



TIGER TALES

5 RAR TIGERS

NEWSLETTER of the 5 RAR ASSOCIATION

PP 22620210007

JULY 1996

EDITION 8

Editor's NOTEBOOK

On the 3rd of March 1996, the 5 RAR plaque was unveiled at 1 RTB, KAPOOKA, NSW. The function was attended by 30 members of the association.

The ceremony was a very moving experience for us all, and it was an important step to ensure that the efforts and contribution of all members of the Battalion are remembered, *especially those who gave their lives and members who were seriously wounded.*



2. MEMORIAL PLAQUE AT 1 RTB

- A special thanks to the following:
- + COL. D. Bucannan MVO..... CO 1 RTB
 - + WO1 C.N. Lee OAM.....RSM 1 RTB
 - + Padre K. Wheeler
 - + 5/7 RAR Colour party
 - + Staff of the Sgts' Mess..... 1 RTB
 - + Recruits from 1 RTB who took part in the service
 - + Association members from Wagga Wagga who drew our attention to the need to do this in the first place
 - + All members who took the time to attend.



1. B. LONDON - ADDRESS AT 1 RTB KAPOOKA

COMING EVENTS

***VIETNAM VETERANS 1996 CONVENTION.**

Tasmania 14 - 18 Aug. 1996.

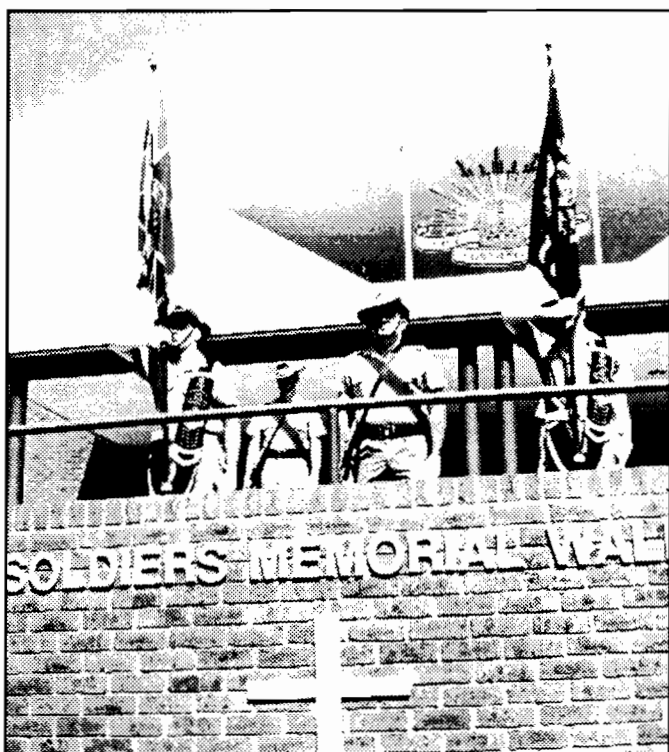
Brief details as follows:

- + seminars 14 Aug. - 16 Aug. 1996
- + workshops 14 Aug. - 17 Aug. 1996
- + BBQ 16 Aug. 1996
- + CONCERT Sat. 17 Aug. 1996
- + DAWN SERVICE 18 Aug. 1996
- + MARCH Sun. 18 Aug. 1996
- + MEMORIAL SERVICE 18 Aug. 1996.

There is too much detail to mention in our TIGER TALES. If members wish to attend, your first point of contact is,
PROJECT MANAGEMENT TEAM
PHONE...(003) 34 7874
FAX.....(003) 34 7868

Editor's Note:

Details of the convention were outlined in the Jan. edition of TIGER TALES 1996. Our rep in "Tassie", C. ILLMAN, wrote and said that he would organise a 5RAR re-union venue once numbers were known.



COLOUR PARTY 5/7 RAR(Mech)

***ANZAC DAY APRIL 1996 - SYDNEY**

The Anzac Day march was attended by about 200 members of the Association. After the march a gathering was held at the Tudor Inn. However, other units/organisations were there as well and the place was very overcrowded. A new venue will have to be found for next year. When this is known, details will be published in the last edition of TIGER TALES for 1996, or early 1997.

BOB FENWICK laid a wreath at the memorial service at regimental square, and a number of members attended an early morning service at 5/7 RAR, where a wreath was also laid. Among those attending were COLIN COOPER, BOB TRENEAR and GEOFF PEARSON.

***ANZAC DAY 1996. W.A.**

John Burrige (extract of report)

Dawn service in KINGS PARK.

The march through Perth saw another huge crowd turn out and the 5 RAR banner looked splendid in its correct location, behind the main RAR banner. This year's reunion saw the RAR group move to a new location at Bobby Dazzler's, corner Murray and Williams St.

Among those attending,

- + Harry Neesham
- + Russell Briggs
- + 'Doc' Halliday
- + John Fitzgerald
- + Allan McNulty
- + Bob Armitage
- + John Burrige
- + John Russell
- + Ken Benson.

Also, 'Dartsa' Davis, who caught up with some old members, (C Coy 2nd tour)

Wayne Herbert, Peter Guyatt and Jim Lowrie, who travelled from Sydney for the occasion.

A good day was had by all.

***MEMBERS LOOKING FOR FRIENDS**

Ed Davies - YEA VICTORIA is looking for JIM REID - WEST AUSTRALIA - 2nd tour.

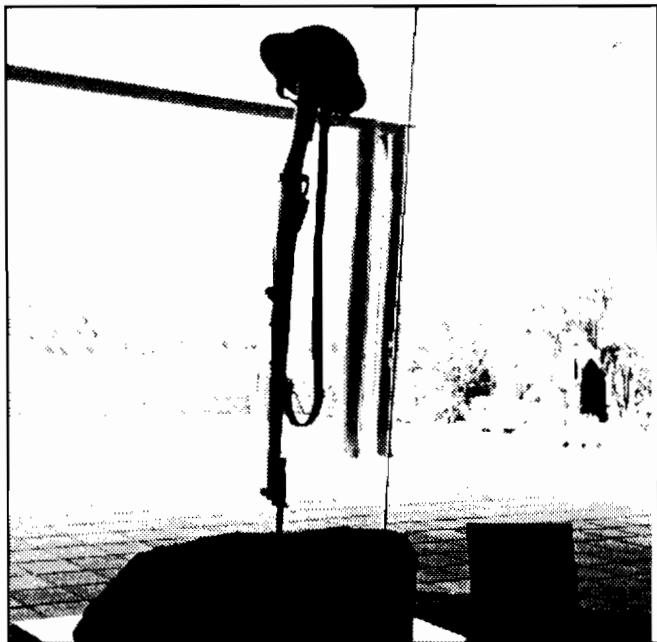
Believed to have been a member of 7 platoon, C Company. The Association has no record.

***CHANGE OF ADDRESS**

Could all members please take note of the following information.

* Financial members' mail is being returned in surprising numbers. IT IS ESSENTIAL for any change of address to be notified to the Association. Also, it costs the Association 45 cents to collect each item of returned mail.

* Some members are sending mail to the Association without names and addresses. Please check your mail before posting.



REST IN PEACE



The 5 RAR Association regrets to inform members of the passing of friends and comrades.

The 5 RAR Association offers our condolences to the families of:

- Andrew Lindsay Macarthur ACT
- Terry Boulton Brisbane Qld
- James (Doc) Urquhart Oakey Qld

5 RAR ASSOCIATION

STATE REPRESENTATIVES

QLD Lt Col R T Shambrook AM Ron
57 Lade Street
ENNOGERA QLD 4051
Tel : H. (07) 335 41706

VIC
Mr G Levey Geoff
40 Brook Street
SUNBURY VIC 3429
Tel :H. (03) 744 4078
 B. (03) 339 1234

SA Mr R H Naismith Bob
16/A2 Harrison Road
PENNINGTON SA 5013
Tel : H. (08) 326 1813

WA Mr J D Burridge John
88 Watkins Road
CLAREMONT WA 6010

TAS Mr C M Illman Colin
20 Blackstone Road
LAUNCESTON TAS 7250

ACT Mr G Negus Greg
3 Daplyn Close
WESTON ACT 2611
Tel : (06) 243 1029 B.
 (06) 288 2070 H.

ADDRESS

**by BRIAN LONDON AOM DCM
1 RTB KAPOOKA**

I am very proud to be part of this ceremony, and it is a privilege to be asked to perform the unveiling of this plaque in honour of our fallen comrades. These men who gave their lives in the service of their country, were members of the 5th Battalion RAR.

Their names have been added to a far greater list of service men and women who did not return from active service.

I was fortunate to have served with the 5th Battalion on both tours of duty in the Republic of SOUTH VIETNAM. I say fortunate, because I had the privilege of

ADDRESS by B. London contd.

knowing some of these men personally, or, at the very least, knowing of them. At the outset of our training we were, in the main, complete strangers, a mixture of national servicemen and regular soldiers. In a very short time we were forged into the strongest of bonds which in my opinion has no equal, save for the family unit, in fact that is what we were, a family, all brothers together united by friendship, a sense of duty and a common cause. These men knew they were placing themselves in harm's way each time they left the security of Nui Dat, this realisation did not deter them.

Trust and faith are perhaps the key words that best describe the link that held us together during those turbulent times. To have trust in the section scouts, the machine gunner and riflemen..... to have trust in the section commanders and platoon commanders. To have faith in the battalion and company commanders, whose unenviable task it was to commit their men to battle.

Deep down, most of us, if not all, realised that some might not come home. The odds were not in our favour, and when we lost a soldier it was like losing a brother or a very close friend. Lives were lost trying to shield a mate who was in trouble, or protecting the wounded from further injury. They simply refused to leave a friend or fellow soldier behind, regardless of the extreme danger which faced them. Such acts of devotion and courage clearly bring into focus the words from St John's Gospel:

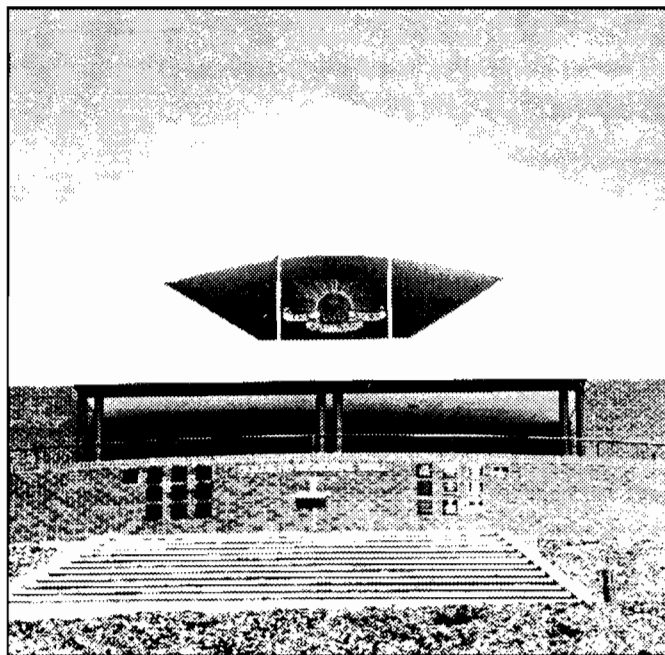
NO GREATER LOVE HAS A MAN THAN HE WHO LAYS DOWN HIS LIFE FOR HIS FRIEND.

Sadly, there was little time to grieve, to pay respects to our fallen in the formal sense, it was back to base to prepare for the next operation with empty bed spaces bringing home the stark reality that these men were no longer with us.

It is a fitting tribute that this memorial plaque be mounted here at this place called Kapooka. For it was here that it all began for many of them.

We who are left behind have a duty to these men, to ensure that their sacrifice is not forgotten, and to take comfort in the knowledge that our lives were enriched by having known and served with them.

LEST WE FORGET



1RTB Chapel

MEMORIAL ON REMEMBRANCE DRIVEWAY

The 5 RAR committee is investigating the possibility of mounting a memorial on the Memorial Driveway {Hume Highway at Bass Hill, NSW}. The structure proposed will be a concrete plinth and brass plaque {5mm thick and 600mm square}, to include the names of members killed in action.

The Association is looking for suggestions from members on this undertaking.

If any member has practical skills {eg stonemasons} and would like to assist, please contact the 5 RAR Association as soon as possible.

FUTURE RE-UNIONS

5 RAR ASSOCIATION

In past issues of our newsletter, we have asked members to complete a return form on future re-unions. Some of the questions asked were:

- + *Do we keep our re-unions in Sydney?*
- + *At what interval should our re-unions occur? etc.*
- + *Should we rotate the venue by states?*

OUTCOME OF RETURNS

Around 25% of members replied. From the information received, the majority of members agreed to:

- + Keep our re-unions in Sydney.
- + Keep our re-unions on a 5-yearly basis.

A farewell re-union to 5/7 RAR (Mech) in Sydney (1998).

- + Consideration be given to hold 'mini re-unions' in other capital cities in 1997 and 1999. As 5/7 RAR will not be able to assist in the re-union in 2000, consideration will have to be given to non-military venues, unless another unit at Holsworthy can foster the Association.

STOP PRESS

I have just received news that the new Sydney venue for Anzac Day 1997 will be:

**THE PAVILLION TAVERN
580 GEORGE STREET,
SYDNEY.**

Also there is news that 5/7 RAR(Mech) are eager to have our next re-union in Darwin. There will be very few members available in Darwin to do all the 'Hack work' needed to ensure the next re-union is up to scratch. Think about it, give us some feed-back, and bear in mind that the return forms (those who replied) clearly indicated that the next re-union should be in Sydney.

LETTERS to the EDITOR

J. Chambers - REDCLIFF

Dear John

Thanks for your letter and order for the book Vietnam Task. You enclosed 2 photos of the editor (me), on duty in Saigon as guard commander some time during the second tour. At first glance, it does look like me, however, after showing the photos to my wife and son they both said, "No, that is not you," and they should know. If it is not me, who is it? Any ideas anyone?

Editor.



Who is it?

Colin Illman - LAUNCESTON

Dear Colin

I received your letter sent to the Project Manager, Tasmanian Re-union Committee. Your letter is too long to publish, however, in short, you are not happy with the registration fee of \$95.00 which covers entry to,

- . the concert
- . BBQ
- . seminars and workshops
- . as well as transport to the main functions, ie BBQ, concert and march.

Of course on top of this charge will be,

- . Air fares
- . accommodation etc,

LETTERS contd

I can see your point Colin, in the case where a member only wishes to attend say, the BBQ and concert it will still cost \$95.00 as there are no separate ticket sales to either of the above functions. As a complete package, it's good value, but as you say, not everyone will attend the seminars and workshops. I guess Colin, people will make up their own minds on the subject.

Thanks again,
Editor.

R. Birtles - Croydon VIC.

Dear Robert

Thanks for your letter and newspaper cutting showing Pte Dave Riik, Dave Bryant and L/Cpl Shoebridge 8 Oct. 1966. I will try to reproduce the article in this edition. Send me the other photos and anything else of interest, I will use them.

Regards
Editor.

EDITOR: B.K. London
PO Box 422
BATEMANS BAY
NSW 2536
Phone (044) 72 5748



A pile of smoking rubble is all that remains of a bunker at FSB Mary Ann. North Vietnamese Army (NVA) sappers hit the command post bunker first, killing four soldiers.

FIRE SUPPORT BASE MARY ANN

By 1971, almost half the army had withdrawn from Vietnam. Soldiers of FSB Mary Ann soon found out, the war was not over.

(A short account of the situation by
B.K.LONDON)

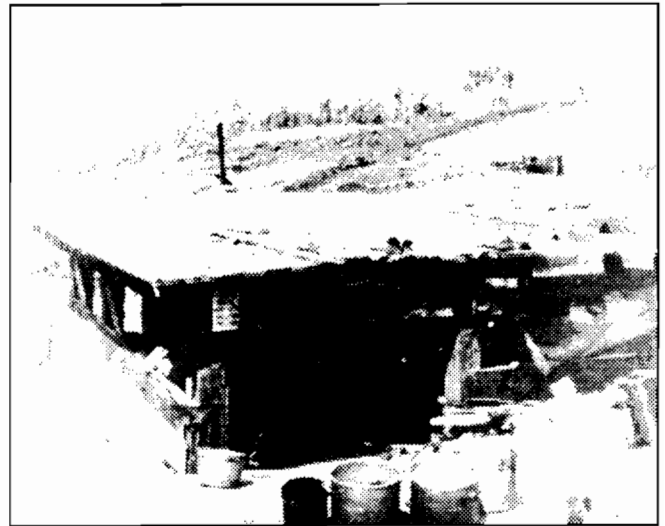
Fire Support Base Mary Ann, a U.S. Army 23rd Infantry Div. outpost in the western highlands of Quang Tin province, served as a base of operations for the 196th Infantry Brigade. Their mission was to protect Da Nang and nearby villages. The outpost was secured by 231 men (1/46Inf Bn) and 20 Svn soldiers. Attached artillery and Battalion mortars plus a headquarters company and one rifle company usually remained at FSB Mary Ann. The other rifle companies were deployed in the field. Each rifle company rotated each 14 or 15 days for R&C at (FSB) Mary Ann. The R&C company was of course required to provide the normal security required in a defensive position. The oval shaped base was 500 metres long by 150 metres wide. The outer perimeter contained 22 bunkers designed for both living and fighting. The whole defensive perimeter was a half-hearted affair with trenches connecting pits ranging from waist height to crawl trenches. Three rows of wire (double concertina) circled the perimeter. A road ran through the camp and was only closed at night by a single strand of wire. The CO's plan was that a minimum of five men must occupy each of the 22 bunkers at all times. This plan was not followed due to shortfalls of riflemen. Despite the poor choice of ground, (FSB) Mary Ann had never been attacked, and there was nothing to suggest that it would be. All of the soldiers were battle seasoned, and besides, if anything was going to happen, there would be plenty of warning. C Company had managed to meld its NCOs, OFFICERS and MEN into a team based on mutual respect. The only problem was the RSM. He went by the book and most tried to stay out of the way of the RSM. In short, (FSB) Mary Ann was a place to relax, and any attempt to make the men face up to their responsibilities usually met with indifference.



The aftermath: a view along the bunker line shows the remains of FSB Mary Ann. The NVA destroyed the tactical operations centre, command post bunker, aid station and main ammo dump, killed 31 US soldiers and wounded 82 in the night attack.



An M-203 rests against a caved-in bunker, one of many structures destroyed in the NVA's early morning attack on March 28, 1971. The soldier who had carried the rifle-grenade launcher combination perished inside.



The mess hall at Mary Ann became a rallying point for some American soldiers after they fled their bunkers.

(FSB) Mary Ann contd.

On the 27th Mar. 1971 Int. reports did not indicate that large concentrations of NVA and VC were operating in the area of Mary Ann. In any case the (1/46) was on notice to move to another area of operations, so things were looking good. Soldiers began leaving their weapons behind in their living quarters, and the NCOs failed in their duty towards the men in this regard. Pot smoking became common place and the men generally lost the plot. The low level threat resulted in a relaxed schedule. Men woke their relief but went off to bed without ensuring that their relief had arisen. By midnight, thick fog was at its densest and the guard schedule had dissolved. The NCOs responsible to ensure that the system worked, went to sleep. Duty officers failed to check the lines, depending too much on their normally reliable NCOs.

At 0230Hrs the 2nd Company of the 409th NVA Sapper Battalion silently approached the base.

Three explosions erupted outside the CP. Everyone awoke, scrambling for weapons and ammo. But it was far too late. The enemy were inside in force. Soldiers of the (1/46) were being killed where they slept. Those who managed to get out of their bunkers were met by waves of NVA, they were killed or wounded. Only small pockets of the (1/46) managed to hold positions inside Mary Ann. The enemy showed no real intentions to seize or hold Mary Ann. Instead, they concentrated their attack on the Company (CP), the battalion (TOC) and the 155 howitzer positions. Other targets included the main ammo dump, the aid station and the supply bunker. Incoming mortar fire commenced at 0240 hours, the enemy was prepared to sacrifice their troops to achieve the objective. A request for a fire mission at 0245 hrs surprised the supporting FSBs (DF and Illum) as this was only used in case of a ground attack!!!

Mary Ann was well on its way to becoming enemy property.

The enemy commander was surprised at the ease

with which the Sapper Coy had infiltrated the defenses of (FSB) Mary Ann. Within minutes all objectives had been achieved. The (TOC), 155 howitzer, and mortar positions were either destroyed or neutralised. The Bn CP was in a shambles, the aid post destroyed, along with the ammo dump. Most of the radio equipment was out of action, one operator managed to send a request to fire preplanned mortar DFs (0245 hrs).

Exploding ammunition and fires within the camp lit up the (FSB) like daylight and flares from the counter mortar fire only added further illumination to (FSB) Mary Ann. The commander of the 409th Sapper Bn realised that a great victory was at hand, and a simple two pronged attack with his remaining forces would surpass the original mission objective. The NVA 409th moved into position for the final assault.

At this time, a lone Huey gunship arrived on the scene, call sign 'Nighthawk', and engaged the enemy assault line with 'Minie Guns'. After just one pass, the guns jammed. The gunship continued to engage the enemy with a mounted M60 machine gun and made several passes around the perimeter of Mary Ann. The initial pass and the persistent use of the M60 broke up the assault lines of the 409th NVA Sapper Bn and they withdrew at 0400 hrs, minutes before first light.

A lone Huey gunship had managed to save (FSB) Mary Ann from being completely destroyed by an enemy force.

CASUALTY RATE U.S. FORCES

KIA-WIA 113

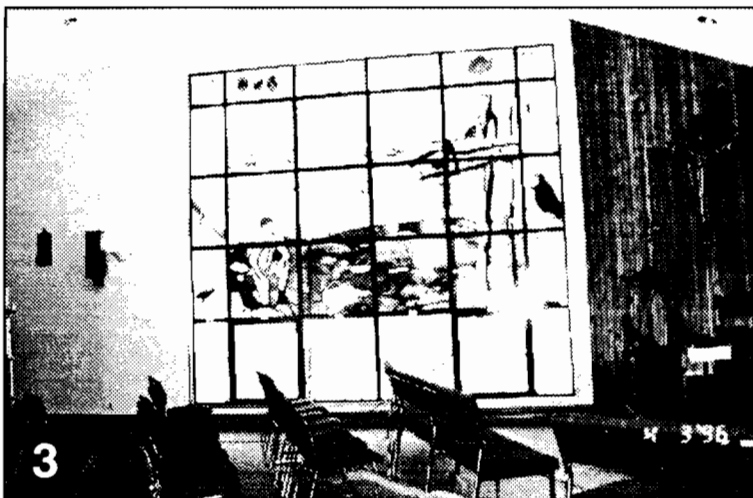
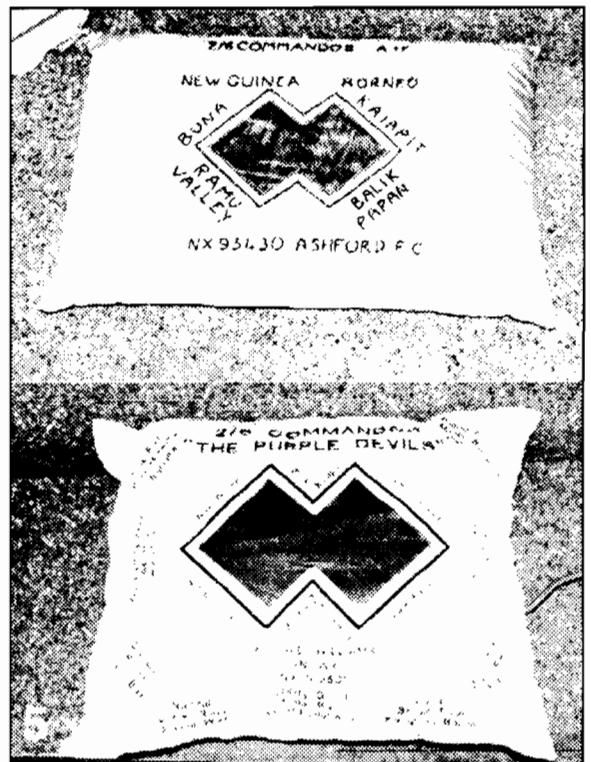
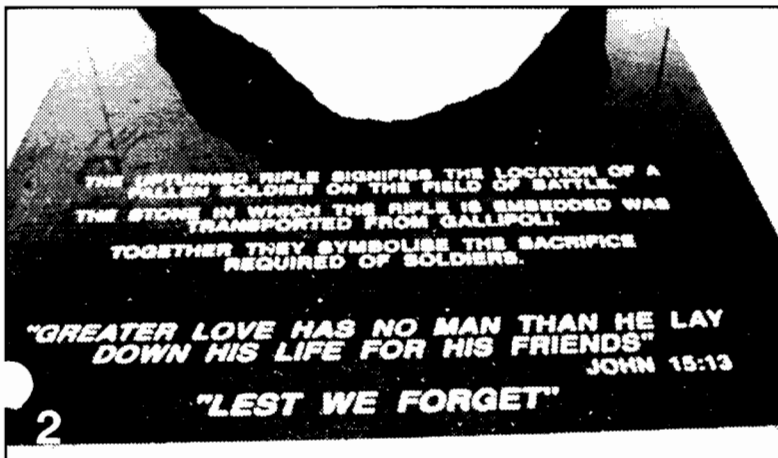
NVA - VC 409th Sapper Bn
(Found KIA) 15

Note 1. For several days after the assault on Mary Ann U.S. forces found numerous graves containing dead NVA in the area of the FSB.



MORE PHOTOS TAKEN AT KAPOOKA 3/4 MARCH 1996

1. Pde Wheeler and recruits
2. Inscription inside Chapel
3. Windows inside Chapel
4. Aerial view of soldiers chapel
5. Cushions Ashford and Williams
2/6 Commandos AIF



★ **This article by Capt. WINSTON COATES, PR officer who has been out on many operations, is based on Operation Canberra. The operation concluded and merged into two subsequent operations, and ended with 10 enemy dead, the capturing of a long-sought-after high-powered radio, the dislodging of an enemy headquarters group from a cave complex, and the capturing of scores of documents, food, a rice store, ammunition, weapons and personal enemy gear. Charlie Company of 5RAR was the Company involved.**

FEATURE PAGE

The helicopter, an *Iroquois*, known to the troops as a *Hughie*, comes in slowly.

It is touch and go. Large trees are missed by inches. The large stump is a problem.

It is inches under the tail rotor as the skids touch down. It is raining again and the rotor blades throw up a mist like a garden spray as the wounded are picked up and taken to the chopper.

The more seriously hurt are slid into place, one above the other, like a three tiered bunk. A walking wounded soldier is helped in and sits on the floor.

An American medic is last in and the chopper lifts off slowly, making its tortuous way up past the trees.

After five minutes another chopper comes in — a RAAF machine this time. There is the same agonising descent. Three more wounded go aboard.

Battalion headquarters, two miles away on a mountain top, gives the order to continue the march and search out the enemy.

Another platoon leads and the men creep back into the area of the brief fight.

They spot more booby traps and by-pass them. The forward section sees two huts and hears movement. It appears the Viet Cong want to lead the company on — into an ambush.

There is another explosion and a cloud of grey smoke.

The shout goes up — "Medic" — and the company stretcher bearer runs forward, already swinging his pack with its medical supplies off his back.

A soldier tells the company commander what happened.

Air strike on enemy

"Grenades," he says, "tied to bushes with trip wires of thin vine."

Again the radio signal goes out for a helicopter. The descent is quicker this time.

The evacuation over, the commander plans his next move. Battalion headquarters decides not to try another penetration through the booby traps.

The order comes to move away to allow an air strike.

Towards evening they are a thousand metres away.

The men begin to scrape tiny clearings for their hootchies.



... Operation CANBERRA, after a booby trap exploded.

Other men move out to form a perimeter. All night men will be alert, taking picquet duty in turn.

Although it is dark on the jungle floor, there is still light above the trees and the company commander orders smoke to be thrown to warn the pilots friendly troops are below.

For an hour the jets shriek overhead, rocketing and strafing the area. Other aircraft drop bombs the type that burst on impact, spewing scores of smaller bombs.

Then, it is quiet again.

The whispered word goes around the positions — "We move at first light." The men sleep.

Another day's hunting is over — but there are many, many more ahead.



VIETNAM TASK

The 5th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment

Robert J. O'Neill

On 24 May 1966, eight hundred men of the Fifth Battalion landed at Nui Dat in Viet Cong territory. For the next twelve months they were faced with the task of restoring peace, civil law and regular commerce to the Vietnamese of Phuoc Tuy Province. This book is a detailed record of those months in the monsoon jungles – of the problems that were faced and the solutions that were found.

Major O'Neill's position as Battalion Intelligence Officer enabled him to view the war from the standpoint of the Battalion as a whole. However, he does not omit description of personal feelings – towards the Viet Cong, the jungle environment, the Vietnamese people and the other allied forces involved in the war.

Most of the book was written on the spot in Vietnam. On operations or at Battalion Headquarters, Major O'Neill jotted down details of the war against the Viet Cong; putting the events of each day in order, often in the small hours of the following morning. Thus not only is this a factual account of the Fifth Battalion's activities over the year, it is also a vivid and compelling picture of the war in Vietnam from the soldier's point of view.



NOW AVAILABLE!

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THE HISTORY OF THE BATTALION
ON ITS FIRST TOUR
SIMPLY ORDER ON THE FORM
IN THIS COPY OF TIGER TALES**