



# Class of 65 Newsletter

## Edition 61 - June 2013



*Disclaimer: This Newsletter is produced for members of the RMC Class of 1965 and is based solely on inputs from members of the Class of 65. It is not an official publication of the Royal Military College nor does it purport to represent the views or opinions of all members of the Class Editorial staff still lacks the linguistic skills to produce a bilingual version.*

### Editor's Corner

Welcome to summer, such as it is so far in Ottawa. Lots of good stuff this month highlighted by an article by **Gary** Running on an epic trek he and his wife made across the Nullarbor Plain in Australia. **Bob Walker** has provided an interesting comparison between the RMC Convocation ceremony in 1965 and that held in 2013.

Before we get there however there are a couple of short notes to pass along. The first is a follow-up to **Hugh Spence's** article in the last edition on the CMR naval recruits of 1960. There were a couple of omissions and an error in the identification of the people in the picture. **Claude Belhumeur** kindly provided the following corrections: The name missing at the left hand end of the middle row is **6489 Marcel Milot**, the individual on the left hand end of the front row is confirmed as **6504 Jean Morin**. Finally, the Commissioned Officer in the front row was incorrectly identified - his proper name is **Gale**.

It has been brought to my attention that **Ted Nurse**, who I think was a year or two after us has written a book about Major Danny McLeod entitled, "Addicted to Excellence: The Life and Times of Major Danny McLeod." It will be available in several months and will be approximately 350 pages, including photos, and will have an introduction by General John de Chastelain. The cost including taxes will be about 35 dollars Canadian.

**Georges Wilson**, in his ceaseless search for missing classmates has tracked down **6189 Ken Kennedy** who confirmed that he is still vertical and still enjoying flying, now as the Chief Ground School Instructor at the Jet Aircraft Museum in London, Ontario (<http://www.jetaircraftmuseum.ca/>).

---

This is Ken at the helm of one of his flying machines.



## **RMC CONVOCATION THEN (1965) & NOW (2013)**

By 6700 Bob Walker

Remember May 1965 when some 100+ of us scarlet clad male cadets sat on hot chairs on a blistering parade square, awaiting the presentation of our degree diplomas, all of us undergraduates in Arts, Science or Engineering? The only exceptions were one or two honorary doctorate degrees conferred by the MND / Chancellor to profoundly accomplished individuals. Boy, have times changed!

This year, I attended the 96th RMC Convocation, my first one in 38 years, in recognition of a work colleague receiving her RMC PhD. She was one of approximately 336 Convocation recipients, the majority of them women and men in scarlet uniforms receiving Bachelor degrees. But, the interesting characteristic was diversity. RMC has come a long way since 1965 with respect to its student body, with not all of them being in-residence cadets, young upstarts, or even militarily affiliated people.

The first four hooded recipients were PhDs in Chem, Elect, Mech, or

---

Computer Engineering, or War Studies. Next, there were over 60 Master level graduates, from Brig-Gen to Leading Seaman, and civilians, in Master of Arts, Science, Engineering, Applied Science, Business Admin, Defence Studies, and Public Admin, all of these graduate programs available at or through RMC.

At the Bachelor level, there were graduates in Arts, Science, Engineering, and Military Arts and Science. However, the options within each specialty were phenomenal. For example, within the B Arts there were 18 specialties for over 140 graduates, including Business Admin, English or French Studies, the standard Economics or History or Politics focus at both "regular" and honours levels, and now also psychology at both levels. The B Science allows specialization for close to 50 science graduates in 14 areas, some of them not even existing in our day, like computer science or honours space science, while the old stalwarts like math, chemistry, physics, and gen-sci still exist. A separate Bachelor category was in Military Arts and Science in which there were 12 successful Canadian Forces members in ranks from Commander and LCol to Petty Off 1st Class and Warrant Officer. The B Eng options still include Aero, Chem, Civil, Computer, Elect and Mech. Almost 100 RMC graduates became B Engineers on 16 May.

Separately, 26 different categories for recognition in academic excellence were identified. Two, our Class of '65 Teaching Excellence Award and a separate Research Excellence Award, were for named, exceptional faculty members. The remaining 24 awards, medals, prestigious scholarships and memorial prizes went to individuals for academic excellence in post-graduate or undergraduate studies, in specific military environment academics, or in RMC department academics. (Separately, at the final military parade on the following day, the non-academic / non-convocation, outstanding military recognition awards were presented, appropriately on a clear and sunny day on the parade square.)

As Bob Dylan still sings, "The times, they are a'changing!" Well, obviously, that includes profound specialization in a number of additional academic programs and study areas. Needless to say, as our

---

government's 2013 budget strangulation is threatening and the shrinking of public service Human Resources is anticipated, RMC has new challenges ahead of it.

## **Two Up Across the Nullarbor**

**By 6567 Gary Running**

Back in the 50's and 60's a trip across the Nullarbor Plain was considered by many Ozzies, to be the quintessential Australian road trip. It still is a wonderful trip, if a little less exciting now that the road is paved, and the gas stations are a little more plentiful.

My wife Moninna and I have been spending our winters in Australia since 2004. We normally leave Canada in late December and return in early April (just in time to do the taxes). Since 04 we've seen a fair bit of Australia and have visited all 6 states and both territories at least once. But Australia is a big country (about the size of the US, excluding Alaska and Hawaii) and you can never see it all.



**Gary and Moninna Running**

This year we decided to cross the Nullarbor plain. We also thought it would be neat to do it on a motorcycle. Although I do own a bike in Canada (a Moto Guzzi 750 Brevia) I don't have one in Australia. Renting a motor cycle in Australia is expensive, compared to renting a car, but there are ways to

---

moderate the rental costs if you are flexible both in your timing and your destination. If you are willing to go to where a rental bike has been dropped off, and return it to its point of origin, you are able to save quite a bit. As it turned out we lucked in. A BMW R1200 GS was available for pick up in Perth, to be dropped off in Sydney.

We were to pick up the bike in Perth at 9 am on the 18<sup>th</sup> of March, and drop it off in Sydney on the 30<sup>th</sup> of March at 10 am. That gave us 12 full days to get from Perth, on the Indian Ocean, to Sydney, on the Pacific Ocean. It's a ride of about 4,000 km or about 350 km per day. That's about 4 to 5 hours riding time each day which is just nice. About 2,000 of the 4,000 km is across the Nullarbor plain and its approaches. The road (the Eyre Highway) runs more or less parallel to the Great Australian Bight but north of it of course, anywhere from 5 to 80 km depending on where you are along the Eyre. So, a neat trip from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific Ocean, and for a good portion of the trip along the northern shore of the Great Southern Ocean (Antarctic Ocean).

The BMW R1200 GS is a beautiful touring bike, very comfortable, lots of power, rock solid on the road, and lots of room for two people and their stuff. It's also a versatile bike and has an off-road capability, but that is definitely not something I would recommend doing when you are riding two-up.

The Nullarbor can get very hot in the summer, high 30's are normal, and low 40's not unheard of. However once mid-March rolls around (early fall) the temperature moderates and you can get some very nice riding temperatures (mid 20's). As it turned out we had almost perfect weather all the way across.

We flew out to Perth three days before the motorcycle pick up date to give us some time to get reacquainted with Perth, and to finalize route planning. Perth was sunny and warm, a little warmer than Sydney, low 30's. We had previously made motel/hotel bookings for that portion of the trip that took us across the Nullarbor as typically food, gas and lodging opportunities are at least 150km apart. There are no towns as such, just what are known as

---

"road houses" which provide travelers with the bare essentials. I suppose tenting could have been a fall-back position but about 2/3rds or more of the world's most venomous snake species are resident in Australia, so we both agreed to give that option a pass.

We arrived early on the 18<sup>th</sup> to pick up the bike and it was there alright, but without the top box on the back that we had been assured the bike would be equipped with. A top box is very useful for a long distance trip as it gives you an extra 35litres or so of storage. Plus it provides a nice back rest for the pillion rider. By the time we got the new top box installed it was close to noon, and quite hot, not an ideal time or temperature to start. However, once we cleared Perth and started heading south east on country roads it quickly became quite pleasant and enjoyable. I was very quickly impressed with what a nice touring bike the BMW is.

Pretty much due south of Perth is the famous Margaret River vineyard region of Western Australia. We were a little east of there traveling through a farming country (a mixture of grain, sheep, and some cattle). Quite pleasant rural roads and landscape and wonderful, colorful birdlife. At one point a small flock of Red Winged Parrots were flying in formation with us, about 10 meters above us and to the left. We stayed the 1<sup>st</sup> night in a small village called Gnowangerup.



Moninna and the bike getting ready to start Day 2 from Gnowangerup

Day 2 saw us changing direction from south east to almost due east. We were now on the south coast highway and heading for Esperance. The agricultural landscape changed to terrain with much less topsoil, and the local economy changed from agricultural to mining. A good chunk of the population of Western Australia is located in Perth (the capital) and the south western corner of the continent. Esperance pretty much marks the south eastern boundary of this area. It's a sea port on the Great Southern Ocean. They ship out grain plus I believe some iron, copper, and nickel. It is a pretty town all things considered and has a tourist business in the summer (December through February).

We started day 3 by riding almost 200 km due north to Norseman and the official start of the Eyre Highway. It rained for an hour or so at the start of our day, but it was so mild and the rain so light that it was not at all uncomfortable. The ride north was through a Salmon Gum forest and the colour of the trees plus the eucalyptus aroma made it quite delightful. Norseman is considered to be to western edge of the Nullarbor plain. Those of you who enjoy links golf may be interested in knowing that Norseman is also the start of what is claimed to be the longest links course in the world. It stretches about 2000 km across the Nullarbor. Some of the more quick witted among you may have already figured out that most of the distance is from green to Tee as opposed to Tee to green. Each roadhouse along the way has a hole or two that you can play. At the completion of each hole you get your score card stamped and authenticated by the local roadhouse proprietor.

After stocking up with fruit, cheese and water we headed east, a direction we would maintain for several days to come. Two hundred km of riding after leaving Norseman we came to our 1<sup>st</sup> roadhouse (Ballidonia), which we stopped at for the night. Ballidonia has a small eclectic museum which if you are ever in the area is well worth visiting. It features local flora and fauna including an impressive display of venomous snakes, pre and post European arrival local history, and a display of some Skylab space junk that landed nearby a decade or more ago.

---

Day 4 saw us truly on the plain and at one point we rode the longest absolutely straight stretch of road in Australia. It runs about 153 km without single turn or bend of any kind. Riding east as we were, you start your day riding into the sun and as the day progresses the sun climbs over your left shoulder in the northern sky. Looking south across the plain you can sense rather than see the Great Australian Bight. In the whole day's travel of about 340km there were maybe three or four dirt tracks heading south to the ocean. For that whole distance the coastal strip along the north shore of the Bight is designated as the Nuytsland Nature reserve. The interface between land and sea is a sheer cliff face, wonderful for nesting seabirds.



Coast line of the Great Australian Bight

We stayed that night in the Madera road house. We had been riding for four full days at this point, and still were not out of Western Australia. The road house is located at the foot of a cliff which several million years ago marked the shore line of the Great Southern Ocean. Australia has since risen, and the shore line now lies several 10's of kilometers to the south. We had finished riding a little after 2pm so decided to hike up to the top of the cliff and have a look at the view. When hiking in outback Australia you should wear sturdy boots and long pants (or if you prefer shorts, wear gaiters over your boots) and carry a hiking staff. A hat, water, sunscreen and compass are also essentials. The view from the top was great and looking either east



---

or west you could see where the shore line had been years and years before.



Above the Madera Roadhouse

Day 5 saw us still heading east of course, with the temperature very pleasant in the mid 20's. The tarmac on the road was good and the traffic quite light, but what traffic there was, consisted mostly of road trains. Road trains are massive, and rather than tractor trailers that you see in North America and Europe, are in fact, tractor trailer trailer trailers. When they pass you going in the opposite direction they are pushing so much wind that there is a considerable wind force that tries to blow you to the side of the road, and as they pass, the vacuum they have created in passing, tries to suck you back into the middle.

One thing about Australia, particularly on the outback major highways, is that there is a lot of road kill on the side of the road. Not just little critters like possums, and wombats, and echidnas, but larger animals like wallabies and emus and of course kangaroos. Depending on the temperature and wind direction, you can smell them long before you see them. It seems to be an accepted fact of life in the Ozzie outback. In fact it is very rare to see a four wheel vehicle of any kind, away from the major cities, that isn't equipped with a "roo bar". The road kill of course attracts lots of bird life so you see all manner of magpies, crows, ravens, wedge tail eagles and black kites etc. along the side of the highways.

Around noon on day 5 we finally passed out of Western Australia into South Australia. At this point the Eyre Highway runs very close to the Great Australian Bight so there are numerous opportunities for viewing the Great Southern Ocean, and the rugged cliff shoreline. It's an opportunity not to be missed.

We stayed that night in the Nullarbor roadhouse. I mentioned earlier that the roadhouses are spaced about 150 km apart so that even if you are not staying over-night you never pass by one without at least topping up your gas tank. They are all different and unique in their own way and you will invariably find something that will interest you. The gas jockey in the Nullarbor Roadhouse had, at the cash in a large glass jar of formaldehyde, the largest brown snake I have ever seen (not that I've seen that many). Brown's are very venomous, and can be aggressive depending on the time of year.

Day 6 saw the Nullarbor plain gradually giving way to a more agricultural landscape and more and more trees started to appear. We stopped for lunch at a lovely town called Ceduna. It reminded me a bit of Esperance as both are port towns on the Australian Bight and both export grain, and also appeal to tourists. Having said that they are separated by about 1200 km of the Great Southern Ocean. After Ceduna the Eyre Highway heads inland across the top part of the Eyre Peninsula. We spent that night in Minnipa, a small rural town on the rail line where grain from the surrounding area is collected in silos for shipment first by rail and then by deep sea going vessels.

Day 7 took us further east and a little north to Port Augusta. Port Augusta lies at the very head of Spencer Gulf and is an important rail head. The famous "Ghan" which runs from Darwin on the Timor Sea in the north, due south through the "Red Centre" of Australia and hits tide water once again at Port Augusta on its way to Adelaide. In addition the trans-continental train from Perth to Sydney also passes through Port Augusta. From Port Augusta we took a slight detour towards the north to have a quick look at the beautiful Flinders Ranges. We stayed that night in a small town called Quorn which is on the southern approaches to the Flinders Ranges



**Flinders Ranges taken from just south of where the pavement ends (Wilpena).**

Day 8 saw us ride north into the Flinders Ranges through Hawker and on to Wilpena where we ran out of paved road. This was just an exploratory look see for us and we may well go back in future years to do the area justice. We turned back south east out of the Ranges and into more agricultural country side. We were on secondary, but still paved, roads with light traffic and lots of turns and modest changes in elevation. Quite enjoyable, and quite a change from the Nullarbor. We stayed that night in Peterborough SA, a town that used to be a major rail centre in the days of steam but now is in the process of trying to re-invent itself. On the way into town I had seen signs advertising a motorcycle museum. As was the case most days we had ended our ride for the day by 3pm, so had time to check it out. What a great surprise. A man and his wife had purchased a large old church complete with an attached church hall. They had converted the church into a home and the hall into a motorcycle museum. As luck would have it he specialized in European motorcycles, with emphasis on Italian bikes. Being a Moto Guzzi rider I was pleased to see he had no less than 3 old Guzzis all perfectly restored and models I had never even heard of.

The first two hours of our ride on day 9 saw us heading south out of

---

Peterborough towards Burra with a fairly strong north wind at our backs. At Burra we turned east once again and now had a strong cross wind which as it turned out stayed with us all day. We had lunch that day in Renmark on the banks of the Murray River. We were now in the middle of one of the many vineyard regions of Australia. We were still heading east and were now on the Sturt highway on our way to Mildura. Leaving Renmark we passed into a piece of Victoria that is wedged between South Australia and New South Wales. We stayed that night in Mildura on the banks of the Murray River just upstream from where the Darling River flows into the Murray. As an aside, the Murray/Darling River basin drains about a quarter of Australia's land mass, and a very large portion of their agricultural output comes from the area. Australia is hugely impacted by global warming and there are many competing interests who want a share of the water. The federal government, along with the state governments of Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia plus all the effected stake holders are trying to resolve the problem. It's a huge issue with no easy solution as there is nowhere near enough water to meet everyone's needs.

As soon as we crossed the Murray River at the start of day 10 we were in New South Wales, still on the Sturt highway, still heading east, still with a strong cross wind out of the north, and now increasingly warm. A north wind blows from the middle of the continent and thus is often quite warm. We were on our way towards Hay a town we had been to 3 times in the past and the temperature had been in the mid 30's each time. It was to be no different this time. After lunch in Hay, we stopped at an Information bureau and made a booking for that night's stay at the next town along the route. We stayed that night just south of Griffith on the shores of the Murrumbidgee River.

We were on the home stretch now and in relatively known (to us) territory. We were now making our way cross country on secondary roads heading generally towards Lithgow which is a town on the western slope of the Blue Mountains, due west of Sydney. The heat of the previous day had had given way to more moderate temperatures and the wind had swung around and was now blowing out of the south west giving us a bit of a tail wind. We stopped for lunch at a market town called Young which bills itself as the cherry

---

capital of Australia. While eating our lunch outside in the restaurant's patio a large storm cloud passed over. The rain was heavy, but didn't last much more than 10 or 15 minutes. Once we had finished our sandwiches (and cherry pie) we gassed up the bike and headed on our way. As luck would have it, we soon caught up to the rain clouds and followed under them for a fair distance. Our first significant rain on the whole trip. We stopped for the day at the next decent sized town, Cowra. As it turned out Cowra was the site of a prisoner of war camp for Japanese service men captured during the 2<sup>nd</sup> world war. As it also turns out it was the site of one of the largest prison breaks during the war. All were recaptured in due course but it was an exciting time for a while. Cowra has since twinned with a town in Japan and now has a marvelous Japanese garden on and near the location of the old POW camp.

The next day, the 12<sup>th</sup> day, was our final day on the road. Our son in law Tony, and his brother-in-law, Nick are both proud Harley owners. Before Moninna and I headed west for Perth, I had made arrangements with Tony and Nick to meet at a coffee shop in Lithgow for lunch. The ride from Cowra to Lithgow was again along country roads and was notable for the wild Emus we saw in the fields. From Lithgow to Windsor (one of Sydney's numerous western suburbs) there is a marvelous motorcycle road through the Blue Mountains called the Bell Line Road. A great ride to end a great trip. The four of us rode to Windsor together along the Bell Line. Once across the Blue Mountains, Nick and Tony took the freeway back, while Moninna and I stayed with the secondary roads.

When we arrived back at Rachel and Tony's place, Rachel was on the front yard filming our arrival. All the way across the continent I had been very confident on the bike when under way. However, it's a heavy bike, particularly two up and with the saddle bags and top box loaded. So I was a little concerned that at very low speeds and on uneven and or unpaved surfaces I might drop it. However we had made it all the way without a single incident. I stopped the bike at the side of and parallel to the road in front of Rachel and turned off the bike. I put both feet on the ground and told Moninna it was OK to dismount. Rachel stopped filming to greet her mom. I put down the side stand (above the gutter on the side of the road)

---

and swung myself off the bike. The bike of course maintained its sideways momentum, knocked me on my back, and laid gently on its side.

Embarrassing to say the least, but it wasn't captured on film, and I'm not sure that Rachel believes that the only time the bike was dropped was on her front yard.

## **2013 Teaching Excellence Award**

The 2013 Class of 65 Teaching is awarded to 15595 Dr. William (Billy) Allan of the Department of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering.

The Teaching Excellence Award was donated by the Class of 1965 in memory of the late Dr. Tom Barton. It is given in recognition of exemplary concern for students, dedication to teaching and enthusiasm in lecturing and an extraordinary ability to stimulate learning.

## **Closing Notes**

A great trek by Gary and Monnina and an equally great account of their adventure!

Congratulations to Dr. Allan.

Unfortunately, after such high notes, we must end this edition on a sad one. Our friend and classmate **6697 Gary Umrysh** passed away on 2 June. I am sure you will all want to join me in extending our deepest sympathy to Gary's family.