



HOLDFAST

July 2019 - Number 34

www.tunnelrats.com.au

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE VIETNAM TUNNEL RATS ASSOCIATION INC.

**A FATALLY FLAWED DECISION
WAS MADE TO CREATE THE
BARRIER MINEFIELD.**

**WAS THE NEXT BIG MISTAKE
THE LACK OF TRAINING GIVEN
TO THOSE BRAVE SAPPERS
WHO HAD TO LAY THE MINES?**

Nostalgia Pages



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



Holdfast Magazine

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Optimum manning of a work team



Troop staff made sure Tunnel Rats were kept busy on menial tasks when back in base off operations, after all, who knows what a Tunnel Rat might get up to with time on his hands! The work party above is based on standard army procedure - if there are three men working you need three men watching over them. The 'watchers' were (L to R) Jock Meldrum, Yorkie Schofield and Shorty Harrison. The fence mending is taking place at the back of the 3 Troop lines in Nui Dat, some time in 1970/71.

Seriously weird sign at a Vung Tau massage joint



With its half man half woman illustration was this massage house way ahead of its time in 1960's Vung Tau? Were these trendsetters trying to appeal to trans-gender folk even before we'd heard of such a thing? Or perhaps the male soldier's uniform and the female nurse's uniform simply meant they were wanting to attract business from soldiers on leave plus the nurses in the US and Australian military hospitals in Vung Tau. After all, who wouldn't be interested in a "Good body massage and EVERYTHING."

Skinny as a rake but strong as an ox



Despite the terrain and the heat, this young Viet Cong soldier is taking the weight of the ammunition box in her stride. You had to admire the will and the staying power of our enemy when you also consider the very basic diet and living conditions they existed under. The markings on the box indicate it was ordnance of US origins. It likely got into enemy hands via the black market or a corrupt member of the South Vietnam forces. It was a complicated war! While our army is still struggling to integrate women into combat roles, it's sobering to think the Viet Cong were doing it 50 years ago.

Sorting out your kit before an operation



Tunnel Rat, CPL Gordon Temby, 3 Troop 1969/71 is going through the ritual of sorting and preparing all the stuff he will need to carry with him on his next operation out bush. Rations needed to be culled down to only the items you actually wanted to eat. All the packing associated with the rations was discarded to reduce weight and increase available space in your pack. An initial demolitions pack was prepared, comprising usually eight blocks of C4 plastic explosive, a length of safety fuse, a longer length of demolitions cord and (packed separately) a few detonators. Pistol and rifle were checked and cleaned and clean ammunition loaded into magazines. Gordon is seen above maintaining and checking his mine detector (hopefully not tuning it so close to all those metallic objects!). Gordon did an extraordinarily long tour of duty of 19 months with the Tunnel Rats. Some guys just couldn't get enough of it! Gordon has kindly provided us with a treasure trove of photos to publish in Holdfast.

Sappers doing their favourite thing - blowing stuff up!



These three lads are doing what Tunnel Rats love to do - blowing things up with excessive amounts of explosives. They have been tasked with destroying some unwanted ordnance and unusually are using TNT for the job. By far our most common explosive material was C4 plastic explosive slabs. Looking at the amount of TNT they are applying to this job we estimate they are using around six times the required amount. Superb! Seen left to right in the photo are 'Rip' Kirby of 3 Troop 1969/70 and Kenny Laughton of 3 Troop 1970/71, plus one other who at this stage we are unable to identify. Ordnance such as artillery rounds, mortar rounds, recoilless rifle rounds and general ammunition were often declared 'unserviceable' or 'US' due to excessive exposure to moisture. Once declared 'US' it had to be destroyed in case it was mistakenly used in a weapon which could result in it failing to work or worse, exploding in the breach.

Blending in with your surrounds



If you stayed out bush long enough on an operation you started to look and smell like the jungle and earth around you. Proving the point above is Harry 'Hi-Fi' Klopčic, a Tunnel Rat with 1 Troop 1967/68. Two of Harry's many passions are Hi-Fi systems and photography. Harry now lives in Nha Trang Vietnam and he is the official photographer on our tours back to Vietnam.

A place of solace during a break from mine clearing



Tunnel Rat CPL. Jim Castles (2TP 1968/69) reckons this antique print would look a treat in his study back home, but Aussie soldiers don't loot stuff, so it is probably still sitting where he left it all those years ago. Jim was commanding a section of Sappers tasked with demining the notorious Barrier Minefield. The lads took a break from the midday heat and discovered this deserted old temple on the outskirts of Dat Do.

Armed to the teeth to head out on a 'swan' with the boss



A 'swan' was a job or operation which involved little danger and was a breeze to carry out. Sapper Peter Riedlinger served as a Tunnel Rat so he knows all about danger, but in the 1968 photo at left he is definitely on a 'swan'. Back in base after an operation out bush, Peter has been ordered to go on OC Escort Duty for the day. This involved being the bodyguard for the Officer Commanding 1 Field Squadron as he travelled around the Province visiting contacts and jobs in progress. At least it was a good chance to see the villages close up. At that time travel out of Australia at our age was a rarity. So all of us remember the totally foreign sights, sounds and smells of local villages the first time we ventured into them. It was a million miles from home in every aspect. Earthen floors, burning incense, chickens roaming the house, pigs in a pen out the back, and impossibly skinny dogs. Peter's brother Lester also served as a Tunnel Rat, two years later in 1970/71.

Sometimes the hot sun and the beer can send sappers a bit Troppo!



For some unknown reason these three Tunnel Rats from 2 Troop 1966/67 were having a Mad Hatter's Party back at base in Nui Dat. It could be the hot sun or the beer - or it could be the sheer stress of their job, as all three of these lads worked on laying mines in the Barrier Minefield in May 1967. From left to right: Rod McClellan, Peter Hegarty and Dennis Quick. We're not sure of the significance of the noose around Dennis Quick's neck!

Armoured shade for Sappers on a mission



This Combat Team of Tunnel Rats from 3 Troop are sheltering under the shade of an armoured bridge layer and doing what soldiers have done for centuries - waited. They are on "Operation Massey Harris" and the bridge layer was used to span a river where a bridge had been blown up by local VC. Seen above (L to R) are: Ben Benningfield, Darrel Binns, Shorty Fulton, Kenny Laughton, Jock Wallace and Bob Reed. The objective of Operation Massey Harris was to locate and destroy illegal market gardens in the lower eastern Phuoc Tuy and Binh Tuy boundary area, where VC of 84 Rear Services Group were ingeniously growing crops below the jungle canopy.

It's party time in Vung Tau!



Looking seriously sixties these balloon wielding bargirls are obviously attempting to entice a few innocent Aussie Diggers into their den of iniquity. Once inside you were fair game for their skillfull tactics at extracting every last cent you had. They were pretty good too at making empty promises, like "I love you long time, no sweat." Which was of course a promise impossible to keep in the intense heat of Vietnam!

Tanks for the luxuries



Being posted out bush with the tanks or APCs instead of infantry had its benefits. You rarely had to walk and there was always plenty of water and rations. Tunnel Rat Denis Crawford (2TP 1970/71) above enjoys a brew at the back of an APC. "The bloody tankies would never share their Jack Rations though," recalls Denis!

'Instructional Film' night in the 2 Troop recreation hut



For the sake of decency and so the officers could attend, Blue Movie nights were dubbed 'Instructional Film Nights'. We have no idea who sourced the movies or who organised the nights, but if you were in camp it was always a hoot to attend. The quality of the productions was pretty ordinary and the film itself was invariably burnt out in some sections where previous viewers had tried to stop the motion to look at 'finer detail' thus exposing the film to the intense heat of the lamp. But the banter between the lads was always the highlight of the night. Identifiable in the top photo, from left to right are: Greg Gough in the red cap, and below him Bob Ottery. In the window, grinning like a Cheshire cat is "Roo Dog Scott, and below him is Ron Coman. Identifiable in the photo above are, from left to right (standing): Mick Van Poeteren and Tommy Ryan, and seated: Harry Hurst (Killed in action 29 April 1970), John Ronaldson and Captain Janis Atrens, Troop Commander 2 Troop.

Catching river rats for dinner!



Gordon Temby of 3 Troop snapped the top photo on Route 44 near Long Phouc Hai. These hunters are actually gathering river rats to eat them. The little rodents are considered a gourmet delight in parts of Vietnam and are much sought after during certain times of the year. The favoured method of cooking is to strip them of all their fur and smoke them on a bed of hay (see photo above). Rather alarmingly, they appear not to gut the rats before cooking or eating! Unfortunately our tour back to Vietnam in November this year doesn't coincide with the peak rat eating season so it's unlikely we'll be able to do a restaurant review on the subject for you.

"It's veal cutlets tonight Pierre"



The French certainly knew how to go to war in style during their long conflict with the Viet Minh in Vietnam. These two Legionnaires have obviously 'obtained' a young calf locally and intend enjoying some traditional veal dishes once back in camp. At their forward bases the French always had wine with meals for all ranks, and best of all they even operated their own brothels. This is not to distract from their brave efforts though, with official statistics revealing the armed forces of the French Union lost 92,800 killed and 76,400 wounded in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

Hoa Long's killer smoothies



The village of Hoa Long was close to our base camp at Nui Dat. If you were travelling through the village and could convince the driver to stop, there was a real treat on offer at one of the road-side stores. They sold fruit smoothies made fresh from locally grown bananas and pineapples. The place was so popular you would often see Australian army trucks and Landrovers lined up waiting their turn. This was despite strong warnings from medicos about the dangers of serious stomach woes from the untreated water and ice added to the mix. Our bravery materialised in many forms!

A sapper slips into 'you can't see me' mode



Taking a break while on patrol with an infantry platoon, Tunnel Rat Ben Beningfield is on full alert, and at the same time doing his best not to be seen himself. While attached to infantry on operations the Tunnel Rats would be out bush for four to six weeks at a time, sleeping on the ground, eating C Rations and drinking water tainted with purification tabs. No shower, no decent wash, and maybe one change of greens during the Op if you were lucky. Despite all this, not one of us would have missed the experience for quids.

With 56 bookings in already
our Tunnel Rats tour back to
Vietnam is going gang-busters

"PACK YA BLOODY MOZZIE
GEAR FOR THIS INSANE VISIT
TO AN OLD VC BASE CAMP
IN THE MANGROVES"

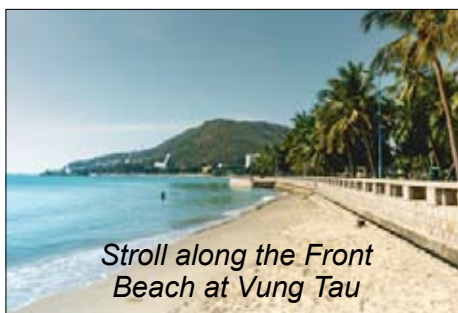
10 days
9 nights
\$1080^{PP}
Twin share

Negotiate your leave-pass and book now!

Focused on Tunnel Rats, our tour will visit key operational areas. For the first time we'll visit a restored VC base camp in the mangrove swamps of the Rung Sat Secret Zone. And incredibly we'll visit a tunnel system none of us knew about north of Binh Ba, and used by the NVA in the Battle of Binh Ba. We will meet several former enemy who lifted mines from the barrier minefield, and visit mine incident sites with the Tunnel Rats involved in those incidents. We will hold a service for our 36 fallen comrades at the memorial rock which still sits in our 1 Field Squadron area at Nui Dat - followed by a BBQ. Plus we visit the barrier minefield and the enemy caves in the Long Hai hills. And you'll get the chance to do a nostalgic tour of Vungers, visiting The Flags area, the old Badcoe Club area and the Grand Hotel where you can have a beer, just for old time's sake.

The trip is for ten days and nine nights in Vietnam, (two nights in Saigon, then five nights in Vung Tau followed by two more nights in Saigon). If you wish to stay extra nights in Saigon before the tour, we can extend your booking at the same low rate we negotiated at the hotel.

Getting there: Rather than adding to the costs and travel time by forcing everyone to depart from one city in Australia, each person will book and pay for their own return air ticket to Saigon, enabling them to find the



*Stroll along the Front
Beach at Vung Tau*

best air ticket deal from their city. The plan is for us all to meet in Saigon on Monday 4th November and from there the Tour begins.

The first event is on the 4th November – welcome drinks

and dinner at a nearby Sports Bar where we can buy food and drinks at incredibly low local prices. Book your air travel carefully to ensure you arrive in Saigon in time to get to the hotel, check-in and make it to the 6pm function. If the airline you choose arrives too late, book your flight to arrive the day prior and we'll book an extra night in the hotel for you.

Shop around for the best airfare. There are plenty of airlines flying into Saigon, so don't grab the first airfare you find. Direct, non-stop flights take less

time and there is no danger of missing a connecting flight, but it may be cheaper to fly on a non-direct flight via another city. There are regular flights out of Australia to Saigon via Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok or Brunei.

The return date for leaving Saigon to head home is 13 November. If you wish to stay extra nights in Saigon after the tour, let us know and we'll extend your booking at the same low rate we have negotiated at the hotel.

Current serving Combat Engineers (male and female) are again most welcome to join the tour, and several are already coming. Apart from this, it's a blokes only tour, with the Tunnel Rats welcome to have their sons and mates along on the trip to share the extraordinary experience.

When we return to our hotel each day there's always the opportunity to enjoy drinks together at the 'Designated Boozer' before people go their own way for the evening. The comradeship of these drink sessions are an absolute highlight of the tour.

The cost of the tour is detailed in the panel opposite. We've been able to cut \$400 off the tour cost, making it even better value than ever before.

HOW WE CUT THE COSTS

1: We changed hotels in Saigon, so on a Twin Share basis we save \$40 per night or \$160 per person over the four nights we're there.

2: We saved \$150 per person more by cutting out the Welcome and Farewell set price dinners (\$75 each dinner) at a flash hotel. Instead we'll go to a Sports Bar buying our own food and drinks at low local prices.

3: Our tour company in Vietnam also negotiated savings in several other areas.

The total of these savings enabled us to bring the price down from \$1,480 on the last tour, to just \$1,080 on this tour, saving us \$400 each.



NEW: We visit an enemy tunnel system north of Binh Ba none of us knew existed, yet it was used by the NVA during the Battle of Binh Ba!

Lots of new activities plus all the old favourites and the same incredible levels of comradeship. Plus, amazingly, we've been able to dramatically cut costs, making it even better value for us

TOTAL COST FOR THE TOUR

The full cost for the 10 day, 9 night tour is \$1,080 per person if you are sharing a room (twin share). If you prefer a room on your own, the extra cost is \$400 to cover the hotel room costs for the nine nights. We'd appreciate receiving your booking and deposit payment ASAP so we can lock down all the rooms and tours. If for any reason you need to pull out later, you'll receive a full refund.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Each guest will be met at the airport and transported to the hotel.
- Four nights in The Bong Sen hotel Saigon including buffet breakfast.
- Five nights in The Muong Thanh Hotel Vung Tau including buffet breakfast.
- Ferry tickets Saigon to Vung Tau and return to Saigon via Rung Sat zone.
- BBQ lunch at Nui Dat.

- All specified land tours.
- All permits to visit restricted zones.
- Entry to all scheduled tour venues.
- All wreaths for our ceremonies.
- All bus hire costs and driver costs.
- Cost of tour guides and interpreters.
- 2 tour shirts embroidered with your name and the Tunnel Rats tour logo.
- Each guest will be picked up at the hotel and transported to the airport at the end of the tour.

All other activities, meals and drinks will be at our own cost. The following items are optional, but you may want to plan your finances for them:

- Our dinner with the NVA musicians, around \$25.
- Donation to buy milk and rice for the orphanage, around \$12 each.
- Combined tip for the tour organiser, tour guides, bus driver etc: \$25
- Lunch on the Cu Chi tour, around \$5.

Our itinerary at a glance

DAY 1 - MONDAY 4 NOVEMBER

Australia to Saigon: People will be arriving at the airport at different times throughout the day. Every guest on the tour is met at the airport by our travel company and transferred to our hotel. After check-in you are free to roam, but be back in time for the 1800h start of our Welcome drinks and dinner gathering in a nearby Sports bar where we can order our own food and drinks at incredibly low local prices.

DAY 2 - TUESDAY 5 NOVEMBER (Optional)

Cu Chi Tunnels tour: Our bus departs at 0900h to the Cu Chi Tunnels where we'll have a guided tour just for our group. You'll also have the chance to fire AK47, M60 and M16 Armalite weapons at their rifle range (cost US\$2 per bullet). We have lunch in a riverside restaurant, then head back to Saigon, where the rest of the afternoon and the evening are free. **Note: You can opt out of this tour if you prefer to have a free day in Saigon or want to book a separate tour or activity for the day. Mr. Ha our tour organiser has many options available.**

DAY 3 - WEDNESDAY 6 NOVEMBER

Saigon to Vung Tau by ferry: A 0900h departure by bus to the Ferry Terminal on the Saigon River. The bus will continue on to Vung Tau with our luggage. On arrival in Vung Tau we will check in to the Muong Thanh Hotel, then have a briefing on our planned activities for the next five days. You then have the rest of the afternoon and the evening free for you to check out the town, including our nearby Designated Boozer.

DAY 4 – THURSDAY 7 NOVEMBER

The orphanage at Baria, the Kim Long underground tunnel and the Binh Gia VC Memorial Cemetery: We depart by bus at 0900h to visit the orphanage where we donate rice and milk products for the children. The orphanage has been supported by Australian veterans for many years. We then visit the Kim Long underground tunnel north of Binh Ba, which none of us knew existed and was used by the NVA during the Battle of Binh Ba. We also visit a memorial cemetery for the NVA and VC killed in the area, before heading back to Vung Tau. In the evening (1800h) we will enjoy a music concert performed for us by former NVA and VC veterans, followed by a dinner, with the musicians as our guests.

DAY 5 – FRIDAY 8 NOVEMBER

Long Tan and Nui Dat: A 0900h bus departure to Long Tan Cross memorial where we'll place a wreath in remembrance of all Australians killed in the Vietnam War. We'll then tour our old base camp at Nui Dat, including Luscombe Field and our old Troop Lines. We'll hold a memorial service for our fallen Tunnel Rat comrades at the site of our former Squadron HQ at Nui Dat. This will be followed by a traditional Troop BBQ amongst the rubber trees.

DAY 6 – SATURDAY 9 NOVEMBER (Optional)

The Long Hai Hills, mine incident sites and meeting with former enemy mine lifters: Our bus departs at 0900h for the Long Hai Mountains, which was the VC's big base camp known as the "Minh Dam Secret Zone". We will walk the hills, look into the caves and visit their beautiful memorial temple to the fallen NVA and VC in the area. We then visit several mine incident sites where men involved in the incidents will talk of what took place. Then it's time to head back to the hotel in Vung Tau. **Note: You can opt out of this tour if you prefer to have a free day in Vung Tau or want to book a separate tour or activity for the day. Mr. Ha our tour organiser has many options available.** Once the tour group is back at the hotel we will meet with former VC involved in lifting mines from our Barrier minefield. The rest of the afternoon and evening is free.

DAY 7 – SUNDAY 10 NOVEMBER

Vung Tau free day: You'll have plenty of time to relax, explore Vung Tau, laze by the hotel pool, go shopping, walk along the beach, go for a nostalgic bar crawl with your mates, or simply stroll the streets and soak up the atmosphere. If there is a particular place out in the Province you wish to visit on this day, speak with our tour organiser Mr. Ha so he can arrange it for you.

DAY 8 - MONDAY 11 NOVEMBER

Ferry to Saigon via Can Gio and the former VC base in the Rung Sat zone: Our bus departs the hotel at 0900h to the ferry terminal for a 1000h ferry to Can Gio, while our bus takes our luggage to our hotel in Saigon. In Can Gio we tour through a restored VC camp in the mangrove swamp and meet with former VC there. We then return to the ferry terminal for the journey back to Saigon to check in to our hotel. The rest of the afternoon and evening are free.

DAY 9 - TUESDAY 12 NOVEMBER (Optional)

Subterranean Saigon tour plus Saigon Highlights tour: 0900 bus departure for the 'Subterranean Saigon' tour visiting VC bunkers and tunnels under homes and shops. Used by the VC for weapons storage, print shops and hideouts, these venues are now preserved as historic sites. We return to the hotel in time for lunch. After lunch those who wish to can enjoy the Saigon Highlights tour visiting key attractions of the city. **Note: You can opt out of either or both of these tours if you prefer to have a free day in Saigon or want to book a separate tour or activity for the day. Mr. Ha our tour organiser has many options available.** At 1800h we have our Farewell drinks and dinner gathering in a nearby Sports bar where we can order our own food and drinks at incredibly low local prices.

DAY 10 - WEDNESDAY 13 NOVEMBER

Time to head home: Time to head home: For those leaving today, pack, check out and be in the lobby at the time advised by our travel company for pickup and transport to the airport. Some of us will stay on for an extra day or so to chill out.

Just a few of the highlights you can expect on the tour



Visit the orphanage in Baria

The old orphanage we used to visit during the war is still there. We meet the kids and staff plus we donate heaps of rice and milk powder for the children. Always an emotional experience.



Spend time with some of today's young Sappers

It's a privilege to have current serving Sappers with us on the trip. Take the opportunity to chill out with them, buy them a beer and swap war stories.



Ceremony at The Rock

The original ceremonial rock that was in front of 1FD SQN HQ at Nui Dat is still there. We hold a remembrance ceremony at that rock for our 36 Tunnel Rat comrades killed in action in Vietnam.



Fire war era weapons

At the Cu Chi Tunnels we visit their rifle range to fire a selection of weapons including the AK47, the M60 Machine Gun and the M16 ArmaLite. Ear Muffs provided for any wimps on the tour!



Time-out highlights

In Saigon and in Vung Tau we nominate a designated boozier where we can gather after each day of touring. The humour, the conversations and the comradeship at these sessions are pure gold - and you can buy a stubby of beer for just US\$1 each.



Historic Long Tan Cross

We visit the Long Tan Cross, situated at the very site where the Battle of Long Tan took place. We hold a ceremony there in remembrance not only of those who fell at the battle, but all Australian soldiers who lost their lives in the Vietnam War.



Nui Dat BBQ

Following our ceremony at The Rock we hold a fully catered sit-down 'Troop BBQ' amongst the rubber trees. And you can tour our old troop lines after lunch.



We visit a restored VC base in the Rung Sat mangroves

Aussie Infantry together with Tunnel Rats entered these perilous swamps several times, but we never found their main base camp. Now we will visit it via a ferry ride from Vung Tau. Bring your mozzie repellent!



The notorious Long Hai hills

We visit this former enemy base including the old caves. Aussie troops suffered big casualties every time we went near this place - mostly from M-16 mines. Step lightly lads!

Here's some of the folks you'll meet on the tour

We have thrown all privacy rights to the wind and published (on the right) a complete list of the folks coming so far on the tour. It's a fascinating mob, with plenty of Tunnel Rats and sons and friends of Tunnel Rats. We have two Veterans from 17 Construction Sqn who will no doubt tell us they built the very roads we will be travelling on! We have two 'Drop-shorts' from Artillery with us (in a nice role reversal, they can expect to cop a bit of flack from us this time). Best of all, we have six current era or current serving Sappers with us, four of them from SOER. It is always a highlight of the tour to enjoy the company (and tales) of these brave Sappers of today.



ABOVE LEFT (on the right): Tunnel Rat legend 'Grumpy' Foster will be with us - you've been warned! In the photo with Grumpy is Chris Koulouris. ABOVE RIGHT: Our Piper Ross Brewer will be joining our tour again and is seen above in his jungle camouflage regalia

Serving Sappers invited to join us on the tour

Current serving Sappers (male and female of all ranks) are invited to join our tour - as long as they have served or currently serve in a Combat Engineer unit.

On the tour they will get an understanding of how we operated in terms of combat engineer tasks, particularly when attached to Infantry and Armoured units. They'll gain an insight into the casualties we suffered, and why, plus how we coped with it. They'll see first-hand the similarities between our tasks in Vietnam and theirs today, and how much better trained and equipped they are than we were.

Plus there will be the unique experience of melding together the incredible comradeship the old and the young Sappers enjoy as a result of our service. And of course it's a real treat for us old Sappers to be around these brave and bright young soldiers. If you're a serving Sapper and you wish to join us on the tour, simply fill in the form and pay the deposit. Or if you are a serving Sapper and have any questions about the tour, contact Jim Marett on: 0403 041 962 or by email on: tunnelrats.vietnam@gmail.com

THE 56 TOUR PARTICIPANTS SO FAR:

Our VIPs

1. Graham Ellis SOER Veteran, Afghanistan
2. Phil Grazier SOER Veteran - Afghanistan
- 3&4. Two current serving members of SOER
5. A current serving Sapper from 1CER
6. A current serving NCO Trainer from SME
7. Ross Brewer, Tunnel Rats Grand Piper

Sons of Tunnel Rats no longer with us

8. Karlis Atrens, son of Janis Atrens 68/69
9. Brad Matulick, son of Dave Matulick 67/68

Other Units/Corps

10. David Cowper, 17 Const Sqn 68/69
11. Terry Treasure, 17 Const Sqn 1971
12. Max Troynar, Artillery 67/68
13. Gordon Williams, Artillery 68/69

3 Field Troop

14. Keith Kermode, Tunnel Rat 65/66

1 Troop 1 Field Squadron

15. Bob Laird, Tunnel Rat 68/69
16. Ross Tulloh, Tunnel Rat 66/1967
17. Ray Carroll, Tunnel Rat 70/71
18. Ray's son Trent "Tommy" Carroll
19. Paul Taylor, Tunnel Rat 1971
20. Paul's brother David Taylor
21. Harry Klopccic, Tunnel Rat 68/69
22. Kerry McCormick, Tunnel Rat 68/71
23. Kerry's mate
24. Graham Fletcher, Tunnel Rat 69/70

2 Troop 1 Field Squadron

25. Graeme Pengelly, Tunnel Rat 1970
26. Greg Gough, Tunnel Rat 69/70
- 27 & 28 Greg's sons Shane and Paul
29. Gary McClintock, Tunnel Rat 70/71
30. Gary's mate Geoff Cohen
31. Wayne Hynson, Tunnel Rat 68/69
32. "Ba Ba" Lamb, Tunnel Rat 69/70
33. Geoff Craven, Tunnel Rat 67/68
34. Geoff's mate Darren Cummins
35. Bob Ottery, Tunnel Rat 69/70
36. Bob's son Ben Ottery
37. Jim Marett, Tunnel Rat 69/70
38. Jim's mate Alan Whiteley
39. Alan's mate Steven Relf
40. Dennis Coghlan, Tunnel Rat 1971
41. Allan Pearson, Tunnel Rat 68/69
42. Alan's grandson Ethan Pearson
43. Kevin Connor, Tunnel Rat 69/70
44. "Grumpy" Foster, Tunnel Rat 69/70
45. Grumpy's mate Nick Maxwell

3 Troop 1 Field Squadron

46. Peter Thorp MID, Tunnel Rat 69/70
47. Peter's son James
48. John Nulty, Tunnel Rat 68/69
- 49 & 50. John's sons Matt and Tim
- 51 to 56. Mick O'Hearn Tunnel Rat 67/68, Mick's son Trev, Mick's mate Steve Lantry, Mick's three relatives; Mick Cory, Kristian Bischoff and Graeme Bischoff.

We have options now for you to tailor your own activities

We have quite a few regulars on our tours, including some who have been on all six tours so far. Others on our tours may have already visited Vietnam several times independently with family. We realise there is probably a limit on how many times you can visit the Cu Chi Tunnels or Long Hai Hills etc, when Vietnam has so much to offer.

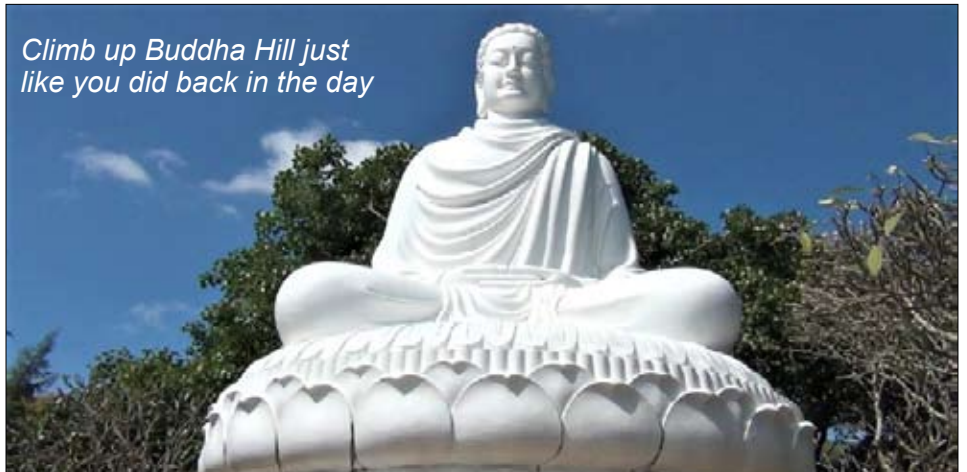
Now, if you wish, you can opt out of any day's activities (except our remembrance service at Nui Dat) and arrange your own tour or activity.

Our tour operator in Vietnam, Mr. Ha of Asia Travel Service has many options available including cooking classes, walking tours, fishing trips, a game of golf, day trips to the Mekong Delta, market tours, foodie experiences, exotic temple tours and much more.

Or you may prefer to enjoy a free day in Saigon or Vung Tau to wander the streets, eat some great food and visit some of the top bars for a cold beer or sip of wine. The choice is yours.



Tour the historic delights of French influence in Saigon



Climb up Buddha Hill just like you did back in the day



Enjoy a seafood feast for about \$20 including beers!!!



Arrange a day of golf including a caddy

If you wish to pre-arrange any private trip or activity during your tour, contact Mr. Ha by email on: nguyendanhha2009@yahoo.com.vn or by mobile on: +84 98 998 95 97

Perfect central Saigon location and great value for us

The Bong Sen Hotel Saigon

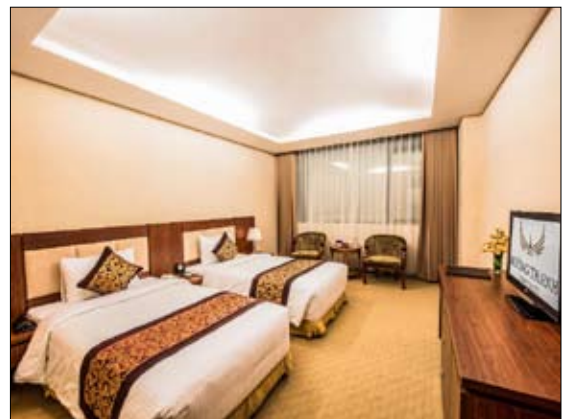
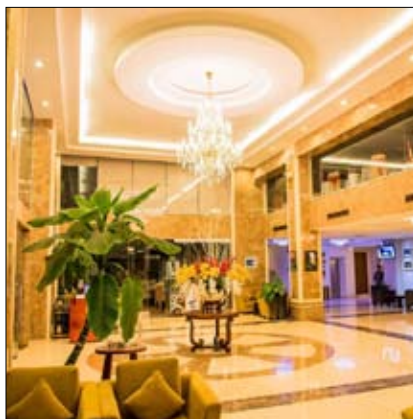
Our first two nights and last two nights of the tour are at the Bong Sen Hotel. It's in a great location on Dong Khoi Street in the heart of Saigon. There are lots of shops and restaurants nearby and plenty of taxis available out front. The hotel represents great value and provides a superb buffet breakfast which is included in our tour price. Conveniently there's a Beer House/restaurant right next door which looks perfect as our 'Designated Boozer'.



Our hotel in Vung Tau is right in the heart of everything

Muong Thanh Hotel Vung Tau

We'll be staying in the perfectly located Muong Thanh Hotel in the Front Beach area of Vung Tau. It's a great base for our tours to the old operational areas of Phuoc Tuy Province. The hotel is next to the famous Grand Hotel, and is close to popular bars and restaurants and just up the road from our 'Designated Boozer'. It has a pool and an excellent buffet breakfast which is included in the tour. For those with more money than sense, there is a casino nearby as well.



TUNNEL RATS TOUR BACK TO VIETNAM - 4 NOV TO 13 NOV 2019

VIETNAM TRIP \$300 DEPOSIT BOOKING FORM – ONE PERSON PER FORM

Full cost of the 10 day, 9 night tour will be \$1,080 (shared room) or an extra \$400 for a room on your own (\$1,480). Any extra nights you may require in the Huong Sen Hotel Saigon before or after the tour can be calculated later once you have your flight details.

Name:	
Mobile number:	Phone number (landline):
Address:	
Postcode:	
Email address:	
If you are a Vietnam Tunnel Rat please list Troop served with and approximate dates:	
If you are a current serving soldier please provide rank and name of CER unit serving or served with:	
If you are the son or mate of a Tunnel Rat on the tour, please provide his name:	
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<input type="radio"/> Cheque or Australia Post Money Order – payable to Vietnam Tunnel Rats Association <p align="center">Post this form to: Vietnam Tunnel Rats Assoc 43 Heyington Place Toorak Vic 3142 Or email this form to: tunnelrats.vietnam@gmail.com</p>	
<p align="center">If you don't have a scanner you can:</p> <p align="center">(A): Simply email the same information requested above to: tunnelrats.vietnam@gmail.com Or (B): Complete the form, photograph it with your phone and text it to Jim Marett at 0403 041 962</p>	

One of the 'secret weapons' behind the success of our great tours

The tours to Vietnam organised by the Tunnel Rats Association have been an extraordinary success since the first one back in 2007. Our numbers on each tour have ranged from 50 to 80 participants which is amazing considering we were such a small unit during the war. We know of no other veteran association which has anywhere near as many participants as ours on their tours back to Vietnam.

One of the very special things we have enjoyed on the tours since the first one, is the unique level of access we have to 'restricted' areas, combined with our ability to meet with former enemy and discuss our experiences openly.

Anyone who has ever tried to organise anything in Vietnam will know that this is an exceptional achievement. Vietnam is still a very controlled society, and experiences like these just don't happen without the right connections.

Our connections are the combination of our tour operator Nguyen Danh Ha (who we know affectionately as 'Mr. Ha'), and his father, Nguyen Dong Chuyen (who we know affectionately as 'Mr Chuyen').

Whilst Mr. Ha is the incredible organiser of all our tours, accommodation and activities, it is his father, Mr. Chuyen who is our 'secret weapon'.

Mr. Chuyen is a proud War Veteran, a former soldier of the Vietnam People's Army (VPA) who served bravely and was wounded in battle. Mr. Chuyen is widely respected and connected amongst the Vietnamese Veteran community and within the local Vung Tau community where he and Mr. Ha live and where Mr. Ha has his travel company headquarters.

So it is Mr. Chuyen, a fellow Veteran and former enemy who is our secret weapon!

Mr. Chuyen was born in



TOP: A war era photo of Nguyen Dong Chuyen (on the right) with one of his Vietnam People's Army comrades. ABOVE: Nguyen Danh Ha our tour organiser and owner of the tour company Asia Travel Service, based in Vung Tau. Mr. Ha is seen above during a visit to Australia last year.

1946 and joined the VPA in 1963 as a volunteer at the age of 17. His motivation for joining at such an early age was an event which took place in 1953 when he was just seven years old. His father that year was captured and tortured by French forces.

His mother then had to struggle through life doing her very best to provide for their six children. And as a farming family they all had to work long hard

hours in the fields to gain a livelihood.

Most Vietnamese men during the Vietnam War were called up into the army at 18 years of age. So when the determined young Mr. Chuyen volunteered at just 17 years of age he first went through nine months of basic training at a drill-ground near his home before officially joining the VPA in February 1964 when he turned 18. Following



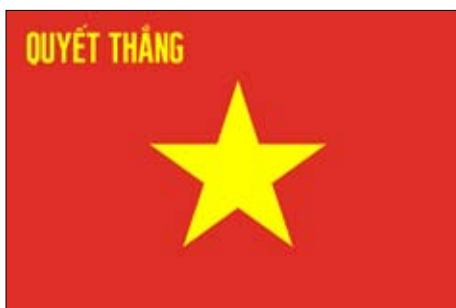
training he was quickly sent out into the battle zones where he spent five years until 1969 when he was wounded in battle. During that five years he moved rapidly through the ranks, being a Private from 1963 to 1964, then a Corporal from 1965 to 1967, and a Lieutenant from 1968 to 1969.

His main area of operations was the Quang Nam and Da Nang zones, and it was south of Da Nang where he was wounded, by rocket fire from an aircraft.

He was evacuated to a field hospital in Quang Nam for emergency treatment then when he was well enough to travel he was transported to a medical recovery unit. After three months of recovery he was able to re-join the VPA but his wounds restricted him from any further frontline duty.

He was sent back to Hanoi for training from 1969 to 1972 as an engineer and driver, then returned to active duty when posted to the Transportation Unit Number 4 – C7 – C11 from 1972 until 1982. This unit was tasked with moving weapons and supplies in logistic support of actions in the Da Nang, Hai Phong and Laos regions.

With health issues emerging related to his wounds from 1969, he retired from the VPA in 1982 with the rank of Major, and in 1994 moved to live in Vungtau



where he now lives with his extended family.

We thank Mr. Chuyen for so generously sharing his connections with us and trusting us with the very special access to areas and people that he facilitates for us.

TOP: The Tunnel Rats gather with former enemy at the site of the 1969 Battle of Binh Ba. Such meetings simply can't happen without the right connections.

ABOVE: Mr. Chuyen in his army dress uniform, displaying his retired rank of Major. He is an accomplished musician, particularly with the traditional 'Moon Guitar' shown above. Mr. Chuyen has formed a musical group comprising many of his old army comrades. The group performs a one hour concert for us in Vung Tau on each of our tours.

LEFT: The flag of the Vietnam People's Army - the slogan reads "Determination to win".

LAYING THE BARRIER MINEFIELD

THE CONSEQUENCES OF A FATALLY FLAWED DECISION



The Tunnel Rats had some pretty hairy jobs in Vietnam, but this one surely takes the cake

“The mine was armed and ready to go when the safety pin was removed from its fuze, but a thin metal rod holding safe the anti-lift grenade beneath still had to be withdrawn. This last step required two men acting together, facing each other on their knees, with the mine between them. While one man held the mine steady and secured the earth around it, the other carefully slipped the metal rod out to arm the grenade. The whole device was now ready to blow. Both men then carefully stood and withdrew.”

The Tunnel Rats laying the Barrier Minefield continued to carry out their dangerous task, even in the face of the horrendous casualties happening among them. In a period of just 22 days, five men were killed and eleven wounded while laying the minefield. The first tragic error was the decision to create the minefield, was the second error the sending of Sappers in to lay the minefield without proper training?

Following are a series of stories revealing the sheer stupidity of the decision to create the minefield, and giving clear indications of inadequately trained men being sent in to lay the mines. The bright light shining out from this tragedy though, is of course the brave

young Sappers who as always carried out their job to the very best of their abilities. They deserved better leadership and wiser decisions at that critical time when such a risky and highly dangerous course had been set.

The decision that did all the damage

“In 1967, the Australian Task Force Commander Brigadier Stuart Graham issued the calamitous order: ATF would construct an 11 kilometre barrier fence minefield containing over 20,000 M16 landmines in southern Vietnam’s Phuoc Tuy Province. The purpose of the ‘barrier’ was to separate and shield the majority of the population in the south-west of the province from enemy forces in

the north and east.

What Graham failed to realise was that the enemy would steal thousands of the mines and turn them back against the Australian Task Force with horrendous, far reaching results.”

(Source: The Minefield: An Australian tragedy in Vietnam, Greg Lockhart, 2007).

Mines lifted from our own minefield became our enemy’s most effective strike weapons, causing close to 50 per cent of Australian casualties. We gifted our enemy thousands of these mines, ideal weapons to defend their vital areas and base complexes.

And to add to the tragedy, our young Sappers needlessly lost life and limb in the process of laying those mines.

"The disaster waiting to happen came to a head"

By "Jethro" Thompson

My troop, 1 Troop was attached mainly to 6 Battalion and 2 Troop supported 5 Battalion, but regardless of my posting as a Plant Operator, I was a Field Engineer first, and I was involved in laying the minefield – for six days before I literally got blown to bits.

The laying of the minefield comprised of two tasks - digging and preparing the holes for the mines, and placing and arming the mines in the holes. Protective gear was only worn by the actual arming parties. This consisted of a flak jacket and helmet. No doubt, today a full bomb suit would be dress of the day.

As you can imagine, the flak jacket was extremely uncomfortable in the intense heat. This added to the stress of the task, as did being dangerously close to five other arming parties. If they stuffed up, there was a good chance you'd cop the flak as well.

I was given the job of arming mines almost immediately – and we were arming the tricky combination of an M-16 landmine perched on a hand grenade, fitted with an anti lift switch. Today, I don't think Work Practices would even allow such a task.

And how was I trained for this job? I had never seen an M-16 mine before. On arrival at the minefield the rest of the Troop had the benefit of two weeks experience laying two small minefields at each end of the Fire Support Base known as The Horseshoe.

Those minefields did not have the anti lift device beneath them, but by working on that task those sappers had received familiarization training in



TOP LEFT: Jethro as a bright young Sapper during his tour of duty in Borneo in 1965. TOP RIGHT: Jethro in May 1967 after his mine incident, at the US 36th Evacuation Hospital, Vung Tau following one of his many bouts of surgery. ABOVE: Having a beer in late 1966 with some Sapper mates just prior to embarking for Vietnam.

preparation for laying the barrier minefield. Myself and other plant operators rushed in with indecent haste to increase the troop numbers, never had any prior training.

Arriving at the minefield with five other Plant Operators who'd been ordered to work on this task, we watched an Officer and an NCO demonstrate the process once. Each of us then had a turn at arming a mine and its anti-lift grenade beneath. Training was now complete!

Originally the Troop was arming a total of about 400 mines a day, and individuals were very much at liberty to perform the tasks they were

comfortable with. But pressure came from Task Force HQ, wanting us to now lay 1000 mines a day to get the minefield finished before the approaching rice harvest season.

On May 9th a new system was introduced, the three field sections in the Troop would each work on a specific task, with each section rotating across the three tasks of digging, carrying and arming.

Arming was the most stressful task by far, and our Troop Commander made the wise decision to ease the stress by setting a quota of 20 mines for the arming section – about two hours work. The plan was,

that each time the arming team reached their quota, they would swap tasks - rotating with the other two sections.

Then, on May 9th, my sixth day at the minefield, the disaster waiting to happen came to a head.

After two hours of arming mines, my team had completed its quota, and we knew we could now take a brief rest, then move on to one of the safer tasks of digging or laying.

I can't stress enough how much of a relief it was to complete that quota and get off the arming task. It was an alarmingly dangerous job, and we were totally unprepared for it.

Relieved, our team then moved out to a safe area where we relaxed and drank from our water bottles. As we waited to be directed to our next task, an NCO approached our team and angrily demanded to know what we were doing "lazing about".

We informed the NCO we'd done our arming quota - and as the Boss said, now we can rest then move on to digging or laying".

Either knowing nothing about the Troop Commander's rotating plan, or choosing to ignore it, the NCO chewed us out again and pushed us back to do more arming.

Amidst a lot of grumbling, our team moved back to carry on arming. I was slower to move off, and incredibly, in this tense environment, the NCO gave me another verbal serve - the third rasping in as many minutes.

This exhibition of bad man-management by the way, is inside a minefield, and with our team heading back into an extremely dangerous task.

In a turning point of my life, I lost my cool, abandoned my normal self-discipline and abused the NCO - big time. Angrily, I headed towards my partner to continue arming, but



LEFT: An M-16 mine being stabilised by packing earth around it prior to arming the mine. RIGHT: Pilot Officer Mike Haxel of 9 Squadron RAAF, Vietnam who made a fateful decision that saved Jethro's life.



I was further up the safe lane than I thought I was and I struck the last mine I'd laid.

The explosion hit six sappers, killing two of them, and wounding four, including myself. I was a good Sapper - and my lack of discipline that day in the minefield was out of character - but it happened.

It happened in an atmosphere where we were in a highly dangerous situation without the training we needed, to give us the confidence to carry out the task. We were stressed to the max - and then pushed by a bad leader displaying his own lack of discipline.

The system let us down, the leaders let us down, and I let us down too. But there's no doubt that if the system and the leaders hadn't failed, I wouldn't have been pushed to the point where I triggered that terrible incident.

As bad as that day on the minefield was for me, it was also the day someone made a decision that saved my life. I'd lost a couple of limbs and had dozens of other wounds. On the medevac helicopter ride to hospital, the medic informed

the pilot I was going to run out of blood shortly, and wouldn't make it to the hospital alive.

In a flash, the RAAF pilot diverted to a Korean Army medical unit he knew was nearby. We dropped in, stocked up with blood product and continued on to the hospital. I arrived alive because of a decision made on the spot by that Pilot.

A few years ago I searched out and found that pilot, and arranged for us to meet. He was Pilot Officer Mike Haxel, and in Vietnam he was just 25 years old - the youngest pilot in 9 Squadron at the time. His tour in Vietnam would see him being awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross

When we got together after all those years - it was an emotional meeting. I gave him a very unmanly hug - and I don't mind admitting that, in the process, I left a few tears of thanks on his shoulder.

On the day of my mine incident back in May 1967, at just 21 years old, I reckoned I still had a lot of living to do, and this young man, God bless him, made a live or die decision - about me.

Minelaying – the training and the task

By Joe Cazey

Troop Officer, 1 Troop 1 Field Squadron Vietnam 1966/67



Sapper training in the 1950/60s followed lessons learned in the Western Desert in WW2 and to a lesser extent, the Korean War. Experience in the jungles of New Guinea, later Malaysia and Borneo did little to develop such knowledge and skills, although booby trap use in those campaigns had some influence. Hence, when Sappers deployed to SVN in 1965 we took a somewhat outdated skill base.

Sappers doing FE3 courses and later FE2 and FE1 courses practised drills for laying and breaching minefields using mainly Mk V and Mk VII anti tank and

M14 and Dingbat anti-personnel mines. The M16 mine wasn't used in such training. Typically, sappers saw a sectioned model or diagram of one of these mines during training, along with some Soviet or Chicom mines. Officers did similar training and conducted short practical minefield exercises during the FE component of their post-graduation training, known as either Long or Short Officers courses.

In Vietnam in March 1967 the decision was taken to more permanently occupy The Horseshoe north of Dat Do with a reinforced infantry company. It was to be a firm base for a FSB and to 'anchor' the minefield that Brig Stuart Graham had decided to have built to separate the populous line of towns and villages from the largely unoccupied areas in the south east of Phuoc Tuy province.

With A Coy 6 RAR, 1 Troop with a detachment from 17 Const Sqn, assisted digging and building bunkers and CPs, putting in a well and laying two protective minefields. This was the first opportunity for some of 1 Troop's Sappers to gain on-the-job experience with these mines.

Unlike the later work on the larger so-called barrier minefield, which was done on more gently undulating ground, some of The Horseshoe protective fields were on steeper ground making pacing interestingly variable. This early work highlighted the huge amount of waste gen-

erated from packaging for large numbers of mines. It also identified some quality issues with the mines and their M605 igniter or fuze themselves.

Once the protective minefields were completed to international standards with fences, signs and paperwork recorded, the bigger task was commenced. The Squadron had been tasked to lay the minefield within the infantry constructed wire fences at a rate of 1000 mines a day. Work around The Horseshoe protective fields had given cause to doubt the likelihood of reaching this target without significant reinforcement.

Additional sappers involved in other work such as base development, ongoing maintenance tasks and other operations, were redirected to augment the troops already on the ground.

To endeavour to bring these less experienced troops across several non-FE trades in some cases, parties were formed to spread the experienced ones with the less experienced, where possible sticking to normal sectional structures. Keep in mind that irrespective of what task people had, the Squadron was constantly inducting newly ar-

BELOW LEFT: Sappers and Infantrymen were tasked with constructing the 11km long minefield fence. BELOW RIGHT: The Horseshoe feature at the starting point of the minefield became a permanent Australian base.



rived replacements, so some people arrived from Australia and their first job in theatre was laying mines.

Besides the usual digging, laying and arming duties of different parties, there was also the simple, but time and labour demanding, logistic tasks of unpacking, testing and distributing mines, as well as managing the tons of packaging mentioned earlier.

Troops on arming duties were using our limited number of flak jackets, passing them on as each relief occurred throughout the working day. Sappers in boots (usually no socks or jocks), shorts or longs, helmet and a sweat soaked "hand-me-down" flak jacket were sweating buckets as they went about their work in an open field totally void of any shade.

Frequent rotation of duties was organised so that smoking and rehydration breaks could be taken as well as relieving the intense concentration needed to lay the mines with the anti lift devices – the M5 pressure release switch with detonator inserted into a US M26 grenade.

While all ranks had weapons with them in the field, arming parties less the OIC (usually a Cpl or Lcpl) didn't have their weapons physically with them, but had them stacked nearby. Outside the fence to the east, infantry platoons were arrayed to protect us in the close protection role, with ambushes set further away.

The OIC of the arming party was well armed but not against VC/NVA threats. He carried his usual M16 and M79 with a canister up the spout plus a pump action shot gun. Besides supervising and keeping a recording of clusters completed, he was on the lookout for dogs or other animals inside the wire fences who, when they'd set off a trip wired mine, would race along the fence setting off others. Being lower down they didn't



TOP: Boxes of M-16 mines nearby the minefield, ready for unpacking.
ABOVE: M-16 mines unpacked, with fuzes fitted, ready for laying.

appear to suffer the worst effects of the jumping mine. However, as they got nearer to the arming party, the OIC was using his arsenal to kill the animal. As a result of this, we ate a deer one night at The Horseshoe, my first ever taste of venison.

Despite a long and stressful day laying mines, sappers of 1 (and later 2) Troop, had the usual picquet at night back at The Horseshoe where we manned the south west corner of the perimeter. The hootchies were sandbagged to about half a metre and then quartered into individual sleeping bays or were Armco culvert halves with sandbags over the metal.

Although daily rates lifted

as confidence grew, we were under regular pressure from HQ 1 ATF to speed things up. We only seemed able to achieve the desired 1000 mines per day when we had maximum availability of sappers and the holes were being dug by infantry working parties.

It must be remembered that the hole needed to be deep enough for a grenade, pressure release switch, the mine and the majority of the length of the protruding igniter (fuze), which is in the order of 325mm deep.

Then the grenade with pressure release switch in place, was placed in the bottom of the hole and tamped with loose soil. The metal rods specially shaped

to go into the spare holes in the switch and bent up to above the surface level replaced the switch's safety pin, which was withdrawn at this point and was pocketed for counting purposes.

The mine complete with M605 fuze was then sat upon the M5 switch and backfilled with soil and tamped down firmly. This left the mine's fuze proud of the ground level by barely 10mm.

What could be seen at this point was the fuze's three prongs and the metal rod sticking above the ground. The mine fuze's safety pin was now withdrawn (or if the mine was to be trip wire activated, the wire was attached, after having been laid out and fastened at the other end).

The mine was now armed ready to go, but the anti-lift grenade was still held safe by the metal rod. Two men were now required to act together. Facing each other on their knees with the mine between them, the last step could be undertaken.

While one man held the ground and the mine still, the other carefully withdrew the metal rod thereby arming the grenade. The whole device was now ready to blow. Both men carefully stood and withdrew to the strip centre line to move onto the next cluster.

With four mines per cluster, this process was a choreographed sequence so nobody was stepping over an armed mine.

As mines were set off by animals either intentionally pushed through into the minefield or smaller ones who made it by themselves, these had to be replaced.

Two men carrying packs with grenades, fuzed mines and switches would follow the compass bearings back along the strip centre line and relay mines into the obvious holes, which had spread soil debris over the other mines in that cluster. This was a nerve racking task which needed



to be done daily.

While never easy, the whole task was made all the harder as casualties occurred. Motivating men to simply go back to doing what they were doing before the bang was heard, after the Dustoff choppers had departed, was a challenge that had to be faced.

TOP: Sappers take a break during the laying of the minefield. L to R (seated) CPL John Hutchison later Killed in Action lifting mines, SPR Terry Renshaw later Killed in Action laying mines, CPL Max Staggard, SSGT George Biddlecombe. ABOVE: The M-16 mine and beside it the M-26 grenade fitted with the M-5 anti-lift switch.

“At that point I had never seen an M-16 mine”

Rod McClennan was tasked with laying the Barrier Minefield while serving as a Tunnel Rat with 2 Troop 1 Field Squadron in 1967. He first learned he would be laying the minefield when told that 2 Troop would be relieving 1 Troop after the series of mine incidents that troop had suffered.

“To be honest I wasn’t shocked to hear we would be doing this - it was just another job,” says Rod. “They did tell us it was the M-16 ‘Jumping Jack’ mine we’d be laying, and at that point I had never seen an M-16 mine, as most of the training back at SME was on anti-tank mines and very basic mine laying drills.

“They did explain at the start that we’d be laying the mines with the added anti-lift device, comprising the M-26 Grenade with the switch sitting between the grenade and the mine – but I didn’t receive any training on carrying out that task.

“Any training given was an ‘as required’ thing to those doing a particular task. On the first day I was preparing the grenade with the switch. I assume the people starting the laying received training.

“Laying was paused after our two guys were killed on May 20th, and that evening my Corporal took Dennis Quick and myself aside and told us we would be taking their place. He then gave us some instructions on the procedure, which I would say took about three to four minutes. I would like to say in his defence though, that he was still in shock as he was knocked unconscious from the blast when our two troop mates were killed.

“That bit of training we received from our Corporal covered how to place the grenade under the M16 and remove the pins. We felt this wasn’t really an adequate level of training for the task, and that we should have had some rehearsal back at Nui Dat

“On the first day we were to actually lay mines we were nervous but slowly became confident. The task was obviously an

extremely dangerous one, but I worked with Dennis Quick from the start and I was confident in his and my ability to be safe as we could.

“The most dangerous aspect of the job was in getting the grenade firmly stabilised below the mine and then removing the pins.

“When John O’Hara and Greg Brady from our Troop were killed on 20th May I didn’t know what had gone wrong and it was not discussed at the time to the best of my memory.

“Our NCO’s were good men, and despite the pressure put on them to reach daily laying levels, they continually stressed to us that we were to work at our own pace and no faster.

“The NCO’s we had then were the best I have ever served with,” says Rod. “I believe most of them were qualified to Sergeant, and Graeme Leach was promoted to Sergeant before returning home. My Corporal, Charlie Reynolds who was promoted soon after, also received the Military Medal. Sadly though, he was simply not the same after this incident.”



Heading back to base after a day of laying mines near The Horseshoe. Left to right: Sappers Barry Wilson, Brian Roberts (Wounded in Action on 20th May 1967 while laying the minefield), Peter Hegarty and Rod McClennan, all of 2 Troop

A young Sapper caught up in the aftermath of the flawed decision by the Task Force Commander

By Peter "Roo Dog" Scott
Tunnel Rat - 2 Troop
1 Field Squadron 1969/70

Ramon John Peter (Ray) Deed was one of four children, born in Melbourne but spent most of his young life in the north western Victorian city of Mildura. Ray was a boy with obvious initiative and a strong work ethic. Whenever the circus came to town he would hound them for a part time job. When he left school he worked in the transport industry, often travelling by truck to and from the Melbourne markets, accompanied his mate Robert Duscher.

All this changed when National Service was introduced, and Ray was conscripted into the Australian Army. Because of his background and aptitude determined during recruit training, Ramon John Peter Deed became 3788300 Sapper Deed and was allocated to the Corps of the Royal Australian Engineers. He was sent to specialist army engineer training at the School of Military Engineering, Casula before being posted on 13 March 1967 to 1 Field Squadron, based at Nui Dat, South Vietnam.

The role of Australian Army combat engineers in Vietnam was to provide close support for other combat elements (Infantry, Armour and Artillery) as part of combat teams and battle groups. Their everyday tasks included searching for and making safe anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines, locating and demolishing unexploded aerial bombs and artillery shells, and searching underground enemy bunkers and tunnels for arms caches and documents. They became known



Sapper Ramon John Peter Deed, wounded in action 9th May 1967, died of his wounds 10th May 1967.

as the 'Tunnel Rats'.

In the same month Ray Deed arrived in Vietnam, the Officer Commanding 1 Field Squadron at this time, Major Brian Florence was ordered to lay the deadly (and subsequently catastrophic) Barrier Minefield by the then Australian Task Force Commander, Brigadier Stuart Graham. Florence resisted the idea from the start, based on his knowledge and shared experience with other old hands at combat engineering.

"I don't like bloody minefields" said Florence to Brigadier Graham "they are a double-edged weapon and eventually someone has to pick the damn things up". But Florence's advice was ignored as the Brigadier had made up his mind to have his

minefield laid.

With reservations and some reluctance, in March 1967 Major Florence ordered the officers and men of 1 Field Squadron to commence planning and laying the 11km long minefield.

These were the background circumstances that Sapper Ray Deed and his mates found themselves in when posted to 1 Troop of 1 Field Squadron in early 1967. They were rapidly organised into teams tasked with laying thousands of landmines. The danger of their task was greatly increased by having to fit the majority of those mines with an anti-lifting device. This device consisted of an M26 grenade with an anti-lift switch on top of it fitted under the mines.

Their mine-laying task

started at 'The Horseshoe' feature just north of Dat Do. The sappers had little prior training in laying the US-made mines and were quickly under pressure to get up to the target speed of laying 1000 mines per day, including those with the complicated and dangerous anti-lift devices.

On May 9th a member of Ray's mine arming party, under pressure to resume work after a short break, lost concentration and accidentally stepped on an armed mine.

In the resulting explosion, Sappers Dennis Brooks, Ashley Culkin, Ramon Deed, Eric Holst and John 'Jethro' Thompson, as well as Corporal Tony Evans, were wounded. Ray Deed died of injuries the following day at the US Army Hospital at Long Binh, while Dennis Brooks died of his wounds on 22 May. John Thompson lost a leg and a hand in the incident, as well as fingers on his other hand, but survived after intensive hospital care in Vietnam and back in Australia.

Ray Deed's body was returned to Australia to his widow Marie and his family, and Mildura had its first ever Military Funeral (the bodies of soldiers killed in WWI and WWII were not re-



The military funeral of Sapper Ramon Deed at Mildura, Victoria

turned home, but buried in military cemeteries throughout Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Asia).

At the time of Ray's death his younger brother Brian (now deceased), a Regular Soldier, was also in Vietnam with the Royal Australian Signals Corps. Brian returned home for the funeral, then went back to Vietnam a year later for a 13 month tour of duty.

It is the families of the fallen that paid the highest price for

Australia's participation in the Vietnam War. And they continue to pay that price to this day. Ray's parents were naturally devastated at his loss, particularly his mother. So were Ray's siblings Lorraine, Brian and Hilary.

Our message to Ray's family and to all the families of our fallen comrades is that we too have not forgotten them. We still see their faces and hear their voices. We continue to honour them at every opportunity. May they rest in peace.

1 Field Squadron casualties suffered during 22 days of laying the minefield

Rank / Name	Casualty Date / Age	Description
CAPT. Moon G.J.	08.05.67 / Age 28	WIA Minor shrap wds from M16 mine tripped by dog in minefield.
T/SSGT. Nolen B.H.	08.05.67 / Age 33	WIA Minor shrap wds from M16 mine tripped by dog in minefield.
SPR. Brooks D.L.	09.05.67 / Age 22	WIA M16 mine during mine laying ops.
SPR. Culkin A.J.	09.05.67 / Age 22	WIA M16 mine during mine laying ops.
SPR. Deed R.J.P.	09.05.67 / Age 21	WIA M16 mine during mine laying ops.
CPL. Evans A.G.	09.05.67 / Age 22	WIA M16 mine during mine laying ops. shrap wds to head.
SPR. Holst E.W.	09.05.67 / Age 24	WIA M16 mine during mine laying ops. shrap to R.arm.
SPR. Thompson J.C.	09.05.67 / Age 22	WIA M16 mine during mine laying ops. Lost L.leg and R.hand.
SPR. Deed R.J.P.	10.05.67 / Age 21	DOW At 34EVACHOSP from wds the previous day.
SPR. Bartholomew G.T.	18.05.67 / Age 22	KBA Result of a .45 pistol shot at the Horseshoe.
SPR. Brady G.V.	20.05.67 / Age 22	KIA M16 mine during mine laying ops. Anti-lift device exploded.
SPR. O'Hara J.L.	20.05.67 / Age 22	KIA M16 mine during mine laying ops. Anti-lift device exploded.
CPL. Rendalls L.C.	20.05.67 / Age 24	WIA M16 Mine during laying ops. Frag wds from mine O'Hara laid.
SPR. Roberts B.G.	20.05.67 / Age 22	WIA M16 mine during laying ops. Frag wds fom mine O'Hara laid.
SPR. Brooks D.L.	22.05.67 / Age 22	DOW At 24EVACHOSP from mine wounds on 09.05.67.
SPR. Bevan B.N.	30.05.67 / Age 22	M16 mine during mine laying ops SW of Hoi My.
SPR. Renshaw T.J.	30.05.67 / Age 22	KIA M16 mine during mine laying SW of Hoi My.
SPR. Sempel L.S.	30.05.67 / Age 21	WIA M16 mine during mine laying ops SW of Hoi My.

Tunnel Rat Officer goes to the dogs!

The author of the newly launched book, "In Dogs we Trust" is LTCOL George Hulse who was a Tunnel Rat in Vietnam, serving as Troop Officer 1 Troop 1 Field Squadron in 1968/69. He then went on to command the Army Engineer dog wing in the early 1970s and is currently the Vice-President of the Australian Defence Force Trackers and War Dogs Association, Vice-President of the Toowong RSL sub/branch and President of the 1 FD SQN GP Association.

Taken from first-hand accounts of war in difficult places, this newly launched book reveals what it's like to be in a fight for your life and your best mate in that fight is a dog.

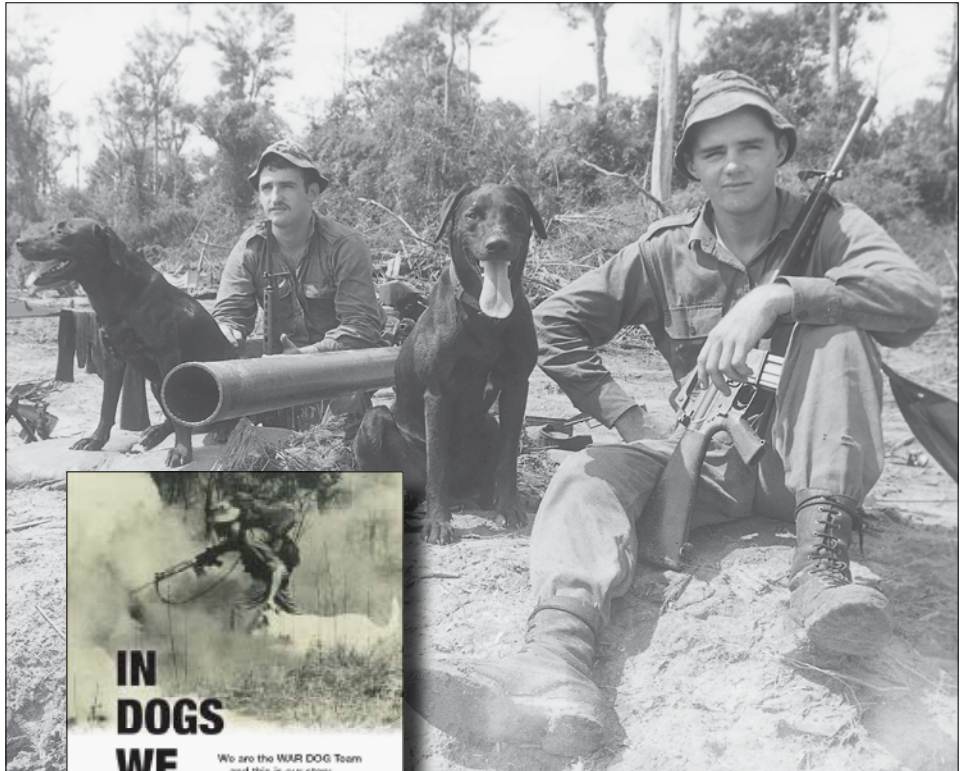
To be the very first person that an enemy soldier sees and not be able to look for the enemy yourself while you concentrate on any indication of trouble from your dog in front of you requires a special kind of combat soldier, and a very special kind of dog.

Readers will gain an understanding of what it's like to be that person as a military working dog handler in both the Australian Army and the Royal Australian Air Force. The many captivating accounts of this special asset in the Australian Defence Force provide a rare insight into a different kind of soldiering.

The book faithfully records first-hand accounts of a range of Australian soldiers at war with their war dogs, including the experiences of Corporal Mark Donaldson VC.

One of the objectives in publishing this book is to create a fund-raising platform in support of the Australian Defence Force Trackers and War Dogs Association.

Copies of 'In Dogs We Trust' can be purchased through the Australian War Dog website at www.aussiewardogs.org for \$30 each including postage within Australia.



TOP: 6RAR/NZ trackers during Operation Burnham, Vietnam 1969. Left to right: PVT Bruce Williams with tracker dog Milo, PVT Russell "Mooka" McDonald with tracker dog Trajan. **ABOVE:** Sapper Darren Smith and Explosives Detection Dog Herbie. Sapper Smith and his EDD Herbie were killed in action together on 7 June 2010 in Afghanistan. **LEFT:** Sapper Joshua Colbourne and EDD Harry in Afghanistan.

Last Post Ceremony will commemorate our fallen comrades



The Vietnam Tunnel Rats Association has reserved the Australian War Memorial Last Post Ceremony for 18 February next year. We will use this occasion to honour our 36 comrades who lost their lives while serving as Tunnel Rats with 1 Troop, 2 Troop and 3 Troop of 1 Field Squadron (35 KIA) and with 3 Field Troop (1 KIA). Mark 18 February 2020 in your diary now as we aim to make this an important and memorable national commemoration of our fallen.

Our wives, sons and daughters are all welcome to the ceremony and our gathering afterwards. If you are in contact with family members of our fallen comrades, let them know of this occasion, and how honoured we would be if they attended.

The first Last Post Ceremony was held at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra on 17 April 2013, and is now held at the Memorial each day at 4.55 pm. Each ceremony is presented as a tribute to one of the 102,700 Australians named on the Roll of Honour. It is a testament to the terrible cost of war that it will take nearly 300 years to commemorate every person on the Roll of Honour, and the Memorial is committed to ensuring that each story will eventually be told.

As the tradition is set that each ceremony is a tribute to one individual, we needed technically to follow that tradition, but (being Engineers) bend it a little to suit our needs. So we chose that in-

dividual from our 36 fallen comrades then wrote a commemorative script which talks of him and honours him, along with our 35 other fallen comrades. Individual wreaths will be laid at the ceremony for each of these 36 Tunnel Rats – some, we hope, by their family members.

The ceremony begins with the Australian national anthem followed by the piper's lament. Visitors are then invited to lay wreaths and floral tributes beside the Pool of Reflection. The individual's story is told, which in our case also covers the story of the Tunnel Rats and of all of the men we lost. The Ode is then recited by an Australian Defence Force member, and the ceremony ends with the sounding of the Last Post. After the ceremony we will meet up at a suitable venue for drinks and dinner.

How we chose the name

Circumstance actually helped us narrow down this task. There are few dates available,

with most of them already allocated to an individual. One of the few available dates was 18 February 2020. The Battle of Fire Support Base Andersen took place on February 18 (1968) and on that terrible night we had four of our Tunnel Rat comrades killed in action. One of those four killed was Sapper Allan Pattison, and the Tunnel Rats Association has had regular contact with Allan's family over the years. They have been very active in honouring Allan's memory in their local area, so we made contact again and they were thrilled at the opportunity and available for that date next year.

Full details of when we meet up at the Australian War Memorial for the ceremony and the venue for our drinks and dinner following the ceremony will be given once we know how many are attending. If you are joining us at this important event, please follow the instructions on the page opposite.

"We still see their faces and hear their voices"



Itinerary (approx) for Tuesday 18th February 2020

2:15pm - meet at the Australian War Memorial entrance area

2:30pm - commence a two hour conducted tour of the Memorial

4:30pm - make our way to the courtyard area for the ceremony

4:55pm - the ceremony commences

Following the ceremony make your way to the drinks and dinner venue

If you plan to join us on 18 February 2020 in Canberra for the above activities it is important you advise us you are coming so we will know how many are coming and we can plan accordingly for the events during the afternoon and evening. Provide your name, the number of people coming and a phone number or email address

Email Jim Marett at: tunnelrats.vietnam@gmail.com

Text or call Jim Marett on: 0403 041 962

Post to: Vietnam Tunnel Rats Assoc 43 Heyington Place Toorak Vic 3142



An untold element of the 'Moon Landing Day' mine incident

Sapper Bill Wilcox's watch stopped the instant the mine exploded, and he still has the watch - a constant reminder of a very grim day in Vietnam

We have written extensively in past issues of 'Holdfast' on the horrendous mine incident suffered by 6RAR's 3 Platoon on July 21st 1969, the day man landed on the moon. The two Tunnel Rats attached to that platoon were Corporal Phil Baxter, the "No.1" of the Splinter Team, and Sapper Dave Sturmer his "No.2" on the team, both of 1 Troop, 1 Field Squadron.

A fascinating side-story to the mine incident has emerged involving the six-man Combat Engineer team sent in to take over from Phil and Dave who had both been wounded in the incident.

Two M-16 mines were set off in the incident, devastating the platoon and the sappers attached to it. The first mine was triggered by the Platoon Commander, LT Peter Hines at around 0940h, causing 18 initial casualties.

Despite them both being wounded by the first mine, Phil

and Dave cleared safe lanes to the other wounded and then cleared a landing zone so helicopters could come in to extract the casualties, including Phil and Dave, and bring in the Combat Engineer team to continue the mine clearing.

The incoming Combat Engineer Team led by Sapper David Wright included Sappers John Fleming and Bill Wilcox from 1 Troop plus several others whose identities we don't have. Also flown in were the Battalion CO 6RAR, Lt Col David Butler and the Regimental Medical Officer (RMO) from 6RAR, Captain Robert Anderson who would assist with the seriously wounded.

With Dave Wright's team of Sappers on the ground, Phil Baxter and Dave Sturmer, along with other wounded were able to be evacuated to hospital.

Unfortunately for those still on the ground at the scene, the nightmare continued.

In moving about to tend to

the wounded, at around 1430h the RMO, Captain Anderson stepped on and detonated another M-16 mine.

This mine caused another seven casualties, including Sappers John Fleming and Bill Wilcox who had just landed, the CO 6RAR Lt Col David Butler, Captain Anderson who lost his sight in both eyes from the incident, and Corporal John Needs who was KIA.

"We were working in the Long Hai Hills when we got word that 6RAR had walked into a minefield," recalls Bill Wilcox. "Then we heard we were to be winched in by helicopter to replace the wounded Sappers and take over the mine clearing process. As soon as we landed we started moving carefully towards the wounded. Phil and Dave had indicated 'safe lanes' on the

BELOW LEFT. Bill's battered watch. BELOW RIGHT: Bill during Rookie Training at Kapooka.



ground, so it was clear where it was safe to walk," says Bill.

"As we made our way carefully to help the wounded men, the RMO stepped outside the safe lane and directly onto a hidden mine. The explosion was massive," recalls Bill. "The only thing that saved my life was the fact the M-16 'Jumping Jack' mine had malfunctioned, going off under the soil rather than leaping up to hip height before igniting.

"The officer who stepped on the mine was flung to one side, and myself and several others were knocked off our feet by an intense blast of shrapnel and dirt.

"I lay on the ground with around 60 shrapnel wounds on my left side and my hand and knee were smashed up. Only one spot on my left side was untouched, and that was where the battery pack for the mine detector I was carrying sat on my upper leg," recalls Bill. Placed on a stretcher and strapped to the skid of a helicopter, Bill was flown to hospital in Vung Tau where he was read his last rites.

"They didn't think I would live," says Bill. "But the incredible nurses and doctors pulled me through. I spent six days in intensive care in an American hospital at Vung Tau, and was then transferred to the Australian hospital in Vung Tau for a week before flying home to Australia, where it was over three months before I could walk."

The watch Bill was wearing when hit by the exploding mine stopped at 2:20pm, exactly when the explosion took place. Bill still has the watch, complete with shrapnel dents, though one of the hands has fallen off.

On July 21st this year (the 50th anniversary of the incident) Bill revisited Vietnam and the site where he nearly lost his life. He had his old watch with him - and at 2.20pm on that day his watch showed the right time again - Vietnam time!



Bill Wilson (with his old watch) back at the site of his mine incident in Vietnam on July 21st this year, the 50th anniversary of the incident.

Casualties from the two mines on 21st July 1969

Casualties from the first mine – tripped by Lt P A Hines

Rank & Name	Unit	Age	Corps	Casualty
Lt P A Hines	6RAR	27	RAINF	KIA
Cpl P T Baxter	1FDSQN	24	RAE	WIA
Cpl G N Cooper	6RAR	28	RAINF	WIA
LCpl D W Hall	6RAR	23	RAINF	WIA
Pt P C Hoskin	6RAR	22	RAINF	WIA
Pte F J Hunt	6RAR	19	RAINF	WIA
LCpl J Kelly	6RAR	20	RAINF	WIA
Pte A C Lamb	6RAR	22	RAINF	WIA
Pte D J Lumby	6RAR	21	RAINF	WIA
Pte B E McDowell	6RAR	21	RAINF	WIA
Pte M W McInnes	6RAR	20	RAINF	WIA
Pte D J Morrison	6RAR	22	RAINF	WIA
Sgt C H Newbery	6RAR	30	RAINF	WIA
Pte C F Renehan	6RAR	22	RAINF	WIA
Pte M W Storen	6RAR	21	RAINF	WIA
Spr D L Sturmer	1FDSQN	21	RAE	WIA
Pte K C Thomas	6RAR	24	RAINF	WIA
Pte R J Walters	6RAR		RAINF	WIA

Casualties from second mine – tripped by Capt Anderson

Capt R T Anderson	6RAR	28	RAINF	WIA
Pte R J Ballard	6RAR	22	RAINF	WIA
Lt Col D M Butler	6RAR	41	RAINF	WIA
Pte G C Davis	6RAR	20	RAINF	WIA
Spr J G Fleming	1FDSQN	23	RAE	WIA
Pt J R Goslett	6RAR	20	RAINF	WIA
Cpl D J Needs	6RAR	22	RAINF	KIA
Spr W R Wilcox	1FDSQN	21	RAE	WIA

SAPPER SNIPPETS

Tramways supervisor takes charge and gets these lost Sappers on track

A big contingent of Vietnam 1966/67 era Sappers from all over Australia hit Melbourne in late April to join with the Tunnel Rats in the ANZAC Day march. Basing themselves in a South Melbourne motel, all was going well until they tried to catch one of Melbourne's famous trams to get them to the march.

Only problem was trams were scarce because it was ANZAC Day! And anyway they had no idea which tram to catch. Seeing the group was clearly lost and bewildered the Tram Supervisor on duty made radio contact with base, let the lads know which number tram to catch and exactly when the next one would arrive which was 'disabled friendly'.

On the verge of becoming grumpy old Sappers at the time, the lads were mightily impressed with the Supervisor. And he was equally impressed with the Sappers, insisting on a photo being



taken of the occasion.

Seen in the photo above, from the left are: Graham Boyd, Bob Coleman, Michael McCallum, Col Treasure, Dave Hogarth, Max Staggard, Ian Kelk, Kevin Smith, Tony Evans, Ivan Scully, Kevin Kenny, Peter Cuthbertson. In front of them is Jethro

Thompson and Bill Graham, and in the very front is the now legendary Tram Supervisor and Kevin Stephens (Kevin suffered gunshot wounds to both legs while serving with 7 RAR, and he and Jethro were often under treatment in the same rehabilitation hospital together).

Tunnel Rats gathering on Vietnam Veterans Day at Coffs Harbour

With the support of Coffs Harbour RSL Sub Branch, Rodney O'Regan (2 Troop 1970/71) has put together a Vietnam Veteran's Day gathering for Tunnel Rats at Coffs Harbour NSW.

The RSL Sub Branch is holding their Vietnam Veterans day ceremony at 5pm on Sunday 18th August 2019 and all Tunnel Rats (and indeed all RAE Vietnam veterans) are invited to join in with them. Rodney has arranged for a bugler and piper for the ceremony, and two of our war widows will lay wreaths on behalf of 2 Troop.

After the ceremony the Sub Branch will provide nibbles and be putting a substantial amount of money over the bar. This will be followed by a dinner on a pay-as-you-go basis.

The President of the club is a former Vietnam Artillery WO1 and he is right behind the gather-



ing. Several members of the Sub Branch were with 3RAR when they were involved in the Battle of Long Khanh in early June 1971 during Operation Overlord. This makes the gathering of special interest to 2 Troop Tunnel Rats of that era as they supported 3RAR on the operation and in the battle.

The Troop Commander of 2 Troop at that time, John Tick is

guest speaker at the dinner.

Rodney has arranged accommodation at the Chelsea Motel across the road from the RSL at a very good rate of \$85 for a Double Room.

If you are interested in attending the event, contact Rodney on 0419 431 779 so he can coordinate the accommodation and the numbers for the drinks and dinner.

SAPPER SNIPPETS

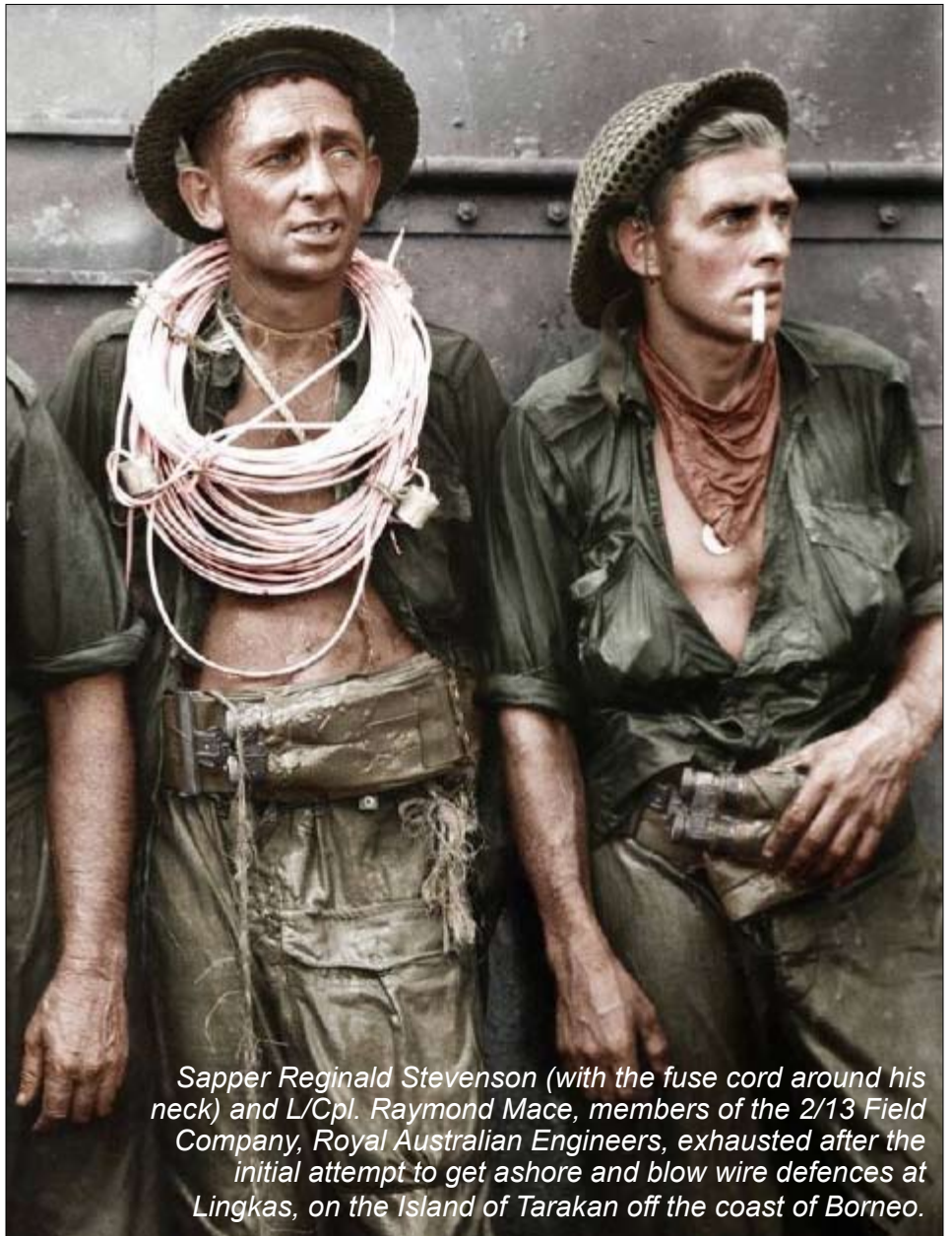
Military Medal for leader of Sapper team on a WWII obstacle clearance mission made while under enemy fire

The primary objective for the Allied attack on Tarakan (code-named "Oboe One") was to secure and develop the island's airstrip so that it could be used to provide air cover for subsequent landings in Brunei, Labuan and Balikpapan. The secondary objective for the operation was to secure Tarakan's oilfields and bring them into operation as a source of oil for the Allied forces in the theatre.

The task of clearing the beach obstacles at Lingkas was assigned to the 2/13th Field Company. These defences comprised rows of barbed wire, wooden posts and steel rails which extended 125 yards from the beach. At 1100h on 30 April, eight parties of engineers went forward in LVTs and landing craft to clear the obstacles. The engineers were supported by the guns on Sadau Island and Allied warships and aircraft. Operating under Japanese fire the engineers cleared all the obstacles obstructing the landing beaches. While heavy casualties had been expected, the 2/13th completed their task without loss.

The Military Medal award

"Lance-Corporal Mace was the non-commissioned officer in command of a demolition team engaged in the breaching of underwater beach obstacles on Tarakan. Despite the intermittent fire of the enemy the working party coolly kept on and completed and sign-posted the gap in thirty five minutes. Lance-Corporal Mace then withdrew his party and went to the rescue of another party who were hampered by the depth of the mud. He attempted to carry a line to secure one of the obstacles to enable the Section to drag them-



Sapper Reginald Stevenson (with the fuse cord around his neck) and L/Cpl. Raymond Mace, members of the 2/13 Field Company, Royal Australian Engineers, exhausted after the initial attempt to get ashore and blow wire defences at Lingkas, on the Island of Tarakan off the coast of Borneo.



Sappers set off one of the explosions to clear beach obstacles at Lingkas

selves to the proposed gap but sank in the mud and had to be dragged back. He then took his L.V.T. to the oil pier and led his party to the beach and attacked the obstacles from the shore side with success. Lance-Cor-

poral Mace's personal endurance, courage and leadership were wholly responsible for the effective completion of the two gaps."

Both Ray Mace and Reg Stevenson survived the war.

Tunnel Rats List

All list enquires to Graeme Gartside (contact details below)

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

3 Field Troop (1965-66)

Ian Biddolph 02 4472 9434
 Alan Christie 07 5494 6628
 Brian Cleary 0438239387
 Allan S Coleman 07 4687 7975
 Bill Corby 07 5502 1193
 John "Tex" Cotter 07 4723 1244
 "Meggsie" Dennis RIP Sapper
 Des Evans 07 4128 2390
 Ray Forster 07 3409 1907
 Geoff Green 03 6272 8167
 Barry Harford 08 8088 4371
 Keith Kermode 0427233063
 Sandy MacGregor 02 9457 7133
 Frank Mallard 0408183325
 Keith Mills 07 4770 7267
 Bill Murray 0497 385 732

Warren Murray - RIP Sapper

John Opie 0427280703
 Bernie Pollard 08 9248 3178
 Bill Unmeopa - RIP Sapper
 Snow Wilson Jnr 02 6649 3998

Chief Engineer Vietnam

John Hutcheson MC 0417224850

OC 1 Field Squadron

John Kemp 02 6288 3428

Rex Rowe RIP Sapper

1 Troop (1966-67)

Ray Burton 08 8268 4575
 Ron Carroll 0408884327
 Joe Cazey 07 3710 8102
 Allan S Coleman 07 4661 1924
 Grahame Cook 02 4390 5159
 Alan Hammond 0423491091
 Cul Hart 0439536631
 Ken Jolley 02 6624 4066
 Barry Kelly 07 4661 2898
 Axel Kraft 08 9572 9597
 Peter McTiernan 02 6557 5211
 David Martin RIP Sapper
 Gavin Menzies 02 6584 7257
 John Olsen RIP Sapper
 Ron Rockliffe 02 9789 4302
 Trevor Shelley 0419784954
 "Jethro" Thompson 0732168906
 Ross Tulloh 0418223345
 Graham Zalewska-Moon
 (Poland phone: 48-815177391)

1 Troop (1967-68)

Billy Adams 03 5974 2916
 Henry Bagdaley 0419902268
 Reg Bament 02 6948 2524
 Bruce Bevan 0402334614
 Neville Bartels 07 4055 9871
 Col Campbell 0417658770
 Dave Campbell 07 4225 6310
 Bob Coleman 0408519500
 Ross Comben 08 9535 2273
 Jack Green 07 3278 8719
 Norm Hitchcock (Canada)
 1-250-2455137

Ray Kenny RIP Sapper

Harry Klopocz 84-096397531
 (Living in Nha Trang Vietnam)
 Peter Koch 0413 222 046
 Brian Lewis 07 3880 0376
 "Paddy" Maddigan 07 5485 1918
 Mike McCallum 02 6288 5113
 John Neal 02 9982 6694
 Barry O'Rourke 0409546717
 Clive Pearsall 03 9459 4470
 Terry Perkins 0413343168

Alan Rantall RIP Sapper

Ivan Scully 03 9802 0977
 Peter Sheehan 03 9390 2834
 Carlton "CP" Smith 0448000334
 Jim Trower 0418842744

1 Troop (1968-69)

Ray Bellinger 0407952670
 Adrian Black 0417756729
 Mike Bruggemann 0409441992

Peter Carrodus RIP Sapper

Albert Eyssens 0407875287
 Ken Ford 0418669689
 Max Goiser 0409717143
 Peter Hollis 02 6581 5401
 George Hulse 07 3399 7659
 Robert Laird 0408561748
 Brian Lamb 02 6059 6947
 Kent Luttrell 0408387641
 Kerry McCormick 03 6344 5291
 Keith Murley 0429729764
 Alan Paynter 03 5975 7130
 Richard Reilly 02 6262 7374
 Colin Spies 07 4743 4676
 Garry Von Stanke 08 8725 5648
 Cliff Truelove 02 6495 7844
 Ken Wheatley RIP Sapper
 Bob Wooley 03 6264 1485
 David Wright 03 9435 4814

1 Troop (1969-70)

Kevin Atkinson 0488 411 571
 Larry Batze 07 4033 2025
 Mervyn Chesson 0419806323
 Allan S Coleman 07 4687 7975
 Phil Cooper 0439 955 207
 Gary Degering - RIP Sapper
 John Felton 0467612342
 Graham Fletcher 0408822489
 Brian Forbes 0412047937
 Jon Fuller 02 4774 1674
 P. "Guts" Geisel 07 4092 1735
 Terry Gleeson 0458 232 886
 Graham Harvey 0418889739
 Trevor Kelly 08 9538 1184
 Des McKenzie 07 5448 3400
 Anthony Marriott 03 6257 0279
 Doug Myers 0421904562
 Paul Ryan 0429165974
 Les Slater 08 9361 0603
 Max Slater 0412 772 849
 Vic Smith 0432916485

Dave Sturmer 0422664942

1 Troop (1970-71)

Mick Augustus 07 3205 7401
 Dan Brindley 02 6643 1693
 Ian Cambell 03 9870 0313
 Ray "Brute" Carroll 08 9342 3596
 Raymond Collins 0419837833
 Phil Duffy 0406020382
 Harry Ednie 0408391371
 Robin Farrell 0409265470
 Bruce Fraser 07 5499 0508
 Garth Griffiths 0435902386
 "Paddy" Healy 02 4930 7541
 Peter Krause 02 6723 2835
 John Lewis 07 3425 1524
 R Loxton 0419944755
 Barry Meldrum 03 5427 1162
 Roger Newman 07 5450 6054
 Peter North 08 9279 5905
 Dennis Pegg 03 6224 9090
 Bob Pfeiffer 0497 501 960
 John Pritchard 02 9837 7482
 John Severyn 0407008610
 Garry Shoemark 02 6546 6778
 Garry Sutcliffe 07 4684 3229
 Donald Stringer 07 41559 515
 Paul Taylor (NZ) (64)42990915
 Terry Ward 02 6566 6163
 Jim Weston 0419260463
 John Wright 03 6398 6211

2 Troop (1966-1967)

Richard Beck 07 3208 5808
 David Buring 02 6254 6689
 Ron Cain 02 6586 1412
 Graeme Carey 02 6056 0997
 Terry Gribbin 03 9722 9717
 Alan Hammond 0423491091
 Peter Hegarty 07 4168 5644
 Graeme Leach 07 4777 8627
 Ken McCann 0409938830
 Rod McClellan 07 3267 6907
 Noel McDuffie RIP Sapper
 Bob McKinnon 07 3267 0310
 Peter Matthews RIP Sapper
 Warren Morrow 0418427947
 Mick Shannon 08 8552 1746
 Bob Sweeney 08 9248 4432

2 Troop (1967-1968)

William Adams 0400405751
 M. Ballantyne 08 8298 2515
 John Beningfield 07 4778 4473
 Peter Bennett 0418915550
 Dennis Burge 08 8281 2270
 Kenneth Butler 0414897889
 Harry Cooling 07 4778 2013
 Garry Cosgrove 02 4845 5153
 Geoff Craven 0447295224
 Peter Fontanini 0438 881 940
 Roland Gloss 02 6367 5324
 John Goldfinch 02 6674 0855
 Paul Grills 07 4162 5235
 John Jasinski 0435799426
 Ron Johnston 07 3351 1609
 Eddie Josephs 0417882491
 Lew Jordan 03 6397 3261
 Ray Kenny RIP Sapper
 John Kiley 02 4228 4068
 David Kitley 02 4735 4991
 Bernard Ladyman 08 9795 7900
 Warren McBurnie 02 6687 7030

Stephen McHenry 08 9344 6939
 Eric McKerrow (Silent number)
 Dave McNair 08 9725 2821
 Kevin Moon 0423005756
 Tony Parmenter 0417856877
 Gary Phillips 0418466859
 Brian Rankin 07 4775 5095
 Hans Rehorn 03 5623 5572
 Andrew Rogers 08 8087 5671
 Mick Robotham 0439144876
 Geoff Russell 02 6342 1292
 Robert Russell 03 5975 5329
 Brian Sheehan 0438933631
 Carlton "CP" Smith 0448000334
 John Tramby 0428659048
 John Willis 03 9363 7878

"Snow" Wilson RIP Sapper

2 Troop (1968-1969)

Bob Austin 02 6644 9237
 Ross Bachmann 07 5495 1443
 Don Beale 02 6971 2424
 Richard Branch 0409496294
 Harold Bromley 03 9726 8625
 Peter Brunton 03 5156 5531
 Jim Castles 02 9639 2941
 Harry Claassen 07 3273 6701
 Peter Clayton 0418 823 266
 John Coe 07 4776 5585

Rod Crane RIP Sapper

John Douglas 0433747401
 Robert Earl 02 4990 3601
 Brian Forbes 0412047937
 John Gilmore 08 9795 6847
 Stan Golubenko 03 9361 2721
 Paul Grills 07 4162 5235
 Geoff Handley RIP Sapper
 Ross Hansen 0409225721
 Wayne Hynson 0425720696
 Ray Jurkiewicz 07 3886 9054
 Brian Lamb 02 6059 6947
 Phil Lamb 08 8564 2001
 Wayne Lambley 07 3851 1837
 Darryl Lavis 08 8263 9548
 Peter Laws 02 4942 8131
 Bud Lewis 0400012255
 Rick Martin 02 6928 4253
 Bill Matheson 0428959044
 Bill Morris 08 9384 2686
 Don Nicholls 0407919993
 Colin Norris 02 4627 1180
 Bob O'Connor 0418742219
 Terry O'Donnell 0417371632
 Rod Palmer 0417672643
 David Pannach (Hong Kong)
 852-2892 2714

Allan Pearson 07 3812 0943
 Gary Phillips 07-5474 0164
 Ted Podlich 07 3862 9002
 Daryl Porteous 07 4973 7663
 Mick Weston 07 5444 3307
 Ray White 03 9740 7141
2 Troop (1969-1970)
 John Ash 03 5243 0268
 "Arab" Avotins 07 4129 8012
 Bruce Bofinger 02 4872 3175
 Frank Brady 02 6555 5200
 David Brook 03 9546 2868
 Jim Burrough 0400884633
 Ron Coman 0487186840
 Kevin Connor 0408 748 172



Garry Cosgrove 02 4845 5153
 Arthur Davies 0412823112
 Grumpy Foster 07 4041 2321
 Graeme Gartside 08 8725 6900
 Doug George 0419475246
 Greg Gough 0417 911 173
 Brad Hannaford 08 8389 2217
 John Hopman 02 9398 5258
 Chris Koulouris 02 4952 6341
 Bill Lamb 0418 424 208
 Mick Loughlin 07 4060 3039
 Mick Lee 07 5543 5001
 Marty McGrath 02 6059 1204
 Jim Marett 03 9824 4967
 Bob Ottery 03 5199 2516
 Bevan Percival 07 5573 6925
 Pedro Piromanski 08 9306 8169
 Ian Pitt 0428492018
 Jack Power 07 4955 3761
 Colin Redacliff 02 9673 0597
 Rolf Schaefer 08 8962 1391
 Brian "BC" Scott 07 3204 5691
 Peter Scott (219) 02 4341 3782
 "Roo Dog" Scott 0400799577
 Les Shelley 07 3264 4041
 Jimmy Shugg 08 9776 1471
 Mick Van Poeteren 0425 749 576
 Gerry Wallbridge 03 9803 4223
 Dennis Wilson 08 8659 1189
 Stephen Wilson 07 5538 2179
2 Troop (1970-1971)
 Bruce Arrow 02 6288 3872
 Mick Bergin 0427742175
 Graham Besford 03 9439 2661
 Mal Botfield 0434536435
 John Brady 02 6888 1192
 David Briggs 08 9537 6956
 Keith Burley 07 5543 0990
 Peter Cairns 0400039446
 Brian Christian 07 4778 6602
 Grahame Clark 0408533869
 Dennis Coghlan 0429938445
 "Sam" Collins 08 8262 6107
 Ron Cook 0414508686
 Jock Coutts 08 9279 1946
 Bill Craig 08 9530 1008
 Denis Crawford 03 9497 3256
 John Cross RIP Sapper
 Robin Date 03 9783 3202
 Gino De Bari 0450931112
 Tom Dodds 040672260
 Harry Eustace RIP Sapper
 Des Evans 07 4128 2390
 Bruce Fenwick 0408434529
 Ray Fulton 03 6288 1176
 Ziggy Gniot RIP Sapper
 Bob Hamblyn RIP Sapper

Cec Harris 02 6629 3373
 Paddy Healy 02 4930 7541
 Kevin Hodge 08 8322 2619
 Paul Jones 02 6231 5963
 Jim Kelton 0488972139
 Kevin Lappin 0419741239
 Gary McClintock 07 4788 0123
 Peter McCole 03 5155 9368
 Bob McGlinn 07 5426 1597
 Ian McLean 0412431297
 Jeff Maddock 0438069803
 Leon Madeley 07 5497 1038
 Bill Marshall 0415 688 788
 Rod O'Regan 0419431779
 Graeme Pengelly 0407 138 124
 Des Polden 03 6223 3830
 Keith Ramsay 0439856933
 Mick Rasmussen 0428 790 645
 Ron Reid 0427 461 297
 Gary Sangster 0427224099
 John Scanlan 0488 132 903
 Peter Schreiber 02 6569 3390
 Garry Shoemark 02 6546 6778
 Alex Skowronski RIP Sapper
 John Smith 0400032502
 Roy Sojan 08 9926 1235
 John Stonehouse 08 9653 1895
 Peter Swanson 0401392617
 John Tick 04 3898 7262
 Harry Eustace 0408515270
 Steve Walton 07 3205 9494
 Terry Wake 07 4786 2625
 Dave Young 0418425429
2 Troop (1971-72)
 Warren Pantall 0417 096 802
3 Troop (1967-68)
 Mick A'Hearn 0429327509
 Ken Arnold 02 6974 1181
 Dennis Baker 08 89527281
 Chuck Bonzas 0407866487
 Bruce Breddin 0418766759
 Norm Cairns 0498765425
 Kerry Caughey 03 5971 4188
 David Clark 08 8388 7728
 Bob Coleman 03 5332 0975
 Jim Dowson 03 5662 3291
 Bob Embrey 07 3351 1222
 Peter Fontanini 0438881940
 Barry Gilbert 03 5023 6657
 Brian Hopkins 08 9751 4946
 John Hoskin 0417886100
 Jack Lawson 0429 798 673
 Peter MacDonald 0419 909 273
 Barrie Morgan 0437861945
 Michael O'Hearn 0429327509
 Alan Pascoe 07 5463 2152
 Gary Pohlner 0427172900

Peter Pont 07 4095 0150
 Tom Simons RIP
 Kevin Shugg 0411144500
 Mervyn Spear 0431212960
 Frank Sweeney RIP
 Brian Thomson 0428551368
 Vic Underwood 0429 907 989
 Murray Walker 08 9332 6410
 Glenn Weise 0488741174
 Mick Woodhams 08 9459 0130
 Bob Yewen 0435051475
 Ken Young 0409124096
3 Troop (1968-69)
 Geoff Box 08 9731 2757
 Col Campbell 0417658770
 Barry Chambers 0401119999
 Neil Garrett 03 5798 1522
 Brian Glyde 02 4455 7404
 Peter Graham 0428325182
 Peter Gray 02 4285 8877
 Derwyn Hage 0408802038
 John Hollis 0437711348
 "Sam" Houston 07 5495 5480
 Phil Lamb 08 8564 2001
 Ian Lauder 08 9419 5375
 Kent Luttrell 0408387641
 John Murphy 08 9493 3771
 John Nulty 02 6927 3535
 Ted O'Malley 0428243351
 Barry Parnell 07 4947 1976
 Bob Pritchard RIP Sapper
 Art Richardson 0407505365
 Greg Roberts 03 5941 2269
 Walter Schwartz 0439512322
 Don Shields 08 8297 8619
 Kevin Simper 0423524884
 Tony Toussaint 0417249235
 Ray Vanderheiden 0410 312 807
 Wal Warby 0418240394
 Ray White 03 9740 7141
Three Troop (1969-70)
 Chris Brooks 0407186207
 Jim Burrough 0400884633
 Terry Cartlidge 0411252859
 Bruce Crawford 02 6628 0846
 Greg Cullen 0427050208
 Richard Day 08 8088 4129
 Phil Devine 0439066012
 Bob Done RIP Sapper
 Ray Fulton 03 6288 1176
 Graham Fromm 0429322561
 Doug George 0419475246
 Graham Harvey 07 5445 2636
 Robert Hewett 0422165003
 Trevor Hughes 0419883281
 Darrel Jensen 0428387203
 Mike King 08 9764 1080
 Rod Kirby 07 4973 7726
 Peter Knight 02 6247 6272
 Gerry Lyall RIP Sapper
 Phil McCann 0417423450
 Chris MacGregor 02 4472 3250
 Norm Martin 02 4953 1331
 Jock Meldrum MID 0456 002 701
 Roelof Methorst 0416834846
 Gary Miller MM 0407586241
 "Jacko" Miller 03 6267 4411
 Chris Muller 0458650113
 Danny Mulvany RIP Sapper
 Vin Neale 03 9786 1549

Peter Phillips 0429362935
 G. Rentmeester 03 9735 5236
 Brian "BC" Scott 0400713994
 Paul Scott 02 6656 0730
 Gordon Temby 0419954658
 Peter Thorp MID 0405845787
 "Curly" Tuttleby 08 8953 2335
 Hank Veenhuizen 0407 487 167
 Jock Wallace 07 3882 6513
 "Wonzer" White 02 9833 0580
Three Troop (1970-71)
 Robert Allardice 0439076891
 Steve Armbrust RIP Sapper
 Errol Armitage 07 5598 8018
 Geoff Ansell 0434178696
 Bob Bament 02 6071 3527
 Mike Barnett 02 9869 7132
 John Beningfield 07 4778 4473
 Darryel Binns 0417170171
 Trevor Boaden 0448160944
 Mal Botfield 0434536435
 Ian Campbell 03 9870 0313
 Terry Cartlidge 0411252859
 Brian Christian 07 4778 6602
 Bob Clare 03 5439 5532
 Graeme Clarke 07 4128 4660
 Ted Clarke 0438225844
 Allan J Coleman 02 9838 4848
 Steve Collett 08 9371 0075
 John Davey 07 3378 4316
 Chris Ellis 0409299520
 Kevin Hodge 08 8322 2619
 John Jones 08 8357 5226
 Kenny Laughton 08 8297 4010
 Garry Lourigan 02 4844 5545
 Darcy McKenzie 0405499780
 R. McKenzie-Clark 08 9729 1162
 Robert McLeay 0429861122
 Jock Meldrum MID 0456 002 701
 Roelof Methorst 0416834846
 Carlo Mikkelsen
 (New Zealand) 0064 9 3776322
 Ben Passarelli 0411340236
 Robert Reed RIP Sapper
 Paul Scott 02 6656 0730
 Les Shelley 07 3264 4041
 John Steen 0419772375
 John Tatler - RIP Sapper
 Gordon Temby 08 9757 2016
 Peter Vandenberg 03 9798 3947
 Brian Wakefield 0427350713
 David Wilson RIP Sapper
Three Troop (1971-72)
 Bradley Bauer 0749281152
 Trevor "Zip" Button 0434332789
 Ron Byron 0439910568
 Jim Dewing 0402433776
 Mike Dutton 0438627140
 Alan Gorman 0413 063 336
 John Jones 0417836538
 Brenton J Smith 0408806685
 Peter Weingott 0418870496
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 Mark Morrison
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