



PARATUS

1ST ARMOURED
REGIMENT
ASSOCIATION INC.



The 1st Armoured Regiment has won the inaugural Coral-Balmoral Cup, which was held at the School of Armour in Puckapunyal. All of the Regiments within the Australian Armoured Corps sent their best Cavalry and Tank crews to compete against one another in a variety of challenges to prove who the best team was. The 1st Armoured Regiment walked away with a clean sweep, winning both the Cavalry and Tank competitions. Congratulations to the Crews and thanks to the School of Armour for holding such a great competition. Paratus!

Theatres of Operation

Japan

Vietnam - Battle Honours

- Coral - Balmoral
- Hat Dich
- Binh Ba

Rhodesia

Cambodia

East Timor

Iraq

Solomon Islands

Afghanistan

Our Soldiers Today

(Click on)

<http://armynews.realviewdigital.com/#folio=1>

Newsletter Contributions

The views and comments expressed in this Newsletter are those of the individual contributor and not necessarily endorsed by the current committee.

Whilst every care regarding all information is exercised, it should not necessarily be taken as absolute historical fact.



In this Issue

ISSN 2208-2433 (Online)

- Editor's Desk - Name change
- 2018/19 Committee
- President's Report
- 2019 Annual General Meeting
- Regimental awards
- Regiment's Birthday celebrations
- Tolmie camping trip – VIC
- Regimental Museum
- Binh Ba certificates
- He's my best mate
- Honour Roll
- C Sqn (1971) Reunion
- 1ARA - birthday lunch
- NSW Branch lunch
- UCG – George Hulse
- Anzac Spirit

From the Editor's desk

Peter Lukeis

Newsletter Name Change

You will have noticed that the front cover of this edition, number 82 has changed to reflect the change of our Newsletter's name.

There have been discussions over the last couple of years regarding the name of our Newsletter.

It was the original name decided on by the founders of the Association, mainly Lou Walker OAM and John Brooker OAM.

When I spoke to them initially around 3 years ago about a name change they stated that they were not opposed to change if it was for the right reasons.

Times have changed over the ensuing years and the **Centurion** no longer represents all of the fighting vehicles that have become part of the 1st Armoured Regiment along with the crews that have manned them.

The current committee decided at our Committee meeting on Wednesday 14th August 2019 that it is time to move on and appeal to the entire membership of our Association by changing the Newsletter's name to one that represents the entire past and present membership to that of **Paratus**.

Paratus is a Latin word meaning "Prepared," which is of course used as the official motto of the 1st Armoured Regiment and we are honoured that the Regiment has agreed to and supports the change of name of our Newsletter.

Vietnam Veteran's Walk A must see - High St, Seymour VIC 3660

The Vietnam Veterans Commemorative Walk is the only one of its kind in Australia dedicated to Vietnam Veterans. The Walk has been created using symbolic elements of Vietnam and over 60,000 names of every serviceman and servicewoman who served in the conflict are listed.

The Commemorative Walk commemorates the service of all who played their part in what turned out to be a tumultuous part of Australia's history. It does, in the interpretive centre, give an accurate history of the times prior to military commitment, the period of our involvement and the aftermath.

The Walk is a meandering red earth path set in native trees and grasses that resemble rubber trees and rice paddies. These two plants are synonymous with Vietnam.

The centre piece of this Walk is the wall, made up of panels of DigiGlass with the name of every Serviceman and Woman who served, in their various capacities in that conflict. The names are separated only by the Service in which they served and are in alphabetical order. The plinths on which the panels stand have holes for you to place Poppies; the effect is to have a field of Poppies under the names. Behind the names is the picture story of the Vietnam conflict.

By all means find the names of loved ones by standing close to the Wall, but also draw back 5 or so metres and look at the pictures behind the names. There is the story of Vietnam in photos, mainly supplied by Veterans.

There are areas of contemplation for people to use along the length of this walk.

There are real parts of history with a Centurion tank, a Huey helicopter, artillery pieces and an M1A1 APC. There are also places to just sit and peacefully reflect.

The long commemoration wall is a wonderful tribute. Make sure you notice the background images superimposed over the names of the 60,267 service personnel and 11 tracker dogs who served in South Vietnam. Panel number 73 has the tracker dogs listed. Find the names of family and friends which you know who served in the war. There is unlikely to be many dry eyes as you learn what they had to endure to protect our liberties.



comms@paratus.org.au



Edie Tor points to name on Wall



Committee 2018/2019

ABN 16930055791
PO Box 301, Mentone. VIC 3194
secretary@paratus.org.au

PATRON

MAJGEN Craig Orme DSC, AM, CSC, (Retd)

A special welcome to our new Tassy Rep, Jim Semmens and many thanks to Jim Soul for his past service.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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Links to Web Sites and Face Book Pages

Web Sites

1st ARMoured REGIMENT ASSOCIATION INC.
www.paratus.org.au

RAAC CORPORATION
www.raaccorpltd.org.au

ROYAL TANK REGIMENT ASSOCIATION
www.royaltankregiment.com

Facebook Pages

1st ARMD REGT ASSOC MEMBERS ONLY
www.facebook.com/groups/112757492512931/

1st ARMD REGT SOCIAL PAGE
www.facebook.com/groups/106848019339045/

1ST ARMoured REGIMENT FACEBOOK
www.facebook.com/1ArmdRegt/



President's Report

Keith (Mel) Meloncelli

It is just over 13 months since members of the current Management Committee were elected. And what a busy 13 months we have had. The Secretary, in a recent report wrote that he believed we had kicked a number of goals and believed that there were still many goals to kick. We have continued 'on song' and believe that we have a good story to tell.

I thought that we should outline our achievements for the last 13 months as we run up to the AGM planned for October 12 in Broadford. I would like to individually address several of our more significant achievements.

Management Committee Meetings - there have been nine (9) meetings of the management Committee since 14 July 2018 and another is planned for the middle of September as we lead up to the AGM. The Constitution requires that we have a minimum of just (3) meetings per year! However, we realised shortly after being elected that we had much to do and we needed to come together more often to address matters of importance.

Membership - When we took over the wheel, there were around 379 members. There had been a loss of around 200 members over the previous two years. We currently have 476, which is an increase of approximately one hundred. However, we have had an increase of around 122 members made up of 54 new members and renewal of 68 lapsed members from 2017/18. But regrettably 25 of our members who were due to renew on 1 February have failed to do so. Around five (5) or six (6) of these indicated that they did not wish to renew, and the remainder have not replied or actioned their renewals. The Secretary is of the belief that most of these did not provide us with updated snail mail or email addresses. We will continue to try and track these members down.

Policies and Procedures - The following Policies and Procedures have been approved and implemented:

- Code of Conduct for the Internet
- Authority to Approve Financial Transactions
- Delegations Policy and Procedures
- Policy and Procedures for Funerals, Commemorative Services and Vale Notices
- Health and Welfare Agencies and Organisations
- Management of Association Correspondence
- Policy and Procedures for Life Membership
- Policy for Debit Cards and Charge Accounts
- Roles and Responsibilities for all Management Committee Members

We have not as yet included these changes or developments in the Association By-Laws. However, implementing these policies and procedures has enabled the Management Committee to test their efficacy and make amendments as we go. In due course all Policies and Procedures are to be included in a comprehensive re-write of Association By-Laws.

Other Significant Outcomes – as follows:

- The Communications Manager has moved Association Management Committee members (albeit with some minimal resistance) to adopt standards for the use of badging, letterheads, signature blocks, etc. for all outwards correspondence as well as other Association documents
- A very successful Association Reunion was conducted in Adelaide under the guidance of the Junior Vice-President (Mark Reid). Mark and his Committee are publicly thanked for their efforts under considerable constraints
- Lapel badges – designed by the Communications Manager, approved by the Committee, production organised by the Communications Manager and distributed to all members by the Secretary. Very well regarded and worn with pride by many members of the Association
- Minutes – all minutes from Management Committee meetings are distributed as soon as possible by email. Physical copies are distributed to non-email members on a regular basis consistent with the need to contain postage costs
- Centurion ARN 169005 – yes it belongs to the Association and is now included in the books of account. A Memorandum of Understanding was finalised with the Tank Museum for the long-term loan of the tank to the Museum. In addition, Terms of Reference were completed and formally signed appointing a Board of Management for ARN 169005. This esteemed group (Branagan, Blackwell, Brooker and Icky Smith) will ensure the upkeep of this very valuable asset
- Expression of Interest and Terms of Reference have been issued for the 2021 Association Reunion. This will ensure that the Management Committee oversees the administrative arrangements as well as providing cover for individual members of the Reunion Committee
- Large Regimental flags have been acquired and are available for use as coffins palls

- The Communications Manager pursued (with vigor) the concept of presenting framed Certificates acknowledging the involvement of a number of members of the Association in the Battle of Binh Ba in 1969. This battle was one of the most significant fought by the Australian Forces during the Vietnam War

Bumpy Ride

Although we – that is the Management Committee – believe we had a good year, it was not without some bumps in the road. However, these have been overcome and we believe that we have established a solid foundation on which we can build over the next twelve months.

Where to from Here

I am confident that members of the current Management Committee will nominate for their respective positions at the next AGM. With the support of the membership I am very hopeful that all members will be re-elected so that the Management Committee may continue to shape the Association for the future. Our aims and objectives must include recruitment of a much younger age group, greater involvement with our RAEME brothers as well as with other corps that have served and continue to serve with the Regiment. There are still several administrative objectives – Communication Strategy and By-Laws – that we need to address, but we are much closer to these than we were some months ago.

I would ask all Members of the Association to look critically at what we have achieved and if you are willing to place your trust in us, then send your proxies to the Secretary or to another Committee Member who you know will be at the AGM. I would like to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to all the members of our Committee for their time and efforts in helping to steer the Association in the right direction. I specifically wish to commend the Secretary for his continued work in making the Association a more effective and constitutionally stronger association for all members. We would not be where we are without his continued work.

In closing, I hope as many members as possible can attend or at least provide their proxy vote for the upcoming AGM. We are an association of currently 476 members, and we all need to have our say either through agenda items or voting on the day. I hope all of you continue to travel well.

Cheers

Keith Meloncelli



President



Report from the Secretary - Russ James

P: Secretary, 1st Armoured Regiment Association Inc.

PO Box 301, Mentone. VIC 3194

secretary@paratus.org.au

Please note new address above

B: Bendigo Bank

1st Armoured Regiment Association Inc.

BSB: 633-000 Account: 161498159



Membership Report

Current Membership = 476 (15 August 2019). This is an increase of 101 since July 2018 and includes renewals of 68 lapsed members from 2017 and 2018, 54 new members and a loss of 21 members who did not renew in 2019. Apart from two (2) or three (3) members who indicated that they would resign, it is not known whether the remainder received either their renewal notices (which were sent by snail mail) or email reminders.

See following – important notice for AGM



Unidentified Membership Fees

If you paid your membership fees during 2018 and did not receive a new membership card or you have stopped receiving Association emails and newsletters, please contact the Secretary at secretary@paratus.org.au

IMPORTANT

Contact Details – as indicated in the last newsletter it is important that our membership contact details are up to date. If in doubt, please advise the Secretary at secretary@paratus.org.au if you have changed your address, your phone numbers or your email address/s in the last couple of years!

Notice for 1st Armoured Regiment Association 2019 AGM



Date and Time: 12 October 2019, 1030 hours

Location: Broadford RSL, 27 Murchison Street, Broadford, Victoria, 3658

1ST ARMOURD
ASSOCIATION INC.

Duration: Two (2) to three (3) hours

Technical: It is anticipated that ZOOM Technology is to be used to enable Association members to attend the AGM electronically (although ZOOM is regularly used for Management Committee meetings, the communications capacity of the Broadford RSL is unknown, and will remain so until testing has been undertaken. The outcome is dependent on the wireless [Wi-Fi] capability at the RSL as well as the bandwidth available to the external environment.)
If ZOOM is used, it will be necessary for members wishing to attend the AGM 'electronically' to register with the Secretary so that the ZOOM application is installed on member's laptops/PCs and users have correctly setup the ZOOM application.

Refreshments: Tea and Coffee from 1015 hours
Light lunch/snacks from 1300 hours
Bar – from 1300 hours (end of Meeting) – drinks at expense of members

Nominations: Nominations for all positions are now open and all financial members may nominate for any of the designated positions of, **President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Communications Manager and Special Projects**. In Addition **State reps** and other **Committee** positions, of which additional numbers are yet to be determined, will also be decided.
Nominations must be supported by two other financial members of the Association. Nomination documentation may be submitted via email. If there are insufficient nominations, the President may call for nominations from those present at the AGM.

Proxies: Members are advised that they may appoint proxies. It should be noted, that the person appointed must attend the AGM and proxies provided to one person may not be passed to another person. Proxies must be submitted to the Secretary by either email or post and must be delivered 24 hours before the commencement of the AGM. Proxies may also be handed physically to the President prior to the commencement of the AGM. However, this must be completed prior to the President declaring the meeting open.
The Proxy Form to be used is to be sent to all members via email or by post to those who do not have email.



The Corps best Cavalry Crew. Congratulations CPL Hoffman, LCPL Griffiths, and TPR Signoriello!



The Corps best Armoured Crews from across the country. Well done to all who competed and thanks to the School of Armour for hosting and organising. A great competition!



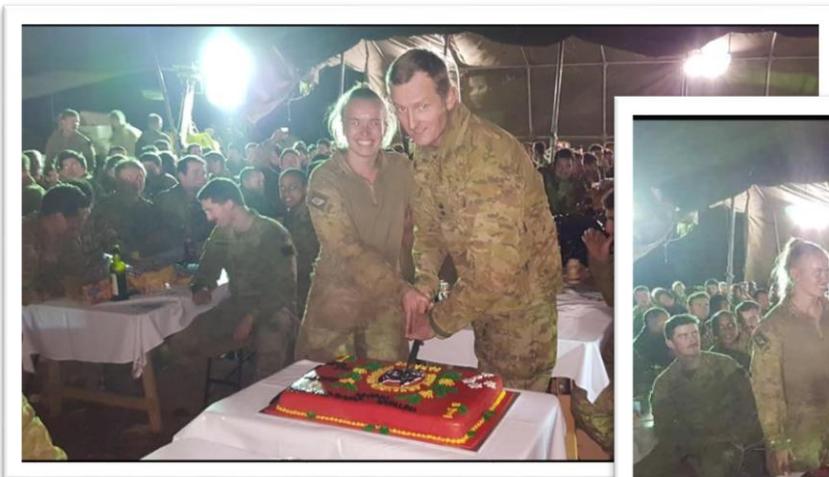
The best Tank Crew in the Corps! Congratulations CPL Johnston, TPR Green, TPR Sharp and TPR Normington!



Commander 1 Brigade, Brigadier Matthew Pearce presents the First Clasp to the Defence Long Service Medal to two members of the Regiment, recognising twenty years of service in the ADF. The Regiment is proud to congratulate OC B Squadron, Major Anthony Purdy, and the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel John Holloway on this outstanding achievement, as well as their continued service to the Regiment, the Army and the ADF.



The Regiment enjoyed a nice piece of cake to celebrate its birthday whilst in the field prior to EX TS19



The Regiment has the opportunity to take a tactical pause between exercises with a Battlegroup dinner in the field!
This was a well-deserved break before they dive into Talisman Sabre 19.

Warning Order!!!



GRAND FINAL WEEKEND CAMPING

The annual boy's camping trip will be again held over the Grand Final weekend **27th September till 29TH September**. This year it will be held at Tolmie showgrounds just 22km out of Mansfield. The camping grounds have toilets, showers & a rec hut if the weather gets really bad.

There will be a big esky & ice to keep your drinks cold, but if you wish to bring your own, you are welcome to. There will be a campfire to sit around & gas BBQ for the cooking of the food. Snacks will also be provided. So, all you need to bring is drinks, chair, sleeping gear, cup & eating utensils.

I'm planning to arrive in Mansfield around 11:00 on the Friday to purchase the groceries so would appreciate a bit of help with that. Also, lunch if anyone wants to meet up to have a bite. Then head up to Tolmie around 13:00.

Those of you that have attended previous camping trips know that it is a good weekend, & it's a great way for mates to catch up for a boy's weekend away. So, feel free to bring your son or a mate along if you wish.

Please email or call me if you are attending on the number listed below, please do not just rock up on the weekend as we need to know numbers that are attending for catering.



Easy access for all vehicles so bring your caravan, camper trailer, tent, swag, or sleep in your car. The cost of the weekend will be \$70 with payment on arrival. This is broken down to \$20 camping fee for the use of the facilities at the showgrounds, & \$50 for all the food over the weekend. Saturday night will be conducted as a dining in night with the main meal consisting of either beef on a spit, or a camp oven roast beef with vegetables.



Iain Reynolds
State Rep VIC
0411 066 704
vicrep@paratus.org.au

1ST ARMoured
REGIMENT
ASSOCIATION INC.



Thanks to MR Brooker OAM for delivering his STH Vietnam presentation to ROBC Tank and SI Tactics Wing.

MILITARY DISCIPLINE AS IT SHOULD BE.

Harsh but fair

SIR - Major Robert Erith's memories of the late Major Eric Garbutt (Letters May 20) remind me of my own training at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, in the late Eighties.

My platoon colour sergeant was an inspirational Coldstream Guardsman called David Gajda. On one particular barrack room inspection, he found a dead fly in my locker. This resulted in two punishment inspections: the first for having a pet, and the second for not feeding it.

Edward Hamilton-Russell
Bulmer, Suffolk



NEW REGIMENTAL MUSEUM!!

The 1st Armoured Regiment is currently planning to establish a regimental museum at RAAF Base Edinburgh, SA in order to showcase items of significance in the unit's history to visitors and serving members alike.



How can you help?

- The Regiment has extended an invitation to the Association to submit suggestions with regards to items to be displayed, and any other matters deemed pertinent
- The museum is currently in the concept design phase
- Over the coming months, a vetting process of items to be displayed will take place, followed by the installation of display cases, and the generation of explanatory plaques for items
- The museum is to be located in the Regimental compound at RAAF Edinburgh, SA
- The unit would be proud to display any outstanding items of memorabilia currently held in private collections among Association members.



Any suggestions or kind offers from Association members, please direct to the Secretary.

E: secretary@paratus.org.au

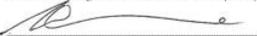
**P: Secretary, 1st Armoured Regiment Association Inc.
PO Box 301, Mentone. VIC 3194**

The Battle of Binh Ba - Certificate of recognition

Sent to all 16 veterans from our Association in a framed version for the 50th Anniversary on 1st June 2019

The Battle of Binh Ba

MAJGEN Craig Orme DSC, AM, CSC, (Retd)



Patron of the 1st Armoured Regiment
Association Incorporated



BE IT KNOWN that as a member of our Association we are proud to recognise and thank you for your involvement in the Battle of Binh Ba, while serving in B Squadron, 1st Armoured Regiment, in one of the most significant battles involving Australian forces during the Vietnam War.

to

David Hay

The awarding of this Certificate was ratified at our full committee meeting on the 23rd of February 2019 where it was unanimously passed that we should commemorate and thank our veterans of the battle by presenting them with this Certificate which can be displayed with pride.

Citation for extraordinary action in the Battle of Binh Ba, Phuoc Tuy Province, South Vietnam from 6th to 8th June, during operation Hammer, which ranks as one of the major Australian victories of the war.

Congratulations from all members of the committee.

Keith Meloncelli



1st June 2019

Dear Peter,

I was both surprised and enormously grateful this morning to receive a certificate from the Association in recognition of involvement in the Battle of Binh Ba, 50 years ago this month. I understand the Committee resolved to award certificates to all Association members who were involved in the action whilst serving with B Squadron, 1st Armoured Regiment.

Could I ask you to please pass on my thanks to all members of the Committee for this kind and thoughtful gesture. It was certainly not by choice, but more serendipitous chance, that we found ourselves embroiled in the action at Binh Ba. None of us realised at the time the significant place it would assume in the history of the Regiment. We were simply doing the job we had been trained to do, as did every member of the Regiment on every day they served in Vietnam.

The certificate will take pride of place in my office. It is a rewarding thing to be recognised by your peers.

Thank you.

With kind regards,

David Hay

PETER LUKEIS,
COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER,
1ST ARMD REG. ASSOCIATION.

Dear Peter, I have received the Framed certificate of the 50th. Anniversary of Binh Ba. in A.I. Condition. I want to thank you personally, and please pass on my thanks to the other Committee members for thinking of + remembering those who took part in the Battle.

Yours Sincerely,
Kevin Joubert.

Peter.

Sincerely appreciated the thought and respect given in providing a Commemorative Certificate of 1stAR involvement in the Battle at Binh Ba on the 6th June 1969.

In addition to this Certificate the Commemorative Ceremony and Last Post played out in Canberra on the 50th anniversary was extremely well done and a great tribute to those who were there and especially for the family of National serviceman Pte Wayne Teeling 5RAR (Lest We Forget), the only Australian who paid the supreme sacrifice that memorable day.

Again, thanks to you and 1st AR Association for this treasured certificate.

Sincerely
Kingsley McGuire.

I would like to thank you for the citation for the Battle of Binh Ba. It came as a complete surprise and much appreciated.

Once again thank you very much.

Regards Bill Morris. (ex-driver of 22C on the day.)

Hello Peter,

Yesterday I was absolutely delighted to receive in the mail My Battle of Binh Ba Certificate authorised and presented by the Committee of the 1st Armoured Regiment Association Inc.

The concept is excellent and I am sure, around the country, former members of B Squadron will be as touched and delighted as I am to receive their Certificates.

Please pass on my sincere thanks to the Committee and, indeed, to Craig Orme, the Patron.

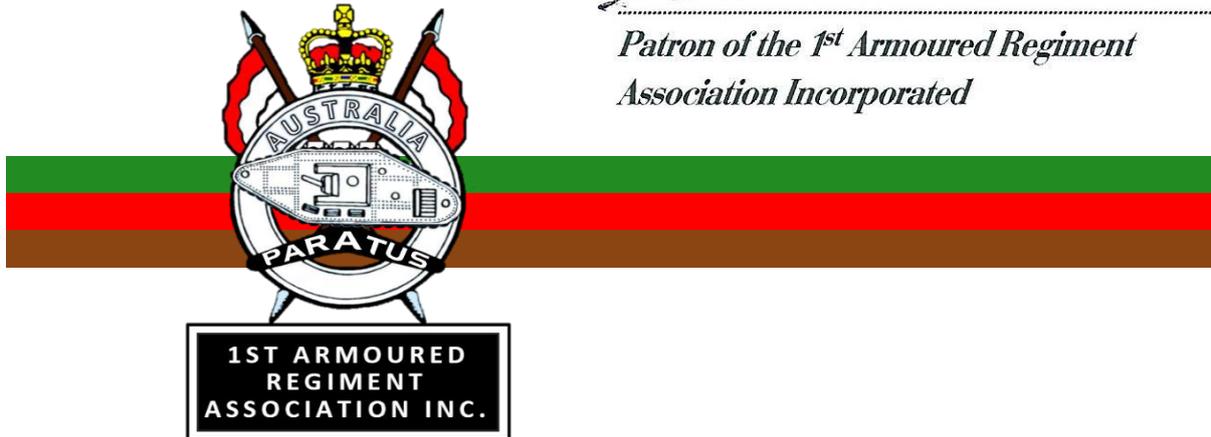
Colin Toll

The Battle of Binh Ba

MAJGEN Craig Orme DSC, AM, CSC, (Retd)



*Patron of the 1st Armoured Regiment
Association Incorporated*



BE IT KNOWN that as a member of our Association we are proud to recognise and thank you for your involvement in the Battle of Binh Ba, while serving in B Squadron, 1st Armoured Regiment, in one of the most significant battles involving Australian forces during the Vietnam War.

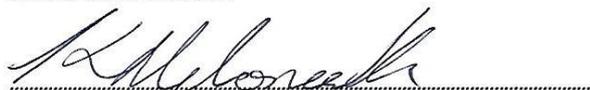
Recipient

The awarding of this Certificate was ratified at our full committee meeting on the 28th of February 2019 where it was unanimously passed that we should commemorate and thank our veterans of the battle by presenting them with this Certificate which can be displayed with pride.

Citation for extraordinary action in the Battle of Binh Ba, Phouc Tuy Province, South Vietnam from 6th to 8th June, during operation Hammer, which ranks as one of the major Australian victories of the war.

Congratulations from all members of the committee.

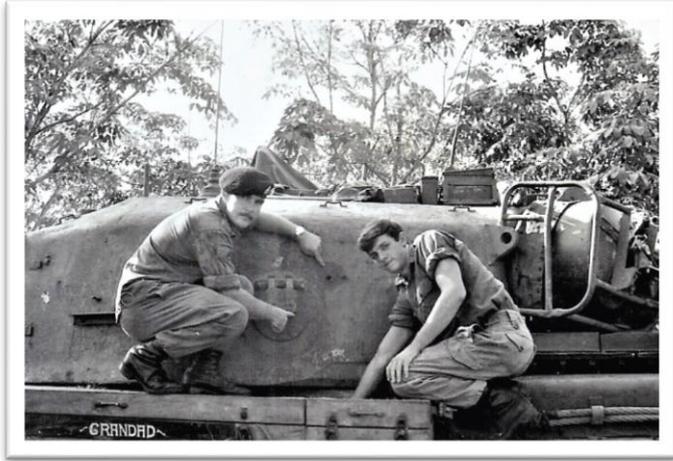
Keith Meloncelli



1st June 2019

'He's my best mate'

AWM - 18 June 2019 by Claire Hunter



Troopers Roy Dodd and Ray Collins inspect the RPG damage to their Centurion tank 21C after the battle of Binh Ba, June 1969. Photo: Courtesy Ray Collins

Roy Dodd and Ray Collins are the best of friends. "We were two blokes in the wrong place at the wrong time," Dodd said. "But he's my best mate ... my very best friend in the world... We don't shake hands, we hug, and that's what we do."

Their unbreakable bond was forged in Vietnam when they served together in the same tank crew during the battle of Binh Ba.

"Ray was the driver and I was the gunner," Dodd said. "When you have to go through something like this in your life together, you are suddenly best friends in the world, and we are still, 50 years on."

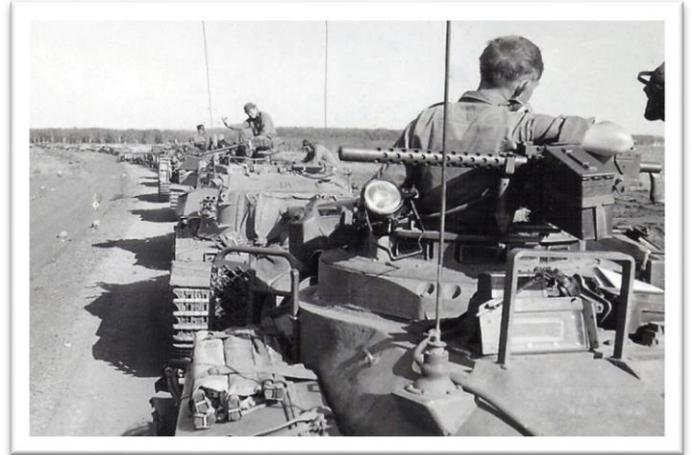


Roy Dodd and Ray Collins with their photograph at the Memorial. Photo: Courtesy Ray Collins

Dodd and Collins were in Canberra to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the battle and attend a Last Post Ceremony at the Australian War Memorial.

They were honoured to discover their photograph on display at the Memorial as part of a special photographic exhibition marking the anniversary. 'Grandad' was painted on the side of their tank for their crew commander, Corporal Geoffrey Bennett, who was in his 30s at the time.

"It's life-changing when something like that happens to you," Dodd said. "It's the afternoon after we got shot up ... They came around and said to me, 'We need to take this tank out again; do you want to come,' and I said, 'No thanks, I'm fine.' I'd been out yesterday."



On the move in 1968. Sergeant Phil Reeves waving. Photo: Courtesy Ray Collins



Searching in the jungle. Photo: Courtesy Ray Collins

On the morning of 6 June 1969, an Australian Centurion tank and an armoured recovery vehicle were heading past the village of Binh Ba, less than 10 kilometres north of the Australian Task Force Base at Nui Dat, when the tank was struck by a rocket propelled grenade.

A small South Vietnamese force was sent in to investigate, but when they were stopped by heavy fire, they requested Australian support.

Within hours, Dodd and Collins were on their way to Binh Ba as part of a ready reaction force and civilians were being evacuated from the village in readiness for Operation Hammer.

"We expected nothing," Dodd said. "We'd done this before, and when we got down to Binh Ba we didn't expect anyone would be there. But they were there, and ... they were very good professional North Vietnamese soldiers – not just the local boys – and they came and stayed for a fight and wanted to get stuck in."



Damage at Binh Ba. Photo: Roger Foote

What followed was two days of fierce house-to-house fighting as the Australians attempted to remove the North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong from the village in a battle unlike any other experienced by Australian troops in Vietnam.

“There’s certain things you’ll never forget,” Collins said. “We were lined up to go through the village, and one of the tanks ... went through on his own. A little while later he said we’d better catch up, so we drove in after him for rear protection, and that’s when we got hit, right down one of the lanes in between the huts.”

They had moved rapidly to the west to cut off the enemy as they withdrew, firing at targets on the way, when their tank was struck by an RPG round, which penetrated the turret, severely wounding the crew commander, Corporal Geoffrey Bennett.

“I felt it,” Collins said. “But I just kept going ... It nipped past the radio, and took the radio out, so we had no communication, and then it went through the back of our crew commander’s seat, and because he was crouching in the seat, instead of sitting in it, he didn’t get killed.”



Crew commander Corporal Geoff Bennett. Photo: Courtesy Ray Collins

Luckily, Dodd was shielded by the gun and only suffered slight wounds to his face, but the crew commander was severely wounded and the loader/operator, who suffered shrapnel wounds to his arms and face, was deafened by the noise of the blast.

“[In the photo] we’re pointing at the RPG hole,” Dodd said. “It’s a little thing – you can put your finger in it like this – but inside it all just splashes out.”

“[The operator’s] face was all pockmarked with shrapnel, and they flew him to hospital – no one knows what happened to him; he went home ... and we’ve never seen him since – [but the crew commander] was badly wounded.

“He had a huge hole in his leg ... and he was bleeding everywhere ...

“I thought our gunnery gear was shot because we were going through the village and suddenly my gun started going left, and I thought, ‘We’ll hit one of these huts,’ and then [the crew commander] said, ‘Fire’.

“He’d seen where the guy was [who fired at us] and then it clicked with me and I fired into one of the huts ... He passed out then, but he had this huge hole ... and he was bleeding everywhere.”



Roy Dodd, left, and Corporal Thomlinson. Photo: Courtesy Ray Collins



RPG damage. The rocket damaged the radio and passed through Geoff Bennett’s seat. Photo: Courtesy Ray Collins

Dodd bandaged him as best he could and fought on. “We never thought about it,” Dodd said. “I was too busy looking after the guy who was unconscious. He’d fallen down on me and I was trying to push him off ... so I could help him, and then Ray got out of his thing and came around and lent in, and went, ‘Oh!,’ and helped me.”

The tank turret became jammed by an ammunition box the crew had thrown out earlier, but Dodd continued to fire.

“The gun was stuck,” Dodd said. “We had no radio communications and the commander had passed out ... and I found I could not traverse ... so the gun was aimed at one spot, and I just kept on firing, and the enemy kept on running into the fire.

“Then we run out of ammo and the machine-gun wouldn’t fire ... and it was time to take Geoff Bennett out.”



Inside an Iroquois chopper on the way to Nui Dat. Photo: Courtesy Ray Collins



Rice paddies on the way back to Nui Dat. Photo: Courtesy Ray Collins

Eventually, they were forced to abandon the tank and seek help from one of the other tank crews.

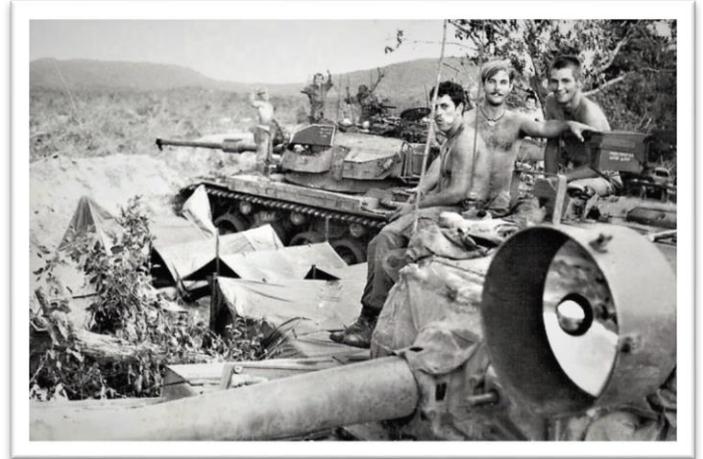
“You just do it,” Collins said. “You didn’t have time to think about it ... Geoff said, ‘Go and tell the crew commander on the other side,’ so I jumped down, and there were shots everywhere, but eventually I got to him, and he came back, and we got a chopper in to take [the crew commander] out.”

Dodd and his mate Collins stayed behind, armed with an SLR and an enemy AK-47.

“They took us out of the battle sitting on the back engine rig of their tank,” Dodd said. “[The enemy] were shooting at us, and then the carrier came over and picked us up,

and we rode around for the rest of it in the back of one of these Armoured Personnel Carriers.”

Years later, Dodd met the man who picked them up. “I came across him and didn’t know,” he said. “We were just talking about Binh Ba and he said, ‘I picked up two tankies and put them in the back of my carrier,’ and I said, ‘I was one of them,’ and we met all those years later.”



Wally Armstrong, Ike Freeman, Rix Thomas, Roy Dodd and John Whitehead. Photo: Courtesy Ray Collins



The Centurion tank. Photo: Courtesy Ray Collins

Today, Dodd and his mate Collins still feel lucky to have survived.

“Yeah,” Collins said quietly. “Lucky to still be around.”

A National Serviceman from Brisbane, Collins was just 21 at the time.

“I was only young,” Collins said. “I was just a boy ... but you just were sort of expecting it in those days ... and you just expected to go.”

His mate Dodd was 23 and had a wife and child at home. He was working in Brisbane and volunteered for two years of National Service in 1968.

He told his wife he had a “cushy job” in Nui Dat so that she wouldn’t worry and wrote to her as often as he could, but he never mentioned what happened at Binh Ba.



Second Lieutenant Brian Sullivan's 1 Troop 1969. Photo: Courtesy Ray Collins



Ray Collins, centre, with John Whitehead and Brian Sullivan. Photo: Courtesy Ray Collins



Checking for mines. Photo: Courtesy Ray Collins

During two days of fighting, the Australians had lost one soldier – Private Wayne Teeling, who was killed in his first action – and 11 wounded. The four tank crews suffered the heaviest casualties.

Their troop commander, Second Lieutenant Brian Sullivan, was awarded a Military Cross for his actions that day. "He was just like one of the boys," Collins said. "And he was terrific. He was a brilliant man. Someone shot [an RPG] at him and the fin cut his back. He saw it coming ... that's how close he was.

"He was a Nasho too, and I tell you what, if he had given an order, I'd have done it."

Dodd felt the same

"He pushed his operator down to get him out of the way and the fin cut his shirt open as it went by," Dodd said.

"He was a fabulous man ... a wonderful man... and I used to say to people ... if he'd have come down and said, 'Righto, get on the tanks, we're going to Hanoi up in north Vietnam,' we would have gone with him; we would have just followed ... We'd have done anything for him." Coming home, they faced another battle.

"I never thought about it for a moment, and then I came home," Dodd said.



Roy Dodd, Ray Collins and Kevin Jaenke. Photo: Courtesy Ray Collins

"It was weird as, for all of us. To go into a battle zone and be in combat and then just step out into the normal world ... there was no adjustment.

"I would be talking to people, and I would be shaking, and my mouth would be shaking.

"The post-traumatic stress caught up with me, and then I got back in the army and did 25 years ...

"I'd get up and talk to people officially about it – we did this and we did that – and it didn't worry me, but then I got out...

"I'd had a little hideaway in the army for a bit, but then without that as a shelter, it all came out."

His mate Collins also found it difficult.

"When I left, I came back on a plane on my own, and I went to Sydney," he said.

"I stayed at the Army barracks ... and I had to spend the weekend there on my own, and that's how I felt – alone.

"Then two days later ... when I came off the plane [at home] there were a whole lot of people to meet me. I got off the plane onto the tarmac in those days, and it was just me, and I just felt, 'This is weird.' And that was unreal for me ...

"I didn't come back the same. You think, 'I'm alright,' but you weren't really.

"I didn't talk about any of it, I didn't go to Anzac parades, and I didn't talk about it for years."



1 Troop in the mud in 1969. Photo: Courtesy Ray Collins



Waiting for a tow. Photo: Courtesy Ray Collins

Dodd felt the same.

"None of us did," he said. "I'd changed ... and my wife knew I'd changed within a couple of days ... I didn't tell my wife – she was home and I'd write, but I never told her what had happened until I came home.

"I had a daughter when this happened – she was nearly a year old – and whenever she saw someone in a uniform, she would say, 'Daddy, Daddy,' and my wife would have to say, 'No, that's not Daddy,' but she would see them around and think, 'That's my daddy and he's come home for a visit ...'

"It was unreal for all of us. I'd try to talk about it, and I'd find I just couldn't; I'd have to stop talking because I would be getting too emotional.

"This woman called me a 'killer' when I was in my uniform walking down the street in Brisbane ... She didn't know me, but just because I had a ribbon on, she called me a killer. What if I'd only been the cook, or I was a clerk in the office, why was I a killer? It was really vicious ... [and] that was harder than this..."

It would be almost two decades before he got to march with his fellow veterans in the Welcome Home Parade in Sydney in 1987.

"We all put our sunnies on, and we marched through the street, and I cried like a baby," Dodd said. "We all cried – every single guy marching; all in our sunnies, and we were howling."



Roy Dodd and Rix Thomas with the locals. Photo: Courtesy Ray Collins

Today, they still remember the battle of Binh Ba as if it was yesterday.

"Oh, God yes, all of it," Dodd said. "It's vivid as in my life ... I can remember the smells ... and I can still see it all; even now."

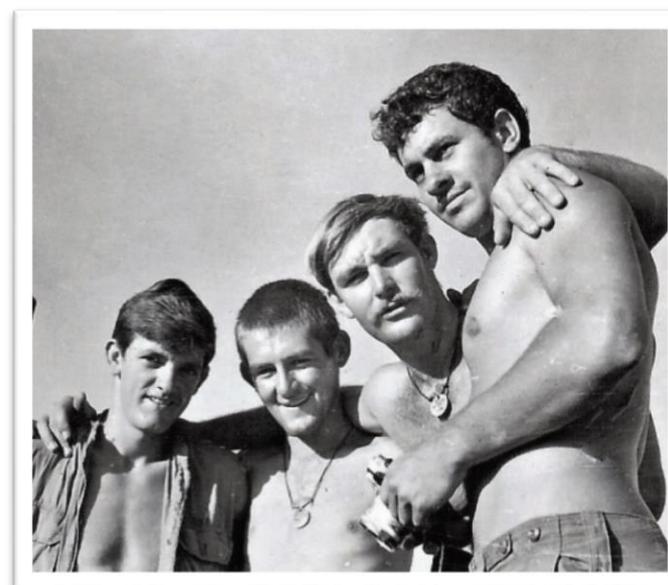
Dodd went to see the tank at a farm in country Victoria only a few months ago.

"I thought I was going to cry," he said.

"You don't want to have these things happen in your life ... but it's still got the hole in it where the rocket went through.

"Two farming brothers who like to restore things bought it ... and they spent over \$100,000 doing it up and it's like brand new. It still runs, and I got to sit on it, and they backed it out of the shed and up the hill, and it was like, 'Wow' ...

"We were lucky."



Ray Collins, John Whitehead, Roy Dodd, and Rix Thomas. Photo: Courtesy Ray Collins



1ST ARMoured
REGIMENT
ASSOCIATION INC.

Honour Roll

Killed In Action

WO2 J.A. Bond
WO2 J. Stone
TPR J. Kerr

Died of Wounds

TPR M. Hannaford
WO2 T. Phillips

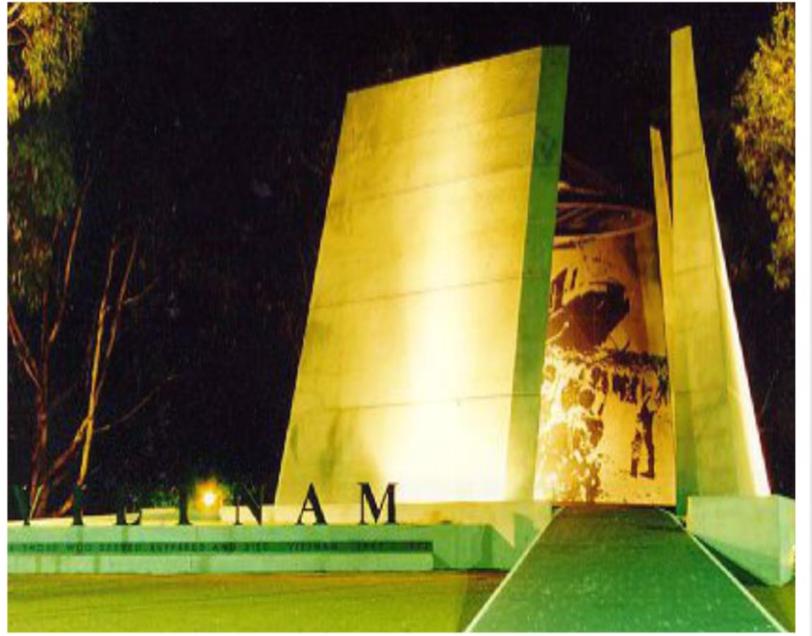
DOW Post-Vietnam

WO1 L. S. Swarbrick
WO2 N. Lowes
TPR P. G. Barwick
TPR R. S. Bellott

Killed Accidentally

LT A. J. Massey
SGT R. Morrison
SGT R. G. Murray
TPR A. M. Jordan
TPR A. Patterson
CFN B. Silver (LAD)

Dedicated to those 1st Armoured Regiment
Soldiers that made the ultimate sacrifice



VALE:



Colin Jeffrey FILTNESS passed away 31 May 2019 aged 81 years

Mr Centurion. Col was born on the 3/3/38 and joined the Regular Army at the age of 17. Posted to the First Armoured Regiment first as a Centurion driver and after a stint of 18 months in hospital due to a motor bike accident as a Centurion Gunner. Owing to his injuries he later trained as a cook, and served in that role in the Regiment until he was discharged in 1958.

He then had a number of positions including owning a service station before joining the Victorian Prison Service on the good side, a position he held until his retirement. It was about this time that I first meet Col as he had started to search for the Centurion that had been owned by Australia.

Over the next 18 years Col travelled throughout Australia looking and recording the Cents that he discovered and I had the pleasure of accompanying him on many of these trips. For more information see Col's Website Steel Thunder <http://steel-thunder.tripod.com/> When in Queensland he stayed with us and over many bottles of port enjoyed each other's company over these years. He was passionate about the Centurions and also spent a great deal of time in the armoured section of the Vietnam Veterans Museum on Phillip Island to record the history of Australian Armour in Vietnam.

Although he had many health problems in later life it was lung cancer the final beat him and he passed away on May 31 after a short battle.

A gentle giant of a man, RIP My Friend.

John (Bluey) Dyson



Kenneth Alfred (Sandy) TOCOCK, MID passed away on Thursday 6 Jun 2019

Sandy was born on 5 March 1929 in Reading BERKSHIRE ENGLAND. He enlisted in the British Army on 24 Apr 1947 and served with Royal Berkshire Regiment, 1st Battalion, Wiltshire Regiment with the British Army on the Rhine until 4 June 1949.

Sandy enlisted in the Australian Army on 1 August 1951 in the United Kingdom. He was initially allocated to Infantry and was posted to 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment. After a posting to Headquarters 3 National Service Training Battalion in 1954/55 it appears that Sandy saw the light and corps transferred to the Royal Corps of Australian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers. After a short stay at 3 Base Workshops, Sandy was posted to 1st Armoured Regiment Light Aid Detachment in June 1960 and essentially remained with Armoured units (1st Armoured Regiment and Armoured Centre) until November 1970.

Sandy served with both C Squadron and B Squadron Sections Light Aid Detachments (LAD) 1st Armoured Regiment in South Vietnam from 22 November 1968 to 5 November 1969.

Sandy was discharged from the Australian Army on 31 July 1978 having completed 27 years full-time service.

Sandy was a guru especially in the areas of armoured vehicle and heavy vehicle recovery. He provided guidance to the younger members of the Corps (RAEME) and acted as a mentor and example for younger officers, non-commissioned officers and younger RAEME soldiers in all of his postings. He was very highly regarded by all with whom he served across all corps. He was also held in high esteem by his superiors, subordinates and indeed with all those with whom he worked.

A true gentleman and considered to be a father to many.

May he rest in the greenfields beyond.

Russ James

Secretary 1st Armoured Regiment Association Inc.

Ronald Frederick COXON OAM, passed away on Saturday 18 May 2019, aged 77 years

Ron was born on 16 November 1941. Just prior to his 21st birthday he joined the CMF and was posted to 13 Field Regiment LAD (presumably in South Australia). Eighteen months later Ron enlisted in the Australian Regular Army and after the normal stint at 1 RTB he was posted to 1 Medium Workshop (1963/64).

Ron was posted to 1st Armoured Regiment LAD in December 1964 and remained until July 1970 when he was posted to 102 Field Workshop in South Vietnam. During his time in the Regiment Ron was an active member of the LAD Aussie rules team.

On 1st May 1971 Ssgt Coxon marched into 106 Field Workshops (still in SVN) but this does not appear in the official records until August 1971. Ron returned to Australia on 19 August 1971 and was posted to Central Command Workshops in Adelaide. Just under 12 months later he was posted to Adelaide Workshop Company where he remained for around four (4) years until he elected discharge in April 1977.

After discharge Ron was very active in the Vietnam Veterans' Association including President of the South Australian Branch, followed by National President until 2013. In 2014, whilst living in Huonville Tasmania, Ron was State Secretary of the Tasmanian VVAA as well as serving as a Pensions Advocate. Ron attended a function of the 106 Field Workshops Association in Hobart in 2014.

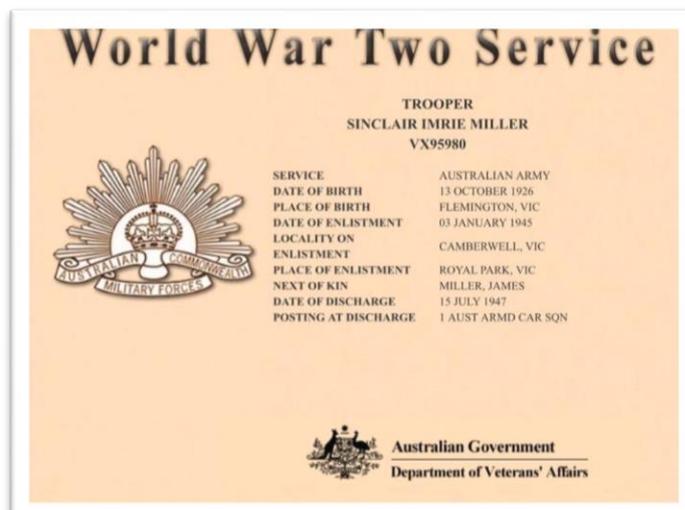
Ron passed away after a short illness.

May he rest in the greenfields beyond.

(Thanks to Milton Pearson for background information on Ron's life)

Tpr Sinclair Imrie (Mick) Miller

Just wishing to advise the passing of VX 95980 Tpr Sinclair Imrie (Mick) Miller aged 92. Former member of 1st Armoured Car Squadron. Mick Miller was also the Chief Commissioner of Police in Victoria from 1977 to 1987. A much respected leader and human being. Vale Mick Miller.



Neville Stanley Hammond JONES, passed away 17 July 2019, aged 65 years

Nev was born on 16 July 1955 and joined the Australian Regular Army when he was 25 years of age. After the normal period at 1RTB Nev trained as a Crewman Driver Signaller at Armoured Centre. He was posted to the Regiment on 9 July 81 and remained for 13 years. He then spent a number of years in both 2/14 QMI and 1/15 RNSWL.

At some stage Nev retrained as a Storeman Technical and was promoted to Quartermaster Sergeant. Nev was also posted to 1 Aviation Regiment, 2nd Cavalry Regiment, Land Warfare Centre and finally to Army Aviation Training Centre. Nev was discharged as a Warrant Officer Class Two on 30 September 2013 having completed 33 years of service.

During his service Nev spent three (3) months on exchange with the British Army as well as five (5) months in East Timor.

Nev was very highly respected by those with whom he served and there appear to be endless stories of his permanent smile, his ability to solve problems particularly with the Lomardini pump and fuel bladder. He would also appear that he had a unique ability to locate goods and materials to which the unit may not have been entitled. Stories of stripping, maintaining and repairing a 'Ducati' motorcycle in his room on the second floor in the barrack block is perhaps surpassed by building a mock-up of a motorcycle from parts scrounged at the Woomera Tip whilst on exercise.

One of Nev's friends wrote, 'Highly regarded by all with whom he served across all corps. Held in high esteem by his superiors, subordinates and indeed with all those with whom he worked or know him.' A former Troop Sergeant wrote, 'Nev was a wonderful bloke who always smiled and was a bloody hard worker. I learnt much from Nev and appreciated his knowledge and ability to solve problems.'

May he rest in the greenfields beyond.

(Thanks to Peter Duncombe and Dutchy Soutar for background of Nev's life in the Regiment)

Over the last 12 months the Association has often learnt about the passing of Association members as well as former members of the Regiment just a little too late.

All Association members and former members of the Regiment are asked to let their partners and children know that the Association should be advised as soon as possible so that we can make arrangements for attendance at funerals and commemorative services as well as preparing condolences and Vale notices.

Please send to Russ James secretary@paratus.org.au or post to
Secretary

1st Armoured Regiment Association Inc.
PO Box 301, Mentone. VIC 3194

*Please also advise of serious illness if you would like us to let mates know.

Dear All

Please find below a link to the communique from the Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Summit convened by the Minister for Veterans and Defence Personnel on 26 June 2019.

<https://www.dva.gov.au/health-and-wellbeing/mental-health/mental-health-summit-communicu>

Further information on health and wellbeing support and services is also available on the DVA website through the link below.

<https://www.dva.gov.au/health-and-wellbeing>

C Sqn (1971) Reunion

Bruce Cameron advises that a get-together of all personnel who were part of C Sqn 1 Armd Regt (including LAD and FDT) in Vietnam, is being organised. C Sqn took over from A Sqn on 17 December 1970. All those who served with the Sqn for any period from that date on are being asked if they would like to receive updates about the proposed 'mini-reunion' in Canberra.

The idea is for a dinner to be held on Sunday 6 June 2021, following a Last Post Ceremony at the AWM. A National Commemoration for the 50th Anniversary of Operation Overlord is under active consideration and is planned to be conducted by DVA the following day. The reunion is not confined to those who participated in Overlord. The National Commemoration to which no funding has been announced is simply seen as an opportunity to reunite all those who trained and served together fifty years before.

Those who have responded positively and asked to be kept informed of arrangements, number 57 so far. Some personnel trained with C Sqn but did not deploy to Vietnam. They are also invited to attend and attempts to track them down are being made. Two have already been located and wish to attend.

Anyone who would like more information is asked to contact Bruce at cameronshome@bigpond.com. Being included on the 'update list' does not have any compulsion as far as reunion attendance is concerned. (Some may just like to get in touch with mates.)

All further updates and information will be provided through the reunion organiser.

The boys from the Seventies



**Jim Semmens, Mick Dunn, Russ Gannon, Herbert Mack,
Mitch Beasley, Geoff Baker, Tony Schwerdfeger, Mark Reid**

VICTORIAN BIRTHDAY LUNCH SEYMOUR 7TH JULY 2019

On Sunday 7th July, Victorian members of the Association celebrated the Regiments 70th Birthday with a commemorative service held at the Vietnam Veteran's Commemorative Walk in Seymour.

Prior the start of the commemoration, members were given the opportunity to attend a guided tour and information session about the Walk with John Blackwell and John Phoenix who informed attendees of the many problems the Walk Committee faced in getting the Walk built.

The Walk meanders amidst native trees and grasses that resemble rubber trees and rice paddies. Plants synonymous with Vietnam. 106 panels of DigiGlass with the name of every Serviceman and Servicewoman who served in their various capacities. The names are separated by the Service in Alphabetical order. Behind the names is the picture story of the Vietnam conflict and the Wall is lit of an evening.



On completion of the Walk members gathered in the vicinity of the Centurion tank to the tune of the Radetzky March.



A short opening address by the **President Keith (Mel) Meloncelli**, followed by Peter Swinfield who recited the Soldiers prayer.



This was followed by a wreath being laid by **John (Tubby) Brooker OAM**, and poppies laid by individual members. The ode was recited by the President and Last Post and Rouse were played to round out the commemoration. Before moving off to the lunch at the Seymour Club, attendees signed the Vietnam Walk visitor book and had a chance to view merchandise available from the Walk shop.



Mark Reid and Terry Hampstead

A short walk to the Seymour Club followed events at the Walk.



The lunch was an array of beef, pork and lamb with a choice of vegetables followed by dessert of which there were a number of choices. The food was of good quality and there was enough to satisfy all appetites.



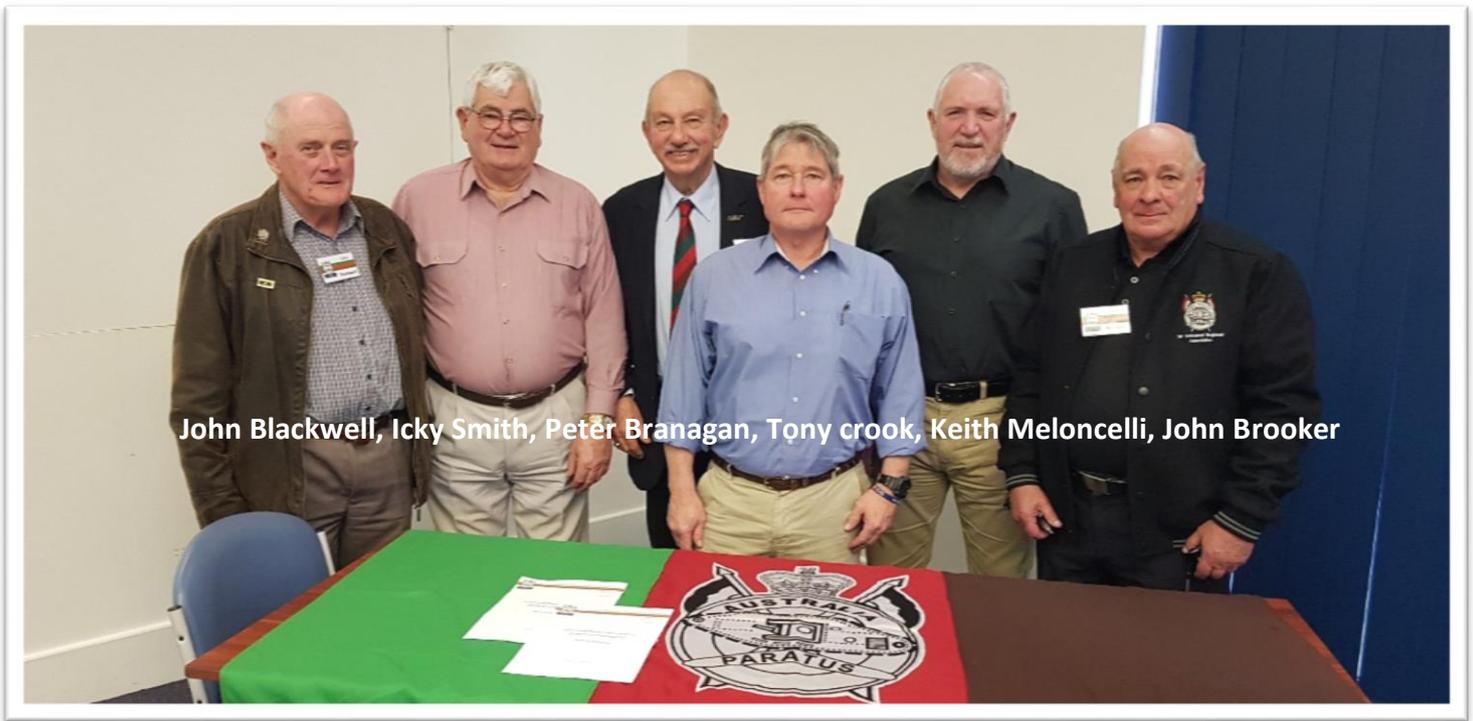
During lunch the President gave an overall view of where the Association is and many of the items the Committee were currently working to address. He then proposed a toast to the Regiment to the strains of Radetzky.

The turnout of 36 was down a little on the 40 that had paid, as four people didn't make it. Members travelled from interstate and down from the border region for the event, however, we would have like to see more local area members attend. Unfortunately, members from Pucka were in the field and were unable to attend, hopefully next time.



Keith Meloncelli, Peter Swinfield, Dean Martin, Andrew Pellow





John Blackwell, Icky Smith, Peter Branagan, Tony Crook, Keith Meloncelli, John Brooker

There was also the signing of the loan documents for the long-term loan agreement as well as the Terms of Reference for the Board of Management for the Association's Centurion tank ARN169005 currently housed at the Australian Army Tank Museum Puckapunyal.

From Mick Payne NSW Rep.



A great lunch with the NSW members at the Chatswood RSL. Thank you all for turning up!
L-R Bob Ferrari, Dave Ritchie, Brad Golding, Wayne Burton, Dave Ferguson, Mick Payne, Yvonne Milner, Colin Milner, Pedro Rosemond, John Keys & Mike Butler.



Stand Up and Salute These People!

The Unit Citation for Gallantry – The Battle of Coral-Balmoral

George Hulse

There are always a group of people who are never acknowledged when the dust settles over the success of a significant campaign. The campaign to recognise all the units that were involved in the Battle of Coral-Balmoral with the Unit Citation for Gallantry (UCG) is no exception. The following are the reflections of George Hulse covering his involvement with the Coral Balmoral Veterans Group in that campaign.

As a member of the Battle of Coral-Balmoral Veterans Group I recall my first contact with Garry 'Pepe' Prendergast in 2013 when he sent out an email looking for interest in his campaign. I put my hand up. In the end there were four of us recruited into Pepe's group. They were: Pepe as the leader, Neil Weekes AM MC, Jack Parr and George Hulse. We would meet at various times and places – sometimes in pubs – and laid out the format, content of our submission and the plan of action to get the submission read at the top end of military management in Canberra.

A visit to Vietnam to speak to the NVA leaders at the Battle by Pepe and Leonie Jones in 2006 presented a whole new palette of information about what happened at the Battle. Leonie covered the Battle in an hour-long documentary and this opened up more avenues of information leading on from Lex McAuley's book "They Will Come Looking For You". The submission came along very well with input from so many of the guys that were there. In addition, the article written by Colonel Ian "Scrubba" Ahearn on the first battle of Coral on 13 May 1968 helped us.

The Unit Commanders Reports, Radio Logs and Intelligence Summaries of the battle were of assistance but, at times, raised more questions than they answered. Eventually we got it there and submitted the 260 pages to the Directorate of Defence Honours and Awards (DH&A) in March 2016. We then readied ourselves for the knock-backs. They came by way of the DH&A referring the whole thing to the Chief of Army. The CA held the submission for about six months and then knocked us back – we expected this despite the fact that Neil Weekes had visited the CA and wrote him a letter suggesting that the CA support the submission.

I also wrote a letter to the CA asking for his support. He couldn't support it and sent it back to the DH&A. We were down 2-0 at this time but not fazed by what we expected anyway. Then the unbelievable happened. On 4 July 2016 Pepe passed away suddenly and this put Neil in as our leader. On 7 March 2017, Neil died leaving Jack and I as the team.

Jack and I continued unabated with the campaign.

Jack and I decided that our next step was to approach the Defence Honours and Appeals Tribunal (DHAAT) and have the decisions reviewed.

As luck would have it, I was in Canberra at that time on other business and took some time off to visit the DHAAT.

I spoke to Mr Jay Kopplemann a very experienced and helpful public servant working in the DHAAT and he advised against going straight to the DHAAT. He suggested that we would be better served by convincing the Minister for Defence Personnel – Mr Dan Tehan at that time – that our campaign merited his support and having him direct the DHAAT to conduct a public inquiry into the Battle of FSPB Coral-Balmoral. But he warned us that convincing Dan would be an enormous undertaking because we were asking him to overturn the decisions of the CA and DH&A.

I reported it all to Jack and we decided to go for broke with a campaign to convince Dan Tehan to accept our initiative. We produced a second submission and sent it to Dan Tehan and backed that up with a public campaign. We decided that Jack would write to every politician in Canberra and anybody that would listen including the veterans and I would mount a Change.org campaign to raise signatures aimed at Dan Tehan.

My part of our campaign with Change.org commenced on 8 February 2017 with the first story going up about the Mortar Platoon of 13 May 1968. I needed a short clip of four minutes duration promoting the purpose behind the campaign and Leonie Jones dropped everything else she was doing to get me my short clip. She went about that high-tech stuff about fixing it to the campaign page.

I followed up every week with another episode of what happened at the Battle with the Artillery, the Tanks. The Engineers, 1RAR, 3RAR, the RAAF a description of the NVA soldier and finished with a page on PTSD. By a stroke of good luck, my next-door neighbour – Ms Erika Rutledge – worked with CPL Ben Roberts-Smith VC MG at Channel 7. Erika offered to speak to BR-S about putting the campaign on the Community Announcement clip during peak time TV broadcast on Channel 7.

I was delighted with the offer, she asked BR-S, he accepted and now all we had to do was to get a 30-second grab of our four minute video. Back to Leonie Jones who again dropped everything and together with Erika they managed to get a 30-second grab done quickly enough for BR-S to go to air and promote our cause.

I thanked BR-S for that and he said he was delighted to help because he was passionate about the battle of FSPB Coral Balmoral (having visited the battle-site and spoken to the NVA Commanders about it). The outcome of the BR-S promotion was an immediate rise in responses to the Change.org campaign.

The signatures were mounting into several thousands and all these were automatically being sent straight to Dan Tehan's office, complete with all the remarks made by the respondents.

The remarks included those from veterans, families, friends and supporters in the general community. More than 7,500 of them in just a couple of weeks transmitted straight to Dan's office. That's the way Change.org operates.

Jack's initiative with the pollies was going well and Dan Tehan received quite a few messages from his parliamentary colleagues putting the wood on him to support the Coral-Balmoral submission. My own pollie was Teri Butler who wrote Dan a very pressing letter supporting our cause.

So, now it was time to sit down with Dan, deliver the outcome of the Change.org signatures and talk about what we wanted from him. I wrote a letter to him requesting an appointment for both Jack and I in his Canberra office. He responded and Jack and I visited Dan on 29 March 2017.

We handed Dan a six-page brochure on the (word-smithed) versions of what appeared on Change.org and an 11-minute straight-forward rendition of yet another video clip that Leonie Jones prepared (and yes, she had to drop everything to get me this clip as well). The 11-minute clip was written by Jack and I but put together by Leonie Jones and narrated by a professional speaker Mr Marcus Oborn – ALL AT NO COST TO US!

The video clips would have cost us around \$20,000 but they cost us nothing. It was all down to Leonie and her pro-bono generosity. Jack and I spoke for about ten minutes each to Dan and we handed him the brochure and video clip. All we asked for was a fair go from him. We waited.

On 24 April 2017, Dan Tehan telephoned me from Villers-Bretonneux in France. He told me that he had reviewed the information sent to him and was convinced that he would direct a DHAAT inquiry. Dan Tehan directed the DHAAT to mount a public inquiry and to report back to him with their findings. That was the giant-killer. The score was now 2-1. The DHAAT inquiry into the Battle of FSPB Coral-Balmoral was the largest inquiry ever held by the Tribunal.

It was so large that they had to hold their public hearings in Brisbane, Sydney and Canberra. They received almost 180 written submissions and conducted their hearing by listening to veterans speak in person as well as via telephone conversation.

The Dept of Defence and the DH&A were represented at the hearings and they spoke against the submission being supported.

The Tribunal listened with interest and demonstrated a totally unbiased view for anybody and everybody who came forward to help in their inquiry. The Tribunal personalities were: Mr Mark Sullivan AO (Chair), Mr David Ashley AM (ex-RSM Army), Mr Graham Mowbray (Lawyer) and Air Vice-Marshal John Quaife AM (Retd). The DHAAT submitted their report to Dan Tehan in support of everything that Jack and I wanted in our submission.

The score was now tied at 2-2. Now it was up to Dan to put it past his parliamentary colleagues. He did that and the Unit Citation for Gallantry was announced for the units involved.

The score soared to 2-3. A parade was held in ANZAC Parade Canberra on 13 May 2018 – exactly 50 years after the Battle occurred in Vietnam and was attended by hundreds of veterans. Unit Colours, Guidons and Banners were paraded to receive the Streamer that is attached at the head of the pike that holds these flags. The score was now 2-4. The Streamer has the words "Coral-Balmoral" written on it. The veterans get to wear the UCG with the Commonwealth Star in its centre on the right breast and the diggers who are currently serving in the descendent units of those at Coral-Balmoral wear the Citation without the Star on their right breast of their ceremonial uniform. They only wear the UCG while serving in the unit but do not wear it when they depart on posting or discharge. All the veterans were treated to a lunch (score 2-5) and then the very moving Last Post Ceremony in the Australian War Museum that afternoon. (Score 2-6). The campaign was well and truly won by the Coral-Balmoral Veterans Group!. So, I ask you to stand and salute the following people in order of importance (in my opinion) for the award of the UCG for FSPB Coral-Balmoral:

1. Mr Dan Tehan – who directed the DHAAT to conduct the inquiry;
2. The DHAAT who demonstrated complete open-mindedness and gave us a fair go;
3. Jack Parr, Pepe Prendergast. Neil Weekes and George Hulse, particularly Jack for his dedication and enormous work ethic which led to his award of the OAM;
4. All the veterans who submitted their written and spoken statements to the DHAAT;
5. Leonie Jones for her numerous video clips, unwavering support for the campaign and her commitment going back over numerous years on the Coral-Balmoral story;
6. All the parliamentary entities who supported us;
7. CPL Ben Roberts-Smith VC MG for his support when we needed it.
8. Change.org for having such a valuable platform to muster public support and engaging the entity it is directed to;
9. Mr Jay Kopplemann of the DHAAT for his very timely and helpful advice;
10. Ms Erika Rutledge who went out of her way to coordinate with Leonie Jones and BR-S during the Change.org campaign.
11. There may be others to recognise. But that's my version of events. It was a team of people and a whole lot of supporters who got us the UCG for FSPB Coral-Balmoral. May God bless them as well as the veterans who fought that iconic battle.

George Hulse

Co-author and team member of the Battle of FSPB Coral-Balmoral Veterans Group

30 June 2019



This is a story by an SOTG digger that all Australians who are old enough should take time out to read. I have read many and this one made me take stock of the great life I have as an Australian. This life we all have, has been and still is, due to courage of our armed forces. The ANZAC Spirit still lives on today.

The 23rd of November has just passed. For some it's just another day. Unfortunately for others it is not. I was there on the ground that day when one of our finest, Luke Worsley from 4 RAR Commando, was knocked. We were out in the middle of the Afghanistan Dasht and a long way from Australia. This story from within the SF community needs to be told to the Australian public but most of all the parents, wives, sons, daughters and family.

What the boys from Bravo Company 4 RAR (now 2 Commando Regiment), Special Operations Task Group (SOTG) rotation V (Roman numeral for 5), did for one of their own over an 18 hour plus period is something I will never forget. His mates did everything they could for him and then some.

We harboured up the vehicles, created the Vehicle Drop off Point (VDO) and the decision was made to move in on foot. Harboring the vehicles was no easy feat as there were Land Rover SRVs, 4 and 6 wheel All-terrain Vehicles, Bushmasters and the Mother Ship. The Mother Ship was an up armoured 4 x 4 Mercedes Unimog that looks like something out of Mad Max. It had a pintle mounted 50cal HMG mounted on top and a 7.62 Mag58 LMG mounted for the passenger.

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The boys took off around dusk and started the stomp of about 3km (3.5hrs) over the mountainous terrain to the objective. Overwatch was established over the village, and the boys went in. All seemed to be going well until the call of TIC (Troops in Contact) came over the radio. Echoes of rifle and intense machine gun fire could be heard across the valley.

Then we heard the words that no one wants to hear. Just after midnight on the 22nd and going in to the early morning of 23rd November, I can remember hearing over the radio that we had a man down. All of us who were listening to the contact over the radio couldn't believe it, we were waiting to hear who it was. The call sign of the soldier was sent over the radio and eventually we worked out it was Luke.

We were in our harbour securing the vehicles, a few of us started to prepare to roll in and give them a hand. We could still hear the heavy fighting going on. Thankfully the boss made the call not to send us forward as we found out later on that the vehicle route in to the village had been mined with IEDs.

The boys had been on target for about 8 plus hours and dawn was not that far away. So the call was made to move out and that they would have to stretcher carry Luke back to the VDO some 3km away.

This paragraph I'm trying to give you some idea of the mind set and some of the setbacks the boys faced and overcame.

We also had Close Air Support, more commonly known as CAS. The boom and the shock wave from the explosion was massive. It broke the silence and even lit up our valley. When the CAS was called in we were in the VDO 3km away and we thought the boom and the shock wave from the explosion was massive. The main group were still in the vicinity of the village, they were only 700m to 900m away when the missile hit the target.

Choppers were called in to come and pick up Luke. The Chinook, along with Gunship support, had to come from TK Airfield and were provided by the Dutch. They were requested to pick Luke from the village and take them back to TK Airfield for processing. As it turned out, we were told the chopper was on its way from TK.

Then the call came over the radio informing us it was being diverted to Forward Operating Base (FOB) Anaconda for another task. We were then told it was not coming directly to us from FOB Anaconda but now diverted to Kandahar. Once again we were then informed that the chopper did not have enough fuel to come to us from Kandahar, so it returned to TK airfield then finally on to our location.

Back to the story: I can remember standing there listening to the Company who were coming back, calling in and updating their position. Once we knew they were about 20 to 30 minutes out from the VDO, I told every spare body to go around to the vehicles, dig out the gas bottles and stove and boil some water. This was so they would have hot water for a brew when they returned. Then I saw the first of two things that day that I wish every Australian could have seen.

I can remember looking up and seeing the first member of the Company coming over the hill, then another and another. Then the rest of the boys who were carrying Luke on the stretcher.

Every man wanted to carry Luke. They had been at it for over 12 hours by now, they were all tired and they were hurt, but in true Grunt fashion they were not bloody beaten and at no time would they give up. At that very moment I was thinking, how proud I was to be there. I just witnessed something un-bloody believable. Before Luke was to be taken off the battlefield by chopper, he was placed in one of the Bushmasters. Everyone from the Company had the opportunity to go in, pay their respects and say goodbye, which they all did. Me personally, I held his hand and said a prayer Psalm 23:4 (Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me). I also told him that one day we will all be reunited in Valhalla and that he would not be forgotten.

In addition to this there was a young Mortar man. He was one of the boys that had just been out all night. He helped carry and was good friends with Luke. Unfortunately he could not bring himself to go in to the Bushmaster and say good bye. I tried to convince him at the time that it was the right thing to do; however, he still could not bring himself to do it. I said to him that I completely understand. 30 minutes later at around 9 or 10ish we received the call that the Evac chopper was inbound.

Finally, we could hear the sound of the Chinook off in the distance. At this point I picked myself up and went over to where the Mortars were. As I approached him I said, mate this is the last chance you will get to say good bye. He was also religious man so I told him, this is the last chance to go in and say a prayer for him.

To his credit we both walked to the Bushmaster together and I told him I would be right outside.

He went in and farewelled his mate. Once we were back in Camp Russell, he came up to me and thanked me for what I had done.

So we loaded Luke on to the chinook and made sure everything was good to go. This is where I saw the second thing that the Australian public should know about.

I was facing the chinook with the company spread out behind me in the defensive position. The position was spread out over approximately 500m on a slight hill that was running up from where we were. The CSM pointed behind me and said "hey DAZZ have a look at that." I turned around and this is what I saw.

I looked up and I could see the whole company, all standing to attention. They were next to their cars, some were standing by themselves, some were standing on Bushmasters and this was truly an amazing site. These boys were paying their respect to a mate that they would never see again but would live on in their memories. On our return to Camp Russell we had a service and we were allowed a few beers. We were all in the building which is normally used as a recreation room and one of the blokes, whose name I cannot recall, played the Dire Straits song Brothers In Arms. Every one stopped what they were doing and there was complete silence. Everyone banded together and paid their respect to Luke in their own way.

Once the Dire Straits song was finished a young man grabbed his guitar and went up the front of the recreation room. He was a strapping young lad who was already a legend within Bravo Company and 4RAR (2 Commando Regiment). Now you have to remember that this is in November of 2007.

This man and his guitar started to play a song, a song that, funnily enough, still haunts me today. The song was "I hope you had the time of your life", by Green Day. It was a pretty good rendition of the song that would give any musician a run for their money.

A few months after the events of the 22nd – 23rd this man with his guitar was awarded the Medal For Gallantry for his actions on that fateful night. A few years after that in 2013 this man went on to become a legend. He went on to become forever immortal.

The man with the guitar was Cameron Baird VC MG and he is the 100th recipient of the Victoria Cross. A man truly worthy of this honour.

The same spirit that the ANZACs took with them to the shores of Gallipoli is still alive and well today. Up until now this story of the boys was just a personal memory that now will be hopefully told to the Australian public, but most of all the parents of these brave young lads. Anyone who reads this can share it as much as possible. Cheers

Darren Peters SOTG V