

4th ANZ Vindicatrix Reunion Napier 2004

To those that made the trip, I hope, like me, that you had a great time meeting many of the pals that you already knew and also the chance to make many new ones. It sure was a great crew that turned up at the venue, the Cosmopolitan Club in the heart of Napier. It was about a five minute trip from Kennedy Park, where 80 of the Vindi lads and lasses berthed. This was a very nice place to stay and the staff were very helpful and courteous. All things considered, I think it was one of the better places to stay. There were some grouses of course, I mean, we are Vindi boys, we did it rough at times at sea, we don't need to do it that way ashore. And the perfect place ain't been built yet.

Well Friday evening went very much as planned. With almost every one arriving and being tagged and let loose into the crowd. Crowd did I say. Well I can think of some other words, but that will suffice. There we were, from around 5.30 pm local time, getting to know our closest neighbours. It was impossible to talk to every lad that was there. I don't know the exact number of Vindi boys in attendance, but there were 240 people, give or take one or two, in the venue by 7.30 pm. Not every one had the meal, which was very delectable and enjoyed by all those that partook of the meal. And of course the ale was flowing well. There were many attempts to announce different things during the course of the evening, but have you ever tried to shush a large crowd of lads and lasses that were decidedly intent on talking. Even with mechanical means, it was an impossibility.

On Saturday, there was some tours arranged that were well patronised. A visit to Napier port was first on the list of stops. It sure has changed 'a lot' since I was there in about 1953/4. I know for sure that the decking has changed, where there is now concrete, we used to walk on wood. The old tin sheds have passed into history too. Ah well, I suppose everything changes in some way, my hair is grey now. Progress anyone?????

The evening began with the formal opening of the 4th Vindicatrix Reunion by Captain Gunn in the main auditorium of the Cosmopolitan Club. After the speeches were all done and delivered, it was time to feed the hungry hundreds. There was a delightful smorgasbord meal to please the palates of the participants. After the meal a presentation of \$500 was made to South Australia by Tony Scott on behalf of the Napier reunion committee, to assist in kicking off next years reunion and a speech in reply given by Tony Iles, Skipper of the SA Branch.

The talking recommenced and the entertainment started. A good looking pair of local entertainers, Dion and Angela, tried to get the crowd enthused enough to forget the talk and get on the floor. A gallant try, when all was said and done, but 50 to 60 years, and sometimes more, to catch up with, takes a lot of stopping. The dance floor was almost unused. The jollity and frivolity went on until late. The bus was requested for 10.30, and after that, we made our own way home.

Sunday Morning Church and the Grand parade. It was a very good turnout. The Vindi group put in a very strong showing, along with the H.M.S Ganges group, the R.E.M.E army group, the British Service Ex-Boys Association and a large group of cadets including a trumpeter. Together with quite a few local people, we completely filled the St. Augustine's Anglican Church to capacity, plus. Our reunion church service coincided with the service for Remembrance Day. The brass band failed to appear, so our parade commenced at the rear of the church and completed at the front doors of the church. There were six groups in all with

their flags to be blessed, and the Vindi flag (Red Duster) showing proudly in their midst.

After the service and the playing of the “Last Post” the church emptied and outside there once again erupted a ‘gabfest.’ When at last the crowd cleared, we made our way back to our lodgings and lunch.

After lunch, we once more made our way to the Cosmopolitan for talking and a few ales and at 2 pm we were entertained by a really great bunch of performers. These young NZ nationals travelled over 200 klm’s to put on a show for us. The Kapa-Haka group came from Gisborne. Their school is Riverdale, and they have long been connected to the sea. In fact, when the DM, (Dominion Monarch to the unknowing amongst you) was decommissioned, the ships bell and also her steering wheel were presented to the school. They have looked after the bell extremely well, and allowed it to be displayed and used at our reunion venue. Our gathered group showed great enthusiasm for the dancing and showmanship of this delightful group of young people. We wished them well for the future, and yours truly could see at least one future ‘All Black’ player in their midst.

After they had left, complete with bell, the group named “Night Shift” took over the entertainment. They played us some groovy tunes, and even I was tempted on to the dance floor. Once again, the ale flowed quite freely, but the conversation was starting to flag, just a tad. At least we could now hear the music.

At the end of the evening, the whole thing just petered out. This in itself was a mite disappointing. I may have missed something, I’m not sure, but I heard no, “Now is the Hour” No “Maori’s Farewell” No “Auld Lang Syne”. I feel sure that there was a short speech thanking us all for attending and hoping to see us all in South Australia, next year. Again, I’m not sure, and NO, I was not drunk.

There was a great deal of work and effort put in to this reunion. For that I am sure we are all more than a little grateful, and send our thanks and gratitude to the organisers. As of all these things, we all hope to learn something. I think I learnt, from listening, that many of the members of our groups, like myself, are sometimes a bit hazy about what is happening, and where, and how to get there. Perhaps I could be reminded, at future reunions, about any phone number/s that I can utilise in case of minor problems, such as, who to contact on what number for transport. What outings are happening, on what day, at what time. Don’t get me wrong please, I am not criticising. Also there is very little wrong with my memory. I do remember things. Dates, times, places. It’s just that my *recall* isn’t as good as it used to be and at times it can be an embarrassment. Any help in this situation is more than welcome.

Last of all, but by no means least of all, may I thank the ladies of the Queensland Vindicatrix for that scintillating skit of the ladies at different stages of their lives on their requirements of the male gender. It’s a pity it is so correct.

Jack Secker (V’51)