

Last Post Ceremony will commemorate our fallen comrades



The Vietnam Tunnel Rats Association has reserved the Australian War Memorial Last Post Ceremony for 18 February next year. We will use this occasion to honour our 36 comrades who lost their lives while serving as Tunnel Rats with 1 Troop, 2 Troop and 3 Troop of 1 Field Squadron (35 KIA) and with 3 Field Troop (1 KIA). Mark 18 February 2020 in your diary now as we aim to make this an important and memorable national commemoration of our fallen.

Our wives, sons and daughters are all welcome to the ceremony and our gathering afterwards. If you are in contact with family members of our fallen comrades, let them know of this occasion, and how honoured we would be if they attended.

The first Last Post Ceremony was held at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra on 17 April 2013, and is now held at the Memorial each day at 4.55 pm. Each ceremony is presented as a tribute to one of the 102,700 Australians named on the Roll of Honour. It is a testament to the terrible cost of war that it will take nearly 300 years to commemorate every person on the Roll of Honour, and the Memorial is committed to ensuring that each story will eventually be told.

As the tradition is set that each ceremony is a tribute to one individual, we needed technically to follow that tradition, but (being Engineers) bend it a little to suit our needs. So we chose that in-

dividual from our 36 fallen comrades then wrote a commemorative script which talks of him and honours him, along with our 35 other fallen comrades. Individual wreaths will be laid at the ceremony for each of these 36 Tunnel Rats – some, we hope, by their family members.

The ceremony begins with the Australian national anthem followed by the piper's lament. Visitors are then invited to lay wreaths and floral tributes beside the Pool of Reflection. The individual's story is told, which in our case also covers the story of the Tunnel Rats and of all of the men we lost. The Ode is then recited by an Australian Defence Force member, and the ceremony ends with the sounding of the Last Post. After the ceremony we will meet up at a suitable venue for drinks and dinner.

How we chose the name

Circumstance actually helped us narrow down this task. There are few dates available,

with most of them already allocated to an individual. One of the few available dates was 18 February 2020. The Battle of Fire Support Base Andersen took place on February 18 (1968) and on that terrible night we had four of our Tunnel Rat comrades killed in action. One of those four killed was Sapper Allan Pattison, and the Tunnel Rats Association has had regular contact with Allan's family over the years. They have been very active in honouring Allan's memory in their local area, so we made contact again and they were thrilled at the opportunity and available for that date next year.

Full details of when we meet up at the Australian War Memorial for the ceremony and the venue for our drinks and dinner following the ceremony will be in the next issue of Holdfast. Meantime, clear your diary for 18th February 2020 and start contacting your troop mates about meeting up in Canberra.