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Sawtell NSW 2452
6th June 2003

**A Report of the 40th Reunion of the 14th Intake, Jan'63,
of RANATE HMAS Nirimba**

To Whom It May Concern,

This report is written as an aid to others who may wish to organise a reunion.

Friday Evening

The long time planned for events started at the Stardust Café in the Rooty Hill RSL at approximately 18:30 on Friday 16th May 2003. 101 persons attended the first night.

The venue was a good meeting spot with the only disadvantage being the loud music volume from the band at the other end. The best spot was closer to the café end even if it meant a longer walk to the bar. It was a large enough area to accommodate us with ease. There did not seem to be any other quiet area within the club other than the Settlers Bistro.

Members of our group were able to purchase light snacks from this café or just around the corner was a group of food outlets called Settlers Bistro with just about everything at really great value prices.

We had decided upon this venue for the first night because a previous reunion organisation had advised that when they had a private room and finger food at the resort they felt that they did not receive good value for their money.

I had previously written a courtesy letter to the RSL club and the local sub branch advising of our reunion and the numbers involved. I was disappointed that there was no one to welcome us and no "message board" welcome as would be found in a lot of other clubs. I did not expect anything official at all but because of our numbers I thought a "welcome" by some one from the club would be appropriate to ex servicemen.

Saturday Ferry Cruise

Saturday morning saw 86 of us being picked up by Baxter Coaches in two of their fine coaches. Right on time they carried us to the Rosman Ferry the "Radar" which we boarded at Birkenhead Point in Henley Marine Drive. The "Radar" was on time as well. Another 9 persons joined the ferry at the wharf making a total of 95 onboard the ferry. 3 of the late arrivals went back via the bus. The ferry initially conveyed us to Spectacle Island where Ian Steel and his offsider divided us into two groups for an informative tour of the naval historical museum collection. Included was a mezzanine level of old Nirimba memorabilia. The museum is not normally open for weekend visitors now so we felt very privileged and thank those that gave up their time very much.

Most people found this visit interesting. We allowed 2 hours for this and I think that was OK for most. There were 49 ex mobis aboard and the donation to the Naval Heritage Fund from our group was \$300.

The Ferry embarked the group again for a two hour cruise of the harbour and a light lunch. The finger food lunch was very much under value for what we paid. The quality was tops but for \$15 times 100 persons (we paid for people who did not turn up – our problem) equals \$1500. We think

that they could have supplied a few more trays of sandwiches. No hot food was offered. There were 2 trays of focaccia sandwiches, 2 trays of sushi rolls and 2 trays of anti pasto and 2 trays of bacon tarts etc. Two more trays of the sandwiches would have been enough. Also no tea or coffee was supplied. Hot water was available if you brought your own.

The ferry cruise itself was most enjoyable and Captain and crew very co operative.

We would thoroughly recommend Rosman Ferries but would suggest that you bring your own food. A local sandwich shop would have provided far greater value.

A mixed dozen bottles of wine was supplied curtesy of JJ "Curley" Ormes and Harry Harman. Some people bought their own wine and beer to go with the ice we supplied. Most were conservative in this regard as we had a long night ahead of us. Still one or two went down comfortably with Sydney harbour as a lovely backdrop setting.

On the return trip in the Baxter Coaches the drivers gave us a guided tour of the 2000 Olympic Park with expert interesting commentary. This was carried out at their suggestion which was great service.

Saturday Dinner

At 1700 on the Saturday night we all assembled again for dinner in the Sherbrooke Room of the Resort. The room was done out for the occasion nicely. The Functions Manager, Rhonda Lannoy, had done a great job in organising her staff to set up 15 tables for 115 guests. (we had 4 last minute cancellations as the number was supposed to be 119) The tables were decked out in balloons of the colours of our old Nirimba divisions. We sat in tables of 8 which suited the old 4 man cabin members and their partners. The "divisional" tables were mixed up around the room. One table of 5 kids had balloons the colours of the first term divisions Tasman & Torres.

A group of us had set up the room with photos of old Nirimba around the wall at 6pm. The walls were darkish for viewing but people still enjoyed looking at the old photos. Individual place mats for each member and partner were put in place on the tables and the sound system loaded with sixties cds. The volume turned down to an acceptable level. When the mob arrived the volume was turned up and even at full volume the music could not be heard above the talkers. No body missed the music so I am glad that we did not waste funds on a "music man". Note that this scenario would depend upon reunion numbers.

Souvenirs

The place mats for each member had a 1963 vintage (or thereabouts) personal photograph and a list of all members of the intake and their hometowns. The "partners" place mat had a collection of Sandy Freeleagus's cartoons. Both place mats had Nirimba emblems. Curley Ormes and Harry Harman had beer stubby holders for sale with 40th reunion emblazed on the side. Margaret Ormes and Lorraine Harman gave out wine goblet rings with "pelican" motifs to the ladies. The prize of the night was when Ray Fryer presented his "Where are they now" book about our intake members. Everyone I am sure will spend many hours reading this book. I wonder what we should do about those that now want to contribute? Should there be a sequel?

Lee Ethell presented us with her recently completed reunion banner that she started just after the Yeppoon 2000 reunion. It will now take pride of place at all future reunions. Ric Johnson and Vic Merryweather are the current caretakers.

The only disappointment on this night was the operation of the microphone loudspeaker system. It seemed to be faulty. The duty manager tried various mikes and sometimes they worked. I suspect a switch not in the correct position but I wish that we had found out sooner. There were a lot of hoarse voices the next day.

The food was excellent. The staff were very friendly and the service was great. We would not change anything of either. There was some talk of not enough of "some" type of drinks but I was not sure what this was. Most people were happy with the range of drinks and I heard no complaints about the prices.

The night was most enjoyable. One thought though. There could have been a spotlight available for our photographs but I suppose that I did not ask for this. The reason being that with such a large number of people, even split into two groups, the flash cameras were having difficulty with the range.

At this events conclusion, Midnight, a number of people ventured down to the club via a walk through corridor. All retiring at various times until 3 remained until late.

Sunday.

At 10:00 Sunday morning we once more boarded the Baxter coaches (on time again) A group reduced to 66 members this time as some had work commitments although a number of cars followed the coaches to Nirimba for a look before departing for home. At Nirimba we had approx 77 in number strolling over grounds some had not seen for 36 years. A lot had changed. We had allowed 2 hours for this stroll but 1 hour was more than adequate as nothing is left of the old buildings except 259 and you can not go there. There is a memorial near the main gate now. It is still worthwhile visiting Nirimba to see how a few dollars can transform a place! I had written a letter to the board of the Nirimba Education Precinct asking for permission to visit Nirimba. We received a favourable reply and an indication of a welcoming body. The welcoming body did not eventuate. We only saw two other people during our visit and they looked like students. The main gate was unmanned and we just drove through. Still I think that we did the right thing by writing a courtesy permission letter and they did reply. But I would not worry if you forget to do this. On to Windsor for lunch. Many varied choices of eating places here and market day in the mall as well. Old memories in the Macquarie Arms pub for a lot of the blokes. An enjoyable relaxing 2 hours spent here.

Then to Aqua Golf at Penrith Panthers Leagues Club. The drivers suggested a diversion via the Penrith Lakes complex. This water way was used for 2000 Olympic canoe events and the white water rafting area as well. Very interesting tour and commentary we thought was a bonus. One and half hours at Bob Birch's Aqua Golf and then aboard the coaches for the last time back to Rooty Hill RSL Resort disembarking at approx 5pm. Another great day.

The Sunday evening finished with a fine meal for all in the Settlers Bistro. A few more drinks until the bar closed at midnight Sunday night.

A last breakfast together and then goodbye until next time. Hahndorf SA in Oct 2004.

The weather. This weekend was first thought of 3 years ago. May was decided upon for various reasons, mostly logical with some personal. May is normally very nice weather in Sydney. The week prior and up to the Friday was the wettest period for many years. Mr Murphy strikes again. However, despite the rainy patches on Saturday nobody noticed and the only real reminder is in the photographs viewed later. Sunday was the glorious May weather expected when the events were planned. The advantage of having the accommodation and meeting places at the one venue, going everywhere by bus together meant that the outside conditions did not really matter. No one got lost due to traffic conditions and no "one person" had to worry about driving in a big city.

The Rooms

The rooms at the Rooty Hill RSL Resort were OK. Spacious and reasonably comfortable. Most people said that the sound of running water which seemed to come from the adjacent room was annoying. This noise may have actually been air via the return duct near the entrance to each room. Also a few said that the rooms were not the cleanest especially the carpet. "Just drop something on the floor and bend down to pick it up to find out", they said!

The Operators

The people at the various operators were very nice to deal with.

Firstly Rhonda Lannoy of the Rooty Hill Resort was very proficient. It is best to talk direct to her as she sometimes is too busy to answer questions in letters. Send them anyway but always follow up with a telephone call or a visit. She made sure everything was set up. (The mike worked for her) and made sure that we had the room prices as quoted. She does not automatically correct any abnormalities but when brought to her attention she soon corrects them. She was very pleasant to deal with.

Also easy to do business with were Susan and Maree of Baxter Bus Lines. Nothing was a problem for them or was anything a problem to Christine Cooke of Rosman Ferries who likewise followed up both phone calls and letters with action just like the Baxter people. Everything ran very smoothly from these two organisations. It is a pity about the ferry lunch.

The Coach drivers deserve special mention as everyone in our group was saying how much they (the drivers) made the days very enjoyable.

A list of contacts is at the end of this report.

Also attached is the programme of our events and what it all cost.

The event could not have gone as planned without the attendance of so many. I would like to thank those members who worked "behind" the scenes encouraging others to attend and for correcting addresses from time to time. Namely:- Bill Ohl, Ray Fryer, Vic Merryweather, Jeff Ormes, Ron Matsen, Harry Harman, Ric Johnson, Ed Garrett, Richard Huntriss, Harry Yaldren plus others that I don't know about.

Thanks also to Dave Lewis who checked out the bus companies for me when his boss told him that he could not have their company bus for our use!

Ken Ward also checked out the ferry company before his departure. Thanks Ken.

Thanks for being part of the 14th Jan'63 Intake HMAS Nirimba and supporting Your Reunions. Try and make it to SA in Oct 2004

Warren D Midgley

Organiser, Jan'63 40th Reunion Sydney May 2003

REUNION 2003 Rooty Hill RSL Resort

| Itinerary May 2003 | | | Cost per person |
|--------------------|-------|---|-----------------|
| Day | Time | Event | |
| Fri 16th | 18:30 | Informal drinks at Settlers Stardust Café from 18:30 There is food available here and at the vast bistro nearby | own expense |
| Sat 17th | 9:30 | Air Conditioned Coach RSL to Birkenhead Point and return to RSL | \$17 |
| | 10:30 | Ferry to Spectacle Island Naval Museum from Birkenhead Point | |
| | 12:30 | Harbour Cruise 2 hours from Spectacle Island. Includes light lunch Ice will be provided but members must supply their own drinks which would be best purchased before boarding brought the bus. Jeff is investigating provision of a few bottles of wine. | \$35 |
| | 14:30 | Air Conditioned Coach to RSL from Birkenhead Point | |
| | 15:30 | Back at RSL. Free Time. | |
| | 19:00 | 3 course Dinner in Resort Sherbrooke Room. Drinks at own expense. | \$40 |
| Sun 18th | 10:00 | Bus to Nirimba Education Precinct walk around | |
| | 12:15 | Bus to Windsor Macquarie Arms for lunch at own expense. (Markets) | \$18 |
| | 14:30 | Bus to Penrith Leagues & Bob Birch's Aqua Golf The Bus is ours until 17:00. Times and venues are very flexible. | |
| | 16:30 | Bus back to RSL approx. | |
| | 19:00 | Dinner unplanned, Settlers Bistro / Stardust Café | own expense |

| Accommodation Guide for Rooty Hill RSL Resort | | Cost per Room |
|--|---|---------------|
| Please Note! You must make your own booking. 02 9832 3888 | | |
| Contact: 029832388 | Room Only | \$100 |
| Rhonda Lannoy | Breakfast is \$14 per person if required. | |
| Now under the management of Holiday Inn | | |

| | | |
|--|-------------------|-----------------|
| monies collected | | \$11,138 |
| Costs | | |
| Sat Bus | Baxter Coaches | \$1,078 |
| Ferry | Rosman Ferries | \$1,425 |
| Lunch | Rosman Ferries | \$1,500 |
| Ice Ferry | Rosman Ferries | \$33 |
| Dinner | Rooty Hill Resort | \$4,522 |
| Sun Bus | Baxter Coaches | \$1,089 |
| Place Mats | Print Write | \$200 |
| Naval Museum Donation | | \$300 |
| Bank Fees | Com Bank | \$30 |
| Ink, Paper & Postage | | \$200 |
| Refunds | 3 members | \$364 |
| Book Mail Out postage | | \$90 |
| Misc cash | | \$40 |
| Total costs | | \$10,871 |
| Over for other reunions/website | | \$267 |

| Statistics of the 14th Intake Jan'63 RANATE HMAS Nirimba | | | | |
|--|----|-------------------------|--|--|
| Total Number in Intake | 82 | | | |
| Graduated | 71 | | | |
| Deceased | 5 | | | |
| Locatable 1/6/03 | 71 | | | |
| Not located at 1/6/03 | 6 | | | |
| No response | 5 | | | |
| Not Interested | 4 | | | |
| Attended at least one event | 53 | 75% of locatable | | |
| Cancellations all up | 6 | | | |
| Busy this time | 1 | 61 of 71 ,86% responded | | |

| Numbers | | Friday | Sat bus | Ferry | lunch | Dinner | Sun bus | Nirimba | Windsor | Aqua Golf |
|--------------------|---------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 14th intake | | 48 | 43 | 45 | 45 | 51 | 32 | 38 | 37 | 33 |
| Partners | | 41 | 37 | 38 | 38 | 48 | 28 | 32 | 32 | 30 |
| kids | | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 2 |
| Guests:- | ex mobi | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Guests:- | other | 3 | 3 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| Total | | 97 | 89 | 95 | 95 | 115 | 66 | 77 | 76 | 70 |
| Late cancellations | | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 8 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| including partners | | | | | | | | | | |

Contacts List

Holiday Inn

Rooty Hill RSL Resort

Cnr. Railway & Sherbrooke Streets, Rooty Hill, NSW

Contact: Functions Manager Rhonda Lannoy Telephone 02 9832 3888

PO Box 83, Rooty Hill NSW 2766 Fax 02 9832 1863

www.holiday-inn.com

Baxter's Bus Lines

98 Magowar Road,

Girraween NSW 2145

Contact: Susan 02 9631 8500 Fax 02 9688 1520

Rosman Ferries

14/6 John Street

North Sydney NSW 2060

Contact: Christine Cooke 02 9955 3458 Fax 02 9955 3238

www.rosman.com.au

Nirimba Education Precinct

Professor Robin Woellner

Locked Bag 1797,

Penrith South DC NSW 1797

Telephone 02 9852 4043

OR

Brett Roddy

Laboratory Manager UWS Hawkesbury

Telephone 02 9852 4342

He will advise other contacts

Naval Historical Collection

Spectacle Island

Locked Bag No 12, Pyrmont, NSW 2009

Contact: as at 2/6/2003. Lieutenant Commander Shane Moore

Telephone: 02 9181 3308 Fax 02 9359 2551

Note that the Museum is not normally open on the weekends now.