



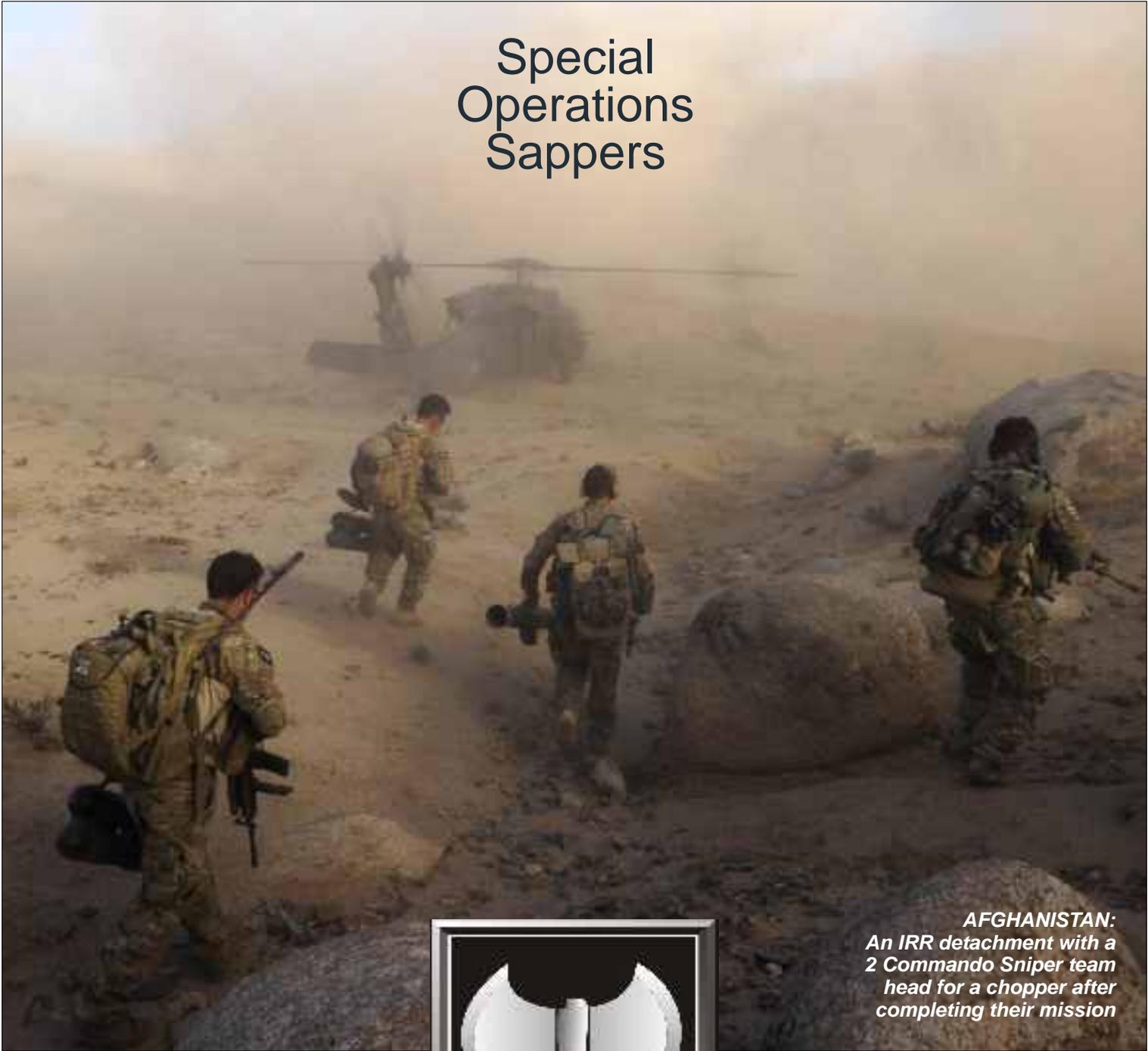
# HOLDFAST

AUGUST 2011 - NUMBER 19

WWW.TUNNELRATS.COM.AU

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE VIETNAM TUNNEL RATS ASSOCIATION INC

## Special Operations Sappers



**AFGHANISTAN:**  
*An IRR detachment with a  
2 Commando Sniper team  
head for a chopper after  
completing their mission*

### OUR COVER STORY

Members of the Incident Response Regiment are Australia's Super Sappers. Established less than ten years ago, they've evolved into a tight, proud unit of highly skilled, Special Operations Combat Engineers. Full story inside:



### ALSO INSIDE:

Jethro puts pen to paper  
Report on Vietnam trip  
Discovery at Nui Dat  
EDD action in the Ghan  
Amazing nostalgia pics

# SHAMELESS FUND RAISING EFFORT

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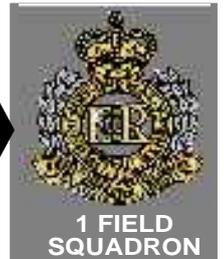
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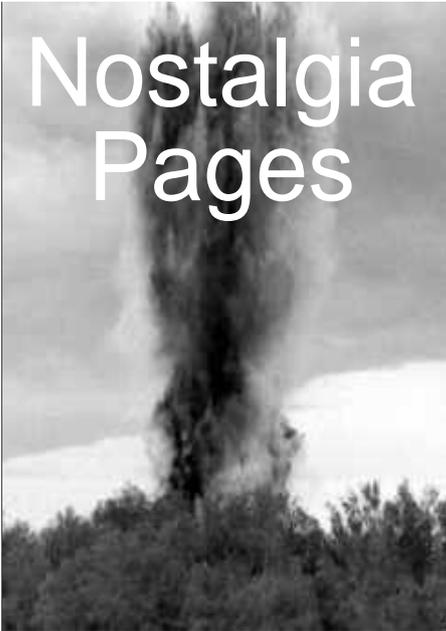
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# Nostalgia Pages



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](mailto:tunnelrat@optusnet.com.au)



## “I think you used too much C4 mate”

Two Sappers inspect the damage after a demolition that may have been a little over the top. Does anyone know who the Sappers are, and more importantly, does anyone know what they'd just blown up?



## Simple but effective

This pressure switch comprises two strips of bamboo kept separated by blocks of wood at each end. A nail through the top strip and a metal plate on the bottom strip provide the electrical contact point to set off a charge of explosives. Wires from the contact points lead to the power source, several batteries wrapped in plastic.



## A “Happening” gets out of hand

When the Boozer closed it was time to shift festivities to the tent for an illegal Happening (drinking in the lines was against the rules). With ample cheap beer, some of the lads got a bit untidy and scuffles were not uncommon. Here Ziggy Gniot (left) 2 Tp 70/71 plays peacemaker.



### Early find by the original Tunnel Rats

Viet Cong grenades extracted from a booby trap beside a road after being found by mine detector by a 3 Field Troop member in 1965. They were set to be triggered by a string and comprised three friction ignited, instantaneous fuse, stick grenades. Note the Australian pattern gaiters and the ankle boots worn by the Sapper in those early days of the war.



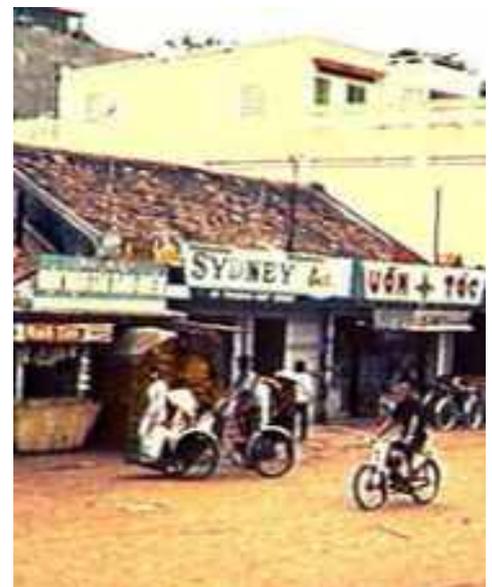
### Signs of the times

Three types of mine signs used by the Viet Cong to warn their own troops and sympathetic local villagers that there were mines in the vicinity. Photo: John Kemp.



### "This looks just like Queensland"

Sapper Brian "BC" Scott, a Tunnel Rat with 2 Troop 1 Field Squadron 1969 - 1970 wanders through a bamboo thicket while out on operations with 5 RAR in 1969. The Viet Cong often built their bunker systems in these types of bamboo thickets as they provided good shade and good cover from aerial observation.



### Not quite The Rocks

The Sydney bar located at 35 Ly Thuong Kiet Street Vung Tau was obviously trying to attract an Aussie clientele. If you were seeking a touch of old Sydney town you would have been a bit disappointed, but if you were looking for cold beer, hot women and the opportunity for cultural exchange with the locals, this place was as good it gets.



## Swamp Rat

Sapper Bill "Ba Ba" Lamb, a Tunnel Rat attached to 7 RAR in 1970 slogs through a swamp in the Rung Sat special zone. A stop for leech checking would have been essential after this trek. No matter how tight your trousers were snapped around your boots with rubberbands, the leeches found a way in. Simply ripping leeches off left bits of leech behind and caused infections. The best way to get them off was to poke them with a lit cigarette, which caused them to retract and be easily removed.



## Checking out the charcoal

During 7 RAR's Operation Dandenong in 1968, a cordon and search of Ap Suoi Nghe village was carried out. These bags of charcoal found under a shelter in the village are being checked with a mine detector for booby traps or hidden weapons. The charcoal was used for home cooking, and most of the charcoal in the area was manufactured in Phu My, between Baria and Saigon. Workers at the kilns would be literally covered in the fine black dust created by the process.



## Copycat Claymore

A Chicom DH10 directional mine in place outside a Viet Cong bunker system. With hundreds of small steel rods embedded into the explosives inside, these mines are very similar to the US claymore mine. The swivel stand enables aiming onto a target area. They were usually remotely detonated via electrical cables.



## Tankie makes a good call

These Tunnel Rats in a Mini Team attached to APCs were asked to check this creek bed out before the APCs attempted a crossing. It was a wise move because the Sappers found an anti tank mine right in the position where the APC would have been forced to traverse due to the terrain. The mine can be seen in the bottom centre of the screen. The Sapper with the mine detector is checking for any anti personnel mines which were often laid near anti vehicle mines to catch the men who would be expected to rush to aid the injured from the anti vehicle mine. Photo by Ian Palmer.



## Illegal switch

This booby trap switch was on US issue in Vietnam and a few were seen floating around the Field Troops of 1 Field Squadron. Setting booby traps was not something Australian troops did, but the switches were good for setting up claymore mines in a defensive position.



## Student Sappers

This photo was amongst many found in a cache near the Rung Sat Secret Zone. Rather than being an enemy "action" shot, the mine-layers are students on a course conducted in early 1969 and run by visiting NVA Sappers. They appear to be learning how to lay an anti-vehicle mine with a tilt switch mechanism. In a breach of normal security, the photographs originally named the students, making the find a bonanza for our Intelligence boffins.



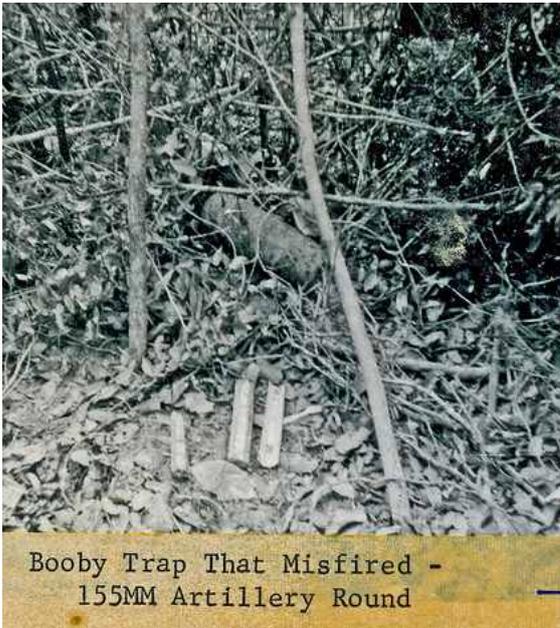
## All the comforts of home

Travelling as a Mini Team with the APCs rather than walking with the Infantry on operations was quite a treat. There was never a shortage of rations and water, and some of the lads had their vehicles set up like palaces (comparatively). Cooking stoves, Eskys and wash basins were common place. Some had portable showers which could be quickly rigged up when water was plentiful. Deck chairs and umbrella shades were popular. It was still hot and bumpy though, and they did kick us out at night forcing us to sleep on the ground - but maybe that was so they could be alone with their pin-ups.



## Sappers clear the way

On 17 February 1971 this M113A1 armoured personnel carrier No 31A hit an anti-tank mine, wounding three of the crew and damaging the vehicle. A Mini Team can be seen clearing safe paths so the wounded can be evacuated. Photo provided by Darryel Binns.



Booby Trap That Misfired -  
155MM Artillery Round

## Lucky Yanks

This 155mm artillery round was linked up to a bamboo pressure switch and run over by a US APC - and it failed to go off, most probably due to dampness in the battery pack. It was June 1969 and the driver had just two weeks left in country. No doubt he bought a ticket in Tatts, or whatever the US equivalent is when he got home safe and sound.



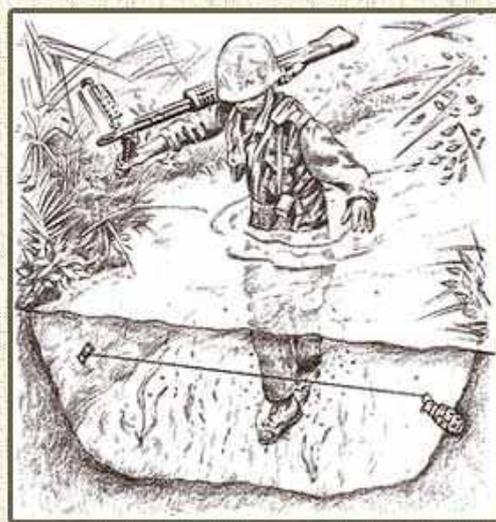
## Chopper Trap

Set up in likely landing zones, and usually obscured by tall grass or light vegetation, these devices were aimed at destroying helicopters as they came in to land. Downdraft from the chopper blades would tilt one or more of the bamboo poles. This in turn would pull instantaneous fuse grenades from the containers on top of the poles.



## Controlled explosion tests new armour

In a 15 month period from March 1968 to June 1969, 25 Australian APCs were damaged by enemy mines in South Vietnam. During this period, five Australian servicemen were killed and a further 30 were injured. Ten of these vehicles had their hulls penetrated by the blast. In June 1969, Australian sappers from 106 Field Workshop designed and fabricated two sets of right angled plates (for the port and starboard sides) from 12.7 mm (half inch) aluminium armour. One plate was fitted to the outside and the other to the inside which effectively sandwiched the section of existing sponson plate. Each new plate extended 1829 mm (72 inches) from above the first road wheel back to the third road wheel. Above (with the bare metal line visible above the first three road wheels), is a modified M113A1 APC which is about to be blown up using a 30 pound charge. The blast from the controlled explosion failed to penetrate the hull, (even though the vehicle was thrown onto it's side) and the integrity and viability of the newly fitted sponson armour was justified. Soon after, the Australian Army began a program to upgrade their fleet of M113A1 of vehicles. The upgrades later included full belly armour and a shock absorbing, collapsible foot rest for the driver.



## “Careful now”

Some trip wires are almost impossible to see or feel before it's too late. This US soldier is about to get a big wake-up call. His only hope may be a damp fuse in the grenade or the stick pulls out of the earth rather than the pin! This drawing is from a series published in a guide to booby traps published in 1968.



“I was just thinking – why can't we replace them?”

Viet Cong soldiers discuss replacing 8RAR with a Viet Cong unit when its South Vietnam tour of duty ends, Stewart McCrae Cartoon Collection, 1970. The Australian government had announced that 8RAR would not be replaced when it returned home from Vietnam in November 1970 and by Christmas that year the Australian Task Force was reduced to two battalions.

“I hope the Viet Cong know this!”



History lesson





## Loaded up and ready to go

Pedro Piromanski (2 Troop 69/70) is all kitted up for operations out bush with the Infantry. On top of the load you can see, he would have a bandolier of Armalite rifle ammunition, and his web belt would carry at least two pouches and several more water bottles (most of us carried eight of these). His demolitions bag is seen on the outside, midway down his pack. All up, including the rifle it is thought on average we were carrying around 45 kilos.

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## Special Operations Sappers

Members of the Incident Response Regiment are Australia's Super Sappers. Established less than ten years ago, they have evolved into a tight, proud unit of highly skilled, Special Operations Combat Engineers

The Incident Response Regiment was based on the Joint Incident Response Unit (JIRU) which was established in 2000 as part of the Australian Defence Force's security arrangements for the Sydney Olympic Games. The JIRU incorporated the Chemical, Biological and Radiological Response Squadron and also included a High Risk Search Squadron.

When the JIRU was disbanded in March 2001 the Chemical, Biological and Radiological Response Squadron was retained as an independent squadron.

Following the September 11 terrorist attacks the Chemical, Biological and Radiological Response Squadron was incorporated into the newly established Incident Response Unit (IRU). The IRU was expanded and redesignated to form the Incident Response Regiment in May 2002.

The IRR provided a composite troop (designated 'D Troop') to the Australian contribution to the 2003 invasion of Iraq. This troop formed part of the Special Forces Task Group and is reported to have operated with the Australian Special Air Service Regiment within Iraq. IRR personnel have also formed part of subsequent Australian Special Operations deployments, including the current deployment to Afghanistan.

Today, in Afghanistan and other deployments around the world, the IRR works hand

in hand, right beside fellow Special Operations Command units including SASR, 2nd Commando Regiment and elements of 1st Commando Regiment, providing their specialist mine, booby trap (IED), search and demolitions skills. The similarities with how the Tunnel Rats operated with the Battalions in Vietnam are extraordinary some forty years apart.

The evolution of the Incident Response Regiment continues, as the Regiment maintains a high tempo of training activities and operational deployments in Australia and overseas. Current commitments involve Operation Slipper in Afghanistan, where IRR elements are increasingly employing their highly specialised skills in support of the Special Operations Command (SOCOMD) mission.

Service in the IRR is unique, with members requiring special physical, psychological, teamwork related and intellectual qualities to operate effectively in support of other SOCOMD units. As such, specific physical and mental assessments, above the standard Army assessments, have been implemented to ensure that these standards are enhanced, assessed and maintained in order to facilitate the roles and functions conducted by the IRR.

### Testing the lads

The Human Performance Cell (HPC) within

IRR continues to develop and refine the screening process for meeting the stringent physical requirements for service in the IRR. The aim is to ensure that appropriate levels of physical and psychological fitness are achieved and maintained, in order to conduct the many physically and mentally demanding tasks that the unit is required to carry out in support of Special Operations.

### **Confirming for the Basics**

The IRR has standardised its Initial Fitness and Selection Requirements to align with the supported units within the Command. Preliminary screening of new personnel is conducted prior to their arrival, with new march-ins subject to the first of several physical assessments at the commencement of the intensive six month Reinforcement cycle (REO).

The initial physical assessment is designed to gauge the initial fitness level of new march-ins in order to determine their baseline fitness level, and is based on the commando Annual Fitness Test (CAFT) standards. Physical assessments contained within the IRR CAFT are:

- Push ups to a two second cadence
- Heaves
- Situps
- 2.4km run in patrol order (7kg & weapon)
- Combat Anaerobic Capacity Test (CACT) dressed

in MOPP4, combat body armour, helmet and patrol order (7kg)

- 5km endurance march dressed in MOPP4 and patrol order (7kg)
- 15 km endurance march in marching order (28kg)
- SF swimming proficiency test (400m in cams)

Personnel successfully completing the CAFT are presented with an IRR qualification patch by the Commanding Officer of the IRR. A proud moment.

Personnel who fail to achieve specific standards within the initial assessment will be issued with a physical fitness conditioning program that will assist them to improve in these areas prior to conducting the final assessment at the conclusion of the Reinforcement Cycle.

It is important to note that personnel are not permitted to deploy on Operations with the manoeuvre elements of the Special Operations Task Group without passing this test!

### **Getting serious**

The Reinforcement cycle is undertaken to achieve two key objectives: the ability to operate effectively in support of Special Forces; and the development of specialist Engineer skills that enable Special Operations missions.

The first objective focuses on an individual's



*An Incident Response Regiment soldier searches a Kajaki cave system for drugs and hidden insurgent caches*

ability to operate weapon systems; to develop vehicle, helicopter, watercraft and parachute insertion skills; and to implement operational planning skills.

The second objective focuses on the unit's ability to deliver specialist capability, including Explosive Ordnance Disposal; High Risk Search; Technical exploitation; and the conduct of Chemical, Biological and Radiological operations.

Throughout the REO cycle, there is ongoing physical and mental assessment, allowing complete assessment of an individual's attitude and capacity over the entire six month period.

Upon successful completion of the REO cycle each candidate is considered by the Board of Studies, and a Record of Attainment (ROA) is compiled and issued to each participant prior to marching off the course.

### **A Life Less Ordinary – IRR**

These days, for those seeking genuine challenge and job satisfaction, the Incident Response Regiment is certainly the place to be.

The oft misused term "High tempo" says it all and is apparently the status quo for the youngest Regiment on the Corps' Order of Battle - a Regiment that has rapidly earned an enviable reputation of reliability on the battlefield and one that continues to evolve in synch with the latest high-order technologies and capabilities from around the world.

The Regiment has been singularly identified for a program of financial and technological enrichment - a clear indication of the Australian Government's commitment to its future. The opportunities to employ these emerging systems and technologies will be the real reward for those who march amongst the Regiment's ranks.

The Regiment is arguably the fastest developing unit in the Australian Army, and opportunities abound for those who are willing to throw caution to the wind and try their hand at a posting.

"You need only talk with someone in the Regiment to learn of the diversity of an IRR operator's role," said a current serving Sapper.

*PHOTO MIDDLE: Look familiar? A cache of weapons, ammunition and explosives recovered by IRR members in Afghanistan looks exactly like cache photos taken 40 years ago in Vietnam. BOTTOM PHOTO: Look familiar? A mine pressure switch crudely made from two strips of wood with metal for electrical contacts - exactly the same (except in bamboo) as we encountered in Vietnam 40 years ago.*



*An Incident Response Regiment soldier leads a Special Operations Task Force patrol, with mine detector ast the ready*





"And you'll hear of the weird and wonderful places routinely travelled to for realistic training. But be warned, the training is tough, unapologetically so, and is likely to become tougher as the ever changing demands of the modern battlefield continue to shape the way in which the Regiment operates."

The Regiment's typically high operational tempo is fast becoming one of its most common features, with very few of the Regiment's soldiers remaining "untouched" by operational obligations in any twelve month period since 2006. The unique suite of skills with which soldiers become equipped during their exhaustive induction training make them ideally suited to the wide range of support roles that the Regiment is routinely engaged in.

Soldiers new to the Regiment very quickly find themselves using every facet of their wits and training just to keep up with those more accustomed to the rigours of service in the IRR.

When asked of his experiences since joining the unit in early 2009, one soldier said, "...the pace at which training is conducted here is like nothing else I have ever experienced. Sometimes it's a good thing and sometimes it gets tough, but it wouldn't be the same if it weren't."

Another commented that "...the difference at IRR is in what we do. There's real purpose in nearly everything that we've done since being here and that carries a sense of achievement that I haven't experienced anywhere else".

*ABOVE: Members of the Special Operations Task Group conduct first aid for local nationals wounded in Tizak, Kandahar. The Special Operations Task Group includes members from the Special Air Service Regiment (SASR), 1st and 2nd Commando Regiments, the Incident Response Regiment, Special Operations Logistic Squadron and supporting units.*



*An Incident Response Regiment member scans the terrain ahead while on a Special Operations Task Group patrol during winter in the Uruzgan mountains, Afghanistan*

# The ultimate memento of your Vietnam tour



J. Moore 201602  
2 Troop 1st Cavalry Division  
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## “The trip of a lifetime”

The trip back to Vietnam earlier this year was a huge success, with 81 making the journey, comprising 39 Tunnel Rats, 14 current serving Combat Engineers, five other Vietnam Veterans, 15 sons of Vietnam Veterans, and eight “worthless civilians”.



*Memorial temple at the Long Phouc Tunnels*

For many of the Vietnam Veterans it was their first time back there since the War, and every one of them said “I should have done this years ago”. It was an extraordinary experience for us all in terms of what we saw and what we did. The itinerary this time concentrated on visits to areas very specific to veterans from the Engineer Field Troops, and included a series of intimate meetings with genuine former enemy, including ex-VC who had lifted mines from the minefield and used them against us.

The Vietnamese Veterans from “the other side” (the VC and NVA) have evolved now to the point where they have built substantial and superbly maintained memorials to their fallen – each one featuring long Honour Rolls which not only name the soldiers, but detail the village they came from and the date and area in which they fell. Cross referencing these with operations you were on can make interesting reading.

We paid official visits to these memorials at Binh Ba, Baria and the Minh Dam Secret Zone (the Long Hai Hills) and laid wreaths at each memorial on behalf of the Vietnam Tunnel Rats Association, in memory of the fallen on both sides.

The association of the 33 NVA Regiment Veterans at Binh Ba made us particularly welcome, and presented us with a massive illuminated glass painting of their memorial. We're still figuring how to

get this back to Australia in one piece!

Highlights of the trip were: the moving memorial service we held at Nui Dat (which we cover separately in this issue); the friendly drinks together each afternoon after we returned from touring (incredible comradeship – and we were all 20 years old again); sharing the trip with current serving Combat Engineers; and (for those that did) sharing the trip with our sons.



*Friendly drinks at the end of the day*

The trip was for eight nights in Vietnam, (two nights in Saigon, then five nights in Vung Tau followed by one more night in Saigon). Areas we visited included the infamous barrier minefield, the



*The Tunnel Rats gather around the Long Tan Cross*

Horseshoe, the caves and tunnels of the enemy's base in the Long Hai Mountains, the enemy tunnel system at Cu Chi, the rebuilt enemy tunnels at Long Phuoc near Nui Dat, the village of Binh Ba, the orphanage at Baria, Long Tan, Vung Tau (including the "Back Beach"), and of course Nui Dat.

Another highly memorable moment was when we visited the exact site on the old minefield where Clive Pearsall (1TP 67/68) had been involved in a mine incident in which he lost a close mate. Clive wanted to visit the site to lay a wreath there in memory of his mate.

After the brief ceremony, and while we were all still gathered at the site, Clive gave an impromptu talk to us all on what happened that day. The details were a vivid reminder of the extraordinary things we did all those years ago – and how they seemed "normal" back then. We were

spellbound by the story and gripped by the emotion. It was living history being laid out before our eyes. Well done Clive.

The comradeship enjoyed during the trip was extraordinary and spread across all groups within the tour. In particular there was a strong bond and feeling of mutual respect between the Tunnel Rats and the current serving Combat Engineers. The Tunnel Rats were fascinated with what these lads are doing in Afghanistan, and in awe of their courage, fitness and "can do" attitude. The Corp is in good hands.

There's already talk of another trip! Let us know if you'd be interested so we can gauge possible numbers – no commitment, just an indication. And give us an idea on what you think would be ideal timing of the trip. Email to Jim Marett at: [tunnelrat@optusnet.com.au](mailto:tunnelrat@optusnet.com.au)



*ABOVE: Welcome to Saigon - Current serving Combat Engineers CPL Shannon Higgins (left) and SGT Jamie Fields arrive in Saigon, safe and slightly shell-shocked*



*ABOVE: Greeted with flowers Richard Broadhurst (left), worthless civilian, and Nick Marett, son of Jim, arrive in Saigon from their home base of Hong Kong*

### “That’s the spirit”

Despite some of the lads keeping rather late hours, almost everyone made it to the morning briefings each day. Admittedly, some were the worse for wear and looked decidedly ragged until they’d had



ABOVE: The big welcome dinner was held at the Continental Palace Hotel. The setting was grand and it was great fun, but the food was beyond appalling

a cup or two of the alarmingly strong locally grown coffee. The briefings generally related to where we were going that day, and large printed maps of the specific areas were provided to everyone to help get our bearings and keep as souvenirs.



ABOVE: On our tour of the Cu Chi Tunnels we had our own private briefing from senior former Viet Cong who had actually been based in the tunnels



ABOVE: Current serving Combat Engineer Graham Tarr heads underground at the Cu Chi Tunnels



ABOVE: Listen up! One of the daily morning briefing sessions held before we headed out on tour



ABOVE: Major General Mike O'Brian (7RAR 1970-71) gave several of the morning briefings, including this one on “Our Enemy”. Staff at the hotel were awe struck when General Giap came up on the screen



ABOVE: The wreath we laid on behalf of the Vietnam Tunnel Rats at the superbly built and beautifully maintained memorial cemetery at Baria for the fallen NVA and Viet Cong who were killed in the area

### Variety is the spice of life

A feature of the trip to Vietnam was the wide variety of things we did and places we visited. There were of course visits to old battle areas and operational areas, but also visits to the orphanage at Baria



ABOVE: The whole tour group assembled outside the memorial hall at the site of the Long Phuoc tunnels just a few kilometres from the old base at Nui Dat



ABOVE: On our tour of the Long Phuoc Tunnels we enjoyed a briefing from a former VC and former NVA who had been involved in the tunnels during the war



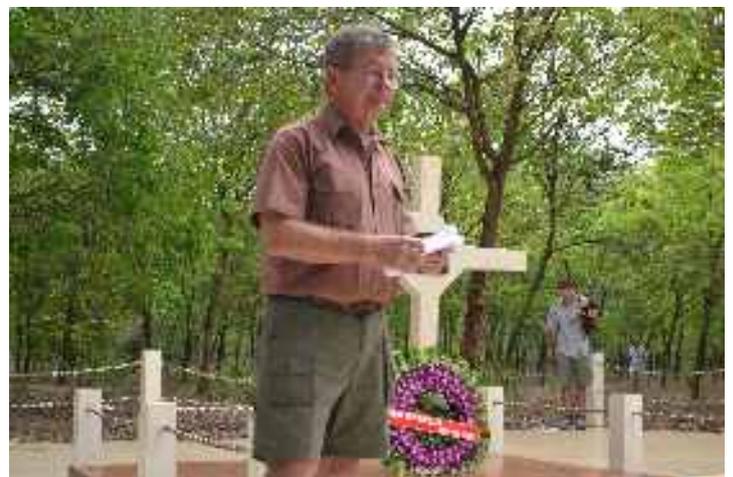
ABOVE: We visited the orphanage at Baria, donating basic foods and cash. The kids broke our hearts



ABOVE: Who said Norm Cairns never had a heart! Norm gives an orphan a much needed cuddle



ABOVE: The Tunnel Rat element of the tour gather around the Long Tan cross after we'd laid a wreath honouring our fallen. The site is very well maintained these days, but you still need a permit to visit



ABOVE: Paul Jones (Tp Commander 2 Tp 70/71) was our acting Chaplain on the tour, a role he pulled off with panache and dignity. Here Paul conducts our ceremony at the Long Tan cross.

### “I should have done this years ago”

For the Tunnel Rats on the tour who were making their first trip back to Vietnam since the war, their continual comment was; “I should have done this years ago”. Some were expecting old demons to

surface, but instead they saw a very friendly local people and a country developing well. And they shared the experience within the incredible bond of comradeship we all enjoy. Many said they’d be back for another trip at the drop of a hat.



ABOVE: We had a strong contingent from 5 Combat Engineer Regiment on the tour. Here the 5 CER lads pose at the Long Tan Cross after our ceremony



ABOVE: Our piper (SGT Jim Davey of 5CER) brought style to our ceremonies and tears to our eyes with his superb renditions of traditional ceremonial tunes



ABOVE: Clive Pearsall gives his heartfelt mine incident story at the actual site of the event



ABOVE: This guy and his wife used to lift mines from the Barrier minefield and lay them against us



ABOVE: Inside the beautiful memorial temple at the base of the Long Hai hills. It lists hundreds of VC and NVA killed in the area, listing the date they were killed and the village or area of the action



ABOVE: The tour group makes it way across a narrow bridge over a ravine as they head up into the Long Hai Hills. The impact of shells and gunfire could be seen on many of the large boulders in the hills

### Helping hand in the Long Hai hills

The Long Hai hills hold many memories for Sappers, most of them bad. After visiting the temple memorial to the VC and NVA fallen at the site, our group trekked up into the hills to see the old caves



ABOVE: "It wasn't this hard the last time I was here in February 1970!" The current serving Combat Engineers give the old Sappers a hand over the hills

and campsites our enemy once occupied. The going was pretty tough at times, but the young serving Sappers were quick to offer a helping hand for the old buggers scrambling over the rocks. The place was an eye-opener for us all.



ABOVE: Sons and fathers (left to right): Tour organiser Mr. Ha, Geoff Marett, Nick Marett, Jim Marett, and Mr. Ha's father, team leader of the entertainment group



ABOVE: Members of the entertainment group with some of the lads on the tour at the hotels rooftop bar



ABOVE: Dinner at the Rex Hotel with the former VC entertainers after their memorable performance for us

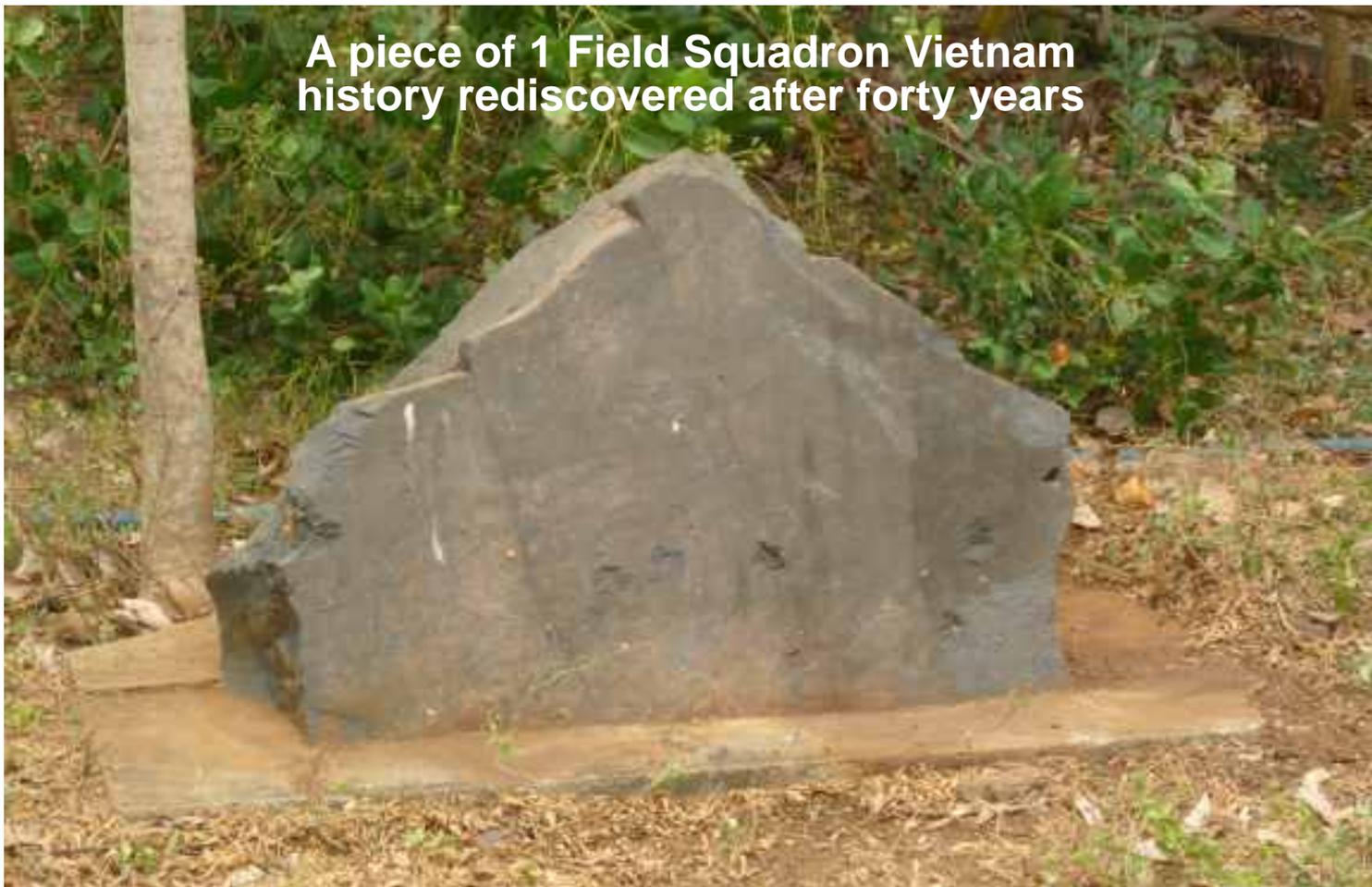


ABOVE: Our group arrives at Binh Ba where we were greeted with flags and a red banner welcoming the Tunnel Rats from Australia. The burial site of the NVA killed in this battle is to the right of the path we are on



ABOVE: Veterans of the NVA 33 Regiment welcomed us and talked of the wonder of old soldiers from both sides respecting each other. They presented us with a beautiful glass print as a memento of our visit

## A piece of 1 Field Squadron Vietnam history rediscovered after forty years



The most extraordinary and the most memorable day of the trip back to Vietnam earlier this year, was Friday April 1 when we held a remembrance ceremony at Nui Dat for our 35 comrades from the Field Troops killed in action in Vietnam.

The April 1st date was significant, it was the anniversary of the arrival in Vietnam of 1 Field Squadron back in 1966.

On the day prior to the ceremony, Jim Marett went to Nui Dat with Mr Ha of OSC Vietnam Travel to look for a suitable site for the ceremony.

"We wanted it to be as close as possible to the 1 Field Squadron headquarters," said Jim. "But we knew from past experience that this area was off limits because it was too close to an operating Vietnamese army base for (incredibly) our old foe D445 Battalion. You could always access our Troop lines areas, but the former Squadron HQ was in a secure area and guards at the base would send you packing if you got too close.

"We were in luck on our visit the day before the ceremony, because the base has been turned into a training unit and is now less security conscious. We could walk right up to the fence of the base.

"Mr. Ha and I headed in the direction the old HQ was thought to be, and found the concrete foundations of three buildings in an "H" formation.

*ABOVE: The Rock, rediscovered on 31 March 2011 while looking for an ideal spot at Nui Dat for our remembrance ceremony next day.*

*BELOW: In April 1970, in front of 1 FD SQN HQ building, Protestant Chaplain General G. Vertigan unveils a memorial (The Rock) to our fallen comrades of 1 Field Squadron*





ABOVE: The Rock and new flagpole in position in front of the 1 Field Squadron HQ at Nui Dat, some time in 1970. Does anyone know what the canoe in the foreground was all about?



ABOVE: Sign pointing to the 445 Battalion base camp near the old 1 Field Squadron HQ area at Nui Dat. BB 445 moved out in 2010, replaced by a recruit training unit

We figured these could be the HQ, with the Officers Mess to the left and the Mines Room to the right, but it was all so overgrown we were unsure.

"It was about then that I spotted 'The Rock' – an almost triangular shaped rock which had sat right in front of the Squadron HQ. It had been blessed by the Army Chaplain General in April 1970, in remembrance of our fallen from 1 Field Squadron.

"Pulling the grass away from The Rock revealed the concrete base it sat on, confirming it was the very same rock, and it still sat there in front of the Squadron HQ foundations, some forty years later.

"We had found the perfect place for our ceremony the next day."

The Rock is actually in the middle of a small farm, but the owner agreed to us all turning up the next day – once we explained that 35 people hadn't been killed on his property, and that it was an old memorial to men who'd lost their lives in the war in various parts of the Province!

There were 81 of us at the ceremony next day, including our very own Piper (SGT Jim Davey, a current serving Sapper with 5 Combat Engineer Regiment).

Unlike remembrance ceremonies at home, in this case we were back at the very place we had all served. It was where we had all gone out from on operations – from the RV point nearby or the chopper pad below us. We had come back to that very place to remember our mates who'd gone out from there and hadn't returned.

We had 35 individual wreaths made, each with the name and photograph of a fallen comrade

on it. Adding to the emotion on the day was the fact that the Tunnel Rats among us were able to choose which wreath to lay, with many having the privilege of placing a wreath at the Rock for a Troop mate they had served with.

As the wreaths were being laid, the Piper played in the background, and a current serving Sapper from SME (CPL Shannon Higgins) read out the rank, name and age of the men we were there to honour.

Once all 35 wreaths were laid, our acting Chaplain (Paul Jones 2TP 70/71) read prayers and the Piper played the Last Post, followed by a minute's silence.

The Piper then played "Rouse" – and something extraordinary happened. The end of the tune "Rouse" is the signal that the ceremony is over and it's time to move off. But on this day, in this place, nobody made a move.

All 81 of us stood there in silence for six to eight minutes, not wanting to move, not wanting it to end. The only sounds were the birds twittering in the trees, and stifled sobs from men remembering their mates and realising what we'd just done.

Eventually we moved off, to enjoy a BBQ amongst the rubber trees nearby. The food was great and the wine and beer flowed freely, but most of us were in a mild state of shock. We'd just held a remembrance ceremony for our mates, right there at our old HQ in Nui Dat. Incredible.

There's talk of an annual pilgrimage to The Rock, and we're negotiating with the farm owner to pay a small monthly fee to keep The Rock clear of weeds and to perhaps light some incense in front of it on a daily basis.

### A very special day

Most all of us have been to many remembrance ceremonies held in all parts of Australia. They are always moving experiences, but this day in Nui Dat was something very special. We were right there at



ABOVE: The 35 wreaths were placed on a long table prior to the ceremony so that Tunnel Rats could select a particular wreath to lay, usually for a former Troop mate



ABOVE: Acting Chaplain, Paul Jones - Tp Commander 2 Tp Troop 70/71 (left) and Jim Marett - 2 Tp 69/70 (beside Paul) commence the remembrance ceremony



ABOVE: The lads line up, waiting to lay their selected wreaths at The Rock in memory of their mates

the very place from which so many of us had set out on operations, and to which some had not returned. It was for them that we were there, some forty years later. Despite the years that had gone by, the memories were strong and the emotions raw.



ABOVE: Our Piper, Jim Davey of 5 CER plays at our remembrance ceremony from atop the foundations of the old Officers Mess at 1 Field Squadron Nui Dat



ABOVE: Gary Miller MM (3 Tp 69/70) lays a wreath at The Rock in memory of a Troop mate



ABOVE: 35 wreaths layed. Our comrades suitably honoured. This sight alone made the trip worth while



ABOVE: After the conclusion of the ceremony, all the former Tunnel Rats gathered around The Rock for a photo as a memento of the extraordinary day.



ABOVE: Following the ceremony we enjoyed a fully catered BBQ and buffet lunch amongst the rubber trees nearby - a surreal experience



ABOVE: Yanis Atrens (Troop Commander 2 Tp 1969) tries the five star, silver service at our BBQ and buffet at the Dat. It was never like this at the OR's Mess



ABOVE: Graeme Gartside, Ian Pitt and Jim Marett inspect a rock found in the old 2 Troop lines area which still had Sappers names on it from 69/70/71

## Explosive Detection Dogs play vital role in Afghanistan



Military dogs in today's Army are being used as Explosives Detection Dogs (EDD) in a special search capacity to counter the high threat of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) throughout Uruzgan Province of Afghanistan. The specialist unit is part of the Corp of Engineers.

*Sapper Shaun Ward with Explosives Detection Dog Ozzy waiting to board a helicopter at a patrol base north of Tarin Kowt, Afghanistan*

The following article is a reprint of an article that was published in the *Tarin Kowt Times (TKT)*, a newsletter produced by our troops in Afghanistan.

**MEET THE PRESS:** An interview with Explosives Detection Dog Bailey, aka 'The Tip Rat'.

**TKT:** Thanks for taking time out of your heavy schedule to speak to us. We appreciate that you normally don't give interviews so this really is an honour.

**Bailey:** No dramas mate. Anything for you guys. Let's just say you're lucky you don't work for *WHO* magazine!

**TKT:** Well, our readers would like to know a bit about EDD Bailey, the new rookie Detection Dog that exploded onto the scene from nowhere. What's your background, what are your likes and dislikes and what makes the enigma tick?

**Bailey:** Gee, this is a bit embarrassing! I was born in '06 in the hard suburbs of wintry Canberra. I grew up like any other young pup, chasing cars, digging holes, and licking myself inappropriately when guests came over to the house. The usual stuff that kids get up to. Then one day, two rough Army guys

drove down from Sydney to speak with my owner and run me through some tests. The usual stuff. Nothing too hard. Could I chase a ball down the park and was I afraid of loud noises, simple algebraic formula! All too easy. Then all of a sudden, YONK! I find myself on a truck to Brisbane for five months of the most intense dog training course in the world. Now I'm in the Army, WHAT THE...?

**TKT:** Is it true that your original owners put your profile on the internet to get rid of you, and that's how the Army found you?



*Explosives Detection Dog Bailey*



*Explosive Detection Dogs and handlers serving in Afghanistan. (L-R) Corporal Craig Turnbull with Tank, Lance Corporal Andrew Sichter with Bolt, Sapper David Brown with Bundy, Sapper Stewart Conlin with Solo, Sapper Brenton Keemik with Aussie and Sapper Rueben Griggs with Que in front of a Dutch Apache helicopter*

**Bailey:** Mate, I've heard those rumours too. Not that I've looked up the ad. I lack the opposing digits to surf the web. The next time I'm in Canberra on exercise, I'm going to find my old owner and crap on her lawn. Anyhow, I finished my training in and I was the only dude left in my class. Eight of us started, only four of us made it through the five months (Bailey, Sharne, Kath and Tammy). I heard Sooty works at Dream-World in security. He was such a twit! It was me and three Bitches (giggle). Can I say that (giggle)? Three bitches that passed out of the course.

**TKT:** It's the question on everybody's lips back home. We have to ask it. Are you and Sharne, the other EDD with you here in Afghanistan, an item?

**Bailey:** No, absolutely not! There is no truth to the rumour and let me set the record straight. Those photos in *WHO* magazine, which are grainy and inconclusive at best, were not of me and Sharne! We have a purely professional working relationship here. Look, She has nice markings and colouration but Tammy (a pure Border Collie EDD at home in Australia) is the only woman for me! Sharne and I are just getting on with the job of looking for tennis balls scattered throughout Afghanistan.

**TKT:** You do know that your handler has tricked you into thinking that tennis balls smell like bombs?

**Bailey:** Tennis balls smell like WHAT?

**TKT:** So tell us Bailey, you have been heralded as a young messiah, an exceptionally gifted yet hot-headed EDD that stands head and shoulders

above all other EDDs in the unit. With the intense media spotlight always upon you, do you ever feel you may fall to the Ben Cousins syndrome?

**Bailey:** I have no idea where you're going with this, mate? I have never been busted for drink-driving in Western Australia, although I must say, I'd probably had beaten Ben over that three-kilometre sprint from the coppers and the 200-metre swim across the Swan River. I am also pretty sure that if I develop a drug addiction that my unit won't send me to a \$60,000 rehab centre in LA. I'm nothing like Ben!

**TKT:** What does an average day in the field on operations in the Ghan hold for you?

**Bailey:** Well, there is a lot of stuff I can't divulge, for operational security reasons, even to a reputable publication such as the TK Times. But let me say this! Things aren't all rosy here in the Ghan. I think there are a total of five or six trees in the entire province. That can make a ten kilometre round-trip foot patrol as pleasurable as watching the Titanic move for three and a half hours after sculling three super-sized Cokes and then being told the bathrooms are out of order. And another thing, and this is to the good local folk of Afghanistan, I have

two words for you, Sewerage Systems! For God sake, it's not hard people. I'm a dog! If you do your business on the ground right outside your front door I WILL be tempted to regress to my wolf instincts and roll in it. That's my dirty little secret. I roll in poo! There, I said it!

**TKT:** Any messages for your loved ones at home?

**Bailey:** Yeah! Well, this might be a little awkward. I have a message for EDD Tammy, my girlfriend back at home in Sydney. Baby, I don't think that we're working out. Look, we had a lot of fun last year on course together. We were young and just fooling around, girl! They were crazy days! But I am in a different place now. I am like this huge war hero and you are, well, I'm not even sure that you are a pure-bred Border Collie anymore. Show me your papers! Besides, I have found someone else. It's not you, baby, it's me. OK?

**TKT:** So we are coming towards the end of your deployment here in Afghanistan. Can you tell us, Bailey, what are the things that you've missed most about Australia?

**Bailey:** Dude, there are so many things. It's settling in a comfy chair in a quiet cafe on a Sunday morning. The newspaper so fresh that the ink comes off on your paws. The scent of a latte macchiato with the milk so frothy and light. It's the cacophony of the sulphur-crested cockatoos at dusk mid-summer. The feeling of dew on buffalo grass underfoot. But I would have to say the thing that I miss the most, the one pleasure denied to us EDDs here on operations, are the opportunities to sniff the backsides of other dogs without my handler grilling me about the dangers of rabies! Rabies, shmabies! Alright already with the rabies. I am so over the whole rabies conversation! He keeps harping on. (Using a whining baby's voice.) "NO! Bailey come! Don't sniff the strange dog's bum!"

**TKT:** So I take it from your tone that you and your handler have had some moments over here!

**Bailey:** Look. We have had our good times and our bad. We've basically lived in each others pockets for the last six months. Any friendship would suffer under the same kind of stresses. But at the end of the day, when I wake up next to him out in the 'dasht' after a hard night's searching, once I'm done grooming and licking myself clean, there is no other human face I would like to lick straight after. He's a good guy.

**TKT:** So you've had your issues with your handler. What about the rest of the guys?

**Bailey:** Oh! Don't get me started. There are some complete 'tools' here. By tools I mean precision built, sturdy guys that are perfect for this job. Yeah, utter 'tools'. Hang on. I have this strange feeling you're going to take those last comments completely out of context too.

**TKT:** Finally Bailey, one last question. There has been some backlash within the Australian media and green groups over the use of explosives detection dogs in Afghanistan, particularly after several of your number have been killed on operations. What is your response to that?

**Bailey:** God! Tough question Mr TKT. Let me conclude by saying this on behalf of myself and all the other K9 sappers. Life in the Army is the best. We live with our handlers in the bush for months on end, and that's a good gig compared to any backyard-bound pet that gets walked to the shops once a week if he's lucky. I'm in peak physical condition from exercising hard everyday. No expense is spared when it comes to my vet treatments and my food alone costs \$120 for a 20-kilogram bag. Sure, my job can be dangerous but I am a soldier too and I work as part of the team. There is no one in the Task Group that doesn't know my name, and everybody that walks by me each day gives me a friendly scratch behind my ears and says "G'day, Tip Rat!" All of us EDDs are seeing the world, tearing around in choppers, planes and trucks with all of our mates and we're doing it with tails held high!

**TKT:** Thanks for your time, Bails! All the best for the future.

**Bailey:** No worries cobber.



EDD Bailey



## Jethro puts pen to paper about his extraordinary recovery from horrendous wounds received in Vietnam



John "Jethro" Thompson served with 1 Troop 1 Field Squadron in Vietnam in 1967. He was a Plant Operator by trade, but when the decision to build an 11km long minefield was made by the Task Force Commander, Brigadier Graham, Jethro found himself laying mines instead of operating bulldozers and scrapers.

With training for the task consisting of a single demonstration lasting just minutes, Jethro was in the minefield, not only laying M-16 mines (which he'd seen for the first time in his life that day) but laying them on top of anti-lift devices. This meant first laying an M-26 grenade topped with an anti-lift switch in the ground, packing dirt around it to secure it, then sitting the mine on top of it, packing dirt around the mine to secure it, and pulling the pin out of the grenade, and of course the mine as well. It's certainly something which wouldn't pass "work practices" today, and to have a whole Troop of Sappers out there on the task with virtually no training is nothing short of scandalous.

Inevitably the Sappers laying the minefield began being killed and wounded, and Jethro's incident on May 9<sup>th</sup> 1967 was the first. Two men were killed and four wounded, including Jethro who lost an arm and a leg, and frankly, was not expected to live.

It's a little known fact that construction of the minefield was actually stopped well short of completion, we suspect because too many Sappers were being killed and wounded on the

*LEFT: Heading for more surgery - Jethro at the US 36th Evac Hospital Vung Tau in 1967.  
RIGHT: Receiving his OA "Gong" in 2006 - at Government House, Brisbane with wife Perle, Danielle Teefy and Brook Butler*

ask. Based on the laying pattern and the size of the minefield, it should have contained over 50,000 mines, but only just over 20,000 mines were actually laid. The minefield, meant to be a barrier between the enemy and the villages, in fact contained huge gaps. Five Sappers were killed and six wounded during the laying. A tragic waste of lives for which someone, one day will hopefully be held responsible.

At a critical point in his hospitalisation, Jethro made a decision, not only to live, but to make the very best of his life despite the challenges he knew lay ahead.

His recovery is a moving story of courage mixed incredibly with humour and typical Sapper mischief, and Jethro has put it all together in a book manuscript for which he is now seeking a publisher. The book is superbly researched and movingly written. If you have any good contacts with publishers, please contact Jethro by phone on 07-3216 8906 or 0488680360 or by email at [johnperle@bigpond.com](mailto:johnperle@bigpond.com)

Following is a sample from the book – the opening page, which describes the horror of the initial mine incident on that fateful day in May 1967:



### Tuesday 9 May 1967

Whoomp! It was the unmistakable sound of an exploding landmine, which I'd heard too often over the last few days. With enormous force I'm catapulted into the air then crash back down on my back. A cloud of debris is slowly raining over me. The gentle rhythmic sound of soil landing around me can be heard despite the noise of the explosion still ringing in my ears. I close my eyes to avoid the gritty sandy soil as it covers me. Had I trod on a mine? I feel no pain. My eyes are drawn to my hands. Fingers are missing; others are hanging loosely. My arms are red with blood gushing from many wounds. Attempting to sit up I cannot feel my legs. Had they been blown off?

Above the ringing in my ears I hear voices calling for everyone to remain calm. 'Call Dustoff', I hear someone behind me calling out. Voices are getting louder and I can hear someone nearby moaning. I don't know who it is. Someone else is calling for the safety pins to be replaced in the mines. Another person replies that they can't replace the pins.

'Why not?' asked another voice. 'Jethro has them in his pocket' was the reply.

Sergeant Brett Nolen has come to my aid he is ripping open shell dressings. He kneels beside me shielding me from the sun and after looking at me silently for a brief moment he starts sticking shell dressings into my guts. I feel his hands pressing down hard onto my stomach. He tears open more shell dressing that look terribly small in his bloodied hands. I am not feeling any pain but blood is running into my eyes, it's warm and sticky. Lieutenant Joe Cazey has joined Sergeant Nolen they are telling me about the lovely nurses who'll look after me once the Dustoff chopper gets me to hospital. The thought of pretty nurses did for a while distract me from what was going on around me as I lay in the minefield, not wanting to think about my life blood soaking into the ground around me.

LEFT: M16 mine with anti-lift device.  
RIGHT: Part of the 11km long barrier minefield

A third person is now squatting beside me. I don't know him. He has a small plastic pouch filled with liquid. I watch as he cuts into my right arm and pushes a needle into the cut, I don't feel any pain. Joe has been holding a water bottle to my mouth as I sipped slowly on it. With his other hand he takes the plastic pouch and holds it above his head and hands it to another bloke standing close by. Someone else squatting behind my head has applied shell dressing to my hands. They turn red almost immediately. There is now very little noise, the ringing in my ears has stopped. Mates are walking by and looking at me. They don't speak; just look and move away.



I hear and then see two helicopters landing near where I had been relaxing with my mates' only moments before the explosion. Mates are now standing along each side of me. They bend down and lift me on to a stretcher; I cry out in pain but my cry is ignored, as the stretcher is hurriedly carried towards the helicopter, A second stretcher is placed above me. The helicopter engine roars and I feel the vibration as we race towards Vung Tau and hospital.



AUSTRALIAN SPECIAL AIR SERVICE  
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Mr. John Thompson. OAM.

8 Kentwell Place,

Wishart. Qld. 4122.

Copy: Maj. Gen. J.C. Hughes. AO. DSO. MC.

Dear 'Jethro',

Each year, following the Vietnam Veterans' Luncheon, I ask a number of those who attended it for their opinions and suggestions regarding the function in general, and, more particularly, the guest speaker and his presentation.

Without exception, every single one of those whose opinion I sought expressed their admiration for the way that you have dealt with the injuries you received, and, to quote one of them, "got on with your life in the most positive way", and we all wondered if we would have been able to demonstrate the level of courage that you have shown. The general consensus was "probably not".

For myself, I consider you one of the most extraordinary men that I have ever had the privilege of meeting. You are, indeed, an example to us all.

Once again, thank you very much for your outstanding presentation.

Your's sincerely,

Brian McDougall.

# 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 6900, or by mail to Graeme Gartside, 9 Park Street Mt Gambier SA 5290 or by email: [ggart@internode.on.net](mailto:ggart@internode.on.net)

## LISTS ARE NOW ALPHABETICAL



### 3 Field Troop (1965-66)

Ian Biddolph 02 4472 9434  
Al an Christie 07 5494 6628  
Brian Cleary 07 5500 6363  
Al I an S Col eman 07 4661 1924  
Bill Corby 07 5502 1193  
John "Tex" Cotter 07 4723 1244  
Des Evans 07 4128 2390  
Wil fred 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 Tugwel I 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 Czey 07 3710 8102  
Al I an S Col eman 07 4661 1924  
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 Baggaley 07 5433 0482  
Reg Bament 02 6948 2524  
Bruce Bevan 02 9580 3327

Neville Bartles 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  
Terry Perkins 0413343168  
Al an Rantal I 03 9434 2031  
Peter Sheehan 03 9390 2834  
Jim Trower 0418842744

### 1 Troop (1968-69)

Phil Baxter MM 02 4625 6213  
Adrian Black 0417756729  
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 I an S Col eman 07 4661 1924  
Paul Cook 02 4946 5321  
Garry Degering 03 9796 0136  
John Felton 07 4661 8679  
Grahame Fletcher 0408822489  
Brian Forbes 0412047937  
P. "Guts" Geisel 07 4092 1735  
Terry Gleeson 03 5623 2886  
Trevor Kelly 08 9538 1184  
Des McKenzie 07 5448 3400  
Doug Myers 0421904562  
Les Slater 08 9361 0603  
Max Slater 0412 772 849  
Vic Smith 02 4339 2131  
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  
Barry Mel drum 03 5427 1162  
Roger Newman 07 5450 6054  
Dennis Pegg 03 6224 9090  
John Pritchard 02 9626 3376  
John Severyn 0407008610  
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 9722 9717  
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. Baliantyne 08 8298 2515  
John Benningfield 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 G loss 02 6367 5324  
John Gol dfinch 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 Kelly 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 McKerrow (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  
Robert Russell 03 5975 5329  
Brian Sheehan 03 9336 3137  
John Willis 03 9363 7878  
"Snow" Wil son 08 9752 2935

### 2 Troop (1968-1969)

Janis Atrens +371 2944 6521  
(This is Janis's mobile in Latvia)  
Bob Austin 02 6644 9237  
Ross Bachmann 07 5495 1443



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 0433747401  
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  
Brian Forbes 0412047937  
Grumpy Foster 07 4041 2321  
Graeme Gartside 08 8725 6900  
Doug George 03 9889 2116  
Greg Gough 0417 911 173  
Brad Hannaford 08 8389 2217  
John Hopman 02 9398 5258  
Chris Kourouris 02 4952 6341  
Bill Lamb 0418 424 208  
Mick Loughlin 07 4060 3039  
Mick Lee 07 5543 5001  
Marty McGrath 02 6059 1204  
Jim Mareth 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 07 3204 5691  
Brian Scott 02 4341 3782  
Peter Scott (219) 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 Wal I bridge 03 9803 4223  
Dennis Wilson 08 8659 1189  
Stephen Wilson 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 03 9497 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 Fulton 03 6288 1176  
Ziggy Gniot 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 Kelton 02 6948 3927  
Chris Koolen 03 5237 1147  
Kevin Lappin 07 3273 8614  
Gary McClintock 07 4788 0123  
Peter McColie 03 5155 9368  
Bob McGlenn 07 5426 1597  
Ian McLean 02 6286 3928  
Jeff Maddock 03 5442 2875  
Leon Madeloy 07 5497 1038  
Butch Marsden 08 9921 6183  
Bill Marshall 07 5545 0389  
Rod O'Regan 02 6550 6068  
Graeme Pengeley 0407 138 124  
Des Pol den 03 6223 3830  
Keith Ramsay 02 6585 6503  
Mick Rasmussen 0428 790 645  
Ron Reid 0427 461 297  
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)

Wil fred 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 Clark 08 8388 7728  
Bob Coleman 03 5342 0941  
Jim Dowson 03 5662 3291  
Barry Gilbert 03 5023 6657  
John Hoskin 08 8270 3002  
Jack Lawson 0429 798 673  
Peter MacDonal d 08 9448 5418  
Barrie Morgan 0437861945  
Viv Morgan 02 9331 3252  
Michael O'Hearn 02 4932 7509  
Gary Pohlner 0427172900  
Tom Simons 03 6344 6058  
Kevin Shugg 0411144500  
Frank Sweeney 07 3882 6025  
Brian Thomson 0428551368  
Al an Tugwel I 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 Hollis 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 Shields 08 8297 8619  
 Ray Vanderheiden 02 4776 1373  
 Wal Warby 0418240394  
 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 Lyal 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 Mulvany 08 9356 6890  
 Vin Neale 03 9786 1549  
 Peter Phillips 0429362935  
 G. Rentmeester 03 9735 5236  
 Gordon Temby 08 9757 2016  
 Peter Thorp MID 02 6288 0008  
 "Curly" Tuttleby 08 8952 6598  
 Hank Veenhuizen 0407 487 167  
 "Wonzer" White 02 9833 0580



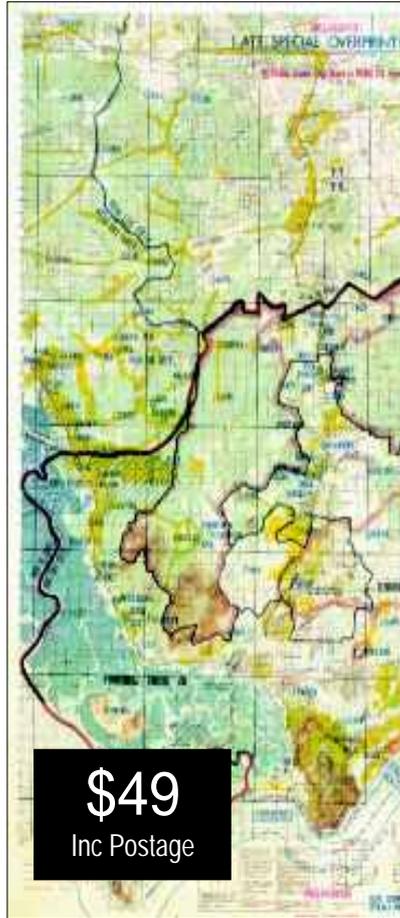
## Three Troop (1970-71)

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  
 Darryl 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  
 Al Ian 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 Mikkelsen New Zealand  
 0064 9 4797857  
 Ben Passarello 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 J 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



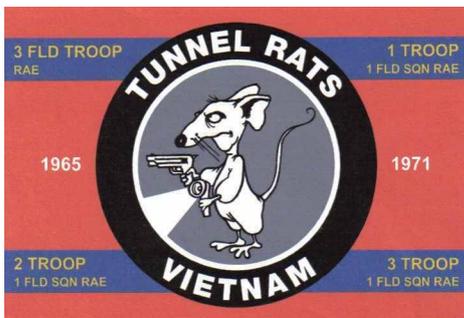
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(each one approx 36"x26")

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<input type="checkbox"/> Nui Dat Defence plan map	
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<b>ADDRESS:</b>	
<b>POST CODE:</b>	
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The cost is \$ (Please fill in the amount)	
You can pay by credit card (your statement will read "Ultimate Design Graphics"), or by cheque or Postal Order. Please make cheques and postal orders payable to Vietnam Tunnel Rats Association	
Tick which card you wish to use: <input type="checkbox"/> Visa <input type="checkbox"/> Master Card <input type="checkbox"/> Amex	
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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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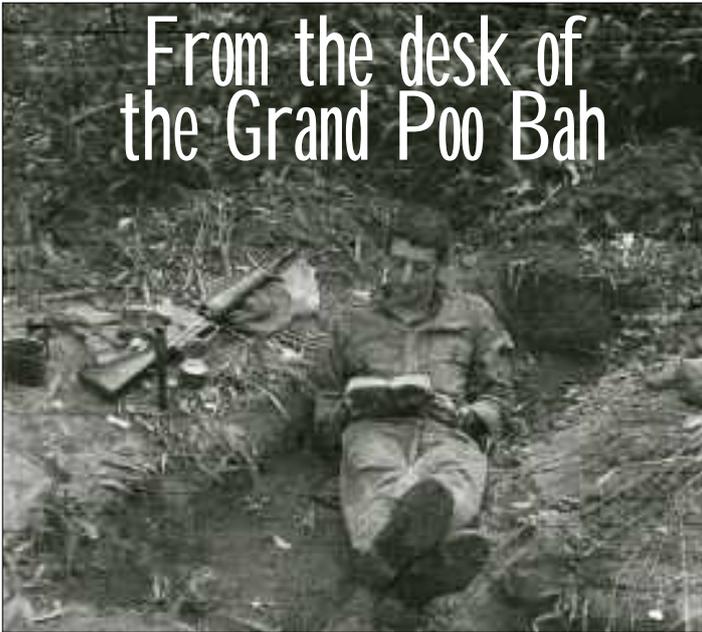
[www.tunnelrats.com.au](http://www.tunnelrats.com.au)

## Join now - it's only \$50

NAME:	SERVICE NUMBER	
ADDRESS:	POST CODE	
PHONE:	MOBILE:	
EMAIL:		
Please tick unit/s served with and fill in dates of service in Vietnam		
<input type="checkbox"/> 3 FIELD TROOP	FROM	TILL
<input type="checkbox"/> 1 TROOP 1 FLD SQN	FROM	TILL
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 TROOP 1 FLD SQN	FROM	TILL
<input type="checkbox"/> 3 TROOP 1 FLD SQN	FROM	TILL
The cost is \$50. You can pay by credit card (your statement will read "Ultimate Design Graphics"), or by cheque or postal order. Please make cheques and postal orders payable to Vietnam Tunnel Rats Association		
Tick which card you wish to use: <input type="checkbox"/> Visa <input type="checkbox"/> Master Card		
Card number		
Name on card		Expiry Date
Signature:		
POST TO:	VIETNAM TUNNEL RATS ASSOC 43 HEYINGTON PLACE TOORAK VIC 3142	

If you don't want to cut into this fantastic newsletter - simply photocopy the form

## From the desk of the Grand Poo Bah



**The stickers:** Included with this issue is a sheet of stickers. Two of them (Jim Cairns and Jane Fonda urinal targets) might be a bit controversial in these kinder, less harsh times, but it's important not to forget what traitorous acts Jim Cairns and Jane Fonda carried out during the Vietnam War. They both openly supported the NVA and the Viet Cong while Australia and the US still had men there fighting. This appalling act of treachery will never be forgotten or forgiven by the vast majority of Vietnam Veterans.



*Communist and former Deputy Prime Minister of Australia, Jim Cairns (Labor) hosting a North Vietnamese delegation in Sydney Town Hall in April 1975, just days before North Vietnamese tanks rolled into Saigon, causing a mass exodus of over one million refugees, none of whom wanted communism.*

**Visit to IRR:** I had the privilege of being a visitor to the Incident Response Regiment on the occasion of their birthday in early August. What an incredible

bunch of men. Super fit, bright eyed, smart and yet humble when they need to be. The Army is at its peak when it selects its Special Operations members. They get it very right. The result is an extraordinary group of men, totally focussed on their task, unbendingly professional, and unnervingly cool about being at the very sharpest end of the combat role in today's Army. You can see "Special" in everything they do – they even walk and talk differently to mere mortals. But underneath this rich persona, they are still proud Sappers. The traditional Sapper larrikin spirit is alive and well in all of them. Australia needs to be thankful that while we lead our soft and comfortable lives, these men are out there doing it hard and doing what our government asks of them. We're in good hands.

**Reunion:** There are rumblings of us holding a Tunnel Rats reunion in Sydney either late this year or early next year. The top feature of the reunion will be an official visit to the Incident Response Regiment, Australia's super Sappers. They've promised to roll out the welcome mat with an "Open Day" to give us an insight into their incredible gear and the way they operate in Afghanistan within the Special Operations Task Force. We would also visit SME (just up the road) to see our old home where we all became Sappers. We would hold a remembrance ceremony for our fallen at the Vietnam Memorial at SME. Send me an email or make a quick call to let us know what you think of the idea and give suggestions on timing.

**Find at Nui Dat:** On our trip back to Vietnam earlier this year we found a piece of 1 Field Squadron history – a ceremonial rock which had sat in front of Squadron headquarters. It was dedicated to our fallen from the Squadron. It's still there on its concrete base, over forty years later. Full details are given in this issue. It is now located within a small farm, and we are talking with the owner through our government tour company to see if we can arrange to keep the rock weed free and perhaps have incense lit in front of it daily. The government will not tolerate anything which looks like or is presented as an official memorial. Long Tan and Dien Bien Phu are the only two sites of foreign memorials allowed in Vietnam. We are also toying with the idea of an Annual Pilgrimage to The Rock, perhaps again timed around April 1st, the date 1 Field Squadron arrived in country. Let us know if you would have any interest in this.

*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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3 TROOP  
67/68

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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
<input type="checkbox"/> 1 TROOP 1 FLD SQN	FROM	TILL
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 TROOP 1 FLD SQN	FROM	TILL
<input type="checkbox"/> 3 TROOP 1 FLD SQN	FROM	TILL
Don't send any money! Simply fill in the form above and post it to the address below. The jacket will be delivered COD to your local Post Office, who will advise you when the jacket arrives. You then pay the Post Office \$100 plus postage.		
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