

# ARMI WANTOKS JOURNAL

## Volume 2 2010

---

The Journal of the Queensland teachers who served in Papua New Guinea in the Royal Australian Army Educational Corps from 1966 to 1973.

---

Editorial Team: Greg Ivey (Contact: [iveygj@gmail.com](mailto:iveygj@gmail.com))  
Ian Ogston ([ozoggies@hotmail.com](mailto:ozoggies@hotmail.com))

---

Welcome to this volume of our Journal. We are highlighting this in this edition the contribution of Phil Adam. Phil has chosen to write about his experiences in the Educational Corps in Townsville before being sent to PNG. This is an important account as we have not placed much emphasis on our experiences in the RAAEC in Australia prior to leaving for PNG. We hope you enjoy the article.

### **Chalkies Get Together:**

October is approaching and this is the time for our annual assembly. The date for this year's event is Saturday, October 16. We are happy to have it at our place if everybody is OK about driving out to our place. The times and catering details will be sent out closer to the date.

### **Other News:**

I am heading off to Canberra for the dedication of the National

Servicemen's memorial at the AWM on September 8. I am particularly interested in contacting other Chalkies and also to see if PNG is mentioned on the memorial. You may remember way back in our early days, I was in contact with the National Servicemens' Association and they had never heard of any service by Nashos in PNG. So, if it is there, it is our little contribution to this history.

Best wishes and we look forward to seeing you all on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

---

## **BIRD OF PARADISE**

Phil Adam

The smell! What a shock it was to jump down from the back of the RAAF Hercules to be met by the heat and the unmistakable smell of rotting vegetation. Greg Ivey and I had finally arrived at Jackson Field . Admittedly, we were four or five days late but, hey, this was the Army. You know the story, 'Hurry up and wait'.



Phil at Murray Barracks in 1970

We had done our infantry corps training at Singleton and then spent about three months at Lavarack Barracks in Townsville. Then, Greg and I had to hitch a ride with a RAAF Hercules carrying flu vaccine to Port Moresby. This was part of Australia's aid to TPNG during the severe influenza epidemic in the Highlands. We were on the Hercules because we had been

marched out of Lavarack and no one had thought to write appropriate movement orders for us... We just had to wait until some form of transport could be arranged. It meant that we missed most of the induction program for Chalkies at Taurama, but in the end, I am not sure that it mattered much. Mind you, flu should not have been a problem for me since I was given six flu injections in six weeks in preparation for my time in TPNG! When the mistake was discovered, I was given all my other injections in one hit!

Lavarack had been something of a strange experience. After all of the regimentation of recruit and corps training, Lavarack was very low key. There were four of us in the Education Section: Mick Lee, Keith Werder, Greg Ivey and myself. We were led by Captain Mert Williams and Warrant Officer Tony Burreket. Mick was married but the other three of us lived in the barracks. We did get permission to live off the base for about a month before we were shipped out to TPNG. We lived in an old house in Railway Estate.

The four of us led a fairly free and easy life at Lavarack. It was a long walk from the OR's barracks to the Education Section at the opposite end of the base so that helped keep us fit. Keith had a car but, if for some reason he was not available, we could not get back to the mess for lunch. Instead, we walked a shorter distance to the pool and had a swim. Keith and I played a lot of rugby union and league and there was even some social life outside the barracks. It was in one of the rugby union games during 'Sports Half' that I sustained a broken finger to go with my other 'war' injury. This was the result of an accident in recruit training and involved several stitches in my neck. Saturday nights were usually spent at one or other of the live music pubs and life was pretty good.

Townsville was something of a Jekyll and Hyde place. On the one hand, the army boys injected a lot of money into the town and provided a sizeable proportion of its sporting teams but on the other, many people were unhappy with aspects of the army presence. I guess that the behaviour of a large group of young men living on the base, often either preparing to go to Vietnam or returning from there, always had the potential to create some problems with the established local community. The reception was not always the warmest although I personally met up with some of my childhood friends who had moved there so I was able to escape the army atmosphere for a while.

At the Education Section, we taught a variety of courses including AACE 1, 2 and 3 in English, Mathematics, Science and Social Science and the SGCE for aspiring officers. All of our students were regular Army and most of them held rank up to and including Warrant Officer Class 1. Given that we were Nasho privates, the relationship was unusual but from my recollection, cordial and good-humoured. At one stage, I was sent to Melbourne to join Les Rowe in re-writing the AACE 1, 2 and 3 courses in Social Studies. One particular highlight, of course, was the installation of the closed circuit television system in the Education Section which enabled us to view the moon landing as it happened.

In the end, it is difficult to assess this period. I was a bit older than most of the other Nashos having originally been called up in 1966 so perhaps I reacted a little differently. The whole experience from recruit training through infantry corps training to the sojourn in Townsville now seems like something of a 'boy's own' adventure even though at the time, and before I was sent to the Education Section at Townsville, it all had a deadly serious purpose. That purpose was preparation for a posting to Vietnam. After my rejection of the offer of officer training at Scheyville, I am not really sure how I came to end up in Townsville, but I did and the rest, as they say, is history. I am sorry now that I do not have any photos of that period (I bought my first camera at the ASCO canteen at Murray Barracks).

\*

Phil Adam served in PNG in 1969 to 1970. Most of his time there was at Murray Barracks but he also had the unusual experience of being sent to Popondetta to assist soldiers who were posted there continue with their Education Courses.

Phil has now retired after a career of teaching in Queensland secondary schools.



