



Follow The Sapper

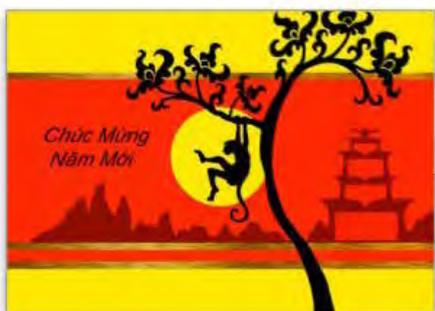
# 'FOLLOW THE SAPPER'



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## Greetings fellow Sappers and Friends.

Chuc Mung Nam Moi or in English, happy new year. The people of Vietnam welcomed in the Luna New Year or TET as it is known, on 8 February 2016 - The Year of the Monkey. It is said that those born in the year of the monkey can be cunning and a bit mischievous. TET is one of the most celebrated holidays in Vietnam.



It is a great time for families to come together from across the land and from overseas. It is a time of happiness. Forty eight years ago there was little happiness in Vietnam. The South was consumed with fear. Chaos and death were in abundant supply.

For many veterans from all the warring nations of the Vietnam War, we commemorate the 48th anniversary of the 1968 TET offensive and for Australian veterans, the battles of Fire Support Base Coral and Balmoral. We remember the Fallen during that terrible time. The 1968 TET was also the year of the monkey. Lest We Forget.

This year some of our old warriors have passed into Sapper Heaven. We share the grief of their families and friends for they who are no longer with us were our families and friends too; they were our comrades in arms.

I remember in particular the passing of Walter Elwyn Rogers aka Buck, aka Rock Tossing Rogers. He was Transport SGT in 1 FD SQN in 1969. As many will remember, Buck was a stirrer. One of his favourite tricks was to hurl a handful of stones onto tin rooves. On one memorable occasion the Engineer in Chief, BRIG Charlie Flint was visiting the SQN and was in deep discussion with the OC, MAJ Rex Rowe, in the HQ building. Buck clearly did not know the brigadier was inside. All ears within the HQ were assaulted by a thunderous roar. Buck had chucked a handful of gibbers onto the roof then continued on his merry way to the Transport Yard. I think though that he copped a serve from the boss. I suspect BRIG Flint enjoyed the stir. Rest in peace Buck.

... Derek Smith - Editor

### "Silent Guardians"

Limited editions of our cover picture above are available. See back page for details.

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By BARNEY SEIBERT

**NUI DAT, Vietnam** (UPI)—It's a different kind of war at the Australian task force base at Nui Dat.

The 5,000-man Australian task force, including a battalion size element of New Zealanders, is the only Allied unit in the Indochina War with tactics markedly different from those used by Americans, South Vietnamese, South Koreans and Thais.

The South Vietnamese, Koreans and Thais all were trained and advised by Americans. So were the Laotians. Even the Cambodians are learning the American counter-insurgency tactics from the South Vietnamese.

But the Australians have needed no advice from Americans in scouring the jungles for the Viet Cong in Phuoc Tuy Province, a lightly populated area of jungled forests and mountains along the South China Sea 50 miles south-east of Saigon.

Japanese infantrymen, who were experts in the craft of jungle warfare, told American captors at the end of World War II that the Australians were the real jungle experts on the Allied side. "Americans are not jungle fighters," one prisoner of war remarked. "They simply remove the jungle."

The Australian expertise in jungle war was forged in expeditions to maintain order in New Guinea, polished in the Australian Army's jungle warfare school, and honed in 12 years of campaigning against the Communists in Malaysia.

The Aussies are the only U.S. allies in Vietnam who brought along most of their own equipment and who pay their own way.

In addition to the 5,000-man task force there are another 3,000 Australian fighting men in Vietnam—airmen, sailors and military advisors working with South Vietnamese units. About 50 per cent of the Australians are conscripts.

Because of their jungle warfare expertise, the Australians are less oriented toward air mobility in the Indochina conflict.

One of the first things Americans notice at Nui Dat is the absence of helicopters—the Aussies have only about half as many as

a conventional U.S. infantry unit of equivalent size and about one-fourth of the total assigned to an American air mobile division.

Another major difference in the Australian concept is the absence of Vietnamese civilian workers at the base. "We do not have a security problem," one officer said.

**Other Differences:**

The Australians live in tents rather than "hooches," call their infantrymen "crunchies" rather than "grunts," maintain their vehicles and equipment almost as well as the Koreans—the most spit and polish soldiers in Vietnam—leave the trees standing to provide shade when they build a base camp rather than removing the vegetation to minimize the infiltration danger.

The Australians buy their artillery pieces and ammunition from the United States—"in the quantities in which you make it we can buy it cheaper than we could make it ourselves." They also buy machine guns, grenade launchers, armored personnel carriers and some web equipment.

Their tanks are British Centurions. Their rifles are the Belgian NATO weapon, which uses the same cartridge as the M.16; the Aussies say it has better range and is less susceptible to jamming than the M16. Their jeeps and weapons carriers are various modifications of Australian-built Land Rovers and their trucks are built by the Australian subsidiary of International Harvester Corp. The trucks do not have the familiar dual rear wheels of U.S. Army vehicles.

The elite Australian unit in Vietnam is the Special Air Service Squadron, highly trained volunteers who are paratrooper qualified.

In four years of operations in South Vietnam's Phuoc Tuy Province, the Australians have killed 2,840 Viet Cong and driven the only two main force Viet Cong battalions, D445 and D440, from the province.

Intelligence estimates show about 800 Viet Cong guerrillas remain in the province and the Communist infrastructure has been reduced 50 per cent to 1,500 persons. During the 1968 Tet offensive there were an estimated 5,000 Viet Cong soldiers in the province, supported by an infrastructure of 3,000 persons.

And the Australians in Vietnam know more than just how to fight.

"Take a look at the Aussies' pacification program," a civilian official of the U.S. Mission in Vietnam said. "It's one of the most effective in the country."

Lt. Col. Keith P. Outridge, 43, of Canberra, commander of the 1st Australian Civil Affairs Unit, said: "We only try to do things as the Vietnamese see it and wish it done, and try to do some-

thing to stimulate their development as we see it and hope they see it the same as we do."

The "Australian Province"—Phuoc Tuy—is a 400-square-mile area of mountains, jungle, forests and coastal swamps. It's 105,000 residents are poor and the province has never been self sufficient in food. Before war disrupted its economy, its people

made their livelihood by working on the large rubber plantations, lumber mills, salt drying ponds and in the resort hotels along the beaches.

The Australian pacification program is similar to but somewhat smaller in scope than American efforts in other provinces and there is some U.S. pacification activity by the American Civil Operations Rural Development Support (CORDS) program in the province. But most of the effort is Australian.

The principal difference is the administration. Pacification is a civilian responsibility among the Americans, a military responsibility among the Australians.

Col. Outridge sees both advantages and disadvantages in a militarily administered pacification program:

On the plus side, he said, is that fact that "most authority in a country at war is military and there is an empathy between military men; we have closer access to military resources to carry out the programs."

Disadvantages, he finds, are "a lack of expertise in specific fields and lack of continuity in projects" due to the "one-year military rotation."

However, he feels that a military pacification program may get to the areas where it is needed most sooner than a civilian program because the soldier is less likely to be kept at a distance by absence of physical security.

"We try to work with the soft moccasin instead of the hob nail boot," Outridge said. "We try to get the Vietnamese into the program as soon as we can. We insist on their input. They must initiate the project, it must benefit the government, and they must help carry it out."

About 22 per cent of Phuoc Tuy Province's population are fishermen, 35 per cent farmers. To stimulate agriculture, the Australians have introduced breeding stock and model farm methods for chicken and hog raising operations.

"We go up and down the highway and persuade a farmer here and there to try it out. After that it spreads from neighbor to neighbor," Outridge said.

This little article was received courtesy of Harvey Lyness. It is from the 22 September 1970 edition of Stars and Stripes. Thanks for that Harvey.

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 [dvsmit@ozemail.com.au](mailto:dvsmit@ozemail.com.au).



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Cover photo: Courtesy 'Silent Guardians' - Australian Military Working Dogs Killed in Action - Afghanistan.

Photos of Repatriation - Page 3 - Courtesy of Australian Defence Force and John Pritchard.

## Corporal Bob Bowtell Returns Home



The Corps of Royal Australian Engineers lost 37 sappers to the war of South Vietnam. The first of our brothers to be killed in action was Corporal Robert Walter Bowtell when he asphyxiated down a tunnel in the Ho Bo Woods on 11 January 1966. He was 33 years old and left a widow and four orphans. Bob's body was not repatriated to Australia, but was buried at the Terendak War Cemetery in Malaysia, in line with government policy at that time.

As a result of a "Bring Them Home Campaign" initiated by the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia, and with cooperation from the Australian Government, the remains of 33 Australian servicemen have been repatriated to Australia. 22 of these heroes are from the war of South Vietnam, the others from conflicts in Malaysia and the Malay/Thai border.

The Australian Office of War Graves, through its parent organisation DVA, organised a repatriation ceremony at RAAF Base Richmond. Two RAAF C-17 Globemaster transport aircraft air-lifted the remains of the 33 servicemen from Malaysia and Singapore to RAAF Richmond, arriving at 1030 hrs 2 June 2016.

Representing 1 FD SQN GP RAE Association was Colonel Alex "Sandy" MacGregor MC (Retd) accompanied by LTCOL John Pritchard RAE (Retd) and Bob's mates including Alan Christie, David Cooke and Keith Kermode. Sandy was the 3 FD TP Commander at the time that Bob was lost to the tunnels.

On 3 June 2016, Bob's remains were laid to rest at a private family ceremony.



On 5 June 2016, the Corps of Royal Australian Engineers under the stewardship of the Special Operations Engineer Regiment at Holsworthy Barracks, conducted a memorial service for CPL Bob Bowtell. Our representative was again Colonel Sandy MacGregor MC (Retd) accompanied by LTCOL John Pritchard RAE (Retd) and a host of sappers and friends of the Corps. The organisation and management of the service was conducted by the RSM SOER, WO1 Jeramie Faint.

Welcome home Bob. It's been 50 years since we lost you and now you are back in the same land as your 36 RAE brothers KIA in South Vietnam.

Their Name Liveth for Evermore  
Follow The Sapper



## The Western Front - Continued

### Bullecourt

#### Bullecourt

If you drive into the beautiful little village of Bullecourt from the north, you will see a small church on your left. It's a good idea to turn in there and park in the car park. There is a plinth at the front of the church with a bronze Australian digger's hat on top. It's small and easy to miss if you are not looking for it. Almost next door to the church is an open garage containing some remains of a WWI tank. We think that it may be part of tank number 799 which literally meandered its way into oblivion on the battlefield. Bullecourt town has an interesting museum run by Monsieur Jean Letaille. An Australian monument entitled the "Bullecourt Digger" is located just out of town along the Rue des Australiens.

This little French village is a picture-postcard place today, but in April 1917, things were a far cry from "picture postcard". The Germans had established their "Hindenburg Line" as a well defended forward edge of the battle area containing every conceivable fortification and obstacle available to them. In places, this continuous line of fortified trenches and posts had a depth of 8,000 meters. The Germans dared their opponents to come and take their Hindenburg Line. As the Germans withdrew their frontline back into the Hindenburg Line, their engineers left booby-traps, mines, cratered roads, ruined orchards, poisoned wells and demolished buildings in their wake. It was denial operations on a vandalous scale. As the Australian engineers moved forward with their infantry, they were kept busy repairing roads, bridges and wells. They were engineers in the advance and were a prime target for snipers. 15 FD COY AE recorded having cleared some 234 mines and booby traps in the Bapaume area alone.

In the township of Bapaume, the Germans had left one building standing, the Town Hall. Personnel from 13 FD COY AE and 13 Light Horse had taken up sleeping quarters in it. During the night of 25 March 1917, a delayed action mine exploded, destroyed the Town Hall and trapped those left alive in its cellars. Half of 8 FD COY AE dug all night long to rescue their mates and clear the dead from the ruined Town Hall.

Bullecourt township itself was surrounded by a part of the Hindenburg Line. The Australian sector facing the Hindenburg Line was positioned a short distance to the south-east of the village. The history books tell us that there were two Battles of Bullecourt.

Actually, there were three.

#### Bullecourt Battle No. 1

At 0430 hrs 11 April 1917, the Australian 4 DIV attacked the Hindenburg Line. The attack was badly planned and executed at senior Army HQ level due to it being treated more as an experimental foray using the shock action of tanks. These prototypic tanks were still in their developmental phase and there was a strong need for close infantry/tank exercises to

confirm their capabilities and limitations. It didn't happen. In fact, before First Bullecourt, the tank crews hadn't even had so much as a yarn to their infantry brothers about the basic characteristics of these machines. There was insufficient time given to deliver normal battle procedures before attempting the breakthrough of a major enemy stronghold.

Too many assumptions and not enough rehearsing. They were "flying blind" into a strongly held and well prepared enemy fortification. Then there was the artillery plan for the final assault phase of the attack. There wasn't one. Just attack "up the guts with tanks leading". The tanks were supposed to crush the barbed wire. They didn't. Of the eleven tanks that took part in this attack, by 0715 hrs, every one of them had been either destroyed or immobilised by artillery and infantry weapons. 4 DIV engineers played very little part in the assault phase of this operation.

Marked by some of the most intense trench fighting of the war, the two battles of Bullecourt (April and May 1917) cost Australia more than 10,000 casualties.

4 BDE and 12 BDE of 4 DIV did exceptionally well to have broken into a small part of the Hindenburg Line, but were in no way able to hold on to it. The diggers in the Hindenburg Line were in desperate need of resupply and reinforcement. They fought with bombs and bayonets and received well-planned and determined counter-attacks from the Germans. What was left of the two BDEs were forced to withdraw through enemy fire on the front, flanks and from German troops in their rear. At last light on 11 April 1917, First Bullecourt ended. Australian battle losses were 4239, this figure includes 1,170 Australians taken PW, putting this battle on a similar statistic to the disaster at Fromelles (5,533).

1 DIV was allocated a 12,000 meter defensive frontage to the east of 4 DIV to provide secure flank protection. Instead of constructing fortified defences against a certain German counter-attack, the engineers were employed on repairing roads and railways. When the German counter-attack arrived on 15 April 1917, 1 DIV experienced some difficulty in halting it and then turning it back. A clear case of inappropriate employment of the engineer asset having a serious impact on operational capability.

First Bullecourt was considered a failure albeit many lessons about the reliability of tanks and narrow frontages were recognised. The cold weather with snow and freezing temperatures did not help an attacking force either. Two unhelpful outcomes of this Battle on the Australians included a feeling of frustration and a distrust of the capabilities of the tank. 4 DIV was withdrawn for a rest and it's positions on the front line taken over by 2 DIV.

Continued from Page 4 . . .

## Bullecourt Battle No.2

Four German Divisions surprised 1 DIV at first light on 15 April 1917. 1 DIV held a frontage of some 12 kilometers and the attacking German units managed to by-pass the Australian infantry and over-run the Australian artillery. The shocked Australian gunners were told to remove the breech blocks and sights from their guns and then get out away from their battery positions as quickly as they could. They barely managed to do that without being taken PW by the German swarming tactic. The four German divisions managed to push a large salient into the Australian area to the south-east of Bullecourt and threatened the HQ of 1 ANZAC Corps in the township of Lagnicourt (about 8 km south-east of Bullecourt).

The German plan from the outset was to upset any Australian second attack in the Bullecourt area by causing mayhem and confusion among the Australian units. Their plan was limited to a one day expedition and then return all troops to the Hindenburg Line.

By day's end on 15 April 1917, the Germans were back in their Line. The Germans celebrated a successful operation. But history tells it as a two way celebration. German losses were around 2,300 with many PW captured by the Australians. Australian losses were 1,010. Of all the Australian guns captured by the Germans, only five had been destroyed. The Australian gunners quickly replaced them with new guns and reconditioned those that had been left intact by the Germans. The Australians celebrated that 4,000 Australians had sent 16,000 Germans packing. The German foray did not prevent a second attack on them at Bullecourt.

Map shows the position of the 3rd Australian Infantry Battalion, 4-6 May 1917. Image courtesy "Australians on the Western Front 1914-1918". See <http://www.ww1westernfront.gov.au>

## Bullecourt Battle No 3

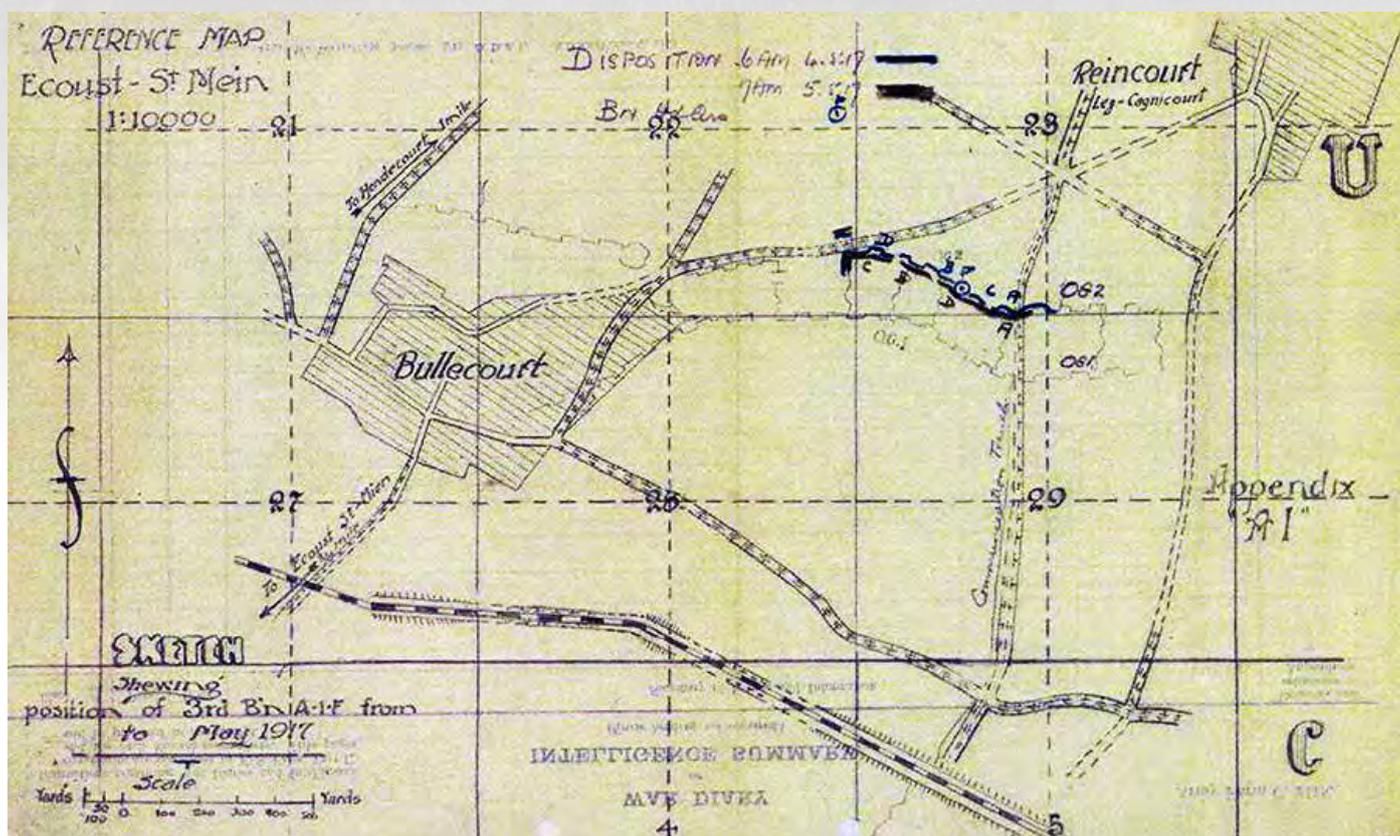
This is known as the Second Bullecourt.

This time, a lot more care was taken in preparation for the battle. Rehearsals were conducted, more artillery pieces made available and a more complete artillery plan was adopted. The Australian 2 DIV would spearhead the Australian attack in the same area as First Bullecourt and the British 62 DIV had the township of Bullecourt as its objective.

Tanks were again offered. The British 62 DIV accepted ten tanks but the Australians did not want to see a tank anywhere near them. The wire breaching plan for the British 62 DIV was "up the guts with tanks". The Australians decided on an engineer answer. Their sappers would breach the wire, and 2 DIV would "Follow The Sapper".

The wire obstacles on the Hindenburg Line were a variety of high and low wire entanglements. Innovative pickets were employed using a screw bottom and hooks to engage the concertina coils. They were sited so as to maximise the fire effect of machine guns and mortars. There were safe lanes for German patrols to move through, but even these were a channeling device should their enemy find them. The wire was a problem for attacking forces and had to be dealt with as a part of any assault plan.

7 FD COY AE had experimented with a device based on a French Bangalore torpedo. They came up with a tube of 100mm diameter and about 4 meters long. It was filled with Ammonal explosive and was fired by an initiator set of a primer and detonator and a length of safety fuse at its base end. The mechanics of emplacement were easy. Push the torpedo through the wire, light the safety fuse, withdraw to a safe area and the torpedo would destroy the wire entanglements for a couple of meters each side of where it had been pushed



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Continued from Page 5 . . .

through, creating an opening suitable for a group of attackers to pass through the gap. The delivery of the torpedoes was an entirely different matter. The sappers had to "hop the bags", cross no man's land and emplace the torpedoes without being detected by the ever-vigilant German sentries. These sappers employed their night patrol skills to maximum effect in getting right up on the German wire without detection, carrying several long tubes.

It was an experimental idea. 7 FD COY had to be sure that the torpedoes would work on the wire of the Hindenburg Line. On the night of 18 April 1917 the sappers crept across 1,000 meters of no man's land carrying eleven torpedoes. On firing them, nine were successful and two failed. And then things became exciting. On hearing the big "bangs" right on their wire, the Germans fired flares and machine guns into the area where the sappers were grouped. Their return to their own lines was a dramatic affair, but they all made it back alive. Undaunted by the German counter-fire, they decided to have another go. On the night of 23 April, the sappers went back with fifteen torpedoes. One misfired, fourteen were successful. On the night of 26 April, six more were fired successfully in the German wire. The Australian sappers were on a roll. On the night of 1 May 1917, 34 sappers went out carrying seven torpedoes and fired all of them successfully. They also returned to their own lines under pressure but without loss.

The engineers of 5 and 6 BDE laid the tapes for the jumping off point before the attack and were ready for the associated engineer works to reinforce infantry gains into the Line against the guaranteed German counter-attacks.

At 0345 hrs 3 May 1917, Second Bullecourt was launched. 5 BDE on the right front of the assault received enormous amounts of German fire and was in big trouble early in the operation. 6 BDE on the left, penetrated the Hindenburg Line near Bullecourt but was under intense pressure. The majority of the sappers of 5, 6, and 7 FD COYs AE were forward constructing strong points and wire obstacles to protect the front and flanks of the infantry

battalions. The Germans launched a number of counter-attacks against 2 DIV but all were repulsed. Reinforcements and resupply were delivered through a communication trench 1,300 meters long, dug by the 2nd Pioneer Battalion, at great cost in casualties to the pioneers. 6 BDE could not continue to hold its position due to enormous casualties and relentless enemy pressure. 6 BDE (2DIV) was relieved by 1 BDE of 1 DIV during the morning of 4 May 1917. The remainder of 1 DIV relieved 2 DIV and continued the fight to hold the gains made.

1 DIV was relieved by 5 DIV on 10 May and the Germans launched a major counterattack against 5 DIV on 15 May. This failed but exposed a defensive weakness on the Australian right flank. 14 FD COY AE went forward quickly and built a single apron fence the same night. This obstacle eased the situation for the exposed Australian infantry units. The carry of materiel for this simple fence was a challenge. It had to be man-packed forward for over three kilometers under enemy shell fire. The engineers found that knife rests went well as expedient fencing in specific places and could be prefabricated before carrying them. 8 FD COY AE had been employed wiring in the rear areas but was rushed forward when things became desperate for 5 DIV in the Hindenburg Line. By the time 5 DIV was withdrawn from the Line on 26 May, most of its front had a double apron fence helping to protect it.

1 ANZAC Corps was withdrawn from the area on 26 May for a well-deserved rest and refit. The Germans eventually withdrew from Bullecourt and the British 7 and 62 DIVs took the town.

Second Bullecourt cost Australia 7,482 casualties. One of them was LT Simon Fraser. Who is Simon Fraser? If you travel to Fromelles you will see a magnificent statue of an Australian Sergeant carrying a wounded digger across his shoulders. The statue is entitled "Cobbers". The SGT is Simon Fraser. He was promoted to LT and arrived at Bullecourt with 5 DIV. He attacked with his platoon, was KIA and is still out there somewhere in the farming fields of Bullecourt. He is in a spot that is "known unto God".



### Vale - 1 FD SQN GP RAE members:

Sapper John Crocker. Served in 1 FD SQN GP SVN 1970/71. Passed away 11 October 2015.  
 CPL Nicholas Burgerhoff. Served in 1 FD SQN GP RAE SVN 1967/68. Passed away 29 October 2015.  
 WO1 Bruce Arthur OAM. Served in 1 FD SQN GP RAE SVN 1967/68. Passed away November 2015.  
 Sapper Neil Innes MM. Served in 1 FD SQN GP RAE SVN 1966/67. Passed away December 2015.  
 WO2 Walter "Buck" Rogers. Served 1 FD SQN GP RAE SVN 1968/69. Passed away 18 January 2016.  
 Sapper Brian Farrugia. Served 1 FD SQN GP RAE SVN 1968/69. Passed away 23 January 2016.  
 WO1 John Dransfield. Served 1 FD SQN GP RAE SVN 1967/68. Passed away 17 February 2016.  
 Sapper Bob Knowles. Served 1 FD SQN GP RAE 1967/68. Passed away 29 February 2016.  
 LCPL Craig Kinmonth. Served 1 FD SQN GP RAE 1968/69. Passed away 8 March 2016.  
 WO1 Ross Thorburn. Served 1 FD SQN GP RAE 1965/66. Passed away 7 April 2016.  
 Sapper Tony Bower-Miles. Served 1 FD SQN GP RAE SVN 1969/70. Passed away April 2016.  
 WO2 Allan (Sticks) Hill. Passed away 11th April 2016.

## President's Report July 2016

### Annual Subscription

Our annual subscriptions are due on 1 July each year. At the AGM in 2015, it was decided unanimously to set the subscription at \$30-00 per year. I ask you to fill out the enclosed form and return it with your payment and updated details to our Secretary/Treasurer, Robin Farrell, at the addresses given on the form please.

### Reunion 2017

Our reunion for 25,26 and 27 August 2017 is locked in for the Twin Towns RSL Club at Tweed Heads. Our memorial service will again parade an Australian National Flag for every Sapper lost to overseas conflicts from 1945 to Afghanistan. All their names will be called and an Australian National Flag paraded in each digger's honour and memory. *Their Name Liveth for Evermore.*

### Unit Citation for Gallantry

The four-person committee (3 x 1RAR members and myself) completed the submission to recognise all personnel and units involved in the battles of FSPBs Coral and Balmoral, 13 May to 6 June 1968, with a Unit Citation for Gallantry. It comprises two volumes of evidence and researched material and was posted to the Directorate of Honours and Awards in February 2016. The Directorate forwarded the submission to the Chief of Army, LTGEN Angus Campbell DSC AM. We are advised that the consideration period for this submission may take as long as six months - hopefully by August 2016. We can wait.

### 50th Anniversary of the Battles of FSPB Coral and Balmoral - May 2018

There is an initiative by the Department of Veterans Affairs to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the battles of FSPB Coral and Balmoral with a parade in Canberra in May 2018. This will probably be similar to the anniversary events that we attended in 2008. However, there is a possibility that the anniversary might also be held at Lavarack Barracks in Townsville. Current-day 1RAR and 3RAR, and other combat support arms and logistic units represented at FSPB Coral and Balmoral, are located there. I will confirm which of the two locations is the anniversary venue for 1 FD SQN GP RAE members in the December 2016 edition of "Follow The Sapper".

The 2016 FSPB Coral anniversary was held at the Twin Towns RSL Club on 12 May 2016. I represented our unit at the memorial service and dinner. Ben Roberts-Smith VC MG was the guest of honour who demonstrated great knowledge of the battles and gave frank and forthright opinions of his view of current-day soldiering.

### History of World War One Combat Engineers

I have this work almost completed. It has been a collaborative work between 1CER, the RAE Museum and 1 FD SQN GP RAE. One of its principal objectives is to demonstrate the mental resilience, personal courage and enormous work ethic of the pioneers of our Corps. It covers only the work of the field engineer units (combat engineers using the current terminology) and gives accounts of the outstanding Australian engineer contribution to the battlefields of World War One. Our newsletter has serialised the first drafts of each segment of this book. However, there are numerous editorial changes to it, and there will be some new images in it that have never been published before.

### Proposed Trips to Gallipoli and Villers-Brettonneux in 2018

There has been enthusiasm for the proposed trip to Villers-Brettonneux for the 11 November 2018, Centenary of the end of World War One. Villers-Brettonneux is the official Australian Monument to World War One and contains a newly commissioned dynamic display of the Australian battlefields. There are a number of suggested tours of these battlefields that are aimed at both self-conducted trips as well as organised group tours. I will follow the tours up and provide a number of options in the newsletter of December 2016. I will need positive confirmation of names and numbers etc. after that edition has been distributed.

There has been mild interest in the proposed trip to Gallipoli for 25 April 2018. This may be due to the unrest in that region. I am assured by tour operators that the security for the 25 April events is extremely well organised. I will keep this option open until 2017 in terms of a 1 FD SQN GP RAE Association group tour. In any case, individuals and small groups are able to make their own arrangements for a visit to the Gallipoli area for the ANZAC Day services. An option may be to simply meet there and form a group. We'll see.

### ANZAC Day 2016 at 1CER - Robertson Barracks, Palmerston, NT

The Association was represented at the 1CER ANZAC Day ceremonies by LTCOL John Pritchard RAE (Retd). John served in Vietnam twice. First time as a Trooper in the Cavalry unit that penetrated the Viet Cong attacking force on 18 August 1966 and lifted D COY 6RAR from its iconic battle of Long Tan. His second tour of duty was as a Troop Officer in 1 FD SQN GP RAE in 1970/71. See story in this edition of Follow The Sapper.

George Hulse  
President 1 FD SQN GP RAE Association  
10 June 2016

### 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

## The Victorian Gravesite Vigil and Service for Sappers Lost to the War of South Vietnam.

In Victoria, on 21 February 2016, a gravesite Vigil of Australian Sappers who were killed in action during the War of South Vietnam was organised and conducted by Corporal Allan "Bluey" Rantall of 1 Troop, 1 Field Squadron Group RAE.

The aim of the Vigil was to commemorate the loss of Victorian Sappers on the 50th anniversary of Australia's commitment of combat units to that war.

There are a number of commemorative ceremonies being held during 2016 to honour the commitment of Australians to the war of South Vietnam. One of these events was a Gravesite Vigil and Service. The Vigil was conducted at each Vietnam Veteran's gravesite or plaque.

521 Australians were killed in action or died of wounds of whom 98 were Victorians.

CPL Bluey Rantall researched the gravesite or plaque location commemorating every Victorian Sapper who was lost to the Vietnam War. He discovered maps and other helpful data that he used to locate every site.

During the management and organisation of the Vigil, CPL Rantall contacted next-of-kin (where possible) informing them of the event and extending an invitation to attend the service. One next-of-kin who CPL Rantall contacted was Sapper Denis Brooks' father who lives in Queensland. He is 88 yrs old, and was very moved that recognition for his son at Springvale Cemetery was to be provided by way of a Vigil and Service. He was too frail to attend, but was grateful that a gravesite Vigil would be held to honour his son. He expressed his thanks with deep gratitude and heartfelt emotion to CPL Rantall.

The Service commenced at 1200 hrs Sunday 21 February 2016 with a Vietnam Veteran standing at each gravesite accompanied by the relatives of our fallen brother. A Bugler played the Last Post and a moving oratory was performed by an appointed Vietnam Veteran. The Australian Flag and a specially knitted Red Poppy were laid at the gravesite. All those in attendance were then invited to lay a red poppy, followed by the laying of wreaths for those folk who wanted to do so.



John Pritchard with grandson Jahi Pritchard at 1 CER service Darwin 2016. Jahi is wearing his great grandfather Captain Keith Pritchard's medals. He was in RAE Movement Control WW2

### Springvale Cemetery, Victoria

CPL Allan Rantall performed the ceremony at Springvale Cemetery for Sapper Dennis Lindsay Brooks of 1 TP, 1 FD SQN GP RAE.

There were 12 people in attendance at the gravesite. Two of the attendees were serving in Vietnam when Sapper Brooks was fatally wounded in the Barrier Minefield incident, 10 May 1967. Sapper Brooks died of wounds on the 22 May 1967.

In the same incident as Sapper Brooks was WIA, there were two other Sappers KIA. They were, Sapper Terrence Renshaw (buried in Wangaratta Cemetery) and Sapper Ramon Deed (buried in Mildura Cemetery). Both these Sappers were also from 1 TP, 1 FD SQN GP RAE.

Those in attendance at Sapper Brooks' gravesite included: CPL Allan Rantall (who performed the service) together with Craftsman Reno Borg (who performed the flag duties)

COLONEL BRIAN FLORENCE AM MC – OC 1 FD SQN GP RAE at the time of Sapper Brooks' loss;

SAPPER IVAN SCULLY – who survived the minefield incident;

LIEUTENANT COLONEL COLIN BOWATER – President Ringwood R.A.E. Association

LIEUTENANT COLONEL DON HUGHES – Vice President Ringwood RA.E Association

SERGEANT MARGARET HANDTE – Secretary Ringwood RAE Association.

KATHRYN KELLY – Daughter of Captain Kelly of 1 FD SQN GP RAE (Decd)

DAVID KELLY – Son of Captain Kelly of 1 FD SQN GP RAE (Decd)

JED RUSSO - Grandson of Captain Kelly of 1 FD SQN GP RAE (Decd)

ERIC HOWATT – WO2 – Ringwood RAE Association

BOB BOETTCHER – A serving Sapper of the Ringwood RAE Association

ALEX GRANNA – A serving Sapper of the Ringwood RAE Association

MRS.BERYL RANTALL

MRS.MELITA BORG.

LTCOL Don Hughes and Colonel Brian Florence AM MC laid a wreath each at Sapper Brooks' gravesite.

... 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**



COLONEL Brian  
Florence, Ivan Scully  
and Allan Rantall at  
the Vigil 2016

## The Victorian Gravesite Vigil

The ceremony moved to another part of the Springvale cemetery where LTCOL Don Hughes and CPL Allan Rantall laid wreaths at the plaques in memory of the following Sappers:

CPL Noel A Smith – 21 Support TP, 1 FD SQN GP RAE.  
Sapper Ron Davies. – 1 TP, 1 FD SQN GP RAE  
Sapper John Smith. – 1 TP, FD SQN GP RAE

LTCOL Don Hughes and CPL Allan Rantall travelled to Fawkner Cemetery to lay wreaths at the gravesite of Sapper Ross Tasman Clark, 1 TP, 1 FD SQN GP RAE.

1 FD SQN GP RAE Association congratulates Corporal Allan Rantall for this initiate and all those members who made the Vigil and Service possible. Well Done!

George Hulse  
President

## By R.J. Stiffy (Steve) Carroll The Long Tan Cross

The battlefield was sleeping  
As we moved beneath the trees  
A faint bird call, a moving leaf  
Touched by a gentle breeze.

The rubber trees so like the dead  
Were silent and serene,  
T'was just as though that fierce fight,  
Long-Tan, had never been.

A glimpse of white appeared ahead,  
A cross in a chain fenced plot,  
A small and humble edifice  
For such a hallowed spot.  
The cross stood stark, incongruous,  
Against the soil so red,  
A tribute to a special few,  
The young who now are dead.

We halted there, we ones who'd come,  
To reflect on what had been  
And saw quite clear the way it was  
In our minds, like on a screen.

We could hear again the sounds of war  
The dreadful cries of pain,  
We could see the enemy advance  
In waves, through driving rain.

We could feel the weight of mud soaked clothes,  
Hear the noise that shook the earth,  
We could taste the fear that both sides felt  
As they fought for all their worth.

Then we stood there by that lonely cross  
And pledged that each sunset  
We would pause a while to remember  
Lest we should forget.

## Executive and Committee Members 2015 - 2016

### Patron:

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

### Executive Committee:

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Email: eddsniffer@optusnet.com.au  
Ph: (07) 3399 7659  
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Email: james.weston@icloud.com

Hon: Secretary - Treasurer: Robin S. Farrell  
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### Honorary Committee Members:

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



### 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 -



**One-time opportunity  
for Members of  
1 FD SQN GP RAE  
Association**

The painting of "Silent Guardians" is an oil-on-canvas showing all six Australian military working dogs that were killed in action during the Afghanistan War. The artist is Sapper David Sturmer a veteran of 1 FD SQN GP RAE in the war of South Vietnam. There are a small number of limited edition prints of this painting still on offer, should you wish to buy one. Each print is individually numbered and contains the signature of David Sturmer and initials of CPL Mark Donaldson VC, who unveiled the painting on 7 June 2015. The price of each print is \$100-00 and includes packaging, postage and GST.

If you would like a print of "Silent Guardians" please contact Mr John Quane at [secretary@aussietrackers.org](mailto:secretary@aussietrackers.org) with your details and he will arrange for payment and shipping. Alternatively, you can contact George Hulse on [eddsniffer@optusnet.com.au](mailto:eddsniffer@optusnet.com.au) and purchase a print through him. Profits go toward paying for the Medals for Australian Military Working Dogs program of the Australian Defence Force Trackers and War Dogs Association.

Reunion Accommodation Offer  
Contact Mantra now for 10% Discount







**I will stay the night**

Mantra Twin Towns are pleased to extend to all guests of the **1 Field Squadron reunion group from 25-28 August, 2017** a 10%\* discount off the best available accommodation rate. The hotel rooms or apartments are beautifully appointed with stylish and comfortable furniture and all the amenities you need to make yourself at home. Relax in the on-site pool or take a short walk down to Greenmount beach. For group accommodation blocks, please email [twintowns.com@mantra.com.au](mailto:twintowns.com@mantra.com.au).

To book call **1800 19 20 20**  
or email [twintowns.res@mantra.com.au](mailto:twintowns.res@mantra.com.au)

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\*Terms and conditions apply. Subject to availability at the time of booking and subject to change.

**1 Field Squadron Group Merchandise**  
NEW STYLE CAPS AND SHIRTS



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.



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*



**BUMPER STICKERS—\$5.00**  
Show your support for the Afghanistan veterans by  
putting this under your Vietnam sticker.



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

**ORDER FORM**

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

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* 1 Fd Sqn Gp RAE Unit Tie.	[ ]	No. required \$30.00 ea + \$8.50 P&H=	\$ .....
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* 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.	\$ .....

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

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