



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)

OCTOBER 2019

THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Welcome to the October 2019 edition of Ringo. This year continues to be a busy one for the committee. Congratulations to the 2RAR(Amphib) Duke of Gloucester team which again took out this prestigious award at the Infantry Centre recently. Led by Cpl Mortimer, this team was pitted against the best that each of the other Battalions of the Royal Australian Regiment could provide and again proved that 2RAR(Amphib) continues to be 'second to none'. An outstanding result that gives pride to all those who are serving and have served in this great Battalion. Well done. A letter of congratulations has been sent to the Commanding Officer.

The Association has commissioned a major military art work by two renowned Australian war artists, Lyndell Brown and Charles Green, which will provide a legacy of the Battalion's two tours of Vietnam. The painting is now completed and it is planned for it to be formally presented to the Battalion either 9 or 10 December this year. Details of the presentation will be advised to all members when available as we are seeking to have many Association members at the event. The committee has also arranged the production of a limited number of high quality prints of this painting which will be made available for sale to our members.

I attended the RAR Association AGM and RAR Council Conference in Canberra 23-25 July. The minutes of the Council meeting can be viewed on our website.

Our Facebook Page continues to flourish and is now the primary medium for getting regular information out to you. While the quarterly issue of Ringo is most important, I ask that you keep a regular eye on the Facebook Page as well as the Association website. If you have anything interesting regarding 2RAR issues and/or members, pass the details on to Rick Hollingdrake to see if it can be posted on our Facebook.

The 2RAR Association AGM and reunion will be held at Tweed heads Services Club from 25-26 October 2019. Both the 2RAR(Amphib) Commanding officer and RSM will be attending the activity. There will also be a D Coy lunchtime get together on Friday 25 October at the same venue. Details are contained in this issue and can also be found on our Facebook Page.

The 2RAR Committee of Management meets every two months and continues to seek ways to support both the Battalion and Association members. We are always looking for additional assistance and there may be some of you who would be willing to share some of the workload. If you feel that you could assist or become part of the committee, please let me or the Secretary know of your interest.

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Rick Hollingdrake works very hard to produce the quarterly copy of this newsletter. He is always seeking contributions so if you have a good story to tell, pass it to Rick and maybe it will find a place in the next copy of Ringo. Let's give him a hand.

I look forward to seeing many of you at the Tweed Heads reunion.

Leo Van De Kamp
President

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: 2019

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) of 2RAR Association, Inc is to be held at 0830 hours Saturday 26 October 2019 in the 'ANZAC Room' Tweed Heads & Coolangatta RSL Sub Branch, Level 1 Mantra Resort.

Apologies for those unable to attend the meeting should be addressed to: The Secretary: 2rarsecretary@gmail.com; or PO Box 1097 Toombul Qld 4012.

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 you for your support.

2RAR ASSOCIATION EMAIL LIST

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PROUDLY PRINTED BY PETER DUTTON MP

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

This is the sixteenth edition of RINGO printed for free.

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VICE PRESIDENT / EDITOR
SECRETARY
TREASURER
MERCHANDISE
MEMBERS

HONORARY PADRE

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WARRIORS WHO HAVE MARCHED OUT

- 215568 Colonel Phillip John GOULD, 2RAR, 9 RAR (Vietnam), SASR, 2 Commando Regiment.
- 235080 Major Robert John FLETCHER, 2RAR Malaya 1955
- 5716932 Private EL WALLIS, 1ARU, 8RAR, 2RAR
- 2793327 Private MOLONY, 2RAR
- 39545 Lt Col Terence John Michael HAYES, DFC AAAC. 2RAR 1970-71
- 3788223 Lance Corporal Richard Patrick GLENN
- 4587 Warrant Officer Class 2 Robert Anthony NEAGLE
- 156647 2nd Lieutenant Terry John PETRIE
- 17804 Corporal William Edward HARRIS
- 54754 Corporal Terence John BROWN
- 2785205 Private Alexander BORKOVIC, 2RAR Vietnam 1967-68
- 8517645 Private Jake 'Skippy' WILLIAMS 2RAR, Timor Leste, TLBG 6, C Coy
- 215259 Alan James 'Squizz' TAYLOR, 2RAR, 6RAR
- 204224 Martyn HARVEY, 2 RAR, 2/4 RAR
- 3790851 Private Anthony POVEY, 2RAR



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.

LEST WE FORGET



2RAR in Malaya c. 1956

REUNION: B COMPANY 2RAR, VIETNAM 1967-68

Biennial Reunion B Company 2RAR

16th August 2020 to 20th August 2020 (Inclusive)

Gympie, Queensland

Contact: Leonie Schwarz

Email: leonieschwarz@bigpond.com

Mobile phone: 0408 015 815

REST IN PEACE: LTCOL TERRY HAYES, DFC

I have been advised of the passing of LTCOL Terry Hayes, DFC, at the Gold Coast on 25th July 2019 after a long illness. Terry was a larger than life Army Aviator who served the Corps in a variety of locations and appointments.

He served in South Vietnam as a rotary wing pilot with 161 (Indep) Recce Flight and was shot down while on a mission with LTCOL John Church CO 2RAR/NZ ANZAC Battalion during the second tour. Terry managed to land the aircraft without further injury to his passenger. Terry was awarded the DFC for his outstanding airmanship throughout his tour.

A Celebration of the Life of the late Terry Hayes, DFC, was held on Friday 9th August 2019 at the Southport Yacht Club, Gold Coast. A private family cremation was held afterwards.

ANNUAL REUNION 2019

Wed 16 Oct	2RAR Birthday 1945 (74 th Anniversary)	Labuan, North Borneo
Fri 25 Oct	Delta Coy Get Together: '1st on Wharf', 1130am	Twin Towns Services Club
Fri 25 Oct	2RAR Annual National Reunion "Meet, Greet & Dine" (4.00pm Harbour Lounge)	Twin Towns Services Club, Tweed Heads, NSW
Sat 26 Oct	8.30am-9.30am: Annual General Meeting: ANZAC Room	Tweed Heads & Coolangatta RSL
	9.45am-10.20am: Annual Commemoration Service	Chris Cunningham Park
	10.30am – 3.30pm: "Mates, Memories, & Camaraderie"	Stars: Level 5

NEW TREASURER

The search is on for a new Treasurer for the Association. After many years in the position, Norm Devereaux is not seeking re-election this year. Thanks Norm on a consistently outstanding

job.

The position requires simply bookkeeping skills maintaining the income and expenditure of the Association. Computer skills with software ACCESS and EXCEL would be helpful.

The Committee is looking for someone to take on the position for the next year or so.

Gordon Hurford

Secretary

2rarsecretary@gmail.com



RINGO NEWSLETTER

RINGO will continue to be sent to you via [Australia Post](#). Do you wish to receive RINGO by [Email](#)? Details here: 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

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If there is a member in TAS or NT who would like to represent the Association, please contact the Secretary: 2rarsecretary@gmail.com

DUKE OF GLOUCESTER CUP RESULTS: 2019

18 August 2019

In the 11 Duke Of Gloucester Cup events between 2009 and 2019, 2RAR has now taken:

First place- 5 times

Second place- 2 times

Third place- 2 times

Only twice in 11 attempts we haven't made top three podium.

2009 - 1st Place, CPL Damian Woods

2010 - 3rd Place, CPL Nathan Lissing

2011 - 4th Place, CPL Adam Gawne

2012 - 1st Place, CPL Lee Newham

2013 - 1st Place, CPL Ben Katz

2014 - 3rd Place, CPL Dan Smith

2015 - 2nd Place, CPL Carlos Barerra

2016 - 5th Place, CPL Brock Morse

2017 - 1st Place, CPL Liam Kiernan

2018 - 2nd Place, CPL Mark Ford

2019 - 1st Place, CPL Paddy Mortimore

#Credit to Karl for the Stats

The Curator

'Second to None'

RAR ASSOCIATION (QLD) TO BE DISBANDED

The RAR Association meeting was attended by 14 members and between the Secretary and the Deputy President there were 14 proxies. The attendance is indicative of the issues facing the Association into the future hence the Resolution put forward by the Management Committee to disband the Association. After considerable discussion and reviewing the history of the Association from inception to now. The members at the meeting agreed the best way forward was to disband the Association, WEF 31 Dec 2019 and transfer the total responsibility of the National Memorial Walk to the RAR Corporation.

We have gone from approximately 680 members in 1999 to 248 members in 2019. Ted Chitham has stood down from the committee, however he will keep an over watch on the transition period, as a result of his duties with ADSO: The Alliance of Defence Service Organisations.

Members are encouraged to join their parent Unit Associations. Contact Greg Decker: 0417 464 251

MEMBERS' DRAW

Congratulations to Noel MORRIS, Kuttatubul, Qld winner of the financial Members' Draw held on 6 August who received the book: Afghanistan: Australia's War by Gary Ramage & Ian McPhedran. A photographic story of the nation's longest war and those who served. Drawn by Arthur.

Congratulations also to Barry COOK, South Morang, Vic winner of the financial Members' Draw held on 1 October who received the book: Afghanistan: Australia's War by Gary Ramage & Ian McPhedran. A photographic story of the nation's longest war and those who served. Drawn by Leo.

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 'Chick' 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 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.

2RAR: 2019 DOG CUP WINNERS



Winners are grinners!

RIP: MARTYN 'MARTY' HARVEY

204224 Martyn HARVEY

'Marty' Harvey, after completing Basic Training and IETs, was posted to 2RAR on 25th April 1972. He served until the linking of 2RAR and 4RAR on 15th April 1973. 2/4 RAR 15/08/1973 - 13/07/1982 and 5/12/1984 - 6/01/1987.

Martyn Harvey passed away at 1900 hrs in South Australia. We have lost a great mate today. 'Marty' was an excellent soldier, and one of this world's gentlemen. Rest in Peace. The Curator

BEST OFFER: 1967 VICTORIA NUMBER PLATES

SVN67 (South Vietnam) number plates for sale. \$900 ono. Best offer to Paul Murphy, D Coy 2RAR 1967-68



pauljmurphy@bigpond.com

Mob: 0408 723 185

MORE ABOUT: STAN JARUGA (1967-68)

Stan Jaruga, a resident at our Geelong Independent Living Units, has received one of the country's top service honours, a citation for his outstanding service 50 years ago, by Governor-General Sir Peter Cosgrove.

Stan was a helicopter gunner in the Vietnam War, wearing no safety harness and standing at the open door of the helicopter armed with an M60 machine gun, scanning for the enemy in the jungle below. He volunteered for the flying secondment, which he says, "beat being in the jungle with a 30kg pack on your back".

Stan has previously been awarded a unit citation for gallantry from the South Vietnam government and is one of very few people to receive both honours. Congratulations to Stan on receiving this citation. It is recognition of his bravery, at a very young age, fighting in a very difficult environment.

Stan Jaruga receiving his citation from Sir Peter Cosgrove. "You don't go into war for the accolades, but it was humbling to get the recognition at a ceremony in Canberra", he said.

DUKE OF GLOUCESTER CUP: 2019

By Corporal Sebastian BEURICH

Proving its motto during this year's Duke of Gloucester Cup, 2RAR finished "second to none" in the Army's premier infantry skills competition. Pte Sam Dierckx was awarded best soldier. Story held at School of Infantry from August 10-16, sections from each of the infantry battalions showed their mettle in individual shooting, defence, attack, urban breaching and assault, first aid and reconnaissance, among other activities, with a strong focus on live firing this year.



The Cambrian Patrol 2019 will be from the 11-20 Oct 2019

The combination of little sleep and complex scenarios made for a "physically and mentally" taxing competition, according to Corporal Patrick Mortimore, who said he couldn't be happier with the way his team performed. "It was a challenging competition with a quick turnaround. Each stand was about three hours, so we went through a lot of scenarios with little time to rest," he said.

"What enabled us to win was the confidence that all the team had in their own abilities. When we came up against really complex scenarios, or something didn't go to plan, they were able to quickly adapt and execute to come out with mission success. "It was definitely one of the highlights of my career – leading the team through something as arduous as that, being able to rise to the occasion, complete the mission and come away with the win." Months of training led to the section's win and Pte Dierckx said his being awarded the DSM Roche Memorial Cup for best soldier "came out of nowhere". "This was my first Duke of Gloucester Cup. It was definitely challenging, but we put in heaps of effort training, so we were well prepared," Pte Dierckx said. "Getting best soldier was a surprise – I was too focused on the competition and ticking all the boxes to even think about it, so I was pretty stoked when it happened. "We were probably one of the fittest teams there. We blitzed the run on the falling-plate shoot by a few minutes, but everyone's bodies were rattled by the end, so it was a relief to finally march across the line." The cup is a "highly sought-after award", according to School of Infantry operations officer Major Brett Seymour, who ran it this year.

"We got a high standard of soldiers and sections. The competition promotes training across the full-breadth of foundation warfighting and skills required of the battalions," Major Seymour said. "As a corps – and regiment – it helps us to find our strengths and areas for improvement, which helps the battalions focus their training.

"The competition was very close right up to the end, which was good to see. It's designed to be physically tough, mentally demanding and technically challenging for the soldiers.

"Everyone in the school puts in to the planning and effort that goes into the cup, so the feedback we received from some of the competitors was a real compliment to the School of Infantry, its wings and their staff."

2RAR's winning section heads to the United Kingdom later in the year to compete in the endurance activity hosted by the British Army, which is notorious for being one of the world's toughest tests of soldier skills.

MORTARS & MINEFIELDS: KOREA

By Ernie R. HOLDEN with 2RAR, 1953

The Chinese and North Koreans used mainly 82-mm and 120-mm high explosive mortar bombs to deliver to their enemy – us! They were fired out of a tube about 39-inches-long, held by a tripod. The tubes were angled at between 45-degrees for long distance and 70-degrees for closer in. One soldier held the tube and fired it and another soldier loaded bombs one at a time, tail first, into the muzzle. The bomb would fall down onto a pin, trigger the propellant in the tail and send the bomb skyward on its deadly mission.

The missiles travelled in an arc – climbing then as they slowed – falling on the enemy. They travelled at less than the speed of sound (about 740 mph or 1,170 kph), allowing a "whoosh – whoosh" sound to travel ahead of the falling bomb. The louder the sound, the closer to you the mortar was going to hit. A close mortar bomb explosion sounds like lightning has struck the ground next to you, with a very loud ear-splitting crack and a percussion air wave that would throw you over. Soldiers were often deafened temporarily or even permanently.

An example of how deadly they can be occurred in Bosnia in 1995 when about 73 civilians were killed and many more wounded in a market place, by one enemy mortar bomb explosion on a hard roadway. Some barrages lasted an hour, with mortar bombs falling about one every 30 seconds. About 3000 mortar bombs were dropping over our front-line trenches and bunkers which stretched for about a half-mile. Quite often the enemy sent over mortar bombs at meal times while the soldiers were in their lines, mess tins held out ready for the cooks to throw some grub into them. The Chinese seemed to know exactly what time meals were given out and where.

A Korean spy was caught in our camp with a radio transmitter and was taken to the hills and shot! No more information to North Korea from him and less casualties to our men from mortar bombs at meal times. In contrast to the Chinese, Australian mortar platoons used 2 and 3-inch bombs on the enemy but only fired them in training and early in my time in Korea, to brush up. Every day there were stories in the camp about someone who had come close to a mortar explosion. While crossing open ground behind the 'C' Company position, I heard the whoosh- whoosh of a Chinese mortar coming down. I didn't have time to run for cover and just crouched where I was for protection. As I looked up, I saw it was going to hit about 150 feet away and, in a split second, there was a grey cloud of dust and debris flying everywhere and pierces making buzzing sounds as they flew through the air above me.

That incident didn't upset me at all, probably because I was young and silly at 20 – I just wasn't frightened of mortars at that stage. However, the sharp crack nearly deafened me, and it was about two days later that I realised the dangers of mortars. I needed to relieve myself, so I went up to the steel pipe in the ground that had lime around it to stop the smells. When I finished, I started walking away when whoosh, a Chinese (bomb) exploded right next to the pipe where I had been. That time I gained a fear of mortars and from then on, they always made me jumpy.

We were sent up to the 'C' Company positions one day on one of our usual digging parties to improve the trenches and dugouts. I was digging in one hoochie and my mate Maury Sharp was in the next one. The Chinese must have seen our shovels of earth coming out over the trench tops and sent some mortars over to stop production. One burst on the bank above Maury, so close that it sent the tail complete with fins, into the trench next to him. I heard him yell and as he jumped out of the trench he said, "I'm bloody well getting out of here – the Chinese have my range exactly". He didn't go back there all day.

Over 35 years later, I asked him, "Why didn't you keep the tail fins for a souvenir?" But I guess at the time he wasn't interested in memorabilia.

THE ROCKET INCIDENT

On a fine, warm Thursday morning on the 28th September 1967 D Coy assembled just outside the wire in front of their Coy base at Nui Dat for a live firepower demonstration by a Light Fire Team (LFT) of two US helicopter gunships. The purpose of the demonstration was to practice the Coy in calling for and directing fire support from an LFT should an enemy be encountered that was too close to unprotected friendly forces to use either artillery or mortar support.



Earlier in the week the officers attended a lecture on the fire direction and control procedures of an LFT which was conducted by a Liaison Officer from the LFT. Some senior officers from the Task Force HQ and Com AFV Saigon were also in attendance at the demonstration.

The company was deployed in open grassland in a line north to south, 10pl closest to the wire, 11pl in the centre and 12pl closest to the rubber which was some distance further south. The target area was to the east some hundreds of meters forward of the troops. The targets were marked for the LFT using the 40mm grenade launchers. The company position was also marked using coloured smoke which the LFT correctly identified before engaging each target. There was a slight breeze blowing from north to south at the time which blew the smoke across the front of the watching Coy.

The attack direction of the LFT was south to north parallel to the spectators and then breaking to the east to circle for subsequent attack runs. The first two targets were successfully engaged. The third target indicated was a little over 100 metres closer to the spectators than the earlier targets and the attack direction was changed to north east from the south west which took the attack direction along the southern flank but clear of D Coy, i.e. 12 pl.

After some practice runs by the LFT and the target and troop marking procedures were completed the third target engagement commenced. On the first engagement run a salvo of four rockets were fired. The first rocket was seen to drop after initial ignition and spiral downwards off line and to its left before full ignition occurred. It landed and detonated on the inner flank of 12pl bordering 11pl. The other three rockets were target rounds. Some warnings were shouted by observers who anticipated the likely area of impact of the rogue rocket. Two soldiers were killed instantly and a dozen more were injured.

Cease fire was immediately ordered, and the uninjured troops moved quickly to assist and tend the wounded. The coy medic and the other soldiers assisting were well versed in first aid procedures as D Coy had previously encountered mines which had caused multiple casualties. Further assistance was also requested from the RAP within the Bn lines and the RMO and additional medics and stretcher bearers were quickly in attendance.

The Dust-off choppers then began to arrive to evacuate those seriously injured. One of those evacuated later DOW and 10

others were so badly injured that they were evacuated to Australia and did not return for further duty with D Coy. There were also some soldiers with minor injuries who were treated at the RAP and returned to duty straight away and proceeded on Operation Kenmore which commenced later in the day. It is probable that this was the most difficult time that D Coy experienced during its tour.

As is usual in such circumstances, an investigation was ordered, Terms of Reference were prepared and issued, and a senior and experienced Investigation Officer was appointed. Written statements were taken from the aircrew and witnesses on the ground. The Investigation was completed the following day and each higher HQ from 1ATF, AFV Saigon to Army HQ in Canberra concurred with the findings. The first rocket fired in the salvo, malfunctioned. It was an unfortunate accident.

In compiling this version of events, the Investigating Officer's Report obtained by Colin, Harry Leggett's son and passed to Tom Young under the FOI Act, was consulted, which confirmed the author's own observations as he was present at the incident. As well several other witnesses who were present have described and published the events of that day. There are no contradictions only differing perspectives.

REST IN PEACE: BEN MORRIS

Nothing is known of Ben's upbringing prior to his entry into the Royal Military College in early 1961. He graduated into the Royal Australian Infantry Corps in December 1965 and was posted to 1PIR for a year. He was reposted to Infantry Centre for a short period before going to the 1st Australian Reinforcement Unit in South Vietnam.



In February 1967 he marched into 5RAR as a platoon commander but was reposted to 2RAR when they arrived in June 1967. It was a nine-month posting to 2 platoon A Company. In March 1968 he returned to Australia and was posted to 3 Training Battalion at Singleton and was promoted Temporary Captain.

In the beginning of 1970, he completed a short course at the RAAF School of Language before taking up the Adjacent position in

2RVR. From there he was reposted to 1RAR in mid-1971 until September 1972. Staff appointments followed as SC 'A' at Headquarters E Command and then to SO2 (GL) Section mid 1974 followed by SO2 (Intelligence) ASSA JIO DoD Cen up until April 1979. His 20 years would have concluded in December 1982, but his discharge date is unknown. In civilian street he did take up a position with the Taxation Office where he became well known as Tax Master. It is probable that after discharge from the Australian Regular Army (ARA) he transferred to the Australian Reserve (ARES) and changed Corps to RAAMC (Admin). There is no information of what postings he filled in the ARES. Between 2004 and 2006 he had some 20 articles published in the ADF Health Magazine and the RAAMC's magazine.

Previous to these articles he revisited South Vietnam and had an article on the visit published in a Catholic Newspaper. A similar article was also published in Duty First. Ben was a practicing Catholic and had friends in the clergy.

These Oral Histories are now lodged in the AWM and some are also in the 2RAR Historical Collection at Townsville.

SECOND TO NONE

2RAR as the ANZAC Battalion in Vietnam, 1970-71

I hesitated over the years to publish this monograph. The general feeling of public antipathy to the war in Vietnam and the ultimate result of the conflict, which reflected little credit on the Australian effort in that country, influenced me in this. Since 1989, when Vietnam veterans marched in Sydney, and with the dedication of the Vietnam Memorial in Canberra, there has been a change of attitude to our involvement in that war. As a result, I decided to tell the story of the Second Battalion The Royal Australian Regiment during its second tour as the ANZAC Battalion. The gallant efforts of the soldiers of this unit, together with the remainder of the Australian Force, did much over the years to pave the way to possible peace and tranquillity. Had the situation elsewhere in the Republic matched that in Phuoc Tuy, there may have been a different and happier outcome to the war; the individual victories and successes of the men of the ANZAC Battalion and their comrades from other units would not have been wasted.

My sources for this work are my diaries and the notes I made on the Intelligence summaries and periodic after-action reports during my service in South Vietnam. I supplemented this material from the information contained in the letters I wrote to my wife. In the opening chapter, I describe my reactions on learning of my appointment to command 2 RAR and some of the things which influenced my approach to my responsibilities. Later, I give an outline of the history of 2 RAR and discuss the matters which I had to address in reforming the Battalion after its return from Vietnam and in preparing it for its second tour of operations. I also discuss the studies I made in preparation for my pre-deployment reconnaissance of Vietnam in October 1969. Details of the historical, geographical and political circumstances pertaining to Phuoc Tuy Province, and details of the opposing forces found there, complete the picture of the situation facing 2 RAR when we arrived in Vietnam. I then describe the events of our year of service in Indochina.

Lieutenant Colonel John Murray Church, DSO
Battalion Commander

THE BATTLE FOR 'THE BOX'

Between 8 May and 15 August 1969, the worst run of Australian mine casualties in the Vietnam War occurred in Long Dat of Australian mine casualties in the Vietnam War occurred in Long Dat District. More precisely, these casualties occurred in what the official Cawsey Report into their occurrence called 'the box', the lowland area of the district south of Route 23 from the Long Hai peninsula to the eastern edge of the Long Green. There, nineteen 1ATF soldiers were killed and at least 80 wounded, many seriously, on M16 mines that the report concluded 'almost certainly' came from the Australian minefield. This was approximately 54 per cent of the total killed and 141 wounded over this fifteen-week period. These figures reflect what the Australians at the time saw as a 'deliberate mine battle' in which the local NLF guerillas, supported by elements of the D445 battalion, used mines offensively in an attempt to prevent 1ATF from dominating the province's vital population in western Long Dat.

Two aspects of this offensive mining require immediate emphasis. First, the lightly armed guerillas who conducted the campaign realised one of the classic conditions of guerilla war when they depended on weapons they picked up on the battlefield, in this case from the 1ATF 'barrier minefield', to provide their principal strike weapons against 1ATF. Second, to employ these M16 mines offensively, the local guerillas were dependent on what might be described as 'wrap-around surveillance' of the Australians in order to anticipate their moves and to mine the ground in advance of them. Often, in fact, the mines moved around; they were re-lifted and replanted in attempts to catch moving patrols.

A LETTER TO GORDON HURFORD, AM

Your letter to me was a real joy to receive and highlighted my personal regrets at not being able to be in Townsville for that important commemoration. The photograph of old comrades



was welcome and I could see how time affected them much the same as me. A long trip from Perth to Townsville, return, would have been too much for my old bones to endure.

Ron Walker was in my section for much of the time in Korea and we still exchange Christmas greetings. He appeared thinner

than when I last saw him and wife Joy. I made the trip to the Battalion for the 50th Battle of the Hook commemoration and to Brisbane earlier for the 50th commemoration of the start of the Korean War. I met many comrades on those occasions.

Thank you for thinking of me and for your letter and photograph to ponder.

Brian Coper MM

A LETTER TO ARTHUR MACDONALD

Thanks for sending me the 2RAR bumper sticker. I thought you might like to know that I was the Public Relations Combat Photography attached to 6RAR, and then 2RAR for the main part of my Vietnam Tour (1967-68). I was in-country for almost 14 months.

The blokes at 2RAR made me feel right at home. Actually, to the point where I found myself on the Orderly Sergeant Roster. I think that was RSM Larry (The Bat) Moon's idea.

I could rattle off a lot of names for you like my friend, WO2 Col Swinbourn, but I'm sure you know them all by heart. I was honoured to have served with such a distinguished Battalion. "The best of the best." I often think back to my time at Nui Dat with the "Drummers", and the many operations and missions we had accomplished as we all did.

I came to the U.S. via a marriage to a Pan Am Flight Attendant in Sydney. I now live on the East Coast about 30 miles north of Philadelphia in Montgomery County. God Bless you and thank you for your service, and continued service.

2782122 Sgt Byron Campbell

DVA NOMINAL ROLL: KOREA

Mr Michael von Berg MC OAM

Thank you for your letter of 22 August 2019 regarding your request for Mentioned-in-Despatches (MID) to be recorded under the "Honours" field on the Korean Nominal Roll.

Whilst MID is not an award that has a recognised post-nominal, the intent of the DVA Nominal Roll is to provide a simple mechanism for families and friends to find information on veterans, including any awards they may have received.

The Nominal Roll is not linked to official commemoration and is not subject to the strict guidelines identified in the Order of Wearing Australian Honours and Awards approved by the Governor-General or in past London Gazettes. As such, I support your proposal.

Liz Cosson, AM CSC

Secretary

October 2019

ABOUT: JOHN FRASER (1945-1968)

by Michael Boyle

This article was published in Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 14, (MUP), 1996

John Fraser (1945-1968), national serviceman and army officer, was born on 12 January 1945 in Brisbane, son of James Grant Fraser, a motor trimmer from Scotland who became a prominent Gold Coast businessman, and his second wife Leonora Jean, née Shaw, who was born in New South Wales. Educated at St Joseph's College, Nudgee, and at The Southport School, Johnny studied medicine for a term in 1964 at the University of Queensland.

One of the best-known junior Rugby Union footballers in Queensland, he played for the Combined Great Public Schools first XV and for the firsts at both his schools. He was employed as a cadet with the Australian Estates Co. Ltd when he was called up for national service on 29 September 1965.

Selected for officer-training, Fraser was sent to Scheyville, New South Wales, where he was described as 'steady', 'intelligent' and 'possessing leadership qualities'. In April 1966 he was commissioned second lieutenant in the Royal Australian Infantry Corps and posted to the 2nd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment.

Next year he successfully applied for an extension of his national service to enable him to be considered for a one-year deployment to the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam). In October 1967 he was transferred to the 3rd Battalion, R.A.R. As commander of 'C' Company's No.9 Platoon, he sailed with the battalion to Vung Tau in December. Known for his 'gap-toothed ever-ready grin', Fraser often led the singing of the 3RAR's ballad, 'There Won't be Many Coming Back'.

In March 1968 the unit began Operation Pinnaroo—probably the most dangerous it conducted in South Vietnam—with the object of capturing and destroying bases of the People's Liberation Armed Forces (Viet Cong) in the Long Hai hills. The Viet Cong designated this area the Minh Dam Secret Zone. Its natural caves and subterranean streams provided a haven from which they launched raids and propaganda missions into the surrounding countryside. By 19 March 'C' Company occupied the Hon Vung foothills where it began to locate and neutralize enemy mines and booby traps.

On 24 March 1968 No.9 platoon was engaged in clearing a safe lane along a gully towards a suspected tunnel entrance. During this slow and deliberate phase, Fraser accidentally triggered a captured M16 anti-personnel mine which had been placed by the Viet Cong to protect the tunnel's mouth.

The M16 was of American manufacture and designed to jump about 3 ft (91 cm) into the air before exploding. When he heard the mine arming, Fraser deliberately used his body in an effort to smother the effects of the blast and minimize injuries to those members of his platoon who were close by.

The explosion fatally wounded him and seriously injured three of his men. As he lay on the ground, he told his comrades not to approach because there were more mines around him.

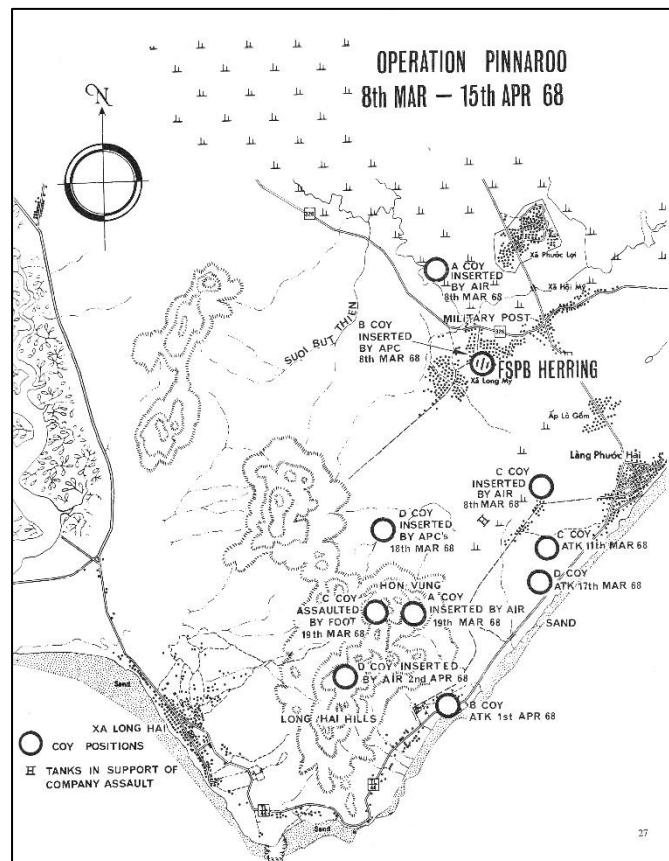
Fraser died that day while being evacuated by helicopter; the other wounded soldiers recovered in hospital. He was buried with Catholic rites and military honours in the Allambie Garden of Memories cemetery, Nerang, Queensland.

A park in which he had played as a child, near his home at Surfers Paradise, was named in his memory.

OPERATION PINNAROO: 8 MAR – 15 APR 1968

Many times, the Australian Army mounted attacks on the [Minh Dam] base only to be paid in kind by their own mines. (The Minh Dam Base 1945-75), 1994.

One day in February 1968, Brigadier Ron (Wilbur) Hughes came out of his hut at Nui Dat and said to his operations officer, Major David Smith: 'Well, it's always been there and needs to be done sooner or later.' Smith knew from his cryptic comment that Hughes was referring to the tactical problem posed by the Long Hai Mountains. He also knew that Hughes intended to launch an attack into the mountains in what would become known as Op Pinnaroo (27 February-15 April 1968).



Before Pinnaroo, 1ATF had merely quarantined the mountains—looked over its shoulder at them. With the exception of Operation Renmark, when 1ATF patrols into the approaches to the Long Hais had been repulsed by mines on 21 February 1967, the Australians had left the mountains alone. Since taking over 1ATF in November 1967, Hughes had also operated mainly in northern Phuoc Tuy and, after the government allocated a third battalion to 1ATF in December, even farther afield with US forces in Bien Hoa Province.

Immediately before Pinnaroo, 1ATF had been launched against the PRVN's build-up for the Tet Offensive around Long Binh and Bien Hoa. Pinnaroo would then precede further operations outside Phuoc Tuy, most notably at fire support bases Coral and Balmoral (May-June 1968). What stands out about Pinnaroo is the way Hughes decided against the grain of operational trends to take on the very ambitious task of trying to 'clean out' the Long Hai Mountains.

Rather than leave them to his staff, Hughes actually took great time and care to write the key 'Mission' and 'Execution' paragraphs of Operation Order 4/68 himself. He then presented them to Smith. The formal mission in the 4 March Operation Order stated that '1ATF is to capture the Long Hai Mountain complex centre of mass YS4653'.

An unusually intricate paragraph on the 'execution' of this mission divided the operation into no fewer than six phases. Paragraph 3. A. (I), which stressed that the area 'is occupied by a strong VC force and is known to be mined', saw the

phases culminating in 'the destruction of enemy base installations [in the Long Hai Mountains]'

2RAR/NZ and 3RAR, supported by 1ATF's tanks, APCs, artillery and engineers, were to 'cordon' and 'clear' the lowland areas around the mountains in the Long Hai Peninsula, an area of operations that amounted to some 50 square kilometres on the map-perhaps double that in reality. Especially with helicopter support, 1ATF was a flexible force. Support from the B52s of US Strategic Air Command also seemed to give the Australian formation tremendous clout. Nevertheless, no more than four rifle companies, or about 300 men, were available for what was regarded as the crucial assault on the 'mountain complex' that covered 30 rugged square kilometres on the map. As they climbed the central massif to around 300 metres at Hon Vung, the mission would draw two companies of 3RAR into a labyrinth of giant granite boulders that formed caves, gullies and re-entrants covered by patchy forests.

Two companies of 2RAR/NZ would also be quickly absorbed by the less formidable, but still labyrinthine, areas around mounts Da Dung (173 metres), Hon Thung (214 metres) and Dien Ba (200 metres). 3RAR Assault Pioneer David McKenzie says: 'We were well aware that the Long Hais were an impossible task. You only had to look at them. You'd have needed thousands of troops to clear them. We were over stretched as it was. So why was Hughes about to take on the mountains? Why, as his cryptic comment to Smith and his personal authorship of the mission and execution passages of the formal orders suggest, was Pinnaroo 'Wilbur's baby'?

Minh Dam and mines

The LONG HAI Peninsula had long been the home base for the district unit, the district infrastructure and the local guerrillas within the VC LONG DAT and VUNG TAU infrastructure. In addition to the district company (C25) the provincial forces have usually maintained a company of the provincial battalion (D445) in the area to support district and local forces in guerrilla and general harassment tasks against the major population centers [sic] in the province. The whole area is known by the VC as the MINH DAM Secret Zone.

This intelligence, dawning 21 months after 1ATF had begun operating in the province, was the result of a number of 'agent reports. Apparently, a woman prisoner provided unusually detailed information on tracks and installations in the mountains. 1ATF had begun operating in the province, was a result of a number of 'agent' reports. Apparently, a woman prisoner provided unusually detailed information on tracks and installations in the mountains. 1ATF intelligence was also linked with ARVN's 10 Military Intelligence Detachment (MID) in Baria and, around the time of Pinnaroo, 10 MID was running agents disguised as Buddhist Monks in the Long Hai Mountains-agents whose tasks apparently included the identification of B52 bombing targets there. 10 MID personnel would later carry out the close inspection of some caves.

Vietnamese intelligence may have been attempting to inveigle Hughes into the operation for its own reasons. In any case, 1ATF received some embarrassing information in February that sharply focused Hughes' thinking on Minh Dam. Hughes had known 'mines were a problem' since a short orientation visit, he'd made to 1ATF a month before he took over command from Graham on 20 October 1967. But this new information connected the mine problem directly with the 1ATF minefield. The intelligence, which was provided by a defector known in the Australian files as Kiet, revealed that he had participated in the lifting of 2000 Australian mines from the barrier minefield between June and August. These very mines, he said, had been replanted to protect the Minh Dam Secret Zone, including many in the Long Hai Mountains.

This information was a jolt to Hughes, who has said of his takeover discussions with Brigadier Graham on 20 October 1967: 'I had half a day handover-takeover with Stuart Graham and there was no discussion of the minefield.' Graham hadn't

raised the issue. Nor had Hughes, although he knew the minefield was in place. Suddenly aware in February 1968 that the mine problem in Phuoc Tuy Province was related to the 1ATF minefield, Hughes felt pressed to take special measures to deal with the problem. He could do this as he carried out the mission: to capture the most prominent peaks in the Long Hais-Hon Vung and Chau Vien- and to destroy enemy installations there.

But still certain aspects of the decision to launch Operation Pinnaroo do not add up. There was a back door to Vung Tau from the Long Hai Mountains. Phase Two of the execution paragraph provides for a 3RAR 'blocking position on the east' of the mountains and, much more vaguely, 'the extension of the 2RAR [NZ] position down the western boundary'. The establishment of a blocking position in the east may have been a plausible objective. Given the vast area 2RAR/NZ had to cover in the north and west of the mountains, however, this was not the case there. Hughes' relatively vague wording of what was to happen in the west reflects this weak spot in his calculations. So also, it may be added, does his wording of other parts of the 'Mission' and 'Execution' paragraphs in the Operation Order. Here we find references to the 'capture' of the mountain complex, 'the clearing of ground' and 'the destruction of all mines and enemy camps'. Yet there is no stress on the destruction of the enemy forces themselves.

Political pressure

Whatever the intelligence picture, Hughes had other reasons for launching Pinnaroo. On 16-17 February 1968, 2RAR/NZ had just returned to Nui Dat from the Tet crisis in Bien Hoa Province and conducted a cordon and search operation around Hoa Long village. Although the village was only 2 kilometres from the southern edge of the Nui Dat base had been the recipient of generous Australian civil aid programs, it was a notorious enemy stronghold.

During the cordon and search, Private K.R. Wilson of B Company 2RAR/NZ was wounded in the stomach by a burst of AK47 automatic rifle fire and died the same day, 16 February. 2RAR/NZ CO Lieutenant-Colonel Chic Charlesworth attempted to pursue Wilson's killers with mortar fire, but was prevented from doing so by 1ATF because of the danger mortaring would represent to civilians. The operation soon came to national prominence when, frustrated, Charlesworth told a journalist: 'I don't think we should go around burning down homes, but I have the feeling these bastards are laughing at us. The press started to ask why 1ATV was operating outside of Phuoc Tuy at the beck and call of the Americans. The enemy, it seemed, was running wild on 1ATF's doorstep in Phuoc Tuy, while 1ATF was operating around Bien Hoa.

Hughes seems to have been under considerable political pressure to do something constructive inside the province at a time when 1ATF's operational orientation was outside it. Although he never seemed entirely comfortable with the option, the concept of a five-week operation would also have made some sense in the light of the post-Tet intelligence picture 1ATF had built up on the Minh Dam Secret Zone. Since the intelligence appeared to reveal vital targets, these could be dealt with quickly, before the Australian battalions returned to the big war outside Phuoc Tuy. In Saigon, General MacDonald- who supported Australian involvement in the big unit war with the Americans - is also likely to have concurred with Hughes' decision, and may even have pressed him to take it. Whatever MacDonald's position, we have an underlying sense of why Hughes acted as he did. With his Nui Dat base in the province, he felt he had to do something about all the enemy activity and 1ATF's related mine problem there; with his operational orientation outside the province, he didn't have much time to act. Nor did he have a sufficiently large force available to him to make a significant impact on the situation. Hence the ambiguity of his orders: their precise tactical objectives on the one hand, and their vague strategic setting on the other.

The way Hughes wavered over his final decision is also indicative of his doubt, as a protracted series of events finally led him to launch Pinnaroo in the face of what his officers anticipated would be terrible mine casualties.

Preliminary moves

The first moves in the tactical plan that finally developed into Operation Pinnaroo confirmed what many feared was in store. On 27 February 1968, during the post-Tet 68 chaos, two or three NLF platoons were reported to be in Long Dien. Hughes ordered a cordon and search of that village by 2RAR/NZ. By 29 February the battalion had completed a sweep of the village without result and was ordered to patrol south of the village towards the foothills of the Long Hai Mountains, where it immediately struck M16 mines. On Friday, 1 March, elements of the same unit had a fleeting contact in which an APC was hit by rocket fire. Colonel Charlesworth noted both the contact and its aftermath in his personal diary:

During morning B Company heard 4 shots...and saw 15-20 who turned out to be VC. 1 APC completely brewed up; 1 trooper slightly wounded. B Company sweep and consolidation, but mine wounding some later in the day. While clearing another mine exploded. Total casualties for day 10 WIA evacuated plus 5-6 WIA remaining.

To pause over those who 'turned out to be VC': when first observed by the APCs, the '15-20' seemed to be friendly forces and so received a wave from the Australians. Instead of waving back, the '15-20' let fly with rocket-propelled grenades.

Charlesworth visited B Company to discuss the move next day around a hill conspicuously surmounted by the ruins of the Dinh Co Buddhist monastery. 'Go slow' is no doubt the fair paraphrase in Charlesworth's diary for what was actually said. On 2 March, another entry indicates what happened: 'A and B and W Companies still prodding slowly south. B Coy found and removed several mines and booby traps arriving top of Dinh Co at 1500. While securing top mine exploded. 1 KIA, 12 WIA!! What an Op[eration]. No VC and all these casualties.' A section from Gordon Hurford's 5 Platoon took the casualties, although Hurford believes the significantly wounded probably numbered no more than six or eight. Private P.J. Lyons was the fatal casualty.

As Major John Kemp, the OC of 1 Field Squadron, saw it, the engineer problem was to support a two-battalion operation in a 'vast low density mine field'. He was referring to the whole of southwestern Phuoc Tuy, where the pre-existing danger of mines had been greatly expanded by the introduction of thousands of M16s from the 1ATF minefield. Yet Kemp's resources were dwarfed by the task. Even the provision of the eighteen ten-man Combat Engineer Teams (CETs) normally required to support two battalions was beyond the capacity of the field squadron. To make the best of an impossible situation, two engineers, Sergeants Brett Nolen and Jonah Jones, assisted the 3RAR Assault Pioneer Platoon in special M16 mine and booby-trap training. But their assistance could not eliminate problems with the equipment. There was no doubt among the pioneers that 'we would be going in against mines from our own minefield' and that 'if one hits you, you're history'. Yet the engineers had little confidence that the special issue of 60 mine detectors that was made to 1 Field Squadron on 6 March would be much use. Apart from various faults that had plagued that equipment, the pioneers soon realised that the detectors 'wouldn't be able to distinguish between mines and all the shrapnel lying around in the ground. So, we knew it was going to be prodding with bayonets and a fair bit of luck.

Additionally, the concentrated artillery and B52 bomber strikes that pounded the mountains for a week before the infantry assault on Hon Vung on 19 March failed to have the desired effect. As well as killing and inconveniencing enemy soldiers, the strikes were meant to detonate anti-personnel mines on the mountains. As they showered the mountains with more shrapnel, however, the artillery and air strikes revealed many more minefields in the area than were originally thought to

exist. The orders for Pinnaroo had given the map coordinates of thirteen 'possible mined areas' in and to the north and west of the Long Hai Mountains. Yet a mine map compiled by the engineers during Pinnaroo and now in the possession of Vic Smith, a member of 1 Field Squadron in 1969-70, shows that the air strikes indicated the presence of a further thirteen possible minefields on the north eastern and eastern approaches to the central massif. Whatever the effectiveness of the mine detectors amid this sea of shrapnel, and whatever the support they could get from prodding infantry, the scope of the 'engineer problem' was beyond the capacity of eighteen CETs. At the same time, the preparatory bombardment failed in one of its most important effects: the destruction of enemy caves and tunnels in the mountains. In Australian eyes, the strikes were 'huge' and 'awesome'. But when engineer officer Captain Viv Morgan and his men later went into the mountains they came across 'caves' that were 'really large interstices between granite boulders'-interstices that could constitute whole re-entrants- and 'we noticed how little damage had been done by B52 bombing. In Vietnamese eyes, the strikes also looked impressive:

Enemy bombs and artillery, enveloped the Minh Dam base in billowing clouds of smoke, dust, and flying rocks. The people in Long Dat District were greatly concerned as they directed their thoughts to Minh Dam. 'We don't know how they can bear it,' cried many mothers and sisters of the revolutionaries. The trees on the mountains burnt continuously for three days and nights, forcing the evacuation of many caves.

Despite the inferno and clouds of rocky debris, the Vietnamese accounts suggest that people were merely smoked out of the caves, which remained largely intact. Nor, with wounded people being moved around, does it seem that the bombardment paralysed the enemy. The Vietnamese say 'over 100 cadres and fighters were wounded in the Minh Dam base. Yet the following account still indicates life on the other side:

at the same time as it directed attacks on the enemy who had advanced into the base, the Long Dat District Committee sent cadres and reconnaissance forces to start looking for other safe caves. Under the rain of bombs and shrapnel, the members of the reconnaissance unit discovered a cave that seemed like Paradise with a fresh water source running over a slope. The district committee ordered that all 100 wounded people be moved into that cave so that they could be cared for. On many occasions the Australians posted troops either beside or on top of the cave, but did not discover it.

Given the terrain, this was plausible. Given the chronology of events, the Australians were not moving around the enemy caves before 19 March when Major Ian Hands led the C Company 3RAR ground assault on Mount Hon Vung. During the assault, which was completed without incident, the tension dropped once certain grey figures that observers in the foothills had earlier reported moving in and out of caves on the mountainside were found to be monkeys.

Once on the mountain at about midday, C Company adopted the best tactical formation it could while the sappers in the CET's helped to check for mines and tape the extent of the cleared area. An Australian flag carried by Second-Lieutenant Lloyd Anderson during the assault was raised on the summit of Hon Vung. A helipad was cleared, and the company area extended sufficiently to allow for about 150 troops as Major Hori Howard was to arrive with A Company plus three CETs that afternoon. The work of mine detecting was greatly impeded by the fallen trees that had been strewn across the area in the bombing. The remainder of A Company flew in, and C Company was able to shake out into less cramped positions once A Company had moved out and occupied 'the Citadel', a high point on an adjacent ridge line about 500 metres on foot down through a gully to the east. No enemy troops had contested the assault. As anticipated, however, the summit was defended by M16 mines.

Before long, a track was cleared and taped down the steep slope between the ridges and up through boulders and broken trees to 'the Citadel'. This would be the base from which A Company would send out its patrols in search of mines and enemy installations. Before the company was settled on 20 March, however, Assault Pioneer Sergeant Buck Rogers (later Clements) was on his way back to Company Headquarters to get some more tape to mark cleared areas when at about 4.00 p.m. he heard a 'BOOM'. An M16 mine had been detonated: assault pioneers David McKenzie and Bluey Eastwood had been hit and engineer Jonah Jones knocked over by the blast. McKenzie and Jones still live to tell the tale. McKenzie recalls that:

All the pioneers went up in the same lift-right on top of the Long Hais. When we got there people were bunched up and anxious to get the tapes out to mark the cleared areas and set Company HQ up for the night. Already shrapnel was a huge problem as we set out with the detectors. As well as this we'd been choppered in late and, with everyone watching, were working under the pressure of the looming darkness to clear an area of perhaps a 30-metre radius for Company HQ. Then, about one hour into the task, one of us – I don't know which – stood on a mine. I felt a tremendous blast and was thrown into the air with the dirt and noise and shrapnel. Then I was aware of a lot of activity. I didn't lose consciousness. I kept thinking that it was exactly at a time like this the enemy would attack.

An entry the 1ATF Duty Officer made in the Log at Nui Dat at 7.40 p.m. provides the closest documentary evidence of what happened: Assault Pioneers prodding when mine exploded. The mine was deeper than they were prodding. This was the enemy's trick of burying the M16s deeply and placing a piece of wood over the striker. Shrapnel was then placed on top of the wood in order to lead the detector operator into thinking that he'd merely detected shrapnel and not a mine. Thus, McKenzie and Eastwood had been working for some time on the spot and gotten repeated positive readings from what repeatedly turned out to be shrapnel. So repeatedly the shrapnel was cleared until, in the heat, tension and frustration, and with the whistling of the detector their nerves, the two thought they had cleared the area, before one of them stepped forward and detonated the deeply buried mine. After A Company's Second Lieutenant Peter Fraser organised the helicopter evacuation, Eastwood was winched out near dark with McKenzie, and the two men were flown to the US 36th Evacuation Hospital in Vung Tau. Eastwood was never the same again.

Conclusion

Human contacts were indeed minimal. With such mountains to hide in, so much territory to move around in, and a back-door escape route from the mountains to Vung Tau, the 100-enemy mentioned in intelligence forecasts for Operation Pinnaroo certainly proved elusive. In relation to the mines, Pinnaroo was also inconclusive. Events towards the end of the operation confirmed that it had indeed been launched partly to clean up the mess left by the minefield. Pinnaroo merged in April with the so-called Cooktown Orchid Operations, in which 2RAR/NZ destroyed 157 mines in the lowlands. However, this figure fell far short of the thousands of M16s lifted from the minefield. Nor would the situation be redressed between 10-12 April when Hughes further ordered his forces to clear the minefield. The attempt soon failed when tanks towing heavy chain mats over the mines between Lo Gom and Lang Phuoc Hai could not sustain the damage that the detonating M16 caused to their tracks and suspension systems. An M16 mine and some booby traps in the minefield also killed two soldiers and wounded eight.

Explaining his decision in the 1970s, Hughes said 'the Long Hais were his area of responsibility; I'd clean them out, if he'd keep them clean. But, of course, the Province Chief did not 'keep them clean'.

TOO YOUNG TO VOTE BUT OLD ENOUGH TO KILL

Stopping for lunch on top of a high feature south-west of B Coy's AO, sitting on the ground and thinking about the reports sent to us about the activities of the other companies. It appears that C Coy drew first blood by picking up a couple of kills the other night. It's also all too bittersweet; since then, both Whiskey Company and Charlie Company have tripped a mine each, with Charlie losing a couple of blokes.

In addition, Whiskey Company, one of two New Zealand companies attached to 2RAR, losing one. As yet, they are not actually sure of the type of mines that they have triggered. Flashing across my mind, I am just wondering if the mines came from the minefield constructed by one of our previous idiot task force commanders-the minefield he ordered to be laid between the Long Hais and the Horseshoe, a fire support base a click north of Dat Do, manned by the Australian forces and naming it Horseshoe because of its shape. It beggars belief how he could have imagined it would actually work, and I really cannot understand from where he received and took his intel and from whom. For all intents and purposes, it was a bloody ridiculous concept, ill-conceived and, most of all, very poorly managed. If you did not know better, you would think he was the senior quartermaster of the mines Q Store for the local Viet Cong units. With the mines readily available, it is saving the VC and NVA the time, the trouble, and the energy by not having a go back and forth to North Vietnam for their mines, even though our engineers did their best when laying the mines with anti-lifting devices and their efforts did actually remove some of our Viet Cong and NVA friends. The advantage still stayed with the VC and NVA, because the minefield was covered neither by sight nor fire, allowing them free reign to remove the mines and anti-lifting devices at will and at their leisure. Unfortunately, for us, the VC and NVA are neither dumb nor inept and are using our own M16 mines, which they recover from the minefield to a great effect by replanting them not in block minefields but at random all over the province.

When laying the mines, the VC do it with a well-established markers plan, and the use of these markers they had well established prior to the time of our arrival in the country. So well-adapted are the VC and NVA in organising their markers that they and the locals are fully aware of the type of markers used in identifying the locations of their mines. Even though the Geneva Convention limits us in the way we use the mines, the task force commander still did not understand the basics of laying a minefield; you could say, if his brains were made of glass, he would not have enough glass to make a monocle for a flea.

Nine Section being the lead section patrolling up, or should I say crawling up a re-entrant, with Lester scouting up front, the field signal is coming back to me to stop, and the section commander is moving forward for a recce. This is unusual, receiving the platoon harbour signal from the front of the platoon and not from the Boss or PL HQ; oh well, maybe we have reached the old disused temple to which we are heading. Who cares anyway as long as we are stopping for a while; I can have a durry as this bloody M79 is driving me crazy, constantly slapping me in the back of the head, and the weight-the weight, it weighs a damn ton.

Harboured-up and my gear off, in the rest mode, having a quiet durry and watching Toad moving from pit to pit as the platoon is also having lunch. Stopping in front of me and looking straight down at me like an old vulture sitting on the side of a discarded carcass and contemplating which part to devour first, Toad says, 'Rick, how would you like to be the section's forward scout?'

Looking at Toad in stunned amazement-is he for real? I would kill for that job, no weight!



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Theatres/Operational Areas Served:

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Sport Shirt: Black/White: "Second To None"	\$47.00		Bumper Sticker: 2RAR Association	\$5.00	
Tee Shirt: Black/White: "Second To None"	\$31.00		Bumper Sticker: Vietnam Veteran	\$8.00	
Tie: "2RAR": Striped	\$29.00		Bumper Sticker: 2 nd Battalion	\$8.00	
Stubby Cooler: "2RAR"	\$11.00		Car Registration Plate Frames: 2 nd Battalion	\$20.00	
Stubby Cooler: "Second To No Bastard"	\$11.00		Note Pad: Leather, ICB Badge	\$10.00	
Sticker (Oval): "ICB"	\$5.00		Sticker: Numerals (New item)	\$8.00	
Sticker (Round): "2RAR"	\$5.00		Sticker: Vietnam Veteran: Oval (New Item)	\$8.00	
Key Ring: Black/Gold: "2RAR"	\$15.00		Sticker: Window Transfer: ICB (New Item)	\$8.00	
Wall Plaque: 2RAR	\$55.00		Playing Cards: Rifleman (New Item)	\$20.00	
Book: Trackers Vietnam 1967/68	\$20.00		Flag: 2RAR Black	\$18.00	
Ladies Silk Scarf	\$57.00		Name Tag: Made to Order (Your preferred name"	\$28.00	
Package Deal 1 Polo shirt and Cap	\$75.00 (Save \$7.00)		Package Deal 3 Polo shirt, Cap and Tie	\$100.00 (save \$11.00)	
Package Deal 2 Sports shirt and Cap	\$75.00 (Save \$7.00)		Package Deal 4 Sports shirt, Cap and Tie	\$100.00 (Save \$11.00)	
Tie "2RAR" (Heritage)	\$29.00		Stubby Cooler: "First round on us"	\$11.00	
Enamel Mug "2RAR"	\$25.00		Book: "A Duty Done"	\$20.00	
Patch: Woven Rising Sun (New item)	\$8.00		Belt Buckle: RAR (New item)	\$18.00	
Patch: Woven 2RAR (New item)	\$8.00		Belt Buckle: Huey (New item)	\$18.00	
Patch: Woven Combat Vietnam (New item)	\$8.00		Patch: Woven Unit Colour Patch (New item)	\$6.00	
Patch: Woven Combat (New item)	\$8.00		Sticker: Unit Colour Patch (New item)	\$6.00	
Badge: Next of Kin (New item)	\$10.00		Patch: Woven ICB (New item)	\$6.00	

You can pay for your merchandise by:

- Cheques to be made payable to: 2RAR Association, Inc
- Direct deposit to the Association's bank account:
Account details: 2RAR Association, Inc
Bank: Suncorp Bank.
BSB: 484-799
Account Number: 063 350 355

When ordering merchandise using this form, email to:

2rarsecretary@gmail.com

or

Post the Merchandise Order Form to:

PO Box 1097
TOOMBUL QLD 4012