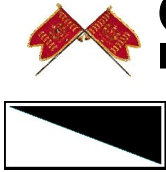


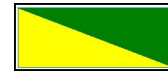
SOUTH AUSTRALIAN MOUNTED RIFLES ASSOCIATION INC



SAMRAG 207

Representing the Royal Australian Armoured Corps
Corporation Limited in South Australia

September 2025, Number 69



On 20 August 2025 SAMRA held its 37th Annual General Meeting at the Naval, Military and Air Force Club. SAMRA aims to support serving members of 3rd / 9th Light Horse, preserve the unit history, provide an opportunity for former members to get together to continue their comradeship, and to welcome anyone who has ever worn a black hat.

We support the unit through the George Johnson MM Memorial Prize for a unit member to travel to England to visit affiliated Regiments. This \$4,000 award is supported by donations from corporate sponsors, function raffles and the unit Hopkins Club.



Recently, seven SAMRA members visited RAAF Edinburgh to cook a BBQ during a unit training weekend, get to know the soldiers better and view unit training. In the near future we are looking at engraving a trophy for an end-of-year prize, helping out with relocating unit memorabilia to the new depot and providing care packages to deployed soldiers.

SAMRA maintained a History Room at the Smithfield Depot. With the unit's move to RAAF Edinburgh, we have relocated historical items to Keswick Barracks. They will be returned when the new unit depot is completed. I also acknowledge the diligent work of SAMRA Military Collection volunteers at Keswick Barracks on maintaining our historical records and property.

SAMRA continues to provide a range of events for members:

SAMRA produces the quarterly SAMRAG magazine, website and Facebook page, all of which are maintained so well by Dave Mercer. I thank all those who contribute articles to make SAMRAG an interesting and well-read magazine.

Dave also maintains very effective email contact with members for significant events including funeral details should any members pass away.

The Anzac Day service at the Light Horse Memorial was well attended by SAMRA members and the public with about 350 attending the service. For the march, we had 25 SAMRA members and 20 unit members marching. Following the march, SAMRA members dispersed to watering holes around the city, notably Torrens Parade Ground. 3rd / 9th Light Horse members went to the Mylk Bar in Waymouth Street and a few SAMRA members joined them for a drink or two.

Mixed Old and Bold functions have been held at Earl of Leicester Hotel in Parkside, Seacliff Hotel, Hotel Victor and Café Balthazar in Pasadena. We also hold a Christmas function at the Holdfast Scout Hall. About 20 – 30 people, including partners, attend each of these functions. There is also the annual get-together at Stansbury Caravan Park around the time of the Melbourne Cup.

SAMRA hosted two Black Hat Nights last year. In October 2024 we had a well-attended function at Keswick Barracks to celebrate 60 years of service of the M113 Armoured Personnel Carrier. Speakers shared their experiences with the M113 during peacetime soldiering and the Vietnam War. In June 2025, the new Officer Commanding, Major Hamish McKendrick talked about the changing role of the Army Reserve.

In all, since the last AGM, SAMRA members have had the opportunity to attend 13 functions organised either by SAMRA or the unit including the Beersheba Dinner, Cambrai Parade and a Farewell to the Smithfield Depot, with a total attendance of about 250 people.

SAMRA encouraged get-togethers at The Cumberland Arms in October 2024 and March 2025, each with 12 – 15 people attending. There have been a few new SAMRA memberships arising out of these get-togethers.

Last year we had 64 life members and 53 ordinary members. We now have 63 life members and 64 ordinary members. With an ageing membership base, we need to continue to attract younger members.

Thanks to the SAMRA Committee for their leadership - Vice-President James Kennelly, Treasurer Peter Byass, Secretary Dave Mercer, committee members Bob Ireland, Steve Langdon, Warwick Edwards, Simon Braid and Robert Townsend-Gun as well as Major Hamish McKendrick and Louis Dow representing the unit. Bob Ireland will not be continuing on the committee next year. I thank him for his support to SAMRA and to the committee.

It is my aim that we build the welfare component of SAMRA. This would be for both SAMRA members as well as unit members. It has been an honour to continue to serve you as President.—Malcolm Haynes

Visit our website www.samrainc.org

Letter from Golan Heights

SAMRA received a letter in March 2025 from Lieutenant Colonel Trent Harron who is serving on Operation Fortitude supporting the United Nations Truce Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) on the Golan Heights in the Middle East. Trent was previously Officer Commanding of 3rd / 9th Light Horse in 2020 and 2021. He writes:

It's been an interesting month so far in the Golan Heights. It was bitterly cold when I arrived but the snow is now melting on Mount Hermon as the temperature steadily rises. I'm on the Syrian side of the ceasefire line and things are fairly tense here as you have probably gathered from recent media reporting. Most of the internal conflict has been along the northern coast with an estimated 4700 killed since the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024. I visit Damascus regularly and the situation has the appearance of being reasonably stable in the city. There is still some cause for optimism in the international community, but I suspect it might be misplaced.

I'm planning to get along to the Commonwealth War Graves in Damascus, Jerusalem and Beersheba (amongst others) whilst I'm here and visit sites of significance to the Australian Light Horse. (Note: Trent subsequently sent the following photos from the Commonwealth War Graves in Damascus)



Commonwealth War Graves in Damascus



Grave of Major Philip Priestly, the first Officer Commanding A Squadron 3rd Light Horse Regiment who was killed in action on 3 May 1918 near Damascus while serving with 8th Light Horse Regiment.



Grave of Trooper Malcolm Murray of 9th Light Horse Regiment who died of illness (dysentery) on 25 October 1918. A graduate of St Peter's College, Adelaide and Trinity College, Cambridge, Trooper Murray was the son of the Lieutenant Governor of South Australia.

SAMRA VISIT TO UNIT—On Saturday 16 August 2025 7 SAMRA members visited 3rd / 9th Light Horse in Chauvel Lines on RAAF Base Edinburgh. The unit was conducting an in-barracks training weekend that included weapons training and simulation exercises. While there, the SAMRA members received a brief on the Protected Mobility Vehicle-Light, Hawkei and had the opportunity to look through the vehicle. Afterwards, after the knock-off by the Officer Commanding, Major Hamish McKendrick, SAMRA members helped with the BBQ and got to know unit members. Thanks for the invitation to visit the unit.



Pete Tulloch, Warwick Edwards, Thom Begg, Malcolm Haynes, Jim Kennelly and Bob Ireland in front of a PMV-L Hawkei with the OC Major Hamish McKendrick



Major Hamish McKendrick at the knock-off parade



Warwick Edwards, Bob Ireland and Pete Tulloch cooking the BBQ

With regards to your editorial (SAMRAG—June 2025), I remember my time with 3/9th, (which started at the Unley depot!) with great memories. Of course we were often cold and wet or hot and filthy as you said, but any discomfort could be alleviated by a timely joke.

I remember a dismounted exercise where we had been issued dehydrated rations, and as it was fire season we had to eat them cold. We were standing around looking at various bits and pieces of stuff floating in cold water, when Ron Hoey, (who was troop sergeant) walked among us, spooning this inedible stuff with gusto saying "Come on boys eat up! This is the most important meal of the day!"

It was actually a really good week end, and we learnt a lot about navigation and radio procedure, but at the end of the night we were wet and pretty hungry, and enthusiasm was beginning to wane.

The last exercise of the night was to assume that we were a troop of APCs and practice the radio procedure for starting up prior to moving to a night hide.

(We were all carrying a 25 set) The call came over our radios, "One zero this is one zero alpha - start up" (Or something like that - I forget the actual voice procedure)

As if on cue every soldier immediately began making noises like diesel engines starting! The soldier next to me muttered sotto vocca "Well wank wank I'm a tank!" - Pete Tulloch

Regards.....Pete Tulloch



Zu Bladeworx Australia has confirmed the successful rolling out of the Hand-to-Hand Fighting Weapons System to the Australian Defence Force under the LAND 300

The defence contractor, manufacturing the H2HFW (Nomad Mk4) Knife for the Australian Army and the Commonwealth of Australia, is contracted by NIOA to complete the delivery under the Commonwealth Land 159 Lethality Program.

Zu Bladeworx has also completed a battalion level contract for 1RAR and the School of Infantry.

The H2HFW is a lightweight, high-performance knife designed around the needs of the modern soldier. It is also highly robust, as it is manufactured using technology seen in aerospace and high-performance car manufacturing. This process is known as billet machining where a block of material is machined to remove all the material that is not required, leaving a solid single piece of steel that includes the blade and handle, which is quite a unique way of making knives.

An example of this manufacturing is seen in race car engines where the camshafts are billet machined to make a stronger camshaft. After machining, the H2HFW is hardened in a furnace to 970 degrees C and then double tempered. Following that it is coated in a ceramic coating normally reserved for firearms (Cerakote). The final process is individual sharpening on custom knife grinding machines. All these processes are completed in Queensland. *Source: Defence Connect—17th July 2025*

3rd / 9th Light Horse - Exercise Es Salt



In July 2025, 3rd / 9th Light Horse conducted training at Cultana Range to practice live fire training ahead of deployment on Exercise Talisman Sabre. The live fire training provided an opportunity to test gun drills, coordination and capability. The exercise commemorates the raid in force to Es Salt in the Jordan Valley on 3 - 4 May 1918 that is now commemorated on the battle honours of 9th Light Horse Regiment.

Carriers in Vietnam (Part 2 Continued)—Craig Haydock

In October last year we celebrated 60 years of service of the M113 Armoured Personnel Carrier in the Australian Army. One of the speakers at a Black Hat Night was Craig Haydock who talked about working, living and fighting in M113s during his service in Vietnam. Craig was a temporary Sergeant who served with A and C Squadrons, 3rd Cavalry Regiment from 6 August 1968 to 6 August 1969. Craig's address to SAMRA commenced last edition of SAMRAG and concludes the next episode.

Ambushing became a major activity for us. While patrolling during the day, we would select suitable sites, ideally where the jungle came close to a road or track. To get the maximum effect, each Section of three 113's would have their own individual sites. Just before dusk, we would drive into the jungle and move down parallel with the track until we came to our site. We would then set up a long line of Claymore anti-personnel mines to our front, all connected by detonating cord so that they all went off together. Then it was a matter of waiting, usually for two nights and the intervening day. Absolute quiet, no talk above a whisper, no hot food or drinks. Constantly on high alert with not enough sleep. When you do this day after day for weeks on end, it becomes very stressful. It reached the stage where one of my chaps had a breakdown.

We spent Christmas Day out at a Fire Support Base (FSB). A truce had been negotiated with the enemy and the cooks came out and provided roast turkey with all the trimmings. The Squadron Sergeant Major arrived towing a trailer overflowing with beer cans and crushed ice. I said "Roy, that looks like a lot more than two cans per man", so he just smiled and said "Well, we might get visitors".

Around this time, the very popular pop singer Normie Rowe arrived and he became my driver. He kept a guitar in the carrier so we often had little impromptu concerts.

The chopper pad was directly in front of our position on the perimeter of the FSB and Task Force Headquarters had set up a tent for the pilots to use while they waited for their passengers. It was now the hot season and we craved that tent. Eventually, we were all moving north to an area closer to Saigon, and as we closed down the old FSB, we noticed that no one came to collect the tent, so we nicked it. We set it up behind our vehicles at the new FSB, so with the shade, a table and our chairs, we were set like gum drops and were as comfortable as it was possible to be. All went well for a week or so, but then one evening, just before stand too, we saw the Brigadier walking around the perimeter. He couldn't avoid seeing us relaxing in our stolen tent, but we tried to look innocent while I frantically tried to think up a viable excuse. Then when he was about 4 metres away, he just stopped and stared at us. I thought that I was done for, but then he just burst out laughing, shook his head, and walked away. We were well and truly sprung, but fortunately, Brigadier Sandy Pearson was from Armoured Corps, and he obviously chose to see our theft as initiative.

We were given a few hours leave one evening at Bien Hoa Air Base. One of our Troop drivers, Cal, was in hospital there after hitting a mine, so we called in to see him first. Someone suggested that it would be a good idea to get a wheelchair and take Cal out with us for a few drinks. Away we went to one of the American Messes and were all having a very good time until a group of US Military Police arrived, looking for the patient that had been stolen from the hospital. Naturally, we wanted Cal to stay, so a bit of pushing and shoving eventuated, so the MP's started arresting people and pushing them into their Jeep. The problem was that the Jeep did not have a cage for prisoners, so those arrested simply climbed over the seats and got out the front doors. It developed into a rather Keystone Cops farce scenario, then one of the guys decided to fix the problem by pinching the Jeep. He drove it away but then crashed into one of the huge rainwater drainage ditches. At that stage, we weighed up valour or discretion, and discretion won, so we got back on our vehicles and all went home.

The following morning, I was at Squadron HQ chatting to the SSM and the OC, when a message came in from Task Force that the Commanding General of Bien Hoa wanted to talk to our OC. He came up on the net and was not a happy man. We were the most ill-disciplined, dreadful group of soldiers that he had ever come across. We had taken a patient from hospital and got him drunk, resisted arrest, stolen a Jeep and crashed it. He went on and on and then ended by saying to the OC "So what have you got to say for yourself". The OC just said "Well sir, boys will be boys." There was not another word from the General. I think that he was just flabbergasted.

We worked with the American army on several occasions and that was always interesting. They had major problems at that time, largely due to their very unfair conscription system, and the units that we worked with ranged from bad to appalling.

One time we were working with the 11th Armoured Cavalry. Their early M113's had petrol V8 engines, so I asked one of their drivers if his vehicle had a petrol or diesel engine. He said "Shit man. I don't no. I just drives the thing." Hope he never ran low on fuel!

Mines were far and away our biggest problem and caused the greatest number of casualties. The enemy were extremely good at selecting sites for their mines, and yet again, there was no mine awareness training. You either just pushed on regardless and hit one, or you constantly asked yourself the question, "Where might they plant a mine" and then made sure that you avoided that spot. Forget any fancy formation driving, such as Two Up or Line Abreast etc. The only reasonably safe formation was Line Ahead, with each vehicle driving religiously in the tracks of the vehicle ahead.

Like other wars, many tasks became mundane routine, interspersed with moments of pure adrenaline rush, but for me, it was never boring, because of the constant search for possible mine sites.

Unfortunately, the thin belly plate on the M113 and the weakness of the weld line on the sponson adjacent to the drivers left leg were bad weaknesses, so additional armour was added, but that was after my time. In spite of this, the vehicle got a reputation for not offering the crew sufficient protection against mines and it seems to have fallen out of favour with our Army, however, if Australia were to be invaded and our tiny army was so pushed that even old farts like me were asked to help, then I would be perfectly happy to serve in an M113, in my opinion they are a great vehicle.



Sergeant Craig Haydock (left) and Sergeant Peter Edwards, both section commanders, check damage caused by the mine in Phuoc Tuy Province, Vietnam in April 1969.

3/9 LH (SAMR) 2025 Year to date summary—MAJ Hamish McKendrick



This year started with a big adjustment as we settled into our new temporary home on RAAF Base Edinburgh, co-located with 1st Armoured Regiment within the Chauvel Lines. Being so close to the training area, weapons range and simulation centre meant the Squadron was able to hit the ground running. At the same time, we welcomed the arrival of our new vehicle fleet — 7 SRV G-Wagons, 6 PMV-L Hawkei's, plus another 6 Hawkei's on loan from 1st Armoured Regiment. Getting hands-on with new platforms has been both exciting and challenging, with crews working hard to develop fresh SOPs, solve problems, and sometimes wrestle with the quirks of brand-new kit.

We also saw the change of ECN 062 from Light Cavalry Scout to Armoured Vehicle Crew – Light Cavalry. This better aligns us with our full-time RAAC counterparts and gives new focus to our mounted role. While it means more training ahead, the Squadron has embraced the change with enthusiasm, keen to sharpen our skills and step up to the challenge. Throughout the year, we've continued to liaise with fellow Reserve RAAC units, the School of Armour and Land Combat College to map out the courses and training needed for the corps.

In April, we paused to commemorate Anzac Day at the Light Horse Memorial. While the Squadron didn't march with the guidons this year, many of our members proudly marched with the Association, representing both past and present.

May saw us head to Murray Bridge (EX RHINO CRAWL) for troop-level Mtd OPS training, while SHQ continued to shape SOPs for CP deployment in the Hawkei. In June, the Squadron went out to Cultana East on (EX ES SALT) for a short but valuable gunnery camp, firing MAG58s and .50cals.

July brought one of the biggest highlights of the year — Exercise Talisman Sabre. For the first time, the Squadron deployed in a domestic security operations role, though this time as the opposing force. A platoon-sized element, led by the SSM, carried out infiltration, reconnaissance and sabotage missions on strategic sites around Katherine, NT. Meanwhile, vehicle crews supported 9 Brigade Headquarters directly — of course it's always good to have friends in high places. The Squadron also worked alongside the US Coast Guard in Darwin and a highlight was the rare privilege of visiting HMS Prince of Wales from the Royal Navy's Carrier Strike Group 25.

It's been a year of learning, adapting, and building momentum. From new vehicles to new roles, from live-fire training to working alongside international partners, the Squadron has continued to grow in confidence and capability. We'll carry these lessons forward as we prepare for our domestic security role into 2026.

LH Memorial Horse Trough—2020

SUBSCRIPTION FEES

At the SAMRA AGM on 20 August 2026 the meeting approved the increase in subscription fees from \$25 to \$30 per year. This is the first increase in many years and will take effect for the 2026-27 financial year.

This has been required because of increased insurance premiums and web hosting fees as well as plans to enhance the historical display when 3rd / 9th Light Horse moves into its newly built depot on RAAF Edinburgh in the near future. SAMRA life members will also be approached to make a financial contribution.

NAME BADGES, TIES, POLO SHIRTS

SAMRA is regularly commended for its dress and bearing on ANZAC Day, at funerals and the like. This is largely because of the black berets as well as our SAMRA ties. All members are encouraged to buy a tie if they don't already have one. Similarly, at functions wearing a name badge, it really helps to put names to faces and is particularly valuable when visiting 3rd / 9th Light Horse. This also applies to wearing the SAMRA polo shirt. Details on how to purchase these items are at the end of this edition of SAMRAG. There are plenty of ties and we have a few polo shirts left. Once they have been sold we will be looking at Print-on-Demand purchases.

WHAT'S IN A NAME—Pete Tulloch

SAMRA Archivist

During both World Wars all sides made use of propaganda in an attempt to undermine the morale of the opposing forces, but in a number of cases these attempts back-fired. The following examples serve to illustrate this point.

THE RATS OF TOBRUK

From April to December 1941, Australian troops of the 9th Division, along with a brigade of the 7th Division and the Polish Carpathian Rifle Brigade, were besieged in the Libyan port of Tobruk.

The German general Erwin Rommel thought that by using tried and tested tactics he would throw the defenders out in short order, thereby capturing thousands of troops, their supplies and a vital port which would shorten his supply lines. Rommel had gained almost mythical status amongst friend and foe alike, but the Australian commander, Major General Leslie Morshead regarded him as over-rated and the German Blitzkrieg tactics as “a limited tactical manoeuvre”. Gen. Morshead directed his troops to dig narrow weapon pits and allow the Panzers to roll over the top of them into pre-registered artillery killing grounds. They would then engage the unprotected German infantry following behind. These tactics worked, confounding the Afrika Corps, and allowing the Allied garrison, (supported by nightly naval resupply runs, known to the troops as the “Tobruk Ferry”), to hold out for nine months.

(After the Australian garrison was withdrawn, the South African General Klopper lost Tobruk in an afternoon – but that’s another story). The American born, British traitor, William Joyce, known to the Allies as “Lord Haw - Haw”, broadcast to the defending troops that they were “living like rats in holes” at Tobruk.

The soldiers took this as a compliment, (rats being nasty tenacious creatures which are very difficult to eradicate), and “THE RATS OF TOBRUK” has entered into Australian military folk-law.

THE SCAP IRON FLOTILLA

When the British reluctantly agreed to the formation of the Royal Australian Navy in 1911, it was under the proviso that its ships would be under the control of the Admiralty in time of war. Accordingly, a number of RAN ships were deployed to the Mediterranean when war broke out.

The cruisers were quite modern, but the flotilla of destroyers consisted of five ships which had been built during the First World War. These V&W class destroyers, (VAMIRE, VOYAGER, VENDETTA and WATERHEN) led by HMAS STUART were clearly obsolete, and ill suited to modern war where the aeroplane had become a major player. (Vampire and Waterhen were both be sunk by air attack.)

On arrival in the Mediterranean the German propaganda minister, Joseph Goebbels sneered that the RAN was sending its scrap iron to help the British Navy. In true Australian style the crews of the ships embraced the nickname THE SCRAP IRON FLOTILLA with pride.

All of the ships, distinguished themselves in a number of actions in that theatre, including the dangerous nighttime resupply runs to their army comrades in Tobruk. The Australians had the last laugh. Joseph Goebbels died in Hitler’s bunker and William Joyce was hanged for treason in HM Prison Wadsworth in 1946.

THE OLD CONTEMPTIBLES.

Unit Squash Team

When I was a high school cadet, we used to line the route of the ANZAC Day march. In those days there were still quite a few WW1 veterans marching, and their contingent was led by the “Old Contemptibles”. The name came from an insult by Kaiser Wilhelm II who sneered at the BEF sent to France in 1914 as “England’s contemptible little army.”

That army consisted of volunteer, professional soldiers, who had evolved their training, doctrine and tactics from lessons learnt during the Boer War. (The ability of infantry soldiers to fire 15 aimed shots per minute from their Lee Enfield rifles convinced many Germans that the British possessed more machine guns than they actually did.) Although small by comparison to the massive conscript armies fielded by Germany, France, and Russia, that “contemptible” army carried out a fighting retreat which ground the German Army to a halt in November 1914—The lesson is – be careful with your insults – they may come back to haunt you!

CHOCKOS

There are some occasions however, when an insult is initiated, not by the enemy, but by your own countrymen.

A case in point is the term CHOCKO as applied to the Australian militia soldiers during World War 2. Supposedly it comes from chocolate soldiers who would melt under pressure. (Another less well-known insult was KOALAS, as you could not shoot them or export them.) In this case the insult has been carried over into modern times, as used by some members of the Regular Army when referring to Army Reserve soldiers. (Recently a regular from 2nd Commando Regiment was heard to refer to the 1st Commando Regiment as “a bunch of useless chockos”, despite the fact that some of them had been deployed to Afghanistan.)

His knowledge of military history must be pretty poor, or he would have known that the “useless chockos” of the 39th Battalion carried out a tenacious fighting retreat on the Kokoda Track, against the cream of the Japanese Army, and held them long enough until AIF troops could be deployed in support. At the battle of Milne Bay, (25th August to 7th September 1942), useless chockos of the 7th and 14th Infantry Brigades, along with AIF troops of the 18th Brigade handed the Japanese Army its first land defeat of the Pacific War. After Milne Bay, a cartoon appeared in one of the Adelaide papers. It showed a battered Digger with the caption, “Who says Chocko now?” - It seems like some of us have forgotten.

The following items are available for purchase. All profits support the Association:

- NAME BADGES—\$25.00
- BLACK POLO SHIRT, BADGE ON THE FRONT, WITH SAMRA UNDERNEATH— \$45.00 WE HAVE THE FOLLOWING SIZE IN STOCK 2XL x 2
- 3rd/9th LH (SAMR) BLAZER POCKET BADGE - \$25.00
- RAAC LAPEL BADGE—\$6.00
- SAMRA MEMBERSHIP LAPEL BADGE—\$5.00
- ASSOCIATION TIE—\$33.00
- UNIT TIE—\$33.00

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2025 SOCIAL CALENDAR

- **Thursday, 18 September—Old & Bold lunch at the Aldinga Hotel, Aldinga.**
- **Wednesday, Black Hat Night, October date and venue TBC.**
- **Friday, 31st October—Beersheba Dinner at the National Wine Centre organised by 3/9 LH (SAMR).**
- **First Week in November—SAMRA AFX at Stansbury Caravan Park, Melbourne Cup BBQ on Tuesday 4 November.**
- **Saturday, 6 December—EOY Family function, details TBA.**