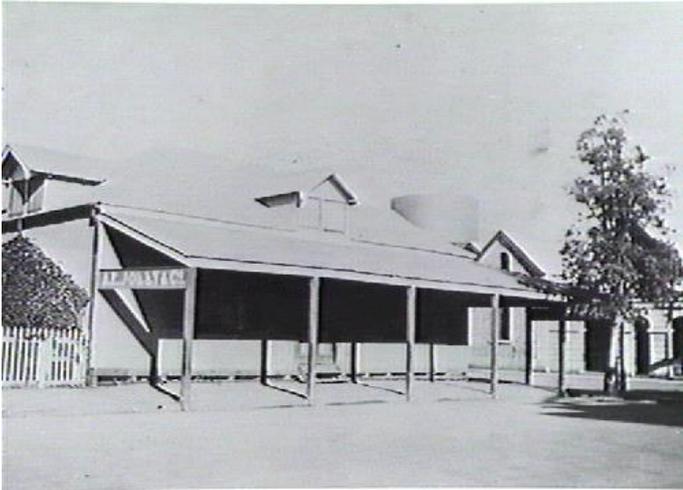
<sup>32</sup> 'Pioneer Register Number 1421, Ernest Edward Jolly', Genealogical Society of the Northern Territory Inc.

<sup>33</sup> 'Late Mr. Jolly left £107,890 to family', *News* (Adelaide), Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> September 1933, p. 1.

<sup>34</sup> 'Classified advertising', *Northern Standard*, Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> February 1942, p. 2. The last edition of the paper until 1946.

<sup>35</sup> 'Classified advertising', *Northern Standard*, Friday 31<sup>st</sup> May, 1946, p. 4.

<sup>36</sup> 'Jolly Street', NT Place Names Register, Northern Territory Government, website <http://www.ntlis.nt.gov.au/placenames/view.jsp?id=6633>, accessed 6<sup>th</sup> October 2017.



(c) Northern Territory Library hdl:10070/19005

**A.E. Jolly's store in another iteration. Date unknown. (Source: NT Library, hdl: 10070/19005).**



(c) Northern Territory Library hdl:10070/7344

**Jolly's Darwin store, date unknown but possibly late 1930s. (Source: NT Library hdl: 10070/7344).**



**A.E. Jolly's store, corner of Smith and Bennett Streets, opposite the Commonwealth Bank, circa 1940. Source: Interesting pics, website <https://au.pinterest.com/pin/463378249140481477/> accessed 10th October 2017).**



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