



# HOLDFAST

FEBRUARY 2016 - Number 28

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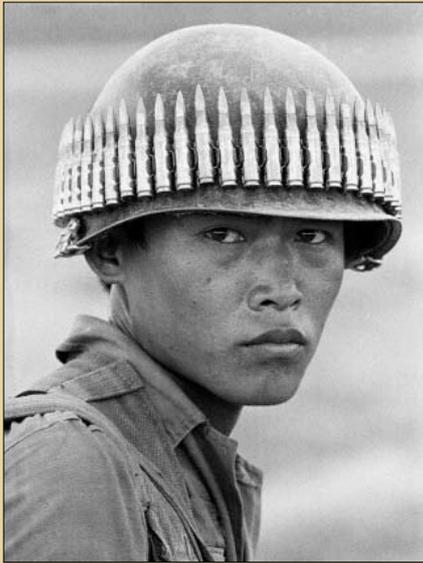
OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE TUNNEL RATS COMBAT ENGINEER ASSOCIATION INC

Fifty years after 1 Field Squadron first arrived in Vietnam, we reflect on the role played by the Tunnel Rats, and we announce our big anniversary trip back to Vietnam

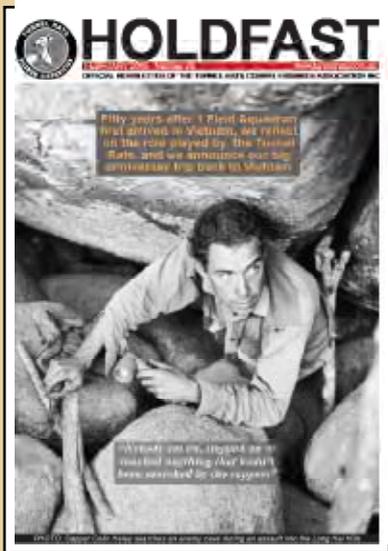
*"Nobody sat on, stepped on or touched anything that hadn't been searched by the sappers"*

PHOTO: Sapper Colin Heley searches an enemy cave during an assault into the Long Hai Hills

# Nostalgia Pages



Pages of great pics from the past to amaze and amuse. Photo contributions welcome. Send your favourite Vietnam pics (with descriptions, names and approx dates) to Jim Marett 43 Heyington Place Toorak Vic 3142 or by email to: tunnelrat@optusnet.com.au



## Holdfast Magazine

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## “That creek looks a bit dodgy Sapper”



Because they are carrying a mine detector, these two Tunnel Rats are most likely a Mini-Team attached to tanks or APCs. They have obviously been asked to check out a creek area for mines before any vehicles attempt to cross it. Unfortunately the photographer (obviously a “Tankie” has cropped the head off the Sapper with the mine detector, and the Sapper prodding for mines has his back to the camera. Can anyone help us identify these two Tunnel Rats? The photo is dated June 1969.

## Sappers meet their Waterloo



In June 1971 Australian, US and Vietnamese Engineers came from widespread locations to mark an annual Waterloo Dinner held at the 1st Field Squadron Officers Mess. Mr Le Thanh Trang, the Phuoc Tuy Province Engineer, was one of the many ‘Sappers’ who visited Nui Dat for the celebration. Here Mr Trang (second from right) tells a joke to (left to right): Lt Paul Flanagan of Headquarters, Australian Force Vietnam (left); 2nd Lt Alan Curtis, 17 Construction Squadron, and Lt Graham Webb, 30 Terminal Squadron. The Waterloo Dinner is perhaps the most significant social event each year for the officers and senior NCOs of the RAE Corps in Australia.

## “I think I’m outnumbered”



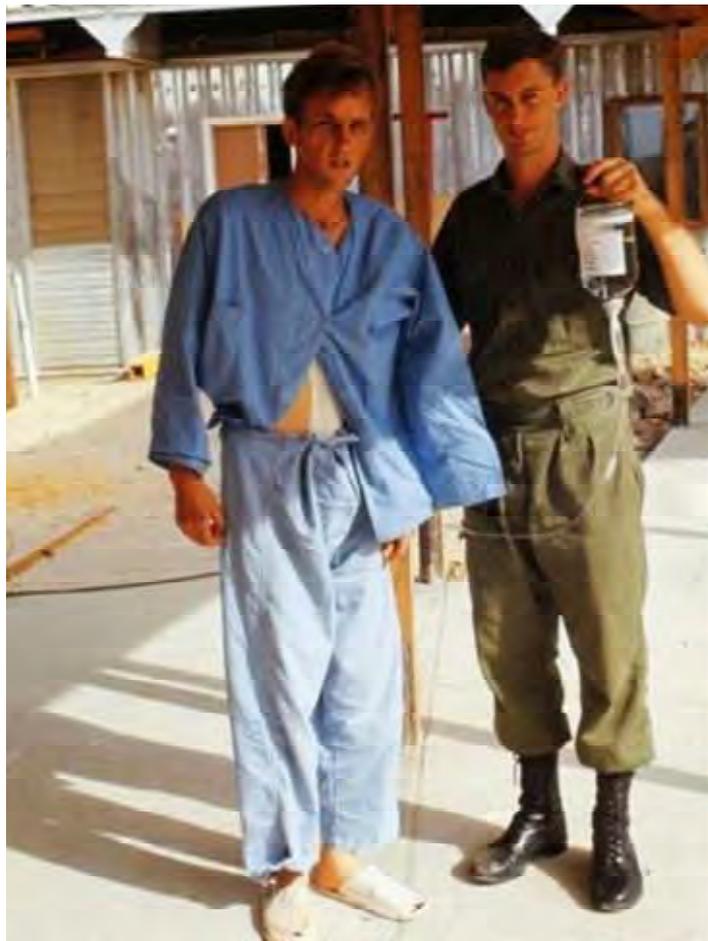
Thankfully it happened rarely, but occasionally we would come across a live enemy soldier while searching Viet Cong tunnels and bunkers. This guy didn't have a white flag to wave, but he did have his “bush hat” (VC version) to wave, which had faded from its original army green to white, indicating how long this soldier had been serving and patrolling in Vietnam's relentless hot sun. You had to admire the dedication of our enemy, who lived in pretty basic conditions, often on a barely sustainable diet and whose posting was till the end of the war or the end of his life - whichever came first.

## When in doubt - double it!



Tasked with blowing up an unexploded artillery shell, Tunnel Rat Steve Wilson (2TP 69/70) is being suitably generous with the amount of explosives required.

## Peter Clayton's Christmas outing



It might not seem like much, but Peter Clayton was pretty happy to be taken for a walk outside the walls of the Australian hospital in Vung Tau on Christmas Day in 1968. Just six days earlier Peter had been hit with shrapnel from a Viet Cong claymore mine. Peter was attached to 1RAR in a Splinter Team when they were ambushed. The Viet Cong initiated the ambush by setting off a claymore mine then opening fire on the 1RAR patrol. There were nine Australian casualties in the incident. L/CPL John Kalma of 1RAR was killed, and eight soldiers were wounded, including three Tunnel Rats from 2 Troop: John Gilmore, John Hooper and Peter Clayton. Peter was evacuated back to Australia due to his wounds, while John Gilmore and John Hooper returned to duty after their wounds healed.

## Sunny Saigon sign 1969



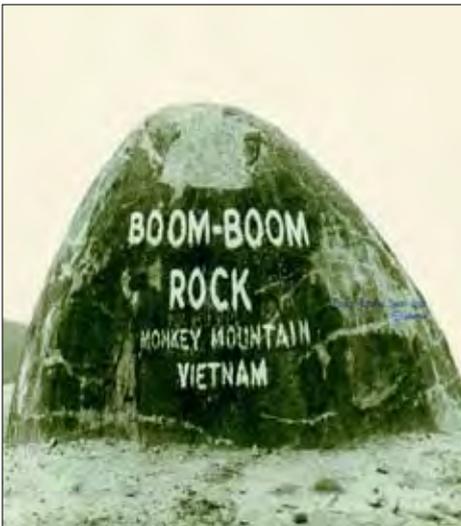
Advertising copywriters were obviously struggling for good things to say about Saigon in 1969. Even “Sunny” was only true for about half the year!

## Well worth a look



In February 1968 Tunnel Rat Ray Jacques, a Corporal with 2 Tp 1FD SQN checks the top of a well for Viet Cong tunnels and hides during Operation Clayton. Ray was attached to 7RAR as the leader of a ten-man combat engineer team for the month long operation.

## What's in a name?



During the war in Vietnam the phrase "Boom-Boom" was slang for making love, though there was usually more cash invested in the relationship than love. We guess this rock was a popular venue for carrying out the act. It must have been for cheapskates who wouldn't spend a few dollars on a more comfortable or romantic place like the many "love hotels" lining the streets of Vung Tau.

## Orphans head to the 'Land of the Free'



As North Vietnamese forces swept south from Hanoi and it became obvious South Vietnam was going to fall, US Embassy staff organised special flights to get thousands of Orphans out of Vietnam. This World Airways flight in April 1975 was one of the first Operation Babylift flights out of Saigon. In the final days of the evacuation one of these mercy flights crashed into paddy fields shortly after takeoff, sadly killing many of the babies and youngsters on board.

## "WTF!"... Wired for sound out bush



We genuinely thought the Tunnel Rats had the weirdest job in Vietnam, but this guy takes the cake for sure. Serving with the Australian Psyops unit, he'd go bush wearing four loudspeakers strapped to his back. A Vietnamese interpreter would broadcast to nearby enemy, encouraging them to give themselves up. Talk about setting yourself up as a prime target! And what happened to the policy of strict noise discipline while on patrol?

## Room for improvement at ARVN Camp



This barbed wire cage was spotted at an Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) Fire Support Base under construction by members of 17 Construction Squadron (RAE). The cage was used by the ARVN for holding prisoners, and is being occupied by two ARVN soldiers on discipline charges. This form of confinement would certainly be frowned on in today's politically correct environment. The engineer vehicle in the background is a Kaiser M543 5 ton Wrecker which was used by the RAE during the 1960s and early 1970s. Photo was taken in 1970 or 1971.

**“This should work Boss - no worries!”**



When it became obvious that the majority of Australian casualties in Vietnam were being caused by mines lifted by the enemy from our own minefield and used against us, the race was on to find a viable way to de-mine the 11km long mistake. The above solution was created in 1967 - 1968 at 1st Field Squadron. The concept was to fit a mine clearing sled, (made from heavy gauge chain and sections of steel 'I' beams) to the front of a Centurion Mk V/1 tank. Sadly it didn't work and the casualties continued.

## Unmask these men



The two Tunnel Rats in the background are from 2 Troop, 1 Field Squadron. They have donned gas masks for use as breathing apparatus as they prepare to investigate a Viet Cong tunnel complex. In the foreground a member of 7RAR keeps watch. The men are taking part in Operation Finschhafen, the battalion's first operation of its second tour of duty in Vietnam. Can anyone help us identify the two Sappers?

## That base camp grin



Tunnel Rat Bob "Pom" Yewen (3TP 67/68) is pretty happy to be back in Nui Dat base camp, safe and sound after being out on operations with the Infantry. We're pretty happy with Bob too, as he just supplied us with a treasure trove of Vietnam photos from his tour. Lots of gems to appear in this and future issue of Holdfast.

Hope there's no Claymore mines along that fenceline



This soldier has been tasked to clear the undergrowth along the fenceline at the Horseshoe base camp. A flamethrower seems like a good quick solution, until you start calculating the chances of various explosive materials being in the grass or on the fence.

APCs might float on water but they get very bogged in mud



In January 1966, several Tunnel Rats with 3 Field Troop are helping their Armoured Corps mates get out of a sticky situation. The M113 Armoured Personnel Carrier became bogged during a search and destroy operation. Can anyone help us name the 3 Field Troop lads?

A land of shattered dreams and lost hopes



Australian and US troops, along with our other allies were in South Vietnam essentially to stop communism from taking over the country and spreading throughout Asia. Most of the locals believed in this cause as well, and these banners popped up for a while, stretched across the trees lining one of the main streets of Vung Tau.

## 1 FD SQN OC's right royal farewell



The Sappers at 1 Field Squadron in Vietnam never did anything by halves. When Major John Kemp's posting as Officer Commanding the Squadron was over, the lads decided to give him a fitting send off. It was November 1968 when MAJ Kemp's 12 month tour ended and he was regally transported to the Luscomb Field air strip in a convoy of Engineer vehicles while sitting atop a specially constructed throne. It was all symbolic of the respect and admiration the Sappers had for his strong but fair leadership style. Many of his Sappers from this era still keep in regular touch with John today, and John and his two sons came on one of our early Tunnel Rat's tours back to Vietnam.

### One legged ice-cream vendor



You had to admire this guy, who sold his icy poles on the roads throughout Phuoc Tuy Province. Pedalling the bike with one leg was an art form in itself. Only the brave would eat his wares though, because they were made from local water, guaranteeing tummy troubles.

### Sappers having a quiet sip at the Boozer



Tunnel Rats from 3 Troop, Norm Cairns 1967-68 (left) and Barry Chambers, 1968-69 are enjoying a few ales at the 1 FD SQN Boozer at Nui Dat after coming back to base from a four week operation out bush. Photos of Norm from his year in Vietnam are as rare as rocking horse poo. This photo destroys the myth that Norm was born looking 100 years old. Here he is, fresh faced and bright eyed just like the rest of us. Norm's brother Peter was also a Tunnel Rat, serving with 2 Troop in 1970-71. Peter was wounded in action when an APC he was travelling on hit an anti-tank mine on 2 May 1971, a little over a month before he was due to go home. After hospitalisation in Vung Tau Peter returned to 2 Troop then returned home on 23 June 1971.

## 50th Anniversary reflections



This year is the 50th anniversary of when 1 Field Squadron RAE first arrived in Vietnam on 1st April 1966. It's a perfect time for us to reflect on what the Tunnel Rats did in Vietnam, and the terrible price we paid in lost and wounded comrades.

It's a great time to also reflect on the origins of our association, the Vietnam Tunnel Rats Association, and the weird battle we had with a few whimpering protesters on the sideline who obviously felt their world would end should the Tunnel Rats be allowed to gather together to tell exaggerated war stories, drink endless beers, remember our fallen comrades, and worst of all – march under our own banner on ANZAC Day.

We formed the Tunnel Rats Association because it had reached the point where this proud title was being claimed by far too many people. The members of the Field Troops listed on the banner above are the only Engineers who went out on four and six week-long operations with the Infan-

try and Armoured units. They fought alongside the Infantry plus they performed their additional tasks of mine and booby trap detection, bunker and tunnel searching and demolition.

In numbers, the Tunnel Rats comprised less than 20% of the 1 Field Squadron Group, yet 100% of the 35 men killed in action from the Group, were Tunnel Rats or were Snr NCOs out with the Tunnel Rats temporarily.

In fact, of all the Engineers in all RAE units who served in Vietnam, the only men killed in action were from the Tunnel Rats. There were two Engineers also KIA while serving with the AATTV (the Training Team) which of course wasn't an RAE unit.

And of the over 200 men wounded in action from the 1 Field Squadron Group, over 90% of them were Tunnel Rats.

Those numbers reveal that the Tunnel Rats carried out a very different role to their fellow Engineer comrades in Vietnam – not better, not braver, but certainly different. And that

difference is clearly reflected in the terrible casualty rate, which averaged around 33% for the Tunnel Rats over the six years of the war. One in three of us was being either killed or wounded during our tours.

Individually and as a group, the Tunnel Rats are extremely proud of what we did in Vietnam, particularly how we worked so closely with the Infantry and Armoured units. By wrongly claiming Tunnel Rat status, some men from non-field Troops had begun to blur the line defining our unique role.

We could not, and would not allow anybody to diminish something we are so proud of. The forming of the association was not an elitist thing, and it wasn't an anti "Pogo" thing. It was simply intense pride in what we did and a move to protect the status of ourselves and our fallen comrades.

Unfortunately, in the early days of the formation of our association there were a few men who felt we had to be stopped at all costs. Those men comprised a sprinkling former

## OUR FALLEN COMRADES



Engineer officers amongst a small group of ORs. Their common link was little or zero service in a Field Troop in Vietnam. All of those men have hopefully by now hung their heads in shame, but if they haven't, it is of no consequence, because we didn't need them back when we formed the Tunnel Rats Association, and we certainly don't need them now.

Back during those early formation days we did waste a short amount of time wondering why on earth these people were so hell bent on stopping us. The only conclusion we could come to, was that by us emerging as an organised association with restricted entry, a side effect was to highlight how the Tunnel Rats were in fact a very small group within the Engineer Corps.

The figures on where the casualties came from are historical facts, and needed to



*Our tools of trade*

be understood and accepted by us all. If our emergence as a small and tight group with a particular history upsets the war stories our opponents regale their drinking buddies with, then they need to change the stories, rather than change history.

It is interesting that the things we as an Association

fought for and the things we are most proud of seem to be the very things that got under the skin of those that opposed our formation.

The Army Combat Badge really got them in a lather, particularly if they didn't qualify to wear it. Some of the things they accused us of included being an elitist organisation, and not recognising the service of men outside the Field Troops (3 Field Troop and 1, 2 & 3 Troop of 1 Field Squadron).

On the accusation of "elitism" - our association represents the men of the Field Troops and we speak of them highly and fight their cause. We don't believe we need to apologise for that and we respect the right of other Unit Associations to express their own unit pride and promote their own causes.

Our belief that the men who served in the Field Troops carried out an exceptional

range of specialist tasks in high risk situations is graphically borne out in our casualty rate.

Being attached to Infantry for the duration of Operations, walking with them, sleeping with them, and being in combat with them, gave the Tunnel Rats experiences few others had in Vietnam apart from the Infantry themselves.

Perhaps the epitome of what we did was shown in mine incidents where we had to clear safe lanes to the wounded. We still see Infantry and Armoured Veterans welling up with tears when they meet us and recall some of those harrowing moments. They are full of thanks and admiration for what we did.

Add into this mix our other specialist tasks of booby traps, demolitions and bunker and tunnel searching and you have a group of men who have every right to be very proud of their service.

So we felt compelled to act when over the years, slowly but in ever growing numbers, many Engineers who served in Vietnam but not in the Field Troops began to refer to themselves as "Tunnel Rats". Some may consider this harmless, but in reality it belittles the genuine experiences of the Field Troops and had the potential to fade all those extraordinary experiences into a confused and ill-defined mass that put forward the absurd notion that all Engineers were the same in Vietnam. The hell they were! Some of our detractors call this attitude "elitism". We call it pride in what we did.

So the association was formed to wrest the title "Tunnel Rats" back to the Field Troops. We believe we have retrieved that title and it is now back where it belongs.

We also believe that the blurring of the line defining Tun-



*Clearing safe lanes to wounded comrades after mine incidents was perhaps the most harrowing of tasks for Tunnel Rats in Vietnam*

nel Rats was eroding the pride that former Field Troops had in their service in Vietnam. Many would go to functions where other Engineers referred to themselves as "Tunnel Rats" when they were nothing of the sort. We knew it was wrong, but naturally wanted to avoid confrontation or an argument with a fellow Veteran.

This politically correct attitude led to us quietly suffering the slow ebbing of our reputation, and a very noticeable slide in the pride Field Troop Veterans were able to express and display. Something had to be done or we would start falling off our perch with nobody knowing what we'd done in Vietnam and the price we'd paid in lost and wounded comrades.

The newsletter "Holdfast" was created to remind us of the role we played and to help restore our pride in our unique service in Vietnam. It was an easy task for Holdfast as that pride was sitting just below the surface, ready to be awakened.

We have a file full of let-

ters and emails from the wives, kids and grandkids of Tunnel Rats, all thanking us for restoring the pride of their husband/father/grandfather in his service in Vietnam.

*"Just wanted to thank you guys - I've never seen Dad so proud, as when he shows us through each issue of the Tunnel Rats newsletter."*

Mission accomplished – and more to come:

There are incredible similarities between the roles of Australian Combat Engineers in the Middle East today and the Tunnel Rats during the Vietnam war. Recognising this, we now proudly welcome current serving Combat Engineers into our association. And we have enhanced the name of our association to reflect their inclusion.

We include opposite a membership application form for those wishing to join. If you are already a member of the Vietnam Tunnel Rats Association you don't need to do anything until the next membership renewal period at the end of this year.

# JOIN THE TUNNEL RATS COMBAT ENGINEER ASSOCIATION

Open to current serving Combat Engineers and Vietnam era Tunnel Rats



## TUNNEL RATS COMBAT ENGINEER ASSOCIATION – MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ SERVICE NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

POSTCODE: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ MOBILE: \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

If you are a current serving Sapper, tick the Combat Engineer unit you are serving with or served with:

SOER  1CER  2CER  3CER  Other, please state: \_\_\_\_\_

If you are a Vietnam Veteran, please tick the unit/s served with and fill in the dates served

3 Field Troop - From \_\_\_\_\_ Until \_\_\_\_\_

1 Troop 1 Field Squadron - From: \_\_\_\_\_ Until: \_\_\_\_\_

2 Troop 1 Field Squadron - From: \_\_\_\_\_ Until \_\_\_\_\_

3 Troop 1 Field Squadron - From: \_\_\_\_\_ Until \_\_\_\_\_

The cost is \$50. You can pay by EFT into our bank account, or by credit card, cheque or postal order

Please tick below your method of payment:

By EFT deposit into our bank account: **Bank:** HSBC Bank Australia

**BSB:** 343002 **Account Number:** 099000031 **Account Name:** Vietnam Tunnel Rats Association

Please email us to advise you have paid by EFT – email to: [tunnelrat@optusnet.com.au](mailto:tunnelrat@optusnet.com.au)

By cheque or Australia Post Money Order – payable to: Vietnam Tunnel Rats Association

By credit card (tick which type of card)  Visa  Mastercard

Name on card: \_\_\_\_\_

Card number: \_\_\_\_\_

Expiry date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Post this form to:** Tunnel Rats Combat Engineer Association 43 Heyington Place Toorak Vic 3142

**Or email this form to:** [tunnelrat@optusnet.com.au](mailto:tunnelrat@optusnet.com.au)

Or simply email the same information requested above to: [tunnelrat@optusnet.com.au](mailto:tunnelrat@optusnet.com.au)

## Mines and Booby Traps were major Viet Cong tools

*From punji stakes to 500-pound bombs, mines and boobytraps were the big killers and maimers of the Vietnam war. Australian soldiers suffered a vastly higher percentage of casualties from these weapons than US forces because of the insane decision to lay an 11km long minefield across Phuoc Tuy Province. Our enemy lifted the mines and used them against us - with deadly effect.*



One of the distinguishing features of the Vietnam War was the number of casualties caused by mines and booby traps. A comparison of mine and booby trap casualty figures from earlier wars is very revealing: They caused 3 percent of battlefield deaths and 4 percent of wounds in World War II and 4 percent of both deaths and wounds in the Korean War, but in Vietnam, mines and booby traps caused 11 percent of deaths and 17 percent of wounds in US forces. However in Australian forces, mines and booby traps caused 20 percent of deaths and 25 percent of wounds.

This disparity (almost double the percentage of deaths by mines for Australian troops compared to US troops) can to a great degree be explained



by the existence of the Barrier minefield in the Australian area of operations. Built in May 1967 comprising over 24,000 mines, the minefield sat there unguarded for over two years. Our enemy treated it as an arms depot, regularly breaching the regulation high barbed wire fence to lift

*ABOVE: These punji stakes are being placed in a tidal estuary. At high tide the stakes will be invisible below the surface of the water. LEFT: We gave our enemy access to thousands of these M16 mines*

mines for their own use against us. Former enemy reveal to us that they lifted over 10,000 M-16 anti-personnel mines.

But there were many other mine and booby trap weapons to worry about as well. Two percent of wounds in this category were from punji stakes alone, a booby trap peculiar to the Vietnam War. These homemade devices consisted of sharpened fire-hardened bamboo stakes that were driven into the ground with only their points protruding in order to impale the feet of any-

one attempting to traverse the area. They were also placed at the bottom of "tiger pits," holes of varying depths concealed by a top covered with a thin layer of dirt that was sturdy enough to support a Vietnamese villager but would collapse under the weight of a westerner.

In the right circumstances, these crude weapons could be quite effective. In the book 'Tools of War' by Vietnam combat veteran Edward Doleman, he describes an incident in September 1966 near Bong Son when elements of Charlie Company, 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division, moved to secure a crashed helicopter:

"One of the men moving through the jungle toward the downed helicopter suddenly screamed. He had tripped a booby trap, and a slender spear, hurled by a bent bamboo whip, had pierced his thigh and stomach. Then, as the rest of the platoon slogged toward the chopper, a soldier cried out in pain, then another, as they stepped on low punjis hidden in the short

grass now under water. As a man's boot hit the stake, the carefully split base of the punji spread apart, increasing its resistance until the fire-hardened point penetrated both boot and foot."

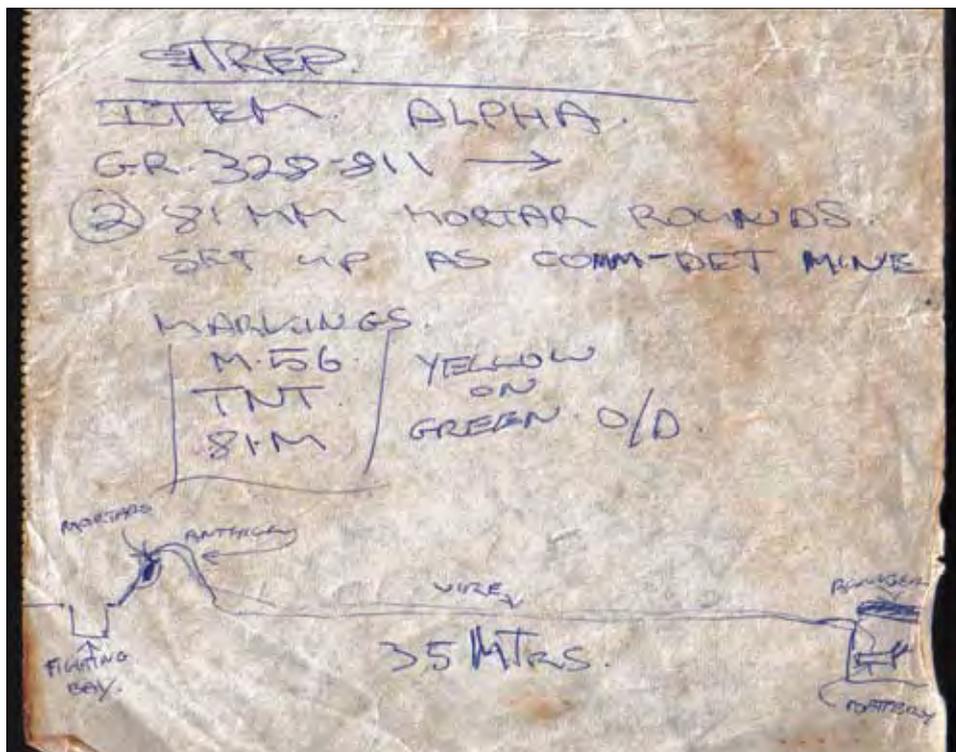
As the war progressed, however, the enemy became more sophisticated in his use of mines and booby traps. High explosives, not bamboo, became the weapon of choice. In various ways US, Australian and other allied forces unwittingly furnished



ABOVE: A twig utilised as a tilt switch to trigger an anti-personnel mine. TOP: Grenade secured to a wooden stake with a tripwire rigged to the safety pin. LEFT: A cluster bomblet set up as a booby trap in a bamboo grove.

### Australian Army mine and booby trap casualties in Vietnam 1962 - 1971

	Fatal mine casualties	Non-fatal mine casualties	Total mine casualties	Total battle and non-battle casualties		Percentage of total mine casualties within total casualties	
				BC & NBC	BC only	BC & NBC	BC only
1962	Nil	Nil	Nil	2		Nil	
1963	Nil	Nil	Nil	2		Nil	
1964	Nil	2	2	10	9	20 per cent	
1965	Nil	23	23	116	94	20 per cent	25 per cent
1966	1	39	40	351	282	11 per cent	14 per cent
1967	23	65	88	488	346	18 per cent	25 per cent
1968	12	86	98	806	631	12 per cent	16 per cent
1969	28	184	212	897	743	24 per cent	29 per cent
1970	29	162	191	556	476	34 per cent	40 per cent
1971	2	39	41	266	194	15 per cent	21 per cent
<b>Total</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>695</b>	<b>3494</b>	<b>2775</b>	<b>20 per cent</b>	<b>25 per cent</b>



many of the items from which the enemy fashioned mines and booby traps. Explosive material came from dud rounds and other ordnance lost or discarded by Free World troop units.

Empty C-ration cans and used batteries were prime components of Viet Cong mines. Unexploded aerial bombs were a particular enemy favourite, ranging from the small CBU bomblets to the massive 500-pound blockbusters. But not everything was homemade. Soviet and Chinese-supplied mines and booby traps such as the North Korean NKPA shrapnel mine, the Soviet POMZ-2 and the Chinese CHICOM POMZ-2M Claymore mines were also used.

No fewer than 19 foreign-made Claymore-type antipersonnel mines were eventually identified as being in use in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam war.

The enemy employed 'nuisance mining,' that is scattering mines throughout an area rather than in well-defined minefields, on a scale never before encountered.

Through ingenious techniques in mine warfare, the Viet

Cong successfully substituted mines and booby traps for artillery. Instead of conventional minefields covered by fire, the enemy hindered or prevented the use of supply roads and inhibited off-the-road operations by planting explosive devices in indiscriminate patterns.

While the Viet Cong benefited directly by causing combat casualties, vehicle losses and delays in tactical operations, equally important was the psychological effect. Just knowing that a mine or booby trap could be nearby slowed combat operations and forced allied troops to clear almost the entire Vietnam road net every day.

The enemy mine problem could be divided into three major categories; road-mining, off-road anti-vehicular mining, and anti-personnel mining.

Many US casualties occurred during road clearing operations. Heavy losses coupled with the need to clear hundreds of kilometres of road every day put a strain on the combat engineer effort.

The anti-personnel mines or booby traps were ingeniously

*LEFT: Field description of a command detonated enemy booby trap hidden in an anthill, found by Australian troops in 1970. ABOVE: Enemy version of the Claymore mine.*

rigged devices, set in unusual locations to trap the individual soldier. Such devices, normally made from materials at hand, were used on a massive scale. Virtually every enemy position was encircled or infested with them.

On the Australian front, in April 1968, in 3RAR's Operation Pinaroo the Battalion found itself advancing towards an enemy base camp in the Long Hai Mountains through an area peppered with mines and booby traps.

The Tunnel Rats were moved to the front, and for three days they led the Battalion through what was in effect a huge unmapped enemy minefield – with booby traps added in for interest. The Sappers found 126 widely dispersed mines and booby traps during this approach to the enemy base. And when they got to the base they searched eleven caves includ-

ing one that went 220 metres into the mountain.

The operation saw a total of 60 Australian casualties, including 7 Tunnel Rats

Some booby traps consisted simply of a hand grenade, with the pin removed, stuck into a C-ration can far enough that the handle remained depressed. The can was anchored on one side of a trail with a wire from the grenade stretched to the other side. Trip the wire and the grenade would be pulled from the can and explode. The grenade wasn't fitted with the normal time-delay fuse, these had an instant fuse that would ignite as soon as the handle was released.

While some booby traps could thus be set off by stumbling over a trip wire or by stepping on the detonator, many were command-detonated. Placed to cover a road or trail, they were connected by wire to an electric detonator controlled by an enemy soldier located in a concealed position some distance away. When a target came into the predetermined killing zone, the device was detonated by closing an electrical circuit.

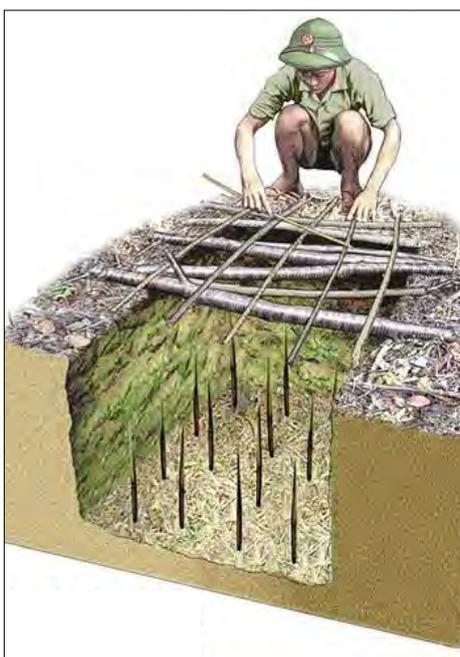
Road mining decreased as bulldozers cleared roadside foliage and eliminated the hiding places for those who triggered the command-detonated mines. Paving of the roads also helped, since mine craters in the asphalt were hard to dig and easy to locate.

Another successful solution was to encourage local citizens to report the location of mines in return for a cash reward. In 1968 103,521 pieces of ordnance that could have been used as mines and booby traps were located by this procedure.

For the infantry, however, the real terror was the enemy's



*ABOVE: We blew up unexploded bombs to deny the enemy access to the to the explosive content.  
LEFT: A Punji pit in the making*



Claymore mines. The rectangular U.S. M18A1 Claymore mine held 1 ½ pounds of C-4 and some 700 small steel balls and was able to sweep a 60-degree arc up to 50 meters in depth. While it was a deadly killer, especially on defensive positions, it was out-shadowed by locally produced Viet Cong circular-shaped Claymores. These varied in weight from 8 to 16 kilograms and were almost 20 times

as powerful as the U.S. version. The VC Claymores were filled with assorted nuts, bolts, nails, glass, used machine-gun links, and segments of steel reinforcing rods stolen from local construction sites. Their range could be awesome. In 1966, one such device exploded some 50 meters outside a US base perimeter. The projectiles cut a swath across an entire battalion area and broke the windows out of a Huey helicopter parked some 500 meters away on the perimeter's far side.

One of the big lessons of the Vietnam War was that countermine warfare simply failed. Considering the magnitude of the enemy's effort in mines and booby traps, the Free World forces failed in their attempts to find the answer to the problem of how to counter them.

## Our SSM cooks up an anti-tractor mine for the SAS

It was by sheer chance that Frank Cashmore had been given what became known as 'the tractor job'. Along with 30 other members of the advance party of 2 SAS Squadron, he had arrived at Nui Dat, Vietnam on 7 February 1968 and had begun the process of in-country training and familiarisation before the rest of the squadron arrived on 27 February.

Cashmore, then 25 years old was a recently promoted patrol commander, and was preparing for his first patrol. His second-in-command of the patrol, Corporal Danny Wright was an experienced SAS soldier. Aged 28, he had joined SAS in 1960 and served as a patrol second-in-command in Borneo.

But the remainder of Cashmore's patrol who joined him at Nui Dat on 27 February—Privates Kim McAlear (aged 19), Adrian Blacker (21) and David Elliott (22)—had only recently joined the SAS and had no operational experience. Blacker recalled that he and McAlear were still 'quite naive': to them it merely seemed as though they were preparing for an exercise, just as they had in Western Australia several weeks earlier.

Cashmore suddenly found himself joining his squadron commander, Major Brian Wade, for the short Land Rover journey to Task Force headquarters where the Task Force commander, Brigadier Ron Hughes, had a special task for the SAS.

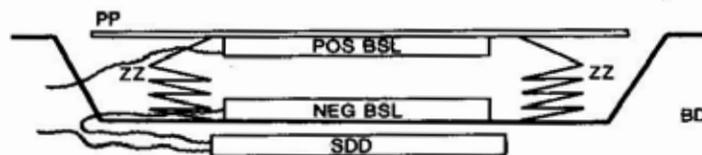
Cashmore and Wade were met by Hughes' SO2 Operations, Major Ian MacLean, who described their mission. An aircraft from 161 (Independent) Recce Flight had reported sighting what appeared to be the tracks of a tractor and trailer across LZ Dampier. It was not known where the trac-



### ELECTRICAL PRESSURE SWITCH TRACTOR AMBUSH C/S 1/3 2 SQN /69

DESCRIPTION  
IMPROVED PRESSURE SWITCH  
WITH SELF DESTRUCT DEVICE  
ELEVATION

MANUFACTURED BY  
1 FIELD SQN ENGINEERS  
AT SAS REQUEST



NOTE  
OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS DEMANDED  
THE SWITCH ONLY FUNCTION ABOVE A  
SPECIFIC WEIGHT THEREFORE THE SPRINGS  
WERE CUT TO RESIST ANY LESSER WEIGHT.

LEGEND  
BD - BAKING DISH  
PP - PRESSURE PLATE  
POS BSL - POS BATTERY STRAP & LEAD  
NEG BSL - NEG BATTERY STRAP & LEAD  
ZZ - CUT CLUTCH PLATE SPRINGS  
SDD - SELF DESTRUCT DEVICE

TOP: In the Mines Room at 1FD SQN, the SSM, WO2 Jack Turner (centre), with OC 1FD SQN, MAJ John Kemp (right) and US Army Major General M. Duke (left). ABOVE: Original diagram of the pressure switch designed for the SAS by the SSM.

tor had come from, but the French owner of the Courtenay rubber plantation had reported that his Fordson Major tractor had been stolen. It was thought that the tractor was being used to transport stores and ammunition from the more heavily populated area of the rubber plantations to the VC bases

in the Hat Dich. The destruction of the tractor would seriously interfere with VC resupply activities and keep them on the defensive with a salutary reminder that they could not move with impunity in Phuoc Tuy Province. That the VC were sensitive to the security of the tractor was shown by in-

formation that the tractor might be escorted by 60 VC, 30 in the front and 30 in the rear.

Cashmore's task was to destroy the tractor. Both Cashmore and the other patrol members later asserted that they were told that since the tractor was owned by a French firm, for political reasons they had to conduct a deniable operation; that is, there should be no indication that the Australians were involved. Wade and Hughes both denied that this was required. But Wade did instruct his men that they should make it appear as though the tractor and its cargo had exploded spontaneously; there should be no indication that the SAS was in the area.

The task presented considerable problems. First, they needed better information on the area. Cashmore obtained from 2 RAR good, recent aerial photographs of the Firestone Trail near to LZ Dampier. The second problem was the technique to be used to destroy the tractor. Wade had become familiar with the technique of 'demolition ambush' when he had attended a Special Warfare Course in the US, at Fort Bragg in 1965.

Given that the contents of the trailer and the size of the VC escort party were unknown, he saw demolition ambush as the only practical solution and briefed Cashmore accordingly. Cashmore selected Corporal Danny Wright to head the demolition team, and Corporal Dave Scheele joined the patrol as his assistant. A quiet, 28 year old Dutchman, Scheele had completed his National Service with the Dutch commandos, served with 2 RAR and been on operations with 2 SAS Squadron in Borneo.

Once the technique had been decided and the team selected, Wade, Cashmore, Wright and Scheele visited

1 Field Squadron Engineers to investigate using anti-tank mines. None were available in Vietnam and the engineers recommended that they use Beehive explosive charges. Beehives were shaped charges

*"The SSM of 1 Field Squadron designed a switch made from a baking dish, four Land Rover clutch springs, some steel plate and battery straps."*

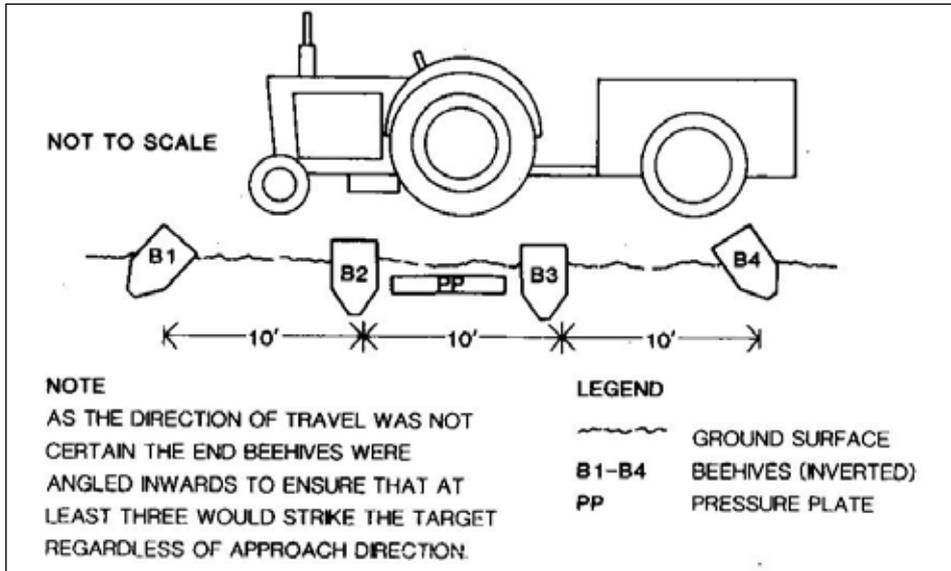
that stood on short legs. The shaped aspect of the charge concentrates the power of the explosion into a narrow point, making them ideal for cutting through steel or concrete. The engineer Squadron Sergeant-Major (SSM), Warrant Officer

Jack Turner, suggested they remove the legs of the Beehive charges and set them upside down. Once initiated the charges would punch holes right through the tractor and trailer into any explosives or weapons stored on the trailer. The engineers supplied four fifteen pound (6.8 kilogram) Beehive charges.

To counter the enemy force accompanying the tractor it was decided to set up four Claymore mines. The next problem was that the planners did not know what was on the trailer, and if it was packed with explosives they would not want to be too close when the demolition was initiated. Wade ordered that the SAS party had to be at least 100 metres from the explosion, so the explosion would have to be detonated by the weight of the tractor. But what if the tractor did not appear on the first night? The patrol would have to be prepared to remain in position for up to



ABOVE: Sergeant Frank Cashmore, commander of the patrol that successfully conducted the tractor ambush in March 1968. Aged 25 at the time, it was his first operational patrol in Vietnam.



ABOVE: Original diagram of the positioning of the charges aimed at achieving maximum impact on the tractor and trailer

seven nights, and the charges would have to be expertly camouflaged to survive the scrutiny of any VC who might pass on foot during this period.

There was also a chance that an innocent Vietnamese Lambro or motor scooter might drive along the track, so the demolition device would have to be adjusted so that it could only be detonated by the heavy weight of the tractor. Wright and Scheele tackled the problem energetically and worked out a wiring diagram to detonate electrically the four Beehives and the four Claymores which would be sited to catch the flank protection escorts. The only thing missing was a suitable pressure plate to close the circuit when the target's heaviest wheels were over it.

The SSM of 1 Field Squadron designed a switch made from a baking dish, four Land Rover clutch springs (cut to compress with the weight of the main wheel of a Fordson Major tractor), an eighth of an inch (3mm) steel plate, twelve inches (30cm) by eighteen inches (46cm), and battery straps. The terminals were fixed to blocks of wood, one on the baking dish and the other on the steel plate. Two pounds (900 grams) of C4 explosive were taped underneath the baking dish to ensure the destruction

of the switch itself. Cells from a disassembled 64 radio set battery were then placed in a beer can and an on/off switch, a self-destruct switch and two cable-connecting terminals were soldered onto the top. This device was constructed by members of the detachment of 152 Signals Squadron attached to the SAS Squadron.

Rehearsals were conducted day and night for three days until every move was perfected. McAlear and Blacker were to provide security to each flank while Wright and Scheele set up the demolitions. Communications between the sentries and the command group would be by URC 10 radios on 241 frequency. If enemy troops arrived unexpectedly the sentries would provide sufficient warning for the demolition team to hide until they had passed. It was soon apparent that they would have to carry a considerable weight and Wright decided to use only a single Don 10 wire as it would have to stretch up to 100 metres. Claymore leads of only 33 metres would require too many joins, creating more electrical resistance and thus a need for a larger

and heavier power source.

Meanwhile, Cashmore discussed the insertion of the patrol with the RAAF helicopter crews. Just as he was ready for his final briefing, Warrant Officer Turner arrived with one more suggestion: he was carrying an auger which he thought would be useful for digging the holes for the Beehive charges.

It took some time to organise the load to be carried by the patrol. Since they had to remain in position for up to seven days they had to carry fourteen water bottles for each man, plus seven days' rations. Then there were the demolitions: four Beehive charges, four Claymores, the pressure switch with its baking dish and steel plate, the batteries and the 100 metres of wire. In addition to their normal radio sets there were the three URC 10s. Each man also carried his usual weapon and ammunition.

Cashmore had the additional burden of the steel auger-1.5 metres long with a metre wide handle. It was one of the heaviest loads ever carried by an SAS patrol in Vietnam.

Soon after 9am on 17 March the six members of the patrol staggered across Kangaroo Pad and heaved themselves into the waiting Iroquois helicopter to head out the ambush site area.

Dave Elliott was injured during the insertion landing due to the extraordinary weight of supplies and equipment he was carrying, and had to be evacuated back to base by the helicopter which had brought them into the landing zone.

The remaining members of the patrol moved off and soon came across a clear area 2 metres by 2 metres with a tied clump of grass in the centre. Suspecting that it had been mined by the VC, they turned north west. They had a further 500 metres to walk, but it was

not until mid afternoon that they reached the Firestone Trail. After a short rest Cashmore and Wright crept forward to observe the track, striking it about 200 metres west of LZ Dampier.

Cashmore received his second shock for the day when he discovered that the tractor had not driven down the centre of the trail with one wheel in each rut, but had gone west with one wheel on the track and the other in the grass, and on its return journey had one wheel in the other rut. The Firestone Trail was 30 to 40 metres wide, the tractor was relatively small, and Cashmore believed that he could not risk placing the pressure plate in only one rut and the explosives between two of the three wheel tracks.

Covered by Wright, Cashmore stepped out onto the track and walked along it towards LZ Dampier as if he owned it, feeling as he said later, 'like a spare prick at a wedding'. With one man on the track and the other covering from the jungle they moved along the track for about 100 metres until they came across a slight bend and discovered that in changing direction the tractor had cut the corner and for a short distance the wheels had been in both ruts. This was the spot for the ambush, and looking around, 50 metres to the north across the Firestone Trail, they found a large bomb crater they had earlier identified as possible cover for the patrol during the laying of the explosives.

That night the patrol moved down to the track to observe the night's activities. At 11.20pm the bright red tractor and trailer appeared, moving west along the Firestone Trail, and remarkably, travelling with a single, centrally placed light blazing through the jungle. From a distance through the grass, it became clear that



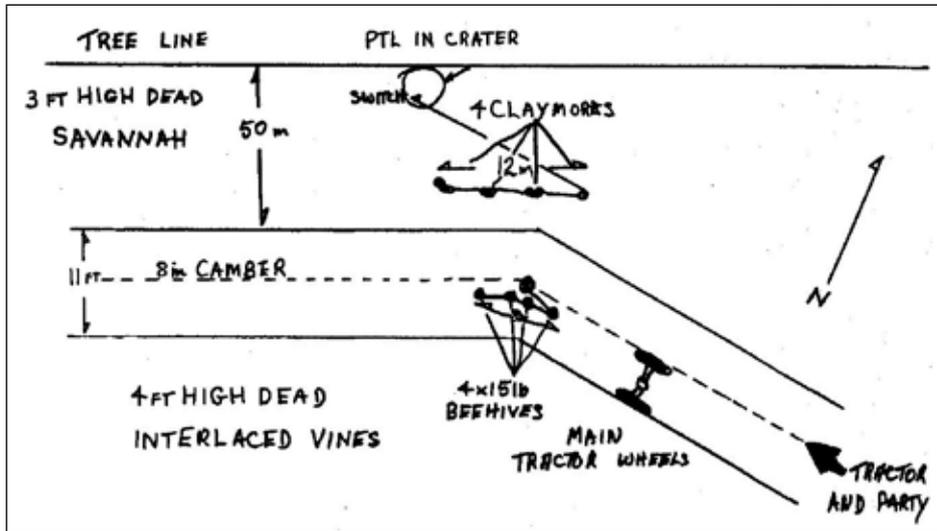
*Above: Corporal Danny Wright, second-in-command of the patrol and commander of the demolitions group for the tractor ambush.*

there was another advantage in planting the demolitions on a bend; the tractor's light would sweep past any sign of the demolitions that had escaped camouflage.

At 1.45am the tractor returned, travelling towards the east, and at last, after a long day the patrol could crawl back into their LUP and sleep. Having timed the tractor's movements Cashmore decided that they had sufficient information to mount the ambush on the following night, and they spent

the next day resting and checking their equipment. Last light came at about 7pm and after waiting a further 20 minutes they moved down to the ambush site, knowing from the previous night's experience that they had until 11.20pm to lay, camouflage and activate the system.

They crossed the Firestone Trail from south to north, carefully obliterating any trace they might have left. The two sentries prepared to move into position and before leaving the



ABOVE: Original diagram of the ambush site with the various explosive charges in place

patrol they checked their radios; they were working, but only just. McAlear went west and Blacker, armed with a silenced Sterling sub-machine gun, moved east to a position from where he could observe across LZ Dampier. Once the sentries were in position the demolition team moved out onto the track and, in the absence of Elliott, Cashmore unpacked the demolition kits and passed them to the two demolition men.

Immediately there were problems. The auger that had been carried to dig in the Beehive would not penetrate the hard-caked mud of the track. They tried to dig the holes with their machetes, but again with little success. To make the task easier they cut about 25 millimetres of compressed paper from the top of the Beehives, but still they would not fit into the holes. Eventually they decided to use the central ridge of dried mud between the ruts to conceal the Beehives, but they still could not dig down far enough, and eventually they had to slightly build up the ridge.

With the demolitions laid and camouflaged it was now time to recall the sentries. They had barely returned to the central point when at 10.20pm they heard the tractor start up some distance away to the east. It was twenty minutes earlier than the previous night. The patrol did

not panic but it was clear that time was becoming short. They connected the Claymores and began to lay the final 50 metres of cable through the grass to the bomb crater. With the tractor approaching they realised that they would not have time to connect the wires and withdraw the 100 metres buffer distance, so they decided to connect the power source and then remain in the bomb crater.

**“It was the most horrific explosion I have ever witnessed in my military career.”**

While the patrol had been running the cable from the demolitions to the bomb crater Frank Cashmore had taken a compass fix on a branch sticking up above the skyline. Now, as the rest of the patrol huddled in the bomb crater, he listened to the tractor, trying to determine when it was in line with the compass bearing. By now it was 11.10pm and it seemed that the tractor should have reached the pressure plate. Cursing to himself Cashmore stood up. Immediately above the kunai he could see the sin-

gle light of the tractor advancing along the trail. It was impossible to see if anyone was walking nearby as the grass was over waist height and he was standing in the crater. Just as he was convinced that they had failed there was a huge explosion.

‘It was the most horrific explosion I have ever witnessed in my military career’, said Cashmore. ‘It blew me arse over head backwards. Four giant orange flames went up into the sky, plus four Claymores. It was just unbelievable.’

Adrian Blacker was also watching the track. To him the tractor with its single light looked like a train approaching. ‘When the explosion went off it was almost like an old movie of a train wreck. For an instant the light flashed skywards before going out.’ The men flattened themselves against the bottom of the crater while great clumps of earth, tin and steel rained down.

Danny and Dave were ecstatic. ‘We’ve done it—magic’, thought Danny. After the tension and hard work of the last five days they had achieved their aim. Desperately Frank Cashmore tried to quieten the two demolition men. They lay there, weapons at the ready, not daring to move while from the trail there was the sound of moaning and four voices speaking excitedly in Vietnamese. Wright, who had attended a Vietnamese language course, thought that he heard one voice saying that they ought to go for help.

A little later they heard what sounded like someone collecting weapons and clearing the breeches in quite a professional manner. For all they knew the VC might be preparing to sweep through the area.

The patrol crawled out of the hole and withdrew about 20 metres to the treeline on

the northern edge of the clearing. Until then there had been a light cloud cover, but now as they crawled towards the jungle the moon appeared and brightly illuminated the figures against the yellow grass.

To Blacker this was the most nerve-racking part of the whole operation. The jungle was too dense for silent night movement so they moved only about 50 metres north east away from the contact area, where, fatigued and drained, they crawled under a large bush in a semi-open patch. Cashmore felt like he had 'been through a washing machine'. Some of them were too tired to remove their packs. They spent the night listening for the sounds of organised reaction; there was none.

At dawn they crawled out from beneath their protective bush, looked around for signs of enemy, then moved stealthily towards LZ Dampier, barely 150 metres away. As they approached the LZ, Blacker, who was leading, saw a lone VC, heavily bandaged, staggering across the open area. Mindful of their orders to avoid contact, the patrol went to ground, waited for a while, and when there was no more activity radioed Nui Dat that the mission had been successful and they wanted immediate extraction.

Back at Nui Dat the SAS squadron operations room telephoned No 9 Squadron RAAF. Within a few minutes the helicopters were in the air, and by 9.10am the SAS patrol had been lifted out of LZ Dampier.

As the helicopter gained height they crossed the ambush site, only 200 hundred metres away. All Cashmore could see was 'a hell of a mess with a big black hole'. The patrol had achieved the mission of stopping the supply vehicle and as a result of air-photographic interpretation they were credited



with fifteen kills, but it must have been many more. A VC defector connected with the unit operating the tractor gave a figure of 21.

The mission also showed the extent to which the SAS relied on the support of other units. 161 Recce Flight was involved at various stages: in locating the original tracks, conducting the reconnaissance for the patrol commander, photographing the aftermath and recovering the 75mm recoilless rifle. The engineers designed and built the pressure switch and provided the Beehives. No 9 Squadron RAAF, as always, inserted the patrol, returned to evacuate the injured soldier, and rapidly extracted the patrol following the ambush.

It was a graphic demon-

*TOP: The carnage and destruction is graphically obvious from this aerial photo taken next morning. ABOVE: The same make and model Fordson Major tractor as the one stolen from the French rubber plantation and later destroyed in the ambush.*

stration of the fact that while the SAS demanded from each member of its small operational patrols a high degree of individual courage and initiative, those highly trained men still needed substantial outside support. The tractor job was one of the SAS's most outstanding patrols

*Article compiled with extracts from "Phantoms of the Jungle" by David Horner*

# The 50th Anniversary TUNNEL RATS TOUR BACK TO VIETNAM

If you haven't been on one of our tours before - this is the one you must be on



If you have been on our tours before - you know you can't miss this one

## SIGN UP FOR THE TOUR NOW AND START LOBBYING FOR YOUR LEAVE PASS

*This year marks the 50th anniversary of when 1 Field Squadron RAE arrived in Vietnam. Focussed on Tunnel Rats, our tour will visit key battle and operational areas, including the infamous barrier minefield and the caves and tunnels of the enemy's base in the Long Hai Mountains. We'll visit mine incident sites with the men involved in those incidents. We'll host a BBQ with our former enemy, the men who served with 33 NVA Regiment, now based in Binh Ba. We'll tour the enemy tunnels at Cu Chi and Long Phuoc. We'll hold a memorial service for our 36 fallen comrades, at the memorial rock which still sits in our 1 Field Squadron HQ area at Nui Dat - followed by a traditional Troop BBQ (piss-up). We'll have a beer on the site of the old 1 Field Squadron Boozer. We'll do a nostalgia tour of Vungers, visiting The Flags area, the old Badcoe Club area, the old R&C leave centre, sites of infamous old bars and other places of former ill-repute, plus of course the Grand Hotel where we'll have a beer, just for old times sake.*

The trip is for nine days and eight nights in Vietnam, (two nights in Saigon, then five nights in Vung Tau followed by one more night in Saigon). If you wish to stay extra nights in Saigon either before or after the tour (or both), simply let us know and we'll extend your booking at the same low rate we have negotiated at the Grand Hotel Saigon.

Rather than adding to the costs and travel time by forcing

All current serving  
Combat Engineers  
are also invited on  
the tour, and we'll be  
honoured to have  
them aboard

everyone to depart from one city in Australia, each person will book and pay for their own return air ticket to Saigon, enabling them to find the best air ticket deal from

their city. The plan is for us all to meet in Saigon on Thursday 3rd November and from there the Tour will commence.

The first event is on the 3rd November – welcome drinks at 6pm followed by dinner. Book your air travel carefully to ensure you arrive in Saigon in time to get to the hotel, check-in and make it to the 6pm function. If the airline you choose arrives too late, book your flight to arrive the day prior

and we'll book an extra night in the hotel for you.

Shop around for the best airfare. There are plenty of airlines flying into Saigon, so don't grab the first airfare you find. Direct, non-stop flights take less time and there is no danger of missing a connecting flight, but it may be cheaper to fly on a non-direct flight via another city.

Vietnam Airlines, and Qantas fly direct non-stop to Saigon, and there are regular flights out of Australia to Saigon via Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok or Brunei.

The planned return date for leaving Saigon to head back home is Friday 11th November.

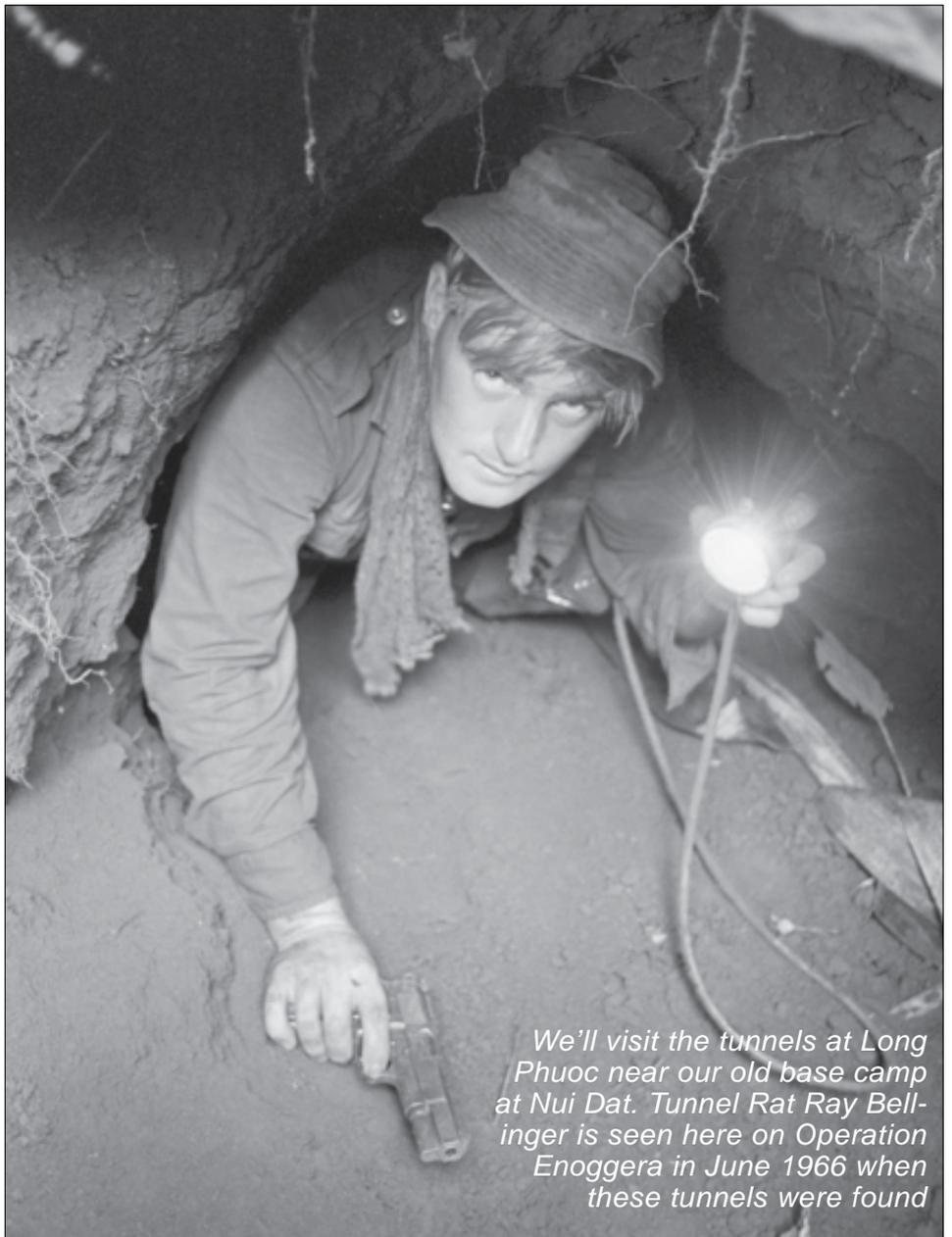
Current serving Combat Engineers - both male and female are invited to join the tour. For all other tour participants it's a blokes only tour.

The Tunnel Rats are welcome to have their sons (minimum age 18) come along on the trip, and Tunnel Rats are also welcome to ask a best mate along to share the experience. Any mates accompanying Tunnel Rats on the tour will collectively be known as "worthless civilians" and may be asked to perform menial tasks from time to time.

Our Welcome and Farewell dinners will again be held at the five star Caravelle Hotel in Saigon. This hotel was home to the Australian Embassy during the war. The Australian Consul General in Saigon will again be invited to join us for the dinner.

At our welcome drinks in Saigon you'll receive an overall briefing on the tour. Then each morning of the tour you'll receive a detailed briefing on that day's activity, often with associated documents and maps.

We'll return to our hotel each day in time to enjoy drinks together at the Designated Boozier before people go their own way for the evening. The comradeship of these drink sessions are a highlight of the tour.



*We'll visit the tunnels at Long Phuoc near our old base camp at Nui Dat. Tunnel Rat Ray Bellinger is seen here on Operation Enoggera in June 1966 when these tunnels were found*

## TOTAL COST FOR THE TOUR

The full cost for the tour is \$1,280 per person if you are sharing a room (twin share). This is up about 15% on our previous tour, not because our costs have risen, but because of the lower Australian dollar. If you prefer a room on your own, the extra cost is \$400 to cover the hotel room costs for the eight nights. We'd appreciate receiving your initial bookings and deposit ASAP so we can lock down all the tours and other details. If for any reason you later need to pull out, you'll receive a full refund. Do it now!

## WHAT'S INCLUDED

On top of lots of fun, incredible comradeship and heaps of nostalgia: Each guest will be met at the airport and transported to the hotel.

3 nights in The Grand hotel Saigon.  
5 nights in The Rex Hotel Vung Tau.  
Buffet breakfast each morning.  
Welcome dinner and Farewell dinner at the 5 Star Caravelle Hotel.  
Dinner with former NVA in Vung Tau.  
All wreaths for our ceremonies.  
BBQ lunch at Nui Dat.  
All specified land tours.  
All permits to visit restricted zones.  
Entry costs to scheduled tour venues.  
All bus and driver costs.  
Cost of tour guides and interpreters.  
2 embroidered tour shirts.  
Souvenir disk of tour photos.  
At the end of the tour each guest will be picked up at the hotel and transported to the airport.  
All other lunches, dinners and drinks will be at our own expense.

## Our itinerary at a glance

DAY 1 - THU 3 NOVEMBER

### Australia To Saigon

People will be arriving at the hotel from the airport at different times throughout the day (or the day before). Every guest on the tour is met at the airport by our travel company and transferred to our hotel. After check-in you are free to roam, but be back in time for the 6pm start of our Welcome Drinks and Dinner function at the Caravelle Hotel.



DAY 2 SAIGON – FRI 4 NOVEMBER

### Cu Chi Tunnels tour & visit to Bob Bowtell site



*Bob Bowtell's sons Michael (left) and Peter emerge from the tunnels, proud as Punch*

Meet in the Grand Hotel lobby at 0815h for departure by bus to the Ho Bo Woods area and Cu Chi Tunnels. At the Bob Bowtell site we will hold a remembrance and wreath laying ceremony. At the Cu Chi Tunnels we'll have a guided tour just for our group and we'll access tunnels not available to the general public. You'll have the chance to fire AK47, M60 ("The Pig") and M16 Armalite weapons on their range (cost US\$2 to \$4 per bullet). Then we head back to Saigon, where the rest of the afternoon and the evening are free time.

DAY 3 - SAT 5 NOVEMBER

### Saigon to Vung Tau by bus via Baria

Pack, check out, then meet in the Grand Hotel lobby at 0815h for an 0830h departure by bus to the Rex hotel in Vung Tau. On the way we'll stop at Baria where we'll visit the Australian funded orphanage. We also visit the memorial cemetery for the NVA and VC killed in our area of operations during the

war. On arrival in Vung Tau the rest of the afternoon is free for you to take a wander, check out the town and get yourself orientated.

DAY 4 – SUN 6 NOVEMBER

### Vung Tau, Long Phuoc, the minefield, and mine incident sites

Meet in the Rex lobby at 0815h sharp for departure by bus. We head to Long Phuoc (close to Nui Dat) to visit the tunnels there and meet up with some of the old VC who used the tunnels during the war. We visit a section of the former 11 km long barrier minefield laid by 1 Fld Sqn Sappers. We'll visit the sites of several of the many mine incidents which took place in the area. Once back at the Rex Hotel we will have the first of our two planned Bravo Sierra ("BS") sessions – restricted to Tunnel Rats and current serving Sappers.

DAY 5 – MON 7 NOVEMBER

### Binh Ba and Nui Dat



Meet in the Rex lobby at 0815h sharp for departure by bus. We head to Binh Ba to meet with our former enemy, veterans of the 33 NVA, at their memorial in Binh Ba. We'll then tour our old base camp at Nui Dat, including Luscombe Field, and the old Troop Lines areas of 1 Fld Sqn. We'll then hold a memorial service for our 36 fallen Tunnel Rat comrades at the site of our former Squadron HQ at Nui Dat. This will be followed by a traditional Troop BBQ (piss-up) amongst the rubber trees.



# TUNNEL RATS 50th ANNIVERSARY VIETNAM TOUR - 3 NOV - 11 NOV 2016

DAY 6 – TUE 8 NOVEMBER

## Long Tan & the Long Hai Hills



Meet in the Rex lobby at 0815h sharp for departure by bus. We'll visit the Long Tan battlefield and memorial where we'll place a wreath in remembrance of all Australians KIA in Vietnam.



Then we'll visit the Long Hai Mountains, which was the VC's big base camp in our area of operations, and a place of much grief for the Aussie troops. The VC called it the "Minh Dam Secret Zone" and it now features a beautiful memorial to the NVA and VC killed throughout the province. Once back at the Rex Hotel we will have the second of our two planned Bravo Sierra ("BS") sessions – restricted to Tunnel Rats and current serving Sappers.



In the evening (1800h to 1900h) we will enjoy a music concert performed for us by former NVA and VC veterans, in "The Penthouse" on the top floor of the Rex Hotel. This will be followed by a dinner for all of us on the tour, with the NVA and VC musicians as our guests. Buses will take us to the dinner venue, departing the Rex Hotel at 1915h. The buses will return us to the Rex after dinner.

DAY 7 – WED 9 NOVEMBER

## Vung Tau free day

You'll have plenty of time to relax, explore Vung Tau, laze by the hotel pool, go shopping, walk along



the beach, go for a nostalgic bar crawl with your mates, or simply stroll the streets and soak up the atmosphere. If there is a particular place out in the Province you wish to visit on this day it can easily be arranged via the travel company handling our tour.

DAY 8 - THU 10 NOVEMBER

## Vung Tau to Saigon



Check out and meet in the Rex lobby at 0915h for departure by bus at 0930h sharp. On arrival in Saigon we'll check-in to the Grand Hotel, then you'll have the rest of the day free. Our tour company has a Saigon Tour available 1300h to 1700h, covering the city's key attractions. Tonight is our big Farewell Drinks and Dinner function at the Caravelle Hotel (above), commencing at 1800h for drinks followed by a buffet dinner at 1900h.

DAY 9 - FRI 11 NOVEMBER

## Time to head home



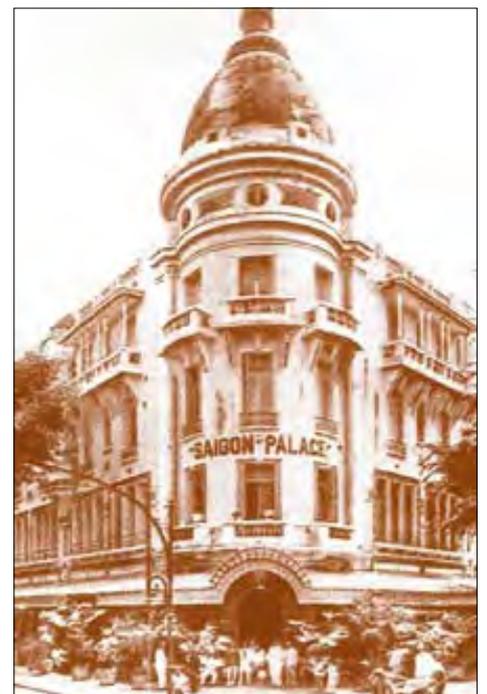
For those leaving today, pack, check out and be in the lobby at the time advised by our travel company for pickup and transport to the airport.

## Our hotel in Saigon - the luxurious Grand Hotel



### Three nights at The Grand Hotel Saigon

Our first two nights, and our last night of the tour are spent at the historic Grand Hotel in Saigon. It's a place rich in history and boasting some superb French art deco architecture. Lots of shops and restaurants nearby. Plenty of taxis available out front all the time. The pool (below left) is in a central courtyard. Originally built as the Saigon Palace in 1930 (see below), the hotel has been totally refurbished, retaining the original style of the rooms in the old wing. They provide a superb buffet breakfast which is included in our tour price. The rooftop bar is blessed with cool breezes and is a great gathering spot for us each evening.



## Our hotel in Vung Tau - the newly renovated Rex Hotel



### Five nights at The Rex Hotel Vung Tau

Facing the Front Beach in Vung Tau, the Rex is a good base for us for our tours to the old operational areas of Phuoc Tuy Province. The hotel is an easy walk to popular bars and restaurants, and a short stroll to "The Flags" (or where they used to be). It is also just up the road from the famous Grand Hotel. It has a great pool and a good breakfast area for us to gather at each morning. We will be staying in the brand new wing of the hotel which is opening just prior to our arrival.





## We're again inviting young Combat Engineers to join us on the tour

Following many discussions with sections of the Army and in particular the Corps of Engineers, a big aim for us on this tour is to invite and mentor current serving Combat Engineers. Many Combat Engineer Afghanistan veterans are suffering high levels of PTSD. We know what that's all about - and it's our duty and our privilege to take these soldiers on a journey with us, back to the scene of our conflict, to show them that incredibly positive things can come out of the combat experience. We'll share with them, how decades later we go there and honour our fallen comrades. We'll show them that, in our case at least, we can meet with former enemy, on the same level - as old soldiers. We'll visit the sites of incidents with men that were involved in those incidents - and see that it can be a healing process. And perhaps best of all, and probably over beers at the end of each day, we'll show the incredible comradeship we enjoy, and how this comradeship extends equally to them, our brother Sappers.

### Sharing Sapper experiences

We're excited on multiple levels about the aspect of sharing this trip with current serving Sappers. The similarities of our tasks in Vietnam and their tasks in Afghanistan are striking.

On one level we hope the young Sappers will get an understanding of how we operated in terms of combat engineer tasks, particularly when attached to Infantry and Armoured units.

They'll gain an insight into the casualties we suffered, and why, plus how we coped with it. They'll see first-hand the similarities between our tasks in Vietnam and theirs in Afghanistan, and how much better trained and equipped they are than we were.

There will be the unique experience of melding together the incredible comradeship the old and the young Sappers enjoy



*Sappers performing the same roles in different wars 40 years apart*

as a result of our service.

We have great respect for and empathy with serving Sappers in Combat Engineer roles today. It will be a privilege for us to share time with these current serving soldiers, and hear their experiences in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere over a few beers.

And of course it's an incredible experience for us old Sappers too, to be around these brave and bright young soldiers.

Serving Sappers (male and female of all ranks are welcome - as long as they currently serve, or have served in a Combat Engineer unit.

If you're a serving Sapper and you wish to join us on the tour, simply fill in the form.

If you are a serving Sapper and have any questions about the tour, contact Jim Marett on: 0403 041 962 or by email on: [tunnelrat@optusnet.com.au](mailto:tunnelrat@optusnet.com.au)

## VIETNAM TRIP \$200 DEPOSIT & BOOKING FORM - DO IT NOW!

Note: Full cost of the tour will be \$1,280 (shared room). A room on your own will cost an extra \$400

Name:	Phone number:
Address:	
Postcode:	
Email address:	
If you are a current serving soldier please provide rank and name of CER unit serving or served with:	
If you are a Vietnam Tunnel Rat please list Troop served with and approximate dates:	
If you are the son or mate of a Tunnel Rat on the tour, please provide his name:	
<input type="radio"/> I want to share a room and I will be sharing the room with:	
<input type="radio"/> I want to share a room, please arrange someone for me to share with.	
<input type="radio"/> I want a room on my own	
Please tick your shirt size: <input type="radio"/> Sml <input type="radio"/> Med <input type="radio"/> Lge <input type="radio"/> X Lge <input type="radio"/> XX Lge <input type="radio"/> XXX Lge <input type="radio"/> XXXX Lge	
Any nickname you prefer to be known by:	
Nationality:	Date of birth:
Passport number:	(can be provided later if no passport yet)
The deposit is \$200 and is fully refundable if you have to cancel for any reason	
Please tick below your method of payment:	
<input type="radio"/> By EFT deposit into our bank account : <b>Bank:</b> HSBC Australia Bank <b>BSB:</b> 343002 <b>Account Number:</b> 099000031 <b>Account name:</b> Vietnam Tunnel Rats Association Please email us to advise you have paid by EFT – email to tunnelrat@optusnet.com.au	
<input type="radio"/> Cheque or Australia Post Money Order – payable to Vietnam Tunnel Rats Association	
<input type="radio"/> Credit card	
Type of card: <input type="radio"/> Visa <input type="radio"/> Mastercard	
Name on card:	
Card number:	Expiry date:
(Please note: Statement will read “Ultimate Design Graphics Pty Ltd”)	
<b>Post this form to:</b> Vietnam Tunnel Rats Assoc 43 Heyington Place Toorak Vic 3142 <b>Or email this form to:</b> tunnelrat@optusnet.com.au Or simply email the same information requested above, to tunnelrat@optusnet.com.au	

## Explosive revelations on a little known covert operation



*“We were trying to leave in the minds of the North Vietnamese that the ammunition they were getting from China was bad ammunition”*

One of the regular tasks for Australian Tunnel Rats in Vietnam was searching and destroying enemy caches of weapons and ammunition. We would invariably blow up the ammunition but usually recovered the weapons and sent them back to headquarters.

Souveniring of the weapons was inevitable, with many of the enemy's AK 47's and SKS rifles ending up hanging on the wall in our troop recreation huts back in Nui Dat.

From time to time we would receive official warnings against ever using the enemy weapons or ammunition. We were told that shoddy workmanship and poor quality materials at the communist arms factories were resulting in weapons and ammunition exploding on use.

It turns out that this was happening, but the cause was very different, and very secret.

During the Vietnam War, the US Studies and Observations

Group (SOG) created an ingenious top-secret program called Project Eldest Son to wreak general mayhem and cause the Viet Cong and NVA to doubt the safety of their rifles and ammunition.

Amid a firefight near the Cambodian border on June 6, 1968, a North Vietnamese Army soldier was spotted by an American soldier raising his rifle. The NVA infantryman pulled his trigger, and instead of a normal muzzle flash, he got something way beyond what he expected.

United States 1st Infantry Division troops later found the enemy soldier, sprawled beside his Chinese Type 56 AK, quite dead - but not from small-arms fire. Peculiarly, they could see, his rifle had exploded, its shattered receiver killing him instantly. It seemed a great mystery that his AK had blown up since nothing was blocking the bore. Was it bad metallurgy, or possibly defective ammo? It was neither.

In reality, this incident was

the calculated handiwork of one of the Vietnam War's most secret and least understood covert operations: Project Eldest Son. So secret was this sabotage effort that few ever heard of it or the organization behind it, the innocuously named Studies and Observations Group.

The concept for Eldest Son came from the fertile mind of SOG's commander, 1966-68, Colonel John K. Singlaub, a World War II veteran of covert actions with the Office of Strategic Services. "I was frustrated by the fact that I couldn't airlift the ammunition we were discovering on the [Ho Chi Minh] Trail" in Laos, Singlaub explained.

It was not unusual for SOG's small recon teams - composed of two or three American Green Berets and four to six native soldiers - to find tons of ammunition in enemy base camps and caches along the Laotian highway system. But SOG teams lacked the manpower to secure

the sites or carry the ordnance away. Further, it could not be burned up, and demolition would only scatter small-arms ammunition, not destroy it.

"Initially I thought of just booby trapping it so that when they'd pick up a case it would blow up," Singlaub recalled. Then it hit him - boobytrap the ammunition itself!

Though obscure, this trick was not new. In the 1930s, to combat rebellious tribesmen in northwest India's Waziristan - the same lawless region where Taliban and al Qaeda terrorists hide today - the British army planted sabotaged .303 rifle ammunition. Even before that, during the Second Matabele War (1896-97) in today's Zimbabwe, British scouts (led by the American adventurer Frederick Russell Burnham) had slipped explosive-packed rifle cartridges into hostile stockpiles, to deadly effect.

SOG would do likewise, the Joint Chiefs decided on August 30, 1967, but first Col. Singlaub arranged for CIA ordnance experts to conduct a quick feasibility study. A few weeks later, at Camp Chinen, Okinawa, Singlaub watched a CIA technician load a sabotaged 7.62x39 mm cartridge into a bench-mounted AK rifle. "It completely blew up the receiver and the bolt was projected backwards," Singlaub observed, "I would imagine into the head of the firer."

After that success began a month of tedious bullet pulling to manually disassemble thousands of 7.62 mm cartridges, made more difficult because Chinese ammo had a tough lacquer seal where the bullet seated into the case. In this process, some bullets suffered tiny scrapes, but when reloaded these marks seated out of sight below the case mouth. Rounds were inspected to ensure they showed no signs of tampering. When the job was done, 11,565 AK rounds had been sabotaged, along with 556



rounds for the Communist Bloc's heavy 12.7 mm machine gun, a major anti-helicopter weapon.

Eldest Son cartridges originally were reloaded with a powder similar to PETN high explosive, but sufficiently shock-sensitive that an ordinary rifle primer would detonate it. This white powder, however, did not even faintly resemble gunpowder. SOG's technical wizard, Ben Baker decided this powder might compromise the program if ever an enemy soldier pulled apart an

*TOP: Tunnel Rats sip a few beers under several of the captured weapons on the walls of 2 Troop's recreation hut, (left to right): Gary Sangster, Bob Ottery, Jock McMullen, Doug George, Peter Ash, and Jim Marett. ABOVE: Weapons and ammunition taken from an enemy cache by the Tunnel Rats is laid out for evaluation and inspection.*

Eldest Son round. He obtained a substitute explosive that so closely resembled gunpowder that it would pass inspection by anyone but an ordnance expert. While the AKM and Type 56 AKs and the RPD light machine gun could accommodate a chamber pressure of 45,000 p.s.i., Baker's deadly powder generated a whopping 250,000 p.s.i.

Sabotaging the ammunition proved the easiest challenge. The CIA's Okinawa lab also did a very professional job of prying open ammo crates, unsealing the interior metal cans and then repacking them so there was no sign of tampering. In addition to SOG sabotaging 7.62 mm and 12.7 mm rounds, these CIA ordnance experts perfected a special fuse for the Communist 82 mm mortar round that would detonate the hand-dropped projectile while inside the mortar tube, for especially devastating effect. Exactly 1,968 of these mortar rounds were sabotaged, too.

Project Eldest Son's greatest challenge was "placement" - getting the doctored devices into the enemy logistical system without detection. That's where SOG's Green Beret-led recon teams came in. Since mid 1965, small teams had been running missions into Laos to gather intelligence, wiretap enemy communications, kidnap key enemy personnel, ambush convoys, raid supply dumps, plant mines and generally make life as difficult as possible in enemy rear areas. As an additional mission, each team carried along a few Eldest Son rounds - usually as a single round in an otherwise full AK magazine or one round in an RPD machine gun belt or a sealed ammo can - to plant whenever an opportunity arose.

When a SOG team discovered an ammo dump, they planted Eldest Son; when a SOG team ambushed an enemy patrol, they switched magazines in a dead soldier's AK. It was critically



important never to plant more than one round per magazine, belt or ammo can, so no amount of searching after a rifle exploded would uncover a second round, to preclude the enemy from determining this was sabotage.

Planting sabotaged 82 mm mortar ammo proved more cumbersome because these were not transported as loose rounds, but in three-round, wooden cases. Thus, you had to tote a whole case, which must have weighed more than 25 lbs. SOG's most clever insertion was accomplished by SOG SEALs operating in the Mekong Delta, where they filled a captured sampan with tainted cases of ammunition, shot it full of bullet holes, then spilled

*TOP: Great care was taken to ensure no scratches were left on bullets that had been tampered with. ABOVE: Once they were seeded with an explosive bullet, the boxes of ammunition were carefully put back together again*

chicken blood over it and set it adrift upstream from a known Viet Cong village. Of course, the VC assumed the boat's Communist crew had fallen overboard during an ambush. The Viet Cong took the ammunition, hook, line and sinker.

In Laos, American B-52s constantly targeted enemy logistical areas, which churned up sizeable pieces of terrain. SOG exploited this opportunity by orga-

nizing a special team that landed just after B-52 strikes to construct false bunkers in such devastated tracts, then “salt” these stockpiles with Eldest Son ammunition. However, on November 30, 1968, the helicopter carrying SOG’s secret Eldest Son team, flying some 20 miles west of the Khe Sanh Marine base, was hit by an enemy 37 mm anti-aircraft round, setting off a tremendous mid-air explosion. Seven cases of tainted 82 mm mortar ammunition detonated, killing everyone on board, including Maj. Samuel Toomey and seven U.S. Army Green Berets. Their remains were not recovered for 20 years.

But as a result of these cross-border efforts, Eldest Son rounds began to turn up inside South Vietnam. In a northern province, 101st Airborne Division paratroopers found a dead Communist soldier grasping his exploded rifle, while an officer at SOG’s Saigon headquarters, Captain Ed Lesesne, received a photo of a dead enemy soldier with his bolt blown out the back of his AK. “It had gone right through his eye socket,” Lesesne reported.

Chad Spawr, an intelligence specialist with the 1st Infantry Division, heard of such a case but, “didn’t believe it until they walked me over and opened up the body bag, and there he was, with the weapon in the bag.” Unaware of SOG’s covert program, Spawr attributed the incident to inferior weapons and ammo.

The booby-trapped mortar rounds also took their toll. Twenty-Fifth Infantry Division soldiers came upon an entire enemy mortar battery destroyed - four peeled back tubes with dead gunners. In another incident, a 101st Airborne firebase was taking mortar fire when there was an odd-sounding, “boom-pff!” A patrol later found two enemy bodies beside a split mortar tube and blood trails going off into the jungle. On July 3, 1968, after an



*To ensure the enemy never knew what was going on, only one cartridge would be sabotaged in any rifle magazine or box of ammo*

enemy mortar attack on Ban Me Thuot airstrip, nine Communist soldiers were found dead in one firing position, their tube so badly shattered that it had vanished but for two small fragments.

Booby-trapped ammunition clearly was getting into enemy hands, so it was time to initiate SOG’s insidious “black psyop” exploitation. “Our interest was not in killing the soldier that was using the weapon,” explained Colonel Steve Cavanaugh, who replaced Singlaub in 1968. “We were trying to leave in the minds of the North Vietnamese that the ammunition they were getting from China was bad ammunition.” Hopefully, this would aggravate Hanoi’s leadership - which traditionally distrusted the Chinese - and cause individual soldiers to question the reliability (and safety) of their Chinese-supplied arms and ordnance.

One Viet Cong document - forged by SOG and insinuated into enemy channels through a double-agent - made light of exploding weapons, claiming, “We know that it is rumored some of the ammunition has exploded in

the AK-47. This report is greatly exaggerated. It is a very, very small percentage of the ammunition that has exploded.”

Another forged document announced, “Only a few thousand such cases have been found thus far,” and concluded, “The People’s Republic of China may have been having some quality control problems [but] these are being worked out and we think that in the future there will be very little chance of this happening.”

That, “in the future,” hook was especially devious, because an enemy soldier looking at batch numbers could see that virtually all his ammo had been loaded years earlier. No fresh ammo could possibly reach soldiers fighting in the South for many years.

Next came an overt “safety” campaign, with Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) publishing Technical Intelligence Brief No. 2-68, “Analysis of Damaged Weapons.” Openly circulated to U.S. and South Vietnamese units, this SOG-inspired study examined several exploded AKs, concluding they were destroyed by “defective metallurgy resulting

in fatigue cracks” or “faulty ammunition, which produced excessive chamber pressure.” An SOG operative left a copy at a Saigon bar whose owners were suspected enemy agents.

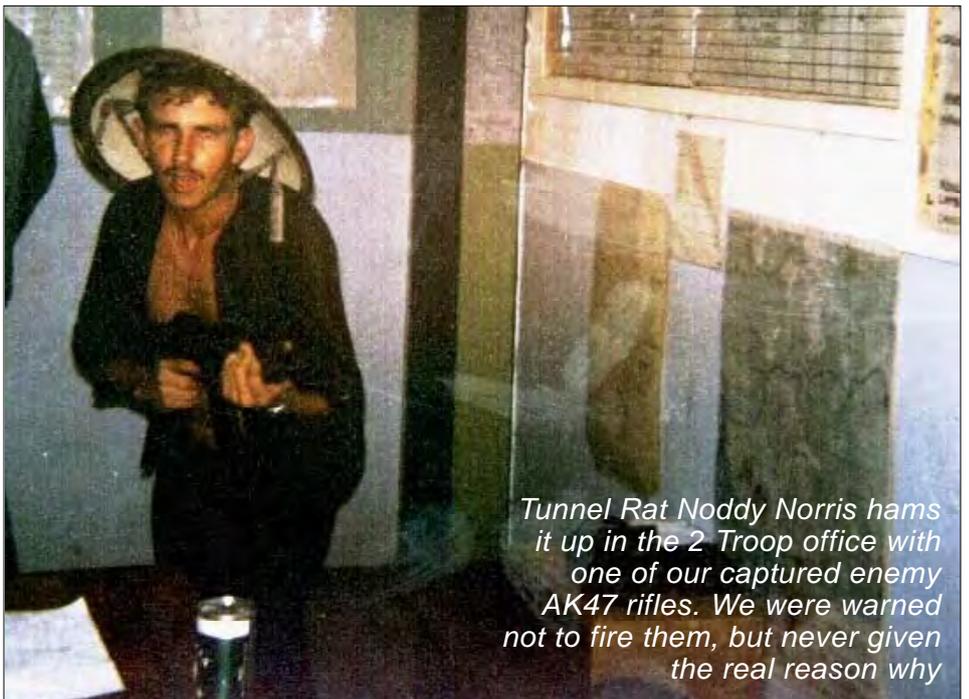
Under the guise of cautioning G.I.s against using enemy weapons, warnings were sent to Armed Forces Radio and TV. The civilian Stateside tabloid *Army Times* warned, “Numerous incidents have caused injury and sometimes death to the operators of enemy weapons,” the cause of which was, “defective metallurgy” or “faulty ammo.” The 25th Infantry Division newspaper similarly warned soldiers on July 14, 1969, that, “because of poor quality control procedures in Communist Bloc factories, many AKs with even a slight malfunction will blow up when fired.” Despite such warnings, some G.I.s fired captured arms, and inevitably one American’s souvenir AK exploded, inflicting serious (but not fatal) injuries.

That incident spurred SOG itself to stop using captured ammunition in our own AKs and RPD machine guns. SOG purchased commercial 7.62 mm ammunition through a Finnish middleman - and, ironically, this ammo, which SOG’s covert operators fired at their Communist foes - had been manufactured in a Soviet arsenal in Petrograd.

By mid-1969, word about Eldest Son began leaking out, with articles in the *New York Times* and *Time*, compelling SOG to change the codename to Italian Green, and later, to Pole Bean. As of July 1, 1969, a declassified report discloses, SOG operatives had inserted 3,638 rounds of sabotaged 7.62 mm, plus 167 rounds of 12.7 mm and 821 rounds of 82 mm mortar ammunition.

Later that year the Joint Chiefs directed SOG to dispose of its remaining stockpile and end the program. In November, teams were specially tasked to insert as much Eldest Son as possible,

*The scheme was aimed at destroying our enemy’s confidence in his weapons*



*Tunnel Rat Noddy Norris hams it up in the 2 Troop office with one of our captured enemy AK47 rifles. We were warned not to fire them, but never given the real reason why*

making multiple landings on the Laotian border to get rid of the stuff before authority expired.

Lacking the earlier finesse, such insertions probably confirmed to the enemy that we were sabotaging his ammunition, but even this, SOG believed, was psychologically useful, creating a big shell game in which the enemy had to question endlessly which ammunition was polluted and which was not.

The enemy came to fear

any cache where there was evidence that SOG recon teams got near it and, thanks to radio intercepts, SOG headquarters learned that the enemy’s highest levels of command had expressed concerns about exploding arms, Chinese quality control and sabotage.

In that sense, Project Eldest Son was a total success - but as with any such covert deception program, you can never quite be sure.

# SAPPER SNIPPETS

## Bob would be proud

On 11th January 2016, the 50th anniversary of when CPL Bob Bowtell was killed in action in Vietnam, his three children attended the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, where the Last Post ceremony that day was dedicated to Bob. Sappers from across Australia attended, including many members of of Bob's former Troop, 3 Field Troop. Left to right: Michael, Susan and Peter Bowtell, with eldest son Michael proudly wearing Bob's medals and awards, including the US Presidential Citation awarded to the Troop. Also keenly remembered by the family on the day was Bob's 4th child Robert, born after Bob's death and who sadly passed away from illness in his early twenties.



## Potshot Pete

Tunnel Rat Peter Cairns (2TP 70/71) was on a secret visit to the Special Operations Engineer Regiment (SOER) recently, when somehow he managed to not only wrangle a trip to their shooting range, but also got to fire their M-4 fully automatic rifle. In SOER mode the rifle is fitted with telescopic sights and a laser range-finder. Peter insists however that it was his natural shooting skills rather than these technical innovations which had him constantly hitting the target. Peter is seen here, with the camera capturing a brass shell flying from the ejection chamber.

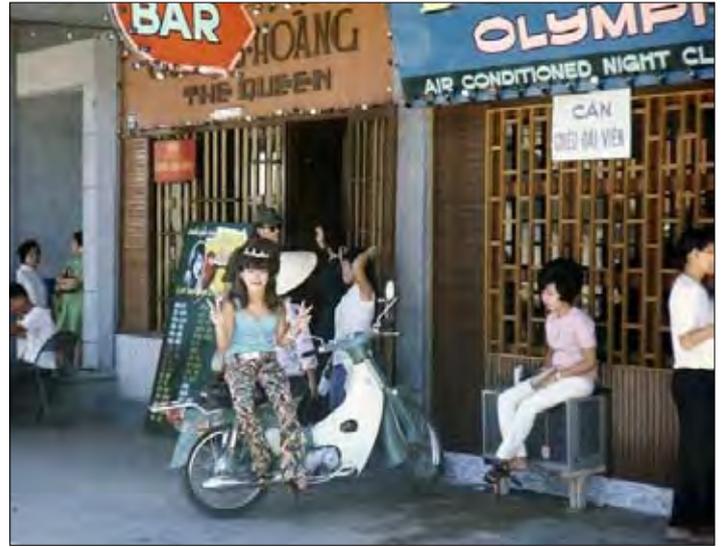
## Obsession overflow

Tunnel Rat Jim Marett (2Tp 69/70) has reached the point where his obsession with the Tunnel Rats and our beloved unit, 1 Field Squadron has finally migrated to include his car. Jim recently arrived home with the number plate "1 FDSQN" adorning his vehicle (see photo right). Evidently it wasn't available in the Corps red and blue colours.

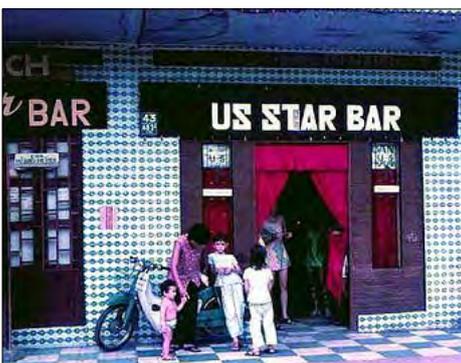


# An official list of approved Vung Tau bars really did exist

On the facing page is the official list of approved bars for Australian troops to visit in Vung Tau, valid July 1969. The mind boggles as to who actually had the job of testing the market and compiling the list? What research did he have to carry out? More importantly, how do you get a job like that? Certainly every Tunnel Rat in 1FD SQN would have volunteered for the job, and would have been damn good at it too. There would have been a serious risk of retiring riddled with the pox, but this could be balanced against the opportunity to gain untold riches from corruption.



*Was your favourite bar officially approved or were you living dangerously while on leave in downtown Vung Tau?*



(Bars are named in Vietnamese on the far left and in English on the far right)

3.. List of in bounds establishments.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Western Name</u>
Sao Mai	02 Phan Thanh Gian Street	Eden
Quan Ky	08 " " "	Melody
Thuy Phuong	10 " "	Starlight
Huynh Mai	16 " "	Chikito
Anh Tuyet	18 " "	Dakota
My Le	20 " "	Detroit
Xuan Mai	22 " "	Gina
Anh Dao	28 " "	San Francisco
Nu Hoang	38 " "	Queen Bar
Kim Le	50 " "	Tu do
Thanh Xuan	37 " "	Linda
Vung Tau	60 " "	Ex China Doll
Kim	13 " "	Sandpiper
Binh Minh	09 " "	Evening Star
Duc Hien (Steambath)	167/4 Truong Cong Binh St	Liberty
M-M	15 Nguyen Thai Hoc Street	M-M
M-T	21 " "	M-T
Dong Tam	25/F duong Tran Hung Dao VT	Olympia
Anh Hong	25/A " "	Chikito
Thien Nga	34 " "	Madelene
Anh	80 " "	Ann's Hideaway
Viet-Hung "tam hoi"	26 duong Trung Trac VT	Washington Steambath
Kim Long	25 duong Trung Nhi VT	Star Barber
Hy Vong	31 " "	Hope Bar
Viet Huong	41 " "	Au Favori
Tam Thang	7 duong Quang Trung VT	Grand Hotel
Phuong Anh	26 " "	Cyrno's
Phuoc Thang	10 duong Quec To 15 Khom Thang Phut	Chinese Restaurant
Kim	63 " "	
Binh Dan "tam hoi"	65/1a " "	Hollywood Steambath
Kinh Do	63/1 " "	
Phuong Thao	63/1 " "	R & R
Hai Van	63/2 " "	
Bach Yen	88/5c " "	Flamingo
Ly Lan	88/5b " "	Blue Stars
Linh	88/5a " "	Linda's
Long Chau Cang	63/5 " "	Port of Dragon Pearl
Binh Dan	35 Phan Thanh Gian	Hollywood Steambath
	8 Quang Trung "	Pirates Inn
	3 " "	Palm Beach
	12 Nguyen Trai St	Gemini
	15 " "	Yellow Bird
	17A " "	Spring Flowers
	19 " "	Lounger Bar
	21 " "	AGOGO
	8/A Tran Hung Dao Street	Maryland
	Quang Trung Street	French Rest- aurant
Hai Yen Barber Shop	5 Le Loi Street	
Tu Le Barber Shop	8 Do Chieu Street	

## Tunnel Rats List

All list enquires to Graeme Gartside (contact details below)

This is our latest list of former Tunnel Rats. If you are not on the list and wish to be, please send your details (Troop, year, phone number and address) to Graeme Gartside at email: ggart@internode.on.net or call 08 8725 6900 or by mail to Graeme Gartside, 9 Park Street Mt Gambier SA 5290

### 3 Field Troop (1965-66)

Ian Biddolph 02 4472 9434  
 Alan Christie 07 5494 6628  
 Brian Cleary 0438239387  
 Allan S Coleman 07 4687 7975  
 Bill Corby 07 5502 1193  
 John "Tex" Cotter 07 4723 1244  
 "Meggsie" Dennis 0413 193 584  
 Des Evans 07 4128 2390  
 Ray Forster 07 3409 1907  
 Geoff Green 03 6272 8167  
 Barry Harford 08 8088 4371  
 Sandy MacGregor 02 9457 7133  
 Frank Mallard 0408183325  
 Keith Mills 07 4770 7267  
 Warren Murray 02 6059 8142  
 John Opie 0427280703

Bernie Pollard 08 9248 3178  
 Ross Thorburn 0408413204  
 Bill Unmeopa 08 9300 5561  
 Snow Wilson Jnr 02 6649 3998

### Chief Engineer Vietnam

John Hutcheson MC 0417224850

### OC 1 Field Squadron

John Kemp 02 6288 3428  
 Rex Rowe 0419 251 420

### 1 Troop (1966-67)

Nick Burgerhof 07 3271 1592  
 Ray Burton 08 8268 4575  
 Ron Carroll 0408884327  
 Joe Cazey 07 3710 8102  
 Allan S Coleman 07 4661 1924  
 Grahame Cook 02 4390 5159  
 Alan Hammond 0423491091  
 Cul Hart 0413300120  
 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  
 David Martin 02 6379 6097  
 Gavin Menzies 02 6584 7257  
 John Olsen 0414433341  
 Ron Rockliffe 02 9789 4302  
 Trevor Shelley 0419784954  
 "Jethro" Thompson 0732168906  
 Ross Tulloh 0418223345  
 Graham Zalewska-Moon  
 (Poland phone: 48-815177391)

### 1 Troop (1967-68)

Billy Adams 03 5974 2916  
 Henry Bagdaley 0419902268  
 Reg Bament 02 6948 2524  
 Bruce Bevan 0402334614  
 Neville Bartels 07 4055 9871  
 Col Campbell 0417658770  
 Dave Campbell 07 4225 6310  
 Bob Coleman 03 5332 0975  
 Ross Comben 08 9535 2273  
 Jack Green 07 3278 8719  
 Norm Hitchcock (Canada)

1-250-2455137  
 Ray Kenny 07 3881 3648  
 Peter Koch 04 3822 3100  
 Brian Lewis 07 3880 0376  
 "Paddy" Maddigan 07 5485 1918  
 Mike McCallum 02 6288 5113  
 John Neal 02 9982 6694  
 Barry O'Rourke 0409546717  
 Clive Pearsall 03 9459 4470  
 Terry Perkins 0413343168  
 Alan Rantall 03 9434 2031  
 Ivan Scully 03 9802 0977  
 Peter Sheehan 03 9390 2834  
 Carlton "CP" Smith 0448000334  
 Max Staggard 0418522859  
 Jim Trower 0418842744

### 1 Troop (1968-69)

Ray Bellinger 0407952670  
 Adrian Black 0417756729  
 Mike Bruggemann 0409441992  
 Peter Carrodus 02 9759 6383  
 Albert Eyssens 03 9769 9715  
 Ken Ford 0418669689  
 Peter Hollis 02 6581 5401  
 George Hulse 07 3399 7659  
 Robert Laird 0408561748  
 Brian Lamb 02 6059 6947  
 Kent Luttrell 0408387641  
 Kerry McCormick 03 6344 5291  
 Keith Murley 0429729764  
 Alan Paynter 03 5975 7130  
 Richard Reilly 02 6262 7374  
 Colin Spies 07 4743 4676  
 Garry Von Stanke 08 8725 5648  
 Cliff Truelove 02 6495 7844  
 Ken Wheatley 07 4774 0045  
 Bob Wooley 03 6264 1485  
 David Wright 03 9435 4131

### 1 Troop (1969-70)

Kevin Atkinson 08 9041 1571  
 Larry Batze 07 4033 2025  
 Mervyn Chesson 0419806323  
 Allan S Coleman 07 4687 7975  
 Paul Cook 02 4946 5321  
 Phil Cooper 0439 955 207  
 Garry Degering 03 9796 0136  
 John Felton 07 4661 8679  
 Grahame Fletcher 0408822489  
 Brian Forbes 0412047937  
 Jon Fuller 02 4774 1674  
 P. "Guts" Geisel 07 4092 1735  
 Terry Gleeson 0458 232 886  
 Trevor Kelly 08 9538 1184  
 Des McKenzie 07 5448 3400  
 Anthony Marriott 03 6257 0279  
 Doug Myers 0421904562  
 Paul Ryan 0429165974  
 Les Slater 08 9361 0603  
 Max Slater 0412 772 849  
 Vic Smith 0432916485  
 Dave Sturmer 0422664942

### 1 Troop (1970-71)

Mick Augustus 07 3205 7401  
 Dan Brindley 02 6643 1693  
 Ian Cambell 03 9870 0313  
 Ray "Brute" Carroll 08 9342 3596  
 Phil Duffy 0406020382  
 Harry Ednie 0408391371  
 Bruce Fraser 07 5499 0508  
 Garth Griffiths 0435902386  
 "Paddy" Healy 02 4930 7541  
 Peter Krause 02 6723 2835  
 John Lewis 07 3425 1524  
 R Loxton 0419944755  
 Barry Meldrum 03 5427 1162  
 Roger Newman 07 5450 6054  
 Peter North 08 9279 5905  
 Dennis Pegg 03 6224 9090  
 Bob Pfeiffer 07 5464 5221  
 John Pritchard 02 9837 7482  
 John Severyn 0407008610  
 Garry Shoemark 02 6546 6778  
 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  
 Alan Hammond 0423491091  
 Peter Hegarty 07 4168 5644  
 Graeme Leach 07 4777 8627  
 Ken McCann 0409938830  
 Rod McClennan 07 3267 6907  
 Noel McDuffie 0427051678  
 Bob McKinnon 07 3267 0310  
 Peter Matthews 03 6250 3686  
 Warren Morrow 0418427947  
 Mick Shannon 08 8552 1746  
 Stan Shepherd 0412 232 197  
 Bob Sweeney 08 9248 4432

### 2 Troop (1967-1968)

William Adams 0400405751  
 M. Ballantyne 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  
 Geoff Craven 03 5629 5224  
 Peter Fontanini 0438 881 940  
 Roland Gloss 02 6367 5324  
 John Goldfinch 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 McKerrow (Silent number)

Dave McNair 08 9725 2821  
 Kevin Moon 0423005756  
 Tony Parmenter 0417856877  
 Gary Phillips 07 5474 0614  
 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  
 Carlton "CP" Smith 0448000334  
 John Trambly 0428659048  
 John Willis 03 9363 7878  
 "Snow" Wilson 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 0409496294  
 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  
 John Coe 07 4776 5585  
 Rod Crane 08 9530 3083  
 John Douglas 0433747401  
 Robert Earl 02 4990 3601  
 Brian Forbes 0412047937  
 John Gilmore 08 9795 6847  
 Stan Golubenko 03 9361 2721  
 Paul Grills 07 4162 5235  
 Geoff Handley 0427931791  
 Ross Hansen 0409225721  
 Wayne Hynson 0425720696  
 Ray Jurkiewicz 07 3886 9054  
 Brian Lamb 02 6059 6947  
 Phil Lamb 08 8564 2001  
 Wayne Lambley 07 3851 1837  
 Darryl Lavis 08 8263 9548  
 Peter Laws 02 4942 8131  
 Bud Lewis 0400012255  
 Rick Martin 02 6928 4253  
 Bill Matheson 0428959044  
 Bill Morris 08 9384 2686  
 Don Nicholls 0407919993  
 Colin Norris 02 4627 1180  
 Bob O'Connor 0418742219  
 Terry O'Donnell 0417371632  
 Rod Palmer 0417672643  
 David Pannach (Hong Kong)  
 852-2892 2714  
 Allan Pearson 07 3812 0943  
 Gary Phillips 07-5474 0164  
 Ted Podlich 07 3862 9002  
 Daryl Porteous 07 4973 7663  
 Mick Weston 07 5444 3307  
 Ray White 03 9740 7141

### 2 Troop (1969-1970)

"Arab" Avotins 07 4129 8012  
 Bruce Bofinger 02 4872 3175  
 Frank Brady 02 6555 5200  
 David Brook 03 9546 2868  
 Jim Burrough 0400884633  
 Ron Coman 07 3355 7279  
 Kevin Connor 0408 748 172  
 Garry Cosgrove 02 4845 5153



Arthur Davies 07 3408 1556  
 Grumpy Foster 07 4041 2321  
 Graeme Gartside 08 8725 6900  
 Doug George 0419475246  
 Greg Gough 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 5573 6925  
 Pedro Piromanski 08 9306 8169  
 Ian Pitt 03 5349 2018  
 Jack Power 07 4955 3761  
 Colin Redacliff 02 9673 0597  
 Rolf Schaefer 08 8962 1391  
 Brian "BC" Scott 07 3204 5691  
 Peter Scott (219) 02 4341 3782  
 "Roo Dog" Scott 07 5578 7054  
 Les Shelley 07 3264 4041  
 Jimmy Shugg 08 9776 1471  
 Bob Smith 07 5456 1194  
 Mick Van Poeteren 03 9437 7386  
 Gerry Wallbridge 03 9803 4223  
 Dennis Wilson 08 8659 1189  
 Stephen Wilson 07 5538 2179  
**2 Troop (1970-1971)**  
 Bruce Arrow 02 6288 3872  
 Mick Bergin 0427742175  
 Graham Besford 03 9439 2661  
 Mal Botfield 02 9872 2594  
 John Brady 02 6888 1192  
 David Briggs 08 9537 6956  
 Keith Burley 07 5543 0990  
 Peter Cairns 03 6267 4646  
 Brian Christian 07 4778 6602  
 Grahame Clark 0408533869  
 Dennis Coghlan 0429938445  
 "Sam" Collins 08 8262 6107  
 Ron Cook 0414508686  
 Jock Coutts 08 9279 1946  
 Bill Craig 08 9530 1008  
 Denis Crawford 03 9497 3256  
 John Cross 02 4757 2273

Robin Date 03 9783 3202  
 Gino De Bari 08 9437 5641  
 Tom Dodds 040672260  
 Des Evans 07 4128 2390  
 Bruce Fenwick 02 4977 2917  
 Ray Fulton 03 6288 1176  
 Ziggy Gniot 0418 885 830  
 Bob Hamblyn 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 0488972139  
 Kevin Lappin 07 3273 8614  
 Gary McClintock 07 4788 0123  
 Peter McCole 03 5155 9368  
 Bob McGlenn 07 5426 1597  
 Ian McLean 02 6286 3928  
 Jeff Maddock 03 5987 3850  
 Leon Madeley 07 5497 1038  
 Bill Marshall 07 5545 0389  
 Rod O'Regan 0419431779  
 Graeme Pengelly 0407 138 124  
 Des Polden 03 6223 3830  
 Keith Ramsay 0439856933  
 Mick Rasmussen 0428 790 645  
 Ron Reid 0427 461 297  
 Gary Sangster 0427224099  
 John Scanlan 0488 132 903  
 Peter Schreiber 02 6569 3390  
 Garry Shoemark 02 6546 6778  
 Alex 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 0408515270  
 Steve Walton 07 3205 9494  
 Terry Wake 07 4786 2625  
 Dave Young 0418425429  
**2 Troop (1971-72)**  
 Warren Pantall 0417 096 802  
**3 Troop (1967-68)**  
 Ken Arnold 02 6974 1181  
 Dennis Baker 08 89527281  
 Chuck Bonzas 0407866487  
 Bruce Breddin 0418766759

Norm Cairns 03 6267 4629  
 Kerry Caughey 03 5971 4188  
 David Clark 08 8388 7728  
 Bob Coleman 03 5332 0975  
 Jim Dowson 03 5662 3291  
 Bob Embrey 07 3351 1222  
 Peter Fontanini 0438881940  
 Barry Gilbert 03 5023 6657  
 Brian Hopkins 0401829744  
 John Hoskin 0417886100  
 Jack Lawson 0429 798 673  
 Peter MacDonald 08 9448 5418  
 Barrie Morgan 0437861945  
 Michael O'Hearn 02 4932 7509  
 Gary Pohlner 0427172900  
 Peter Pont 07 4095 0150  
 Tom Simons 03 6344 6058  
 Kevin Shugg 0411144500  
 Mervyn Spear 0431212960  
 Frank Sweeney 07 3882 6025  
 Brian Thomson 0428551368  
 Vic Underwood 0429 907 989  
 Murray Walker 08 9332 6410  
 Glenn Weise 0488741174  
 Mick Woodhams 08 9459 0130  
 Bob Yewen 07 5532 4560  
 Ken Young 0409124096

### 3 Troop (1968-69)

Geoff Box 08 9731 2757  
 Col Campbell 0417658770  
 Barry Chambers 0401119999  
 Neil Garrett 03 5798 1522  
 Brian Glyde 02 4455 7404  
 Peter Graham 0428325182  
 Peter Gray 02 4285 8877  
 Derwyn Hage 0408802038  
 John Hollis 02 6662 6660  
 "Sam" Houston 07 5495 5480  
 Phil Lamb 08 8564 2001  
 Ian Lauder 08 9419 5375  
 Kent Luttrell 0408387641  
 John Murphy 08 9493 3771  
 John Nulty 02 6927 3535  
 Ted O'Malley 0428243351  
 Barry Parnell 07 4947 1976  
 Bob Pritchard 07 4779 0608  
 Art Richardson 03 9314 8216  
 Greg Roberts 03 5941 2269  
 Walter Schwartz 0439512322  
 Don Shields 08 8297 8619  
 Ray Vanderheiden 02 4776 1373  
 Wal Warby 0418240394  
 Ray White 03 9740 7141

### Three Troop (1969-70)

Tony Bower-Miles 0412 317 306  
 Chris Brooks 0407186207  
 Jim Burrough 0400884633  
 Terry Cartlidge 0411252859  
 Bruce Crawford 02 6628 0846  
 Richard Day 08 8088 4129  
 Phil Devine 0439066012  
 Bob Done 0407485888  
 Ray Fulton 03 6288 1176  
 Graham Fromm 08 8532 2561  
 Doug George 0419475246  
 Graham Harvey 07 5445 2636  
 Trevor Hughes 0419883281  
 Darrel Jensen 0428387203  
 Rod Kirby 07 4973 7726  
 Peter Knight 02 6247 6272

Gerry Lyall 07 3343 4725  
 Phil McCann 0417423450  
 Chris MacGregor 02 4472 3250  
 Norm Martin 02 4953 1331  
 Jock Meldrum MID 0424924909  
 Roelof Methorst 0416834846  
 Gary Miller MM 0407586241  
 "Jacko" Miller 03 6267 4411  
 Chris Muller 0458650113  
 Danny Mulvany 08 9356 6890  
 Vin Neale 03 9786 1549  
 Peter Phillips 0429362935  
 G. Rentmeester 03 9735 5236  
 Brian "BC" Scott 07 3204 5691  
 Paul Scott 02 6656 0730  
 Gordon Temby 0419954658  
 Peter Thorp MID 02 6288 0008  
 "Curly" Tuttleby 02 6681 4133  
 Hank Veenhuizen 0407 487 167  
 "Wonzer" White 02 9833 0580

### Three Troop (1970-71)

Steve Armbrust 0407695247  
 Errol Armitage 07 5598 8018  
 Geoff Ansell 0448 013 712  
 Mike Barnett 02 9869 7132  
 John Beningfield 07 4778 4473  
 Darryel Binns 0417170171  
 Trevor Boaden 0448160944  
 Mal Botfield 02 9872 2594  
 Ian Campbell 03 9870 0313  
 Brian Christian 07 4778 6602  
 Bob Clare 03 5439 5532  
 Graeme Clarke 07 4128 4660  
 Ted Clarke 0438225844  
 Allan J 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  
 "Jock" Meldrum 0424924909  
 Roelof Methorst 0416834846  
 Carlo Mikkelsen  
 (New Zealand) 0064 9 3776322  
 Ben Passarelli 0411340236  
 Robert Reed 07 3351 4440  
 Paul Scott 02 6656 0730  
 Les Shelley 07 3264 4041  
 John Steen 0419772375  
 John Tatler 0405188717  
 Gordon Temby 08 9757 2016  
 Peter Vandenberg 03 9798 3947  
 Peter Weingott 07 3378 2770  
 David Wilson 0401726090  
**Three Troop (1971-72)**  
 Trevor "Zip" Button 08 95615363  
 Ron Byron 0439910568  
 Mike Dutton 0438627140  
 Brenton J Smith 0408806685

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# SHAMELESS FUND RAISING EFFORT

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UV rated inks and vinyls ensure long product life. Heavy-duty elastic sewn on the inside of the cover tensions it around the tyre correctly. Black piping on outer edge gives a look of quality.

- 1: Stops nasty parking fines
- 2: Eliminates road rage attacks
- 3: Ends speeding fines forever
- 4: May induce friendly waves

**\$150**  
Including delivery

BADGE  
DETAIL  
FROM  
TYRE  
COVER



PLEASE PROVIDE TYRE CODE NUMBER AS EACH COVER IS TAILORED TO THE EXACT SIZE

TYRE CODE (for example 225/75R16 110S ):	
NAME:	
ADDRESS:	
	POST CODE:
TELEPHONE:	
EMAIL:	
Cost includes packing and postage. You can pay by credit card (your statement will read "Ultimate Design Graphics"), or by cheque or Postal Order. Make cheques and postal orders payable to Vietnam Tunnel Rats Association	
Tick which card you wish to use: <input type="radio"/> Visa <input type="radio"/> Master Card <input type="radio"/> Amex	
Card Number:	
Name on card:	Expiry Date:
Signature	
Post to: Vietnam Tunnel Rats Assoc 43 Heyington Place Toorak Victoria 3142	