



# 'FOLLOW THE SAPPER'

**Follow The Sapper**

## Greetings fellow Sappers and Friends.

Birth is a wonderful thing. I have been fortunate to attend the birth of my two sons; to hold them while they were still wired to their Mum; to watch them turn from that strange blue colour to a healthy pinkish hue. It was a great privilege when I was the Orderly Room Sergeant of 1 FD SQN Group to be able to advise some of our men that they had become fathers. They could not be at the birth of their children. They were at Nui Dat. That event began with a union of husband and wife then on RTA came a wonderful reunion. How great it would have been for the new dad to meet his new child for the first time.

Next year, 2016, is the 50th anniversary of 1 Field Squadron Group's birth in Nui Dat. What a birth. 3 Field Troop RAE deployed in 1965 under command of 1 RAR. In May 1966 the rest of the Squadron Group arrived and were reunited with 3 Troop. I was serving on the AS3051 John Monash and was in Vung Tau at that time. I can only imagine the reunion between old mates who had already seen action in Bien Hoa, and the new arrivals. As with all who served, our Group left its mark.

All births leave their mark. I see the Group's birth in Nui Dat as being somewhat similar to that of a baby. It steadily grew and gained strength with maturity in that environment. It enjoyed happy times and tragic unhappiness at any loss. God knows there were too many. Then as those who made up the Group moved on and new members arrived, the Group aged well until it too left that place of its Vietnam birth.

So what am I on about here. When putting my editorial together, I had in mind the word reunion. Reunions must have a beginning; a birth as it were. I looked it up in my trusty Roget's Thesaurus which provided many appropriate words including sociality, friendship, social gathering and festivity. Those words surely describe that reunion of the Group in 1966; the reunion of partners and children on RTA and without doubt the reunion of our Group at Twin Towns in 2015.

I was amazed to see Barry Hawthorn lay a wreath. Barry was the 2IC of B Company, Army Apprentice School in 1963 when I was undergoing my training to be a clerk - 18th intake. He was a terrific mentor for us young lads. Then John Opie appeared on the scene. Another old mate from our past. Finally, for me anyway, was to meet up with Phil Kudnig again. Phil was the OC of the Group in 1971. I had not seen these blokes in years. And there were so many other old mates to re-connect with. I am sure that was the case for all who were there. It was a cracker of a reunion filled with sociality, friendship and festivity. My Thesaurus description was right on the money. (See photos next page)

... Derek Smith - Editor

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or  
PO Box 703 Warwick. Qld. 4370

**facebook**



Barry Hawthorn and wife with Derek Smith 2015.



Dennis Pegg, Phil Kudnig and Derek Smith 2015.  
(The 2IC, OC and Orderly Room Sergeant in 1971)

### A Short Extract from the Nui Dat News 18th August 1971

*“We have much pleasure in making known the fact that the Squadron is honoured by the presence of a member of what is possibly the oldest club known to mankind. He gained his membership a few weeks ago during an impressive presentation in the Officers Mess. We of NDN wish to congratulate young Peter Weingott who is now a member of the Phantom Club, itself over 400 years old. We believe he proudly displays his presentation of an autographed picture of the Phantom, in his room in 3 Troop where he also keeps his priceless collection of Phantom comics. Well done Peter.”*

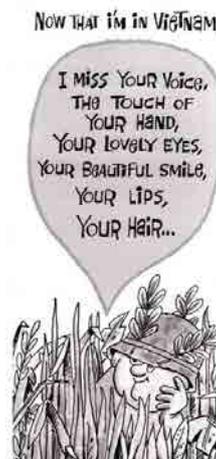


By way of a brief background, the cunning chief POGO aka Derek Smith, noted that Lt. Weingott was regularly receiving largish parcels through the mail. Curiosity got the better of Sgt. Smith. He ever so carefully tore the corner of one of these packages where he discovered a swag of Phantom comics. Well to each his own I suppose. Most preferred Playboy magazine that came free via the Americans. Not being able to resist temptation, POGO Smith nicked one of the comics and with the approval of the 2IC - Dennis Pegg, sent off an application for membership of the Phantom Club for young Peter. And the rest is history. Great fun. Peter, wherever you are, I hope you can enjoy this little blast from the past.

### Humour Me



Sourced from the book Stand Easy.



Cards from Vietnam PX The reverse side of the card.

**PLEASE  
SEND  
THEM**

To all our avid readers and fellow Sappers - I am sure you have some great photos and yarns that we would all enjoy reading. We want more content for "Follow the Sapper". Please, if you have stuff you are happy to share, pass it along to me.

My email address is [dsmith@ozemail.com.au](mailto:dsmith@ozemail.com.au).



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Cover photo: "Elevation of the senses" and was dedicated on 8 October 2015 - AWM

## Commemorations

2015 has been a big year for commemorations. As we reported in our last newsletter, members of the Group joined with our current serving members of 1 Field Squadron and members of 1 Combat Engineer Regiment, and marched in Darwin this last ANZAC Day. This year we also celebrate 70 years since the surrender of the Japanese which saw the end of World War II. On 15th August 1945 the Commander-in-Chief issued this Order of the Day from Borneo.



AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES

# ORDER OF THE DAY

by **GENERAL SIR THOMAS BLAMEY;**  
**Commander-in-Chief**

Advanced LHQ, Borneo,  
15th August, 1945.

### SURRENDER OF JAPANESE.

The Japanese have surrendered.

Our long and arduous struggle has ended in complete victory.

The climax has come at the time when all six Australian Divisions are fighting strenuously, each on its own area, in the far flung battle line. No divisions amongst the Allies have contributed more to the downfall of our enemies than ours.

Our general officers and our commanders of all grades, our regimental officers and our warrant and non-commissioned officers have led you unfalteringly to victory. Under their guidance, the troops have been formed into a magnificent army to the pride and glory of Australia.

We have fought through the burning days and freezing nights of the desert. We have fought through the heat and sweat of tropical jungles. We have defeated the Italians and the Germans and we would soon have destroyed completely the Japanese before us.

We are now to go to our homes, having done our part in ensuring freedom, for which we have fought so long and successfully, and so let us stand together in future years to ensure that it remains the crowning heritage of Australian people. Above all, we give thanks to the Almighty for His greatest and crowning mercy that marks for all people the total downfall of tyranny.

General,  
Commander-in-Chief,  
AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES.

28287/45.

Source: AWM Canberra, ACT, Stand Easy, 1945

Another significant commemoration was the 100th anniversary of the completion of Watsons Pier under the watchful eye of Lt. Stan Watson at Gallipoli and the following Waterloo Dinner. Approximately 90 serving and ex serving Sappers and their partners were at Gallipoli for this great occasion including Bill Watson (grandson of Stan) and other members of the Watson clan. All were ably looked after by Benjamin Hayes and his team from Bronia travel. Ben had an expert group of guides who provided us with detailed visits to the battlefields of Gallipoli spanning seven days. It was a great time enjoyed by all and what a way to mark those 100th anniversaries.



Bill Watson, Joshua Funder and Derek Smith at the site of Watsons Pier, Gallipoli 2015



Derek, John Raddatz and Keith Christensen at Gallipoli 2015.



Head of Corps Brig. Wayne Budd, John and Chris Raddatz at Waterloo Dinner, Gallipoli

## The Western Front - Continued

### Armentieres, The Battle of The Somme, Pozieres, Mouquet Farm, The Winter of 1916 and The Engineers Hit Back

#### Armentieres

The township of Armentieres lay about 3 kms from the front line with the River Lys close by. The township is mentioned in Roman writings and its name is derived from "a place to raise herds of cattle". Its proximity to the front line and its occupation by both British Forces from 1914 to 1918 and then German Forces from April until October 1918 resulted in its total destruction. It was rebuilt after WWI only to be destroyed again in WWII and has been rebuilt yet again.

The sappers found that the water table in this area was very high which meant that fire trenches were often so flooded that they could not be occupied for any extended period of time. Breastworks were constructed - "if you can't dig down, you have to build up". They attended to communication trenches as best they could and provided extensions for the supply of water to the front line. Working as a part of the overall engineer plan, the British side had battalions of Pioneers. These Pioneer Battalions were commanded mainly by infantry officers, but would almost always have engineer officers on their strength. The work of the Pioneer Battalions was outstanding and they provided indispensable combat support to the combat arms. The Pioneer Battalions fought as infantry when required and this occurred many times on the Western Front.

The long planned, joint British/French, Battle of The Somme was launched on 1 July 1916 and, in part, involved 13 British Divisions of the 4th Army attacking 5 German Divisions. It achieved partial success with much of the German second line of defences having been captured. But the cost was high. By 14 July, the British had suffered in excess of 100,000 casualties. Fresh Divisions were urgently needed. The 1st ANZAC Corps which included 1 DIV (with its 1, 2 and 3 FD COYs AE), 2 DIV (with its 5, 6 and 7 FD COYs AE), 4 DIV with its 4 and 13 FD COYs and the NZ DIV (with its 1 and 2 COYs NZE) were ordered to join the British 4th Army in the area of the city of Amiens. Almost at the same time another attack near the village of Fromelles was launched on 19 July. It included the Australian 5th DIV containing its 8, 14 and 15 FD COYs AE, plus elements of the 3rd Australian Tunneling Company. It was a ghastly failure and cost Australia 5,533 casualties in just one night.

#### Pozieres

The task of 1 DIV was the capture of the village of Pozieres. Its objective was to take half of the township and establish a new front line. Having achieved that, 1 DIV was then required to continue its assault and take the remainder of the town. The job for the sappers was intense. They needed to dig "jumping off" (read Line of Departure) trenches, communication trenches, "dug outs" and "strong points". Dug Outs were deep underground structures capable of housing at least one platoon of infantry with protection from enemy artillery fire. Strong Points were field fortifications which provided all-round defence, including barbed wire obstacles, and were designed as bulwarks against the inevitable determined German counter-attack. The responsibility for this work was allocated mainly to the Engineer Field Companies and the Pioneer Battalions.

The attack was launched in the early hours of 23 July 1916 and 1,2 and 3 FD COYs were soon at work in the new front line established in the village of Pozieres. They were assisted by 5 FD COY (2 DIV) and 13 FD COY (4 DIV). The work sites included buildings which had been so intensely shelled that much of the rubble had turned to soft powder. The earth was firm and damp making digging less strenuous than at Armentieres. They worked non-stop to get the defence measures emplaced and achieved remarkable success considering the circumstances under which they worked. However, daylight arrived and the re-positioned German artillery fired a number of accurate barrages on the Australian forward trenches. 2 FD COY found themselves in a bad place.

The sappers had to scramble for cover and took whatever refuge they could find. Many of the defence works were shelled and had to be repaired or realigned. Some realigned trenches were taped by the engineers above the ground and then the Pioneers or infantry soldiers rushed to the line and dug feverishly. If the misery of the artillery bombardments wasn't enough, the terror of accurate fire from German snipers caused numerous Australian casualties minute after minute. Not surprising that they dug feverishly! 1 DIV fought determinedly during 24 July despite its casualties and on 25 July 1916, the second phase of the attack on Pozieres was launched in order to capture the remainder of the village. 1DIV captured all its objectives but could not continue this assault beyond 25 July. No wonder! 1 DIV had suffered 5,285 casualties in two days of fighting. 1 DIV was relieved by 2 DIV on 25 July. 2 DIV engineers of 5, 6 and 7 FD COYs carried on the work of their brothers in 1 DIV.

However, the attacks on Poziers Heights, two plateaus just to the east and north-east of the township, were intense and strenuous. The Heights overlooked the surrounding area and the Germans did not want to give that advantage away. The German infantry and artillery were very active in counter-attacks and continuous barrages on the 2 DIV positions. It took several major attacks by the units of 2 DIV to secure the area. The sappers had their work cut out for them providing communication trenches, strong points and dug-outs. The fighting, barrages and amount of physical work required to gain this success was described as being far worse and more intense than anything experienced throughout the duration of the Gallipoli Campaign. 2 DIV was relieved by 4 DIV whose job it was to repeal yet more determined German counter-attacks.

And there were tactical problems as well. The engineer support plan would be drawn up prior to an attack. The positioning of strong points and dug-outs were decided. The communication trenches were also pre-determined to a point leading up to the start of the battle. However, due to many circumstances, such as enemy movement, friendly gains or losses and local initiatives of the forward commanders, many of the facilities were prepared and then not used. Worse still, many of the infantry units that needed them had moved too far away to use them anyway. The practice of embedding the sappers with the assault waves of infantry early in the attack was proving to be a command and control problem too - just as it had been for 1 FD COY on 25 April 1915 at Gallipoli.

Too many times the sappers became embroiled in the battle fighting with the infantry or could undertake very little useful engineer works due to a number of battlefield pressures. The process of digging a jumping off trench several days before an attack also defeated any surprise that may have otherwise been possible. On many occasions, this facility was prepared about 200 metres from the enemy front line. The Germans knew the direction from which the attack would be launched and prepared for it. A better solution was reached when it was decided to lay a tape where the trench was intended to be dug and then dig the jumping off trench on the night before the attack. The learning curves were steep and costly.

Pozieres was a success for the Australian 1st, 2nd and 4th Divisions and the area was secured against determined and repeated counter-attacks by the Germans attempting to re-take their old positions. This operation cost Australia a total of 12,131 casualties in 17 days. Much had been learned and still more was waiting to be learned about warfare on this scale. This was just the beginning for the 1st ANZAC Corps.

In addition to combat engineers, the Australian Engineer Corps on the Western Front commanded Divisional Signals units and Surveyors. The Signals personnel had a tough time ensuring that communications by hard wire were maintained given that the shelling was so intense that cables were broken almost as quickly as they were laid. A system of laying telephone cables in H configurations helped to ease the problem of broken and damaged lines but was no guarantee of secure communications. Even deeply buried cables were subject to damage and interference by the Germans. The Surveyors worked to extremes helping to locate exactly where things were in a landscape that had lost previously well-recognised landmarks, and where even the course of streams and rivers had been changed due to the intensity of the shelling. Map making for the Surveyors was a full-time job and not an easy task as the landscape was constantly being changed by destruction and impassable mud.

A new combat engineer task arrived. Camouflage from the air. Aeroplanes had made a big impact on the ability for officers to conduct reconnaissance and for artillery fire missions be more efficiently delivered. It was an all-corps responsibility but the main job fell to the Sappers to provide large scale and sensitive area camouflage against aerial observation. The aeroplane also gave rise to aerial photography used to great advantage by the surveyors in the production of their maps. Then came the gas. It was difficult to work in a gas cape and mask. It was even more difficult to recognise ranks and to receive and give orders, particularly under conditions of reduced visibility.

### **Mouquet Farm**

To the north-west of Pozieres, the Germans had developed a well fortified battle ground around Mouquet Farm. This area was on high ground and the Germans were determined to hold it at all costs. This they managed to do for some time. British and Australian Divisions attacked Mouquet Farm from early August until the end of September 1916. Australian formations, in sequence, included the 4th Division (with its 4, 12, and 13 FD COys AE), 1st Division, then 2nd Division and finally the 4th Division yet again. The Germans held out until the end of September at which time they were forced off. The Germans did not have the time nor resources to afford the British and Australian dead, individual burials and simply dug large massed graves into which they put the British and Australian bodies.

Those mass burials lay untouched from 1916 until 2010 when the bodies were exhumed, some identified through DNA from their living relatives and then reinterred in war cemeteries with traditional headstones. Those remains that could not be identified were reinterred along with those whose names were known.

### **Winter 1916**

1, 2 and 4 Divisions were withdrawn from the line in early September and sent to Ypres in Belgium - "Wipers" as the soldiers affectionately called the pulverized town. The men set about making life as comfortable as possible for the onset of winter. They were still required to mount raids on German positions and the Sappers job was to accompany these raids and destroy enemy facilities such as dug outs. This relative "rest" was short-lived. In October 1916, the Australian 1, 2 and 4 Divisions were ordered back into the battlefields of the Somme Valley together with the newly raised 5th Division.

What greeted them resembled something out of a modern day Armageddon movie. Totally shattered towns, all trees stripped to bare stalks, natural drainage destroyed so that water could not effectively drain anywhere, roads and other infrastructure totally mangled. And then it rained and rained and rained. The ooze of mud was everywhere. Horse transport came to a standstill and men had to carry everything forward. In the rear areas where the odd road offered motorised transport, it provided little relief. In the words of a senior officer from 5 DIV: "It took a whole day for a lorry (truck) to complete a journey of 5 miles (8 Kms)". Clearly the tonnages of engineer defence and bridging stores and artillery ammunition needed something better than this.

The Battle of The Somme started on 1 July and ended on 19 November 1916. Winter set in and it was bitter. Both sides now had an equalizer. But, it was just as well that the British, Australian and New Zealand troops were unaware that on the German side, the fields were relatively unmolested, trees still stood proud and streams maintained their original courses.

### **The Engineer Hits Back**

Lessons had been learned throughout 1916. Mistakes had been made. There had to be better ways to do things. The learning curve had to be flattened out, at least a little bit. To this end the Chief-of-Staff of 1st ANZAC Corps, Brigadier Brudenell White, conducted a conference where all his senior sapper officers and some admin and log officers were gathered to develop an engineer plan designed for of the Somme area. The outcome was the adoption of an engineer plan proposed by LTCOL A. Carey who was the Commander Royal Engineers (CRE) of the 5th Australian Division. His plan basically: centralised engineer plans at the highest level, coordinated the engineer stores and equipment plan at the most appropriate levels, gave rise to preparing essential equipment strategically located for an imminent operation as close to its final destination as could be sensibly provided. This may have been a pre-cursor to equipment bridging made famous during WWII, twenty years later.

These outcomes became Australian engineer doctrine for the years ahead and are still as applicable today as they were when first mooted by LTCOL Carey.

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Continued from Page 5 . . .

## The Western Front - Continued

The immediate outcome of the Carey Plan provided an Australian pioneer battalion, three British labour battalions, three infantry battalions withdrawn from forward Divisions and several companies of engineers withdrawn from reserve forces. The total manpower was equivalent to almost eight infantry battalions under the command of two engineer officers. And it didn't finish there. In 1 ANZAC Corps they employed their own 12 x FD COYs plus 13 FD COY RE, 178 and 258 Tunneling Companies RE, five reserve forces companies, four British labour battalions and a company of skilled German prisoners.

Australian engineer workshops, field storage (parks) and support engineers were born here. They worked diligently through the winter to repair roads, provide expedient roadways by using timber for the iconic "corduroy roads", plank roads, duckboards, assault ladders, laundries, water points, pipelines and a host of other combat and line of communication infrastructure. These engineers could be found working from the teeth end of the fighting trenches to the tail end of the logistic train.

They were truly "UBIQUE".

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### I Remember WO2 Barry Crisp - SSM 1 FD SQN GP 1968

Our SSM in Vietnam in 1968 was a quiet achiever. He had a sympathetic ear for any young officer or soldier who wanted to talk to him about any subject whatsoever. Most SSMs are perceived as fire-eating sapper crunching people who you might want to avoid. But that was not Barry, he was more of a father-figure in his well thought out conversations he had with all ranks in the squadron. He was also a courageous man.

I was Troop Officer of 1 Troop. At FSB Coral in May 1968, I commanded the Troop during the most intensive part of the battles there. The most pressing engagement of that battlefield was the morning of 16 May 1968 when 141 NVA REGT, with its three battalions launched battalion attack after battalion attack on the 1st Australian Task Force, particularly against the companies of 1RAR. We copped it too. During the battle, 1 TP drew very close to expending ammunition, particularly for our three GPMGs. My TP Staff Sergeant was Ray Kenny. I asked Ray to organise the second line resupply from SQN HQ. Ray picked up the Tele-K set and phoned the SSM, WO2 Barry Crisp and the conversation went something like this:

Kenny: *"Yeah, g'day Sir, Ray Kenny. My boss wants his second line ammo and he wants it here right bloody now"*

Crisp: *"OK, so send some guys back to collect it from me"*

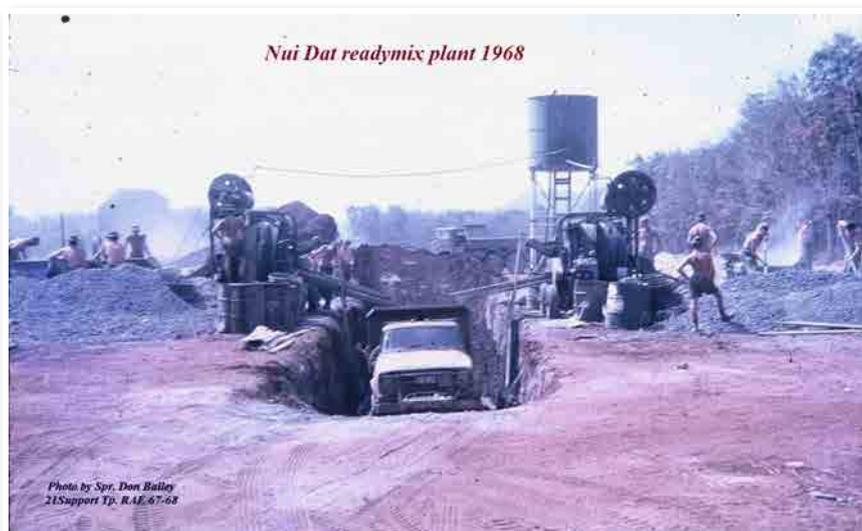
Kenny: *"Are you kidding? We are a bit busy here. How about you organise someone back there to bring it forward?"*

Crisp: *"Wait!"*

Within a minute, Barry Crisp, our SSM, brought up a couple of boxes of ammo and did this several times - on his own. How he managed to dodge all that green tracer is a miracle, but he did. He was a man among men.

We lost him to cancer at 1600 hrs 6 September 2015. He was in the company of his loving wife, Rhonda. He doesn't want any fuss at his passing. No funeral or memorial service, just a quiet get-together and a yarn among old mates. Typical. I will represent 1 FD SQN GP RAE at the gathering that Rhonda Crisp has organised for him.

Follow The Sapper - Ubique  
George Hulse



Sappers hard at work.

Don Bailey kindly sent this photo of the readymix plant for publication.



One of our heroes. Sapper Lloyd Thompson, age 99 years young. A World War II member of 1 FD SQN.

## President's Report November 2015

### Reunion 2015

Our reunion and memorial service at the Twin Towns Services Club was a success. We had some 70 members attend with their partners and we enjoyed each others company immensely. The annual general meeting on 30 August voted in our committee and ensured that the business of the Association continues with enthusiasm.

The memorial service in Chris Cunningham Park was well attended by visitors and sappers alike. The Catafalque Party and Flag Orderly came from 2CER and dined with us as our guests later. The RSM 2CER, WO1 Matthew Dickson, read out the names of every sapper lost to overseas service since 1945. The Padre, Reverend John Reid lead us in prayer and our old boss in Vietnam 1967/68 Colonel John Kemp AM, recited the Ode.

Live music was provided by the Australian Army Band-Brisbane who provided excellent renditions of "Hurrah for the CRE" as we marched our new banner on parade and then at the end of the ceremony played "Wings" to march us off parade. When RSM 2CER called the names of our lost brothers, we paraded a National Flag for every one of them under the control of Major Bob Pfeiffer. It was a moving and memorable experience.

### Reunion 2017

Our next reunion is scheduled for 25, 26 and 27 August 2017 at the Twin Towns Services Club at Coolangatta.

We will conduct our memorial service in a very similar manner to the one for 2015. Please pencil the dates into your diary for 2017.

### New Annual Subscription

The Association AGM was very well attended. One item that was voted on unanimously was the raising of our annual subscription to \$30 per year commencing on and from 1 July 2016. There will be reminders of this in future editions of "Follow The Sapper".

### Unit Citation for Gallantry Report

This initiative has been reported previously. The submission is not yet completed because we continue to receive incredible information about what happened at FSB Coral and Balmoral. We intend to provide as compelling a document as we possibly can with supporting documents and researched information backing it up. We intend to deliver the submission to the Department of Defence in November 2015. More to follow.

### Proposed Trips to Gallipoli 15 April 2018 and Villers-Brettonneux November 2018

I have a number of quotes for the following proposed trips - the best value for money of which are:

1. *Gallipoli 25 April 2018. The estimated quote (subject to change) is \$9,000 per person and includes return economy air travel from Sydney, all transfers in Turkey, tours of Istanbul, the Gallipoli area, Canakkale, 4 star accommodation at Gallipoli including all meals and coach transportation to and from ANZAC Cove.*
2. *Villers-Brettonneux 11 November 2018. The estimated quote (subject to change) is \$9,200 per person and includes economy air travel from Sydney, all transfers, tours of Paris, Ypres, Bruges and the full tour of the battlefields where Australians fought.*

The above quotes are for a minimum of twenty persons. I have six persons who have indicated that they are interested in these proposed trips. You do not have to attend both places to secure a position on the Association tour. Please let me know if you are interested in attending one or both of these proposed visits by emailing me on eddsniffer@optusnet.com.au. The deadline for this is 30 April 2016.

The alternative is not to commit to a paid tour and just agree to meet on-site and form a group at ANZAC Cove on 25 April 2018 or at V-B prior to 1100 hrs 11 November 2018. You organise all your own travel and accommodation arrangements. Please let me know your preference. Remember the deadline for this is 30 April 2016. I need the lead-time to confirm accommodation. Payment arrangements will be confirmed after I assess the degree of interest in these proposed trips.

### Association Polo Shirts

Much to our surprise at the reunion in 2015, our members preferred the polo shirts with the Engineer badge on it - not the bursting bomb with the numeral 1 in the bomb. With this feedback from our members, we will develop future stocks of this item with the preferred logo. If you have an issue with this, please pass your comment on through the Association feedback resource at info@1fieldsappers.org.

### Seasons Greetings

On behalf of every member of the 1 FD SQN GP RAE Association committee, I wish you and your loved ones every happiness, success and health for Christmas and the New Year.

George Hulse

President 1 FD SQN GP RAE Association

10 November 2015



#### Vale: 1735480 Spr John Crocker

Sapper John Crocker passed away on 15 October 2015.  
He served with 1 FD SQN GP in Vietnam 1970/71.



#### Vale: Sapper Paul Cook (Cookie)

Sapper Paul Cook passed away 7th October.  
He served with 1 Troop - 1 FD SQN GP in 1969/1970.

Rest in Peace Sappers, Lest We Forget

## THE LEGEND OF THE CU CHI TUNNELS

By R.J. Stiffy (Steve) Carroll

Crawling through a tunnel  
Like a filthy sewer rat  
A young Australian soldier  
Near a village named Vo Dat.

They'd encountered Cong that morning  
And as they'd followed through  
They'd stumbled on a trapdoor  
'Neath a clump of dead bamboo.

The Field Commander bellowed  
Get the Engineers, fast  
And in minutes Three Troop gathered  
To perform an untried task.

No-one knew what lay below  
No-one even cared  
No-one had the faintest clue  
None before had dared.

The Yankees' boss Westmorland  
Would never stoop so low  
As to order U.S. soldiers  
To search those holes below.

But an Aussie posed the question  
A big resourceful begger  
An Engineer Captain  
With the surname of MacGregor.

'We had better have a bo-peep sir  
See what's down below  
Find out what they've hidden there  
I think we need to know.

So he grouped his men around him  
And asked them what they thought  
And after much discussion  
Found the answers he had sought.

How would they approach the task?  
Was there any special need?  
Who'd go first and who'd go last?  
For none were hero breed.

There was Saunders, Ash and Cookie  
Sanderson, Bowtell  
Unmeopa, Barnett and  
So many more as well.

They'd go down and search the tunnels  
Using teams of just two men  
With pistol torch and little else  
'Till they reached the other end.

But they couldn't know what lay ahead  
They'd never been before  
And they didn't know what danger lay  
Beneath that small trapdoor.

'Twas the boss himself, MacGregor  
Who dared to show the way  
In another tunnel, much the same  
He left the light of day.

It could be done he'd proved his point  
But smaller men than he  
Would have to do the major task  
Down there on hand and knee.

One precious life was lost that day  
To the great eternal sleep  
Trapped in a pocket of noxious air  
In the dark and humid deep.

The reaper swung his scythe that day  
A gallant soldier fell  
But now lies tranquil, valour proved  
Corporal Bob Bowtell.

For days the gallant Sappers searched  
The tunnels depth and length  
Until they were exhausted  
Their guts their greatest strength.

'Let us have one final look'  
A stocky man protested  
'Les and me, we won't take long  
We're fit and fresh, we've rested.'

The Captain paused, they were short of  
time  
The rest were pulling out  
But he gave the nod and two diggers slid  
Into the dark redoubt.

With flashlight in the left hand  
And pistol in the right  
They crawled down through the labyrinth  
Its depths as black as night.

They crawled like that for ages  
Two lads from Broken Hill  
Their clothing caked in mud and sweat  
From the air so hot and still.

Communications? There were none  
They had no outside line  
And battery lights were growing dim  
They were running out of time.

They would have to do a U-ee  
Find a place to turn around  
When suddenly from up ahead  
There came a hint of sound.

Both hearts were beating madly  
They had reached a narrow bend  
And they feared what lay around it  
Could it spell their end?



So gathering up his courage  
Barry poked his head around  
Expecting a burst of gunfire  
But nothing, not a sound.

Then the faintest gleam of light peppered  
through  
The narrowest of gaps  
From the tunnel floor beneath them  
As they lay there on their backs.

Barry peered through the gleaming slit  
His entire body trembled  
And he shook with fear at the awesome  
sight  
Twenty Viet Cong assembled.

They were not aware of the Aussie pair  
For they thought the search had ended  
As they ate their rice playing cards and  
dice  
And their wounded they attended.

It was huge the room they spied upon  
And its contents they were vast  
And the young pair knew if they wished  
to live  
They would have to get out fast.

So they backed away as they held their  
breath  
Afraid the Cong would hear  
Then somehow, turned themselves  
around  
And revved it up a gear.

They scurried off, those tunnel rats  
Through mud and slime and gloom  
Aware what lay behind them spelt  
Sudden death and doom.

In the meantime at the bamboo clump  
The order had come down  
To blow the tunnel complex up  
No time to mess around.

So nitro-prill was readied  
And primers were all set  
But still no sign of the gallant pair  
They couldn't blow just yet.

... Continued on page 10.



1 Field Squadron Group  
 Royal Australian Engineers Qld Inc.  
 25<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup> August 2017

**2017 FAMILY REUNION REGISTRATION FORM**  
 Venue: Twin Towns Services Club – Tweed Heads NSW

**Personal Details**

Family Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_ @ \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Address: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

**'Nickname' or**

Preferred Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Partners Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
*(Required for ID Tags at Reunion)* *(Required for ID Tags at Reunion)*

Other guests attending - Number ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) Preferred guests names: \_\_\_\_\_  
*It is preferred by the Executive Committee that all Members Guests are over the age of 18 years.*

**Cost of Events**

**Cost: \$175.00 per person.**

Covers all events, Friday Meet and Greet, including Saturday Memorial Service,  
 Saturday Evening Family Reunion Banquet and Sunday Luncheon.

**Payment Details**

**Please accept my Registration for:**

Number attending: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Method of Payment:  Cheque.  Money Order.  Direct Deposit into account.

When making a Direct Deposit, ensure you mark it **'Reunion'** and then you're **'Family Name'**  
 Heritage Building Society: **BSB 638-070. Account No: 10045570.**

Amount enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Make cheques, money orders payable to: **1 Fd Sqn Gp RAE Qld Inc.**

**All registrations to be pre-paid by Friday the 11th August 2017**  
 (This is a huge catering event. Much goes on behind the scenes, therefore  
**'No Late Numbers will be taken—DEFINITELY.'**)

Please send this Registration Form to:  
 2017 Reunion Treasurer  
 1 FD Sqn Gp RAE Qld Inc.  
 P O Box 703 WARWICK QLD. 4370.  
 e-mail: info@1fieldsappers.org

DONATION FORM

AMOUNT: \_\_\_\_\_ Receipt required: Yes  
 No

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATION**

Continued from Page 8 . . .

It was then a mud streaked head  
appeared  
And then a second one  
So the waiting team put the charges down  
Demolition had begun.

'There's an army down below sir  
There's a township down there too.'  
Frustration turned to anger  
What were they to do.

MacGregor grabbed the radio  
And talked to GHQ  
But his pleas were cut off sharply  
'You've been told what you must do.'

So they primed a mile of tunnel  
Then let the whole lot blow  
And just what lay beyond that door  
Our side will never know.

But did the blast destroy it all  
I'd be very much surprised  
History says five thousand Cong  
Or more, somehow survived.

And if they'd searched on further  
Would results have been the same?  
Would the Commos still have won the  
war?  
Would Saigon have kept its name?

Its very hard to speculate  
But of one thing I am sure  
A bit of hell would have broken loose  
If they'd opened up that door.

But at least we would have known the  
truth  
The strength of our northern foe  
And what secrets they were hatching  
In those chambers down below.

T'was from there that the TET Offensive  
Which cost so many lives  
Made orphans out of children  
And widows out of wives.

Was launched just two years later  
And although it came to naught  
Proved the Cu Chi Tunnels  
More strategic than we'd thought.

But we can't re-write the history books  
Can't cancel half a line  
We cannot go beyond that door  
Back to another time.

The only thing that we can hope  
If another war there be  
Is that we'll be served by brave young  
men  
Like Three Troop RAE.



## 2016 IS THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEPLOYMENT OF 1 FIELD SQUADRON GROUP TO VIETNAM

**Let's get together!**

One of our members, Cul Hart, who served with the Squadron in 1966, had reminded me that next year, 2016, will be the 50th anniversary of the Squadron Group's beginning in Vietnam. Cul is keen to arrange a get together of all who were in the Group at that time. What a top idea! Cul does not want to conflict with any other gatherings - he simply wants to create the opportunity for those who served in the Group in 1966.

As we all appreciate, there is some planning to do to pull together any sort of reunion. Cul is happy to take this on as long as there are sufficient numbers interested. He is looking for something between 30 and 40.

His plan is that each person rocking up would pay their own way. All would contribute to any cost associated with a venue. Individuals would pay for their own accommodation, meals, drinks etc.

### **When:**

Sometime around May 2016  
- nothing set in stone at this stage.

### **Where:**

Probably Gosford RSL  
- on the Central Coast NSW

### **Express Your Interest:**

#### **Contact Cul Hart directly**

Email - ratshart66@bigpond.com

Mobile - 0411 300120

Home - 02 43940045

Address - 1/16 Bensley Close  
Lake Haven NSW 2263

*For all you 1966 vintage members out  
there, how about it?*

*Commemorate the Group's beginnings.  
Everyone - all ranks - all sizes - welcome.*

**JOIN CUL AND BE IN IT.**

## Executive and Committee Members 2015 - 2016

### **Patron:**

LT.GEN. Frank J. Hickling. (Retd) AO. CSC

### **Executive Committee:**

Hon: President: George Hulse

Email: eddsniffer@optusnet.com.au

Ph: (07) 3399 7659

Mob: 0412.341.363

Hon: Vice President: Jim Weston

Email: aurain.weston@bigpond.com

Hon: Secretary - Treasurer: Robin S. Farrell

Email: rfarrell1@bigpond.com

Ph: (07) 4661 7791



**Follow The Sapper**

### **Honorary Committee Members:**

Gary Sutcliffe - loosepizzle@bigpond.com

Bob Pfeiffer - carolynpfeiffer@bigpond.com

Peter Krause - krause22@activ8.net

Peter North - popnorth@gmail.com

### **Follow The Sapper:**

Editor: Derek Smith

Email: dvsmith@ozemail.com.au

Ph: (07) 4773 5104

Web Master: John Robertson

### **Contact Address:**

1 Fd Sqn Gp RAE Qld Inc

PO Box 703 Warwick. Qld. 4370

**Website : [www.1fieldsappers.org](http://www.1fieldsappers.org)**

**Email: [info@1fieldsappers.org](mailto:info@1fieldsappers.org)**

**facebook**

### **1 Field Squadron Group Web Site**

is maintained by John Robertson at  
Visreal Productions - Warwick, Queensland. 4370

Phone 61-7-4661 5222

Email: [info@visrealproductions.com](mailto:info@visrealproductions.com)

# 1 FIELD SQUADRON GROUP

THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ENGINEERS  
QUEENSLAND INCORPORATED

( Including 1 Field Squadron Workshops and 21 Engineer Support Troop )

## 'NEW MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION'

Mrs \_\_\_\_\_  
Surname Ms \_\_\_\_\_ First Names \_\_\_\_\_  
(Family Name) Mr \_\_\_\_\_ (Given Names)

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Wife/Partners Name \_\_\_\_\_  
(Confidential if ticked)  (Confidential if ticked)

Residential Address \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Private Phone ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_ @ \_\_\_\_\_  
(Confidential if ticked)  (Confidential if ticked)

Veteren's Service Details or other appropriate information. (If possible)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Service No. \_\_\_\_\_

Period of Service: From \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ To \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ Active Service: Yes  NO

Unit/Units \_\_\_\_\_ Which Country Served for? Australia or Other \_\_\_\_\_

Which duties? ( F.E, Plant, Mine Clearing, etc. ) \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Year is 1st July to 30th June in each year. Fees are accepted until 30th September, in accordance with the Association's Constitution. Unfinancial members will not be able to vote at the Annual General Meeting.

New Member Entrance Fee \$ 10.00 (Once Only - Inclusive of Association Badge.) \*Lost Badge \$5.00 each  
Annual Subscription Renewal \$ 30.00 (Includes Newsletters)  
**TOTAL \$ 40.00**

MEMBERS SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_



## MEMBERSHIP 'RENEWAL / UP-DATE' FORM

\$30.00 per year. (1st July to 30th June)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

STATE \_\_\_\_\_ POSTCODE \_\_\_\_\_

Private Phone ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_ @ \_\_\_\_\_

Wife/Partners Name \_\_\_\_\_  
(Confidential if ticked)

EXTRA or 'LOST' Membership Lapel Pins Required, please tick - How many?  \$5.00 each P&H included.

MEMBERS SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Return Application with Cheque, Money Orders or Direct Deposit to:  
Direct Depositing into account: Heritage Building Society. BSB: 638-070 Account No: 10045570  
Ensure you mark it, 'Membership' and then your 'Surname' or 'Regimental Number' for identification.

IF YOU USE THE DIRECT DEPOSIT FACILITY PLEASE FORWARD THIS FORM AS WELL.  
NO CASH IN MAIL PLEASE -

## 1 Field Squadron Group Merchandise

### NEW STYLE CAPS AND SHIRTS



1 Fd. Sqn. Gp. Polo Shirt - \$25.00 + P&H  
Check out the fabric - breathable and definitely no ironing.

*Note: Sizes are limited to Small (Suitable for the Girls), Medium, Large & Extra Large*



1 Fd. Sqn Gp. RAE Tie - \$30.00 + P&H  
'Aussie Made' 100% Polyester  
1 Fd. Sqn. Gp. Logo at the bottom & '1 Field Squadron Group' raised print diagonally across navy blue area.



Follow the Sapper Cap - \$17.50 + P&H  
One size fits most.



Follow the Sapper Hat - \$17.50 + P&H  
Hats are in sizes S/M and L/XL.



### BUMPER STICKERS—\$5.00

Show your support for the Afghanistan veterans by putting this under your Vietnam sticker.

#### ORDER FORM

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Town: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

- |   |                     |  |          |
|---|---------------------|--|----------|
| * 1 Fd Sqn Gp RAE Unit Tie.                     | [    ]              | No. required \$30.00 ea + \$8.50 P&H=  | \$ ..... |
| * 1 Fd Sqn Gp RAE Cap.                          | [    ]              | No. required \$17.50 ea. + \$8.50 P&H= | \$ ..... |
| * 1 Fd Sqn Gp RAE Hat.                          | Size: {    } [    ] | No. required \$17.50 ea. + \$8.50 P&H= | \$ ..... |
| * 1 Fd Sqn Gp RAE Polo Shirts.                  | Size: {    } [    ] | No. required \$25.00 ea. + \$8.50 P&H= | \$ ..... |
| * Veterans Supporting Veterans' Bumper Stickers | [    ]              | No. Required \$5.00 ea.                | \$ ..... |
- (Postage free with other purchases)

ALL Order Forms to the Honorary Treasurer Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

'Cheque, Money Order or Direct Deposit by NetBank' (Confirm by email-Please)

### Contact Details

**Please ensure your mail and contact details are correct!**

If you have relocated or your contact details have changed please message our Hon Secretary directly at: [info@1fieldsappers.org](mailto:info@1fieldsappers.org) or PO Box 703 Warwick. Qld. 4370