



nulli secundus

2ND BATTALION ROYAL AUSTRALIAN REGIMENT ASSOCIATION, INC THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION

South West Pacific, Japan, Korea, Malaya, Thai-Malay Border, South Vietnam,
Cambodia, Rwanda, East Timor, Solomon Islands, Iraq, Timor Lesté, Afghanistan

RINGO

Courage. Sacrifice. Mateship.

NEWSLETTER

PATRON: MAJOR GENERAL M.D. SLATER AO, DSC, CSC (RETD)

DECEMBER 2019

THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Welcome to the final newsletter of 2019. This year has seen several changes in our committee. Congratulations to all those who were elected/re-elected at the 2019 AGM at Tweed Heads on 26 October. Our treasurer for the last 10 years, Norm Devereux, did not stand for re-election and David White was voted in as the new treasurer.



On behalf of the Association I would like to thank Norm for his outstanding contribution over those many years. Also, a vote of thanks to both Norm and Margaret for having hosted the committee meetings for the last four years. Congratulations to David White as we welcome him aboard and we look forward to his contribution to the Association.

The 2019 annual reunion was well attended and the attendance at the event by both LtCol Judd Finger, the Battalion CO and WO1 Jason Sten, the unit RSM, was very much appreciated by all members. The CO gave a detailed outline of the Battalion's activities during the year which confirmed that it has been a very busy year for them. Friday night was the Meet and Greet where members caught up with their old mates. The AGM was held early on Saturday morning followed by a memorial service which was officiated by the Association Padre, the Reverend Graeme Davis.

Following the service, all members and guests proceeded to the Tweed Heads Services Club and enjoy a great afternoon of fellowship. Certificates of Appreciation as well as a bouquet of flowers were presented to Judith King, Rhonda Hollingdrake, Margaret Deveraux and Glenda Gammon for their hard work at each of the annual reunions over many years. A big thank you to all four recipients.

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A number of veterans attended the 2RAR(Amphib) Officer/NCO Dining-In night at Lavarack Barracks on 10 December. This function provided me with the opportunity for the presentation of the painting titled "2RAR AIR ASSAULT OPERATIONS – NUI DAT VIETNAM". It was an outstanding evening and the painting was well received by the Battalion.

The dinner further provided an opportunity for me to acknowledge the support provided to the Association by the outgoing RSM, WO1 Jason Sten. WO1 Sten, who is retiring from the Army, has been an essential conduit between the Battalion and the Association and has been available, supportive and friendly to members of the Association through his tenure as RSM. For his contribution, WO1 Sten was awarded the Silver Soldier on behalf of the Association. The Association wishes WO1 Sten well in his retirement from the Australian Army.

The Association makes an award to the Battalion Champion Soldier each year and the Commanding Officer nominated Pte Samuel Dierckx as the best soldier in the unit. Pte Dierckx won the 2018 and 2019 sniper competition and was awarded the DSM Roche Cup as the best soldier during the Duke of Gloucester Cup competition held at Singleton recently. The Association award includes a cheque for \$1000 and a Silver Soldier. The Association congratulates Pte Dierckx on this outstanding achievement.

Our North Qld representative continues to look at ways of providing social activities for the Battalion members and families. I would like to thank all out state and territory representatives for their efforts. Finally, I would like to thank all committee members for their contribution throughout the year. It has been a busy one and the hard work put in by your team has ensured that the Association remains viable. Also, a vote of thanks to Rick Hollingdrake who continues to work hard in producing four newsletters every year.

I wish you and your families a very enjoyable and safe festive season. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Leo Van De Kamp

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This edition of RINGO has been printed courtesy of the Hon Peter Dutton MP, Federal Member for Dickson.

This is the Seventeenth edition of RINGO printed for free.

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2RAR AS THE BATTALION IN VIETNAM, 1970-71

by J.M. Church DSO

Training for War

The move of 2RAR to South Vietnam in April 1970 marked the end of 18 long and busy months of reorganisation and training.

During the early months when I had taken over command from 'Chic' Charlesworth, the Battalion lost those national servicemen who had completed their service. In November, 2RAR acted as the enemy for 5RAR in its final exercise at exercise at Shoalwater Bay and, as the end of the year approached, we began our preparations for the move to North Queensland. While all this was going on, I was able to inject one moment of military splendour. On 16 October, I held a trooping of the colour on our unit birthday. This was to serve two purposes. Firstly, it was a farewell to the city of Brisbane, which had been the Battalion's home since 1963, between its periods of service overseas. Secondly, it marked the beginning of a series of goals that I set for the Battalion leading up to its next tour of duty in Vietnam.

In December and January, the Battalion moved from Enoggera to Townsville where it set up alongside 6RAR in the recently completed military cantonment at Lavarack Barracks. The camp area lay under the brow of Mount Stuart, the imposing hill feature that rises on the western outskirts of the city. The complex had the facilities to cater for a task force of three infantry battalions with operational and logistic support units.

A short period of settling-in at Lavarack Barracks preceded a gradual increase in strength as the regular soldiers, who were to man the Battalion for the next years, began to arrive.

The first task that I faced after our arrival in Townsville was to re-establish the command structure of the Battalion.

Fortunately, most of the warrant officers and senior NCOs who had served with the unit on its first tour were to remain; I left most of them in place. This gave me a firm base on which to build the framework of the new team.

A similar situation did not apply with the officers. We had a complete changeover which began with my arrival in the Battalion. Added to this, the full complement of officers would not be complete until a year later when we received our last group of graduates from OCS and RMC. The former were to graduate in June and carry out infantry training before their arrival. While the latter would join us after finishing their graduation leave.

Because we were to have a New Zealand officer as second-in-command for our tour in Vietnam, Major Vin Musgrave temporarily filled that position to assist me in our preparations. Musgrave had served in Vietnam with the Training Team and he was a very experienced infantry officer; I was glad to have him.

The New Zealander, Major Roy Taylor, would join the Battalion just before our departure. He was a senior officer who had seen service with the New Zealand battalion in Malaya. We were to develop a close relationship and friendship during our service together.

The Operation Officer, Major Tan Roberts, was not to arrive until early in 1970. I was happy to accept the delay in Roberts' arrival.

The headquarters team was complete, at this stage, when the RSM, Warrant Officer Class One Len Williams, arrived. He was a strong member of the team and played a vital role in the training and development of new, young NCO's. he was also a weapons training expert, having come from the Infantry Centre, and was an excellent disciplinarian and parade ground soldier. *Continued over.*

FAREWELL: RSM JASON STEN CSM

Jason Sten was awarded a Conspicuous Service Medal – 11 June 2018, Bronze Army Commendation - 3 November 2015 and two MUC's

- 2/4 RAR (PTE) – Rwanda - OP TAMAR 1994-1995 (Meritorious Unit Citation)
- 2 RAR (CPL) – East Timor - OP WARDEN 1999-2000
- 6 RAR (SGT) – Timor Leste - OP ASTUTE 2006
- 6 RAR (SGT) – Iraq - OP CATALYST 2007
- 6 RAR (WO2) – Afghanistan - OP SLIPPER 2010 (Meritorious Unit Citation)
- Contingent RSM (WO1) - Sudan - OP ASLAN 2016-2017
- 2 RAR (Amphib) (WO1) - Townsville - OP NTH QLD FLOOD ASSIST 2019

RSM Sten has been a champion of the 2RAR Historical Collection.

RINGO NEWSLETTER: AUSTRALIA POST/EMAIL

RINGO will continue to be sent to you via [Australia Post](#). Do you wish to receive RINGO by [Email](#)? Contact Gordon: Mob: 0407 926 270; 2rarsecretary@gmail.com RINGO is available in an electronic colour version and can be sent directly to your email in-box.

The benefits are twofold:

* You will receive the issue sooner and without the delay of it going through Australia post

* It has economic and financial advantage to the Association by saving on printing and postage.

Gordon Hurford, AM
Secretary

Continued: The company commanders who moved to Townsville with me were Major John Lloyd in command of Alpha Company; Graham Hoffman, Bravo Company; Kerry Farrell in command of Charlie Company; and Chris Mayhew, Administration Company. I had served with Lloyd and Mayhew in Malaysia and knew them all quite well.

What is not apparent, are the many weeks of hard work and long days on exercises in the field. All ranks worked under a great deal of pressure and stress to bring the unit to its final peak of efficiency. These exercises took the men away from young families often at times when a husband's presence was sorely needed in the home. The lives of many of the married soldiers were hectic and stressful, and many marriages went through a very rocky period. Despite this, most of these soldiers spoke of the love and support they received from their families to carry them through this difficult time.

Late in March 1970, we were formally warned for service in South Vietnam. We took our pre-embarkation leave, packed up and made our farewells to Townsville.

Before our last parade, Queen Elizabeth, the Duke of Edinburgh and Princess Anne honoured us by making a visit to Lavarack Barracks. Charlie Company formed the Royal Guard of Honour with Barry Petersen as its commander. Colin Purcell was the Ensign of the Colour and Bob De Haas the second Ensign.

The plan of our movement to Vietnam was for the advance party of 150 members to fly from Townsville to Saigon on 29 April. QANTAS provided a Boeing 707 under charter for our flight. Three company groups, each of 150, followed at intervals of four days. 6RAR flew back in the returning aircraft.

Second to None

2RAR AS THE BATTALION IN VIETNAM, 1970-71

by J.M. Church DSO
The Home Connection

A major consideration we had to confront during our tour of South Vietnam was the situation facing our wives and families in Australia. Several organisations had accepted the task of overseeing their welfare and each in its own way did a sterling job.

The problems that confronted our wives were manifold. Their isolation from other members of their families who would normally have supported them during the absence of their husbands exacerbated these problems. Townsville is 1 359 kilometres north of Brisbane and 5 900 kilometres by road from Perth. It is not an easy matter to cover these distances without considerable expenditure. Army families were not always wealthy and, consequently, few could not travel far from North Queensland. Some wives, mostly newly married women without children, opted to move back to live near their parents. However, the majority remained in Townsville to provide a stable home-life for their children while their fathers were away.

In the first instance, those who remained in Townsville were fortunate because they belonged to the Battalion family. They could go to other wives for advice and sympathy. My wife strengthened this association by developing a strong wives group that met frequently and served as a support group to which each woman could turn for help. Peg Williams, the wife of the RSM, and most of the officers' and senior soldiers' wives, gave her able assistance.

We were all normal people and were subject to the normal problems that confront the members of any community. However, in our case, because of the division that was arising in Australian society over the war in Vietnam, our wives were subjected to additional pressures. These stemmed from their relationship with the soldiers fighting the war. Sad to say, a few of our wives suffered abuse from some of the more rabid antagonists to the war. This abuse took several forms, including reprehensible phone calls. Knowledge that these occurrences were taking place was a constant worry to the married soldier. We could have all done without the ever-present stress of looking back over our shoulders.

HQ 3 TF/NQ Area included within its organisation a section responsible for the welfare of the army families. This section was made up of male and female soldiers who were trained as social workers. They were responsible for giving advice and help to families where problems persisted. They were also responsible for keeping the Commander informed about the morale of the families so he could make informed recommendations about the disposition of the soldiers. A soldier's unit would return him to Townsville when his absence affected the health and mental state of his family. Fortunately, we had very few cases in which we had to return a soldier to Australia permanently, even temporarily. However, where Army Headquarters had approved his return, the soldier was quickly on his way.

The Chaplaincy group and other organisations, such as the Australian Red Cross Society and the Salvation Army, also took a close interest in the families' welfare.

Perhaps the most traumatic event to face the authorities was informing a wife of the death or injury of her husband. A chaplain, or senior officer from the Area Headquarters usually undertook this task. The officer did this with sensitivity as early as possible after the event. He usually did so at a time when the soldier's family could best accept the news. Normally, the logistic system returned the soldier's body to Australia by the next available aircraft. An appropriate headquarters conducted a military funeral at the cemetery of the next-of-kin's choice. The family welfare section then arranged for the widow's return from Townsville to her permanent home.

Soon after 6RAR departed for South Vietnam in April 1969, I set up a system where my soldiers did odd jobs for 6RAR wives who needed help. These chores included grass mowing and rubbish removal and similar tasks. I did this with selfish motives because I wanted 6RAR to do the same for the 2RAR wives when our time came. The system worked well when I was running it. Unfortunately, 6RAR went off to Singapore to become part of BCFESR at the beginning of 1971 and the arrangement broke down.

The people of Townsville also were generally very supportive of our families. The owners of the local television station, Channel 7, made a cameraman available to attend our children's Christmas Party. He recorded family messages for screening to the troops at Christmas. In return, the Army public relations section in Saigon made a similar film of soldiers' messages. The TV Channel screened these at a families' day in Townsville in the New Year. I arranged to show the Christmas Party film during each company's sojourn in Nui Dat. Each company asked for several re-runs of the film to meet the soldiers' demands. I must confess that I also sat through several showings of the film so I could watch my own family in action.

In the main, our wives coped very well with the strain of running their families without their husbands. So much so that after the men returned, both partners needed a long reorientation period to get used to the previously accepted roles. Many families found the readjustment to be a difficult process that took many years to accomplish. However, this was to be in the future.

RETURN TO AUSTRALIA

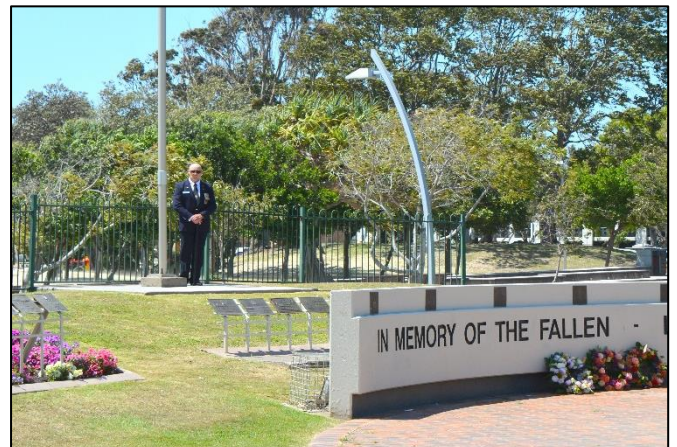
At the beginning of May, we had several events to plan for, culminating in our return by sea to Australia where we looked forward to resuming our normal lives again. These events included holding a memorial parade, the presentation of Vietnamese awards, the completion of our operational commitment, the changeover of the New Zealand component, and packing up and handing over to 4RAR.

We held the memorial parade on the morning of 4 May. It included a service conducted by the chaplains attached to the Battalion. Then followed a parade during which General Minh, presented members of the Battalion with the medals of the Vietnamese awards. As these were foreign awards for which Royal approval was not normally given, the ribbons could not be worn as chest decorations. However, the soldiers received them in the spirit in which they were given. We received the General on parade with the normal compliments and the recipients were fallen-in facing the Battalion. The General then proceeded to pin on the medals as the Adjutant read out the recipient's name. After the ceremony, the officers retired to the Mess where we had tea and cake. I talked to the General for about 10 minutes and he told me, in quite reasonable English, how difficult it was to win the Cross of Gallantry with Palm, with which he had invested me. He then told me that he himself had won it 31 times!

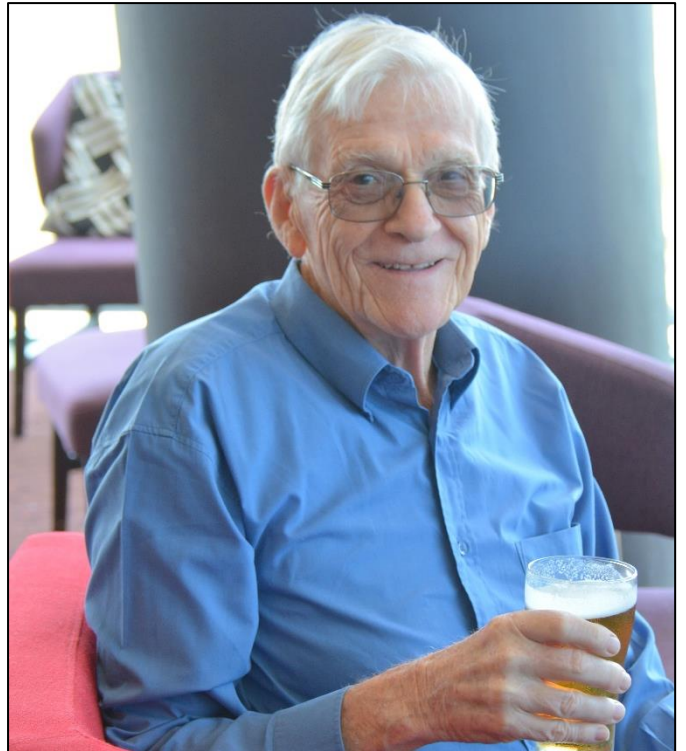
The Viet Cong had reduced their activity during April to a low level. This was probably because of the withdrawal of D 445 LF Battalion from the Province back to the Nui Be or May Tao mountains while the Chau Duc District Headquarters continued to act in a fragmented fashion. The one remaining uncertainty was the 3rd Battalion of the 33rd NVA Regiment. The base of this Battalion was the southern portion of the Long Khanh Province just to the north of our area and to the east of Courtenay Hill. For the preceding two months, this unit had posed a threat that, from the evidence of the increasing rate of contact we had with it, was becoming more serious.

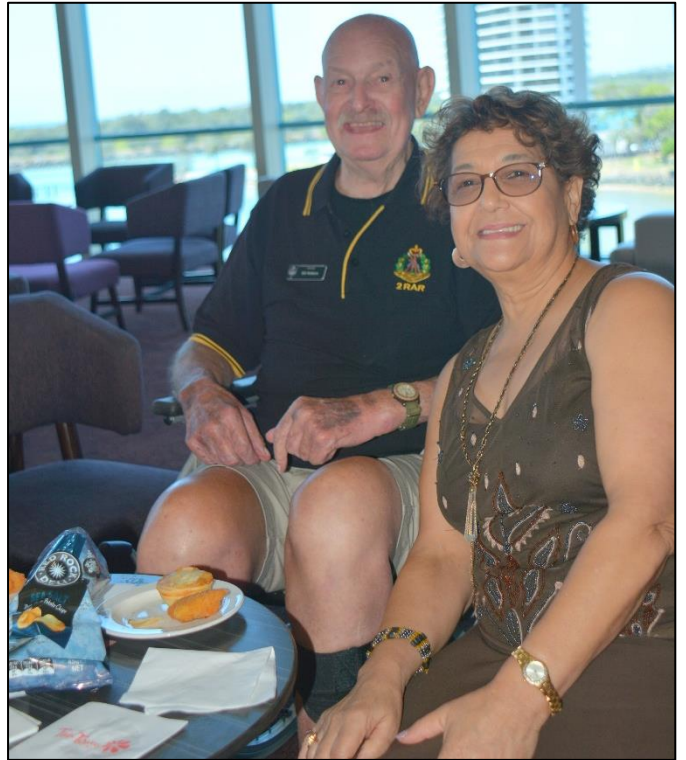
Alpha and Charlie Companies deployed to the area to the east and south of the Chau Lac Rubber plantation, which lies south-east of Courtenay Hill. At Bruce McDonald's request, they left in the afternoon after the parade for the presentation of awards.

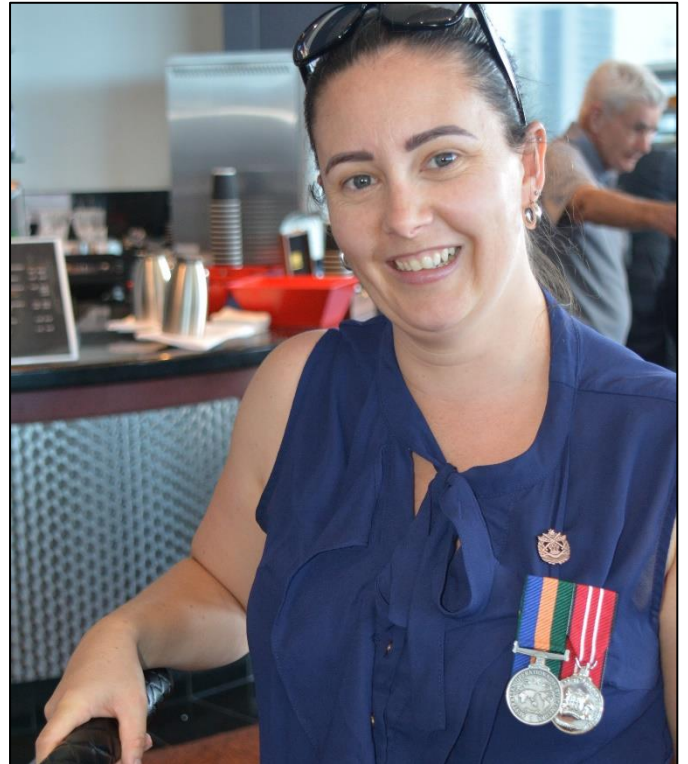
COMMEMORATION & CAMARADERIE 2019













HOME AT LAST

B Coy 2RAR during the Malayan Emergency 1955-1957

By Private Cyril (Frenchy) Ray

About a quarter of the Australian contingent in Malaya consisted of married men requiring married quarters. The government in Australia had promised that houses would be available for all, first to increase recruitment and secondly to solve the problem of the shortage of married quarters in Australia. Our leaders did not realise the large number of men who went rushing to the alter.



To be fair to the Army, a special organisation was formed in Penang to build modern houses as soon as possible. Their first move was to lease a hotel to accommodate the first arrivals. The place was named 'The Australian Hostel', which was manned by a whole Chinese crew, belonging to the same clan. It was fairly well run and remained in operation for many years.

The houses were built mostly in an area called Tanjong about 5 miles from the centre of town. Duplex houses were constructed for the "other ranks" and single bungalows for the officers. Each house had a little garden in front. A Malay gardener would look after the garden of 3 houses, an Amah (servant girl) was provided for every house to look after the children and help with the general household duties such as ironing, washing etc. the Amah had her own room at the back of the building, next door to the washing area. The amah was paid directly by the Army, but the directive of work was left to the soldier's wife. Most amah's were between 20 and 30 years old, some were Malays others were Chinese. Some were good workers some were lazy, but generally speaking we were pleased to have a built-in babysitter.

During our stay, we had two, both married and both very friendly. The first one was a Muslim and would not eat food cooked in our pots and pans as we used pig fat (bacon for instance). The other was the 4th wife of the local "bomo" (witch doctor) who was only seen once a month to collect his wife's pay-packet. She hated doing the ironing. Thinking that we would not notice it, she sub-contracted our ironing to another native woman in the village. We could not really complain as the ironing was certainly better done than when she did it herself at the beginning. The main snag was when we needed some item of clothes, the odds were that we could not find what we were looking for. The lady in the village was always late in the delivery (which was always done in our absence).

When my wife arrived on the 9th August, we stayed in the Australian hostel for a month awaiting the final construction of our house. We were delighted to move in eventually, but the furnishing was a major problem. Everything was eventually provided, from furniture, to teaspoons. It all came very slowly through the year. Our curtains were delivered the day we left the house in October 1957.

All in all we had a wonderful time, visiting the town with all the Asian shops, Temples, restaurants, bars, and hotels by the beach.

Many young women, who had never left Australia before, found it difficult to adapt. Life in Asia, at the time, was so far removed from the way of life we had in Australia. When the husband was away on the mainland with his unit, his young wife had to do the shopping which by itself was quite an adventure. Local shops did not have anyone speaking English

and all purchases had to be bargained for. More modern shops were available, but their prices were adjusted upward whenever an Australian walked in. Price tickets were never seen, and one had to ask what was the price of each item of groceries, a very good trick on part of the salesman, as after a few minutes of asking for everything, the purchaser gave up and handed over his or her shopping list for home delivery, without bothering about the bill.

Amah's used to visit each other every afternoon taking the young children with them. Whilst the kids were playing the Amah's told each other all the family secrets of their employers. All of which was immediately reported to everyone willing to listen. The stories were often misunderstood, as the amahs were not fluent in English. What was missing in the translation was added to by the imagination of the amah. This network of gossiping amahs created a system that enabled the women in the married quarters to know what was going on in the battalion many days ahead of the troops.

When a soldier was killed or wounded the married women in Penang would know all the details of the contact and the unit involved within minutes of the incident. One can assume that certain officer's wives did not realise the importance of security and spoke in front of their servants (Officers had 2 amah's). It was the Malayan version of the bush telegraph.

LASAH

On the 3rd November B Company was told by a group of aborigines that a large number of CTs were in the area. For two days the patrol followed the tracks of about 40 guerillas. To walk 8 miles through thick jungle is a great achievement by itself, especially knowing they could have been attacked by a CT group which outnumbered them four to one.

Late in the afternoon of the 5th, a sentry heard a noise which was immediately investigated by an aborigine and an Iban tracker. They noticed a CT walking up a hill presumably going back to his camp. The patrol immediately deployed into an ambush position around the hill. Unfortunately, an aborigine fired his shotgun at the CT wounding him.

The rest of the CTs fled instantly before the ambush position was completed. The next morning, the patrol moved into a large camp for up to 40 people. A rifle was found which originally was taken during the ambush on the Krudda Estate. The following day a patrol of C Company's forward scout spotted a CT. The scout, and a dog-handler fired on the CT who fell dropped his weapon and fled. The patrol spotted a camp and charged instantly into it, where 7 CTs responded by firing shotguns, rifles and throwing hand grenades. One CT was wounded but they escaped scattering in all directions. The patrol found a large quantity of supplies including food and medicine. The immediate assault proved to be effective, but the inaccurate firing spoiled what should have been a very good result.

The last contact of 2RAR came on 20 November, which could be classified as the greatest over-kill. The patrol of C Company was informed that a lone CT was resting in a tapioca plantation. Immediately a patrol was sent with 20 men, an officer as commander, 3 NCOs, two Iban guides, a tracker dog, a patrol dog and 2 dog-handlers. Three miles away another platoon was on stand-by, together with several Armoured cars in case the CT escaped. He did not and was killed instantly by the patrol commander. The dead CT was the one wounded by B Company on the 5th November. The Commanding Officer, Col. Ochiltree said it was a patrol well planned and efficiently executed by the Officer in charge.

Over the year 2RAR claimed 6 CTs killed and 8 wounded. 2RAR lost 3 men killed and other security forces also lost 3 men killed.

On the 5th December 1956, 2RAR handed over the area to the 1st Battalion, The Royal Lincolnshire Regiment.



2ND BATTALION, THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN REGIMENT ASSOCIATION, INC.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

II

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Years Served, eg 1970/71												

Theatres/Operational Areas Served:

Theatre/Op Area	Japan	Korea	Malaya	Vietnam	Cambodia	Rwanda
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Theatre/Op Area	East Timor	Solomon Islands	Iraq	East Timor	Afghanistan	Other
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Ladies Silk Scarf	\$57.00		Name Tag: Made to Order (Your preferred name"	\$28.00	
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