



HOLDFAST

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OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE VIETNAM TUNNEL RATS ASSOCIATION INC.

THE DOCUMENTS CAPTURED BY AUSSIE
TUNNEL RATS IDENTIFYING TOP VIET CONG
OPERATIVES SHOULD HAVE CHANGED
THE OUTCOME OF THE VIETNAM WAR



BUT THE DOCUMENTS DISAPPEARED!

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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Tunnel Rats at the sharp end



Surrounded by the notorious razor sharp "Elephant Grass" several 3 Troop lads out on operations in 1970 await the next move by their infantry comrades. Seen (Left to right) are: Darryel Binns, Jock Wallace, Kenny Laughton and "Rip" Kirby (unusually, wearing a helmet instead of a bush hat).

Ready to roll gear



For Tunnel Rats called out on a one-day operation (thus requiring no rations or sleeping gear), this is what we carried: At the top is the DPM Bag containing sticks of C4 plastic explosive, DetCord, safety fuze and a pair of pliers (detonators were carried separately for safety). Beside the bag is a well-worn and superbly faded Bush Hat. And below that, the M-16 Armalite rifle. Below this is the utility belt (worn around the waist) which carries (from left to right); a pouch containing rifle ammo magazines; then a small pouch containing a metal tin with the detonators inside wrapped in cloth; two water bottles; a 9mm pistol in a holster; another water bottle, our bayonet; and another pouch containing rifle ammo magazines. Ready to roll!

Pogo (temporary) and loving it!



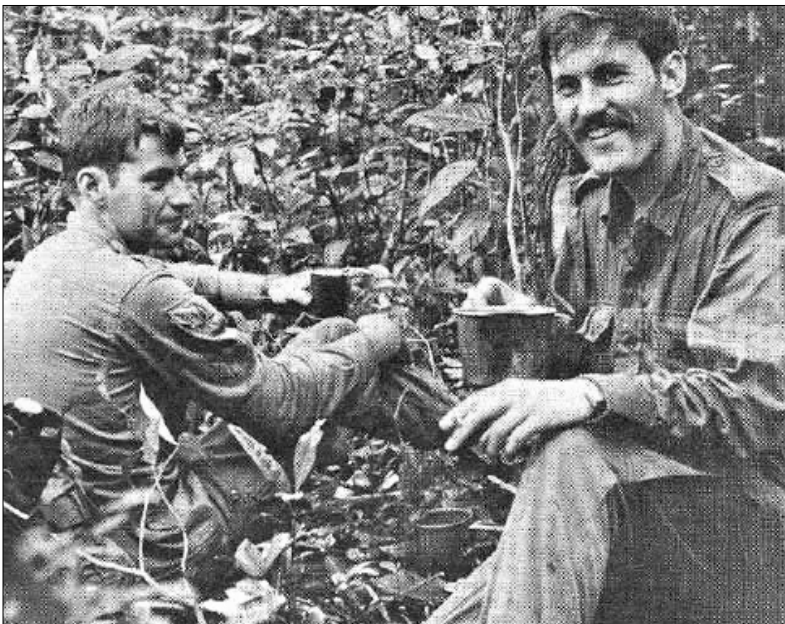
The sand and wheelbarrow in the background indicate that Tunnel Rat Terry Smethurst (1968/69) has been given a temporary construction job on base at Nui Dat between operations out bush. By his expression we suspect Terry has just been accused of being a "pogo" by one of his fellow Tunnel Rats. The term 'pogo' was used to refer to soldiers not in a combat role and thus; 'Posted On Garrison Operations'. With the high casualty rate among Tunnel Rats this would be quite an insult if it hadn't been delivered with humour by a fellow Tunnel Rat. The strong bond between Tunnel Rats created a very special sense of humour within our ranks. Much of it involved seemingly insulting each other. Some of it would enter areas 'normal' people politely avoid and they would consider it to be "dark humour".

With beer, 'Jack Rations' and pin-up posters, this is definitely Sapper territory



Tunnel Rats Mert Lee (1968/69) and Paul Grills (1968/69) have an absolute hoard of Jack Rations in front of them. We can't imagine how they could have acquired such a stash but suspect it was by dubious means. "Jack Rations" were non-ration food items, often of a frivolous nature rather than providing any real sustenance to the body. The unusual name comes from the common response whenever you were asked to share these treasures; "F*** you mate, I'm eating the lot myself". This goes contrary to the legend of diggers looking after each other - but it was the universal response across all ranks and all Corps.

Two Tunnel Rats in their natural habitat - out bush



Lance Corporal David Gammie (left) and Sapper Kevin Dorotich are out bush with the Infantry and enjoying a 'Smoko'. This was a pause in patrolling where you could make up a brew of coffee, tea or that dreadful powdered cordial and relax for a while. The stop was never for long, usually 10 to 15 minutes or half an hour if you were lucky. Despite the traditional name given to the short break, it wasn't compulsory to smoke - though most of us did in those days. Free cigarettes came with our US rations in small four-smoke packs carrying brands we'd never seen before.



He should have been a Sapper!



Warrant Officer Class 2 Don Andrews of Service Corps was posted to HQ Australian Force Vietnam in Saigon and must have thought he was in a pretty safe posting. This all changed one day when Don was riding to work on a US Army bus which had not been fitted with wire mesh screens. A motor scooter pulled alongside the bus and a pillion passenger quickly hooked a satchel bomb onto the side of the bus, right alongside where Don was sitting. In a move that probably saved his life along with the other passengers on the bus, Don reached out the window and flicked the satchel off onto the road where it exploded harmlessly behind the bus. The photo shows Don using a different bus (one fitted with wire mesh screens) to demonstrate what took place to Vietnamese police and army personnel.

Very early days at Nui Dat



Sapper Rod McClennan arrived in Vietnam in February 1967, which is why things look a little primitive in the 2 Troop lines. There are no concrete paths and it seems no troop ablution block as Rod is shaving outdoors, using his helmet as a basin. The great mystery though is why there are white shirts hanging up in the background. There is just no reason anyone would have a white shirt in Vietnam. We all had one set of civilians clothes for a few days leave in Vung Tau, but these were sports shirts and Bermuda shorts (with long socks if you were a toff). Can anyone solve the shirt mystery?

Stomping on stage at The Grand - Vung Tau



The Grand Hotel was quite flash compared to other venues in Vung Tau. As the hang-out for officers it had to at least appear halfway decent despite the fact there were ladies of the night available on site. On the entertainment front they actually had a small stage area in the main lounge bar where they featured some good bands. The hotel tried their best to cater for their mainly Australian customers. On hearing that 'The Stomp' had been a dance craze in Australia they went through a period of presenting this on stage. It went over like a lead balloon. The Stomp was a surfer based phenomenon embracing sun-blonded hair, boardshorts and zinc pasted noses. It just didn't seem to work with Philippina bands pumping it out in a Vietnamese bar in Vungers!

Tunnel Rats from 3 Troop take a well-earned rest as they show off some 'booty'



Operation Pinnaroo had it all - mines and booby traps peppered the approaches to an enemy complex comprising tunnels, bunkers and huge caves that all had to be searched, cleared and then demolished in some of the largest explosive charges set by Australians during the war. The operation was carried out in the Long Hai Hills over a seven week period from 2 March to 12 April 1968 and there were 60 Australian casualties during this period, including nine Tunnel Rats, four of whom were killed in action. In the photo above, showing off a flag taken from an enemy tunnel are (L to R): SPR Lyndon Stuttley; unknown 3RAR infantryman; SPR Barry McKay; 2LT Lloyd Anderson 3RAR; SPR Norm LeBhurz (KIA 14 September 1968); SPR David Woolley and SPR Jim Dowson.

"I'd rather be out bush with the lads"



Looking seriously bored CPL Jim Castles (1968/69) has scored Escort Duty. This usually involved providing armed escort for a 1 Field Squadron officer visiting a village or project in our area of operations. The duty required the wearing of helmets and flack jackets despite the fact it was an absolute 'swan' (an easy and perhaps unnecessary task involving little or no risk). The worst part was if the officer stayed out late into the day, beyond the opening time of the Boozer back at base.

A 'Greenies' worst nightmare - this pesky tree had to go



No doubt this tree was a zillion years old and housed the ultra rare Silver Breasted Tit Bird, but it stood in the way of constructing a new Fire Support Base. Sapper Steve Collett (3TP 1970/71) was tasked with blowing it up, and is seen at work in these before and after photos.

People Sniffer (Man Mounted)



We had all heard of the various aircraft mounted People Sniffers, the devices designed to scoop up air samples and analyse them for traces of human perspiration and urine. The US also designed a man-mounted version (seen above with it's cover removed) and tested it for 12 months in Vietnam. Based on the same principles as the air-mounted versions, this beast could evidently detect enemy concentrations from a distance greater than most rifles. We doubt it was a great success as very little was heard of it during or after the war.

Don't dice with this young lady!



We have no doubt this sweet-faced Vung Tau bar manager ended up a millionaire. Like every girl working in the bars, her name was Mai Lin, and she was an absolute wizard at dice games. Nobody could ever work out how she was cheating, but she was because she simply never lost. The only exception to this was when she felt the players were getting suspicious and likely to drop out of the game. At this point, to keep them interested she would let them win a small amount, which she quickly recovered with her subsequent wins. Of course it helped that the guys were half pissed and she was stone cold sober. Where is she now? Perhaps in Sydney or Melbourne's Chinatown, running a respectable restaurant with a little Mah-Jong game going on out the back.

Military traditions are important and shouldn't be resisted



At a Troop BBQ at Nui Dat following an operation out bush, Tunnel Rats Gordon Temby (left) and Chris Brooks (right) have grabbed a newcomer to 3 Troop for a traditional dunking into the ice-chest. These BBQs were quick to fall into disarray as the men hadn't had a beer in four to six weeks. The sudden intake of alcohol and the joy of being safe and sound on the base with your troop mates was a wicked combination. The tradition of new lads being dunked in the beer fridge was a military tradition, even if Gordon and Chris just thought of the idea that night. After all, 'newbies' were fair game, just as they no doubt were when Gordon and Chris attended their first 3 Troop BBQ. This is how traditions are built isn't it?

Could these documents found by Aussie Tunnel Rats have changed the outcome of the Vietnam War?



In January 1966 on Operation Crimp, WO2 Jack Cramp (left) and Major John Healy, both of 1RAR look through some of the documents before they are despatched to headquarters

“ Secret documents dug out of the Cu Chi tunnels by 3 Field Troop Sappers in 1966 should have exposed the Viet Cong’s entire clandestine organization to total destruction.”

By Lex McAulay

In Asian mythology there is a dragon that lives underground guarding the king's treasure, most precious of which is the pearl of wisdom and power, kept safe under the dragon's jaws. On January 11, 1966, an Australian Sapper crawled out of a narrow, dark Viet Cong tunnel north of Cu Chi dragging a leather satchel fastened together by two straps and buckles. He did not know it, but inside that satchel was the key to victory in South Vietnam, equivalent to the pearl of wisdom and power in the myth. That victory could have been won in 1966, but it was not. The squandering of one of the war's biggest intelligence bonanzas— which could

have made the 1968 Tet Offensive impossible—has been little noted by historians but certainly ranks among the Vietnam War's biggest lost opportunities.

During the entire Vietnam War, only one operation conducted by the Free World Military Forces (a designation for all the various non-Communist military units operating inside and in support of South Vietnam) had the potential to bring victory to the government in Saigon. Code-named “Crimp,” it was conducted in January 1966 by the U.S. 173rd Airborne Brigade (Separate). The operation marked the

beginning of the “tunnel rat” legend.

As Commander of the Military Advisory Command, Vietnam (MACV), General William C. Westmoreland's priority in 1965 was to use his surging numbers of brigades and divisions to upset the Viet Cong/North Vietnamese Army timetable and buy time for his allocated formations to settle into their assigned locations and begin largescale operations in 1966. Besides seeking out enemy main force regiments to engage them in battle, Westmoreland's units swept the areas in which the arriving forces would establish base camps. The first U.S. Army ground force forma-



ABOVE: The documents found during Operation Crimp included name lists, diaries, pamphlets, letters and operation plans

tion deployed to the III Corps Tactical Zone in South Vietnam in May 1965 was the 173rd Airborne Brigade. The brigade was commanded by Brig. Gen. Ellis W. Williamson and consisted of two parachute infantry battalions, the 1st and 2nd Battalions, 503rd Infantry (1-503 and 2-503), plus airborne artillery, cavalry and a support battalion. Assigned to the 173rd was an Australian battle group made up of the 1st Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment (1/RAR), with Australian and New Zealand 105mm artillery batteries, a troop of M-113 armored personnel carriers from the Prince of Wales Light Horse and 3 Field Troop Royal Australian Engineers. The 173rd was a powerful mobile force which had fought some notable actions in 1965.

In late 1965, MACV intelligence placed the Viet Cong headquarters for the Saigon district—their Military Region 4—near the Ho Bo Woods, north of Cu Chi town. The 173rd Airborne Brigade and the 3rd Brigade of the U.S. 1st Infantry Division (the Big Red One) were tasked to sweep the area, with the 173rd to attack the VC headquarters and the Big Red One's brigade to screen the adjacent sector to the south. On New Years Day, 1966, the 173rd deployed on Operation Marauder from its base at Bien Hoa to the

Plain of Reeds, west of Saigon, while simultaneously preparing for Operation Crimp.

Crimp was planned as an airmobile assault by the 173rd on the enemy headquarters location, to be followed by several days for exploitation, then a return to Bien Hoa to prepare for further operations. As a 1963 graduate of the Australian Defense Language School, I was the only linguist available in the 1st Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment at the time. The 173rd brigade headquarters also had a special team of linguists from MACV, led by Sergeant Sedgwick "Wick" Tourison, that waited for the detainees, prisoners and captured documents from the Viet Cong headquarters that would be sent back by the units in the field.

On January 8, the 173rd made three battalion-sized air assaults into landing zones around the Viet Cong headquarters southwest of the Ho Bo Woods. The plan was for the Australians to land first to the east of the headquarters and secure a blocking position in a populated area along a main road. Then the 1-503rd would land to the north and the

2-503rd to the southwest. The two U.S. battalions would make crisscross sweeps through the area of operations and push the enemy onto the Australians. The brigade from the Big Red One took the area to the south.

As it turned out, Viet Cong headquarters actually was in the blocking position assigned to the Australians, which arrived in a hot landing zone and soon found action against the Viet Cong security battalions—the Quyet Thang and Cu Chi 7th. As they fought their way through, almost every platoon found tunnels. As soon as the enemy was driven away, exploration of the underground hideouts began. Only small skinny men, armed just with a flashlight and pistol, could fit into the tunnels. As the infantry and combat engineers crawled and wriggled they soon found they were in a huge underground network, far bigger than anything found since the 173rd had begun operating in the area in May 1965. The tunnel system went down three, four or more levels to the water table, and linked the local villages and hamlets. While some of the tunnels were newly dug, others were so old that moss grew on the walls.

High-powered "Mighty Mite" air pumps were brought in to force tear gas and smoke into the tunnels, to drive out the Viet Cong and expose the tunnel entrances. The tactic didn't work, as the entrance covers were too heavy to be dislodged by air pressure. With a map and pencil in hand, I hovered above in a Huey to mark the locations of coloured smoke expected to be seen jetting out of air holes and trapdoors, but the 37 smoke grenades dumped into the tunnels produced no indicators visible from the air or on the ground. Furthermore, the residual gas and smoke remained a hindrance to the Australian tunnel searchers.

The commander of the Aussie combat engineers, Captain Alex MacGregor, realized that



US troops and their interpreter look with amazement at some of the thousands of documents found during the operation, all of which virtually disappeared into South Vietnam's military archives.

a map of the found tunnels had to be made to further guide the exploration effort and to detect emerging patterns. He had his men take a compass and lengths of field telephone cable into the tunnels to shoot azimuths and measure the distances to the turns and trapdoors. All of this stressful underground exploration was done in near-darkness and without knowledge of what the enemy might do at any moment. The Aussies had no breathing apparatus in the badly ventilated tunnels, and many had to be rescued when they lost consciousness for lack of air. One combat engineer, Corporal Bob Bowtell became wedged in a tunnel and suffocated in the bad air. Nevertheless, more men still went down into the darkness and the unknown.

So much material was flowing from the tunnels in the Australian sector that I could only

look briefly at any given bundle of documents, or check the first couple of files in a box, tie on a tag with details of date, location and capturing unit, and have the bags and boxes stacked at the landing zone for evacuation to brigade headquarters. Anything determined to be unimportant was thrown onto a fire built nearby. As soon as the first bags of captured documents were opened at brigade headquarters, Wick Tourison's team realized that everything else previously captured by MACV was now obsolete. Day after day, more important documents were dragged out of the tunnels. The secret world of the Viet Cong had been cracked wide open.

As it became clear that the enemy headquarters was in the Australian location, General Williamson brought his U.S. battalions up alongside 1/RAR. To the north the 1-503rd fought several

actions against dug-in VC, keeping them off balance and finding more tunnels, one with six levels. To the south, the 2-503rd searched its area but found little to report. Farther south, the 3rd Brigade from the 1st ID engaged snipers firing from the tunnels. Outside the 173rd area of operations, aggressive cross-country sweeps by Americans and Australians prevented the enemy from mounting a counterattack against the U.S. paratroopers. Meanwhile, the Australians continued to search the tunnel system, but also maintained a strong screen of patrols and ambushes above ground that kept the Viet Cong from re-entering the area. Frequent small unit actions were fought by day and night and a number of Viet Cong who refused to surrender were killed in the tunnels.

When one of the tunnel searchers brought me the two-strap leather satchel and I began perusing its contents, I immediately recognized that this was probably the most important



WO2 Ron Pincott (centre) of 1RAR shows the Commander of AAFV Brigadier Jackson, samples of Viet Cong documents and clothing recovered from underground tunnels during Operation Crimp

item found in the entire tunnel complex—the master file of detailed information on all the Viet Cong in the region. Meticulously recorded across large sheets of paper were the complete backgrounds of key members of the Viet Cong organization in the Saigon vicinity. Arranged in columns were the individuals' real names, code names, places and dates of birth, occupations, Communist Party membership details and party assignments. I took the satchel to Australian commander Lt. Col. Alex Preece and explained to him what it contained and suggested it be sent directly to MACV. I then returned to continue the work of assessing the mass of material still being retrieved from the underground labyrinth.

Because of the critical intelligence finds, Operation Crimp was extended, finally concluding on January 14, 1966. The 173rd had captured an important Viet Cong headquarters, removed eight truckloads of vital documents and tons of weapons and supplies—but not without a serious fight. The brigade's casualties were 23 killed and 102 wounded, against enemy losses of at least 128 and possibly an-

other 192 killed, plus 95 prisoners and 122 weapons captured. The enemy had been unable to thwart any part of the brigade's plan or to mount any sort of an attack on any brigade unit. The Viet Cong had been outfought and outsmarted at every turn.

“What happened to all those captured documents that identified the Viet Cong by name, occupation and street address throughout the Saigon region?”

Some of the Australians wanted to stay and complete the exploration of the tunnel complex, but General Westmoreland needed all the combat forces he had to sweep and secure other areas for soon-to-arrive units. The victim of Washington armchair experts, he also was ordered by President Lyndon B. Johnson to cease offensive operations to observe the traditional truce for the Tet Lunar New Year.

On January 15, General Williamson went to Saigon to brief Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Ambassador-at-Large

Averell Harriman, while senior 173rd officers attended a press conference in Saigon. The success of Operation Crimp was recorded in after-action reports and lessons learned, and in the memories of the veterans. What happened at MACV and in Saigon was well over the horizon as viewed from battalion level. The U.S. 25th Infantry Division moved into the Cu Chi area and had its own experiences in the war in the tunnels. More operations followed for the 173rd and by mid-1966 the original troopers completed their tour of duty, as did the Aussies in 1/RAR. The war went on. Operation followed operation. Crimp faded in memories.

So what happened to all those captured documents that identified the Viet Cong by name, occupation and street address throughout the Saigon region? The key leather satchel's contents were translated and put together with all the other important information hauled out of the tunnels. MACV and South Vietnamese army (ARVN) order-of-battle staffs had an unprecedented wealth of information to add to their files on enemy units and on the entire Viet Cong organization. When MACV learned through the documents the advanced level of the enemy reconnaissance of American facilities in Saigon, it immediately reinforced security procedures and, on March 1, issued Counter-Intelligence Instruction No. 1.

Major General Joseph A. McChristian Jr., Westmoreland's chief of intelligence, had visited the Australian unit during Operation Crimp. From the treasure of captured documents he realized just how serious the threat to Saigon was and initiated an intense program of enemy information collection in and around the capital. In mid-1966, MACV intelligence staff prepared a briefing on the situation. In contrast, the South Vietnamese had to be persuaded to do anything.

It took months to push the issue through meetings, briefings and discussions with U.S. and Republic of Vietnam bureaucracies. It took nearly a year after the intelligence was uncovered for the December 1966 Operation Fairfax/Rang Dong to be launched—searching for the enemy in the Saigon region. The city itself, which was the responsibility of the South Vietnamese, was not included in the operation. As 1967 unfolded, the U.S. 199th Light Infantry Brigade operated in coordination with three ARVN battalions and achieved significant success on the outskirts and approaches to Saigon. Disappointingly, however, instead of the ARVN personnel improving in proficiency, they tended to leave everything to the Americans. After the operation was handed over to the ARVN in December 1967, Fairfax/Rang Dong became completely ineffective, allowing the Viet Cong to regenerate in time to mount their Tet Offensive in early 1968. Westmoreland would admit later in his memoirs that handing over responsibility for Saigon and its environs to the ARVN “made for uneasy moments.”

Most critical to the inability to exploit the massive tunnel intelligence, however, was the fact that there was no combined U.S.-ARVN office in January 1966. Throughout the war the South Vietnamese government retained ownership of all captured documents. ARVN units that captured documents up to 1966 held them, but made little effort to exploit the information. The South Vietnamese had to be persuaded to adopt sensible procedures, but could not be forced to do so. General McChristian persisted, but the combined document exploitation center did not open until October 1966, and the combined intelligence staff did not start functioning until the following month. The Saigon government retained responsibility for its own internal security



Author CPL Lex McAulay in Vietnam during his tour with 1RAR

matters, and therefore no concentrated follow-up action using the information from Crimp was taken by the South Vietnamese against the Viet Cong infrastructure in Saigon. Incredibly, the Viet Cong in Saigon continued their work barely interrupted by the government security forces. Westmoreland did not mention Operation Crimp in his 1968 end-of-tour report or 1976 memoirs. McChristian made no note of the operation in his monograph on military intelligence published in 1974.

Exactly a year after Crimp, in January 1967, Operation Cedar Falls was launched in the same area. But the Viet Cong in Saigon still only suffered pin-prick irritations from the government, and the Tet Offensive followed in 1968. I continue to believe that if the information gained from Operation Crimp had been used immediately to destroy or even simply dislocate the Viet Cong political infrastructure in Saigon in 1966, there could not have been a 1968 Tet Offensive because there would not have been the necessary planners and coordinators for the entire Saigon region. A widespread clandestine organization necessary to support an offensive on the scale of the Tet attacks requires years to recruit and train. There would have been no point in a 1968 Tet Offensive that did

not include Saigon. If the enemy infrastructure in and around Saigon had been destroyed, then by early or mid-1967—with the North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong defeated in every battle (as they were), with General Vo Nguyen Giap's strategy in ruins and with U.S. air strikes ratcheting up pressure throughout North Vietnam and Laos—it is very likely that Hanoi would have been forced to cease its armed invasion of the South and possibly begin to negotiate from a position of weakness, as had happened in Korea. And South Vietnam might still exist today. In the tale that was Operation Crimp, it was as if the 173rd Airborne Brigade's warriors went into the cave of the enemy dragon and captured the magic pearl—but the corrupt and incompetent local princes could not make use of its powerful secrets, and were thus eventually defeated by their enemies. What remains untarnished in this tragic tale, however, is the shining story of the warriors' exploits.

Lex McAulay enlisted in the Australian Army in 1960 and graduated from the year-long Vietnamese language course in 1963. He was aboard the first planeload of Royal Australian Regiment soldiers to Vietnam. He served three tours in Vietnam and retired from the army in 1982.

We weren't the only Sappers in the Vietnam War



Surprise attacks by elite Communist units known as sappers were one of the most serious and feared threats for Australian forces in Vietnam.

“Sapper fighting is a living symbol of our national character and soul, our indomitable fighting will, our creative energies. Sapper fighting is the essence of Vietnam, and the premise behind it is to allow the few to fight the many and the weak to fight the strong.”

Colonel Bach Ngoc Lien, a senior NVA sapper commander

The key Fire Support Base (FSB) battles for Australian forces in Vietnam were at FSB Coral, FSB Balmoral and FSB Andersen. Before each of these battles, enemy Sappers crept right up to the perimeter wire of those bases to observe, map them out and report back to their commanders. And when the battles started, those same enemy Sappers were the ones who snuck up to the perimeter again, cut the wire obstacles and entered the Australian bases ahead of their Viet Cong (VC) and North Vietnamese Army (NVA) comrades.

In the fog-shrouded early morning hours of March 28, 1971, 50 members of a specially trained NVA assault force, their bodies covered with charcoal dust and grease that

made them almost invisible in the dark, quietly approached Fire Support Base Mary Ann, a small U.S. Army encampment in Quang Tin province. The remote outpost with about 30 buildings, including bunkers and sleeping quarters, was defended by 231 Americans of the 196th Light Infantry Brigade, 23rd Infantry (Americal) Division, along with 22 South Vietnamese soldiers.

The intruders, from the 2nd Company of the 409th NVA Main Force Sapper Battalion, crouched low in three- and six-man teams, silently slipped through the barbed wire that marked the firebase's outer defences.

Under an umbrella of NVA mortar fire, the sappers raced through the compound toss-

ing gas grenades and canvas satchels loaded with explosives. They then directed automatic weapons fire at the demolished or burning targets. The infiltrators hit the battalion tactical operations centre and C Company's command bunker, killing Captain Richard V. Knight, the company's leader. Grunts were shot down trying to escape their quarters or buried alive when enemy explosives were hurled into their tents. The base "was a shambles... with things burning all over the place," wrote the Americal commander, Maj. Gen. James L. Baldwin, in a letter to his family. After one hour of close-quarter combat, 30 Americans were dead and 82 wounded. A count of the enemy dead showed 15 NVA bodies in and



TOP LEFT: A group NVA Sappers captured by Australian troops are awaiting extraction by helicopter after the battle at Fire Support base Balmoral on 28 May 1968

around the US camp.

The attack was a stark example of the effectiveness of the sapper force. The sappers who so devastatingly struck firebase Mary Ann—as well as hundreds of minor outposts, major bases, airfields, fortified hamlets and large cities throughout South Vietnam—were members of the Bo Doi Dac Cong (roughly translated “soldiers in special forces”), a highly organized, well-trained and well-equipped organization that carried out special operations.

Although sapper combat appears almost identical to classic guerrilla warfare, the North Vietnamese saw it differently. In guerrilla warfare, a small unit attacks and destroys a small isolated enemy formation. In a sapper operation, a small well-trained command attacks a post held by a numerically superior (although still somewhat small) force that is inside the enemy’s lines. The Vietnamese called this type of combat the “blooming lotus”

tactic—penetrating a fortified area and assaulting outward.

Sappers generally did not attack enemy troops that were moving around in the field. The manoeuvres of those units were unpredictable, and sappers wanted ample time to conduct thorough reconnaissance of an enemy position. In addition, experience showed that withdrawal from a field fight was more difficult than withdrawal from an urban area or firebase.

Before the Communists’ Tet Offensive against targets across South Vietnam in early 1968, the sappers in the South were controlled by the Viet Cong and operated independently of the NVA. But after the horrendous losses the Viet Cong suffered during Tet, all sapper operations in South Vietnam were supervised by the 429th Sapper Group, which reported directly to the Sapper

High Command, a department in the NVA High Command in Hanoi.

Sapper assaults normally heralded an attack by regular NVA or Viet Cong forces. Sappers sometimes participated in conventional infantry assaults. Their support usually entailed breaching a defensive line and creating a gap the regular infantry could flow through. Unfortunately for the sapper detachments involved in those missions, the sustained fighting of a conventional battle would often further thin ranks already being depleted from the sappers’ traditional commando activities.

Field sapper organizations established by the Viet Cong ranged from independent squads to battalions. The NVA field units were grouped into battalions and regiments. The standard battalion had a headquarters platoon of 15 to



ABOVE: After detailed reconnaissance of a base by Sappers a period of intense planning took place before an assault on the base took place

20 men and three field companies of 60 members each. Every company was divided into three 20-man sections. A section comprised six cells of about three men each. Rounding out the battalion would be a signals platoon of 30 soldiers and a reconnaissance platoon with 30 men.

Some sapper units were heavily armed, with even more firepower than conventional NVA infantry units of a similar size, while other outfits sported the bare basics in weapons. The most common weapons in a field sapper's arsenal included AK-47 assault rifles and TNT satchel charges.

Other weapons included B40/41 rocket-propelled grenade launchers, bangalore torpedoes, Soviet-made RPK light machine guns, various hand grenades, mines, pistols and submachine guns. Several units had a heavy weapons section equipped with 57mm and 75mm recoilless rifles, 60mm or 82mm mortars and flamethrowers.

Before conducting a mission, sappers carried out a very thorough reconnaissance.

They not only scouted the target from the outside, using sources such as local guerrillas, but also collected intelligence using agents operating from the inside. Just before the attack on firebase Mary Ann, the Americans were warned that some of the firebase's South Vietnamese soldiers, supposedly allies, were secretly working as NVA operatives. That may have been the case. During the battle, U.S. troops took fire from South Vietnamese army positions inside the base, and the sappers did not assault those sectors.

After a final reconnaissance was made, usually over three to seven days, the sapper commander could determine which enemy fighting positions and other obstacles his men would face. He then planned the attack. A typical raiding party, without infantry support, would be organized into four elements: security, assault, fire support and reserve.

The security team consisted of a reinforced cell (four men), armed with at least one RPG launcher, AK-47s and several mines to stop enemy reinforce-

ments from reaching the battlefield.

The key component of the raiding party was the assault element, two or more teams called "arrows." Moving along a specified route, each arrow travelled with three cells—contingents for penetration, assault and direct-fire support. The penetration cell had four members, usually wearing only shorts and a coat of mud, who carried AK-47s, wire cutters, bamboo poles to lift up barbed wire, bangalore torpedoes and probing tools such as metal stakes, knives and bayonets. The assault cells, hauling most of the demolition material, employed four or five men loaded with AK-47s, RPGs, anti-tank grenades and scores of explosive charges. Often more than one assault cell was used in an operation. The direct-fire support cell, made up of two or three soldiers, brought RPGs and AK-47s to the assault.

The assault team also received assistance from indirect fire laid down by another support team. The 30-man indirect-fire crew, using 60mm or 82mm mortars and AK-47s, masked the noise made by sapper penetration units as they began their infiltration, distracted the enemy's attention from the perimeter section where the assault team was operating and hit enemy forces trying to react to the attack. That crew was guarded by its own security cell.

The reserve element, usually a reinforced infantry squad (13 men), furnished close-in support when needed. Its armament would consist of a machine gun, an RPG launcher, AK-47s and a dozen or more explosive charges.

In the planning process, the raid's commander would determine the approach, infiltration and withdrawal routes, fire support positions and target priorities. He would then organize

rehearsals that used maps, mock-ups and diagrams of the target area in drills that might last days. An attack's success also depended on the element of surprise, which was the only thing that could give the sappers an edge against the massive American and allied forces firepower. To attain that advantage, sapper commanders emphasized camouflage, stealth, speed of execution and—as at firebase Mary Ann—lulling the garrison into assuming an attack would not occur.

Sapper missions for a late-night attack began at dusk because it might take six or seven hours of slow, cautious movement to cover the last 200 yards without detection. Sappers normally chose the most difficult avenue to the base hoping the enemy would not expect them to take that approach.

When they reached the defensive barriers, sappers preferred to cut through the barbed wire rather than detonate explosives, which would give away their position.

To draw the defenders' attention away from the penetration, the indirect-fire element might use diversionary feints, such as artillery shelling to make the garrison think it was under a routine attack launched just to test its defences. In response, the troops would take cover in their bunkers.

If the penetration force was prematurely discovered or pinned down by enemy fire, the assault cells would use RPGs to speed up the attack, while the penetration cell would start throwing explosives in all directions in a last-ditch attempt to blast through the perimeter.

Once inside, the sappers moved rapidly. They placed demolition charges on key installations, threw satchel charges and grenades, and fired RPGs to inflict casualties, suppress enemy resistance and keep the garrison's troops



TOP: The NVA Sappers move ahead to clear the way for the Infantry who will make the full force assault on the targeted fire support base. ABOVE: Sappers on an assault mission often wore minimal clothing to help ensure they didn't get tangled in barbed wire fences.

confined to their bunkers so they could not organize defensive fire or counterattacks, as at firebase Mary Ann.

After the sappers finished their assignment (the optimal completion time was 30 minutes) or if they could not overcome enemy opposition, the raiding party withdrew, covered by the direct-fire support and reserve sections. They moved back through the penetration lanes to a rallying point.

North Vietnamese and Viet Cong sappers faced a foe with superiority in technology, firepower and troops, yet they destroyed hundreds of supply and fuel depots, military bases and pieces of equipment, killing and wounding many troops in the process. Their sudden and unexpected attacks also created a fear that no matter how well fortified and well-armed a base was it was never safe from a sapper assault.

Our Last Post Ceremony is shaping up well



The Vietnam Tunnel Rats Association has reserved the Australian War Memorial Last Post Ceremony for 18 February this 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). It will be an important and memorable national commemoration of our fallen.

The 18th of February is the date on which the Battle of Fire Support Base Andersen took place in 1968, and on that terrible night we had four of our Tunnel Rat comrades killed in action.

As the tradition is set that each Last Post Ceremony at the Australian War Memorial is a tribute to one individual, we needed to follow that tradition. We chose Sapper Allan Pattison who was one of those Sappers killed at FSB Andersen.

The Tunnel Rats are taking this opportunity to treat this ceremony as a tribute to all 36 of our fallen comrades. We have submitted a script which of course concentrates on Sapper Pattison but also covers the loss of our other 35 mates from our ranks.

If you wish to lay a wreath for any one of our 36 Tunnel Rats killed in Vietnam you will have the opportunity to do this in the closing stages of the ceremony. You will need to purchase the wreath yourself and carry it with you to and at the ceremony. If you intend to do this, please make yourself

known to staff at the AWM Front Desk no later than 4 pm on the day. Commemorative cards on wreaths and floral tributes will be catalogued and archived by the AWM and kept in perpetuity.



The Last Post ceremony

The ceremony commences at 1655h and usually lasts around 20 minutes. We suggest we all start to gather in the area at least 30 minutes or more prior to the start time to ensure we are well positioned and together as a group (if possible). Several of the people involved in the Battle of FSB Andersen have been appointed to lay wreaths in the main part of the ceremony, as have

several current serving Sappers attending. Those wanting to lay a wreath for a particular Tunnel Rat killed in Vietnam will be able to do this in the final stages of the ceremony.

The Drinks & Dinner

To attend the drinks and dinner you must book first. As meals and numbers of seats will be pre-arranged, the club will not be able to cater for anyone who turns up on the night without first booking through Jim Marett by email on:

tunnelrats.vietnam@gmail.com

The Drinks and Dinner commences at 1800h on 18th February at the Hellenic Club 13 Moore Street Canberra City. You may want to book your accommodation nearby as we expect the Club will become a bit of a meeting place for us – our 'Designated Boozer'.

Because of our numbers, now over 100 and growing fast our drinks and dinner will be in a function room, with drinks commencing at 1800h and the dinner at 1900h. The cost of the two-

course dinner is \$30 per person and payments are to be made on the night directly to the Club in the function room. A cash bar will be operating for drinks.

To help the club catering staff deal with the numbers, we will be emailing a limited menu to each person who books so they can select their dishes in advance and we can in turn pass this on to the club. The club will not be able to cater for anyone who turns up on the night without first booking through us.

Medals

Let's honour our fallen comrades - Tunnel Rats should wear their medals for the ceremony and the drinks and dinner following.

Organised tour of the Australian War Memorial

Because of our large numbers now attending, we have had to abandon the idea of an organised group tour of the AWM prior to the ceremony. However, we can all tour the AWM individually or in small groups we organise ourselves. Just remember to be at the ceremony area well ahead of the start time.

Transport from the AWM to the Hellenic Club

According to Google Maps



The Hellenic Club 13 Moore Street Canberra City

it is a six minute drive or a 30 minute walk from the AWM to the Hellenic Club 13 Moore Street Canberra City. Taxis and Uber are options for those not driving.

Operation Hammersley Commemoration

By coincidence, at 1100h on the same day (18 February) there is an official commemoration ceremony of Operation Hammersley at the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial on Anzac Parade Canberra (just down the hill from the AWM). This is an official

DVA sponsored commemoration marking the 50th Anniversary of Operation Hammersley conducted in the Long Hai hills in February/March 1970. Form up for the ceremony is at 10.15 am. The 8RAR led Operation heavily involved both Armour (tanks and tracks) and Engineers (Mini Teams and Splinter Teams) in breaching the enemy's positions in the Minh Dam Secret Zone. All of the combat arms took heavy casualties. 1 Field Squadron lost SPR Rod Hubble KIA, with six other Tunnel Rats WIA.



Itinerary for Tuesday 18th February 2020

- 1030h - (Optional) Attend the Operation Hammersley Commemoration
- Noon onwards - Free time to tour the Australian War Memorial
- 1600h to 1630h - Assemble in the AWM Last Post Ceremony area
- 1655h to 1715h - The Last Post Ceremony is conducted
- 1720h - make your way to the Hellenic Club Canberra City

The ARVN also had their heroes - and for them it was a long war



Colonel Cau Le, 1963 graduate of the prestigious Da Lat Military Academy

“Some Australian and US Veterans are too quick to be critical of the fighting spirit and skills of our allies, the South Vietnamese ARVN. The reality is, like any other army, they had good and bad units within their forces – and the men in those good units were exceptional soldiers.”

One of those exceptional soldiers was Colonel Cau Le who was in almost continuous combat for 12 years against the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese. As a platoon leader, company, battalion and finally regimental commander, Le was decorated for bravery 28 times, including South Vietnam's Victoria Cross equivalent, and is among a handful of foreign soldiers ever to be awarded the U.S. Silver Star and Bronze Star medals.

No Australian or American soldier comes close to Le's time-in-combat record. Captured at the close of the war, this brave soldier was then imprisoned for the next 13 years. Born in French Indochina in 1941, Le began his military training as a very young student at the Vietnamese Junior Military Academy in the late 1940s. He graduated in 1963 from South Vietnam's version of Duntroon or West Point, the Vietnamese Military Academy in Da Lat.

Le's first assignment was as a platoon leader with the ARVN 23rd Infantry Division, fighting Viet Cong in the Central Highlands. Le said that he believed "defeating the VC would not be a difficult matter," since his soldiers were "brave, diligent, persistent and patriotic." But as he discovered in the winter of 1965, when North Vietnamese Army units attacked his company in Phu Yen Province, winning the war would not be an easy task. Over the next decade, Le would face the VC and NVA in dozens of battles and engagements.

Although he was small in stature at 5 foot 4, 120 pounds, as a company commander he was always at the forefront of the action with his unit, and he always stayed in the thick of the fighting.

During the 1968 Tet Offensive, Le served as the executive officer of the 3rd Battalion, 47th Regiment, ARVN 22nd Division deployed outside the coastal city

of Tuy Hoa. After a VC main force battalion and elements of the NVA 95th Regiment occupied the city, it took several days of hard fighting for Le's battalion to drive the enemy out of the city.

Promoted to major, Le was in command of the 2nd Battalion, 47th Infantry on June 5, 1969, when they attacked a strongly held Viet Cong position. During the four-hour battle, Le repeatedly exposed himself to intense mortar, machine gun and rocket grenade fire to stay in the best position for directing the attack. As a result of his actions, 53 enemy were killed. Le's American advisers nominated him for the Bronze Star Medal with "V" Device for valor—which was approved and awarded to him.

Nearly three years later, at the start of the April 1972 Easter Offensive, Le was executive officer of the 47th Regiment at Dak To in Kontum Province. The 22nd Division commander, realizing

that the regiment's 2nd Battalion was about to be overrun by the enemy, sent Le to take control of the situation and reorganize the defensive forces.

Le loaded his backpack and took a helicopter out to the battalion headquarters positioned atop a ridge. The battalion had been severely mauled in nonstop combat since early April and had more than 40 wounded soldiers yet to be evacuated.

"I ordered an emergency meeting," Le said, "and I listened carefully to the reports of all leaders from all levels from squad to company. I could sense that they were worried so much that their morale was at stake. How could I encourage them to stay and fight?"

Le's solution was to immediately call in artillery fire on the surrounding enemy positions and order his subordinate leaders to consolidate their soldiers in well-constructed bunkers rather than poorly dug individual foxholes. Le then admitted to his squad and company leaders that he, too, was afraid of death and assured them it was normal to have such fears. But, Le explained to them, leaders "must set a good example by conquering those fears."

Le's battalion held its ground, and the enemy bypassed them to hit other targets. But his success with the 2nd battalion was bittersweet, as both his regimental and division headquarters were overrun on April 24 and both their commanders killed, along with Lt. Col. Robert W. Brownlee Jr., a senior district adviser assigned to the 47th. The ARVN II Corps commander, General Ngo Du, radioed Le and informed him that his two superiors were dead—and that he was now a lieutenant colonel and the commander of the 47th Regiment. He was 31 years old.

Two months later, on June 25, 1972, Le was tasked with providing security for traffic on Highway 19 from Qui Nhon on the east coast to Pleiku in the Central



TOP: Australian troops re-trained ARVN forces at The Horseshoe, bringing them to the point where their 'graduation' was to go out on their first operation with Aussie soldiers. Here Private Ron Jones of 6RAR gives ARVN soldiers instructions on how to load an M79 grenade launcher. Eventually four battalions of the ARVN 18th Division were retrained by the Australians. ABOVE: Colonel Cau Le's first assignment was as a platoon leader with the ARVN 23rd Infantry Division, fighting Viet Cong in the Central Highlands.

Highlands. When a convoy en route to Pleiku was ambushed by Viet Cong with 82mm recoilless rifles and small arms, Le immediately directed two of his infantry companies to attack. Using a UH-1H Iroquois helicopter as an airborne command post, he directed AH-1G Cobra gunship fire on the enemy.

Le's Huey was repeatedly hit by small-arms fire, finally causing it to make a crash landing just west of the ambush site. Le was unhurt and his aggressive spirit undiminished. According to

U.S. Army accounts, Le "moved toward the enemy to take command of the attacking forces... enroute, he rallied a disorganized Popular Force militia platoon and formed them into an effective fighting force."

As Le moved forward, he and his American adviser, Lt. Col. George Higgins, came under intense mortar fire and were forced to withdraw. Using his adviser's radio, however, Le continued to direct the attack until the enemy was driven off into the jungle. Within a couple of hours, the

convoy moved on to Pleiku as planned. For this extraordinary heroism in action, Le was awarded the American Silver Star.

Three years later, a month before the fall of Saigon in 1975, Le stepped on a land mine in a rice paddy, the blast shattering his right ankle. Despite his pleas to his troopers for them to leave him behind, for a time they carried him with them in a hammock. With the enemy closing in, they were finally forced to abandon Le in a swamp. Before he was captured by VC guerrillas, and in accordance with ARVN regulations, which assumed that captured ARVN officers would be summarily executed, Le removed all insignia of rank. He also managed not to reveal his status as an officer when questioned—so his captors believed he was a sergeant.

A few days later, Le's true identity was revealed by some ARVN soldiers, but, for whatever reason, the VC chose not to execute him. Still, many years of darkness and suffering lay ahead. For the

next 13 years, Le languished in a Communist re-education camp deep in the jungle in Quang Nam Province.

Although not physically tortured during his imprisonment, Le was psychologically abused and repeatedly threatened with death. Five of his 13 years as a POW were spent in what Le came to call a "hell cell"—a small solitary confinement box that had no direct lighting, running water or ventilation. He says he kept his sanity by "singing all day long." Frequently close to starvation, at one point he was so hungry he caught and ate a rat.

While he was imprisoned, Le's wife supported their five children by working as a nurse. She was only permitted to visit him once a year, and then for only 15 minutes. Le did not see his children until he was released in February 1988.

Once he was freed, Le and his family immigrated to the United States. During the next two decades, he lived quietly with his

wife Kieu Van in Philadelphia, where he worked in the District Attorney's office assisting Asian crime victims until his retirement in 2007.

When Le applied for U.S. citizenship, he requested that his original Silver Star and Bronze Star medals, which had been lost during the war and his imprisonment, be reissued to him. In 1996, shortly after becoming a U.S. citizen, Le received his two American decorations in a ceremony in Philadelphia.

Of his experience with Americans in uniform, Le says: "I was proud to fight alongside the Americans. We were brothers in arms against a common enemy."

BELOW: On ANZAC Day, particularly in Melbourne and Sydney the South Vietnamese Veterans are keen participants, often proudly wearing the uniforms of their old units. For many Australian Veterans this is always an emotional sight.



A long day in the Long Hai Hills - late June 1968



By Bob O'Connor - 2 Troop 1967/68

What I describe on these pages took place some three weeks after returning from FSB Coral, making it sometime in late June. That particular operation aside, this one was sizable enough, consisting of a company of infantry, APCs, centurion tanks, several trucks carrying construction materials and an Engineer combat team consisting of seven tunnel rats. We were told a temporary safe harbour was to be set up in the valley between the western and middle peaks of the Long Hai Hills, from which to carry out search and destroy missions against the known VC forces in the area.

For those not familiar with the Long Hai's, they were regarded as being particularly dangerous, not only because of the rugged and steep terrain, and the number of enemy 'contacts' and resulting firefights, but it was also the 'home' of the Viet Cong D445 Battalion and the C25 Company. The enemy used the hills as a supply and staging base from which to launch attacks against the Task Force Base at Nui Dat and the American bases in Phuoc Tuy province. They referred to this area as The Minh Dam Secret Zone. Australians knew the Long Hai's well, having suffered many casualties from mines and booby traps during past operations. So much so, it was considered that anything and everything in the area was either mined or booby-trapped and likely rigged with anti-lift devices, particularly in the case of un-exploded bombs and mortar and artillery shells.

Around mid morning, construction began on the harbour defences and no sooner had it started, it stopped. Minutes later the our team corporal

informed me that some unexploded ordnance had been encountered by the infantry. The corporal was new in-country and I had only met him for the first time that morning. He asked me to investigate what an infantry captain had told him was an unexploded mortar round discovered by his men when working at filling sandbags.

On inspection at the worksite I found the nose of something suspicious around 15cm below ground level and protruding slightly from the side of a small hole. At first it did look to be a mortar round with the fuse removed, suspicious in itself, as the VC used these as primers to make roadside bombs which they targeted against armoured and troop-carrying vehicles. That it appeared to have been tampered with suggested strongly it could very well be a rigged explosive. A lot ran through my mind on realising this - and got me to wondering just how this boy from the suburbs of Brisbane got to be there on that day in that place dealing with such seriously dangerous stuff!

I reported what I found to our new corporal, who had wisely positioned our sappers at a safe distance, which was a good decision considering his 'rawness'. I then returned to my 'problem' in the hole in the ground. I was somewhat comforted that the surrounding area had been well chewed up by APC tracks, as this meant it was less likely to contain mines laid by the enemy to target anyone working on whatever was in that hole in the ground. So I began to excavate the earth from around the unexploded ordnance. My plan was to expose the topside of the bomb in the hope that

I could identify exactly what it was I was dealing with. I could then remove the earth from the sides leaving the bomb on an 'island' of earth. I would then carefully, very, very carefully, scratch at the underside, grain by grain, to check if it was sitting on a pressure release switch. If it was, this meant the slightest movement could set off a massive explosion.

The first phase of my plan took longer than expected, because my 'little mortar bomb' was considerably longer than expected. It turned out to be some kind of artillery shell and this increased the chances of there being an anti-lift device beneath it - and thus increased the danger tenfold! This realisation came to me not as a sudden shock, but as a long, drawn-out one lasting some 30 minutes, as my miniature trench became longer and wider along the top of the shell. Encountering the driving band towards the tail end confirmed it was indeed an artillery shell, a M107HE 155mm artillery shell to be precise, with the "HE" lettering standing for High Explosive.

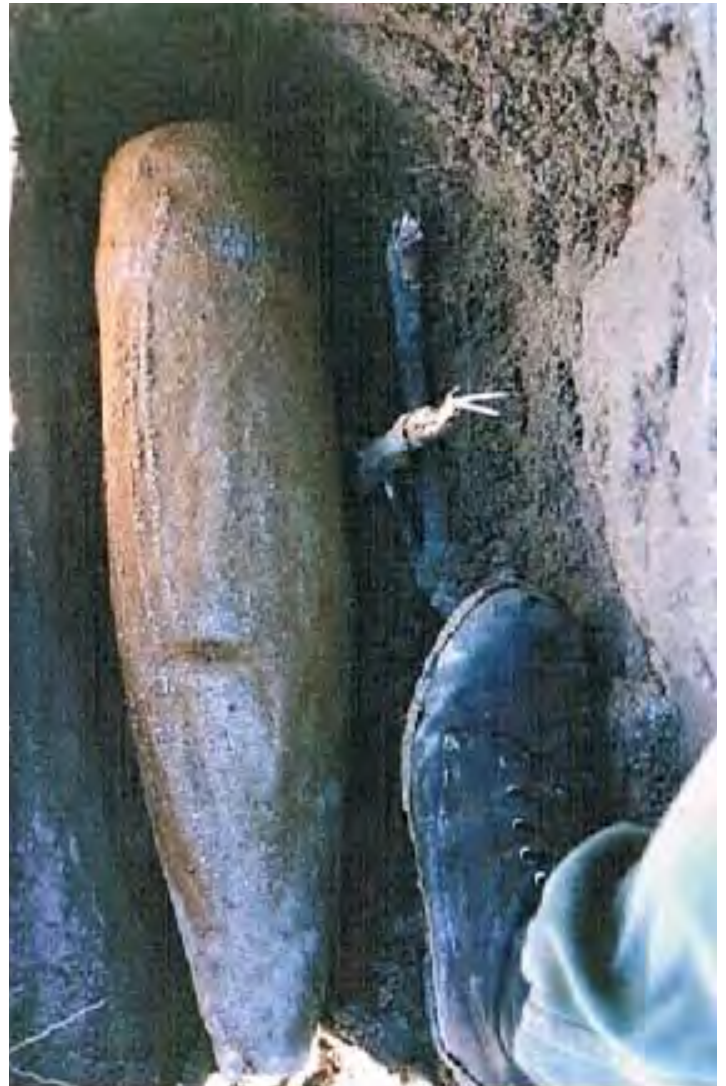
At this point another member of our seven man team approached me - it Terry Smethurst, brand new in country and on his very first combat operation. Terry had been acting as my occasional 'runner,' keeping our brand new corporal abreast of proceedings, who in turn informed the infantry captain, who it must be said, didn't come within cooee of me or my hole once during the entire episode. When I suggested blowing the shell in situ with a slab of C4, he became agitated, quite excited really and shouted at me from 40 metres away. I could hardly hear him.

"What?" I shouted, "I can't hear you."

"I want that thing removed - and that's an order!" He obviously didn't agree with my idea of relatively risk-free disposal, (assuming man and machine would be moved to a safe distance) and his long-distance communication, including what I took to be some kind of threat, told me in no uncertain terms he wasn't going to keep himself informed by giving me a hand with it either. This is the sort of indignant reaction we in the ranks often got when we applied something referred to as, 'Sapper initiative' to solve a problem, particularly one that could kill us, and was usually regarded with varying degrees of horror by anyone including and over the rank of second lieutenant.

I'll never forget the expression on Terry's face, nor his wide open eyes when he arrived at my excavation pit to see a strip of exposed metal running the full length of the shell, which lay less than a metre from his feet. And his only words were; "Bloody hell!"

"That's what I said," I told him, "now go and tell the new corporal what I've found." Terry was off like a shot and within a few minutes engines began to fire up all over the place - they were get-



The big question was whether or not there was an anti-lift device beneath the shell

ting the hell out. I took a pull of tepid water from my plastic bottle and listened to the sounds of a dozen diesel engines diminishing into the distance.

Like many experiences fate visited on me during my tour of duty in South Vietnam, these hours were indelibly etched in my memory and remain as vivid and as real today as it was all those 51 years ago. What began as a kind of 'heart-stopping' episode gradually turned into a par-for-the-course job as time wore on, and to describe it as finally becoming 'ho-hum' would not be too much of an exaggeration. In fact, it became difficult to keep my concentration focused properly as I dug a deeper hole around the shell with my entrenching tool and scrapped away spoonful after spoonful of earth along each side.

Because of the slow progress, Terry had ceased regular reports to our corporal, but he did watch me like a hawk, passing me my entrenching tool and water bottle when needed. On one occasion, when I took the little spade from him I lost concentration and lowered it too quickly, generating a loud clanging sound as it hit the shell. The alarming sound sent Terry dashing off so fast

he was 20 metres away before the reverberations had died down. And I would have been right beside him had I not been sitting on the edge of the hole with my feet at the bottom on each side of the supporting island of earth. I simply sat there, staring at the shell and wondering if I will see the flash of the explosion in that nano-second before being atomised into a pink mist.

This lapse of concentration on my part prompted me to recite a mental 'Our Father' and to tell Terry to go back to our group and stay there. He didn't need to be told twice. On the bright side, we both got a good laugh out of it, and Terry actually returned ten minutes later with one of those looks on his face. "What are you doing here mate?" I asked. He shrugged his shoulders; "I've got to learn to do this sooner or later." Whereupon he continued to watch me as before, scraping and scratching away with my spoon. Terry had been silent for a long time until he eventually asked; "How the hell do you do this kind of stuff Bob?"

"Well Terry, I'm going to die in this country sooner or later, so it doesn't really matter when, does it?" Terry looked at me as if I was joking, then turned to look at something a long way away, giving a reasonable rendition of what the Americans refer to as, the thousand yard stare. "I didn't do any training in this sort of thing," he said. "Neither did I. No one has, you just make it up as you go along. You know, use your initiative."

I wasn't sure whether he believed me or not, until he said; "What if you don't have any initiative?" I responded by telling him it was important to make a start, and that the rest will naturally follow on from there. He was still giving me the same quizzical look though, probably wondering if I believed my own advice or not.

"Look Terry, you're a field engineer, that's why we're here and the rest of our blokes are out there a hundred metres away sitting behind something made of steel," I said. "But their time in the sun will come – ours is now, we all have our jobs to do. Field Engineers got the short straw that's all."

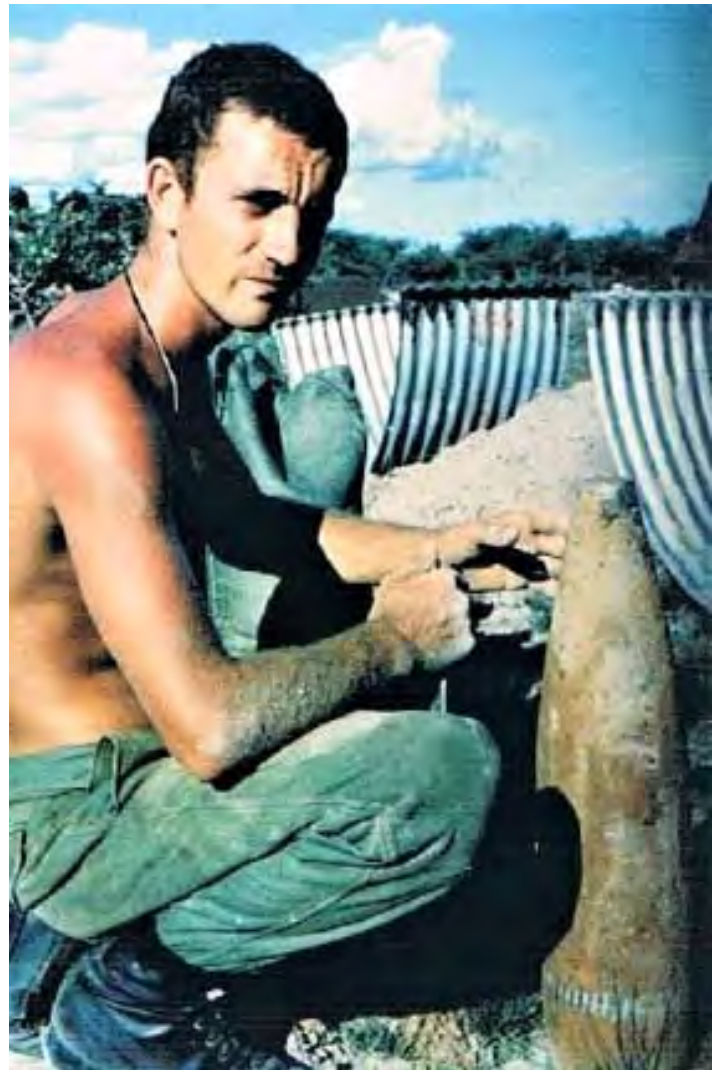
"I should have been a cook!" responded Terry. "You'd be a terrible cook mate, you'd burn everything." There followed a long silence as we both thought about the various things we'd both said.

Four and a half hours after I first arrived at the 'suspicious item' I lifted the shell off its island and placed it upright beside the hole.

"I'm glad that's over, it's thirsty work." He passed my water bottle. I was glad it was over, and so was Terry by the look on his face as he observed the shell standing there in all its ominous glory.

"It gets easier as you go along Terry," I said. "Just be careful where you walk around these things though, there could be more of them in the immediate area. The VC are experts at this stuff."

"Right," he said, nodding and casting his eyes



Bob finally gets the M107HE 155mm artillery shell out of the hole and declares it safe and sound

around at the chewed-up ground before asking me whether I was sure all this stuff got easier. "Yes," I replied. "But there's a secret to it though. Firstly, no one is going to force you to do this kind of stuff, so if it's not for you, ask for a transfer. But if you decide to stay though, you've got to believe, and I mean really believe, that you're already dead. Tunnel rat casualty rates are ridiculously high, so it's not too hard to believe."

He gave me an incredulous look as he shook his head from side to side. "Once you accept you're a dead man walking the job gets much easier," I continued. "It even becomes a challenge. Nothing to do with the army, it's a personal thing."

He did another rendition of the thousand yard stare while I swallowed another mouthful of warm, foul-tasting water before telling asking him to go and inform the new corporal that everyone can relax now. I watched Terry walk away, still shaking his head. A few minutes later I heard the faint sound of clapping. It was coming from beyond the evacuated area around us, someone shouted. "Three cheers - for the Engineers!" Then the diesel engines roared into life again.

Happy snaps from our recent trip back to Vietnam - it was a ripper

There were 65 of us on our trip back to Vietnam last November, with the group comprising Four current serving Sappers, 47 Vietnam Veterans including 42 Tunnel Rats, plus 14 sons and mates of Tunnel Rats. It was an exceptional tour, with all of the 'tour regulars' saying it was the best ever.

A big part of the magic was that we all bonded from day one, creating a great atmosphere and a perfect platform for the wicked Sapper sense of humour to come to the fore - and it did, big time. A contributing factor to this was that our 'designated boozier' was within the hotel we were staying at. This meant we all gathered together at the end of each day's tour activity, sharing the experience and the incredible humour.

The big highlight as always was our ceremony at the old 1FD SQN HQ area where we hold a remembrance ceremony and place individual wreaths for all

36 of our Tunnel Rat comrades Killed in Action in Vietnam.

"This is incredible mate - I should have come back years ago!"

Another major highlight was our regular activity of visiting mine incident sites and having presentations on site by men who were involved in that mine incident, and in many cases wounded in the incident. It is living history to see these presentations, and they are remarkably healing for both the presenter and the Veteran listeners.

Again we met with our former enemy, in this case, with three former VC (two men and one woman) who had worked at lifting mines from the Barrier Mine-

field layed by Australian Sappers in 1967. We were free to ask any questions we liked and the answers were candid and often framed in good humour. You have to admit they were very brave to carry out their task, knowing there were anti-lift devices under the majority of the mines.

The food was phenomenal, the beers were crazy cheap and the Vietnamese people everywhere were welcoming and friendly - even our old enemy!

On this tour, as on all past tours, there were Veterans with us who were back in Vietnam for the first time. They were initially apprehensive, but by day three they were all declaring; "I should have come back years ago!"

This was our seventh official Tunnel Rats tour and as long as we keep getting such a great response and we keep having such a great time, we'll just keep doing it and making it even better each time.



The mob (all 65 of us) at the former site of 1 FD SQN HQ Nui Dat after our ceremony placing 36 wreaths at The Rock for our 36 fallen Tunnel Rats



The weird world of the mangroves on our visit to the restored VC camp in the Rung Sat secret zone



The Tunnel Rats tour group took over the ferry boat for our journey from Saigon to Vungers



Our tour Piper Ross Brewer trying to look cool - despite the fact he's wearing a skirt



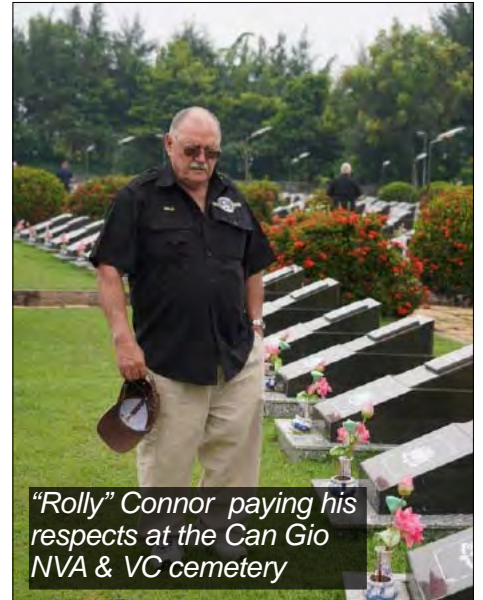
Top Sapper of The Corps, CPL Matthew Sullivan, 3 CER (left) and Top Trainer at SME, SGT Tom Vallas, at our Nui Dat ceremony.



"Smokey" Craven showing off his wounds from this tour



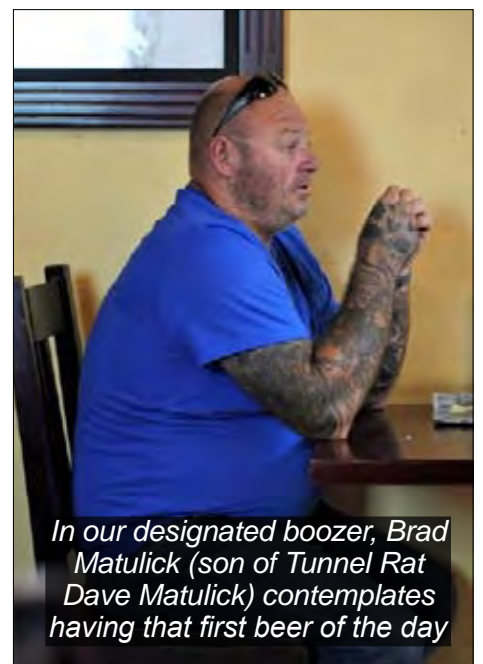
Peter Thorp MID, TP Commander 3TP 69/70 giving his compelling presentation on the devastating mine incidents on 28/02/70 during Operation Hammersley



"Rolly" Connor paying his respects at the Can Gio NVA & VC cemetery



Two absolute characters, Shane and Paul Gough, the rascal sons of Greg Gough



In our designated boozier, Brad Matulick (son of Tunnel Rat Dave Matulick) contemplates having that first beer of the day



Alan Whiteley emerges from the Cu Chi Tunnels alive and with that wided eyed look of WTF!!!



Old habits linger - Sapper legend "Grumpy" Foster checks for mines on the pathway into a restored VC base camp in the Rung Sat secret zone



Graeme Pengelly & Grahame Fletcher doing a "Colonel Kurtz" heading up-river to set up camp and restore the Apocalypse



Tour members being welcomed to Saigon L to R: Bob Ottery, Wayne Hynson, Ben Ottery, SGT Tom Vallas, Nick Vallas, Alan Whiteley & Steven Relf



Gary McClintock wondering where his sunglasses are!



Our Welcome Dinner above the 'Designated Boozier' in Saigon

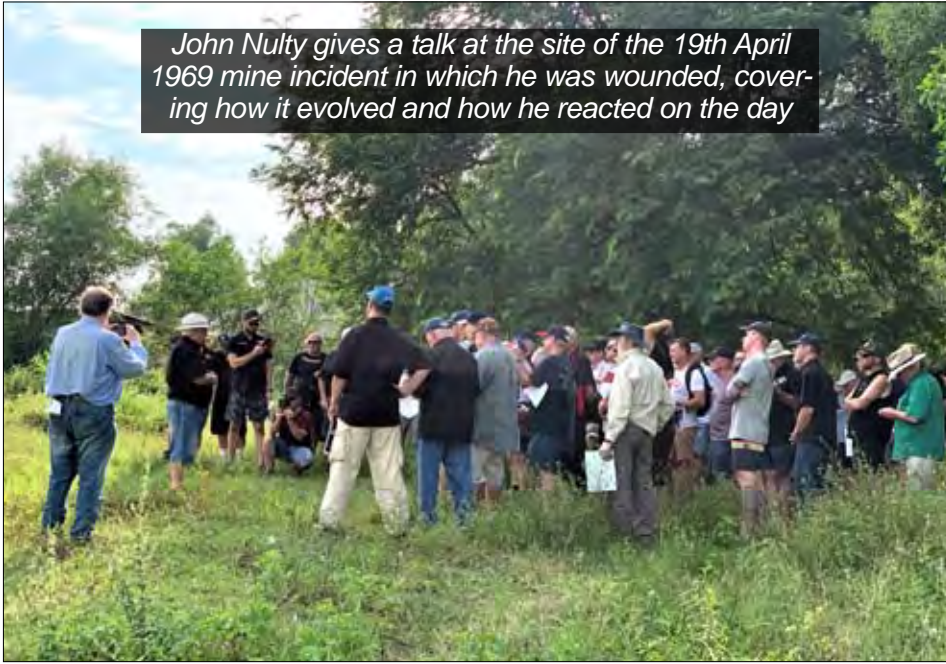


ABOVE PHOTOS: (1) Key roles in our Nui Dat remembrance ceremony; John Davey as Chaplain, COL David Cowper as MC and SGT Tom Vallas reading The Ode. (2) Greg Gough wondering what mayhem his two sons will create over the rest of the tour. (3) Tour 'Sheriff' Keith Kermode concocting charges for his hilarious disciplinary hearings during our morning briefings. (4) CPL Matthew Sullivan after placing a wreath at Long Tan on behalf of his unit, 3CER. (5) Jim Marett with an NVA Veteran who insisted on holding his hand for the photo!



Our BBQ among the rubber trees near the old HQ area of 1 Field Squadron. A somewhat posher set-up than the Troop BBQs we enjoyed during the war!

John Nulty gives a talk at the site of the 19th April 1969 mine incident in which he was wounded, covering how it evolved and how he reacted on the day



Our tour organiser Mr. Ha and our Piper Ross Brewer



At the site of the mine incident in which they were both wounded on March 23rd 1970, Grumpy Foster and Rolly Conner talk of what took place that day



Some of the lads went on a side trip to the Mekong Delta



Bob Laird gives a presentation at the site of the mine incident in which he was wounded on 22nd May 1969



Tunnel Rat Bernie Ladyman became best mates with Nguyen Dong Chuyen, an NVA Veteran and the father of our tour organiser Mr. Ha



HEADS UP!

"IT'S ON AGAIN IN
EARLY MARCH NEXT YEAR. START
WORKING ON YOUR LEAVE PASS AND
START SAVING YOUR PENNIES. LOOK
FOR FULL DETAILS IN THE NEXT
ISSUE OF HOLDFAST."



THE NEXT TUNNEL RATS TOUR TO
VIETNAM IS IN EARLY MARCH 2021

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 RIP Sapper
 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 RIP Sapper
 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 Bellinger 0407952670
 Ray Burton 08 8268 4575
 Ron Carroll 0408884327
 Joe Cazey 07 3710 8102
 Allan S Coleman RIP Sapper
 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
 Sandy Sempel 0419411887
 Trevor Shelley 0419784954
 Ron Stibble 0447028986
 "Jethro" Thompson 0732168906
 Ross Tulloh 0418223345
 Graham Zalewska-Moon
 (Poland phone: 48-815177391)

1 Troop (1967-68)

Billy Adams 03 5974 2916
 Henry Baggaley 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 RIP Sapper
 Norm Hitchcock (Canada)
 1-250-2455137
 Ray Kenny RIP Sapper
 Harry Klopoc 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)

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 RIP Sapper
 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 McClennan 07 3267 6907
 Noel McDuffie RIP Sapper
 Bob McKinnon 07 3267 0310
 Peter Matthews RIP Sapper
 Warren Morrow 0418427947
 Dennis Quick 0439786168
 Mick Shannon 08 8552 1746
 Bob Sweeney 08 9248 4432
 "Taffy" Williams 0423628319

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 0401344911
 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 RIP Sapper
 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 RIP Sapper
 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 RIP Sapper
 Bruce Breddin 0418766759
 Norm Cairns 0498765425
 Kerry Caghey 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 Dune 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 RIP Sapper
 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 RIP Sapper
 Brian Wakefield 0427350713
 Kevin White 02 8517 3278
 David Wilson 0401726090

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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FROM THE VIETNAM TUNNEL RATS ASSOCIATION