



# The Germ Journal



**Issue Number: 43  
31 December 2011**

\*\*\*\*\*

Welcome to the December 2011 Edition of the Germ Journal (the Ex-104 Battery Member's Newsletter).

**Contact List Updates:**

If any Germ has an E-mail address that is not recorded on the Contact List please let me know (corcorf@bigpond.net.au). It will save time and money if all I have to do is mail out electronically.

New/Change of address, etc.:-

Phil Johnston's new email address is: [phil.johnno@bigpond.com](mailto:phil.johnno@bigpond.com)

**12 Field Regiment RAA Association:**

No Report this quarter.

**Royal Australian Artillery Association:**

No Report this quarter.

**Reunions:**

12 Field Regiment Adelaide 2012

If you could put a line or two in your Germ re our 12 Field Regiment Reunion next year in Adelaide on 24<sup>th</sup> 25<sup>th</sup> 26<sup>th</sup> of April 2012 would be much appreciated, obviously numbers at any reunion will make it a success.

Having said that I realise that 104 Battery is having there own reunion in Adelaide in 2013.

One of the high lights will be 8/12 Medium Regiment have strongly indicated that 102 CORAL Battery will be carrying the banners and calling the march as our marching skills have deteriorated over the years, Only army exercise will stop a good battery roll up.

Your Gunners may not be interested in this bit Frank, but on December the 3<sup>rd</sup> 2011 102 Coral Battery was resurrected at Edinburgh air base out at Elizabeth SA. 102 Battery was disbanded in 1987. It was an interesting ceremony there was a very small contingent of 12Field Regiment Gunners there being Les Partridge RSM, Don Tait BK 102 Battery, Larry Darcy and Dick Creek, the last 3 Gunners travelling from interstate. Also in attendance was Jim Holland, Trevor Bryant and myself and 6 people from SA Artillery Association. The rest was made up by family and friends.

After the ceremony the Battery had their Christmas Break Up at 48 Field Battery 105 club Keswick Barracks. Overall it was a good day.

Hopefully all those ex Happy Valley people are all well. In finishing I wish all you and your family and your Germ Gunners a MERRY XMAS and HAPPY NEW YEAR.

Peter Geelen

The 12 Field Regiment Association received the following from the BC of the newly raised 102 Coral Battery.

Trevor,

I am writing to you as the South Australian representative of the 12 Fld Regt Association.

I would like to express my thanks to the Association for their outstanding support to the 102nd Coral Battery re raising ceremony on 3 Dec 2011. The support of the veterans and association members demonstrated to the soldiers of the Battery the importance of the occasion. The attendance of these veterans has established a link to their origins; this is an area I place a great level of importance.

I also request the association's assistance with locating 102nd Coral Battery memorabilia. I understand that there was a great deal of memorabilia in the Battery when it was disbanded in 1987. Myself and the BSM are extremely keen to give these items a permanent home in the Battery Lines. I hope you can agree that the lines at RAAF Edinburgh are suitable to hold these precious items.

I would also like to formally offer the Battery's assistance in the 12 Fld Regt Association reunion over the period 24 - 26 April 2012. I am very keen to support this activity in anyway I can. I am hopeful that I will be able to provide a demonstration of the new digital mode of operations that we are moving too.

Again, my sincere thanks to yourself and the Association. I see Saturday as a success with a fantastic turnout from friends, families and veterans.

Kind regards.

Duncan

**D.J.M. ANDERSON**

MAJ

BC 102 Coral Bty

8/12 Regt

#### 104 Battery Reunion Adelaide 2013

Things are progressing well with the preparation for the reunion in Adelaide in 2013. A total of 28 have booked so far, meaning up to 56 people are definitely attending.

Adelaide Shores have agreed to extend the special deal for bookings until January 31, 2012, so those ready to book should do so soon.

We have more people joining the committee early next year and our next meeting will be held in late January.

Please make a commitment to the reunion, particularly those who have not attended in the past, as it is a good opportunity to have great fellowship and create new memories. A full programmed of activities is planned.

The committee wishes you all a happy Christmas and a great 2012.

Bob Dehle

#### **History of 104 Battery:**

104 Field Battery has the distinction of being the only Field Battery of 12 Field Regiment to have served two tours of duty in South Vietnam. 104 also has the distinction of being the last Field Battery to depart South Vietnam.

The 104<sup>th</sup> Medium Battery, equipped with 5.5" BL Guns was formed during 1965. During 1967 the 5.5" Guns were replaced with 105mm M2A2 Howitzers and as a consequence 104 became a designated Field Battery.

Training for deployment to SVN began in earnest from that time. In May 1968 104 deployed to SVN as part of 12 Field Regiment. 104 was the Direct Fire Support Battery for 4RAR/NZ. An extract from Mission in Vietnam, a history of 4RAR/NZ tour of Vietnam Jun 1968-May 1969 says: "104 Field Battery provided splendidly accurate and sustained support throughout the tour. The battery became such a close-knit part of the Anzac battalion team the Artillerymen were invited to contribute as full members in the production of this book".

While giving that support the battery established a reputation for rapid and accurate artillery fire and at the same time developed an extremely close bond with the battalion, a relationship much closer and deeper than would be normally expected between units from different corps.

The battery excelled when they could work in conditions they and the infantry understood.

104 Field Battery returned to Australia in May 69 and was stationed at Holsworthy before moving to Townsville.

1970 and early 1971 was devoted to training for a 2<sup>nd</sup> tour of South Vietnam. The Battery was fortunate to have a nucleus of experienced soldiers who had already completed a tour with 104 previously. The Battery was fully aware of the very high standards that had been established by 104 during 1968-1969.

104 redeployed to SVN in May 1971, once again the DS battery for 4RAR/NZ. During this tour the infantrymen of 4RAR/NZ came to have such confidence in the 104<sup>th</sup> Field Battery that the Task Force Standing Order, stating that the 1<sup>st</sup> round of a Fire Mission had to be directed 1000m in front of the leading elements, was waived for the first time and as a mark of affection, the infantrymen of 4RAR/NZ began to refer to the Battery as "104 Company." 104 provided the Fire Support for the TF withdrawal from Nui Dat to Vung Tau in November 1971, thus completing their designated role with 4RAR/NZ.

Members from both tours of Vietnam established their own proud legacy whether it being the "Germers" from 1968-69 or the "Professionals" from 1971. 104 Field Battery was accorded a Civic Reception in Townsville on their return to Australia in December 1971.

#### **Items of Interest:**

Contributions from around the country follow;

#### Rob and Rosemary Brooker's News: -

Hi all,

We have just returned from eleven days in Adelaide to celebrate Rob's Mum's 90th Birthday and caught up with all of the Brooker family. Rob's brother was diagnosed with Mantle Cell Lymphoma after our visit in June, so it was good to spend time with him. We also caught up with my Mum who turned 90 last year, so hopefully we have inherited our Mums longevity.

We have been on babysitting duties this year, but our younger grand-daughter starts school next year, so we will only be on duty in the school holidays in the future. Next year we are going on a holiday to South America. We have visas and vaccinations to complete early in the New Year and then we hurry up and wait for our trip to start.

This year has been a period for us to start de-cluttering our home and garage, as we prepare to downsize to a single level home with a smaller garden while we still have good health and can organise the move without the help of our kids. We aim to move to our next home before we turn 70, so have plenty of time to get organised. In the meantime, Rob is enjoying his Lawn Bowls with a few trips away to country competitions each year and I continue to enjoy sewing and patchwork.

Rob and I wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy 2012.

Regards to all.

Rosemary and Rob

Frank and Paula Corcoran's News: -

Well another year has flown by and I have had the all clear on my 6 month check up. The next stage is a PSA check at 9 months and if that's clear I will probably go out to a 12 month cycle of checks.

I had a trip to Sydney in late October, which I forecast in the last Journal. It was a successful 5 days and it gave me great pleasure to show off the sites of Sydney and the National Park on the way to Newcastle to a good friend. The Newcastle foreshore has been developed into a strip of restaurants and hotels and is quite impressive. Of course a trip to Sydney is not the same without a trip on the ferry to Watsons Bay and Doyles for fish and chips.

I had a trip to Tasmania in late November to see Nadia and Julian, spend a few days in Hobart and then up to Bicheno on the east coast. I think Nadia misses having her family close by so I can see Paula and I spending more time in Tasmania in the future.

Paula, Petrea and I are going to Nadia's and Julian's for Christmas. It's Nadia's first Christmas in her own home and she wanted to have Christmas at her place. Christmas in Hobart and then go up to Bicheno after Boxing Day to see the New Year in. Bicheno has a small population normally but it swells by a few thousand over the summer months.

Well that's about it for the Corcorans, so we take this opportunity of wishing you all a very Merry Christmas and a Prosperous and Healthy 2012.

Paula and Frank

Dick Duane's News: -

Can I have a bit of a whinge? How come we don't hear from Deadly, Fleggie and others who used to be prolific correspondents way back when. Ah well times change.

Dick

Editor's Note:

Gentlemen, you have been suitably admonished by Tricky, so how about it.

John and Barbara Herbert's News: -

Greetings to All,

Hoping you are all well. Can't believe another year is almost over. Everything is quiet here. We are spending a lot of time in our garden and John's veggie patch is flourishing.

Wishing everyone a very Merry Christmas and a wonderful New Year!

Cheers,

Barb and John

Gordon and Sue Johnson's News: -

Hello fellow Germs

I (Johno) and Sue would like to wish all you fine people a Merry Christmas and all the best for 2012.

It would also like to thank the boys and girls who are organising Adelaide for a job very well done.

Good health and best wishes to all.

Johno

Pieter and Gay Leembruggen's News: -

Hi Frank & Paula, Germs, Germettes and Families,

Firstly, to Frank and Paula, Gay and I are so glad and relieved to have read the good news about your recovery in the last Germ Journal. We hope you are well and truly on the mend by now and for the future.

Thankfully, Gay and I have enjoyed another year of reasonably good health. Gay still has issues with her back from time to time and I have an ongoing problem with a permanently blocked vein at the back of the right eye which has badly affected my sight on one side. All they can do is stop it getting worse with eye injections and laser treatment, which sounds a lot worse than it actually is, apart from the cost.

So far, my crook eye has not inhibited my ability to do computer work and I am still doing 3 days a week with Bob Ferry (Gosford Solicitor), looking after the business side of his practice. I am the envy of his staff, as I have a 4 day long week-end every week!

In April we did our first trip to the west coast of America and absolutely loved it. We flew into San Francisco for a few days and did Alcatraz, Yosemite National Park (Gay missed this with a sore back), Sausalito, etc. Then took a coach to Monterey and beautiful Carmel, where Clint Eastwood used to be Mayor, followed by the Coast Starlight Express train to Los Angeles. We stayed on the Sunset Strip, visited Hollywood, Beverley Hills (walked the full length of Rodeo Drive-fabulous homes and shops), Santa Monica and Venice Beaches, Universal Studios, etc. Then back on the Starlight Express back to San Francisco, spending a night at Paso Robles to see Hearst Castle on the way. We spent a few more days in San Francisco where we both got a really bad dose of flu and moaned and groaned all the way back to Oz. Apart from the last couple of days, it was one fabulous trip and we are saving up to go back. We found the yanks terrific hosts and their service is absolutely second to none and oh so cheap with our dollar being so strong.

This year also saw our darling granddaughter, Lauren, turn 17, and complete her HSC and Graduate. We proudly watched her leave for her first formal in a stretch limo looking as pretty as a picture. I've been giving her driving lessons for a few months and she is now getting formal driving instructor lessons for her next life changing challenge (a driver's license – how scary is that?). Next year she will travel to Sydney each day to study Interior Design.

Well, that's our story for 2011.

We hope you all have a Fantastic Christmas and may your dreams come true in 2012.

Our love and best wishes,

Pieter & Gay

Greg and Barbara Petersen's News: -

Well 2011 will soon be a distant memory and hopefully 2012 will be kind to all of us.

We have just returned from a cruise to New Zealand where we took in the sights of Fiordland, Picton, Akaroa, Dunedin and Wellington. Christchurch had been on the itinerary but was cancelled because of the earthquake damage. Our ship had just left Picton when it was hit with a 5.7 earthquake and the day we arrived home in Brisbane Wellington was hit with a quake as well. New Zealand is a beautiful country and we hopefully will visit again for a longer period of time.

Greg still does volunteer work at the RSPCA twice a week which he enjoys and we continue to mind our two grandchildren. Mitchell turned 6 this year and we collect him from school two afternoons per week. Ruby turns 2 in December and continues to bring so much joy into our lives.

We wish one and all a very Happy Christmas and all the very best for 2012.

Greg and Barbara

Russ and Marilyn Pullen's News: -

We were going to be heading off in the van to SA by now but as usual there's always a fly in the ointment! Everyone has always insisted I am a tad dozy, well at least now it is official! After a couple of months of more doziness than normal some routine bloods revealed I have had both Ross River and Barmah Forest Viruses in recent times so now we are going to fly to SA to join the family for Christmas.

After Christmas we intend to mope around home for a little while before we head back north again to listen to the little patter of rug rat feet and joyous screams of adulation directed straight at us whilst we (more definitively, she who has slept in the birthing unit for the entire gestation period of the NEXT grandchild) await that glorious birth.

After that is anybody's guess but I can guarantee somewhere along the way there will be some tight lines and smelly fingers. It is my intention that we hang foul for the birth of Amelia Lee, a view you may well feel may also be closely aligned to Grandma's and then we are going to Karumba. The only uncertainty is which year we do the tight lines and smelly fingers thing.

Merry Christmas and a Healthy and Prosperous New Year to all my readers and subscribers.

Cooee

R n M

Charles and Jackie Robinson's News: -

Charles Robinson from Lismore here.

Have been following your news, re your prostate with some interest as I had mine removed 2 years ago. I was operated on a Monday and released to go home on the Tuesday. I hate staying in hospitals, but I really would have appreciated another day as a patient as I felt so crook. Blood tests are now giving a 0.01 reading so all is well. My doctor insists that I do at least 400 pelvic floor exercises each day which I do - 200 in the morning & 200 in the evening. I know a few guys who don't do any, would be interested to hear from any readers in the same situation.

We are going to Melbourne this year for Christmas, thought a change was due from the normal procedure. Have booked into the Novotel at St Kilda for 5 days. Might be bread, cheese & wine in the park for Christmas lunch. Looking forward to being in a big city for the lead up to Christmas, will be totally different to Lismore. Very impressed with the people at Metlink, they have arranged a travel pass for me inside 30 minutes.

Hope all your readers have a safe Christmas/New Year. We are looking forward to catching up with as many as possible in Adelaide in 2013, we have booked.

Cheers, Charles & Jackie

Barry and Sue West's News: -

September:

Well folks the continuing treatment for my cancer has dealt us some good news (if that is possible), in that the chemo has reduced the cancer paraprotein level to where it is "*barely visible, and unable to be quantified*". What that means is my haematologist is now planning for me to go ahead with a stem-cell harvest commencing this Thursday (6 Oct), followed by stem-cell replacement therapy, possibly in November or December.

Initially I will spend one or two days in hospital having high dose chemo to stimulate the growth of new stem cells, followed by about 7-10 days at home administering a hormonal concoction to boost the production of the new stem cells. That will involve early morning (7.30am) trips to the hospital to monitor the productivity. Apparently, I may not be feeling too flash during this treatment because of the high dose chemo, hence the reason I'm putting this update out now rather than later. Also, I will probably lose any hair I have left (Peter

Garrett look-alike?) so I'm glad the weather is starting to pick up (albeit slowly). I have to admit I am feeling a little apprehensive, but if it means prolonging the time I get to spend with Susan (it's our 40th wedding anniversary this Sunday, 9 October) and grandchildren, then I'm all for it. Wellness permitting, I will endeavor to keep you all up to date, but that's the latest for now. As I have said before, Susan and I appreciate the help and support we have had, and continue to get from both family and friends.

Early October:

Well, as mentioned in my last update, stem-cell harvest was planned to commence on 6 October and it did. Started with another high-dose chemo treatment (to knock out the cancer paraprotein cells, but also killing off a substantial quantity of white blood cells), followed by daily injections of a growth hormone to promote the growth of new stem cells and hence, new white blood cells. The hormone injections were scheduled to continue for at least two weeks, with blood tests every day to keep track of the development and growth of new stem cells. In the meantime, I was expected to feel quite "crappy" (and I did for most days) as my immune system slowly picked up with the growth of new white cells.

Yesterday (Sunday 16th, day 10) we went for a regular blood test, to be told 1 1/2 hrs later that my stem-cell count had jumped 10 fold from the previous day and they would like to commence cell harvest "now" (can't wait around for a day, as the stem cells mature in about 48 hours and they need the 'babies' for the transplant). Back to the hospital and after some preparation (taking about an hour), it was on to the collection machine for two hours. Spent overnight in hospital under observation and mid morning today (Monday) given the news that they had collected 11.7 million stem cells. Another haematologist said it was the second highest reading he had seen. To put that into some perspective I need about 4 million cells for a viable transplant and for many patients that may require two separate collections. Here I am, 1 collection with 11.7 m. The Haematologist and nursing staff were 'over the moon' with the result and me, I'm still getting over the shock. The haematologist did (quietly) have some concern as to my ability to generate sufficient stem cells, but obviously the result speaks for itself. What all this means is my stem-cell transplant may be brought forward to about mid November (I have an appointment with the haematologist on 8 November). In the meantime, I need to build up my body strength for the transplant, Susan and I can take a well earned break from flitting back and forth to the hospital (nearly 50 km round trip) and we might find a little more time to spend with our (now 5 month old) twin grandsons Jayden and Isaac. All being well, I guess the next update will be news of the transplant.

Late October:

Well folks, it's all about to happen. A few days ago we were advised that the Haematologist wants to proceed with the transplant ASAP, to take advantage of the (currently) very low cancer blood paraprotein levels, and the roaring success we had on the stem cell collection. I guess it's a bit like fighting a war – Sun Tzu (***The Art of War***) said "*Speed is the essence of war. Take advantage of the enemy's unpreparedness; travel by unexpected routes and strike him where he has taken no precautions*" (XI.29). My enemy of course is my cancer, and we are striking while it is in a lull. At this stage we are aiming for a start date of Monday 14 November, although there will be several days of pre-transplant preparation in the preceding week. Anyway, Susan and I attended an 'education' session on what will happen, and what to expect. I thought the stem cell harvest sounded daunting, but the transplant will be a different 'kettle of fish'. What that means is I will be in hospital (in isolation) for about a month, then hopefully, I will be allowed to go home, although recovery is expected to be slow, with a very big risk of infection. Consequently, we will have a nurse from the oncology unit visit me every day for the first month out of hospital, to check on my general health etc, and to take blood samples to measure the level of platelets and white blood cells. Guess there is not much more to add at this stage, other than to think of the long term gain. Anyway, Susan and I will do our best to keep you all informed of my progress.

November:

Well, over the last couple of weeks I have been feeling the best I have been for several months and I therefore have taken the opportunity to spend more time with the family. I have also been back and forth to the hospital several times during the last couple of months for various things and tomorrow (Friday 11/11/11) I go into hospital for a day procedure to have a "Hickmans" line inserted in my chest. They will use this to remove fluids from me and to add fluids, blood, stem cells, etc into my system. This is all in preparation for the big day starting next Monday, 14th.

By the way, I understand that the combination of (tomorrows) numbers 11/11/11 is lucky in Chinese numerology, so I hope they are right.

At this stage I can expect to have chemo on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday (which will totally wipe out all of my white blood cells and my immunity), followed by the stem cell transplant on Friday next week. At that stage I will be in isolation (for approx 10-14 days), where I will be constantly monitored for any signs of infection, as well as keeping an eye on my progress re growth of new white blood cells, platelets and general development of my immune system. Apparently, I will be feeling like 'crap' during this time, and while limited visitors are welcome (subject to minor quarantine restrictions), it is unlikely I will be very welcoming (so what's new? you ask). Anyway, the good news is that recovery time is, to some degree, related to the number of new stem cells transplanted (makes sense). Anyway, whereas most recipients receive between 2 million and 4 million cells (depending on their stem cell harvest), in my case, having produced nearly 12 million stem cells, the haematologist plans to load me up with 5 million cells, which she believes will aid a better and hopefully, marginally quicker recovery.

On family by the way, my daughter Christine and grandson Oliver are arriving this weekend from Adelaide and plan to be here for the next two weeks, so all my three children will be here in Canberra to give extra support to Susan and I during the most critical phase of the treatment.

Anyway, I'm planning on getting through this one way or another, and assuming all goes well, I hope to be out of hospital by about the end of November. Recovery time from there is any ones guess, but I am not ready to throw the towel in just yet. I have already been through enough 'crap' over the last 18 months.

Susan may post a progress report by email, but I'm sure she won't mind a phone call enquiry re progress either.

December:

Firstly let me say I am back out of hospital and fighting. I was discharged last Friday, 2nd December and had another review today so I thought I would wait a few days before reporting. Besides, the last couple of days haven't all been great anyway. I want to thank everyone who sent their good wishes, thoughts, prayers, etc to both Susan and I. Anyway, I'm here to tell you that if anyone says a complete stem cell transplant is easy, it isn't. With a combination of nausea, vomiting, the big 'd' and fatigue, I now know what death warmed up is really like and it's not pleasant. Anyway, I eventually managed to come out of the other end still kicking (although the hair is a lot thinner, and I have lost about 10 kg in weight) and last Friday the medicos reckoned on me being ok to go home (two weeks after the transplant). Pity my body hasn't been told the news!! Having said that, much of the various side effects will continue for quite some time (possibly months), but gradually slow down and abate. In other words, it will be a slow recovery of two steps forward and one step back for some time to come. I must say here that part of my recovery is all due to the support of my family. Susan of course was the main stayer, visiting me every day bar one for three weeks. Also I (and Susan) had the support of our children, Simon and Cheree (with the twins Isaac and Jayden), Nik (who delayed his move to the Solomom Islands) and Christine, David and Oliver (who drove over from Adelaide for the critical two weeks).

Anyway, the last two days have been the best so far, in that some of the side effects appear to be abating and I am at least eating some proper food, albeit small amounts (rather than cup-of-soups and Sao biscuits), so things might be looking up. As mentioned at the start, I had a review today and the haematology registrar was more than pleased with both the way I'm progressing and more importantly, how the blood levels have increased and continue to increase, particularly without any infection or complications. As a result, I have been taken off some of the post-discharge medication and the next major visit to the hospital now is mid January when I will have a bone marrow biopsy to determine how well the new stem cells have taken and to review how effective the treatment has been to slow down the cancer growth. In a few words, it's all looking good so far. With that, I'm hoping it's not all uphill to January at least and looking forward to having a great Christmas with the family and hopefully I will catch up with a few of you in the new year.

On that note, Susan and I wish you all a pleasant Christmas and New Year.

Barry & Susan



**General:**

A group of 14 Victorian based Germs have banded together to have a 104 Battery Banner commissioned, at their own expense, for use on ANZAC Day and other suitable occasions. It will be ready in time for ANZAC Day 2012 and will be used first up here in Melbourne for those Germs who cannot make it to the Regt. Reunion in Adelaide.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those Germs who have contributed to the Germ Journal over the year, as without their continued interest the Germ Journal would not exist.

Next Edition will be March 2012.

Up the Ol'Red Rooster.

*Frank Corcoran*