



HOLDFAST

FEBRUARY 2010 - NUMBER 16

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OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE VIETNAM TUNNEL RATS ASSOCIATION INC

Sergeant Bob Embrey
3 Troop 1967 - 1968

Captain Viv Morgan
3 Troop 1967 - 1968

OUR COVER: With gas masks, torches, pistols and bayonets at hand, Sappers of 3 Troop 1 Field Squadron approach one of the many enemy caves and tunnels they searched and destroyed on Operation Pinnaroo, aimed at flushing the Viet Cong out of their secret base camp in the Long Hai Hills in March 1968

Sapper Barry Gilbert
3 Troop 1967 - 1968

BUMPER 40 PAGE ISSUE



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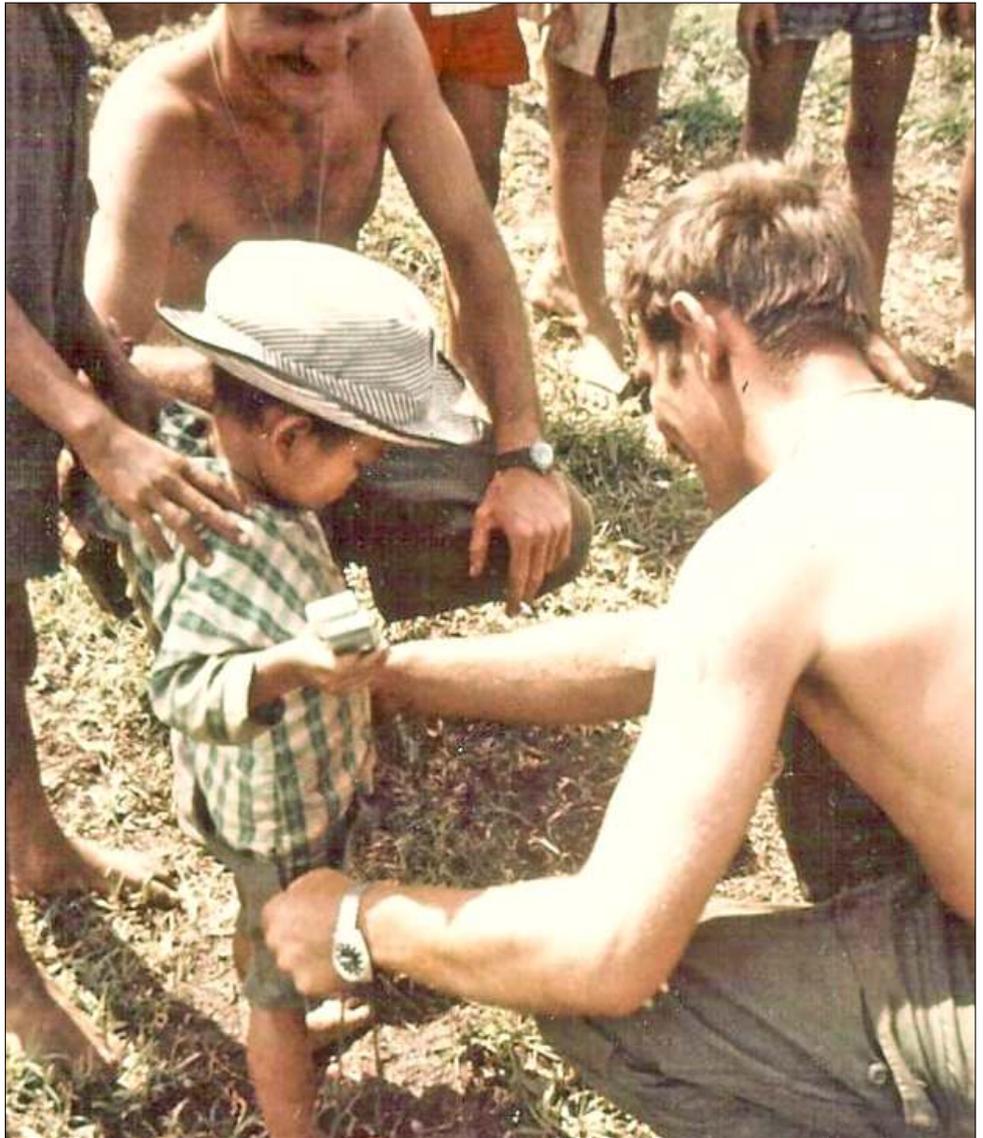
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Nostalgia Pages



Pages of great pics from the past to amaze and amuse. Contributions welcome. Send your favourite Vietnam photos to: Jim Marett 43 Heyington Place Toorak Vic 3142. Or by email to: tunnelrat@optusnet.com.au



Sappers take a shortcut

Some of the local kids in Vietnam literally had the arse hanging out of their tousers - some, like this kid on Route 2 near Ngai Giao had no pants at all! But this was nothing a bit of Sapper ingenuity couldn't fix. Using a bayonet, Sapper Bob Hamblyn (right) quickly tailored a pair of snazzy shorts from a sandbag. Photo was taken in late 1971 by Sapper John Hodgson. Sappers Hamblyn and Hodgson were tasked with clearing sections of Route 2 for mines while roadworks were being carried out. Looks like the kid also scored two mini-packs of Salem cigarettes and a Tootsie Roll candy bar for his troubles.



A Patriotic puff

Our allies, the Army of the Republic of Vietnam had their own brand of cigarettes issued to them. Made by the French tobacco firm J Baston, the cigarettes were non-filter and very strong - you could smell them a mile away. The Vietnamese writing at the soldier's feet translates as "Protect the Country".



Top souvenir

The most prized souvenir you could scrounge from your bunker or tunnel searching escapades was a Chicom pistol (left). Only Viet Cong and NVA officers carried these, so they were very rare. This fine pistol was found by a 1 Troop Sapper in 1968 and smuggled home in his trunk. "What are they gunna do, send me to Vietnam!"

Happy Sappers

No decent Sapper piss-up is complete without an explosive device to play with when things get a bit boring. These 3 Troop 69/70 Tunnel Rats couldn't be happier - they're at an illegal tent "happening" with their mates, they've got an ample supply of XXXX beer and an illumination mortar round to tinker with. Hank Veenhuizen sent us the photo. Can anyone help us by naming the lads at the "happening"? Note: Drinking in the lines was technically illegal but the rule was rarely enforced.



That Golden Smile

The South Vietnamese seemed to have a fascination with gold teeth. Even some of the smaller villages featured a dental surgery with a sign out front promoting the installation of gold teeth. The ARVN soldier (left) has a superb set of pure gold chompers and was happy to flash a grin for Hank Veenhuizen who provided this photo as well as the one above. At the other end of the colour spectrum were the black teeth caused by the chewing of beetle nut (combined with lime powder it provided a mild high). It was mostly women who took up this habit, and it was quite a shock to see a mouth full of black teeth and the associated spitting of the rich red nut residue.

Another World

If you were here, you were in paradise - you were on two days leave in Vung Tau, and this is the OR's Mess at the Peter Badcoe Club. Tunnel Rats usually scored leave only after four or six weeks out bush, where ration packs, sleeping on the ground, no showers and being eaten alive by every bug known to man was the order of the day. Here at the OR's Mess they had table cloths, chairs, great food, US condiments, fresh juices, and, can you believe it, young Vietnamese women serving you. "Pinch me, I'm dreaming!"





Who said Sappers had no sense of style!

Sometimes a photo is so good it just has to be given plenty of space in the magazine. This is one of those gems. Our quartet of Tunnel Rats are on leave in Vung Tau and they've thrown caution, judgement and good taste to the wind and just embraced the whole experience. The Indian Tailors in Vung Tau (notorious for ripping us off) have obviously

fitted the lads out with the very latest in fashionable attire (remember it was the "Hippie Era") and they're ready for action. Seen here at the Peter Badcoe Club, Vung Tau, are: (left to right) John Felton, Tony Marriott, Steve Dunne and "Tubby Olson, all from 1 Troop in 69/70. The shirt Tubby is wearing is what we called a "Hippie Shirt" but was

actually the national dress of the Hmong mountain tribes. From all appearances we suspect Tony is pulling the old "footy sock in the trousers" trick. And the frilled cuffs on Steve's shirt earn him the inaugural "Holdfast Fashion Icon" award. No doubt the boys are heading back into town for a few beers with their mates and a bit of cultural exchange.

1 Troop toughs it out

(RIGHT): Sometimes, one of the three Field Troops of 1 Field Squadron went through a patch where they just seemed to be cursed, suffering a string of casualties. 3 Troop went through it in 67/68, and then 1 Troop went through it in 69/70. There was no particular thing you could blame it on, it was just fate. One of the Sappers who fell during this time was Tony Hollis (in the centre of the photo) who was killed in action along with his troop mate Ron Engstrom. Tony and Ron were attached to 6RAR and killed in a mine incident on 30th January 1970. On the right of the photo is Errol Findlay. We don't know the name of the Sapper on the left (sorry mate), so if you can identify him, let us know.





SAS secret make-up kit

The SAS lads are trained to keep secrets, and perhaps one of their best kept secrets is the little make-up compact they were issued with (above). How do you explain this to your mates? Whenever we came across the SAS in Vietnam we'd be amazed and in awe of their gear. They had cool compasses on their wrists and stubby M-16 rifles with grenade launchers underneath. Instead of carting eight water-bottles like we did, they had water "bladders" that made them look six months pregnant (below). They had neat pre-camouflaged pig's skin gloves, with the fingertips cut off so they could operate their gear and weapons. This is serious soldiering. And when it came time to "cam up", instead of rubbing on a bit of mud or charcoal like we did, these lads pulled out their make-up kit and painted each others faces with precision and skill, even taking into account the local vegetation.



Viet Cong anti-tank mine

A typical example of the "home-made" anti-vehicle mines found in Phuoc Tuy Province throughout the war. This mine had been placed by the Viet Cong but fortunately found by Sappers before doing any damage. The wooden pressure contact switch (left) is connected by wires to the battery pack (centre) which contains six 1.5 volt "Black Cat" batteries. The battery pack is also connected by wires to the Mine (right) and provides the power to explode the electric detonator inside the mine. This type of device has been designed for destroying vehicles, by its size and because the blast is directed straight up into the vehicle after running over the pressure switch. Photo provided by John Kemp, OC 1 Fld Sqn Vietnam 67/68.



"Mmmm Beans and Weiners!"

Perhaps the most hated meal option in the American C-Ration range was the infamous Beans and Weiners. Only new guys in-country would fall for a swap deal, but they'd only fall for it once.



“They’re a little worried about inflight safety”

Sappers often hitched rides on Huey Choppers to get back to base after a one-day operation - usually a mine incident or tunnel or bunker demolition. It was pot luck as to who your fellow passengers were. In this case it was three VC, three enemy soldiers captured near the fishing village of Long Hai in 1970. They were being taken to Nui Dat base camp for interrogation, their heads covered by sandbags so they won't see the layout or any details of the camp. Rumours were rife that VC prisoners were regularly thrown out of choppers to prompt their mates into talking. The rumours were untrue, but these three guys would be feeling a little insecure.



VC Web Belt

Our enemy, the Viet Cong tended to travel lightly compared to the 90 lbs of gear we lugged around. The Viet Cong web belt above, and shown being worn by a VC in the painting (top) by war artist Ken McFadyen usually only had one pouch and one water bottle attached. Our US made web belt often carried two water bottles, two pouches, a bayonet, a pistol and sometimes our “Bum Pack” demolitions kit of explosives, fuses, pliers and tape etc. The VC managed with far fewer because they were willing to drink from water sources we'd consider very dubious. The VC web belts became a popular collector's item, but few of us can get them around our somewhat expanded waists these days!



Hooker ingenuity saves the day

Remember how the Vung Tau bar girls used to try to beckon you into their den of sin, waving and yelling from a half open door? It seems it was illegal for them to solicit business from “outside the premises” and this was strictly policed in a bid to clean up Vung Tau's image. The bar above found a way around this by knocking down the outside wall, moving it back three feet and building a low fence where the old wall was, creating an area open to the street from which they could beckon you in. Capitalism at its best.

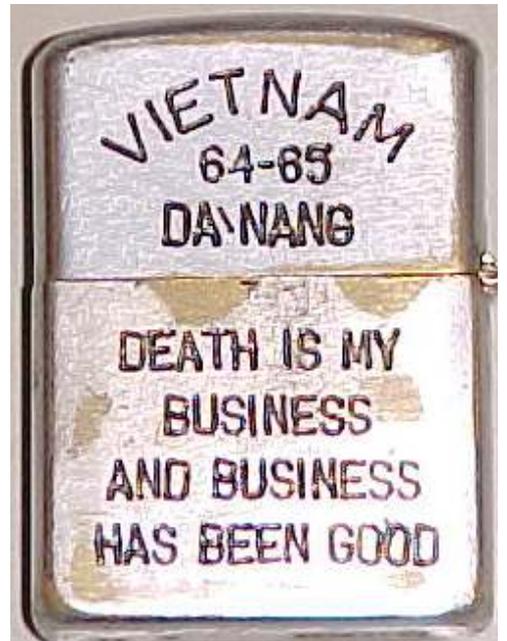
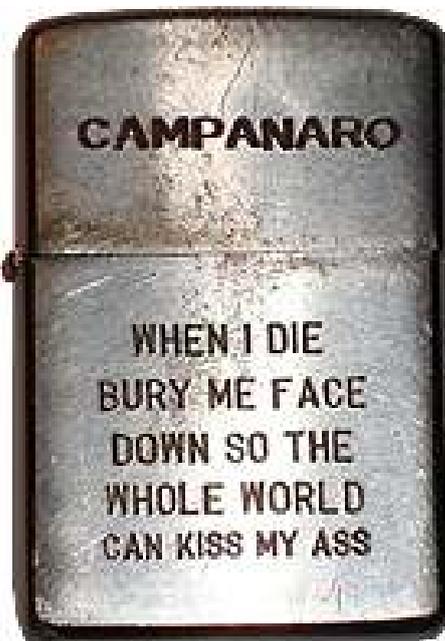
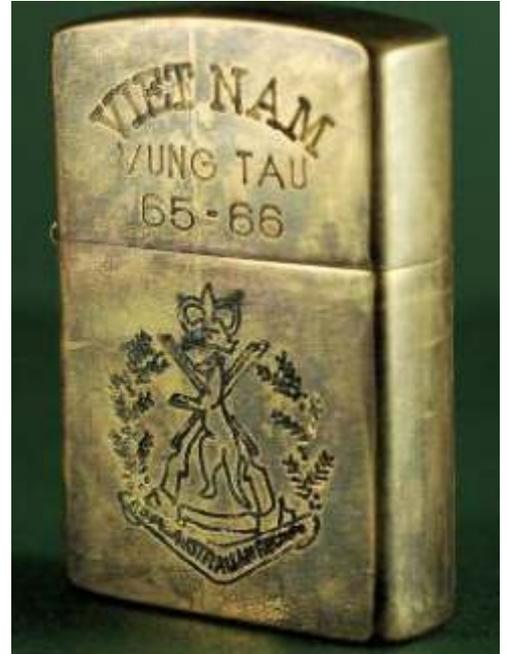
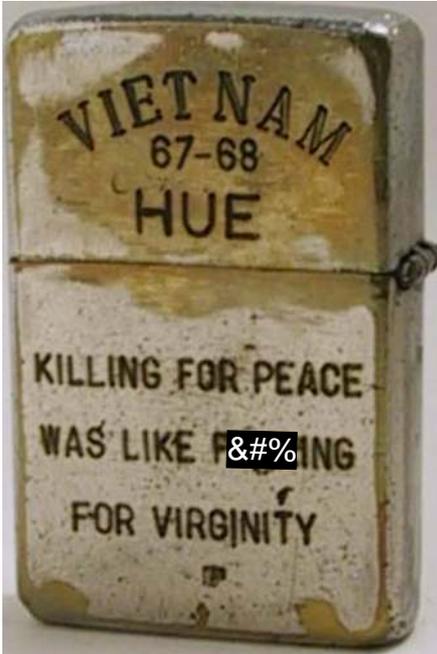


Mystery Sappers

This photo of a group of Tunnel Rats in Vietnam is part of the Australian War Memorial collection, but they don't name any of the Sappers. Can anyone help us with the names? The official caption says: "July 1967 Sappers from 1st Field Squadron, Royal Australian Engineers, relax during a short break during Operation Cooparoo with 7th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (7RAR). This group carried out demolition work for B Company, destroying Viet Cong bunkers, checking for booby traps and creating landing pads for helicopters."

More Zippo Culture

We received a lot of response to the Vietnam era Zippo lighters we ran in our last issue. Photos of about 20 further examples of this art form were sent in to us. It seems there's nothing like a bit of poetry and culture to stir a Sapper into action. Many of the better examples sent in were unfortunately too crude to publish in these sensitive times. By the engraved locations and some of the phrases, many of the lighters had belonged to US servicemen. One can only guess how they ended up in Aussie hands.





Another World (two)

Here's a surprise. As far as we were concerned, Vung Tau was just filled with girlie bars, brothels, bath houses, massage joints and barber shops (which were also all of the above). This might shock you, but it appears there were also restaurants in town, and some good ones like "Cyrnos" above which according to our source, a 17 Construction Sqn lad who spent 12 months living off base in his own apartment (can you believe it!) who said "Cyrnos" had the best steak in town.



The "moment of truth" helmet

We're told this amusing sign was erected in the Engineer Field Troop HQ area of a fire support base some time during 70/71. The trees in the background indicate it definitely wasn't the rubber trees of our base at Nui Dat. They look more like teak trees. Could it be FSB Pat? Does anyone know when and where it was?



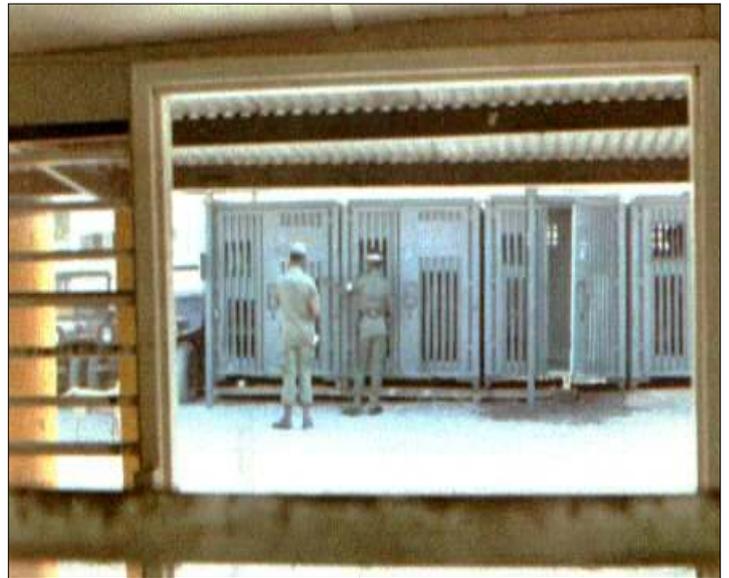
Hurry up - and wait

Saddle up, stand around and wait - for Sappers this was often the order of the day. Usually we were the last to find out the reason for the delay so patience was one of our many virtues. Here five Tunnel Rats from 3 Troop 67/68 await pick-up, from left to right: Dave Wooley, Jack Lawson, Sam Houston, Murray Walker and Peter Pont (proudly wearing his Corp badge on his bush hat!). Barry Gilbert, also of 3 Troop 67/68, supplied the photo.



Why is Wayne smiling?

It's not that 2 Troop Tunnel Rat Wayne Hynson (68/69) has just come back from two days leave in Vung Tau or anything like that. In fact if you look closely Wayne's actually gritting his teeth because he's putting up with yet another "bullshit session" from his troop mates, Daryl Lavis and Peter Laws. Evidently they were relentless!



The Dangers of going on leave

Sappers looking for fun on a few days leave, found the seaside town of Vung Tau was paradise, but there were dangers. Getting the “clap” was odds on, with over 50% of the bar girls infected. Being robbed or ripped off was a strong possibility, particularly if you separated from your mates and were flashing your cash around. However the most humbling danger was that of being locked up by the Military Police. These guys were actually eternally patient with soldiers on leave, but they were still universally hated because of their role. TOP LEFT: An Aussie and a US MP outside a bar, confer on how best to be a pain in the arse to the Sappers inside. TOP RIGHT: If the US Military Police locked you up, you’d spend the night in these converted shipping containers. It was a little warm in the mornings, but usually you’d be out by 0900hrs and heading back to the Peter Badcoe Club for breakfast, a swim and a shower before going back into town for some more frivolity.

“How are you Sapper?”

ABOVE: It’s Christmas 1968 and Minister for Air, Gordon Freeth is visiting Sapper Graham Hooper at the 1st Australian Field Hospital, Vung Tau. Graham had been wounded in action on December 19th, suffering gunshot wounds to his left leg during a VC ambush while attached to 1st Battalion RAR.

Make and Break

RIGHT: In February 1968, taking a welcome break from his normal Tunnel Rat duties, Sapper Peter McDonald of 3 Troop helps repair houses damaged by the Viet Cong during Operation Coburg.

Bag Men

FAR RIGHT: Also on Operation Coburg in February 1968, Sappers Brian Hopkins and Vic Underwood fill sandbags for overhead protection of their bunker at a fire support base.





Promises Promises

This not a Vietnam era photo, and the charming lady is definitely not a hooker. However, her T-shirt plays on one of the great hooker come-ons of the Vietnam war era: "I love you long time". This promise of all night ecstasy was never kept. Ever. Not once. And despite this appalling record of dishonesty, we fell for it every time.



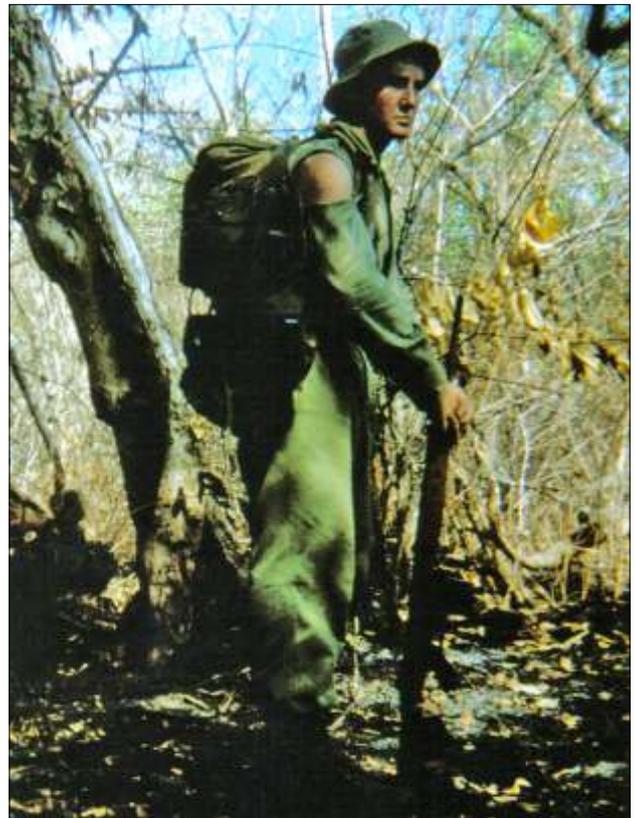
"Is this heaven or what?"

Left to right: 2 Troop Sappers Rod Crane, Rick Martin, Terry O'Donnell and Jimmy Shugg are back in base in April 1969 after being out on operations for weeks without a shower or change of clothes. They're filthy dirty, they stink, and they're happy as hell to be alive. It's time for a tub and a liberal dusting of Johnson's Baby Powder before changing into a set of brand new greens and heading to the boozer for a million beers with their troop mates. Paradise. Photo by Wayne Hynson.



Those damn Long Hai hills

Here's an unusual aerial view of the Long Hai Mountains, the chain of hills which ran into the sea at the north eastern sector of Phuoc Tuy Province. The Viet Cong used the hills as their headquarters for the region, living in caves, bunkers and tunnels peppered throughout the area. To the VC the hills encompassing their various bases were known as the Minh Dam Secret Zone. It was no secret they were living there because we used to bomb the daylight out of the place on a regular basis. Australian troops made various assaults on the hills, but paid a huge price in casualties each time, usually to mines and booby traps.



The Look

After being out with the Grunts for a while, you had a certain worn and weathered look about you. Above, desperately needing a new set of greens, Sapper Ray White of 2 Troop 69/70 has been out bush with 5RAR for perhaps a day too many.



“Let there be light”
 When Tunnel Rats went into bunkers and tunnels we carried a US issue Army torch (right) to help light the way. It was a “see round corners” design, with the lense at right angles to the body of the torch. It also came with a red tinted lense you could clip on to reduce the strength of light - making you less visible to the enemy. The most common light source for our enemy, the VC was the portable oil lamp bottle (left) with its cloth wick. They used these within their bunkers and tunnels, but also out in the open or on the move if they felt confident they could not be observed.



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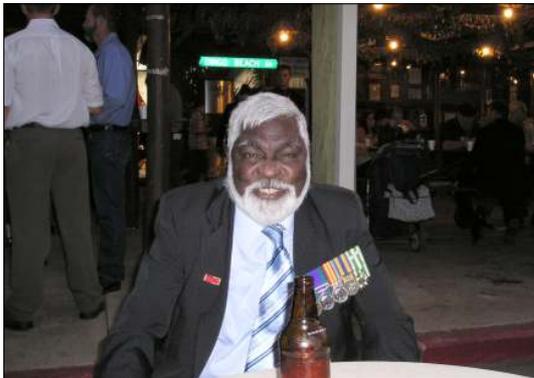
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Farewell Bill



“Bill Coolburra”

17587 Clement William Coolburra
20th June 1945 - 28th October 2009

We've lost another one of our legends. Bill Coolburra passed away on 28th October 2009. Born on his beloved Palm Island in Far North Queensland, Bill was universally loved by his Sapper mates, and known for his good nature and infectious laugh – if you heard Bill laugh, you couldn't help but join in. Bill did his Corps training at SME in 1964 and his first posting was to 1 Fld Sqn with whom he served in Borneo for six months. Bill went on to serve in Vietnam in 1965-66, and then Malaya in 1967-68, and Singapore in 1971-73. In Vietnam Bill served with the original Tunnel Rats, the legendary 3 Fld Tp and

then with their replacement unit 1 Fld Sqn. Bill was wounded twice in Vietnam: as a Battle Casualty through Asphyxiation in a tunnel at Ho-Bo Woods on 11th January 1966, and Wounded In Action by a booby trap on 18th March 1966. He was buried on Palm Island, at home with his friends and family around him. Over 500 people attended his funeral, where he was honoured with a three-volley salute fired at the grave site by current serving Sappers from 3 Combat Engineer Regiment. Bill is survived by his wife Edna, children Zita, William, Jason, Gail and Ralph, and his grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Rest in Peace Sapper

The historic industry surrounding Nui Dat - Circa 1929

The rubber trees we lived amongst at the Nui Dat base camp were part of a string of plantations commencing at Binh Ba and stretching north as far as Long Khanh. First established in the 1920s, the plantations provided a great lifestyle for the French managers, but during the war they had to play both sides - paying "taxes" to the VC to remain in business.

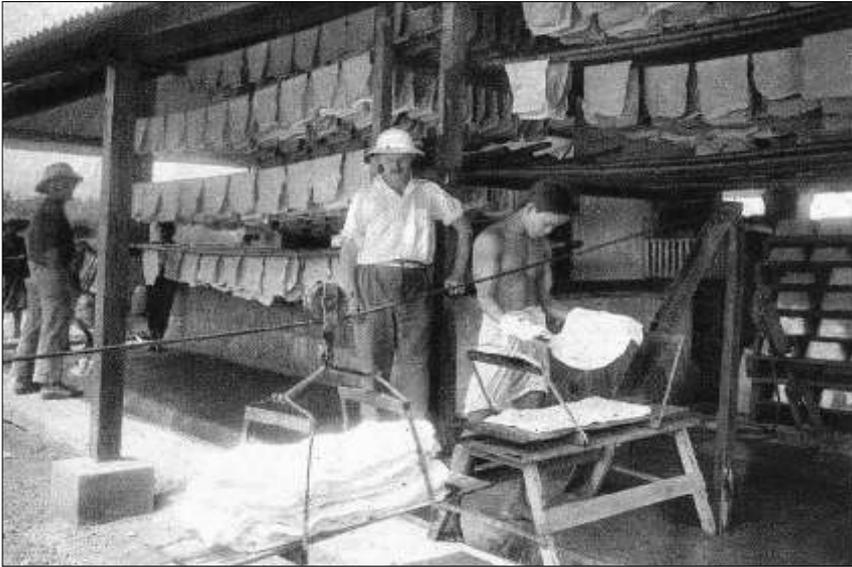


ABOVE: The treatment and storage areas of the plantation in 1929

LEFT: The boss looks on as sheets of crude rubber are hung for curing

BOTTOM LEFT: It'll be some years before Pierre the plantation manager earns a single Franc from these seedlings

BELOW: A fancy house, a flash car, plenty of servants, and weekends in Vung Tau - what more could a French colonial master ask for



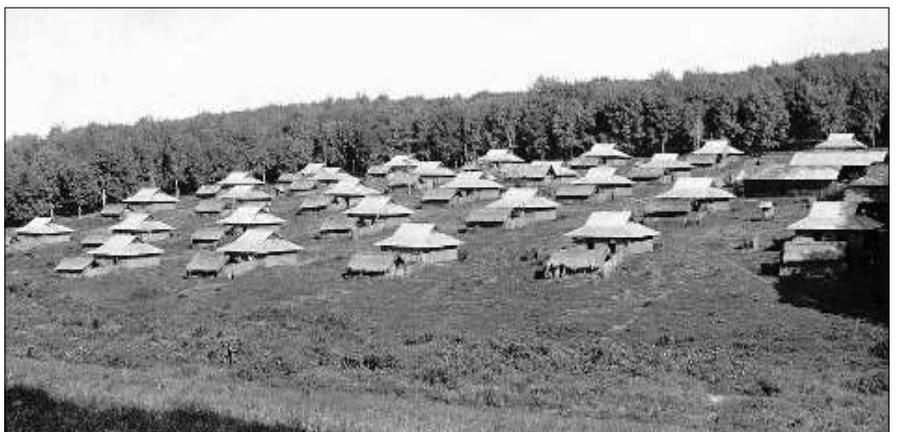


ABOVE: Traffic jam on the main drag in 1929. The car in front is a 1928 four cylinder Citroen B14

RIGHT: Traffic jam on the main drag 40 years later in 1969 during the the Battle of Binh Ba. Vehicles are the 12 cylinder Centurion tank and the M113 diesel powered APC

BELOW RIGHT: Simple huts built for the rubber workers

BELOW: cover of the 1931 Annual report on the production and finances of the rubber plantation (complete with a wine glass stain - very French!)



Can a 52 ton Centurion Tank be flipped up 45 degrees by a mine?

“To right it can”, says Tunnel Rat Clive Pearsall, and he had it confirmed over a long lunch with a few Turret Heads

Talk about co-incidence! Clive Pearsall (a Tunnel Rat with 1Troop in 67/68) was attending the Naval & Military Club's annual Vietnam Veteran's luncheon in Melbourne, where the speaker was a “Tankie”, Major Peter Badman, the former OC of C Squadron 1st Armoured Regiment in Vietnam.

Naturally, during the luncheon this got Clive to thinking of his own experiences, working in Mini Teams with the tanks. In particular Clive recalled a mine incident he'd been closely involved in: “I was riding in a convoy of three Centurion tanks, I was sitting on top of the second tank, along with my Number 2, Ken Wheatley who was out on his first operation.

As we hurtled along at about 40 km an hour, the tank in front hit a massive mine. In slow motion I saw the lead tank lurch up off the ground at about 45 degrees. Then there was the shuddering roar of the blast, and both of our tanks came to a halt as dust, stones and rocks went flying 50 feet into the air. Incredibly nobody was badly injured – and afterwards Ken Wheatley and I joked how we were so black from blast debris that we looked like coal miners.”

There were several tables of “Tankies” at the luncheon, so Clive thought, “What better time to see if any of those present recalled the incident.”

Clive went over to the table of “Tankies”, and incredibly, the first guy he spoke to about the incident was Michael Bidey who turned out to be the gunner of the centurion tank which hit the mine. Michael informed Clive that he had



ABOVE: Tunnel Rat, Clive Pearsall while attached to APCs on an operation

photos of the aftermath, and a week later Clive duly received copies of those photos, along with Michael Bidey's recollections of the incident:

“The 3rd of August, 1968 - who could forget it. The crew of 31A was Sgt Nev Callis, Kevin Hunter (driver) Barry Munari (operator) and me as the gunner. I was filling in for the regular gunner who was on

RIGHT: The tank took severe damage from the mine. BELOW: One of the tank crew shows just how big the blast crater was (note the old SMG weapon!)

R&R. It happened north of Nui Dat not far from FSB Avenger in what I seem to remember was an area known as he Courtney Rubber.

I can to this day, close my eyes and see myself being thrown around the inside of the tank in slow motion - first whacking my head on the turret roof and then crashing down onto my backside. It was like a dust storm inside the turret.

We were very lucky – I had bruises everywhere, a crushing headache and a sore back. It was either this blast or the next mine in September where I cracked my pelvic bone. My first reaction was that we had been hit by a rocket - not that I knew what being hit by a rocket was like. But it seemed to me that we had been hit on our right side and I immediately swung the turret to the right.

The crew commander



(Callis), yelled at me to traverse back as we were aiming at one of our tanks.

This was the largest mine encountered by the Squadron since it arrived in country earlier that year. It left a crater about 12 feet wide and over 4 ft deep.



ABOVE: Number 2 on the Mini Team, Ken Wheatley. LEFT: Tank debris was flung far and wide. BELOW: Michael Bidey, was gunner on the tank which hit the mine. BOTTOM: Clive (far left) and Ken (middle) on board the recovery vehicle.

For Clive Pearsall, it was great to have his own recollections of the incident confirmed by a fellow Veteran involved in the incident. Over the years several “experts” had doubted that a 52 ton tank could be lifted up at 45 degrees – and that the men inside could survive such a blast.

Clive's luncheon episode proves the value of not only attending Veteran's gatherings, but of taking the opportunity to mix with other Corps there, and asking those questions you've had stored up for years.

I had heard that it was about 401bs of Chicom TNT and it lifted the tank clear off the ground. There was extensive damage to the tank - parts of the track were blown all over the place - the final drive, right rear suspension and track wheels were blown off.

It was late in the day and we had to sleep at the back of the tank. I didn't like that very much as the VC had but to walk onto the track a hundred meters down the road and fire some RPG's at us. It was a perfect fire lane. I remember the site well - the mud, the rain, my aching back and headache and an uncomfortable premonition that we were being spied upon.

It was fortunate that we had an Armoured Recovery Vehicle with us, and the boys of the LAD worked like navvies to get the tank up and going.

It was a feeling of relief to be on the move again even though I was in the confines of the gunners seat, and the possibility of a shower and a cold beer back at base in Nui Dat seemed far away again.”



Jethro Thompson reflects on a good year for a young Sapper

Terribly wounded in a mine incident during the laying of the Barrier Minefield in May 1967, Jethro has been an inspiration to us all ever since. Despite the many and varied ongoing medical and physical issues emanating from his injuries, Jethro is one of the most positive people we've ever met, continually amazing us (and shaming us) with his "can do" attitude. The thing Jethro fears most is losing his mobility, and thus his independence. A bout of being wheelchair bound for months after heart surgery a few years ago made him even more determined. He built his strength up enough to get back on his "sticks" and embarked on a year of Veteran-related community service and travelling the land to catch up with a few old Sapper mates. During this time, at our Tunnel Rats Reunion in Hobart last April, Colonel John Kemp (OC 1 Field Squadron Vietnam 67/68) declared Jethro "an icon of the Corp". Whilst this may not yet be etched into the official records of the Corp of Royal Australian Engineers, not a single Vietnam era Sapper would dispute it. Below Jethro reflects on his activity filled year for us.

Editor

Reading about the recent recovery of the last two Australians listed as 'Missing in Action' on the Vietnam War Memorial in Canberra left me feeling extremely lucky and overwhelmingly proud to be a Vietnam Veteran.

Peter Aylett, listed as an



engineer with the recovery team is a former Sapper, who served in Vietnam, first as a Plant Operator with 17 Construction Squadron, then a second tour with the AATTV, has been heavily involved with the recovery of all six MIA's.

I felt a strong nostalgic link with this particular recovery, as on Australia Day 1988, it was my honour to present to Pilot Officer Robert Carver's father, the

Memorial flag that had been carried in Robert's memory through the streets of Sydney during the highly successful Welcome Home Parade.

To cope with the emotion brought on by memories of the event I have taken a little time to reflect on my own life since Vietnam. Despite many hardships I've been extremely lucky, not only to have survived my wounds but more importantly to have the gift of 'mateship'. Unequivocal Mateship which has endured for over forty years. I have found it's immaterial if you interact with your mates regularly or infrequently, the understanding and appreciation of each other is constant. When needed, they are there and in my case, have always been there.

Last year in particular was a good year for catching up with old mates and comrades. In early

ABOVE: Jethro and Perle soaking up the comradeship at our Hobart reunion. BELOW: Jethro has an uncanny knack of attracting pretty women - here he weaves his magic while selling Legacy badges



January with two old Borneo veterans I sat around a table enjoying lunch at the Maroochydore RSL Club, reminiscing about our time in Borneo and beyond. Tom Upson, Ken Young and I had come together for the first time in many years. When patrons started to enter with their evening meal we became mindful of the time, and made a tactical withdrawal to a quieter corner of the club. The icing on the cake that afternoon was that our three wives fully understood and appreciated the meaning of the time we had together.

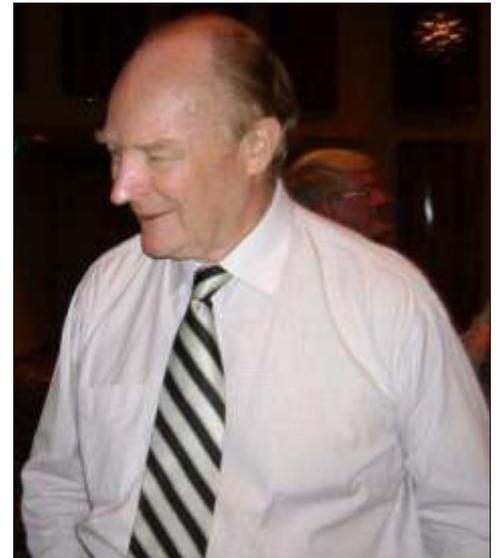
While visiting SA in February I was able to catch up with an old mate from my very early days in the army. Mike Shannon (2 Trp 1 Fld Sqn 66/67) and his wife Marieluise provided a very fine afternoon's entertainment reminiscing about the past and expectations for the future. As is normally the case time limitations brought an end to our afternoon.

April found my wife Perle and I enjoying the magnificent scenery of Hobart, but struggling with the strong winds that made it a little difficult strutting around on my crutches. The City had been invaded by rats, Tunnel Rats that is. A large number of old sappers descended on Hobart for several days of fun. Although only a handful from 1 troop 66/67 turned up, many other familiar faces were present. Adrian Black who I served with in Borneo and John Kemp who was the OC of 24 Construction Squadron were in attendance.

Constant displays of uninhibited emotion were to be seen regularly as old mates came together after many years apart. Wonderful stories of conquering adversity were listened to with admiration and pride. Sappers are a resolute



*ABOVE: Jethro in Borneo.
RIGHT: Adrian Black who
Jethro served with in Borneo,
seen here at the Hobart reunion*



bunch of blokes. Hardship might regularly challenge but rarely beats a Sapper.

ANZAC Day Dawn Service saw a great turn out of old sappers at the Combat Engineer Regiment based at Enoggera. Included in the official program was appropriate recognition of the Sappers' Association. President Barry Bishop laid a wreath on behalf of the Association. A very impressive picture of our late mate Phil Jonah Jones was projected for all to see.

After the service I joined the queue for breakfast sitting patiently in my wheel chair I received many offers from Sappers both young and old to collect breakfast for me. Hard to imagine that I lined up three times a day in the same area over forty years ago. The atmosphere was very pleasant and it was interesting to observe that army food had improved marginally over those same 40 years. Later I watched a bunch of old Sappers proudly march through the streets of Brisbane, most well turned out, with medal-adorned chests pushed out and shoulders back.

Due to a medical situation going a little pear

shaped, I was not able to go with Jim Marett to the Puckapunyal Army camp in May where he regularly gives a most informative Power Point presentation to Captains and Majors on the Combat Officers Advance Course (COAC). The presentation covers how the Tunnel Rats operated in Vietnam. I've been sharing that platform with Jim lately, in my case covering the elements of training, leadership and self discipline which failed on the day I became a casualty. Sharing our story with young RAE officers is a most rewarding experience, and I believe, beneficial to young officers preparing to lead men into potentially dangerous situations.

With an improvement in my medical situation I was however, able to return to Enoggera and share a few of my experiences from Borneo and Vietnam with young serving Sappers towards the end of May, ably supported by Ted Podlich (2 Troop 68/69).

Early last year I became aware that the late Mark Le Gay Brereton" of 1Fld Squadron was buried in an unmarked grave at the Mount Gravatt cemetery. This situation was rectified when the Queensland Sappers Association, Beenleigh RSL Sub

Branch and a number of sappers generously donated sufficient funds to purchase a headstone. A poignant graveside service was conducted on the 29th June in the presence of family members, Sappers and RAAC fellows, followed by lunch and a few beers

August was a really good month: on the 14th Perle and I flew to Sydney to join my old mate Charlie Lynn an MP in the Upper House of the State Parliament, who actually was a Sapper before becoming an Officer in RAASC. Charlie as Patron of the AVVRG (Australian Vietnam Veterans' Reconstruction Group) was hosting a fund raising dinner in the State Parliament Dining Room. Guests included Col Joy, Little Pattie, the Minister of Veterans Affairs Alan Griffen, and Dave Sabben, who was the guest speaker. To almost every ones surprise Dave did not speak about Long Tan, instead providing a most informative talk which linked in well with the activities of the AVVRG. Dave spoke about important and worthwhile projects that are somehow deemed to be non newsworthy, thereby failing to attract media attention and consequently support. Col Joy and Little Pattie enthusiastically participated in successful fund raising activities after dinner, and provided some very amusing and nostalgic entertainment.

I would strongly recommend this annual fund raising dinner to you all, especially Sappers living within reasonable travelling distance to Sydney. As a matter of interest the President of the AVVRG in NSW is Kerry Phelan another old Sapper who served with 17 Construction Squadron in Vietnam.

The following morning Charlie was scheduled to give



LEFT: 1967 - Jethro heads on a journey that will test every element of his will and grit. RIGHT: 1970 - Just three years later, Jethro joins the Public Service, his first job after the Army



an Address at the City of Blacktown RSL Sub-Branch's Commemoration of VP Day.

On the way home we called in to the Concorde Hospital Kokoda Walkway. What a fine presentation, recording the heroic deeds of young Australians who were untrained and under equipped, but buoyed by determination and endless courage. Their deeds are superbly honoured here. I strongly urge fellow veterans to visit the Walkway. The memorial gardens have excellent Picnic facilities complimenting a very fine Restaurant.

Sunday night we dined aboard a Captain Cook Cruise Boat with the sights of Sydney by night to admire as we delicately ate, drank and laughed our way through the seven course degustation menu. The challenge of the night was the need to climb so many stairs to reach the dining room. When Charlie returned from the bathroom and informed me that I'd have to negotiate twenty eight stairs if I needed to 'go' discouraged me from drinking immediately. Crook shoulder, crutches and stairs are not very compatible.

Arriving back at Circular Quay we enjoyed a leisurely stroll uphill to the Union Club where we were guests of Charlie, concluding a fun filled weekend with a very good old mate. The Union Club with its old world charm was an educational stay to say the least. Once I had come to accept the no 'denim' and 'no cash' policy and the requirement to dress a little more formally than I would normally, especially when on holidays, the place was an absolute treat.

With time to spare we roamed the building admiring fabulous paintings and trophies that had been presented to the club since its establishment in the middle of the 1850s. Specific rooms are available for almost every form of assembly. Taking tea at our leisure and convenience, basking in the reflected glory and the spiritual presence of some truly remarkable men, many of them pioneers of this great country. This stopped Charlie and I in our footsteps, as simultaneously we commented on how far we had come since our wild and mischievous days at SME.

Monday we drove down

| SECRET | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-------------|--|--------------|--------------------|-------------------|--|-------------|---------|-------------|
| RAAF FORM 451 | | | | | | | | | |
| DUST OFF OPERATIONS | | | | | | | | | |
| Date | Aircraft No | Crew | Section | Time | Rate | Area of Operation and Type of Operation | Fax | Gasovac | Weight lbs. |
| 9 | 1025 | HAXELL - MATHIESON McGARTHY - COVINGTON | 12 | 2.30 | H11 | Dustoff Standby - Dustoff mission from DAT DO to 36 Evac. Hosp. at VUNG TAU and from VUNG TAU to LONG BINH. | 13 | 5 | |
| 9 | 1021 | TIRAPSON - BRIDGES COUGHLAN - PARK | 5 3 12 | .25 .25 1.45 | H11 H11 H11 | Transland 335 - Resupply from 1 ATF to the 'Horsehoe'. Transland 340 - Fax from 1 ATF to DUC THAN. Transland 337 - Fax from DUC THAN to the 'Horsehoe' and 1 ATF. Also this A/O assisted on Dustoff mission from DAT DO. | 6 2 4 | | 700 100 |

to Canberra, where we elected to maintain our link with former leaders of our nation. Reciprocal rights with Charlies membership of the Union Club saw us en s c o n c e d i n t h e Commonwealth Club, same deal, no denim no cash, all accounted for with a signature. Our original plan to be in Canberra on the 18th' August was to enable me to meet and have lunch with one of the RAAF Dust Off pilots that collected myself and the other three wounded sappers from the minefield many years ago.

Unfortunately, due to a very serious family health issue my Pilot had to cancel out. While this was disappointing, all was not lost as Perle, Charlie and I attended the Vietnam Veterans' Day Service. It was a very fine service, attracting a large crowd and many notable dignitaries including the Governor General, Prime Minister and most importantly, our very own fellow Sapper, Lieutenant General Gillespie.

At the end of August Sappers could be seen strolling the streets of Tweed Heads again, admittedly most were heading towards the RSL. The 1st Field Squadron Group reunion was held over the weekend of 28th to 31st of August. With only limited time available due to my involvement with Legacy, I was restricted to attending only the Saturday night banquet. Once again it was a great turnout of Sappers, and it

was good to see John Kemp and Brian Florence, two former and well respected OC's of the Squadron in Vietnam.

Amusingly on the night I was mistaken on one occasion for the legless legend Graham Edwards, who coincidentally was in the building as 7 RAR members were also holding their reunion the same weekend. On several other occasions I was mistaken for Steve Theodore who has two similarly mangled hands as mine.

Sunday morning I made a hurried trip back to Brisbane to fulfil my obligation to my Legacy Group. A sausage sizzle at Bunnings was to launch our week of fund raising. Due to old age and ill health, group numbers were down, leaving only a few members to carry the workload. To our relief, one our newest members had recruited a number of 6 RAR Veterans, including two former cooks to assist on the day and throughout



ABOVE: Record of "Dust off" flight to evacuate Jethro and his comrades wounded in the May 9th 1967 mine incident.

BOTTOM: Third from left, Pilot Officer Mick Haxell, captain of Jethro's "Dust off" chopper heads out on another mission, in May 1967

the following week.

A call for assistance from members of the Sappers' association living in the area only produced one volunteer. However, Sappers who regularly attend our casual gatherings responded to a request by Jack Campbell and myself and provided much needed support.

The loyalty and commitment of one Sapper in particular is especially noteworthy. Jimmy White, a former plantie in 24 Construction Squadron turned up as he had committed to do, but was not looking too good. Jim had recently left hospital after having major surgery to rectify an aortic

aneurism, and if that was not bad enough, he had been recently advised of seriously bad news about a family member. When asked why he fronted up he replied; "I said I would help". Thanks Jim.

Trevor Shelley and Ted Podlich turned up for an afternoon shift on the Friday, and after a cursory look at the badges and merchandise we were endeavouring to sell, immediately demonstrated their powers of persuasion. It was such a sales frenzy, if I had not intervened they would have sold the table and chairs provided by Westfield Centre Management!

On the 23rd September I attended the Borneo Memorial Dedication at SME. With expectations of meeting up with many former comrades, I drove down from Brisbane to Camden. Charlie and Jill, providing me with a comfortable bed and delightful company. By morning we were all eating and smelling red dust and my white Tarago was now looking like a red Tarago, courtesy of the 'Dust Storm'. The dedication had to be moved to the Chapel at SME as the wind and dust made outdoor activities almost impossible.

The number of Borneo veterans in attendance was disappointing but I thoroughly enjoyed catching up with the few I had served with in 24 Construction Squadron. Max Johnstone the OC and John Swanson the SSM were present and looking good for their years of service. Pat Crowley, Ken Young and Tom Upson were present and looked after me in a manner befitting a young Sapper who had looked after them so many years ago. Snow Wilson and George Biddlecombe were also present.



With lunch at the sergeants mess over I headed for Canberra. The gusting wind blowing across the highway caused me some concern and I was grateful that on this occasion I was wearing my artificial arm, providing me with a more reliable grip on the steering wheel. After a long day it was a relief to check in to the hotel that would be home for the next three nights.



A conference on War Wounds had brought me to Canberra, as State Secretary to the Limbless Soldiers' Association. It was considered a worthwhile conference to attend, and it provided me with

ABOVE): A nice lunch, a glass of wine, and two Tunnel Rat mates to exchange exaggerated war stories with - what more could a Sapper want. (Left to right) Jethro (1Tp 66/67), Trevor Shelley (1Tp 66/67) and Ted Podlich (2Tp 68/69) on one of their regular lunches in Brisbane.

an opportunity to finally meet up with Mick Haxell who flew one of two "Dust Off" choppers to convey the four wounded Sappers (me included) to hospital on the 9th May 1967.

On Saturday morning I headed home via Bathurst and a nice comfortable bed at Toby Tobin's (Spt Tp 1 Fld Sqn 1967). A few hours of catch up chatter while sniffing the delightful aroma wafting from the kitchen had my appetite well and truly honed. Cheryl's home cooked roast meal went down a treat, as did a most scrumptious omelette for breakfast the following morning.

Arriving safely home on Monday provided me with a feeling of accomplishment. Since my heart surgery I had not been prepared to travel far from home alone. With Perle's acceptance of my new found confidence I can see myself on the road again. Maybe I'll turn up at your place.

Send our Sappers in Afghanistan some Aussie goodies from home

You can send a 2kg parcel post free. Address it to: 8238748 W02 S Goodbody, OP Slipper MRTF2, AFPO 13, Australian Defences Force NSW 2890 Don't send booze, cigarettes, porn or anything that melts or is likely to spoil in the heat.



Our photograph: Touchdown! Sapper Zach Rodda, an Australian Combat Engineer, leaps out of a US Black Hawk helicopter on an air insertion near Tarin Kowt, Afghanistan.

The SSM sets the standard for Sapper's reports



When two-man teams of Tunnel Rats were attached to Infantry units to carry out their mines, booby traps, demolitions and tunnel and bunker searching tasks, they usually radioed a report back to base each night. Amongst usual things like "send me clean sox you bastards", the report would cover the things they'd dealt with that day. If it was a different type of enemy mine or bunker, they'd make a rough sketch and hand it into Troop HQ after the Operation. The rank of the men in these two-man teams was always Sappers or Corporals. If large minefields, bunker systems or tunnels were found, ten-man Combat Engineer teams were often sent out. Again their rank was always Sappers and Corporals, and the quality of the reporting back with a few rough sketches was the same. In February 1970 however, a ten-man team was sent out from 2 Troop led by the Squadron SSM, WO2 Ron Janvrin. They were to support 8RAR on Operation Hammersley in the Long Hai Mountains, and were tasked to search and blow up a series of enemy bunkers. 8RAR was actually supported by 3 Troop, but there were so many bunkers, tunnels and caves found on Operation Hammersley that 2 Troop were called in to assist. Fortunately for our history, the quality of the reporting on this Operation improved immensely, having been done by the SSM himself. Holdfast has uncovered the actual report written by Ron Janvrin. It's a fascinating reminder for us of the extraordinary things we did all those years ago – and of how, back then, they just seemed like everyday tasks. Read and reminisce lads:

ABOVE: Nine members of the Combat Engineer team led by the SSM, WO2 Ron Janvrin as they await word to move into the Long Hai hills. From left to right: Frank Brady, Bob Smith, John Ash, Peter "Roo Dog" Scott, Ron Janvrin (SSM), Bill "Ba Ba" Lamb, Mick "Grumpy" Foster, Mick Van Poeteren and Brad Hannaford.

Report on Bunker System GR YS4752 - YS4852 Long Hai Ranges 21 -25 Feb 1970 By WO 2 R Janvrin SSM

21 Feb 70: A demolition team was dispatched from 1 Fld Sqn to C Coy 8RAR operating in the Long Hai Ranges, to assist in the search and destruction of bunker systems. The team consisted of the SSM, 2 Cpls and 8 Sappers.

22 Feb 70: GR474522 (Grid Reference), a total of 10 bunkers were located in this area. One containing a VC body and another partly destroyed, suspected of having a body due to the smell. All bunkers in this report were of similar design in the form of a T, the top of the T being a fighting pit and the other a sleeping bay.

22 Feb 70: GR477521. A total of 8 bunkers in this location.

23 Feb 70: GR478521. A total of 12 bunkers in this system. Located in this system was a Command bunker, (see sketch). Completed on the 15 Feb 70 as this date was scratched into the wall of the bunker. Another bunker in this system was lined

in para silk. Female clothing was found in this bunker.

23 Feb 70: GR749522. A total of 11 bunkers in this location.

24 Feb 70: GR481521. A total of 12 bunkers in this location, one containing the remains of a VC apparently hit by shell fire.

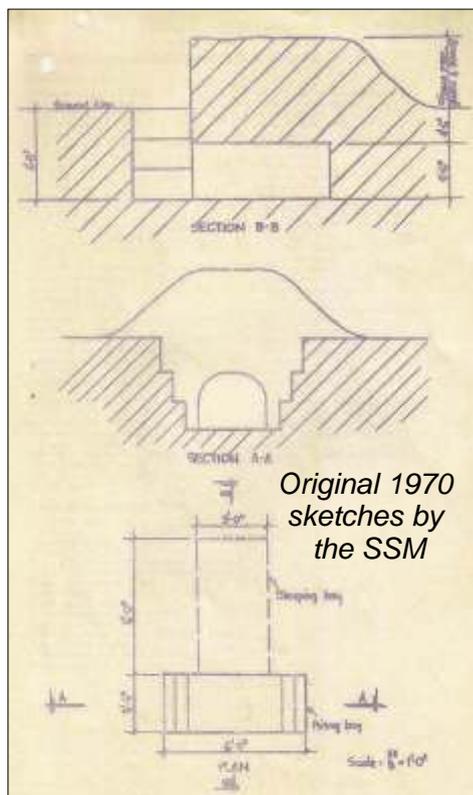
24 Feb 70: GR5485520. A total of 10 bunkers in this location and 4 graves containing 6 bodies.

25 Feb 70: GR473526. A total of 9 bunkers in this location, about 12 months old and connected by comms trench.

25 Feb 70: GR472516. A total of 8 bunkers in this location about 12 months old and not used for at least 8 months. A spring was also located in this area. Demolition team returned to Nui Dat at 1430 hrs on 25 Feb 70.

Dimensions

Dimensions varied throughout the whole system.



Gr474522:

Fighting pits: 5ft x 2ft 6in x 4ft deep. Sleeping bays: 6 ft x 3ft x 2ft 6in high.

OHP: No OHP on fighting pits. Sleeping bays were excavated beneath existing vegetation



which helped to strengthen it. The excavated earth from the sleeping bays was placed on top forming a total of 4 ft 6 in OHP.

GR477521 to GR485520

Fighting pits: 7ft x 2ft 6in x 5 ft deep to 8 ft x 2 ft 6in x 6ft deep.

Sleeping bays: 7ft x 3ft x 3 ft high to 8 ft x 3 ft x 3 ft high.

OHP - pits: 3in Dia timbers, 18in of earth.

OHP - bays: As in para 1.

GR473526: As above but connected by comms trench.

GR472516: As above.

ABOVE: Sappers Bob Smith (left) and Brad Hannaford setting up one of the bunkers for demolition.

MIDDLE: Enemy weapons and ammunition from the bunkers.

BOTTOM: Infantry and Sappers dismount from a Centurion tank and head into the Long Hai hills.



No timber was used for OHP on any of the sleeping bays. The roots of the vegetation were sufficient to hold and compact the OHP.

Other information

All bunkers throughout the system, excluding the ones mentioned as old, were recently in use, some being constructed as late as 15 February 1970. This particular type of bunker was new to the Sqn and experiments were carried out on methods of destruction.

Methods of Destruction

Three methods were tested to demolish each system:

(1) Charges were dug into the walls and OHP about 18in.

(2) A charge of 10-15 lbs was placed in the sleeping bay of each bunker.

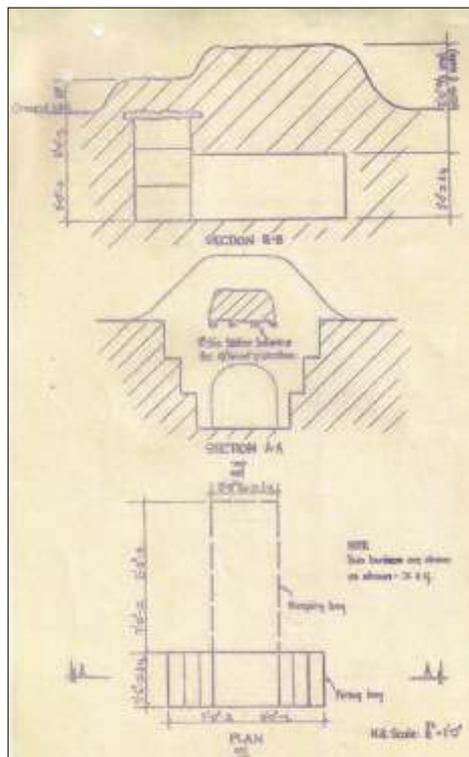
(3) A charge of 10-15 lbs was placed 18in into the OHP.

All methods proved successful and the second method was used, charges varying depending on size of bunker.

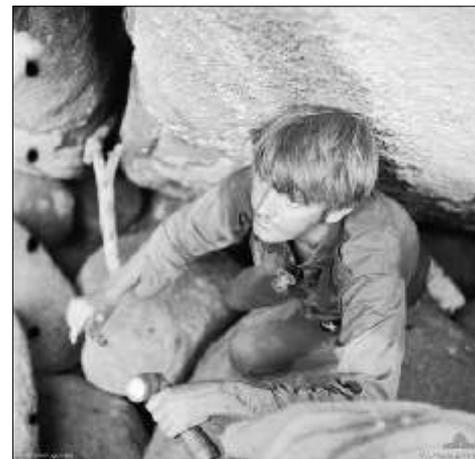
(R. Janvrin)
WO2, SSM

List of enemy equipment captured from the bunkers

3 x 82mm mortar rounds
12 x RPG rockets
10 x RPG7 rockets
6 x RPG boosters
8 x 60mm mortar rounds
2 x M26 grenades
7Q x 7.62mm short rounds
40 x 7.62 tracer
15 x 50 cal rounds
8 x 12.7mm rounds
3 x Chicom blast grenades
640 x 7.62mm unk
534 x 5.56mm rounds
597 X .30 cal (ball)
3290 x 7.92mm rounds (ball)
2400 x pistol ammo
8 x M79 HE rounds
1x Chicom anti-tank HE grenade
3 x electric detonators
4 x blast caps



1 x electric coil
26 x BAR mags (loaded)
188 x 7.62mm link rounds
424 X .30 link
10 x RPG7 boosters
2 x 60mm mortars
2 x 60mm mortar sights (Chinese)
5 x SKS rifles
13 x shotguns
1 x SMG M3
1 x Thompson SMG
1 x BAR
10 x US model rifles
3 x German Mauser rifles
1 x French La Belle
7 x Russian bolt action rifles
2 x RPG launchers
1 x M1 Carbine
1 x AK47 rifles
3 x M16 rifles
Large qty of documents
5001b rice
Qty cooking eqpt
25 transistor radios
Large qty dried fish
17 pkt cigarettee
2 Aust entrenching tools
Qty plastic
10 US pistol belts
30 Pouches utility US pattern
14 x 44 gal drums diesel
24 x 44 gal drums (empty)
3 x heli sling shackles
14 x water bottles various types
1 x hoe



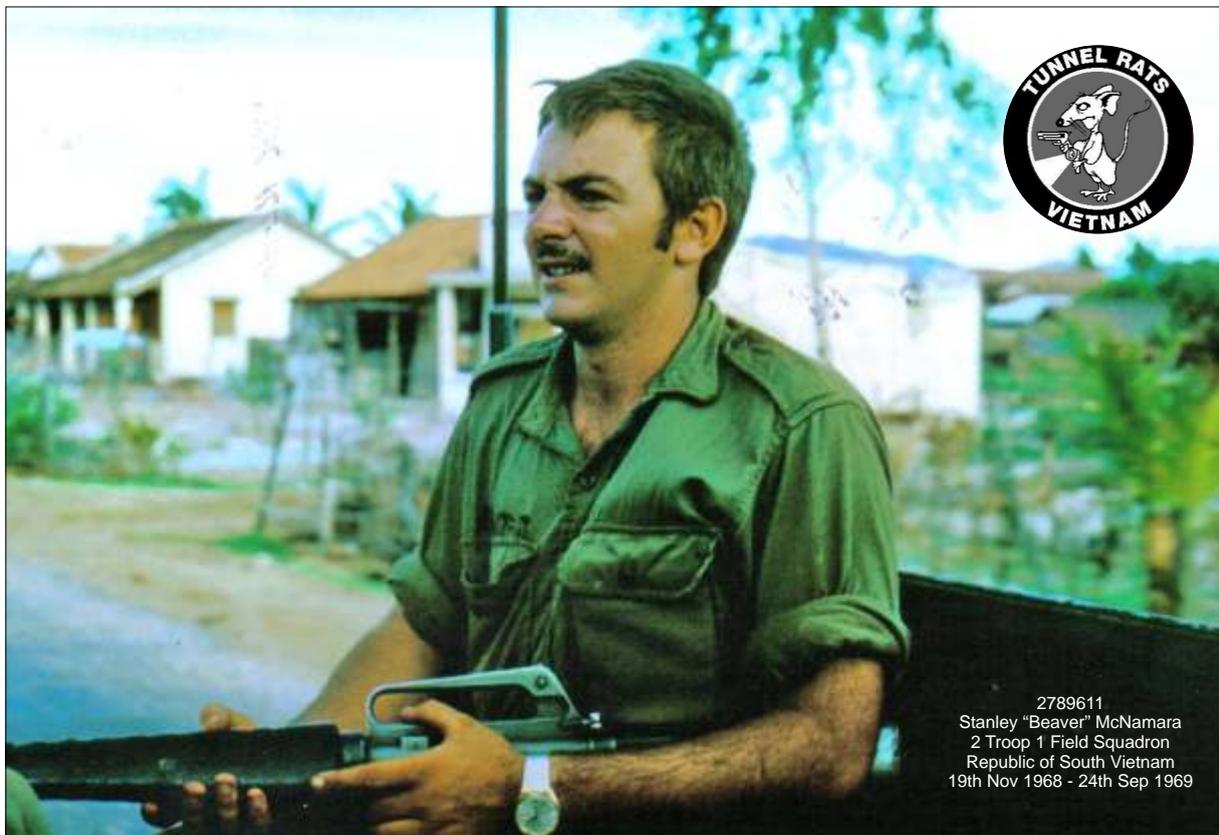
ABOVE: One of the many 3 Troop Sappers attached to 8RAR for Operation Hammersley was Sapper Trevor Hughes, seen here emerging from one of the enemy caves found on the Operation.

4 x long handle reaping hooks
3 x brassiers (womens)
1 x cardigan (womens)
9 x chopsticks
10 x sandals
8 x pr torch batteries
1 x saw blade
13 x cups canteen field
12lb sugar
301b salt
10lb tobacco
15lb beans
3/4 lb wire solder
6 x bandages 4"
6 x surgical tweezers
74 phials drugs
3x plasma intravenous drips
5 x tubes sulphur tablets
10 x tubes aspirin tablets
1 x bottle chapytal
4 x rolls elastic plaster
2200 x chloroquine tablets
600 anti-biotic tablets
300 x optaliadone tablets
1 x 1occ syringes hyperdermic
1 x 5cc syringes hyperdermic
200 x r tifomysice tablets
Assorted bandages
1 x Chicom field dressings
1 x bottle sotavene snake bite
1 x small medical kit
8 x tablets (type unknown)
3 x tubes penicillin ointment
28 x forceps
1 x bottle 10 suture needles

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Getting the ACB to Sappers who paid the Supreme Sacrifice

With the investigative skills of a private detective and the rat cunning inherent in every good Sapper, Peter "Roo Dog" Scott (2tp 69/70) has done an extraordinary job getting Army Combat Badges presented posthumously to the next of kin of our fallen comrades.

The families of all but a few of our mates who paid the supreme sacrifice in Vietnam have now received the Army Combat badges their loved ones were recently awarded posthumously by the Australian Army.



None earned those badges more than these men.

For the mothers, fathers, wives, sisters and brothers of these fallen Sappers, the presentations were proud moments, tinged with sadness.

Many family members who attended were pleasantly surprised at how their loved one was still thought of and regularly honoured by his Sapper mates.

Many who attended (including the Sappers) were equally surprised at the emotions that were laying just below the surface, and how easily they came to light after all these years. Sad but beautiful, and the very essence of our comradeship.

In Peter Scott's endeavours to get these badges to the families, he has been ably assisted by Sappers across Australia who've rallied to the call whenever and wherever Peter needed help. Well done those Sappers!

Here's a summary of the most recent presentations, held not only in Australia, but in the UK as well, where the family of Sapper John "Yorkie" Schofield were found:



Fire Support Base Andersen

Posthumous Award of the Army Combat Badge to the Four Sappers killed in Action at FSB Andersen

Operation Coburg took place between 24 January - 1 March 1968 and saw heavy fighting between the 1st Australian Task Force and North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong during the wider Battle of Long Binh-Bien Hoa. American and South Vietnamese intelligence reports had indicated that an imminent communist offensive during the Tet New Year festival was likely, and in response the Australians were deployed away from their base in Phuoc Tuy Province to bolster American and South Vietnamese forces defending the Long Binh-Bien Hoa complex north-east of Saigon. 1ATF deliberately established fire support bases astride the communist lines of communication in the vicinity of the village of Trang Bom, expecting that they would attempt to destroy them. The Australians subsequently

clashed with the Viet Cong during early patrols in AO Columbus, while later FSB Andersen was repeatedly attacked by major ground assaults.

Late on the evening of 17-18 February the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army launched an assault on FSB Andersen. The first attack was preceded by a heavy rocket and mortar barrage in the early hours of the morning, followed by two waves of infantry each of company size. The attack focused on the south-west of the perimeter manned by 3RAR's echelon and mortar platoon, as well as an American medium artillery battery. The perimeter wire was subsequently breached, but the attack was repulsed by mortar counter-battery fire, Claymore mines and the heavy weight of machine gun fire from armoured personnel carriers and the American gunners. The communist mortar and rocket barrage had a most devastating effect, falling right among the

American and New Zealand gun positions, the mortar lines and the battalion echelon, as well as scoring a direct hit on an Australian engineer standing patrol outside of the FSB wire.

The Sappers Killed in Action on 18th February were:

L/CPL John Garrett,
S/SGT Colin McLachlan,
SPR Alan Pattison and
SPR David Steen

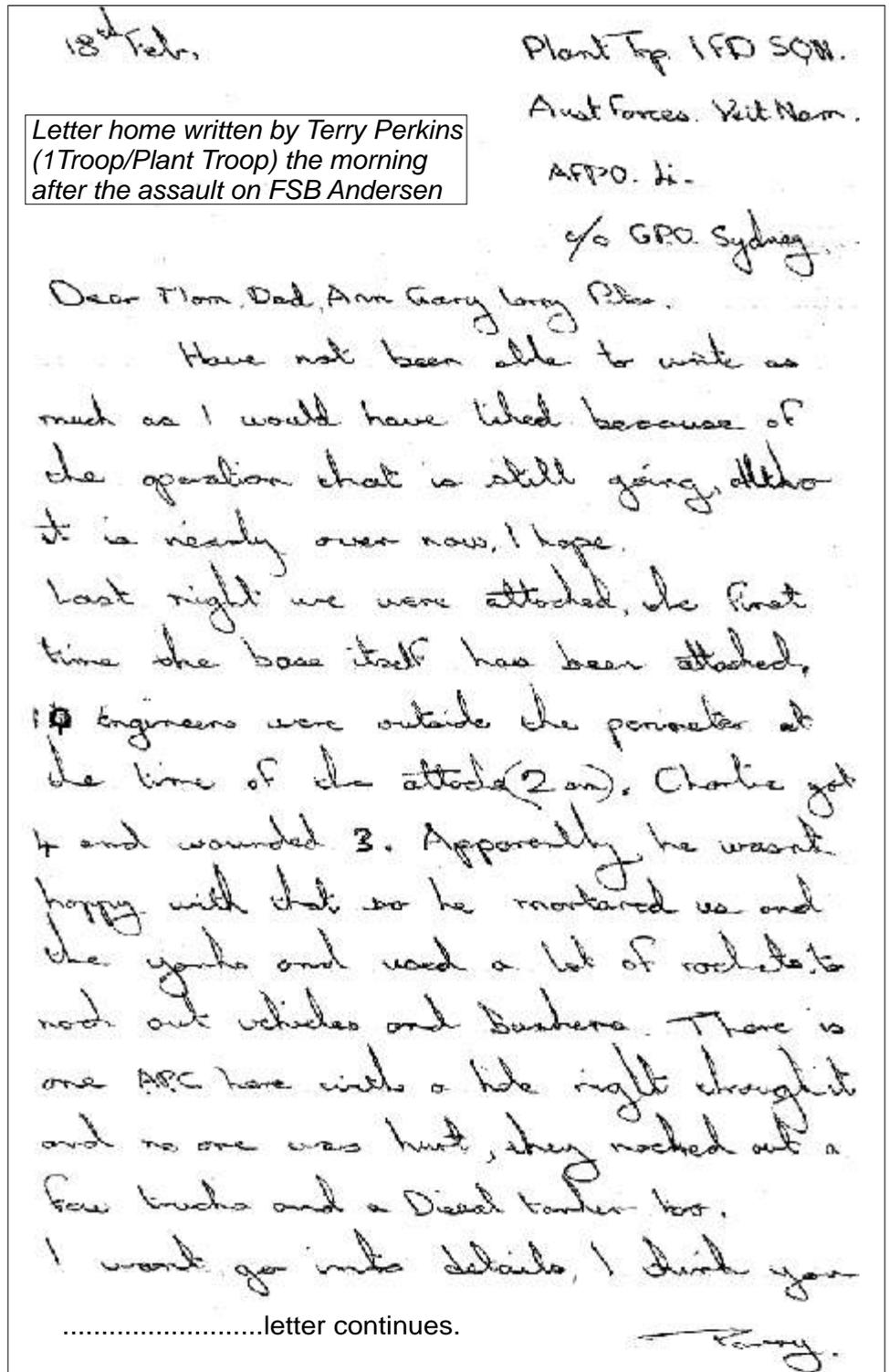
All from 3 Troop 1 Field Sqn Royal Australian Engineers.



John Garrett's ACB was presented (above) to his mother Mrs Norma Meehan in Brisbane by Peter Scott (right) and Terry Perkins (left). John's medals had never been issued, so these were obtained for Mrs Meehan and have been subsequently placed in a presentation case arranged by Terry Perkins (1 Troop/Plant Troop) who was at FSB Andersen on the night of 17/18 February.



Colin McLachlan's ACB was presented (above) to his widow Mrs Patricia McLachlan (centre) in Hervey Bay by Graeme Clarke (right). Graeme reports that Patricia and the family takes great pride in Colin's medals, and were very happy to



hear that Col's old comrades still remember and honour him. Photo below of Graeme Clarke making the presentation.

for the presentation. The family were very pleased to receive the award which they'll put in pride of place with Alan's medals.

Alan Pattison's ACB was presented (right) to his sister Helen and brothers Ralph, Kevin and Barry in Adelaide by Terry Perkins (far right in the photo). Terry and his wife Margaret made a special trip from the Gold Coast to Adelaide





David Steen's ACB was received by his mother from the Mt Gambier RSL Sub Branch. David is remembered and honoured (above) in Penola, South Australia.



Norman "Pancho" Le Bherz's ACB has been presented to his nephew Anthony (above) at Broadbeach on the Gold Coast by Peter Scott. Peter carried greetings from Norm Cairns and other members of 3 Troop who served with Pancho, and remember him as a great bloke who was accidentally killed not long before completing his tour of duty. Anthony had carried his uncle's National Flag in the Canberra Vietnam Memorial Dedication parade, and is very pleased and proud to have the ACB to place with Pancho's medals.



Rob Wooley and Anne Grinning

The Army Combat Badge of **Sapper Peter Penneyston** was recently presented to his

sister Anne Grinning and extended family at a ceremony in Strahan SW Tasmania. Rob Woolley from Huon Valley TAS made the trip over to the west coast especially for the presentation, which was attended by about 60 people. The presentation was followed by a dinner to celebrate the occasion and honour Peter Penneyston's service and sacrifice.



The ACB of **LCpl Bryant Victor Hansen** was presented to his widow Beverley and their son Wayne Hansen, at the RAE Vietnam Memorial at the School of Military Engineering (above). The presentation was made by Lt. Col John Pritchard (left) on behalf of the Vietnam Tunnel Rats Assn. John Pendegast of the RAE Vietnam Memorial Inc. also presented Wayne Hansen with his father's National Flag

from the Welcome Home Parade, which had been laid up in the SME Chapel.

Sapper John "Yorkie" Schofield was a "Pom" serving with the Australian Army. In Vietnam he served with 3 Troop in 70/71 and after surviving his tour, returned to England where he joined the Police. He was killed on police duty on 6th July 1974, shot by, an intruder "Yorkie" had discovered mid-robbery.

Ben Beningfield took on the task to present "Yorkie's" ACB to his family, and had quite an adventure in the process. Ben did two tours of Vietnam as a Tunnel Rat, first in 67/68 with 2 Troop and then again in 70/71 with Three Troop, where he served with "Yorkie". Ben takes up the story:

I had organised to go to the UK for a memorial service for an aunt, uncle and cousin of mine which was to be held on the 22nd of April last year. This gave me the opportunity to try and track down Yorkie Schofields NOK. The endeavour proved successful, with me finding Yorkie's widow Geraldine who was very proud to receive Yorkie's ACB and



John Schofield's entry in the Police Memorial at Guildford Cathedral

certificate. During my correspondence with Geraldine prior to my leaving for the UK, she indicated that she would like to have a little informal ceremony in her back garden with just her immediate family present, as Yorkie's death was so long ago and she had had no contact with any of Yorkie's police mates for over 30 years. She suggested a BBQ and a few cold beers, which laid the foundation for a very pleasant afternoon.

Before I left for the UK I spread the word on the old boy net that I was after photos of Yorkie in his army days to take with me and got quite a good response, resulting in over a dozen photos, one of our Tunnel Rat Badges, a copy of the Holdfast magazine with Yorkie's story in it and a few other mementoes. Gordon Temby also contacted me to say that he and his wife Fran would be in London towards the end of May and would like to attend our little gathering.

Geraldine set the date as Saturday the 23rd May. Before I met Geraldine, I went to Guildford Cathedral to visit the Police memorial mentioned in a previous issue of Holdfast. Guildford cathedral is a huge brick building which looked more like a factory than a place of worship, but the interior is absolutely stunning. I couldn't think of a more beautiful place for the memorial. When I went into the cathedral I met the Vicar and a couple of elderly ladies who guide people round. I explained what I was looking for and one of the ladies took me down towards the front of the cathedral to show me where the memorial was. It consist of a rather large niche in the wall with a memorial book enclosed in a brass and glass case, surmounted by the Surry Constabulary badge which had



Left to right: Ben Beningfield (2Tp 67/68 and 3Tp 70/71), Mrs. Geraldine Schofield, Gordon Temby (3Tp 70/71)

been carved into the stone work.

My helpful guide then fetched the Verger and I told him that I was looking for John Scofield's name. He opened up the glass case, found "Yorkie's" name in the beautifully illustrated book, and closed the case up again, with the book now opened at Yorkie's page. They gave me the OK to leave a poppy there for "Yorkie", which I did, then said that it was OK to take some photos. They left me there alone with "Yorkie". I took some photos and said a few words, then I choked up and totally lost it altogether. I finally pulled myself together, thanked the staff for all their help (they couldn't have been more helpful) and left. This was on the 20th of May.

Gordon Temby, Fran and I duly fronted up at Geraldine's house around midday on the 23rd and met Geraldine, her daughter, two grand-daughters and her brother and sisters along with their respective spouses. Incredibly, one of Gerri's sisters was married to an American Vietnam Veteran who had served in I Corps. He was a top bloke - in fact the entire family were just an absolutely lovely bunch of people and we

had a great afternoon together, washing down burgers and snags with some great Pommie beer (yes....it does exist) and some Aussie red, which just happened to come from Margaret River, Gordon's neck of the woods.



We had a little presentation ceremony for the ACB and the certificate, and I got Geraldine to fill out the application forms for Yorkie's other two medals. Geraldine then brought out a lot of mementos that she had kept of Yorkie's including his slouch hat. It was a really great afternoon. Geraldine and her family were touched to know that there are people on the other side of the world who remember her husband with fondness and respect.

“Meeting up with the enemy down in the tunnels was probably our worst nightmare”

Sapper Trevor Shelley served as a Tunnel Rat with 1 Troop in 1966-67 and early in his tour, while still only a “Number 2” he had that experience we all hoped wouldn't happen – sighting the enemy while searching a tunnel system.

Trevor was attached to 5RAR on Operation Sydney, for a cordon and search of a village. His two-man Splinter Team was headed by Sapper Doug Sanderson, the “Number 1” of the team.

Coverage of the incident from “Vietnam Task”, 5RAR's book of its 1st tour gives a good introduction, followed by Trevor's recollections of the incident:

“Of particular interest was the attention paid to Viet Cong who tried to break through C Company's cordon. Members of the company opened fire at the two charging figures, killing one and wounding the other. The wounded man jumped into a nearby bunker. Colonel Warr ordered that he was to be taken alive if it were possible without endangering our men and Lieutenant Rainer's platoon was given the task. It would have been simple to kill the Viet Cong by lobbing a high explosive grenade into the bunker, but instead a tear gas grenade was thrown through the narrow entrance. A sapper, wearing a gas mask, then took the risk of going into the bunker after the fugitive. All was well, for the gas overcame the Viet Cong and he was carried out into the open and resuscitated by Tony White.”

*From: “Vietnam Task”
By Robert J. O'Neill*



Trevor Shelley recalls the incident well:

“It happened about one month before the Battle of Long Tan, on Operation Sydney on the 20th of July 1966. At the time the original 3 Field Troop Sappers were still in country and were generally our Number 1's in the Splinter Teams with 1 Troop guys as the Number 2's – but not always.

The incident took place in the morning after 5RAR and the Splinter Teams had completed a night movement into a cordon position around the Duc My village. This was a first, and it surprised the Viet Cong (and the Americans) that the Aussies were willing to move in Battalion strength at night.

We all took up harbour positions late in the afternoon of the 19th July. I'm not sure how far we were from Duc My, but it was several km. Our harbour position was along paddy fields at the edge of the forest.

We sat there without unpacking anything from our packs until about 2100hrs when we received word to saddle up. Each platoon moved up to the

ABOVE: Tunnel Rat Doug Sanderson (gas mask on top of his head), waits for 5RAR radio operator Private Dudley Fisher to relay permission for the Sappers to re-enter the tunnel.

BELOW: The wounded Viet Cong after being removed from the tunnel and revived



start point, where we all tied onto the five men in front and moved off. The going was slow but fairly steady as the forest undergrowth wasn't all that thick. However it

was a pitch black night, and at one point, as we moved through a forest area, everybody started picking up pieces of vegetation from the forest floor. It was phosphorescent and glowed in the dark, so each man placed it onto his webbing at the back, at about shoulder height. Each of us could then see the man in front, allowing us to more easily keep good distances between us, and more importantly, not get separated from the patrol.

We trudged along all night and it was pretty uneventful until there was a flurry in front of us when one of the riflemen fell down a deep well. He was lucky as he missed all the timber cross-members supporting the walls. It took about half an hour to get him out of the well and sorted before we could move off again.

It was just before first light when we got into position in the cordon and then we just waited for the word to arrive for us to move forward into the village.

The move happened just after first light and there was gunfire from inside the village but we continued to move forward. When we were inside the village, 5RAR guys went into defensive positions and Doug and I began to search a fairly large house. Other than an hysterical old woman there was not much inside so we went into a bunker which was beside the house, with Doug leading the way.

About 20m in, the tunnel turned and when we went around the corner we could see a pair of legs in the distance. Somehow the decision was made that should exit the tunnel to get a tear gas grenade. Armed with the grenade, we then re-entered the tunnel and tossed the grenade in the direction of the pair of legs we'd seen minutes earlier. At this point we didn't have gas masks on, so not wanting to suffer from the effects of the gas ourselves,



TOP: 5RAR and the Splinter Teams mount up for Operation Sydney. ABOVE: Trevor Shelley and Bill Coolburra. (in Malaya) RIGHT MIDDLE: At Duc My Village an elderly man shows his ID to Lt. David Rowe of 5RAR. RIGHT BOTTOM: The Viet Cong pulled from the tunnel is given artificial resuscitation by Cpl. Norman Sims of 5RAR

we left the tunnel rather rapidly. We then sat on top of the tunnel and pretty soon we could hear cries from inside as the tear gas did its work.

After some time we re-entered the tunnel again, this time with gas masks on, and we pulled the guy out. He was revived by 5RAR medics and evacuated out by helicopter. It was the general opinion that he was involved in the initial fire fight and then ran into the tunnel to hide. He was wounded but I feel that happened prior to his



entering the tunnel.

The VC had left a really good hammock behind in the tunnel, which of course I "souvenired", and I used that hammock right up until 1973 when it eventually fell to bits."

Sapper Snippets



New "rifle" gives the enemy no place to hide

The US Army plans on purchasing more than 12,500 XM-25 weapons (shown above) incorporating High Explosive Airburst, or HEAB rounds starting in 2012. This will be enough to put one in each Infantry squad and Special Forces team. Here's the magic part - imagine you have an enemy taking cover behind a wall or in a ditch. With the XM-25, the gunner simply aims the laser range-finder at the top of the wall where the enemy last ducked down. The gunner presses the laser range finder button on the front of the XM-25's trigger guard and records a distance to the wall of 451 meters. The distance is displayed on the TAFC's optical lens along with an adjusted aim point, or "cross hair," to help the soldier better aim the XM-25. The adjusted aim point takes into

account air pressure, temperature, and the ballistics of the 25mm round for the given range of 451 meters. The soldier then uses the increment button on the trigger guard and adds one more meter to the firing solution since the enemy combatant is about one meter behind the wall. Upon pulling the trigger, the TAFC programs the HEAB round in the chamber of the weapon, telling the round to explode at 452 meters from launch point. The HEAB round departs the rifled barrel, arms at 30 meters, clears the top of the wall at 451 meters and explodes its two warheads at 452 meters, right above the enemy. The entire firing sequence takes the gunner less than five seconds to aim and fire and another 2.5 seconds for the round to fly and explode over the target.



Old "Enemies" meet after 40 years!

In early 1970, Bob Pfeiffer (middle) had been in Vietnam just a few weeks as the new Troop Sergeant of 1 Tp 1 Fld Sqn. Sappers Jim Marett (left) and Mick Van Poeteren (right) had been in

country long enough to think it was a good idea to blow up the Squadron flagpole in protest over beer rationing. Unfortunately Bob was walking past the flagpole as it blew up. "The huge base of the pole landed at my feet, and would have hit me had the decorative chains around the base not held it back," said Bob at the Tunnel Rats Reunion in Hobart last year. The entire Nui Dat base camp was stood to that night. Jim and Mick were never caught for their misdemeanour, and the reunion last year was the first time they had ever met up with Bob. What do you say to a guy you nearly killed 40 years ago with a booze-fuelled prank? "We offered him a wine," said Mick. "Bob gracefully accepted the wine, but added the proviso that Jim and Mick owed him free wine for life. Seems fair.

Incredibly - everyone survived this mine incident



We all remember how vulnerable APCs were in Vietnam and how easily a well placed mine could blast through the floor of the vehicle, creating havoc inside (photo below). Thankfully things have improved. The other three photos show one of the new "hardened" MRAP vehicles after it has been hit by a 500 lb mine in Afghanistan. The vehicle was totally destroyed, but everyone in the vehicle walked away. OK albeit with ringing ears. Note the unusual v-shaped construction of the bottom of the hardened Pathfinder vehicle. This effectively deflects the blast, giving it no flat surface to expend its energy against. The blast picked up the truck and turned it around! The driver got some broken ribs (see the photo of the steering wheel), but that's it. Everyone walked away from a 500 lb explosion directly beneath their vehicle.



*Vietnam - June 1969 in the "Long Greens".
Driver and Crew Commander killed*



Latest list of Tunnel Rats

Here's our updated list of former Tunnel Rats from 3 Field Troop and 1 Field Squadron RAE, Vietnam 1965-71. This is not a complete list, it is simply a list of all the men we have been able to find and make contact with. If you can help with names and numbers, please contact our "Master of The List", Graeme Gartside on 08 8725 2845, or by mail to Graeme Gartside, 9 Park Street Mt Gambier SA 5290 or by email: ggart@internode.on.net

LISTS ARE NOW ALPHABETICAL

3 Field Troop (1965-66)

Peter Ash 02 6771 4623
Ian Biddolph 02 4472 9434
Al an Christie 07 5494 6628
Brian Cleary 07 5500 6363
Al Ian S Coleman 07 3283 6689
Bill Corby 07 5502 1193
John "Tex" Cotter 07 4723 1244
Des Evans 07 4128 2390
Wilfred Eyles 02 4390 0150
Ray Forster 07 3409 1907
Geoff Green 03 6272 8167



Barry Harford 08 8088 4371
Sandy MacGregor 02 9457 7133
Frank Mallard 08 9377 4560
Keith Mills 07 4770 7267
Warren Murray 03 5728 3341
Bernie Pollard 08 9248 3178
Ross Thorburn 0408413204
Al an Tugwell 08 8552 5229
Bill Unmeopa 08 9300 5561
Snow Wil son Jnr 02 6649 3998

OC's 1 Field Squadron

John Kemp 02 6288 3428
Rex Rowe 0419 251 420

1 Troop (1966-67)

Dick Bentley 08 8386 2334
Nick Burgerhof 07 3271 1592
Ray Burton 08 8268 4575
Joe Cazez 07 3710 8102
Al Ian S Coleman 07 3204 7401
Grahame Cook 02 4390 5159
Mick George 02 6882 8574
Al an Hammond 0423491091
Cul Hart 02 4392 0912
Neil Innes MM 02 9875 2962
Ken Jolley 02 6624 4066
Barry Kelly 07 4661 2898
Axel Kraft 08 9572 9597
Peter McTiernan 02 6557 5211
Gavin Menzies 02 6584 7257
John Olsen 0414433341
Ron Rockliffe 02 9789 4302
Trevor Shelley 0419784954
Kevin Smith 03 9787 1506
John Thompson 0732168906
Ross Tulloh 0418223345

1 Troop (1967-68)

Henry Baggalley 07 5433 0482
Reg Bament 02 6948 2524
Bruce Bevan 02 9580 3327
Neville Bartels 07 4055 9871
Bob Coleman 03 5342 0941
Ross Comben 08 9535 2273
Jack Green 07 3278 8719

Ray Kenny 07 3881 3648
Peter Koch 04 3822 3100
Mike McCallum 02 6288 5113
John Neal 02 9982 6694
Clive Pearsall 03 9459 4470
Al an Rantal 03 9434 2031
Peter Sheehan 03 9390 2834
Jim Trower 0418842744

1 Troop (1968-69)

Phil Baxter MM 02 4625 6213
Peter Carrodus 02 9759 6383
Albert Eyssens 03 5944 3127
Ken Ford 02 6645 2738
Max Goiser 02 9792 1765
Peter Hollis 02 6581 5401
George Hulse 07 3399 7659
Robert Laird 03 6356 1748
Brian Lamb 02 6059 6947
Kent Luttrell 0408387641
Kerry McCormick 03 6344 5291
Richard Reilly 02 6262 7374
Tom Smith 07 5594 4659
Col in Spies 07 4743 4676
Garry Von Stanke 08 8725 5648
Cliff Truelove 02 6495 7844
Ken Wheatley 07 4774 0045
Bob Woolley 03 6264 1485
David Wright 03 9435 4131

1 Troop (1969-70)



Kevin Atkinson 08 9041 1571
Larry Batze 07 4033 2025
Al Ian S Coleman 07 3283 6689
Paul Cook 02 4946 5321
Garry Degering 03 9796 0136
John Felton 07 4661 8679
Grahame Fletcher 0408822489
P. "Guts" Geisel 07 4092 1735
Terry Gleeson 03 5623 2886
Trevor Kelly 08 9538 1184
Des McKenzie 07 5448 3400
Les Slater 08 9361 0603
Max Slater 0412 772 849
Vic Smith 02 4364 0372
Dave Sturmer 02 8407 9812

1 Troop (1970-71)

Mick Augustus 07 3205 7401
Eric Banfalvi 07 3201 8234
Dan Brindley 02 6643 1693
Ian Cambell 03 9870 0313
Bruce Fraser 07 5499 0508
Peter Krause 02 6723 2835
R Loxton 0419944755
Terry Mel drum 03 5427 1162
Roger Newman 07 5450 6054
Dennis Pegg 03 6224 9090
John Pritchard 02 9626 3376
Garry Sutcliffe 07 4684 3229
Donald Stringer 07 4151 2659
Paul Taylor (NZ) (64)42990915
Terry Ward 02 6566 6163
Jim Weston 02 4987 7179
John Wright 03 6398 6211

2 Troop (1966-1967)

Richard Beck 07 3208 5808
David Buring 02 6254 6689
Ron Cain 02 6586 1412
Graeme Carey 02 6056 0997
Terry Gribbin 03 9727 1839
Bill Harrigan 08 9447 1127
Peter Hegarty 07 4169 0372
Graeme Leach 07 4777 8627
Ken McCann 03 5985 3276
Rod McClennan 07 3267 6907
Noel McDuffie 0427051678
Bob McKinnon 07 3267 0310
Peter Matthews 03 6250 3686
Mick Shannon 08 8552 1746
Stan Shepherd 0412 232 197
Bob Sweeney 08 9248 4432

2 Troop (1967-1968)

M. Bal Intyne 08 8298 2515
John Beningfield 07 4778 4473
Peter Bennett 0418915550
Dennis Burge 08 8281 2270
Kenneth Butler 0414897889
Harry Cooling 07 4778 2013
Garry Cosgrove 02 4845 5153
Peter Fontanini 0438 881 940
Rol and Gloss 02 6367 5324
John Gollfinch 02 6674 0855
Paul Grills 07 4162 5235
Ron Johnston 07 3351 1609
Eddie Josephs 0417882491

Lew Jordan 03 6397 3261
Ray Kenny 07 3881 3648
John Kiley 02 4228 4068
David Kitley 02 4735 4991
Robert Knowles 08 9535 6416
Bernard Ladyman 08 9795 7900
Warren McBurnie 02 6687 7030
Stephen McHenry 08 9344 6939
Eric McKerron (Silent number)
Dave McNair 08 9725 2821
David Matulik 07 4055 1915
Tony Parmenter 0417856877
Brian Rankin 07 4775 5095
Hans Rehorn 03 5623 5572
Andrew Rogers 08 8087 5671
Mick Rowbotham 03 9439 7566
Geoff Russell 02 6342 1292
Brian Sheehan 03 9336 3137
James Smith 0413 669 087
"Snow" Wil son 08 9752 2935

2 Troop (1968-1969)

Janis Atrons +371 2944 6521
(This is Janis's mobile in Latvia)
Bob Austin 02 6644 9237
Ross Bachmann 07 5495 1433
Don Beale 02 6971 2424



Richard Branch 07 4947 1044
Harold Bromley 03 9726 8625
Peter Brunton 03 5156 5531
Jim Castles 02 9639 2941
Harry Claassen 07 3273 6701
Peter Clayton 0418 823 266
Rod Crane 08 9530 3083
John Douglas 08 8376 3788
Robert Earl 02 4990 3601
John Gilmore 08 9795 6847
Stan Golubenko 03 9361 2721
Paul Grills 07 4162 5235
Geoff Handley 03 5593 1791
Ross Hansen 07 3202 7540
Wayne Hynson 03 5245 6898
Ray Jurkiewicz 07 3886 9054
Brian Lamb 02 6059 6947
Phil Lamb 08 8564 2001
Wayne Lambly 07 3851 1837
Darryl Lavis 08 8263 9548
Peter Laws 02 4942 8131
Bud Lewis 07 3881 1230
Rick Martin 02 6928 4253
Bill Morris 08 9384 2686
Don Nicholls 02 9579 4126
Col in Norris 02 4627 1180
Terry O'Donnell 03 5334 3443
Rod Palmer 0417672643
Ted Podlich 07 3862 9002
Daryl Porteous 07 4973 7663
Mick Weston 07 5444 3307
Ray (Phillip) White 03 9740 7141

2 Troop (1969-1970)

"Arab" Avotins 07 4129 8012
Bruce Bofinger 02 4861 5715
Frank Brady 02 6555 5200
David Brook 03 9546 2868
Jim Burrough 03 9885 8285
Ron Coman 07 3355 7279
Kevin Connor 0408 748 172
Garry Cosgrove 02 4845 5153
Arthur Davies 07 3408 1556
Frank Denley 02 6571 2056
Roy Elbourne 02 4868 1493
Grumpy Foster 07 4041 2321
Graeme Gartside 08 8725 6900
Doug George 03 9889 2116
Greg George 0417 911 173
Brad Hannaford 08 8389 2217
John Hopman 02 9398 5258
Chris Koulouris 02 4952 6341
Bill Lamb 0418 424 208
Mick Loughlin 07 4060 3039
Mick Lee 07 5543 5001
Marty McGrath 02 6059 1204
Jim Marett 03 9824 4967
Bob Ottery 03 5199 2516
Bevan Percival 07 5537 1577
Pedro Piromanski 08 9306 8169
Ian Pitt 03 5349 2018
Jack Power 07 4955 3761
Col in Redcliff 02 9673 0597
John Ronaldson New Zealand
Brian Scott 07 3204 5691
Peter Scott (219) 02 4341 3782
"Roo Dog" Scott 07 5535 6290
Les Shelley 07 3264 4041

Jimmy Shugg 08 9776 1471
Bob Smith 07 5456 1194
Mick Van Poeteren 03 9435 0383
Gerry Walbridge 03 9803 4223
Dennis Wil son 08 8892 2671
Stephen Wil son 07 5538 2179

2 Troop (1970-1971)

Bruce Arrow 02 6288 3872
Mick Bergin 03 5974 2175
Graham Besford 03 9439 2661
Mal Botfield 02 9872 2594
John Brady 02 6888 1192
Keith Burley 07 5543 0990
Peter Cairns 03 6267 4646
Brian Christian 07 4778 6602
"Sam" Collins 08 8262 6107
Ron Cook 03 8787 7377
Jock Coutts 08 9279 1946
Bill Craig 08 9530 1008
Denis Crawford 07 4977 3256
John Crocker 07 3206 7995
John Cross 02 4757 2273
Robin Date 03 9783 3202
Tom Dodds 040672260
Des Evans 07 4128 2390
Bruce Fenwick 02 4977 3530
Ray Ful ton 03 6288 1176
Ziggy Gnot 0418 885 830
Bob Hamblin 08 8672 3930
Cec Harris 02 6629 3373
Paddy Healy 02 4930 7541
Kevin Hodge 08 8322 2619
Paul Jones 02 6231 5963
Jim Kel ton 02 6948 3927
Chris Koolen 03 5237 1147
Kevin Lappin 07 3273 8614
Gary McClintock 07 4788 0123
Peter McCol e 03 5155 9368
Bob McGinn 07 5426 1597
Ian McLean 02 6286 3928
Jeff Maddock 03 5442 2875
Leon Madley 07 5497 1038
Butch Marsden 08 9921 6183
Bill Marshall 07 5545 0389
Rod O'Regan 02 6550 6068
Graeme Pengelly 0407 138 124
Des Pol den 03 6223 3830
Keith Ramsay 02 6585 6503
Mick Rasmussen 0428 790 645
Ron Reid 07 5488 0024
Gary Sangster 0409 522 099
John Scanlan 0488 132 903
Peter Schreiber 02 6569 3390
Garry Shoemark 02 6546 6778
Al ex Skowronski 0407954570
John Smith 0400032502
Roy Sojan 08 9926 1235
John Stonehouse 08 9653 1895
Peter Swanson 0401392617
John Tick 04 3898 7262
Harry Eustace 07 5521 0856
Steve Walton 07 3261 9446
Terry Wake 07 4786 2625
Dave Young 02 4283 3439

3 Troop (1966-67)

Wilfred Eyles 02 4390 0150

3 Troop (1967-68)



Ken Arnold 02 6974 1181
Chuck Bonzas 08 9330 3490
Bruce Breddin 0418766759
Norm Cairns 03 6267 4629
Kerry Caughey 03 5971 4188
David Cl ark 08 8388 7728
Bob Coleman 03 5342 0941
Jim Dowson 03 5662 3291
Barry Gilbert 03 5023 6657
Jack Lawson 0429 798 673
Peter MacDonal d 08 9448 5418
Barrie Morgan 0419 820 290
Viv Morgan 02 9331 3252
Michael O'Hearn 02 4932 7509
Gary Pohl ner 0427172900
Tom Simons 03 6344 6058
Kevin Shugg 0411144500
Frank Sweeney 07 3882 6025
Brian Thomson 0428551368
Al an Tugwell 08 8552 5229
Vic Underwood 0429 907 989
Murray Walker 08 9332 6410
Glenn Weise 0427 741 170
Mick Woodhams 08 9459 0130
Bob Yewen 07 5532 4560
Ken Young 02 9602 5204

SHAMELESS FUND RAISING EFFORT

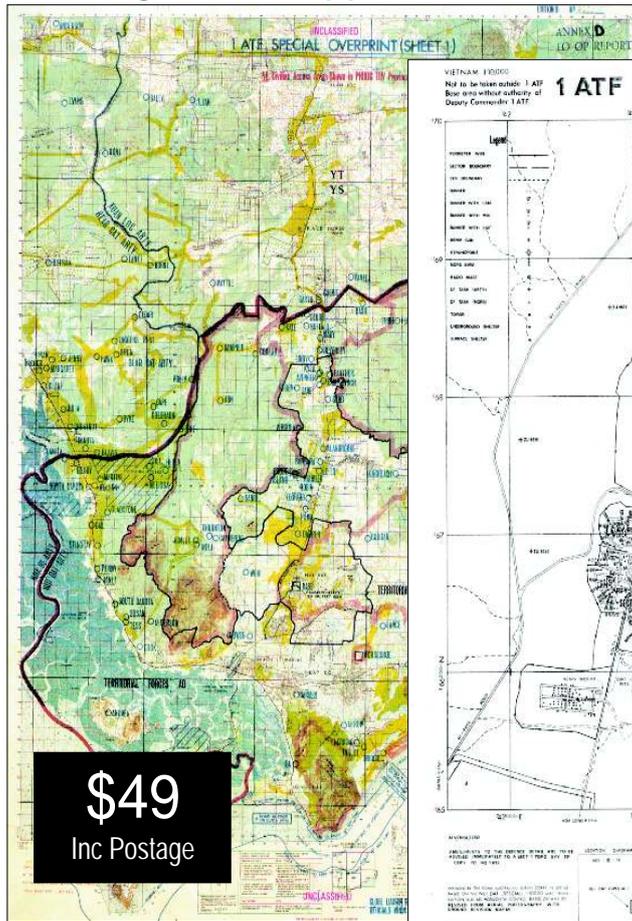
ALL PROFITS GO TO THE VIETNAM TUNNEL RATS ASSOCIATION

3 Troop (1968-69)
 Geoff Box 08 9731 2757
 Eric Banfalvi 07 3201 8234
 Barry Chambers 08 8927 8237
 Neil Garrett 03 5798 1522
 Brian Glyde 02 4455 7404
 Peter Gray 02 4285 8877
 John Holis 02 6662 6660
 "Sam" Houston 07 5495 5480
 Phil Lamb 08 8564 2001
 Ian Lauder 08 9419 5375
 John Murphy 08 9493 3771
 John Nulty 02 6931 1884
 Ted O'Malley 07 4054 3472
 Barry Parnell 07 4947 1976
 Bob Pritchard 07 4779 0608
 Greg Roberts 03 5941 2269
 Don Shiels 08 8297 8619
 Ray Vanderheiden 02 4776 1373
 Ray (Philip) White 03 9740 7141
 Three Troop (1969-70)

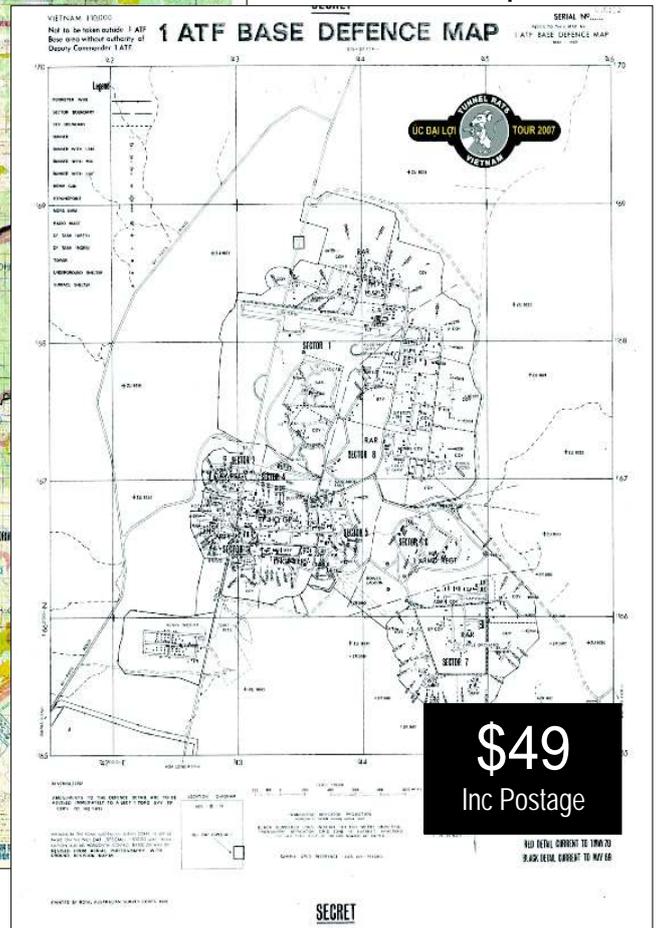


Tony Bower-Miles 0412 317 306
 Chris Brooks 08 9271 2811
 Jim Burrough 03 9885 8285
 Terry Cartledge 03 5367 1472
 Bruce Crawford 02 6628 0846
 Richard Day 08 8088 4129
 Phil Devine 0418 830 169
 Bob Done 02 4944 9321
 Ray Fulton 03 6288 1176
 Graham Fromm 08 8532 2561
 Doug George 03 9889 2116
 Graham Harvey 07 5445 2636
 Trevor Hughes 07 5532 3497
 Darrel Jensen 07 4938 7203
 Rod Kirby 07 4973 7726
 Peter Knight 02 6247 6272
 Gerry Lyall 07 3343 4725
 Phil McCann 03 5442 3459
 Chris MacGregor 02 4472 3250
 Norm Martin 02 4953 1331
 Jock Mel drum MID 0405 677 448
 Roel of Methorst (Silent No.)
 Gary Miller MM 07 5495 5647
 "Jacko" Miller 03 6267 4411
 Chris Miller 07 4653 0457
 Danny Mulvaney 08 9356 6890
 Vin Neale 03 9786 1549
 Peter Phillips 0429362935
 G. Rentmeester 03 9735 5236
 Brenton Smith 08 8388 5501
 Gordon Temby 08 9757 2016
 Peter Thorp MID 02 6288 0008
 Leon Tuttleby 08 8952 6598
 Hank Veenhuizen 0407 487 167
 "Wonzler" White 02 9833 0580
 Three Troop (1970-71)
 Steve Armbrust 07 5545 1073
 Errol Armitage 0427 855 482
 Geoff Ansell 0448 013 712
 Mike Barnett 02 9869 7132
 John Beningfield 07 4778 4473
 Darryll Binns 08 8988 5827
 Mal Botfield 02 9872 2594
 Ian Campbell 03 9870 0313
 Bob Clare 03 5439 5532
 Graeme Clarke 07 4128 4660
 Ted Clarke 03 5682 2584
 Alan Coleman 02 9838 4848
 Steve Collett 08 9371 0075
 John Davey 07 3378 4316
 Chris Ellis 08 9398 1718
 Kevin Hodge 08 8322 2619
 Kenny Laughton 08 8297 4010
 Garry Lourigan 02 4844 5545
 R. McKenzie-Clark 08 9729 1162
 Robert McLeay 03 5386 1122
 Carl o Mikkel sen New Zealand and
 0064 9 4797857
 Ben Passarel 02 9610 3949
 Robert Reed 07 3351 4440
 Paul Scott 02 6656 0730
 Les Shelley 07 3264 4041
 John Steen 0419772375
 Gordon Temby 08 9757 2016
 David Wilson 07 3855 1370
 Three Troop (1971-72)
 Ron Byron 02 6653 4791
 Brenton Smith 08 8536 2923

Australian area of Ops map
 showing all fire support bases



Nui Dat defence plan
 map, with units, roads
 & all defence positions



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Who can join?

The Association was formed for all who served with one of the Royal Australian Engineer Field Troops in Vietnam. Membership is exclusively for men who served in Vietnam with either 3 Field Troop or 1 Troop, 2 Troop or 3 Troop of 1 Field Squadron.



A superb "Tunnel Rats" membership card is provided for Members, detailing your name, Troop and service in Vietnam.

Why we formed the Vietnam Tunnel Rats Association

Our status seemed to be getting a bit blurred. It had reached the point where any Engineer who served in Vietnam was calling himself a Tunnel Rat. The members of the Field Troops fought alongside the Infantry plus they performed their additional tasks of mine and booby trap detection and clearing, plus bunker and tunnel searching, bomb disposal and demolition.



The Tunnel Rats paid a huge price in casualties during this service - with an average of over 30% of us being either killed or wounded during the six years of the war. Our association was formed to recognise and honour that service and those lost comrades.

By wrongly claiming Tunnel Rat status, some men from non-field Troops had begun to blur the line defining the unique role of the Tunnel Rats. If it became generally accepted that all Engineer units in Vietnam were Tunnel Rats, then our unique service would not be properly recognised. Nobody has a right to do that. We should not allow anybody to diminish something we are so proud of. The forming of the Association is not an elitist thing, it is simply intense pride in what we did and a move to protect our status.

Holdfast Newsletter

is edited by Jim Marett and published quarterly by the Vietnam Tunnel Rats Association Inc.

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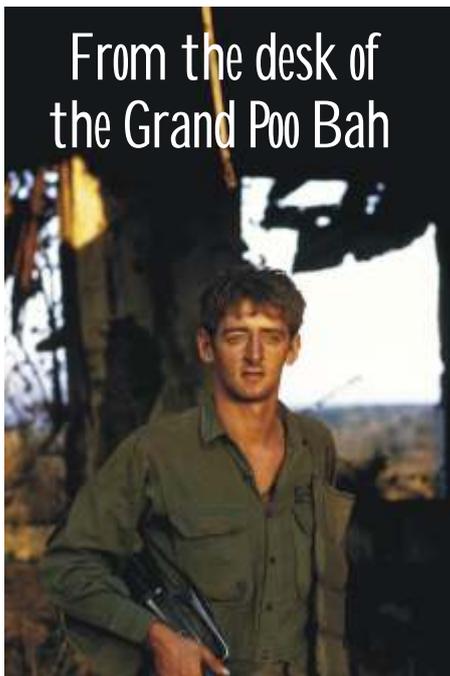
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Join now - it's only \$50

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| NAME: | SERVICE NUMBER | |
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| Please tick unit/s served with and fill in dates of service in Vietnam | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3 FIELD TROOP | FROM | TILL |
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If you don't want to cut into this fantastic newsletter - simply photocopy the form

From the desk of the Grand Poo Bah



Well, here we are at issue number 16 - who said it wouldn't last! Our newsletter is praised far and wide, and often described as "the best unit newsletter in the country". But the best thing about the newsletter is that it has played a key role in bringing us back together after all these years, and has spread the word about the extraordinary job we did in Vietnam, and the big price we paid in carrying out that job.

This in turn has enhanced the incredible comradeship we enjoy. There's no better feeling (or sight) than when old mates meet at our reunions, sometimes for the first time in 40 years, and within seconds it's like they were with each other yesterday. Nothing to prove. That comradeship just clicks in, unfailingly, without exception. Gold.

Missed issue

We missed an issue of "Holdfast" which should have come out in the last quarter of 2009. This was caused by a shortage of time and funds, which is why we've raised the membership now to \$50. We started off with an 8 page

newsletter and charging \$38 per year. The newsletter grew to 32 pages every issue, but the dues stayed at \$38. Something had to give! The price increase plus the merchandise we sell through our "Shameless Fund Raising" efforts should cover regular 32 page issues no problem. As a pathetic attempt to make good for the missed issue, this one is a whopping 40 pages.

Here's an idea

There has been a bit of talk amongst us about a unique trip back to Vietnam - this time inviting current serving Sappers from Combat Engineer units to come with us (all ranks welcome). It would be a sort of old Tunnel Rats mentoring new Tunnel Rats thing.

We'd show them where and how we operated, tour the barrier minefield area, and the Long Hai enemy base area which was of course surrounded by mines and booby traps. We'd visit prominent battle areas, talk with old enemy and visit our old base camp. Naturally we'd visit the tunnel systems at Cu Chi and Long Phuoc.

There would be lots of other areas of interest we could include once proper planning began. We would do this in close co-operation with the Army. We've sounded out a few serving NCOs and they love the idea and feel it would be a valuable experience for them.

Of course it would also be great fun - sharing the time with these guys, having a few beers with them and hearing their experiences, as many of these lads have served in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere.

At this stage I'd like to just get an idea of how much interest there would be in the trip. If the interest is there, we'll get it rolling. Email me or call me and let me know (no commitment,

I'm just trying to see if there is interest).

As Combat Engineer units are men only, the tour would be a blokes only event. Sons of Veterans would be welcome and encouraged, they'd be a great mix with the serving Sappers - and perhaps better able to keep up with their drinking habits!

Mailing List disappears

A computer glitch evaporated our most up to date mailing list, so this issue of Holdfast has been mailed out on a list which is about 12 months old. This means some guys, new members in particular will not get the newsletter. If any of your mates mention they've missed out, get them to phone or email me and we'll get them back on the list.

Next Reunion

Our reunion in Hobart in April last year was a huge success. We're in the midst of planning our next one, and will have details in the next issue.

Material for Holdfast

We've got to the point now where members are sending in heaps of material for the newsletter. Well done lads. There are endless stories out there, and every one which comes in is a reminder of the weird and wonderful things we did all those years ago, and how at the time, they actually seemed normal! When you submit material please type it rather than have it hand written. Ideally, send it by email as this avoids the need to retype all the words to create the artwork. And when you send photos, caption the photos with names.

*Sapper Jim Marett
2 Troop 1 Field Squadron
Vietnam 1969 - 1970*

SHAMELESS FUND RAISING EFFORT

ALL PROFITS GO TO THE VIETNAM TUNNEL RATS ASSOCIATION

Tunnel Rat's Woolen "Bomber" Jackets

Personalised with the Troop/s you served with and your date/s of service.
Superbly made, fully lined, and beautifully embroidered with the Tunnel Rat's logo plus your personal details of service. These are tailored in "generous" sizes, so order your normal size, not one size up.



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| PLEASE TICK AND FILL IN DATE DETAILS OF UNIT/S SERVED WITH IN VIETNAM | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3 FIELD TROOP | FROM | TILL |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 TROOP 1 FLD SQN | FROM | TILL |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3 TROOP 1 FLD SQN | FROM | TILL |
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