

## **SAMRA – President’s Annual Report 2020/2021**

The past year has once again been impacted by the COVID 19 Pandemic, limiting the scope of operations for the Squadron and hence our opportunities to engage with them. However, we were able to support three significant Squadron activities, whilst the Squadron was able to support both our Anzac Day activities and Major Roger Burzacott’s Memorial Service.

### **Anzac Day 2021**

We successfully conducted the Light Horse Memorial Service on ANZAC morning, despite the unusual challenges this year. Not only did we have to manage the COVID -19 requirements of the event we also had to engage a Traffic Management company (Workzone) to produce a plan and to manage the traffic flow near the memorial precinct during the service. We were not allowed to block the complete East Terrace carriageway as we normally do but were required to leave one lane open for bus thoroughfare. Fortunately, we still had sufficient room in front of the memorial to accommodate the restricted crowd of 150 people. Workzone, who also installed the crowd barrier, provided an excellent service, which they generously donated as a community service. A special thank you to Bob Ireland, Peter Byass and Dave Mercer for their assistance in the conduct of the service and the implementation of the COVID-Safe Plan.

Although, we were missing many of the usual members for the march, we were delighted that several Squadron members were able to join us to bolster the numbers and to carry the SAMRA banner. Unfortunately, Grant Kirkpatrick collapsed near the end of the march, but was immediately attended to by paramedics, under the very skilful direction of Nikola Fry an Emergency Department Nurse, who along with her friend, a new Squadron member, had chosen to march with us on the day. Although Grant’s condition appeared to be serious, he recovered reasonably quickly and was released from hospital later that evening - feeling sorry for himself, with a sore nose and swollen lip. He spent a few days with his cousin at Springton before moving back to his Adelaide apartment.

### **Vale two Honorary Colonels**

Most members would be aware that SAMRA, in conjunction with the Army Museum of SA Foundation (AMOSAF) conducted a memorial service for MAJ Roger Burzacott RFD on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> March at Keswick Barracks. Roger was a past Officer Commanding A Squadron 3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> Light Horse (SAMR) and immediate past Honorary Colonel. He had also been a member of the Board of AMOSAF at its inauguration, and Chairman from 2006 until 2011. The Lancer Honour Guard from the Squadron, along with the bugler for the last post and the piper for the Regimental march provided a fitting military setting for Roger’s family and the 150 friends and associates who came to show their respect. Once again COVID requirements provided some challenges but with the capable assistance of David Mercer, Bob Ireland, Jim Szpunar and Ken Potter we were able to seamlessly overcome them. A special thank you WO2 Steve Langdon, SSM A Squadron, for his assistance, especially, in preparing the Honour Guard.

Colonel Ray Stanley AM, OBE, RFD, ED, a past Commanding Officer of the Regiment and past Honorary Colonel (1983-88) passed away on ANZAC day. His funeral was held at St Peters College Memorial Hall on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> May with a crowd of over 1,000 attending to pay their

respects. Although not active in the military community in recent years, Ray had continued his educational pursuits in his senior years, producing numerous textbooks and papers for academia. He was highly regarded for his senior teaching and educational roles and had significant academic and social networks. As your president, I was honoured to be one of his pall bearers, whilst eight other SAMRA members, in conjunction with about 30 members of the Order of St John, provided an Honour Guard. Thank you to the members who gave up their afternoon to farewell a long term SAMRA member and the last of the Regiment's Commanding Officers.

### **SGT George Johnson MM Prize**

*"All I did was fix a broken track while some pesky Germans were shooting at me"*

George Johnson's modest description of his actions in Normandy on 6 August 1944 while serving with the 23rd Hussars is an example to us all about who true heroes really are. George didn't mention that he had reconnoitred a position under heavy fire, engaged a Tiger tank forcing it to withdraw, sustained damage to his Sherman 17 pounder tank's track and rear idler, worked all night to repair the tank while under shell and mortar fire, before moving forward to drive off several attempts by German tanks to overrun his Squadron's position.

His actions were recognised with the award of the Military Medal, the ribbon of which was awarded by Field Marshal Sir Bernard Montgomery, commander of all Allied ground forces during the Battle of Normandy, in December 1944.

After the war, George immigrated to South Australia where he joined 3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> South Australian Mounted Rifles and served as Quarter Master Sergeant in B Squadron based at Gawler.

Sadly, George is no longer with us, however, his memory lives on. SAMRA is proud to be the major sponsor of the George Johnson MM Memorial Prize. This is awarded every two years to an outstanding junior NCO in the Squadron and gives them the opportunity to travel to the UK to visit the affiliated Regiments – the Royal Dragoon Guards and the Queen's Royal Hussars. The prize is valued at around \$5,000 being \$3000 in cash and the remainder in kind, (accommodation by the affiliated host units)

The 2020 recipient was Lance Corporal Paul Dowsett. Paul has served with the Sqn for almost 10 years and is well regarded by all unit members for his leadership, enthusiasm, and commitment. In his civilian career, Paul is Manager Primary Industries Food Safety with the Department of Primary Industries and Regions. Paul looks forward to travelling to England when the COVID-19 travel restrictions are lifted.

It was especially pleasing to accept generous donations from members Charlie Belperio and Warwick Edwards who between them contributed almost half of our \$2500 commitment towards the prize.

### **Support Activities**

I would like to acknowledge the Squadron (Sqn) OC, Major Trent Harron for two significant Sqn activities that the Sqn conducted in the last few months of 2020 and to thank SAMRA members for supporting them. The Squadron Open Day in October attracted over 150

visitors, including 20 SAMRA members. SAMRA worked the BBQ, under COVID requirements, whilst the Sqn staff went about entertaining and managing the visitors. It was a great day and a big hit with all who attended. The Beersheba Dinner at the Morphettville Function centre was also successful, attracting over 100 guests including 15 from SAMRA. The relaxed formal nature and dress of the function was done very well and enabled all ranks from brigadiers to troopers to interact. However, it was the short addresses and thank you-s that were the highlights. It was through this interaction that I got the message that the Bush Fire Assist project earlier in the year did much more than assist the civil community – it built a strong bond between members of the Sqn and did much to build their esprit de corps. There is little doubt that the Sqn is in a good place to grow, should that opportunity arise in the next 12 months or so. It's important that we as key stakeholders in the "health" of the Unit, do all we can, to assist the OC and his team to meet their goals and objectives.

The five reunion luncheons and two Black Hat nights conducted during the year were well supported, despite the ages and ailments of members, with between 30 and 40 members regularly attending. The guest speaker at our March 2021 evening was SAMRA member, Colonel Jake Kearsley CSC who gave us an enlightening insight into the future direction of the Army and the expanding role of the Reserve within it.

In late November 2020, 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.

### **3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> SAMR Military Collection**

Most of you would be aware that SAMRA has been the custodian and manager of the 3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> SAMR Military Collection since its transfer from the Squadron's Smithfield depot to the Army Museum of South Australia (AMOSA) at Keswick in 1998/9. The museum is jointly managed by the Army History Unit (Reserve personnel) and the Army Museum of South Australian Foundation (AMOSAF) - the civilian company responsible for the volunteers that currently assist in the development, operation, and part funding of the museum. AMOSAF also owns a significant number of the heritage items that are displayed/stored at the museum.

Late in 2020 we became aware that AAHU was attempting to compulsorily acquire the vehicles, weapons, and many other attractive heritage items from the 3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> SAMR Military Collection. The Australian Army History Unit, the manager of the AMOSA subunit had taken the view that all heritage items held in storage or displayed at Keswick, irrespective of their initial ownership, belonged to the Commonwealth. This supposition also impacted the other collections managed by the group of Associations and organisations supporting AMOSA.

It took a high-level meeting between the Head of AAHU and the principals of the impacted Associations, along with some legal advice to convince the AAHU that most of the heritage items controlled by the Associations were in fact 'owned' by the Associations and that they could not be compulsorily acquired by AMOSA.

One of the outcomes of this ownership discussion has been the need for AMOSAF and its partner associations to clearly identify their respective heritage items and to transfer their details from the AMOSA register to a separate civilian data base. MOSAIC, a generic museum data base has been selected for that task and Peter Tulloch, our Collection Manager, has recently been trained and is ready to start the process.

Another outcome has been the need for AAHU and AMOSAF (including the partner Associations) to renew the Memorandum of Understanding/Operating agreement between the two organisations. This is currently in progress and close to finalisation.

So, in between trying to locate and identify SAMR Collection items amongst the various displays and storage areas at Keswick, Peter and I have commenced collecting items to prepare a couple of displays to be located at the Sqn Depot, hopefully by the end of this year. We already have three display cabinets and plan to raise initial exhibits showing the organisational and vehicle history of the Regiment/Sqn, along with the story of 2<sup>nd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> Armoured Regimental Group in Borneo in 1945.

In closing, I would like to thank the Committee for its active support over the past year, especially the Hon Secretary for his never-ending communiques, Peter Byass for assistance with the Military Collection, Malcolm Haynes for his support in capturing virtual members via the Happy Hour initiative and to Trent Harron for his efforts in strengthening the SAMRA/Sqn relationship.

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

Reg Williams AM RFD  
President  
04/08/21