

SAMRA – President’s Annual Report 2019/20

The past year has been a quiet year for SAMRA with only a couple of significant engagements with the Squadron (A Squadron 3rd/9th Light Horse (SAMR)) two Black Hat functions and four reunion lunches. However, nearly all planned activities in the first half of 2020 were either cancelled or seriously curtailed by two catastrophic events, firstly the Adelaide Hills/KI bushfires, followed almost immediately by the COVID – 19 pandemics. It was disappointing to see the Anzac Day services cancelled but most members found a way to remember the fallen, even if it meant sharing the dawn (and a few pleasantries) with the neighbours at the bottom of the driveway or in the local park.

The highlight for the year was “history in the making” with the call out or the Reserve Brigades in Southern Australia in early January 2020 to assist in the Bushfire Recovery Tasks. In fact, many of our soldiers were so close to the action that they were also undertaking tasks to directly assist fire fighters and police to contain fires and to make routes safe for property owners and fire fighters. It was great to hear of the overwhelming response to the call up. Many of the Reservists from the 10/27 RSAR Group (Includes A Squadron) had reported to HQ at Keswick before receiving official notification of call up, with over 85% of members of the units involved, reporting for duty as instructed. Major Trent Harron the new OC of A Sqn had barely got to relax after returning from a busy tour of duty in Afghanistan when he was tasked to lead the first contingent to Kangaroo Island. According to reports, Trent and his Squadron acquitted themselves well, both on KI and in the Woodhouse/Lobethal area.

The combined Associations (RSARA, SAMRA, RAE) worked together to support a “thank you” activity at Keswick Barracks on 24th January for the families of officers and soldiers of the 10/27 RSAR Group deployed on Bush Fire Assist. Some of the soldiers from the Adelaide Hills deployment were able to attend with their families making a total of around 400 to be catered for, on the day. Thank you to Roger Burzacott, Malcolm Haynes, Grant Kirkpatrick, John Black, David Mercer and Bill McKeough, their contribution helped make a great day for the partners and children of members of the Battalion Group.

In late November 2019, SAMRA representatives attended the End of Year parades for both the Squadron and 49 RCU and presented awards for best trooper/cadet and best Junior NCO. Major Malcolm Haynes RFD presented a SAMRA Plaque to the outgoing OC 3/9 LH (SAMR) Major Chris Manning, in appreciation of his support to the Association during his term of office. SAMRA also provided the George Johnson MM prize (selection of books) to the most outstanding Squadron member for 2019 - Corporal Matthew Dudson, who unfortunately was away on full time duty on Operation Resolute at the time of the presentations.

Our March 2020 Black Hat evening attracted a good crowd with members keen to hear about the experiences of the guest speaker, Major Trent Harron, in both Afghanistan and the Bush Fire Assist project. Trent gave detailed accounts of his roles as an operations officer in a war zone and a contingent leader supporting a civil emergency/defence situation. He also presented his vision and goals for the Squadron. Trent’s appointments, including his current temporary full time posting as 2IC, 1 Armoured Regiment are a testament to his skills and to the proponents of the “one army concept”. He and SSM Steve Langdon have clearly demonstrated the value of the integrated “one army” training model.

Our social program last year included three reunion luncheons at hotels between Adelaide and McLaren Vale as well as the traditional Christmas BBQ at the Patowalonga in Glenelg. All the social activities were well attended with over 40 members “revelling” at the Christmas BBQ. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 restrictions caused the cancellation of the mid-year special luncheon planned to support the Bushfire Impacted Adelaide Hills region.

In October last year I had the good fortune to represent SAMRA at the RAAC Corporation AGM at the home of one of the Squadrons of 2nd/16th Hunter River Lancers in Tamworth NSW. It was pleasing to once again to meet with representatives of all the armoured units and to discuss Corps business. Our Corporation continues to grow in reputation and influence, mainly through strong and inspiring representation in ESO forums and the DVA, by our president Noel McLaughlin OAM. The HRL Association did a great job hosting the AGM and associated activities and are to be commended for their efforts in commemorating significant Light Horse history in a series of plaques at the Tamworth War Memorial Garden. This is a memorial well worth going out of your way to see.

As mentioned earlier, the 2019 George Johnson MM prize was restricted to a comprehensive set of military history books but with support from the Squadron and an extensive fund raising campaign over the next 12 months, your committee is determined to make the 2020 prize, a trip to the UK to visit the Squadron's affiliated Regiments. The OC, Major Trent Harron has already established the necessary contacts, and has appraised his NCO's of this exciting opportunity.

We were shocked and saddened by the death of SAMRA stalwart, Major Michael (Roger) Burzacott RFD on the 19th March 2020. Roger was a past Officer Commanding (1989 – 1991) and past Honorary Colonel (2006-2011) of A Squadron 3rd/9th LH (SAMR). Roger commenced his service as an Army Apprentice in January 1959 graduating as an Electrical Fitter in RAEME. He spent 10 years in the Regular Army, including Operational service in Malaya during the Indonesian Confrontation, before joining the Ares as a Cpl in January 1968. Roger was commissioned in 1970 and served in many RAEME officer appointments, including OIC of 13 Field Regiment LAD and OIC A Sqn 3/9 SAMR LAD before transferring corps to RAAC in 1980. He served as Operations Officer and 2IC A Sqn 3/9 SAMR before being promoted Major in 1987 and posted as SI OCTU, a role he really enjoyed. However, his return to A Sqn as OC in 1989 was his "heaven" and he "revelled" in his new command. He was instrumental in the renaming of the Squadron, the production of the Beersheba Scroll, 150th Anniversary Celebrations and representing the Squadron in the UK at the Ter- Centenary of an affiliated regiment, the Queen's Own Hussars in 1990. Roger retired from the Army in 1992 but to his delight was invited to be Honorary Colonel of the Squadron in 2006 a role he enthusiastically undertook. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic prevented an appropriate "send-off" for one of our favourite soldiers, however, SAMRA and A Sqn 3/9 LH (SAMR) will be conducting a memorial service for Roger once restrictions are lifted.

Our only project at hand – support to the Army Museum of SA Foundation has finally started to gain momentum. SAMRA member Peter Tulloch has volunteered to help the Committee to audit and manage the 3rd/9th Military Collection. Peter Tulloch, Peter Byass and I have become regular AMoSA Volunteers and we will steadily work through the collection to clear non useful material and catalogue the remainder. It is hoped to eventually develop mini displays to exhibit in the Keswick Museum as well at the Unit and for public exhibitions.

In closing, I would like to thank the Committee for its active support over the past year, the Hon Secretary for his never-ending communiques, Malcolm Haynes for his support in capturing virtual members via the Happy Hour initiative and to Chris Manning for his efforts in trying to bring SAMRA and the Squadron closer together. A special thank you to Seamus Neeson and Robert Gun who are retiring from the Committee this year. Seamus has worked on the Light Horse Memorial Service team for almost 10 years whilst Rob as Vice President has worked around his other roles as an Officer of Cadets and a motel owner, often travelling from Victor Harbour or Clare to attend meetings.

I would also like to acknowledge the SAMRA volunteers who put so much effort into supporting the AMoSA Foundation - Dirk, Ron, Barry and now Peter. Your efforts are not only supporting SAMRA but also the wider military and civilian communities

Reg Williams AM RFD

President

MEMBERSHIP:

Life	= 59
Ordinary	= 81
Total	= 140 *

*Does not include serving members of A sqn 3/9 LH (SAMR) since their membership is free