



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.

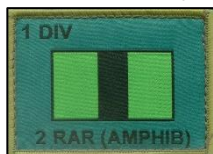
NEWSLETTER

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

JULY 2018

### THE BATTALION REPORT

#### Australian Army Skill at Arms Meeting:



PTE Bradburn from 2RAR (Amphib) was recently awarded the prize of 'top shot in Army' at AASAM. A quietly spoken but incredibly professional soldier, his award was very well deserved after a competitive elimination shoot-off. Of

note, there were 3 other 2RAR (Amphib) members in the top 20 and the 2RAR (Amphib) finished second to 1RAR in the team competition. I have it from a reliable source that 1 & 2RAR were first and second, daylight was third. Especially pleasing given 2RAR's new role, our snipers were the confirmed as best snipers in the ADF at AASAM, finishing second to the Japanese team by only 6 points in the international component. Once again, these guys went about their business quietly and professionally. As you can imagine, there was a very warm reception awaiting these guys at the boozier when they returned from AASAM.

#### 2018 SASR Selection:

The SASR selection course was completed recently and in a very tough process, 1 x 2RAR officer and 2 x 2RAR soldiers were successful.

#### Amphibious Exercises:

2RAR (Amphib) has started the annual amphibious campaigning season. Over the next month, half of the unit will be supporting the annual Sea Series of exercises on board the HMAS CANBERRA off the Nth QLD coast. The other half of the unit will have embarked onto HMAS ADELAIDE for the biennial Rim of the Pacific Exercise in Hawaii, returning in August. No prizes for guessing which was the preference of most of the soldiers. Clearly, this is a busy time of the year for the battalion and we have been working hard for the first half of the year to ensure that we put our best foot forward in terms of our new role, when under the gaze of an external audience. Particularly pleasing from my perspective was the great team effort from everyone in the battalion to get the soldiers and their equipment where they needed to be in order to embark on these ships in good order. Embarking a landing force onto a LHD is not an easy task and to do this in two separate locations, over two days, was a credit to our operations, transport and logistics personnel.

#### A world class Pre-Landing Force capability:

2RAR (Amphib) is on track to achieve meaningful progress towards becoming a world class Pre Landing Force. A promising young Lieutenant is on a 3 month exchange with 1st Recon Bn (USMC) in Camp Pendleton, California and during

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the Rim of the Pacific Exercise, the 2RAR contingent (Task Force Black) will be working closely with 3rd Recon Bn (USMC) to develop interoperability and familiarity with a range of specialist insertion techniques. I hope this is just the start of an enduring and constructive relationship between 2RAR (Amphib) and two of the world's premier conventional force reconnaissance units.

The Sea Series of exercises will also provide an opportunity to progress the capability. Prior to the amphibious assault, the 2RAR (Amphib) contingent will conduct a Full Mission Profile amphibious raid off the HMAS CANBERRA, using helicopters, alternate amphibious platforms and small boats, to secure the currently disused resort on Lindeman island. In the lead up to D Day, the 2RAR contingent will be inserting via helicopters/small boats, 72 hours ahead of the general purpose landing force, provided by 8/9 RAR. These activities will be key milestones for the unit and a good illustration of what the guys and girls have been able to achieve in relatively short order.

#### Being part of the 1st Division:

While still closely linked in with 3 Bde, we are also seeing the numerous benefits of being part of the 1st Division. There has been a significant investment in resources into 2RAR, linked to the new role. This has included specific individual combat equipment and clothing, additional small boats and ancillary equipment for small boat operations, amphibious specific storage/maintenance facilities and enhanced fitness equipment. The list goes on.

#### Operational Deployments:

Lastly, later this year 2RAR will provide a platoon sized force to deploy on operations to the Middle East. This is a very welcome development for soldiers who have been patiently conducting an amphibious trial on behalf of Army, whilst others deployed around them.

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### PRINTED FOR FREE

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

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## WARRIORS WHO HAVE MARCHED OUT

- 3395 Brigadier Jeffrey James "JJ" SHELTON, DSO, MC BCOF Japan, 66 Battalion 1947-48, 3RAR Korea 1951-52. OC A Coy Maryang San (MC). CO 3RAR Vietnam, Coral/Balmoral 1968-69, Commander 3rd Task Force, Townsville 1972-74. 'JJ' passed away 13 May 2018. Age: 91+ years. A true gentleman and a soldier's soldier. Thanks Arthur MacDonald
- 235023 Colonel Stanley John MAIZEY MID, BCOF Japan, 2RAR Korea 1953-54 Veteran of the HOOK Battle 24-26 July 1953., 2RAR Malaysia 1960-61, 5RAR Vietnam 1966, HQ 1ATF 1966-67. Stan passed away 18 June 2018 suffering Parkinson's disease. Age: 86+ years. Stan's funeral was held at Mount Cotton, Qld. Thanks Judith Maizey (Daughter), Roger Wainwright
- 26795 Private John Irwin PERRING MMG PI, 2RAR Korea 1953-54. Veteran of the HOOK Battle 24-26 July 1953. John passed away 13 May 2016. Thanks Terry Dinneen
- 12917 Private Gordon James BULL, 2RAR Korea 1953-54. Veteran of the HOOK Battle 24-26 July 1953. Passed away 9 September 2014. Thanks Terry Dinneen
- 33730 Corporal Frederick James WINDEBANK, 2RAR Korea 1953-54. Veteran of the HOOK Battle 24-26 July 1953. Passed away 7 November 2014. Thanks Terry Dinneen
- 2401537 Leslie Martin WASLEY, 2RAR Korea 1953-54. Veteran of the HOOK Battle 24-26 July 1953. Passed away 30 November 2014. Thanks Terry Dinneen
- 2792875 Private John Thomas GRIFFIN, 2RAR Vietnam 1970-71; 8 Sect 6 PI B Coy. John suffered cancer followed by a Stroke at Westmead Hospital, NSW. Age: 69+ years. John's funeral was held on 17 April at Castlebrook Cemetery, Rouse Hill, NSW. Thanks Jock Cassidy, Phill Evenden, Evan Griffin (Son)
- 2793299 Private Desmond Gerrard REDGROVE, 2RAR Vietnam 1970-71. Des passed away Saturday 3 February 2018. Age: 69+ years. A Service was held at St Joseph's Catholic Church, East Maitland, NSW. Thanks Geoff Daly
- 38314 Corporal William Joseph (Bill) DAVISON, 2RAR 1967, A Sqn, 3 Cav Regt 1967-68, 2RAR 1968, 1970-71. Bill passed away on 7 June from lung cancer. Age: 74+ years. Veterans attended his funeral, and the last post was played at his burial. Bill was stoic to the end. Thanks Wally Musgrave, Jason Davison (one of Bill's sons)
- 2785455 Craftsman Ian William DUERS, 2RAR Vietnam 1968 (RAEME). Ian passed away on 1 February 2018. Age: 73+ years. Recorded in the Journal of the Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia.
- 5716966 Private Murray John CARTER, 1 ARU 1970 Vietnam, 2RAR 1970-71. B Coy. John passed away from a heart attack. Age: 69+ years. John's funeral was held at Karrakatta Cemetery, Booragoon, WA on 26 April. Thanks Roger Carter (Brother), Jock Cassidy
- 27029 Sergeant Malcolm Clive RANDALL, 1RAR LCpl Korea 1954-55. 2RAR Sgt Malaya 1955-57. No further information. Thanks Campbelltown RSL, Terry Dinneen
- 2783572 Private Sidney Charles (Sid) POWELL, 2RAR Vietnam 1967. D Coy (Coy Sig). Sid passed away on 16 April 2018. Age: 73+ years. Sid was Coy Sig for John Knell OC D Coy. Funeral was held at Albany Creek, Qld. Thanks Wally Konewic
- 12314 Warrant Officer Class Two Gregory William POOR, 1RAR Korea 1954-55 (Cpl), 3RAR 1956, 2RAR Malaysia 1960-61 (Cpl). Greg's funeral was held on 19 April 2018. Gone, but not forgotten. Thanks Allan Whelan

Continued from page 1

It is fitting recognition of the consistent level of performance they have maintained over several years.

Needless to say, when the list of those deploying was read out at the boozier, the audience was very attentive. Importantly, this will be the first of a number of similar sized deployments to the middle east for the battalion over the next couple of years.

In short, the members can be confident that the battalion is in good shape and that the soldiers continue to be fine custodians of the traditions of a battalion that is, second to no one.

Doug Pashley  
CO 2RAR (Amphib)

\*\*\*

- 477617 Lance Corporal John David MCLINTYRE, 2RAR 1970-71 BHQ Int Sect (RNZIR) Vietnam. John passed away 14 May 2018 from lung and liver cancer. John's ashes were scattered in Hauraki Gulf, NZ. Thanks William Num, Rick Avery
- 4721298 Private David Clyde TIVER, 1 ARU, 8RAR Malaysia 1967, Vietnam 1969-70, 1 ARU, 2RAR 1970-71 Vietnam. David's Funeral Service was held in the Florey Chapel, Centennial Park, Pasadena, SA on 22 June 2018. Thanks, Stephen Marr
- 1732374 Private Leslie Reuben (Les) PLESTER, 2RAR Vietnam 1967-68. (WIA) Aslt Pnr PI. Les passed away suddenly on 2 June 2018. Age: 72 years. Les had prepaid his Cremation and he chose not to have a Funeral. Forever in our Hearts. Thanks Julie (Daughter), John Misztal



*Yes, you'll always march beside us,  
And when our time is through  
We'll muster on that "Last Parade"  
To march again with you.*

## MALAYAN EMERGENCY: NOMINAL ROLL

The Malayan Emergency conflict began after three estate managers were murdered in Perak, northern Malaya, by guerrillas of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP).

In addition to air and infantry forces, Australia provided artillery and engineering support, and an air-field construction squadron built the main runway for the air force base at Butterworth. The conflict lasted 13 years with thirty-nine Australian servicemen killed during this conflict.

Staff and volunteers at the Australian War Memorial are currently researching, digitising and indexing records to create a searchable roll representing Malayan Emergency, Malay Peninsula and Indonesian Confrontation.

The Roll will be due for release online in June 2019.

## The Malayan Wars

After some 48 years of providing documentation, asking every incumbent Minister for Veterans' Affairs to get the task done, asking the RSL to help to record and publish the Nominal Rolls for the Malayan Emergency and the Indonesian Confrontation.

It appears that someone has put politics well to one side in order to acknowledge the commitment that Australia provided to Malaya and then Malaysia post WW2.

We will never be advised the whys and wherefores of the reasons for the delays of 58 years and the 54 years respectively, since the Cease Fire of the Malayan Emergency in August 1960, and the Indonesian Confrontation in August 1966.

National Malaya & Borneo Veterans Association Australia Inc  
President: Brian Selby (SA, NT)

## THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Welcome to the July 2016 edition of Ringo. The committee continues to be busy with a number of projects under development.

I hope that you enjoyed your ANZAC Day activities in your respective areas. Rick Hollingdrake represented the Association at the ANZAC Day Dawn Service at the National Memorial Walk and also led the march in Brisbane. I attended the Mooloolaba Dawn Service organised mainly by Ian Atkinson, one of our members. I then attended the Maroochydore march and service at Cotton Tree. Both these events were extremely well attended.

In the last edition of Ringo, I gave incorrect information regarding the painting of The Hook and the Battalion's Silver Soldier. I stated that these items had been gifted to the Battalion where in fact the painting was purchased mainly through Regimental Funds while Ringo was purchased by the Officers' Mess and paid for by members through the silver fund. It was presented to the Officers Mess in December 1963. Additionally, I indicated that there had been no legacy left to the Battalion from the Vietnam war. This is also incorrect as there are eight original paintings and sketches by Ken McFadyen which are framed and displayed at the 2RAR Headquarters. These paintings and sketches were commissioned by 2RAR Regimental Funds in 1968 after the return of the Battalion from Vietnam. Copies of these paintings and sketches are contained in "The ANZAC Battalion in South Vietnam 1967-68" which records the Battalion's first tour of Vietnam. Hopefully this will set the record straight.

In April this year the government announced the appointment of Lt Gen Angus Campbell, AO DSC, to the position of Chief of the Australian Defence Force with effect July this year. Lt Gen Campbell was a previous CO of 2RAR and the Association sent a message of congratulations on behalf of all the Association members.

2RAR continues to develop its amphibious expertise with a series of exercises both with HMAS CANBERRA off the Nth QLD coast as well as on board HMAS ADELAIDE for the biennial Rim of the Pacific Exercise in Hawaii. The unit has also identified a number of outstanding achievements by its members and on behalf of the Association I would like to congratulate the following members:

Pte Justin Gow who received the recent Chief Instructor Award for the soldier who displayed outstanding leadership and field craft skills on Subject 1 Cpl Army Course – session 0277;

Pte Cody Potts who received the Trainee Merit Award for displaying outstanding leadership skills, knowledge and attitude throughout the Subject 1 Cpl Army Course – session 0278; and

Pte Keiren Bradburn from 2RAR (Amphib) was recently awarded the prize of 'top shot in Army' at Australian Army Skill at Arms Meeting.

Congratulations to all three members for their exceptional accomplishments. Well done.

The RAR Corporation AGM and RAR Association Conference will be held in Townsville from 6-9 October this year.

This year's AGM and Reunion will again be held at the Twin Towns Services Club Tweed Heads 26-28 October this year. Initial planning has commenced, and I would like to see as many of our members there as possible. It should again be a most enjoyable get-together.

Thanks again to our erstwhile Editor Rick Hollingdrake for again producing a fine newsletter.

Leo Van De Kamp  
President

Page 7: Richard Hawkins to be awarded Medal for Gallantry.

## AGM, COMMEMORATION & REUNION 2018

The AGM will be held on Sat 27 Oct 18 in the ANZAC Room Tweed Heads & Coolangatta RSL, the Commemoration Service at Chris Cunningham Park (under shade), the Memorial Fountain is being restored, and the Reunion at Twin Towns Services Club.

Looking forward to seeing YOU.

## MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

In 2018 committee meetings will be held as follows:

- Wed 16 Feb 18 ✓
- Wed 6 Jun 18 ✓
- Wed 3 Oct 18
- Wed 4 Apr 18 ✓
- Wed 1 Aug 18
- Wed 5 Dec 18

## MEMBERSHIP

Membership of the Association is open to any person who has served in 2RAR after 16th October 1945: past members of 66 Bn AMF; 2RAR; 2RAR/NZ (ANZAC); 2RAR MTF-3; 2/4RAR; and all ranks serving in 2RAR (AMPHIB).

Classes of Members: Ordinary, Associate, Honorary, & Life.

## DONATIONS

We appreciate financial donations 'big and small', and we thank these members for their recent support.

'Kiwi' Gibbons	Ron Walker	Brian Cooper
Henry Chisholm	Bob Wickes	Michael Collins

## MEMBERS' DRAW

Congratulations to Robert DENHAM, Woonona, NSW winner of the financial Members' Draw held on 3 April who received the book: Afghanistan: Australia's War by Gary Ramage & Ian McPhedran © 2014. Robert served in Vietnam 1970.

Congratulations also to Ross WILSON, Shell Cove, NSW winner of the financial Members' Draw held on 5 June who received the book: Afghanistan: Australia's War by Gary Ramage & Ian McPhedran © 2014. Ross served in Vietnam 1967.

This is the 10<sup>th</sup> year of the draw.

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## 2RAR ASSOC. EMAIL LIST

Not receiving emails from us? Left out of the loop? In the dark? Subscribe to the Secretary's Email List.

Email the Secretary! 2rarsecretary@gmail.com

## RINGO NEWSLETTER

In April I advised that RINGO will be sent out by Email to those who wish to receive it that way. All others will continue to receive RINGO by Australia Post.

Are you happy to receive RINGO by Email?

Contact: 0407 926 270; 2rarsecretary@gmail.com

Gordon Hurford, AM  
Secretary

### **DONATIONS: 2RAR HISTORICAL COLLECTION**

Have you served, or a relative served, in the 66th Bn 2nd AIF, 2AR, 2RAR or 2/4RAR? Do you have images, gear, medals, maps, photographs, books, movies or your relative's which form the lineage of today's 2RAR (Amphib)? Are they sitting in a box or a trunk not seeing the light of day with the possibility they could be discarded?

The Battalion has a rich history: The Dutch East Indies, Japan, Korea, Malaya, Malaysia, South Vietnam, Rhodesia, Cambodia, Somalia, Rwanda, East Timor, The Solomon Islands, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Timor Lesté.

We are interested in the Battalion's daily routine, Exercises, Sport, Parades, Bn Balls, and the Edgar Towner, VC Club (ETVCC). We would like you to consider donating these items.

We would like the original slides, but if you don't want to part with the originals, digital images can be scanned copies. (1200dpi). Remember your negatives and photos are slowly degrading. (We can archive them in climate-controlled rooms). These items will be available to view.

The museum is funded by donations, sponsors and grants, and if you are an individual or business that would like to be a "Friend of the 2RAR Historical Collection" please contact the Curator.

The museum is looking to upgrade and refurbish the Historical Collection. If you would like to visit the Museum, or donate to the collection, contact the Curator. I am very keen to get in touch with original 66Bn veterans!

Jason Harrison (Mr.)

Mob: 0419 749 198

Email: 2RAR.Museum@gmail.com

Postal address:

2RAR Museum Curator

Samichon Lines

Lavarack Barracks QLD 4813

### **KERRY SMITH'S DONATION**

The 2RAR Museum has received a donation of memorabilia on the passing of 33614 Sergeant Kerry Albert SMITH. Kerry was the Bandmaster in 2RAR in Puckapunyal, and Korea (1953-54). A veteran of the HOOK.

The items donated include Kerry's medals, diaries, and a scrap book of original photographs, including a recent trip to Korea and 'The Hook'.

Mrs Phyllis Smith travelled to Townsville, and along with her son Paul (Townsville), donated the items. This was an emotional time and a wonderful gesture to place his donation in the care of the Battalion Museum.

### **MYSTERY TOUR & LUNCHEON**

**Sunday 28 October 2018**

The Committee has arranged a Mystery Tour & Luncheon to complete a wonderful Annual Reunion 2018 weekend.

Buses will provide transport to our mystery venue and the cost will be minimal. The cost of lunch to be paid for according to personal choice. If you wish to participate on our Mystery Tour & Lunch, please advise Aub:

Aub Terry

Email: kbterry45@gmail.com

Mob: 0412 396 103

We want to have sufficient bookings for the buses, and for the venue. Your earliest attention to this matter would be gratefully appreciated.

### **DVA WEBSITE: NOMINAL ROLLS**

This website combines Nominal Rolls: WW2, Korea, Vietnam, and First Gulf War. NB: Malaya/Malaysia: June 2019.

View the website here: <http://nominal-rolls.dva.gov.au/home>

### **VALE: BRIGADIER JEFFREY JAMES SHELTON DSO MC**

James Shelton was born in Melbourne on the 29th of June 1926. He attended Scotch College in Melbourne, and then Bendigo High School, before going on to study engineering at Melbourne University.

Shelton entered Duntroon as a cadet in February 1944. After graduating in December 1946, he was sent to Japan to serve with the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan joining the 66th (Australian Infantry) Battalion. He returned to Australia two years later, having been promoted to acting captain.

He next served as adjutant to a Citizens' Military Force battalion in Adelaide, which is where he heard about the start of the Korean War. Shelton was sent to the reinforcement holding unit in Japan in 1951 and joined 3RAR as a reinforcement officer after the battle of Kapyong. He commanded A Company during the battle of Maryang San, for which he was awarded a Military Cross for his personal bravery and leadership.

After returning to Australia in 1952, Shelton was sent to England for a two year posting with the British Army. Here he attended numerous infantry courses and was attached to a British Battalion based at Luneberg in Germany, as part of the British Army of the Rhine.

On his return to Australia, Shelton served at the School of Infantry at Singleton before being posted as adjutant to Duntroon, where he was reunited with his friend and former commanding officer, Colonel (later General Sir) Frank Hassett. Two years later, Shelton was posted to the Defence Force Staff College at Quetta in India. It was a posting he thoroughly enjoyed.

His next posting was to Army Headquarters in Melbourne. During this posting Army HQ transitioned to Canberra. Shelton returned to 3RAR as a company commander, before being promoted to lieutenant colonel. Another two-year posting to England followed, this time as an exchange instructor at the British Army Staff College, then located at Camberley. During this period Shelton met luminaries such as Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery.

On his return to Australia at the start of 1967, Shelton was posted as commanding officer of 3RAR, then based at Woodside, South Australia. He was delighted to command the battalion with which he had already seen so much service and felt it to be the pinnacle of his service career. 3RAR deployed to Vietnam at the end of the year and was soon on operations in Phuoc Tuy Province. Shelton and his men took part in numerous operations in Vietnam, most notably the battles of Coral and Balmoral in May of 1968, in which the battalion experienced the most sustained combat experienced by Australian soldiers in the Vietnam War. Shelton was awarded the Distinguished Service Order for his leadership during the long month of near-constant fighting.

After returning to Australia, Shelton returned to Army HQ and was promoted to colonel. After further postings to Citizen Military Forces, regular army units, and headquarters, he was promoted to brigadier. In 1972 he was given command of the 3rd Task Force in Townsville. In 1974 Shelton returned to Army Headquarters in Canberra. Following his retirement in 1980, he was made honorary colonel of the Australian Army Band Corps, a position he held for 14 years.

Sunday 13 May 2018 marked the 50th anniversary of the first battle of Coral. While watching the ceremony from his hospital bed, Jim Shelton, who had been unwell for some time, closed his eyes and passed away peacefully. He was 92 years old.

Shelton will be remembered by those who knew him and those who served with him as a true gentleman and a soldier's soldier. Vale Brigadier Jim 'JJ' Shelton.

## HOC: BRIGADIER JASON BLAIN DSC CSC

In 2018, Brigadier Blain had the great honour of assuming regimental appointments as the Head of Corps of the Royal Australian Infantry and Regimental Colonel of the Royal Australian Regiment. He is also a director on the board of the



Royal Australian Regiment Foundation and has a strong interest in the wellbeing and resilience of serving members and veterans.

He was born in Mossman, North Queensland, and completed his schooling in Ingham. After attaining a Bachelor of Arts, he attended the Royal Military College Duntroon, graduating into the Royal Australian Infantry Corps in 1991.

During his career, Brigadier Blain has served in a wide range of

regimental and staff appointments including three years as a career adviser in the Directorate of Officer Career Management–Army, for which he was awarded the Conspicuous Service Cross.

As an Infantry officer he has commanded at all levels within the Royal Australian Regiment (RAR) and was privileged to be the Commanding Officer of the 6th Battalion during 2008-09.

Brigadier Blain's operational experience includes company command in East Timor, and service in Afghanistan. During 2007 he served as an operations officer in the Headquarters of the International Security Assistance Force in Kabul. From January to June 2010 he commanded Mentoring Task Force One (MTF-1) in Uruzgan Province. In recognition of sustained outstanding service by the men and women of MTF-1 during an intensive operational tour the task force was awarded a Meritorious Unit Citation. From July to October 2010 he served as the inaugural Deputy Commander of Combined Team Uruzgan. For his 2010 service in Afghanistan Brigadier Blain was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

## COMMEMORATION: PETER (BARNEY) LYONS

2276248 Private Peter (Barney) James LYONS 4 Sect 5 PI B Coy, was 24 when he was killed in South Vietnam on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1968 during Operation Pinnaroo in the Long Hai Hills south east of Nui Dat.

*On Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> March, Peter's family were sitting around the lounge room reading a letter from Peter and were very happy, because Peter said, 'dear mum and dad, I'll be coming home in June.' 12 hours later, Father Fitzgerald arrived in Thomas Street and informed the family that he had been killed in Vietnam the day before.*

Peter was remembered during a commemorative service at his graveside in Old Junee cemetery on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2018, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death. Members of 1RTB Kapooka provided the catafalque party. Wreaths, bagpipes and the Last Post made for a very solemn service. Family members attended, including John Curtis, who also served in South Vietnam, gave the Eulogy on the family's behalf.

A good contingent of 5 PI travelled from various States. Norm Devereux, Peter's section commander, gave a touching eulogy that spoke to Peter's character. It was a great loss to us the day he died at the ruins of the Dinh Co Monastery in the Long Hai hills. He was killed by an M16 anti-personnel mine. Senator Jim Molan AO DSC (former Army Major General) was also in attendance.

## MISSING IN ACTION IN KOREA

**2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment**

3/3706 Corporal John Berkley ASHE

2/401173 Private Edmund George BOURKE

*Rest in Peace*

## UNIT CITATION FOR GALLANTRY: (UCG)

### Royal Australian Navy Helicopter Flight Vietnam

During the 2RAR 1967-68 tour of South Vietnam, 9 B Coy machine gunners were attached to the RAN Helicopter Flight Vietnam (RANHfV) which was part of the 135th US Army Assault Helicopter Company in the Experimental Military Unit (EMU).

The B Coy soldiers who flew as door gunners were:

Bill Wearne	Stan Jaruga	Bob Devers
Geoff Kingdon	Roland Lee (dec.)	Dave Mansfield
Ralph Hoger	AK (Kerry) Pearce (dec.)	Rob Carmichael

Reports are saying that individuals have to apply for the UCG, but our RAN contact says that is not the case.

Congratulations to the 9 soldiers involved. They served with courage and determination in an unfamiliar role. They did themselves and 2RAR proud.

## SNIPPETS

- I got a surprise in the RINGO April edition as I was the winner of the members draw. Thank you 2RAR Assoc. I have been out of the army for 53 years and still think of the friendship and mateship that was there. I look forward to ANZAC Days and other events and to be able to mix with mates again. David Hartcher
- Leading a 4-man Ptl on Exercise in NE Malaysia, as we entered a wet depression in the Jungle an overpowering stench of Tiger pervaded our collective senses. We about faced and slowly withdrew. Later, during a nav check (on higher ground) and having sat down beside a rotten tree, I saw the tail end of a multi-coloured krait. The snake was put to death; the Tiger survived. Rick Hollingdrake (L/Cpl 1RAR)

## LETTERS

I read with interest Bryan Pannell's snippets in copies of Ringo and it has brought back memories as I served in 4 PI B Coy along with Don Godley, but we were in different platoons, but never the less we were in a very good Company led by Major Arthur Rolfe who kept us very fit as each morning while in camp he would conduct the physical training.

I remember very clearly his squatting duck walks as he always carried a whistle and when he blew the whistle you would know when to squat and duck walk. It helped everyone to keep up our fitness.

Curly Lamb the CSM was as tough as they come, but a very fair man who held the company in good stead. Curly later presented Arthur with a mounted whistle at his farewell when he was posted after serving 12 months. Arthur did shed a tear that day and thanked us all for our camaraderie. Maj John Church became the new OC for the remaining 12 months.

Peter Elkins the CQMS was the tug of war guru who trained selected soldiers from the company in competition events at unit and brigade level and was successful in winning most of the tugs against the Brits and Kiwis. They were known as the Company Jock strappers.

B Coy had some very good Senior NCO's, Sgt's Alan Bulow, Ted Wade and Ackie Dummett were all experienced and very capable in their jobs as platoon Sgt's they gave advice not only to soldiers but to the officers.

Abdul Lynch, Norm Hardy, Bill Dickey, Wally Davies, and Rock Hudson were all very good capable NCO's. John May was my mentor a great man and an experienced NCO was my section commander for a period and I learnt much from him as a young soldier. It was a good grounding for me when I later became a platoon sergeant in Vietnam. B Coy in 1961-63 was a professional company which produced reliable efficient NCO's and officers who served later in other units.

Henry Chisholm  
Point Clare, NSW



## STORIES FROM AN EAST TIMOR VETERAN

Anzac Day is once again upon us and given the heightened tension in Australia's political climate, I'm sad to say that it will more than likely be the focus of a good deal of anti-Australian smearing from the usual culprits. I know that many Australians hold Anzac Day dear to them and it's unlikely to be easily shaken from our collective identity, nor will it be surrendered from our grasp as a sacred day of commemoration and celebration. It is important to note however that Australia's military prowess in the various conflicts that we've found ourselves in over the last century, are something to behold and shouldn't be something confined to the one day.

Yet we've allowed our national psyche to barely acknowledge Remembrance Day, Long Tan Day, and the anniversary of the Battle of Beersheba among others. It's also critical to point out that the fact that we've allowed the campaign in Malaya and the Korean War to be almost entirely forgotten is a national shame which, more than likely, has a great deal to do with certain academics wishing to divert attention from a successful operation against Communism by Western Forces. The focus of that fight has been squarely laid on our involvement in Vietnam, which was of course more controversial and therefore easier to criticise/demonise.

In short, I do mourn the loss of public acknowledgement of our military prowess which I directly attribute to the general negative sentiments towards Western strength that permeate through our public institutions, and it seems we're all too busy to care. I can't easily shrug off my own sense of guilt over this, as I too have been caught up in the hyper pace of contemporary, digital age living in a capital city. Yet recent events and random conversations with strangers have prompted me to give pause and reflect upon my own service in the Australian Regular Army. I must admit that at least part of why I don't have a great deal to say about my own service is that I look to those who served in places like The Western Front, Northern Africa, Papua New Guinea, and Vietnam with such adoration that it inevitably tends to dwarf my own experiences. This is not to say that I'm not immensely proud of my contribution to our national interests, it's just that other things tend to occupy my mind more than my army life these days. You're far more likely to run into me at Stolberg than you are at the local RSL. I'm more likely to be concerned over Melbourne FC's chances of getting into the finals, or how I'll get my hands on next week's episode of 'Game of Thrones' than reviewing my possible entitlements from the Department of Veterans' Affairs. My lifestyle and experiences are not uncommon for the soldiers of generation Y and the more I think about it, the more I see the way our soldiers tend to be a snapshot of our society. Should you ever observe a Vietnam veteran alongside an Iraq veteran it becomes apparent that there are very few things that so poignantly illustrate the changing face of our 'sons of ANZAC' and our society.

My name is Barry and I served as an infantry soldier and French linguist in the Second battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment (2RAR). I served in East Timor in 2007/08 and again in 2009. I've worked with our American partners on exercises along with the Papua New Guinean army and the French army. I'm of migrant background and was raised in the northern suburbs of Melbourne where I did much of my schooling. I never bring up the conversation of military service, but such conversations have a tendency of intruding into my social life. I do casual security work when I'm not at University and one of my colleagues is an American veteran who served two tours in Iraq. Recently I found myself without much of a response to his query as to why Australian soldiers aren't particularly vocal about their experiences and to why the Australian public aren't more inquisitive or vocally appreciative towards the service of their soldiers.

Personally, I find that most Australians are tremendously respectful of their service men and women and are always very polite and gracious towards those who have served and those who currently serve. In the interests of community engagement and support for my peers, I'll humbly share a small piece of my experience in the Australian Army.

While serving in East Timor in 2007 the battle group in which I was serving in was put on high alert and prompted to quickly react following the attempted assassination of President Jose Ramos Horta and Prime Minister Xanana Gusmau. The 3rd Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment – who had a standby Company ready – were reacted and deployed along with elements of the TAG branches of the Special Forces. We were moved around the countryside by helicopter and I saw parts of the country that were even less developed than what I had become accustomed to. During a week of heightened activity, we had an ambush set up at a road intersection in order to stifle the movement of armed men who had been spotted in our vicinity by our reconnaissance elements. For all of this excitement, one of the things that stands out in my mind from this trip is the manner in which the guys from 3RAR generously insisted that their cooks save us some bacon in anticipation of our return from a patrol. The patrol wasn't even that hard or eventful but hey, spare bacon. I personally never bought into the stereotype of them being an arrogant parachute battalion, and that experience only served to confirm my respect for them.

I could go on about the more tactical aspects of service life, but I think it's of more value to recollect an occasion where our platoon was on patrol during my second deployment and we stopped at a remote village in the hills somewhere in the West, close to the Indonesian border. There was a small vendor selling dumpling, pastry things – they may have been satay type things for all I can remember – and as can be expected the town dogs were eager to get a piece. One of the dogs managed to snatch one of these tasty snacks out of a small boy's hands and enthusiastically devoured it a couple of meters away. The child was upset and cried at having been denied such a culinary delight. It appeared that the boy's parents were consoling him in a 'well that's life in the hills' type manner – which is fair – but I found myself unable to stand idly by. I went over to the vendor and bought another one of these treats and promptly handed it to the boy before shooing away the dog. The boy stopped crying and looked at me in a very confused manner while his father smiled, thanked me and seemed to tell his son something to the effect of 'well aren't you a lucky little runt'.

I can't remember the name of the town and certainly couldn't point to it on the most detailed map of East Timor. I wouldn't be able to recognise the boy or his father if I was to see them today, but I like to think that this occasion and these aspects of service have resonated in the communities in which we've served. Much of the Australian public are more likely to hear about catastrophes in Afghanistan or Iraq than we are to hear about the running water, roads and schools that have been built during our deployments, and while much of the infrastructure we've provided may be destroyed, very few of us feel as though our efforts were in vain.

I offer this insight as a means of allowing our local community to understand what life is like for those of us who have served but also to pay homage to those who have been called upon to serve in much harsher conditions and more dangerous circumstances and to commemorate those we've lost.<sup>1</sup>

*"They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old;  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning  
We will remember them."*

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.xyz.net.au/stories-from-an-east-timor-veteran/>

## DROP SHORTS

### 14010, QX6555, 19942 Corporal Charles Mene MM WIA

Born on Mabuiag Island in the Torres Strait, Charles Mene was 24 years old when he enlisted for service in the Militia at the outbreak of the Second World War. Until February 1942 members of the Militia could serve only in Australian territory, while a separate Australian force was raised for service overseas.



*Corporal Charles Mene receives the Military Medal from British High Commissioner Sir Douglas MacGillivray, c. 1957*

In December 1939 Mene transferred to the newly formed Second Australian Imperial Force and travelled to Brisbane for training. This was the first time he had been outside the Torres Strait, but he quickly adapted, and was soon fighting in the rugged mountains of Syria as part of the 2/33rd Battalion.

By early 1942 the Australian government was forced to turn its attention to the Pacific and the heightened threat posed in the region following Japan's attack on Pearl

Harbor in December 1941. Mene's unit was sent to reinforce the battered and tired troops in New Guinea on the Kokoda Trail, and was later involved in the desperate battles at Gona, Ramu Valley, and Shaggy Ridge, before travelling to Balikpapan in Borneo.

In 1946 Mene was sent to Japan as part of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF). More than 16,000 Australians served in BCOF, and at the peak of its involvement was responsible for more than 20 million Japanese citizens in an area exceeding 57,000 square kilometres. Australian troops worked alongside British, Indian, and New Zealand troops to enforce the unconditional surrender of Japan, maintain military control, and supervise the demilitarisation of the country.

While Mene was in Japan he fell in love with a local woman, and they later married. In 1950 he enlisted for service in Korea with the 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (1952-53), 3rd Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (1953). There, his extensive combat experience saw him serve in a machine-gun platoon while occasionally leading less-experienced rifle companies in battle. On one occasion his section came under heavy artillery and mortar fire, during which Mene carried the wounded back to safety until all were out of harm's way. In 1952 he was awarded the Military Medal for the "courage and devotion to duty" displayed during his service.

Mene went on to serve in the Malayan Emergency, where Australians fought with British Commonwealth Forces against communist guerrillas hidden deep in the Malayan jungle. After two years in Malaya 1955-57, 1960-61 with 2nd Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment and some 22 years in the Australian armed forces, Mene was discharged and returned home to Australia.

## MEDAL FOR GALLANTRY

1735350 Private Richard Hawkins, MID be awarded the Medal for Gallantry. I have decided to recommend to the Governor-General that you be awarded the Medal for Gallantry for your action in Vietnam on 15 December 1970. (Courtenay rubber plantation) Darren Chester, 6 Jun 2018

## INITIATION TO WAR: THE HOOK

### On behalf of 2RAR Association: Lt Downey (dec.)<sup>2</sup>

By the end of April 1953, officers and senior NCOs of the Battalion had reconnoitred the forward positions, and the Platoon Sergeants and section 2ics had been in-situ since 29th April to again familiarise themselves with the area of operations and to guide in the main body.



*2RAR Fighting Patrol on "The HOOK" Samichon Valley, Korea 1953, Ivor Hele 1965*

It was during the familiarisation period that the Battalion had its first battle casualty. The NCOs were encouraged to join the Royal Fusilier patrols, and on the night of 30th April one such patrol became involved in a fire-fight, suffering casualties. Corporal Alan George Smith of 2RAR was killed in action in that fight.

On the night of 5th May 1953, the Battalion main body entered the line and assumed command of Hill 159 with C Company taking over the left forward knoll and spurs and B Company taking over the right forward knoll and spurs of the elongated feature. Two days later 3RAR relieved the 1st Battalion Durham Light Infantry on Hill 355.

By this stage the weather was warming, and there were severe rain storms which made life in the trenches difficult. Nevertheless, this did not prevent the policy of active patrolling in the valley, known locally as the 'Bowling Alley' between the allied and enemy lines. These enemy lines, as far as 2RAR was concerned embraced four main features directly opposite Hill 159. They were somewhat higher rising in the ridgeline from our left to right and culminating in Hill 227. Locally they were named 'Matthew, Mark, Luke and John'. The crest of these feature was some 1,000 metres from the defensive wire of the 2RAR positions. The valley floor ranged from about 250 metres to 800 metres across at the widest point, and it was in this area that patrol action by 2RAR concentrated.

Truly aggressive patrolling was entered into to wrest control of No-Mans-Land from the enemy. The US forces who had taken over during the deep winter months had failed to keep the enemy in check, and the enemy moved with some impunity up to the allied defensive wire.

From 5th May to 16th June 1953 each Platoon, conducted some thirty-six patrols on the nearer spurs of our own positions, on the spurs of the enemy positions and in the valley. The majority of these were fighting/ambush patrols, although individuals conducted lie-up patrols to gain vital intelligence, or sniping, and there were usually reconnaissance patrols moving with the fighting patrols. At each mine-wire gap each platoon had to provide a standing patrol of usually an NCO and four to give warning of any

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.koreanwaronline.com/history/oz/2rar/2rarA.htm>

enemy activity or provide covering fire for any patrol withdrawing under enemy pressure.

Other patrols included stand-by patrols to come to the assistance of any other patrol in trouble, and escort patrols for Engineers checking and maintaining the mine-wire. The patrol programme was considerably exhausting, but it generally achieved very pleasing results in forcing the enemy back to his own defensive positions.

Throughout May and early June, the main contacts with the enemy were on the left flank of the 2RAR position, on West Spur, London Ridge, Durham Ridge, and on a small knoll, Kigong-ni, known as the Mound, some 400 metres from the mine-wire gap Dingo. This particular knoll was about half-way between the enemy and the allied Main Line of Resistance, and it was thought important to be in possession of that knoll to secure tactical advantage of the situation applying to the left forward Company. A number of major clashes occurred in these areas, while active patrolling to the east along the Bowling Alley was relatively quieter. The main brunt of this ceaseless night fighting was borne by C Company and D Company who shared the patrolling on the left flank. It was those young soldiers trained by Lionel McCombe who were to take command in many very difficult situations.

*Among the outstanding trainers in the Battalion since March 1951 was the RSM, WO1 Lionel McCombe, who had selected so many bright young regular soldiers and given them extra tuition before first parade every morning. These young soldiers were the backbone of the Sergeants' Mess from that point onwards.*

At the end of May 1953, D Company relieved C Company as the left forward company, and A Company relieved B Company on the right flank. The reserve Companies were located on Hill 159 Rear and Hill 210 respectively. Patrolling from these Reserve Companies continued. As there was little for the 17pr guns of the Anti-tank Platoon to do they began transforming to a large rifle platoon and took up position between 2RAR's right flank and the left flank of the unit on Hill 355, and they conducted patrolling in the east of the valley. Situated within the Battalion area was a troop of Centurion tanks of 1st Royal Tank Regiment, one located on the crest line of Hill 210, another on the crest line Hill 159, and one in reserve.

While these provided some reassurance in attacking any new digging activity or movement on the enemy's Forward Defended Locality, they also caused some inconvenience in that they always drew enemy artillery and mortar fire when they themselves fired, and troops in the vicinity soon came to respect the enemy's accuracy with mortars and with artillery. To counter some of this enemy activity, Royal Navy aircraft often conducted bombing raids, and possibly caused some consternation among the enemy. Of course, the effect of these raids was unknown, but later evidence indicated that the Chinese had a most impressive underground defence system, tunnelling through from the rear slope to effect embrasures on the forward slope.

On 28th May 3RAR was relieved by the Durham Light Infantry, and went into reserve, and in turn 3RAR relieved 2RAR on 16th June 1953. The results of active patrolling might have been significant, but there was the cost in killed and wounded. 2RAR lost 10 killed, and 57 were wounded and 3 members were missing. One of these PTE Fred Speed was eventually returned from prisoner of war camps.

### **The Unknown Soldier**

*I crouched in a shallow trench on that hell of exposed beaches steeply rising foothills bare of cover a landscape pockmarked with war's inevitable litter piles of stones equipment ammunition and the weird contortions of death sculptured in Australian flesh I saw the going down of the sun on that first ANZAC Day the chaotic maelstrom of Australia's bleeding.*

### **RETURN TO ACTION: THE HOOK**

The 28th Brigade was now given responsibility for the positions on the left flank of the Commonwealth Division. To the left was the 1st US Marine Division and in particular, the 7th Regiment of that Division.

The Brigade's area consisted of a ridge line with the highest feature as Hill 146, and the whole shaped in the fashion of a 'hook' lying on its side. The most important part of this feature was what was called THE HOOK; this jutted out towards the enemy held ridge line which, in general, overlooked all the surrounding features. The HOOK had been hard-fought over in 1951 and in 1952 when occupied by the Black Watch. In May of 1953 the Duke of Wellington's Regiment fought a bloody battle for control of the left forward feature. They had been assisted by the King's Regiment, who eventually relieved the Duke of Wellington's.

In the relief of the King's Regiment, Brigadier Wilton, Commander, 28 Brigade, decided to allocate the left forward positions to 2RAR, and the right flank bordering the Samichon River to 3RAR. LTCOL Larkin's plans were that B Company would hold the main feature on the left forward position on the ridge, A Company would be placed on its right flank, and C Company would form the barb of the 'hook'. The Anti-tank Platoon was to be under command of B Company as an additional, albeit reinforced Rifle Platoon. It must be remembered that the Chinese Forward Defended Locality was nowhere further than 200 metres from the front bunkers of B Company, and at times the standing patrols, usually of an NCO and six were at times mere metres from similar enemy standing patrols.

Prior to the move platoon commanders spent a 24-hour period in the line with the King's platoon commanders as part of the familiarisation process, and accompanying one of their standing patrols, in the case of B Company, to Green Finger and Ronson, two very close relationship positions with the enemy. One of the lessons learnt on these missions was to keep off the radio net unless something was urgent. The carry of radio static and voice on a still night carried well into enemy territory. No fighting/ambush patrols were to be sent out.

The preparation for the move meant that only essentials were to be carried, as the full complement of equipment including ammunition was to be man-carried in from the debussing point, a distance of about 2 kilometres, certainly for those occupying the forward positions. The move of the Brigade was to be over two nights, the 9th July for 2RAR and 10th July for 3RAR.

The movement of the Battalion from Area 6 was anything but smooth, and the convoy of trucks jammed with other traffic throughout the short transfer. Military Police were seemingly unable to un-jam the blockage and rather than the forward companies, B Company and C Company taking over the HOOK positions at first light, it was about 1000 hours before all the troops were in position and the King's companies withdrawn. By contrast, and from later intelligence, the Chinese Division who initiated the attack on the HOOK later in July, moved on foot some 60 kilometres in just over 24 hours to take over their position.

A very rapid familiarisation began in each platoon area and those tasked with the night standing patrols given a briefing of routes out and in. The sniper section of SGT Hansen, PTE Tupper and PTE Ray were stationed at the furthest point forward of the forward platoon.

The defences were still in a very run-down state after the bombardments of May 1953 and to us there seemed to have been little done to rectify the situation. Digging during the day was not possible and this was perforce a night operation, when a platoon or more of the Reserve Company would be marched forward to undertake digging and riveting work. There gradually took shape a well-constructed bunker system, designed and supervised by a first-class Assault Pioneer



platoon. By the time of the Truce a well-constructed cut and cover trench system was nearing completion.

In the meantime, where trenches had collapsed through enemy shell and mortar attack, one kept fairly low to the ground. The bombardments in July virtually reduced the well-developed trench system to a shallow gutter, so heavy was the enemy artillery concentration. Here, the same section of trench system is shown after the bombardment.

The left flank of the Battalion was secured by C Company, and on the saddle connecting their position to the right flank of the 1st US Marine Division, a Contact Bunker was established and manned by a Corporal and six men. Further in to the 2nd Platoon, Company H of 3rd Battalion of the 7th Regiment was a 2RAR medium machine gun section. This was in the Main Line of Resistance and tasked to fire across the front of 2RAR, as was another section of medium machine guns located within A Company of 3RAR as shown on the altered map from the Official History.

Some very strong enemy pressure had been applied to the infantry and the MMG section on Hill 111 on two early occasions before the main HOOK battle. While the objective was not actually Hill 111, but rather Berlin, East Berlin and Boulder City, those on Hill 111 took a battering on 8/9th July and again of 19/20th July, and on both occasions the 2RAR MMG section played a major role in assisting in the defence of Hill 111.

Shelling and mortaring on all positions of the Battalion were a constant and accounted for nearly all the Battalion's casualties. The nightly standing patrols were seldom missing a fire-fight with the enemy. It was afterwards revealed that enemy tunnelling had occurred underneath the spur line to Green Finger, and it is thought that the enemy laid up here during the day and were very quick to come into action at last light. As with all patrolling at this particular time in the war, the dash to make position first was important. The loser in the race usually suffered the most casualties.

Normal patrolling and stand-to during darkness continued through July and the tempo of operations added to 'fatigue creep'. The constancy of the work of digging during the night, the constant bombardment by the enemy and the lack of sleep probably had some effect on all ranks in the Battalion. On 22nd July there was a changeover of B and D Companies, with B Company going into Reserve.

The night of 24/25th July was hectic! From about 2030 hours incoming artillery and mortars were generally at the rate of 30 a minute over most of the two forward companies and Hill 111 with fairly intensive shelling of the Reserve company area, Battalion Headquarters, and the Mortar base plate positions. The actions by individual soldiers, NCO and private soldiers alike, was inspirational. SGT Cooper's section on Hill 111 was, for some of that night, alone, as the enemy had created a gap between Marines and the MMG section, although eventually retaking the position. The composure of young NCO.s in calling in artillery fire onto their own position was courageous, as was the literally toe-to-toe personal fights around the positions on Hill 111 and the Contact Bunker. The standing patrols on Green Finger and Ronson on that same night were severely attacked and on Ronson, withdrawn after calling in defensive fire tasks. (6) The standing patrol on Green finger led by CPL Len Hayden remained and returned again on the night of 25th/26th July. Throughout these two nights night almost turned to day with the use of the Battalion's illuminating flares and those continually dropped by an aircraft flying backwards and forwards across the battle zone.

The accuracy and speed with which the Divisional artillery performed in defensive fire task was extraordinary. It is assessed that some 25,000 mixed rounds of shells and mortars were fired against the enemy. The only US shelling was right on target in the C Company, 2RAR jeep-head, all 75

rounds. By this stage of 1953 the Commonwealth Division was a formidable formation.

By first light on 25th July there were scene of great damage, both human and material. The enemy attacked again during the night of 25/26th July 1953, but with less enthusiasm and the attack petered out by early morning.

It is estimated that the enemy dead numbered some 3,000, and for 2RAR's period on the HOOK, the casualties were 15 killed and 72 wounded. The last two nights before the Truce was signed on 27th July cost the Battalion 5 killed and 24 wounded.

The cease-fire took effect at 1000 hours on 27th July 1953, and one of the conditions was to be clear of the agreed Demarcation Zone (DMZ) within a week. This involved each Company dividing itself into three elements, one element to establish a camp for the Battalion, one element to remove and recover as much as possible of the engineer's stores and equipment from the line, then demolish what couldn't be removed, and a third element to scour the whole area between the Forward Defended Localities, for missing soldiers' remains, weapons and other recoverable material.

The soldiers of the Battalion had performed with steadfast bravery against a full-on enemy attack under the most appalling conditions. Great advances were made to have a foolproof signals line system in operation, but the bombardment saw this blown to pieces. Normal radio traffic became unusable and there was the reliance on CW bands with Morse Code. Torrential rain clogged drainage of the trench system and at times troops were standing waist deep in water. Throughout the period 9th-27th July 1953 the soldiers of 2RAR were indefatigable! Like Australian soldiers wherever they have served they made the most of every situation with initiative, humour and aggression towards the enemy. It was a great Battalion!

#### **FIRE SUPPORT BASES CORAL & BALMORAL, & UNIT CITATION FOR GALLANTRY**

The Battles of Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral are not widely known in Australia. Yet they were among the most important of our country's long commitment to the war in Vietnam. The Unit Citation for Gallantry is richly deserved. In the words of the Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal report – the citation is for "everyone who was there".

The Battle Honour 'Coral-Balmoral' is shared by the 1st and 3rd Battalions, the Royal Australian Regiment, the 1st Armoured Regiment and the 3rd Cavalry Regiment. The Royal Australian Artillery's 102 Field Battery received the Honour Title 'Coral' in 2008, the year of the battle's 40th anniversary.

Australian troops moved into the area of operations, known as 'Bondi' in Bien Hoa Province on 12 May 1968 and began setting up Fire Support Base Coral. They didn't know how strong the enemy presence in the area was until a devastating attack fell upon them less than twelve hours later: Nine Australians were killed. The artillery and mortar men were the hardest hit.

The North Vietnamese and Viet Cong could not tolerate the Australian presence across the route they used to attack Saigon and over the next 16 days North Vietnamese troops launched another determined attack against Coral and twice attempted to drive the Australians from nearby Fire Support Base Balmoral.

By early June, after suffering devastating losses, the North Vietnamese conceded this route to Saigon. The last Australians left the area on the sixth. Twenty-six Australians lost their lives in three and a half weeks at Coral and Balmoral. Almost 100 were wounded. At least 270 Vietnamese were killed, though we will never know the true figure.

All of those who served at Coral and Balmoral earned a proud place in Australia's wartime history.

## **VICTOR WINKLER'S MILITARY INTERLUDE**

### **Final Preparations: South Vietnam**

The Corps Training period at Enoggera finished towards the end of July (1966). There were some postings of soldiers to other sub-units of the Battalion as the Coy reduced to its organisational strength but most of the Corps trainees remained in D Coy. They were now trained soldiers and their pay was increased accordingly. The coming months was the first opportunity for the new OC who had marched-in a few weeks previously, to influence the training of the Coy. The syllabus for Corps Training was set by AHQ and could not be altered without their authority. Now, depending on what resources were available the OC could, to a large degree plan and organise the further training of D Coy.

Physical training continued, and Battle Efficiency Standard was achieved. Soldiers could now march nine miles (14.5km) in full battle order in less than two hours and run two miles (3.2km) in full battle order in less than 18 minutes, but not on the same day. The rope climb, and carry were part of these tests.

With Corps training completed and the basics in place, fine tuning of Battalion Standing Operating Procedures and the intangibles such as co-ordination and teamwork were emphasised. Of course, the Coy also took its turn at duties which occupied a week out of every four or five weeks. In August the Battalion received a reminder of what their training was about when news was received of the close call and casualties their sister Battalion (6RAR) received at Long Tan. It was a timely reminder and brought home the seriousness of the business they were about.

Administration was not neglected and continued in parallel with training. New issues of equipment were received, GP boots were a novelty when first issued and meant that running on bitumen was quieter, but not necessarily any easier.

The most frequently used training areas available to the Battalion were Enoggera Hill, adjacent to the barracks which contained a 25-metre range, Greenbank with a larger variety of firing ranges and limited manoeuvre training areas and was an hour's drive away and Tin Can Bay was several hours drive north of Brisbane and provided a field firing capability and had larger manoeuvre areas. All were put to good use and became familiar to the soldiers of D Coy.

Exercise Barrawinga dominated the final quarter of 1966. It took place in Shoalwater Bay Training Area about 60km north of Rockhampton. Except for a small number of soldiers who could be accommodated in the battalion vehicles the rest of the Battalion travelled to and from Shoalwater Bay by a specially chartered train. This exercise was conducted over a six-week period and included another RAR Battalion and troops from several overseas allies, numbering in total some 8000.

Normally the larger the exercise and the higher the control the less the troops have to do. This exercise was no exception and as the first phase was defensive in nature the troops were largely inactive except when wearing out their tools entrenching while digging-in on top of a steep ridge overlooking an airfield.

Rations for this exercise were 24-hour packs of which there were five types in order to provide some variety. D Coy had the choice of the same two types for the whole exercise and were not impressed. For the second phase of the exercise they were more mobile and travelled on foot over wide areas of the 'Bay'.

Endurance was probably the main attribute D Coy gained from the exercise and equally the company got to know and work with one another within the organisation that they would now take to South Vietnam as the daily routine, patrolling and SOP's were practiced over and over.

On return to Enoggera, Christmas leave was a welcome break from an intensive training period, an intensity that was to increase in the New Year on their return from leave.

The Battalion began to re-assemble from leave in mid-January to find new officers had been posted in to the most senior positions of the Battalion and included a new Commanding Officer. He was not sited for a couple of weeks as his first duty was a reconnaissance visit to South Vietnam.

Immediately on return from leave the rifle Coys began a three-week course at JTC. D Coy headed off in mid-February and returned in early March and then moved to Tin Can Bay for a week's field firing of all organic Coy weapons, although some types of ammunition were in short supply.

Within a week of the Coy's return from Tin Can Bay to Enoggera they were off again to Shoalwater bay for the final testing exercise Get Set which was of two weeks duration. This exercise was assessed and conducted by HQ Northern Command and the umpires and assessors were most concerned that individuals and each level of Command and administration of the battalion could function properly in all the circumstances they were likely to encounter. They passed, and under similar conditions they were likely to encounter. By mid-April they were back in Enoggera.

There was not much time left to ensure everything was up to DPI standard. Baggage and clothing had to be marked, kit checks ensured that everyone had all of their clothing and equipment and it was properly marked and serviceable. Medical documents were checked to ensure all the appropriate vaccinations had been given, dental checks ensured that teeth were serviceable, wills were made out and lodged and NOK details were checked to ensure they were correctly recorded.

Seven days pre-embarkation leave was granted wherein winter uniforms, civilian clothing and personal effects not required in South Vietnam were stored or secured or left with families and friends. The Coy returned from leave in time for the Farewell Parade with family and friends in attendance and the next day the advance party left for South Vietnam by air.

Two weeks later the main body of the battalion embarked on HMAS Sydney for South Vietnam.

During the two-week voyage training continued. Firing off the aft deck at balloons was a frequent occurrence as was PT. It was three kilometres around the deck of the Sydney. As the Sydney entered the tropics shirts were dispensed and with the results of PT conducted now for over a year became visibly apparent. The muscle toning on the bodies of these young men extruded fitness and a tropical suntan was much sought after in those days before anyone knew much about melanoma. It was just over a half a century earlier that the original Anzacs landed on a hostile shore, and these lads too were about to have their courage tested on a foreign and hostile shore. It is probable that nobody on board then thought of it in those terms.

### **OPERATION BRIBIE**

A swift strike near a small village in the Phuoc Tuy Province in Vietnam 50 years ago turned into a fiery battle where eight Australian diggers were killed.

"Advancing into what was surely a ferocious wall of enemy fire, some of us were lucky to survive the day", was how section commander Cpl Spike Jones, of 5 PI, B Coy, 6RAR described the battle.

He was the only member of his section not killed or wounded during the battle and was later awarded a Military Medal for his actions. He said he believed the day was filled with misjudgements and mishaps, which added to the confusion of battle during the afternoon.

## **OP MAGNUS: THE MALAYAN TIGER**

**By 15345 Donald Godley: 6 PI B Coy 2RAR 1962**

About the middle of the night it was my turn to do a stint on the gun. I had made my way along the vine in a very careful fashion and settled myself on the ground behind the gun butt. I did the usual check and made sure the change lever was on safe. I could fire the gun quickly, if the need arose. If it seemed anything was approaching towards our position along the track, all I had to do was flick the change lever back to fire and press the trigger, simple as that. The gun was tied into a fixed line of fire with para cord to wooden stakes, but the butt was free to be swivelled back and forth in a sideways motion whilst the gun was resting on the bi-pod. This permitted a full field of fire. Spare magazines were always in a set place ready for re-loading along with the spare barrel.

After a while, I quite suddenly discerned an unusual sound coming towards me. It wasn't human steps, but something altogether different. It was a soft, but distinct pad, pad, pad. Nice and even in rhythm, but it was coming along the track straight in front of me. I quickly wrapped my hand around the pistol grip of the gun, thumb on the change lever and holding my breath, waited and I thought my ears had stretched from listening so hard. But it was there sure enough, still coming, pad, pad, pad, then it stopped. All I could hear again were the leaves falling, bamboo crackling here and there.

The hair on my neck was stiff with fright, every nerve was stretched as I listened into the darkness about me. I had a feeling there was a tiger near me, but it wasn't until a few moments later when I smelt the sour odour of very stale strong-smelling urine, that I was sure it was one.

I began analysing what I knew about Tigers. I had only seen one in Taronga Park Zoo, in Sydney, but I knew they grew very big indeed. Full grown males could be 500kg, 3 metres long and could spring about 4 metres from a sitting position. I imagined I could see it, but of course I couldn't. So, I waited, but there was no sound of any movement, just the ever-present awful smell frightening my senses.

After what seemed ages and ages, during which time I was expecting imminent death, because if it did decide to spring upon me, the weight would bring a quick death, and I wished that, rather than being torn apart and eaten. I knew full well it would be no good firing at it because if it wasn't killed by the first burst and only wounded or frightened, then it would attack and kill. If I kept as calm as possible, it might move off without further ado, this was how we dealt with threats from the great black king cobras, or ugly vipers, when we came upon them, we went quietly around one end of them.

Suddenly the pad, pad, pad, recommenced, but it was moving off to my right. It was close alright, very close and once again I was petrified. It continued moving and the smell faded too. I was still worried, because it was moving towards my mate Jack O'Donnell sleeping in our hutchie. The next hutchie in line, after him was Wes Bugler and Tony Cuncliffe. I had to wake one of them as my relief, so I thought about staying on the gun all night, rather than following it.

After awhile I realised I was very weary indeed and I needed a break, but suddenly the night was filled with the sound of loud scratching. I could hear it raking its claws back and forth against a clump of bamboo. I was forced to wait it out. I looked at my watch, it was a shock to see I had been on piquet about two and a half hours. Hell, no wonder I was weary.

I plucked up courage, got up off the ground stiffly, grasped the vine and made my way towards what ever fate awaited me, but it was either that, or go out to it. I felt my way past my own hutchie and on until I came to Wes and Tony. I reached it, felt a foot and shook until someone groaned awake nice and quietly. When the body sat up whispered to me, I knew it was Wes. I couldn't wait to tell him all about the Tiger, but he wasn't worried at all, he thought I was bullshitting him.

He lit a smoke and said he'd go to the gun.

I was far gone to worry, so simply followed him back along the vine until I found my hutchie. I crawled onto my stretcher and don't remember any more until I was awoken for stand-to.

I quietly related my tale to Jack. He thought I had flipped my lid. My imagination had been running wild, so he said. I thought, oh well, how can I prove my story? I couldn't. I was pondering about what we had heard sometime before. It was a story about how a Tiger attacked a Kiwi Patrol one night. It seemed the Kiwi's were about a section strong. The Tiger entered a hutchie, seized a sleeping bloke by the head and started dragging him off through the jungle. His scream awoke the others and when they started firing bursts into the air, it dropped the chap and made off. Poor chap was evacuated out with large teeth holes in his skull. The story went on about how after being sent home to New Zealand, he was sitting in a pub having a beer, when he caught sight of a large tabby cat in the bar mirror. The Cat was behind him, walking along a picture rail. They said the chap went stark raving mad on the spot.

My frightening thoughts were suddenly interrupted by the sound of a loud deep growl coming from over in the next sections perimeter area. I recall Jack looking at me because it was quite light by the time. He never said much, but I could tell he was thinking alright. Next thing Wes came along the vine and said, boy I know now you weren't bullshitting me after all mate. We were all pretty worried, and hanging onto our rifles, I know that.

After stand down, our section commander, Butch Brady, came along and he was told the yarn. He then headed off for Platoon HQ. he returned a little while later and told us that the Tiger frightened hell out of Jock Logan, our neighbouring Section Commander. It seemed Jock had been sitting outside his hutchies during stand-to with his OMC across his lap (probably dreaming of far away Bonnie Scotland), when he stood up about 2 metres in front of him, gave the growl heard by the whole Platoon, turned about and trotted off. Jock didn't speak for a couple of days, and his complexion was a pale shade of grey (ha).

Though it returned the following night, it circled our harbour position in the other direction, we weren't nearly as troubled. We thought that us being in Platoon strength, the smell of humans was very strong, so we would be reasonably safe from attack. We also realised we were obviously camped across its pad that lead to its watering hole.

We did a couple of more nights there...

More about Op MANGUS in October: '[A' Coy Ambush 1962](#)

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This is the tenth edition of RINGO printed for free.

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II

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