



Terrigal Wamberal RSL sub Branch

# NEWSLETTER

## President's Message

Welcome to the Summer edition of the sub-Branch Newsletter.

As the year ends and we reflect on the challenges the sub-Branch faced during the COVID-19 pandemic, I am confident that we did everything possible in the best interests of our members. I thank Secretary Michael Tabone and Treasurer Doug Lindsay, who continued to attend to sub-Branch business during the lockdown period.

Our monthly meetings, while still subject to COVID regulations, are back to some semblance of normality. The sub-Branch office is open on a Wednesday and Friday between 10 am and 12 pm .

The Committee continues to plan social activities, including a successful trip to the Hunter Valley. This year's social calendar will conclude with our Christmas Luncheon on 16 December.

The sub-Branch held limited Remembrance Day services at Breakers and the Terrigal Foreshore Memorial. After the cancellation of ANZAC Day, it was satisfying to able to stand with colleagues to commemorate this important day.

We have secured a generous sponsorship agreement with Creightons Funeral Service. Commemorating ANZAC Day has always been a challenge financially, and this injection of funds will allow us to plan next year's Dawn Service with confidence. Included in the sponsorship agreement is a discounted offer on pre-paid funeral options for members and family. We will be promoting Creightons as our major sponsor.

In this edition, we feature the formation of NORFORCE in the Northern Territory.

The Unit was raised and commanded by sub-Branch member Lieutenant Colonel John George, OBE (Retired). John was invested with the OBE for his services in raising NORFORCE and commanding the Unit in its early years.

As this is our last newsletter for the year, I will take this opportunity to wish members and their family, a Merry Christmas and a safe and Happy New Year.

Terry Saxby



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- RSL State Congress (Online) 7 December
- Sub-Branch meeting 12 December
- Christmas Luncheon 16 December

# Meet the Members

## Colonel Peter White (Retd)



Peter graduated from the Royal Military College, Duntroon, in 1967 and served with distinction for 27 years.

During his military career, he specialised in transport logistics and was posted to various locations in Australia and overseas. He served in Vietnam in 1970/71 and to further his knowledge and qualifications in transport; he studied at a military transport facility in England in 1973/4.

He retired from full-time military service in 1991, achieving the rank of colonel.

After discharge, he became an active member of the NSW Royal Australian Corps

of Transport Association and 85 Transport Association.

Both organisations were formed to promote camaraderie amongst current and former army transport personnel. Peter was President of both organisations.

In recognition of his outstanding military service and with his involvement in Corps of Transport Associations, he was appointed by the Chief of Army to the position of honorary Army Colonel Commandant NSW (Transport Corps) from 2003 to 2007 and Representative Colonel Commandant Australia from 2007-2010.

He served as President of this sub-Branch from 2015 to 2020.

## VISIT BY NSW RSL STATE PRESIDENT



On the 12 October, we received a delegation of RSL State Branch executives, including NSW Acting State President Ray James OAM, CEO Jon Black and CFO/GM Corporate Services Nicole Hasrouni. Before meeting with the sub-Branch Committee, Ray James presented George Craven with his 50-year RSL Member Certificate.

*Photo: David Ferry (CCDC), Ray James, George Craven, Terry Saxby (Sub-Branch President)*

CEO Jon Black then briefed the Committee on the proposed RSL Strategic Plan and its importance to the future of the League. The Plan, if adequately funded, will be implemented over a five-year period. There is a need for change and the Plan details how this can be achieved. The Plan can be downloaded by clicking of the follow:

[www.rslnsw.org.au/members-suite/strategic-plan](http://www.rslnsw.org.au/members-suite/strategic-plan)

The Annual RSL State Congress this year will be a one-day online event held on 7 December. The Congress will be limited to an AGM involving financial reports and confirming the results of the election for State President and RSL Board.



*Photo: Sub-Branch committee briefing by State Branch.*

## MILITARY HUMOUR



### TRAINING PRIORITIES

At one Army base, the annual trip to the rifle range had been cancelled for the second year in a row, but the semi-annual physical fitness test was still on as planned. One soldier mused: "Does it bother anyone else that the Army doesn't seem to care how well we can shoot, but they are extremely interested in how fast we can run?" 3

# Vale Burnie Mudge and Beulah Miller



*Burnie at Remembrance Day 2019*

On 2 October, the sub-Branch lost a stalwart member and true gentleman, Burnet Patch Mudge. Burnie died at the age of 98.

He enlisted for full-time service in the CMF in 1941 and trained as an artillery gunner. He transitioned to the AIF in 1942 and was posted to Milne Bay in 1943. At that time, Milne Bay was a significant battleground in our campaign against the Japanese.

Burnie was discharged from military service in 1946.

He was a long term and active member of this sub-Branch until ill health made it difficult for him to attend meetings. Burnie was proud of his military service as an artillery gunner. In the words of Friedrich II of Prussia, *"Artillery adds dignity, to what would otherwise be an ugly brawl."*

"Stand Post" Burnie and then rest in peace.



*Beulah with husband Vern*

We also mourn the loss of Beulah Miller, who died on the 12<sup>th</sup> November at the age of 98. Beulah enlisted in the Women's Royal Australian Airforce in October 1942 and served until June 1945. She was stationed at Tamworth and Parkes, where she was one of the first women to replace men as a transport driver. Beulah regularly attended sub-Branch meetings with other women veterans. They were a happy group, always welcome and well respected.

**We will remember them.**

# **NORFORCE**

## **FROM CONCEPT TO REALITY**

### **PRELUDE**

***Few soldiers are afforded the honour and privilege of raising and commanding a new unit on the order of Battle. I was so fortunate; I was in the right place at the right time; I worked for the man who made the decision and I had his confidence; he gave me the support to carry it through to success: Major General Ron Grey, AO, DSO.***

***Raised on 1<sup>st</sup> July, 1981, the North-West Mobile Force (NORFORCE) is a Regional Surveillance Unit of the Australian Army. It will soon be 40 years old.***

***The following is a synopsis of the raising of NORFORCE as I recall it after almost 40 years. It is important to understand that this was a team effort by a group of dedicated, enthusiastic and spirited 'warriors' from the combined Regular Army and Army Reserve to whom I remain indebted for their service and contribution to the Unit's success.***

***Lieutenant Colonel John George, OBE (Retired)***

### **40 YEARS ON**

Headquartered in Darwin and comprising mainly Army Reserve personnel, NORFORCE is responsible for the conduct of reconnaissance and surveillance operations, principally along the Northern Australian coastline from Broome in Western Australia to the Queensland Border.

The Unit comprises a Regimental Headquarters, plus Training Support and Operational Support Squadrons located in Darwin, and four regional-based operating squadrons based in Darwin, Gove, the Kimberley (Kununurra), and Alice Springs.

NORFORCE is now one of three Regional Surveillance Units (RSU) that form the Regional Force Surveillance Group (RFSG), commanded by a Colonel.

### **HOW IT ALL BEGAN**

In the late 1970's there was keen and growing interest in establishing a greater Defence presence in Northern Australia, especially in the Northern Territory and North-West of Western Australia. There was a particular interest within Army of establishing a surveillance capability throughout the region. SAS had for some years been conducting exercises in the region and had begun developing expertise in operating in this fairly unique environment. But SAS at the time was already under pressure, extending its responsibilities to include counter terrorism operations which when added to their normal roles and tasks restricted the time and resources available to do justice to coastal surveillance in remote areas.

The then Chief of the General Staff (now Chief of Army), Lieutenant General Sir Donald Dunstan, AC, KBE, CB, KStJ, (late Governor of South Australia), had a profound interest in the North and was a frequent visitor to these parts. General Dunstan was keen to increase our presence in what he saw as a very vulnerable part of the country, but he also had the foresight and enthusiasm to want to get the Indigenous population more involved in Defence.

Major General Michael Jeffrey, AC, AO(Mil), CVO MC, (later Governor of Western Australia, then Australia's Governor General), a former SAS Commander, shared General Dunstan's interest not only in creating an Army presence in the North and North-West, but involving the Indigenous population with their unique skills, and also achieving greater participation of the Army Reserve in Defence activities. Jeffrey was a firm believer in a 'one-Army' concept; a view not necessarily shared by many others at a senior level in the Army at that time.

Another senior officer who shared many of Jeffrey's views was then Army Chief of Operations, later to become General Officer Commanding (GOC) Field Force Command, before 'being taken' from the Army to become Commissioner for The Australian Federal Police, Major General RA (Ron) Grey, AO, DSO. While Chief of Operations, General Grey played the leading role in pursuing the NORFORCE concept and making it a reality. He was commanding the Field Force when the concept was finally approved for implementation in 1981.

### ***OUT OF THE BLUE***

It was about mid-February 1981. I was a Major, working for and reporting directly to General Grey as his Staff Officer Projects at Field Force Command. I was mid-way through writing his annual Tactical Exercise Without Troops (TEWT), Exercise 'Arnhem Answer', to be conducted in the Northern Territory around July-August of that year. There was much talk at the time about establishing NORFORCE within a fairly short time.

General Grey came into my office, threw himself in a chair in front of my desk, looked at me with his usual scowl and said "Johnny, how would you like to go raise and command NORFORCE?". As surprises go, they don't come any better; not to me anyway.

I was, I think, one of few relatively middle -ranking officers at the time who had what I can only describe as an open and productive rapport with General Grey. I found he accepted my frankness and I think my honesty. So much so, over time, we became firm friends and remain so today. It was this, then formative relationship, with the General, that enabled me to bend his ear on the challenge he had just offered me. But it was also to prove vital to our success in those early days; he literally moved mountains for us. The General is now 90 and I make a point of seeing him regularly. I shall be forever grateful for his mentoring and support in those years.

The thing that concerned me most about the NORFORCE concept was its originally proposed organization. It was intended it be based essentially on a conventional Infantry Battalion structure; something that I believed was perhaps not totally unworkable, but that failed to facilitate the roles and tasks it was expected to perform. I should add there were political reasons behind this; Defence and politicians at the time not being particularly inclined towards any sort of 'special' organization. I put it to the General that we should re-design it to be based on the SAS Regiment's organization both in terms of structure and equipment. He stuck his neck out I believe and gave me the unofficial 'okay'. He continued to support this concept throughout the formative period.

### ***KICK-OFF***

I handed over my responsibilities at Headquarters Field Force Command in mid-May 1981, to my then contemporary and respected colleague Major Peter Cosgrove, MC, later to become General Sir Peter Cosgrove, AK, AC(Mil), CVO, MC, Chief of Defence and again later, Governor General of Australia. I arrived in Darwin on promotion to Lieutenant Colonel in early June, 1981 ready to raise the Unit on 1<sup>st</sup> July.

I immediately met with my newly appointed RSM, WO1 Reg Davies (later the Hon Reg Davies, MLC, in the WA Parliament) with whom I had served in SAS some years earlier but did not know him well, other than by his reputation (he had been 19 years in SAS) as a fine warrior and an excellent trainer. Reg and I, I like to think, worked well together and I give him a great deal of credit for the Unit's early success, especially with the Indigenous soldiers.

Fortunately, I inherited a well-trained and very well-led 7<sup>th</sup> Independent Rifle Company (7IRC) of about 120 all ranks plus two retired racehorses (retired again from 'active duty a short time later) that would form the nucleus of the new NORFORCE. 7IRC was then commanded by Major Zoltan (Zot) Simon who I knew well from SAS days; I couldn't have wished for a better backstop as Zot was to become Operations Officer of the new unit (effectively my 2IC). It was Zot to whom I assigned responsibility for designing the new organization and equipment table. Zot achieved this in record time (a couple of months) and General Grey quickly pushed it through the system for approval. We were under-way.

The next challenge we faced was procuring the equipment. Remembering that at this time the Army Reserve was not exactly a high priority anywhere, except perhaps for 1 Commando Regiment that had been formed under an old friend, Lieutenant Colonel (later Colonel) Peter McDougall, AM, and was getting involved, alongside SAS, in the counter terrorism first response role.

We had determined very early-on that the standard light Military operating vehicle, the Land Rover, was not fit for purpose in the North in the long range reconnaissance role; even without trying to modify it like SAS had done so it could be a 'fighting vehicle'. We didn't need that; we just needed something that could sustain travelling long distances in rough terrain and easily be repaired in situ. Most cattle station operators and contractors working in the remote Northern outback used Toyotas so it made sense we also have Toyotas. With due credit to the Army, but particularly to the efforts of General Grey, within a year we were equipped with Toyotas.

Vehicles were just one procurement issue. We needed telecommunications equipment, watercraft (Zodiacs) and weapons, as we did direct aviation support 'on-call'. I must have locked horns with just about every 'red hat' in the system trying to procure the equipment and materiel approved in our new equipment table, and for the external support for operations and training. But I had one saving grace; General Grey, to whom I reported directly. Again, he moved mountains for us. If it were not for he, we would never have achieved the success we did in such a short time. Within a year or so we had achieved priority status in the supply and operational support systems; we had been allocated a direct support rotary or fixed wing aircraft most of the time; we had established a state-of-the-art UHF-based communications centre to support our patrol and training programmes across the region; we had a 'fleet' of 15 or so 'rubber duckies; and we secured all the motor transport, RAN and RAAF support we needed. Upon reflecting on this success, I am reminded of the advice often given young officers with ambition in the service "hitch your wagon to a General's horse"; it certainly rings very true in my case.

From the outset, the RSM, Operations Officer and I were determined NORFORCE would be 'operational' in the true sense of the word. Our role and tasks were such that this was a realistic expectation in peace as well as in war. We saw it as a chance to put the Army Reserve on the map (as it were); a chance to do a real job in real time; and to do it well. We set the training standards high and we achieved them; we set regular Army standards and expectations; the Reservists, especially the officers, Veterans (some with Vietnam service) and long serving Reservists, grasped the opportunity with both hands; and we succeeded.

Recruiting turned out not to be the challenge we had anticipated. The word spread quickly and there was much enthusiasm for the concept right across the Northern Territory and the Kimberley, especially in major towns, and mining camps. Many a recruit was identified in a pub after work when they were invited to attend a 0600 HR 5km run next morning to see if they had what it takes. Surprisingly many turned up and passed.

One of the best recruiting grounds was the then mining camp at Koolan Island off the coast of Western Australia. We ended up forming a water operations troop here within a very short time. To give an idea of the level of enthusiasm, I must mention a fellow by the name of Rick Odie.

Rick was a 60 year-old former British Army Major who was employed by the mining company at Koolan Island as Chief Administrator. Over several visits he pestered me endlessly to enlist but he was over the age limit. He wouldn't give up and wore me down, so in the end I went to my greatest backstop, General Grey, in an attempt to find a solution. The General said to me "well he's too old to be an Infantry Officer, so recruit him as a Private soldier and let me see what I can do". We did just that: Private Odie was back in uniform, topping his recruit course and beating many of the much younger ones at a range of physical 'combat ready' tests. A couple of months later, General Grey rang me and said "re Odie, I've found a way to commission him again. There are not restrictions on age in the Army Pay Corps so transfer him to there as a Major. Then, just put the Infantry badge on him". Welcome Major Odie! Sadly, Rick is long passed; a lovely man and a good soldier; respected by all.

Another very successful area was the Nabalco Bauxite mining operation at Gove in East Arnhem Land that was then managed by James Strong, AO, who went on to head the Mining Industry Council and later CEO Australian Airlines/Qantas. James had spent time as a cadet at the Royal Military College, Duntroon, and was a very enthusiastic supporter of both 7IRC and the NORFORCE concept. 7IRC had already established a very good depot and sub-unit at Gove and it went from strength to strength with James's support. James unfortunately passed away some years later but quite young, during surgery. I shall never forget his friendship nor his support to NORFORCE generally.

Within a year the soldiers had attained the necessary skills and competencies to patrol for up to 14 days in remote areas with minimum support. We had trained competent patrol medics, signallers and vehicle operators, and become competent in insertion and extraction techniques by sea, air and land. Women who could pass the requisite Patrol Course at the same standard as men were included in our six-'man' patrols; 'equality' was alive and well; that was 40 years ago. It didn't need some trendy, 'activist' General or politician to make it happen; it was just the Commanding Officer exercising his command prerogative and common sense. Mind you we did have some 'tough' ladies as part of the team so that facilitated 'equality and inclusion' (to coin modern-day speak).

The aim of the patrol programme was to have at least one patrol deployed 52 weeks a year. We fell quite a bit short, but we gave it our best shot. I was grateful for, with the exception of the odd one, having 50 (at peak) or so solid Regular Army Officers, Warrant Officers and Senior Non-Commissioned Officers to lead the Unit through its formative days.

### ***THE INDIGENOUS EXPERIENCE***

Part of my brief in raising NORFORCE, was to get the Indigenous Community involved in the Unit as a priority. Zolt Simon's 7IRC already had a nucleus; we just needed to tap into this programme and give it greater emphasis. In doing so we had the backing of people like the then Premier of Western Australia, The Hon Sir Charles Court, and the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, The Hon Paul Everingham. Both were very keen supporters of the NORFORCE concept. Local Government authorities throughout our area of operations were also very supportive; places like Broome, Derby, Kununurra, and Alice Springs and Gove. Indigenous Community leaders in a wide range of Indigenous communities throughout the Northern Territory and North-West Western Australia were also enthusiastic to provide assistance in getting their young people, especially young men, into uniform. As a consequence, within two years we had in excess of 60 Aboriginals trained and on the payroll. I understand today this number is in the hundreds thanks to ongoing determined leadership of the Unit.

There are many interesting stories to be told about our Indigenous experience but the one that stands out is the conduct of the first all-Aboriginal Recruit Course conducted since WW11. This was the RSM, Reg Davies' 'baby'; one he nurtured from the very day we raised the Unit.

Reg had a unique relationship with the Indigenous soldiers; he was very much the Father-figure but also their chief disciplinarian; they 'seemed to 'love' him; he was almost like a God to them; he certainly had their respect as a 'Tribal Elder'.

Reg ran the Course, early in the second year as I recall, at a remote former cattle station called Kimbolten, the Army had purchased, just North of Derby, Western Australia.

From memory, about 35 Aboriginal lads attended and all graduated. It was, I think, about three weeks in duration and culminated in a Corroboree to which we flew-in the Tribal Elders from the Kimberly Region to help celebrate. The Reviewing Officer was the Administrator of the Shire of Wyndham-East Kimberly, Mr John Edwards, who was also a very enthusiastic supporter of the NORFORCE concept. The 'band' comprised an empty four-gallon drum beaten by a Warrant Officer. As for the Corroboree; the crocodile and kangaroo cooked in a pit by the Elders, was not quite what you might call 5-Star.

There are many stories to be told about the early days of Indigenous involvement in NORFORCE; some humorous but all positive. This was a great opportunity which was grasped by all parties involved. It has been a success and is an excellent example of how the Military is able to quickly integrate people, their qualities, skills and wider attributes to achieve its objectives. The Indigenous involvement in NORFORCE has been a mainstay of the Unit over the past 40 years. It is a credit to a succession of commanding officers and non-commissioned officers who have served in NORFORCE during his time.

### ***LINKING WITH THE PAST***

While I was working for General Grey at Victoria Barracks in Sydney in 1979-81, I also worked alongside Colonel David Chinn who, amongst other things, was a keen Military historian. He had a particular interest in the Colour-Patches of WW1 and WW11 and was keen to have them re-introduced into service. In talking with David, I ascertained that NORFORCE has a WW11 predecessor; the North Australian Observer Unit (NAOU) or the Nackeroos, as they were affectionately called, whose Commanding Officer was Lieutenant Colonel (Professor) Bill Stanner, a renowned anthropologist who passed in October 1981, just a few months after NORFORCE was raised. I never met Bill but I did meet his wife and we named the NORFORCE Soldiers Club after him 'The Stanner Club'; his portrait was prominently displayed in the Club. Over the first 20-odd years or so the surviving members of the Nackeroos were held in very high esteem by their successors and there were many interactions between young and old at various ceremonies and gatherings. It was interesting to hear the tales of how and where these knockabout men of tremendous adventurous spirit operated, mainly on horseback, throughout the North in the latter days of the War. They were so excited and grateful that Army had 'resurrected' them by creating NORFORCE and they really did regard the new Unit as their spiritual home.

I also ascertained from David Chinn, that the Colour-Patch for the Nackeroos comprised an Orange (Ochre) and Green Double Diamond. I had an idea before going to Darwin to raise NORFORCE that I would take a risk and resurrect it to be worn to our slouch hat puggaree just as they did all those years ago. Like all good Commanding Officers of the day I needed to make sure my RSM endorsed such a bold decision; he did. NORFORCE became the first unit in the Australian Army since WW11 to wear a Colour-Patch. Now, every unit in the Army wears one on the puggaree of the Slouch Hat.

While I had discussed the NORFORCE Hat complete with Color-Patch, brim turned down and (the then) Infantry Corps Badge on the front with General Grey and had his 'agreement', I only secured what I interpreted to be 'official sanction' for wearing it when I wore it in front of the then Chief of Defence, Admiral Sir Anthony Synnot, KBE, AO, , and then Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant General Sir Donald Dunstan, AC, KBE, CB, KStJ, at the Chief of General Staff's Conference at Canungra in 1982; both commented to the effect "I love it"; good enough approval for me. Mind you I wouldn't have called it a career move; many were opposed to my tacit disregard for protocol.

It's interesting how history is made. Mind you there is no reference to this initiative anywhere within Army; not as far as I know. Someone else would have laid claim to it I by now, I suppose; perhaps some staffer.

Future Commanding Officers stuck with the NORFORCE Hat until it was approved. As for the Regimental Badge, the third Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Neil Weekes, MC (later Brigadier Neil Weekes, AM, MC, OAM (Civ)) while he was in command, designed and had approved a NORFORCE Badge to replace the Infantry Corps badge. The story behind this is 'romantic' in the sense it was inspired by Neil being one day 'confronted' in front of his office by a rather inquisitive frill-neck lizard that then became the centre-piece of the badge and the NORFORCE motto 'Ever Vigilant'. I take my hat off to Neil who sadly passed away in 2019; a great soldier lost.

The NORFORCE Flag was another issue that had the potential to be derailed early-on by 'heraldic protocol' but thanks to the good General Grey we won through. The RSM and I had designed the flag which, then, was the Green and Orange Double-Diamond on a sand-coloured background. It was to be unveiled for the first time by General Grey at a ceremony at which we were also going to unveil the NORFORCE Commemorative (diamond shaped) Rock in front of the Unit Headquarters. A suitable plaque on the Rock further signifies the occasion.

I made the mistake of showing his to the then Chief of General Staff (General Dunstan's successor), Lieutenant General (later General) Sir Phillip Bennett, AC, KBE, DSO, who later become Governor of Tasmania, on one of his visits to the Unit a few weeks prior to the proposed unveiling. Sir Philip asked me whether I had the approval of 'The Heraldic Committee', which I never knew existed. I said I didn't so he 'politely' suggested I needed to do so. When he left I phoned General Grey and explained what had transpired. He asked me whether General Bennett had specifically told me not to fly the flag. When I said 'No', he said 'well then, we go ahead as planned'. And so it came to be that General Grey unveiled the Unit Flag for the first time. The occasion is recorded on a metal plaque affixed to the Commemorative Rock. The design of the Flag has now changed to incorporate the Unit Badge but it is still very much the pride of the Unit. A second rock has been added to the Commemorative Rock to signify the 'Double-Diamond' Colour-Patch.



***NORFORCE Colour-Patch***



***NORFORCE Regimental Badge***

### ***A SAILOR'S EYE***

As with most 'Regiments' it is customary to have an Honorary Colonel, Colonel Commandant, or some other 'father-figure' who could be 'trotted out' in public on ceremonial occasions. When we raised NORFORCE, it was proposed by the then Commander of the 7<sup>th</sup> Military District based in Darwin, that it would be good local 'PR' if we appointed the Administrator of the Northern Territory (equivalent to the Governor of a State - remember the Northern Territory was exactly that; a Territory), retired Navy Commodore Eric Johnston, AM, to be our Honorary Colonel. Eric was so appointed and remained so while he was Administrator. The appointment, rightly or wrongly, now automatically goes with the job of Administrator.

Eric's involvement was minor, and I had very little interaction with him. He was, however, generally supportive when, on rare occasions I asked for his support. He was not really my type, nor I suspect, I his, but he was very popular in the Territory; he was just a little too pompous for my liking and very conscious of his position; we spoke a different language. Despite this, we enjoyed an occasional laugh together, like when I had to teach him after 30 odd years serving on Her Majesty's ships, how to wear a Sam Browne and salute like a soldier; he liked neither.

### ***MORE TO FOLLOW***

NORFORCE unquestionably had an amazing and outstandingly positive start; a success that has, I believe, continued to this day. It was the forerunner to other Regional Surveillance Units around the Country: The Pilbara Regiment in Western Australia, based in Carnarvon; and 51 Royal Queensland Regiment (51RQR) based in Cairns; both of which have also been highly successful.

### ***THERE'S ALWAYS ONE***

But in the early days there was an unfortunate 'underbelly'; the then local Darwin Headquarters; Headquarters 7<sup>th</sup> Military District. This 'must have been the then '3<sup>rd</sup> X1' of the Military talent list. It was a thorn in the side of NORFORCE from Day One and for a number of years thereafter. NORFORCE was all too much for this bunch of 'slackers' (with the occasional exception). Initially the commander of this administrative headquarters and I were of the same rank. That made it easy to oppose that with which I did not agree. Later he was promoted Colonel. The only difference that made was I attached 'Sir' to my rejections of his perceived 'authority'. Mind you he had the last laugh but that's another story for another time. Thankfully, the overall influence over our day to day operations of the Unit was extremely limited; thanks, in the main, to my own determination and the backing I had from General Grey to whom I reported. But it was none-the-less a frustration we could have done without. It would be impolite to say more about this unfortunate situation.



***'Taking One for The Team'. The author being invested with the Officer of The Order of The British Empire (OBE) for his and his Team's success s in raising NORFORCE.***

### ***EPILOGUE***

This writing is but a very short synopsis of the raising of NORFORCE some 40 years ago. There is much more to be told; this is based purely on one person's recall and is limited by space allocated.

As I look back on my time in the Army, but in particular as Commanding Officer of NORFORCE, I am reminded of a time when soldiers were allowed to soldier and when leaders were allowed to lead. Mistakes were not only made by leaders, they were almost expected. As a Unit Commander you were allowed to 'command'; to get on with the job; to do it 'your way'. You were expected to experiment; to find new and better ways; and to take calculated risks. The Army had its 'characters' and this was encouraged. Political correctness was virtually non-existent. They were good times; challenging times; enjoyable times. I am grateful having had the opportunity to serve.

The Author

  
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Visit and explore our facilities at Greenway Chapel and Memorial Gardens, and Palmdale Memorial Park. Tour our numerous gardens, Defence Memorials and spacious chapels that are fitted with the latest in audio-visual technology, equipped for complimentary live-streaming. All facilities are located on-site at Greenway and Palmdale, including fully catered, private function rooms and a café. Feel comfortable knowing you are in safe hands with our friendly and experienced teams.

Contact our friendly team to learn more and organise a visit to one of our locations, including our newly refurbished Erina Heights Chapel (pictured below), exclusive to Creightons Funeral Service.



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