

CLEM SARGENT

Good Morning Ladies and Gentlemen.

We are gathered here today to farewell and pay tribute to our esteemed friend, Clem Sargent.

Clem Sargent joined the Interim Army in March 1946 with the hope that he would be sent to Japan with the Occupation Forces. Instead he was allotted to 5th Field Survey Company of the Survey Corps, based at Chatswood in Sydney, as a Sapper. He did his initial survey training under Major Bert Eggeling and Warrant Officer Class 2 Spencer Snow.

In October 1946 he did field work in the Snowy Mountains. He was part of Spencer Snow's survey party which commenced levelling from near Jindabyne to the top of Mt Kosciusko. The levelling stopped at Charlottes Pass because snow covered the remaining high ground.

After a brief Christmas break in Sydney work commenced again in Jan 47, still as part of now Warrant Officer Class 1 Snow's survey party. In March 1947 the survey party rode horses into the Grey Mare Range and the Rolling Grounds and worked for six weeks establishing survey control. Clem remarked recently "I'd never ridden, couldn't ride then and still can't". The survey party was forced to pull out for the winter. Clem had been promoted to Corporal around this time.

In 1948 Clem was working on the Berridale 1 inch to 1 mile map. Major Clews's plan to do barometric heighting down Hannells Ridge had to be cancelled because of snow falls. This saved Clem and Sapper Williams having to ride a horse from "The Chalet", at Charlottes Pass, down through Dead Horse Gap and Tom Groggin to meet with the Maj at the bottom of Hannells Ridge. Later that year he attended a course at the newly established School of Military Survey at Balcombe. This was the first course of several courses that he would attend over the next couple of years. The Commanding Officers were Major Bert Eggeling and later Lieutenant Colonel Bill Johnson.

In 1949 Clem was posted to the Long Range Weapons Establishment, with Don Ridge. The Unit was commanded by Lieutenant Snow and Sargent Ken Cook was the Unit senior non commissioned officer. In 1950 Clem was involved in surveys for the Woomera rocket range and participated in measurement of the Koolymilka first order base line. This was the last such baseline measured in Australia.

After a Special Survey Course at Balcombe in the latter part of 1950 and another in 1951, Clem was commissioned as a Lieutenant on 15 December 1951 at the same time as Ed Anderson, Don Ridge, John Hillier and Frank Stevens. Early in the New Year he did a Course on the "Multiplex" aerial mapping system at Bendigo.

Between October 1952 and January 1954 he was posted to 15th National Service Training Battalion, at Puckapunyal. There he was initially a platoon commander responsible for training recruits in the "old National Service intakes" of 3 months duration. He was later the Assistant Adjutant of the Battalion. When asked about being stuck behind a desk he said. "I wasn't overly struck on it. But I did what I was told"

From January 1954 to September 1955 he was posted to Southern Command Field Survey Section. During this posting he worked on establishing survey control for 1 in

to 1 mile maps mainly in the Mildura–Ouyen areas of North West Victoria, with some work at Ringwood and Wangaratta.

He was promoted Temporary Captain on 22 July 1955, prior to posting to Army Headquarters Survey Regiment at Bendigo on 20 September 1955, and to Substantive Captain on 15 December 1955.

In early 1956 he managed to escape the office and do some work back on the Ouyen–Mildura 2nd order triangulation with Keith Todd, Norm Tupper, Bruce Coburn and Tom Royle. Army Headquarters Survey Regiment had recently been reorganised to include a Topographic Squadron as well as the Cartographic Squadron.

Between August 1956 and November 1957 Clem worked on Project “Cutlass”. The project was a shore-ship-triangulation survey of New Ireland, new Hanover and surrounding off-shore islands in the Territory of Papua and New Guinea. The project was a cooperative effort between Australia and the United States of America, Army Map Service (29 Engineer Topographic Battalion). The project was similar to the preceding New Britain survey; Project “Xylon”.

Following years of arduous field work Clem became the Adjutant/Quarter Master of the Army Headquarters Survey Regiment.

In the years 1961-1962 Clem worked on geodetic surveys and control for 1:250,000 scale mapping and in the Queensland Gulf Country and Cape York. When stationed in the Coen area Clem was pleased to be given the task of searching for one of the “K” trees marked by the Kennedy Expedition in 1848 some where in the Weymouth Bay or Shelburne Bay areas. I’m not sure which. He found the general area but bushfires had removed all the likely trees in the area.

By this time Electronic Distance Measurement (Tellurometer) was in use by the Survey Corps. A single traverse line replaced the cumbersome triangulation chain and establishing survey control became much faster. Astronomical observations for latitude, longitude and direction were also routine methods used in survey control work.

After promotion to Major on 15 December 1961 Clem was posted to Army Headquarters, Survey Directorate, which had recently moved to Canberra, as Deputy Assistant Director Survey. On 9 March 1965 he was posted to a similar position as Deputy Assistant Director Survey at Headquarters Far Eastern Land Forces, Singapore until February 1967. As the Deputy Assistant Director Survey he would have been responsible for the smooth administration of Survey Directorate as well as financial and personal matters.

On his return to Australia he became Officer Commanding Western Command Field Survey Unit and Deputy Assistant Director Survey Western Command, based in Fremantle. There he was responsible for the Survey Corps 1:100,000 mapping programme in the Kimberly Region of Western Australia.

Around this time traditional methods of surveying had changed markedly. New equipment called “Aerodist” had recently been introduced into the Corps. Lines between survey points were measured by an aircraft flying between the points making electronic measurements to instruments at the ground stations. Intervisibility between survey points was no longer a problem, and lines could be much longer, up to about 200kilometers. This was a great advantage in the rugged, remote or flatter areas of Australia, New Guinea or Indonesia.

Between April and August 1970 Clem was seconded to Eastern Command Field Survey Unit in Sydney to command the first Defence Mapping aid project in Indonesia - Operation "MANDAU" in West Kalimantan (Borneo). Initially the operation was to be commanded by a Capt, however, as Army Headquarters began to realise the size and importance of the Project a Major was called into the job. Clem was selected because Major Bob Hammet the Officer Commanding Eastern Command Field Survey Unit had recently died and Captain Ted Laker the Officer Commanding designate had not yet returned from his posting in the United Kingdom. The remaining Officer's Commanding were busy preparing for their own major field operations. "Mandau" was an international project which included United Kingdom Forces from the Royal Engineers - Survey Service, Indonesian Army Topographers, Australian Army, A Royal Australian Air Force CARIBOU aircraft contingent and chartered civilian Aircraft. Besides Survey there were Army detachments from Signals, Aviation, Service Corps, Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, Pay Corps, Catering Corps, Medical Corps and Ordnance Corps.

"MANDAU" was also significant in that it established a bond of trust between the Royal Australian Survey Corps and Indonesian Army Topographers that was to grow stronger year by year. Later when relations between the Indonesian and Australian Governments became strained, co-operative surveys were able to continue pretty much as normal

Clem and his Detachment were the people that started it off.

His last appointment was Commanding Officer and Chief Instructor of the School of Military Survey, Bonegilla, from which he retired with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel on 19 March 1975. The Commanding Officer and Chief Instructor of the School is a very important job as it carries the responsibility for setting the standards for the next generation of Corps members. The standards apply not only in the technical area but also in the areas of work ethics and general conduct. In these areas Clem was well suited to the job.

Clem joined the Australian Survey Office after he left the Army. There he was involved in the training of survey technical officers. After a time at the Department of Defence (Directorate of Recruiting) he completed his career with the Division of National Mapping as the Senior Executive Officer (Planning and Co-ordination). It is ironic that a former survey corps officer should hold the purse strings at the Division of National Mapping.

Since retirement from the Survey Corps he has kept an active interest in Corps matters - as editor of the National Bulletin of Survey Corps Associations for five years and as President of the Canberra Survey Corps Association for over ten years.

Clem was appointed Colonel Commandant of the Royal Australian Survey Corps for a period of four years from 10 February 1983 to 10 February 1987. This appointment was later extended until 10 February 1989.

In retirement Clem has been involved with three major Survey Corps Association Projects.

Firstly: Publication of the Corps history. This project was completed with the publication of the book "Australia's Military Mapmakers" by Chris Coulthard-Clark in September 2000.

Secondly: The dedication of a commemorative plaque to recognise those who served in survey units on Active Service. Many of you will remember the great occasion on 9 July 2007 when His Excellency Major General Michael Jeffery AC CVO MC Governor General of the Commonwealth of Australia and Clem unveiled the plaque at the Australian War Memorial.

Thirdly: Re-establishment of the Survey Corps Museum at the School of Military Engineering, Casula. A start has been made to this project. There are many items already on display. However, it will take some years to bring the Museum up to its full potential, and there will be an on going maintenance requirement. We have a dedicated group working on the project.

In addition to his Survey Corps activities Clem had a great interest in military history. He joined the Military Research and Collectors Society, the predecessor of the Military Historical Society of Australia, in Victoria in 1959. Since then he has been an inaugural member and office bearer of both the Western Australian and Australian Capital Territory Branches. He has held senior positions in the Society such as Federal Secretary (1978 -1988) and Federal Vice President. He has been the Australian Corresponding Member of the Council of the Society for Army Historical Research (Based in the United Kingdom).

His military history interests are primarily in the Peninsular War and the Peninsular War Veterans in Australia. He has published one book "The Colonial Garrison 1817-1824", which is a history of the 48th Regiment, the Northhamptons, who were in Australia between 1817 and 1823. He has been working on another regimental history; this time the 40th Regiment, 2nd Somersetshire Regiment, who served two tours of duty in Tasmania between 1824 and 1860. He has written many articles for the Society's Journal "Sabretache". "The Royal Australian Survey Corps 1915-1990" is one article that quickly springs to mind.

For his services to Military History Clem was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in June 2003.

I think that you will agree with me when I say that Clem has had a busy, often exciting and certainly a fulfilling career. If you have ever been part of ship to shore or helicopter operations you will understand what excitement can be. We all enjoyed his cheerful manner and the enthusiasm he showed for daily life. His no nonsense style of getting things done was appreciated by us all, even those that were volunteered.

And so as we say farewell Clem, I offer to you some lines from the Chorus of the Survey Corps Song. "Wandering the Kings Highway":

"But when I start my journey
At the dawn of another day
I give a health to comrades
Pals of the king's highway."

Thank you Ladies and Gentlemen.