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## **NEWSLETTER MARCH 2021**

### **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Things appear to be settling down in Australia with the COVID-19 at last, apart from Melbourne, our thoughts are with our members there. I guess we are not out of the woods yet, fingers crossed.

The committee is pleased with the number of members who are now sending in their profiles for our Newsletter, they make a good read.

We still hope for the reunion in Coffs Harbour to go ahead and at this stage it should be OK to hold, more from the Secretary later.

The deferred AGM will be also held at this reunion, so if anyone would like to take part in running the Association on the Committee please let us know.

A further reminder that the National Gunner Dinner will be held in Caloundra again on Friday 20 August and Saturday 21 August this year, they are celebration 150th Anniversary of the Corps was raised. Details are available on the RAA Association website.

[www.australianartilleryassociation.com](http://www.australianartilleryassociation.com). Any members wishing to attend the functions we have a table booked for our members, at present at least five are attending. Please ensure if you decide to go that on the application you advise you wish to sit at the 101 Battery SVN table. I have attended the previous two which were a great success allowing us to catch up with mates from long ago. As we all are getting older it might be the last chance to see some of these old mates.

The Association is pleased to still receive new life memberships from annual members at the reduced rates, this means the number of reminders sent to Annual subscribers will drop.

There has been a change in policy at DVA which I believe will be detrimental to all Veterans from all conflicts due to privatisation of the Pharmaceutical hot line when your doctor gets

authorisation for prescriptions, the document is included in the Newsletter. Perhaps members could raise the issue with their GP and Local Federal Member.

In conclusion please stay safe and as well as possible in this uncertain time.

John Pollock,

President

## **PROFILE**

**13947 BARRIE A. PARKER**

**MALAYA, 1966/67 TOUR SVN**



Born in Brisbane in 1937 and started school in 1942 at Greenslopes State. I still remember the warm and often sour milk issued to all pupils at lunch time. Our house was near the Greenslopes Military Hospital and I recall the long convoys of ambulances when the hospital ships came into Brisbane Ports. One day General (later Field Marshall) Montgomery came to visit the hospital and drove past our house. My brother Wally and I were standing out front, Wally with a beautifully made tank and I with a large wooden field gun. Monty was in an open car and he looked at us and said “There’s a couple of real Aussies”. We moved from Greenslopes to Stafford and I finished my schooling at Stafford State School when I was 15.

Jobs were easy to come by in the 50s and I spent time from job to job finishing up at Peter’s Milk delivering bulk milk to cafes and theatres in Brisbane City. This was heavy work and I was still a weedy something had to give.

I joined the Army on 22 Sep 55. After basic training I was allocated to Artillery. I did a 40mm Bofors course with Sgt Paddy Adams. I remember having to shout "Held" when we jumped onto the safety platform. After all that I was posted to 100 'A' Fd Bty at Georges Heights. This was a good posting for a new gunner with so many experienced members. Our BSM was Nipper Race and there was a long list of people who wanted a pup from his slouch hat.

I was then posted to Brisbane to 122 Mobile Coastal Bty at Kelvin Grove where I was in charge of 2 shiny new search lights. We did a deployment to Fort Scratchly in NSW but didn't get to fire our 8 inch guns. I'm still not sure what we did there.

Next posting was to 102 Fd Bty at Holsworthy and we were equipped with 4.2 inch towed mortars. This was something new and we spent a lot of time working with them.

I joined 101 Fd Bty for my first tour of Malaya (Malaysia – Aug 57) as a Gun Bdr in 1959. While in Malaya I did a Malay Language course in Singapore. I met my future wife Rose when a group of us went dancing at the Green Parrot in Penang. The battery lived in Atap huts at Butterworth – cool in summer, wet when it rained. The RAAF Base was just a few Kms away and I had my first glimpse of the RAF Vulcan Bomber, impressive. We returned to Australia in 1961.

On returning to Australia I learned 103 Bty had sent a Bdr home for medical reasons. I applied for this posting and joined 103 Bty as a gun Bdr mid term. When 103's tour finished I stayed on and joined 102 Fd Bty until our return to Wacol.

I went to the regimental barber and ran into an old sparring partner, Major Nick Marshall. He asked if I wanted to go to Vietnam with 101 Fd Bty as he was a Gun Sgt short. I jumped at the chance, no Canungra, family settled. I left with 101 Fd Bty in 1966. While I was in Vietnam my wife won 2<sup>nd</sup> prize in a gardening competition. They sent the cheque to me in Vietnam, "Not Happy Jan!"

107 Fd Bty was my next home and we were posted to Malaysia with our families for 2 years. We were a sub unit of 26 Regt RA and carried out training exercises with Bell Helicopters and Hovercraft. We dropped a major part of the L5 Gun into the Malacca Straits (probably still there – useless guns anyway), they fell apart in Vietnam. The Battery returned home in 1969

In 1970 I was posted to Officer Cadet School, Portsea, Vic. as Weapons Instructor and later as the Warrant Officer Training. This school is now part of Duntroon. I was at Portsea for 3 years (non corps), it was one of my better postings 2 lots of leave each year between intakes, good fishing, good mess, all Corps. From here back to Wacol.

4 Fd Regt was still coming up to strength. I missed out on BSM 107 & 108 and was posted as BSM HQ Bty.

I took my discharge in Townsville 23 Sep 1975 (one day extra – another story).

After discharge I tried my hand at small business – retail – and retired in 2000. My wife Rose and I have three children, 7 grandchildren and eight great grandchildren. We are proud of our son Major Robert Parker Rtd who led a company of Infantry to East Timor with General Peter Cosgrove.

## **PROFILE**

**1734166 GARY BASFORD**

**1969/70 TOUR**



My full time Army stint was pretty short being a Nasho and my time with 101 Battery in 69/70 in SVN, as a reinforcement, was even briefer after being plucked out of Arty Tac HQ in Nui Dat to join the Bty at FSB Discovery in Nov 1969. Quickly following, we were then air inserted into FSB Picton in the May Tao Mountains for that long operation. I said goodbye to you all when the Bty left SVN in May 70 & while I stayed on with 108 Bty 4 Fd Regt until it was time to go home for discharge & my return to civvy life. As it turned out I served in all three Field Regts in 18 months!

I will share my brief story in 3 section – pre-army followed by my army career with particular emphasis on our time together in SVN & finish with my post army days for your interest maybe?

## **Pre-Army**

I was born in Sydney in 1947. My early education at Dee Why was continued in 1955 at the Stafford State School in Brisbane when my family moved to Queensland. I did well at primary school due especially to a very hard teacher, in my Grade 8 Scholarship year in 1960, who had a bad reputation as a tough teacher. I think this set me up well in terms of focus & discipline. I moved onto the newly opened Everton Park State High School where I completed junior & Senior years. My family was not well off & at times throughout my school years encouraged me to think about a job. Fortunately, I had teachers who encouraged me to continue my studies at higher levels. I was offered a Commonwealth Scholarship at the end of Grade 12 (1964) followed by a Qld Gov scholarship to go to the University of Queensland, undertaking a 3-year Bachelor of Science Degree & graduating as a Geologist in 1967.

In early 1967, my birthday marble appeared for NS callup, but I could defer for a year. I commenced work as an Engineering Geologist for 6 months in 1968 believing that the Army had forgotten me. Well that was rather silly! However, those initial six months employment were strangely my first connection with the quarrying and construction material industry, an association which in many ways remained throughout my entire working life.

## **Army Career**

I entered the Army at "Fraser's Paddock" Enoggera on 17 July 1968 for recruit training at 3 TB Singleton. I was subsequently selected as 1 of 13 recruits for officer training at OTU (Scheyville near Windsor NSW) arriving there 2 Aug. It was tough, intensive training designed to prepare young officers for active service in Vietnam as Platoon Commanders. The pass rate for this course was only 60% & it changed my life & to some degree shaped the rest of my professional & private life.

I was posted into Artillery & immediately did the Section Commander's Course at the School of Artillery in early 1969. My posting was to 12 Fd Regt at Holsworthy as the Assistant Adjutant to Captain Reid, just returned from SVN. Thought I was going to see out my 2 year army commitment in Australia until a call from a senior officer "The Directorate of Artillery" who stated that as I was Canungra trained & ready to go, I would be posted to SVN as a replacement Artillery Officer. Given very little choice, I agreed to his "offer", but deep down, I think, I did want to test out my hard-earned military skills.

Without going into too much detail, when arriving in SVN, I started in Arty Tac HQ, then did a short stint in Baria as Sector Liaison Officer where a Sgt and myself seemed to be driving in a landrover all over the province doing whatever was required & meeting some very strange/interesting people. It remains mainly a blur to this day as to just what the hell we were really doing!! It felt incredibly dangerous at the time?

In Nov 69 I was posted to 101 Bty and choppered into FSB Discovery followed then by the many FSB's we set up as new or redeployed into, including the Horseshoe twice. 101 Bty

then went home leaving me to see out my time assisting with the new 108 Bty in settling in & to serve on their first operations.

My Battery role was always Left Section Commander (Delta, Echo & Foxtrot Guns). Never got to do GPO, but then Boydie, Tony & Fenters were doing fine

I remember so many of you still to this day when seeing names in the Newsletter which triggers memories good & not so good at times. I can honestly say that I enjoyed the company & professionalism of all of you I worked with from the BC, BK down to you hard working Gunners slogging it out. I have nothing but respect. There are some of you I have caught up with since those days in various circumstances. Unfortunately, I am not a very active member of our 101 Bty Association but I have been a Life Member for a long time now & really appreciate the efforts of those of you who have kept the Association going.

As Dave Richard-Preston did recently in his memoir, I would like to mention some particular “moments” with you. Some of you should remember some of these “moments”. These are in no particular time order.

- My first day of arrival, flying from Saigon down to Nui Dat we took small arms fire into the Caribou’s wings. Welcome to country!
- Week 2 returning to the Dat from Baria with a Sgt, the rice paddies around us exploded with bullets. Thinking ambush we nearly rolled the vehicle, took cover in the table drain with our rifles & grenades. We ascertained finally that it was an Aussie truck convey of soldiers up front having some “fun” scaring the life out of the Vietnamese women workers in the paddies. It unfortunately led to charges being laid – I will say no more.
- While in Arty Tac, our 1 Fd Regt CO wanted me to go airborne with an American in a little “push-pull” Bird Eye plane & get to understand the immediate areas around our base. When he was flying us into the trajectory path of our guns being calibrated in the Nui Dinh/Thi Vi Hills which I knew from the warnings being given from Arty Tac to all aircraft in the area, I intervened! I could see the fall of shot. He was thankful & then I noticed his map which looked like it was all of Vietnam on one page he had ripped out of our Phillips Atlas that we all had at primary school!
- Being mortared at the Horseshoe from Dat Do, the village below, during New Year truce. Sgt Brian Ranson of Foxtrot gun & I know all about this as we were in our forward sentry position when the fireworks began.
- The lost patrol – FSB Peggy - I took out a 12 man clearing patrol on approaching dusk on 18 Jan 70. We quickly entered dense bamboo and before long I had lost my bearings. I asked my Sig (Dave Richard-Preston I do believe), with his mapping and FO experience, and another of the blokes who was map reading with me. Both responded that “I have no \*\*\*\*\* idea sir, thought you knew”. The situation became tense and my field notes of that afternoon state “came across fighting pit system,

then a spider hole or cache or tunnel system (threw in smoke), OP in trees plus water point with well used track, then voices & noises – nogs up other bank, found one of

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- our old camps dug up, popping & tin noises followed, then a possible mortar base plate position”. Our patrol became very concerned that we had bumped into something bigger than we could handle especially as one of our M 60’s was inoperable. We got out “fast” into the FSB safely thankfully & I reported our findings to our BC & CO 6RAR. H & I’s were directed into the suspect areas that night &
- following nights. My field notes show that in the 2 afternoons after, Sgts Terry Bucknell & Tassy Woodard patrolled into these same areas. I am sure the enemy by then would have been long gone, but there was no doubt that they were probing our wire & mine defended perimeter. At one of my OTU reunions subsequently, I shared this story stating how embarrassed I was when I really was a very good map reader & navigator through my Geology training as well as OTU Officer training. Two of these fellow officer graduates told me to get over it, as they, on occasions, got lost & were not sure which valley they were in or got stymied by bamboo (like our patrol), so they just called in an artillery round or two to sort out where they were!! One was a Platoon Commander in RAR & the other was our only graduate in SAS. So, I did get over it.
- A US Arty officer from the 155’s deployed with us in FSB Picton (May Tao’s) invited me to inspect their gun battery. Being friendly, we spoke with his men as he introduced me, as we moved through their gun emplacements. One guy responded to his officer with “why don’t you go and get \*\*\*\*d sir!” Astonished, I asked more questions of this fellow. His response – “Don’t worry about that Gary most of the guys here are on “grass. They’ll be OK”. They were behind our forward FSB position & often fired low angle missions over us. Not impressed!
- In Vung Tau on R & I for one night when Sgt Jim Hollins, myself & several of our men got caught out after curfew in a place we probably should not have been. Needless to say, the situation was diabolical. When a group of Provos stormed, Jim & I confided that this was not going to be pretty & not a good outcome for him & me particularly. Unbelievably it turned out that the 2Lt Provo Officer confronting us was a classmate of mine from officer training. He said “Basford what the \*\*\*\*, I can’t believe it”. Shook his head and then said “You have 2 minutes to get out”. We all escaped thankfully. I have never met him again since at any of our OTU reunions or elsewhere. I believe to this day, I would throw my arms around him in gratitude. My mates often remark “that’s probably the very reason he doesn’t come to reunions!”
- FSB Elaine when the Skycrane totally levelled our site while delivering a size O dozer. Every bit of canvas, star pickets, galvanized steel sheets, our loose gear were airborne, & no one was hurt. Remarkable, as I expected many severe injuries!

- Shortly after that horror chinook crash, we left FSB Discovery for FSB Picton & my particular chinook had some issues with one of its engines missing a beat repeatedly. The US hook man was tap dancing to the sequence. I looked around & all of us were
- going white with fear thinking that surely this one was not going to crash also? It was frightening.
- I remember the day vividly when at FSB Peggy (I think), the Engineers were demolishing 2 unexploded naval rounds (big mothers). The first huge explosion started a fire in our claymore field & BK Alan got me to grab some blokes & put it out. It so happened as I left my underground cover, the 2<sup>nd</sup> explosion went off sending a very large chunk of jagged, searing hot shrapnel within cms of me tearing the sandbags to shreds beside me. Alan & I did have words about this later!!
- My last operation was with 108 Bty & was in the “famous” Nui Dinh/Thi Vi Hills region. First day in the FSB my foxhole was the smallest, deepest, best protected of all, which drew some derision. But, as I tried to convince the BK & others, that the noggies knew exactly where we were & that we were newbies, we should fully expect a mortar attack that night. And that is exactly what happened!
- A few days later, I had only days left in country & said my goodbyes to 108 Bty & was airlifted by a Bushranger Huey back to Nui Dat. I was wired up so I could speak with pilot during the flight. As we passed over Bin Ba, in the rows of rubber trees, a few spooked enemy made a dash. The pilot, in a wink, with both machine gunners ready to engage, choppered into the rubber trees & all I could see were branches & the rotors trimming leaves. To this day, I don't exactly know what I said, but the pilot pulled out saying - “OK Gary calm down, they would be some of the luckiest enemy on the planet”. The crew knew I was heading home to Aust. & respected that dying in an accident a few days out, was not on. My close friend, Tony Garland had died in that horrible mine incident in late April 70 when he had only days left in country & was returning to his newly wedded bride, Elizabeth. The mitigating circumstances (which I won't discuss) and the loss of Tony unfortunately continues to haunt me at times.

## **Post Army**

I spent many years after discharge in July 1970 in the Qld Government as a Senior Engineering & Geotechnical Geologist based in Brisbane, Townsville & Toowoomba. We were on the leading edge of geotechnical investigation work for significant major projects for the Qld Government. These were truly frontier days and we contributed to the continued research and development closely working in teams with engineers in decision making and risk mitigation.

As a result of my prolonged technical contact with the private quarrying companies, in 1994 I was invited to join a major Australian multinational company as their Senior



Geologist/Geotechnical Manager – CSR, Readymix, Rinker, Cemex & now Holcim – major construction material, concrete producer & precast/pipe manufacturer. I travelled widely in Australia & was responsible for the development of many quarry & mine sites, seeking new rock & sand resources & developing local & national company strategies. I worked almost autonomously for the senior managers for those 14 years & these were my most exciting, informative, hard & rewarding work years. It was a nice way to retire in late 2008 when I coerced a younger, well credentialed geologist friend to take over my role.

Well, I thought I had retired, but after significant pressure by the quarrying industry and other consulting organisations, I used my private Geobas Consulting Company, which I had been operating also for many years, to work on several exciting major quarrying and mining projects. This continued for 3 years & it was enormously enjoyable as it was on my terms & my hourly rate. But when I had to expand my business to service the growing work requests, it was obvious that it was really the time to retire & that I did.

Lyndsay (Lyn) & I became engaged before I left for service in Vietnam, postponing marriage until I safely returned. We have been married now for over 50 years. We have 2 sons, 2 daughters-in-law (daughters we never had) & 4 grandchildren (2 girls & 2 boys) who are aged 12 to 15. Being a grandfather is great fun & exciting with genuine enjoyment for all of them & me. At times I do try to be serious & act as a true mentor to them.

My interests remain outdoors with active overseas travel, body surfing, golf, gym and walks. Have travelled widely with my wife to places like China, Middle East, Africa, Turkey, the Antarctic, Arctic, Iceland, Galapagos Is, South America, etc. We have had major overseas travel disrupted this 2020 year by “The Virus” which was disappointing but thank goodness we were not caught out in Morocco, Spain & Portugal where we were supposed to be in March- May 2020.

I have now walked annually for the last 15 years in places like the NZ Milford Track, Great Ocean Track in Victoria, the Tassie Overland Track Cradle Mt – Lake St Clair, WA Cape to Cape, SA Flinders Ranges, Karajini NP in WA, NSW Blue Mts & so many other challenging but beautiful places. These walks take several days & require serious lead-in training – all part of the fun. I do this with 5 of my close friends - ex fellow OTU army officers & other geologist work colleagues. We have been nick-named “The 6 Pack” by a German lady hiker on our 2010 Tassie Overland Trek & it has stuck ever since. These annual walks/hikes & the special genuine long-term friendships are a part of my retirement which has been so enjoyable. We plan to continue these walks annually while all members of the group still can! We are aged 73 -75 with health niggles emerging, but no one wants to be the first to pull the pin. The challenge therefore has become quite serious!

I sincerely wish you all well. Continue a healthy life as useful members of this our baby boomer generation who serve our current & younger Australian society well. We need to remain outgoing, if not still reactionary, which was a strong part of what we were in our youth. My volunteering life continues as a Legatee with Brisbane Legacy now for 11 years

which has been very fulfilling, if not at times, demanding. Our Legacy Widows do deserve our full recognition & support. We owe it to our mates.

## **SECRETARY'S REPORT**

### **An Update on Nick Marshall's Condition**

The following was received from Brigitte Fudge, Nick's daughter:

"Hi Brian,

A belated note to say thank you for all the newsletters. I spent this morning with Dad, barely getting a peep out of him as he read on by himself.

I am unsure how much he remembers though I do know he is enjoying reading them and recognises some names.

Thank you for forwarding to us,

I hope you have a happy, healthy and safe holiday season.

regards

Brigitte"

### **Association Memorabilia**

Just a reminder to members with Anzac Day approaching we have stock available for purchase. Caps, Plaques, Ties and a few Association Polo Shirts with Operation Bribie embroidered on them'

### **Association Reunion**

If all the stars are aligned it is intended to hold our Annual Reunion and AGM in Coffs Harbour on 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> September. The 18<sup>th</sup> will 55years since the first tour of SVN departed Australia in 1966 and the 19<sup>th</sup> when we arrived in country. We will have the Meet and Greet on the 17<sup>th</sup> and the dinner on the 18<sup>th</sup>. The Meet and Greet, The AGM and the Reunion dinner will all be held at the Coffs Harbour RSL. David Bird has done some ground work and advised that the Bentleigh Motor Inn which is within crawling distance of the RSL, has advised the following rates per room per night:

Singles \$100, Doubles \$110, Twin \$120 (Queen & Single or Double & Single).

Also John Pollock has made some enquires through an old mate and the RSL will give us discounted rates on the meal and drinks. Exact cost will be in the next newsletter. It would be great to see a really good roll up from Malaya/First Tour and Second Tour members.

## **Coming Soon to this Newsletter**

A revamped Manning Detail of the 1969/70 compiled by members of the second tour who are currently working hard on it and will have it ready for the next newsletter

## **Membership Subscriptions**

Just a reminder that those members who have not renewed their subscription for 2021 that they will no longer receive the newsletter or notification of any activities after this newsletter.

Brian Collins

Secretaru

## **Book Review**

The following was submitted by Allan Baldwin

THE LONG SHADOW - BOOK REVIEW

Worthwhile for all SVN Vets to consider reading.

## **Obituaries**

**Billy Tooke.** The following was written by Maj Graeme Wren.

**I first met Bill in 1978 at the S of A Lark Hill on one of my exchange trips to the UK. Bill was the Master Gunner. I then ran into him again through courses at S of A and when I was a SMIG at the S of A at North Head, Manly 93-95 and Bill was the Senior SMIG on Gunnery Wing. We worked very closely together. I learnt much about gunnery from Bill. There was nothing he did not know, a walking encyclopaedia and some very good techniques when explaining survey to the uninitiated.**

**Bill and Juliet (Julie) would attend the SGT'S Mess for functions and were always leading the way. Great times.**

**I ran into Bill at the Hobart airport about 2010. I could not believe it. I might be wrong, but he might have been suffering from early dementia as he could not remember our time at the S of A, which would be impossible, given what we got up to.**

**A lovely man and a gentleman. He will be missed....such good memories...**

RIP Billy...

## **Malcolm Thomas Rawcliffe (Clagg) Wilkinson MBE**

An obituary for the late Clagg Wilkinson has been posted on the RAAHC website. A link to the obituaries section of the web site is:

[http://artilleryhistory.org/gunners\\_past\\_and\\_present/obituaries/obituaries\\_home\\_page.html](http://artilleryhistory.org/gunners_past_and_present/obituaries/obituaries_home_page.html) or you can access the site via [www.artilleryhistory.org](http://www.artilleryhistory.org)

### **ADF soldiers moving tribute**

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. Harboursing 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.

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 gunfire 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 into 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 into 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.

In this paragraph, I'm trying to give you some idea of the mindset 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 was 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 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. 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 Mortarman. 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 into the Bushmaster and say goodbye. 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 goodbye. He was also a 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 onto 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, this was truly an amazing sight. 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. Everyone 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

### **A Letter to old Soldiers and Service Personnel**

Remember swearing the oath, thinking you were special and still free

Then you arrived at the depot to become *idle horrible people* for all to see

Day and night Spartan routines, which would please any father's heart

Before dawn, sleep stolen by a bugle call for another long day to start.

Polishing, beds made, rifles cleaned and a rushed meal of porridge glue

Barrack room inspections revealed specks of dust thus extra chores to do

On graduating to a unit, it became your family forever and a day

More rules, and if you broke them, the only hope was to pray

“Honour, love of country, duty first and all for one and one for all”

Your heart and mind so responsive to each and every bugle call

You were ready for war, to fight and win, and always care for each other

To make sure; there was a fierce, angry sergeant as your adopted mother

In war you tasted grief, hunger, thirst and so often, doubts and fear

Courage was fueled by the comfort of comrades, ever so near

There was faith in your leaders and all of you were as one

When all seemed lost, and as ordered, you all stood fast and won

Whatever the odds; never did you relent heart and spirit to any foe.

When you came home; sadly, many carried packs of restless woes

Those who have not been part of the military will never understand why  
Soldiers risk all with the fall of the dice as they go forward to live or die.  
Their lives bound by proud history, honour, duty, and dear comrades all  
To dishonor the sacred creed is to be banished and never again to stand tall  
Their strength is unity, mate ship, pride, love of country and its way of life  
Always shared are the precious dreams, often conceived during bloody strife  
Now you grow old and a new generation of soldiers marches by with pride  
Like you once were; in step, heads held high, and always as one, side by side  
You can watch and cheer the young column, yet no longer follow  
Young hearts, laden with the unknown; spirits high, marching into tomorrow  
They pass aged footprints of peace and war where you have already been  
Then will be your last and smartest salute, until the column can't be seen  
George Mansford©January 2021

### **Life in China (Continued) – John Pollock**

Well everyone, unfortunately and I guess hopefully this will be my last report from China. My wife's Temporary Residence Visa was granted on 6 January 2021, only 11 months after lodgement. This was very surprising as the average time for grants had been between 17-21 months. We believe it was quicker because of the COVID-19 crisis. Immigration has probably had more staff to concentrate on Spouse and family visas because they have not been processing tourist, student and work visa for many months. To that end we have booked flights to Australia on 11 April 21. Finger crossed they don't cancel them at the last minute.

In this report I will speak about the fantastic mobile phone system developed here in China in 2011. It is a phone App developed a number of years ago called **WeChat**. The app is now used in 25 countries and can be used in 17 languages. To use it you don't need any Chinese ID only a phone number for yourself and people you contact. It is an ideal tool to use if travelling overseas because it allows you to communicate with non-English speaking people.

It can be downloaded from Google etc.

Most people here don't use cash everything is paid by WeChat or the competitor Alipay.

All businesses big and small use a QR code card or scanner at their till or checkout for payment. You can also send and receive cash on it, pay utility bills, book airline, train,



theatre tickets, pay for your bus and taxi fares, top up mobile phones, Uber eats, Hotel bookings and payment, pay off credit cards. To operate the App you just open it, select scan for the **QR code** or **Money** for the instore scanner.

Once the scan is completed enter the amount, then your pin number and it is done. Instantaneously you receive a message showing you the payment receipt, including the vendor which stays on your phone as a permanent record. This feature is really great if you have to return something. You can also get your favourite restaurant, coffee shop store etc to scan their loyalty cards onto your phone, no need to carry plastic cards.

However I have left the best until last. You can use it as a phone for voice calls, make video calls, send text messages; both send and receive photographs and videos anywhere in the world. Best of all each and every one of the applications, including download are **FREE**, no charges or annual fees involved.

It has been one of the main links used between the Association Secretary and myself to organise the Association business and to keep in contact with family and friends in Australia.

An additional feature in the scan mode is translation, if I want to purchase an item I select scan, slide it over to translate, hold it over the item written in Chinese and I want to read what it is, press the button and immediately it translates to English, if required I press the button again and it captures the translation into my photo album. Very handy when out by yourself and don't read Chinese or any other language when overseas.

One of the main uses I have for it is when texting Chinese friends or my wife if we want to discuss a complex matter. I just go to my contact list select the person, type my message as a text send, on their end press translate and up comes the conversation in Chinese.

Their answer in Chinese comes in I press translate it then becomes English, amazing.

Another event occurred in January, we live adjacent to our local bus depot, no 16 route, on one weekend they replaced the 20 odd petrol driven old buses with brand new very quiet and smooth electric ones which means they are starting to follow major cities like Shanghai and Wuhan who have had them some time. Only problem I see is you will not hear them coming up behind you same as the electric motor scooters which are a problem here at pedestrian crossing, by the way no one stops at them anyway.

In conclusion I have really enjoyed my 18 months living here in China, a very diverse place where everyone is very welcoming to overseas visitors, when the world returns to normal, whenever that is and you are looking for a place to visit I can recommend it. There are many good tour companies here with very good English speaking guides.

### **Photos from 66/67 Tour**

The following photos were submitted by Norm Johns



R to L – Max Sare, Alan Grice, Ted Miekus  
Ross Teschendorff

L to R – Barrie Parker, John Hughes, Frank  
Buxton, John Woolhouse, Frank Roughan



L to R – Harry Kent, Bill Smith

Sharing the Dust

**Note:**

Thanks goes to the office of Terry Young MP, Federal Member for Longman for the printing of this Newsletter.