

ARMI WANTOKS JOURNAL

1/13

The Journal of the Australian Army Teachers Who Served in TPNG 1966 to 1973

Hello All,

We have attempted to look, in this journal, at some historical contexts. The first deals with the Chalkies Group that has developed in the last decade with the objectives of telling our interesting story to a wider audience and nurturing camaraderie between all Chalkies who have spent time in TPNG. It is a time to reflect on what has been achieved and where to go from here. It may also be useful for the development of Chalkie groups across Australia.

The second article has been written by Roger Jones and deals with the history of RAAEC. It is important for all who have served in this Corps to know the journey the Corps has taken to reach the point at which each of us connected with it.

We do hope you enjoy these and that they contribute to a deeper understanding of our own service.

Editors

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TEN YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE CHALKIES GROUP

BY IAN OGSTON

The Chalkies Group came together officially on the 25th October, 2003. On this occasion, a group of ten Queensland Chalkies met for the first time at the Long Tan Room at the Kedron-Wavell RSL. The purpose of this gathering was to assemble the Chalkie story as it unfolded for each of the bases in TPNG between the years of 1966 to 1973. Those who attended the inaugural meeting are listed at the end of this article.

The lead-up to this meeting began in the previous year. I had always believed that my experiences in TPNG were worthy of being written down for my family, if not for others. A search of the Australian War Memorial holdings and the internet generally, indicated that it was most unlikely that anyone had heard of the Chalkie scheme let alone written about it. Also, I was fortunate in that my wife, Elizabeth, had kept all of my letters that I wrote to her from TPNG and these formed the basis of my story. This eventually became the booklet, *'Chalkies - Conscript Teachers in Papua New Guinea 1970-71'*.

I realised at this stage, that my account of my year at Goldie River was but a small part of a much bigger and fascinating scheme that lasted for more than eight years and involved many hundreds of Australian teachers. I also became aware of the great significance of the Chalkies work in terms of the move towards independence in 1975 for TPNG. This was the driving force - **we had been involved in a program of considerable importance historically, and no-one knew anything about it.** The whole scheme was absent from the records of the Australian War Memorial, the RAAEC and, we were to find out, the National Servicemen's Association (who were, at that time, writing a history of National Service in Australia).

I began contacting colleagues who I had served with in PNG in 1970/71 and putting letters in the Queensland Teachers' Journal and other publications. The result of this was the first meeting at Kedron-Wavell in 2003.

Queensland teachers 'conscription story' must be told

Dear Sir

I am attempting to make contact with Queensland teachers who served in Papua New Guinea during their National Service in the late 60s and early 70s. These teachers were required to spend 12 months teaching soldiers of the Pacific Islands Regiment after completing recruit and infantry training. Postings included Port Moresby, Goldie River, Lae and Wewak.

I believe it is important that the story of this 'footnote to conscription' be told and this overseas service by Queensland teachers be recognised.

Could I ask any teacher who was involved in this, contact me (email ozoggies@hotmail.com) with a view to pursuing this further.

Ian Ogston

West Chermside

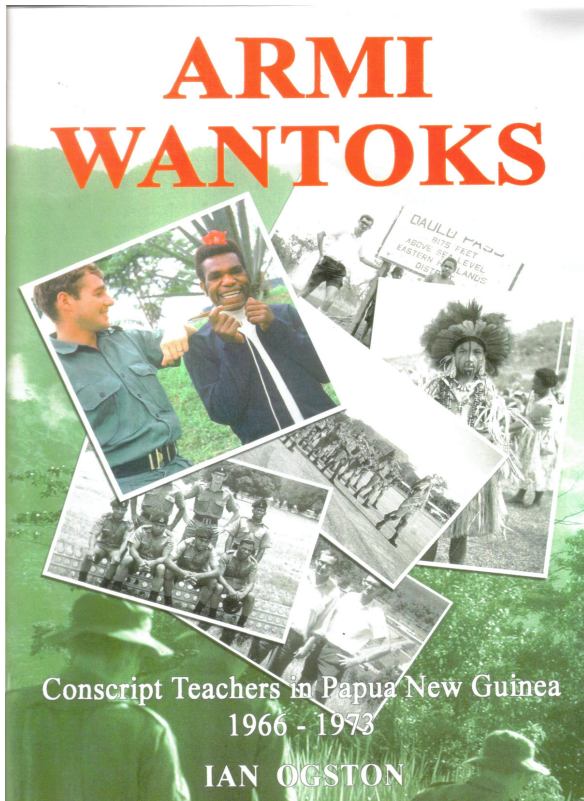
Original contact letter in Queensland Teachers' Journal 20/3/2003

We produced, as a result of this meeting, the booklet, '*Armi Wantoks*'. (See illustration below). This book was designed to flesh out the experiences of Chalkies at Murray, Taurama, Moem and Igam Barracks to give a fuller picture of the scheme. By this stage we also knew a lot more about the origins of the scheme and this was added to the record. '*Armi Wantoks*' has had two reprintings and has now virtually sold out.

After our first meeting, we had a barbeque at my place in Brisbane and we discovered here that we enjoyed each other's company immensely and decided to meet annually to renew acquaintances and invite others to join us. This has been, perhaps, the richest and most fulfilling aspect of the Chalkies Group.

The last ten years has been a productive time for this group and I have listed below some of the achievements through this decade.

- production of the '*Armi Wantoks Journal*' to continue to tell the vast number of experiences we had in TPNG



Chalkies' publication, 'Armi Wantoks'

- placing our books in the Australian War Memorial and the National and State Libraries and the records of the RAAEC
- inclusion in the history of National Service being written by the National Servicemen's Association. (As a result of this, the NSA has had to change their banners to include PNG service. As well, PNG is now listed as a place of service on the National Servicemen's memorial and the front entrance of the AWM).
- Chalkies march at the main ANZAC Day parade in Brisbane
- production of a CD collection of photos from our experiences in TPNG
- connection with the present RAAEC at Gallipoli Barracks at Enoggera in Brisbane through Captain Shirley Crane, Major Helen Lambe and Major Mary-Lou Bates
- assisting PhD student, Tristan Moss, at ANU in his research into Army education in TPNG prior to independence
- development of our website www.nashospng.com through the good works and skills of Frank Cordingley
- expanding Australia-wide through the relentless and skilful work of Terry Edwinsmith
- a return trip of a Chalkies group to PNG (as organised by Terry)

- the National Chalkie Reunion at Kedron-Wavell RSL in 2012
- the Melbourne Chalkies meeting with Terry in March this year.

Perhaps the greatest achievement of the group has been the bringing together of a fine group of people with the shared experience of TPNG. This has brought a great number of rich experiences for us and indeed, our wives and partners.

We hope, now, that this great time can happen for Chalkies in other states as state organisations or ‘chapters’ are beginning to be established.

The first Chalkie Reunion participants:

Phil Adam, Ian Colwell, Ed Diery, Terry Edwinsmith, Greg Farr, Kev Horton, Norm Hunter, Greg Ivey, Bob Large, Ian Ogston

THE ORIGINS OF THE RAAEC

By Lt. Col. Roger Jones (retd.)



Lt. Col Roger Jones in TPNG in the 1960s

End of the First World War

In winter 1917/18, the Canadian Army established its ‘Khaki College’ at Witley Camp in the UK to run classes and lectures of a vocational and rehabilitation nature. It also set up an extension in France at what was called ‘The University of Vimy Ridge’. This came to the notice of General Brudenell White and General Birdwood and, when the German 1918 offensive was defeated, classes for Australian troops were established with attendance reaching nearly 10,000 in December 1918. George Long, the then Bishop of Bathurst, was a key figure in this. Post-war, when Army Certificates of Education were established for promotion purposes in the Permanent Military Force (PMF) in the 1930s,

these were originally offered through the Australian Instructional Corps (AIC) ¹.

Second World War and afterwards

Just after the outbreak of the Second World War, C.E.W. (Charles) Bean, Australia's Official Historian in WW1 and one of Bishop Long's supporters, wrote to the Army Minister suggesting a similar scheme. On 11 September 1939, the Minister wrote back acknowledging it and saying he had passed the suggestion to the Military Board. In May 1940, details of the new British Army scheme came to hand. Later, the government of NSW (urged on by Sydney University, where Dr. Magdwick was then Secretary of the University's Extension Board) pushed the issue. On 17 December 1940, the Military Board submitted a plan devised by Sydney University and strongly advocated by the Adjutant-General, Major General Victor Stantke. The Minister set up an Advisory Council chaired by the Sydney University Vice-Chancellor Sir Robert Wallace and, on 21 January 1941, the Minister publicly announced the inauguration of the scheme in a speech in Sydney. On 5 March 1941, War Cabinet agreed to the Army Minister's proposal and the other two Services indicated they would do something similar.

On the publications side, the AAES (Australian Army Education Service, 1941-48) did not produce any army training pamphlets as such. It published the 'Current Affairs Bulletin', the soldier-friendly but frequently controversial magazine-style 'Salt' - a handbook for Education Officers (also used by the Navy) - and a long series of newsletters and other teaching and guidance material including basic literacy/numeracy workbooks. [Years later, in 1950, I did my teacher-training year at Claremont Teachers College in WA and I was amused to be given, among my prescribed texts, copies of 'Good Instruction, Parts 1 and 2' - which was a post-war RAEC (UK) publication and a very good introduction to large-scale basic literacy/numeracy teaching. This was the approach which the British had found necessary with the introduction of their National Service Scheme.]

As for rehabilitation training, it is of interest that the whole post-war Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme was introduced after the War Cabinet's approval of an Army agenda item submitted by the AAES and approved by the Military Board and Army Minister. A number of vocational pre-occupational schemes and correspondence course schemes were run during the war years in conjunction with mainland universities and institutes. There was also a huge effort at War's end under the 'Orders for Demobilisation of the AMF' issued in August 1945. This led to the establishment of pre-discharge 'Formation Colleges' in places such as Wewak, Lae and on New Britain. There were peak enrolments of between 2,500 to over 4,000 each. These Colleges conducted basic literacy, trade refresher, pre-vocational and other vocational-type courses, with suitably-qualified and willing instructional staff recruited from all corps and, in some cases, being directly transferred to the AAES (which in 1948 became the AAEC or Australian Army Education Corps).

In 1946, the need to supply troops in the BCOF (British Commonwealth Occupation Forces) in Japan, and troops in Korea during the Korean War, with library and other services, as well as pre-discharge re-settlement assistance, led to the AAEC re-establishing some of its Second World War functions. In addition, it was tasked with providing schooling facilities for the families accompanying Australian and other

Commonwealth servicemen. The AAEC staffed a school with volunteer civilian teachers drawn from Australian state and independent school systems – one of whom was Harold (Hal) Porter (1911-1984) a noted Australian novelist and writer.

The '1948-52 Crisis' in the AAEC and its outcomes

The Crisis

In 1948, the then Australian Secretary of the Department of the Army visited British Army establishments in both the UK and in Germany and recorded adversely on the performance of the (UK) RAEC at the time. His report questioned the role of the AAEC. (The British Army had been having huge problems because their government had just introduced universal National Service and had made the RAEC responsible for a huge amount of the necessary basic literacy/numeracy training.)

The Australian Military Board, taking a limited view of Army educational needs at the time, decided to cut the newly-formed AAEC to 3 officers and 29 ORs but in November 1950 the Adjutant-General subsequently increased this to 7 officers and 41 ORs. This took into account several factors: the pending Services Vocational and Educational Training Scheme (SVETS) and revised Army Certificate of Education introduction, as well as the needs of the Apprentices School formed in 1948.

The Military Board approved the Adjutant-General's decision but it went to the then Minister for the Army, Jos Francis. In February 1951, he wrote on the file 'From what I have seen personally of the existing AAEC at work in the field, I have not been impressed with it', and demanded a total review of the whole service.

After further Board/Adjutant-General/Board consideration, in May 1951 the Minister finally agreed to a limited increase to the AAEC establishment, subject to a full review in 18 months.

The new Director of Army Education, Major Arthur John, conducted the review over the period July 1951 to October 1952. As a result, in late 1952, the Minister finally approved the proposed new AAEC establishment and role.

The Outcomes

The Minister's 1952 approval had been based on his endorsement of a new AAEC overall aim. This was expressed as 'to play its part in the development of those qualities on which the soldier's military skill so largely depends – intelligence, sound morale and mental alertness'.

This overall aim was little changed from some earlier statements of the role of the old wartime AAEC. The problem was that the review then went on to prescribe the 'major functions' of the Corps, limiting them to such matters as preliminary and basic education for apprentices and bandsmen, instruction for NCO promotion requirements, instruction in current affairs, maintaining the education centres and SVETS.

So, while its overall aim was little changed, the actual functions of the new Corps were quite limited. This made the Corps very vulnerable to the push that was then going on in both civilian life and the Services in the late 1950s for vocational-type training to be based on what was then called 'training systems'. In more recent years, many of the original AAEC/RAAEC functions themselves have been made less necessary as Army recruitment requirements have changed and become more selective, with outsourcing, and because the range of community-available services in areas of major troop

concentration have tended to make those functions untenable or unnecessary.

The 1960s

Thus, although the Corps was granted the title 'Royal' in August 1960, by the late 1960s it was fighting to retain many of its broader adult education and support functions against the constant encroachment of the 'training systems' concept. The Corps is now primarily made up of training technology specialists supported by some technical NCOs and administration staff.

Members of the old AAEC, later RAAEC, and newer members such as those who served in TPNG, however, can take pride in the organisation's earlier initiatives and achievements.

¹ The AIC was formed in 1921 to implement military training and 'train the trainer' training for all corps in the AMF. Members of the Corps undertook 6 months initial training at the Small Arms School followed by a year's probation before appointment. At its peak in 1942, after it was made responsible for training in the 2nd AIF, the militia and the Voluntary Defence Corps (VDC), it had 234 'quartermaster-commissioned officers' and 889 warrant officers. In 1953, following the formation of specialist corps responsible for their own training, the Corps was disbanded and its remaining officers transferred to other corps.

