



# Porky Seven News



Edition 53 .. Newsletter of the 7th Battaion, The Royal Australian Regiment Association .. December 2019



## From the President

Firstly, may I wish all of our members and their families a happy Christmas and a prosperous new year. I would also like to pass on our congratulations to the Battalion for their efforts in recent months and wish them the best for their period as the Ready Battalion Group. The previous edition of the Seven News contained an article outlining the training and preparations the Battalion has undergone. We are faced with uncertain strategic circumstances and seemingly unending natural disasters in the region, so their role at the tip of the spear cannot be underestimated.

Since the last edition of Seven News we have finalised a new commercial

arrangement between the Association and the clothing and apparel company known as Belligerent Digger. Owned and operated by Carl Sengstock, a former 7 RAR man, Belligerent Digger specialises in selling quality military styled T-shirts, shorts, caps, etc. The Association has recently reached an agreement whereby Carl will pay a generous percentage of all on-line sales of 7 RAR themed merchandise directly to the Association.

In essence, the more we purchase, the better off the Association will be. It is hoped that this will support a business owned and operated by one of our own men and will result in a healthy income stream for the Association. This is a significant change in our financial model, pending your support it offers the potential to reduce our reliance upon subs and allow us an opportunity to support the membership and potentially soldiers in the Battalion. Carl is now finalising the samples of 7 RAR themed products. Once he is ready to trade, we will announce the arrangement via the Facebook group and we will include the necessary



links so that you can purchase items on-line.

Finally, on your behalf I offer my congratulations to those who are about to be promoted and assume higher levels of responsibility. The

Army has a significant number of former 7 RAR officers, warrant officers and senior NCOs serving very faithfully in many influential appointments. We wish them well.

Michael Garraway, President



**TO ALL OUR MATES, FRIENDS AND FAMILIES, HAVE A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS AND THE BEST EVER**



**Rest ye oh Warrior, You will battle no more,  
No longer to live the horrors of war,  
Your duty was done with honor and pride,  
Farewell oh brother, until we march by your side.**

**It is with deep and sincere sympathy that I report the death of former friends  
and comrades in arms.**

**335091 Neville Robert Smethurst, OC D/ 2IC 2nd tour, passed away**

**Tuesday 2 July 2019**

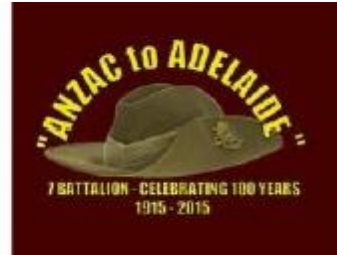
**3787780 Ian Stuart Downie, 1st tour, passed away Friday 27**

**September 2019.**

**1411215 Jeffrey Leonard Thomas, A2 1st tour, passed away Sunday 20  
October 2019.**

**4411017 Peter George Verrall, PNRS 1st tour, passed away,  
drowned in boat accident), Friday 25 October 2019.**

**41836 Thomas Marlo Bourke, C7 1st/A2 2nd, passed away Monday 11  
November 2019.**



## CONTENTES PAGE – CALENAR JANUARY TO APRIL 2020

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### CALENDAR JANUARY – APRIL 2020

- 01 Jan Mew Year's Day. All States.
- 26 Jan Australia Day All States.
- 10 Apr Cut-off date for 1/2020 Seven Newsletter articles.
- 25 Apr ANZAC Day all States, details in Apr 2020 Seven News.



## NEW MEMBERS

Garth Dickson Kennan, C/CHQ 2ND tour.

Mrs Kerry Wall Widow Ron Wall , D Coy 2ND tour.

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Hi All,

Noel Crouch's 50 year Commemorative service is being held in Katanning, WA on the 21/05/2020. As his platoon commander, I wish to write a few lines on my memory of him & send flowers to the service. I would like to include other soldier's memories of him in my text. Can you put a notice to this effect in the next newsletter telling anyone who has got a story on Noel to either telephone, write or email me. My contact details are shown below.

Any questions please email me ASAP.

Chris Johnson,

39 Bentley Road, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire, CB2 8AW, UK.

Tel: 00 44 1223 460575.

Emails: [dilmun@msn.com](mailto:dilmun@msn.com) or [greycap@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:greycap@hotmail.co.uk)

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Vale: Kay Farrell, wife of Peter Farrell, A2 2nd tour, passed away on 25 October, both were holidaying in New Zealand.







## **From the Editor's Desk**

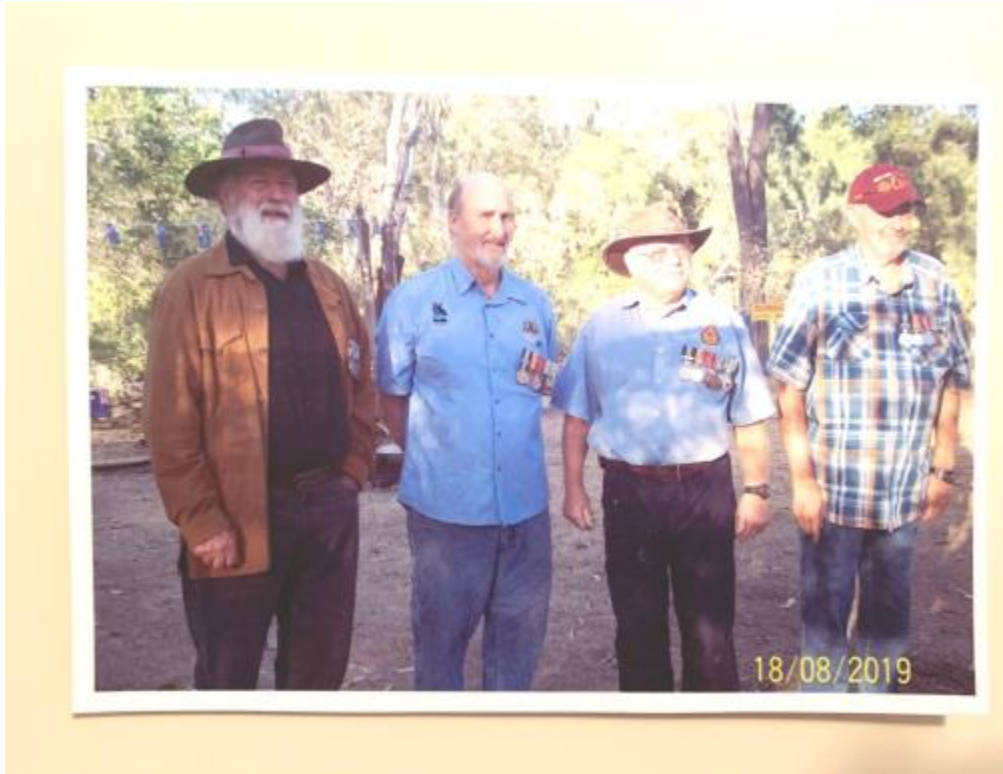
The old saying, "Time and Tide waits for no man" is a very appropriate saying to all us older members of the Association. Please keep in touch with all your mates from the past as we can see in each Seven News we see the passing of our service mates. Please don't forget the planned reunions of B and C Companies during 2020 ANZAC period in Adelaide.

Please note the articles on Pages 8, 9 & 10 dealing with the Veterans concessions with those agencies mentioned on the APOD website. If anyone has any questions please contact DVA and they will give you all the processes to get linked with the APOD agency.

Members please note that as we get older within the Association keep tabs on all your mates as there is a common thread of friendship between us all. As is fairly evident our Association reunions are fading within your own States try and have a local get together often so we keep personal contact with our friends and families.

May you all have a Very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy 2020.

Tony Keech, OAM EO/ED



**4 PIGS AT PANDANUS RETREAT, CAPE YORK, QLD FOR LONG TAN DAY 8/2019**

**L to R: RAY GREENWOOD, ANDREW GILMORE, JOHN PETTIGREW, RAY MARR,**





**DVA partners APOD to deliver discounts to veterans**

APOD - Australian Partners of Defence - has partnered with the Department of Veterans' Affairs as part of the Australian Defence Veterans' Covenant initiative.

APOD was founded in 2012 and says it already delivers more than 10,000 offers on behalf of 500 corporate partners from the retail, automotive, entertainment, dining, travel, tourism, and other sectors. CONTACT offers its free subscription via the APOD site - and gained more than 400 new subscribers in the first two days after the Veterans Covenant was launched.

The DVA partnership means Australian Veteran Card holders now have free access to the full range of benefits and deals offered via APOD.

APOD founder Rebecca Waller described the DVA partnership as a massive boost for the initiative she began seven years ago to honour the sacrifices made by veterans and their families. "A lot of hard work and long hours have gone into growing the number of businesses participating in this initiative - it's certainly been a labour of love," Ms Waller said.

"With more than 600,000 veterans potentially eligible for the Veteran Card, membership of APOD will grow significantly, but it's up to the Australian business community to get behind the initiative and show their support to those who have served their country. "We have made it really easy for businesses to get involved and put their gratitude on display by developing special offers for defence veterans and their families."





Ms Waller said that APOD was a win-win for businesses and veterans.

"There is no charge for businesses to get involved as partners of APOD and they get to promote their brands, products and services to a large audience.

"There is everything to gain from getting involved."

Veterans' minister Darren Chester said DVA's partnership with APOD would give Australian business owners a way to say 'thank you for your service'.

"We are proud to be partnering with APOD to ensure veterans can easily find local businesses in their area that are showing that respect and recognition of their service," Mr Chester said. However, CONTACT notes we could find no way of searching offers by geographic location on the APOD site (though this could be our ineptitude rather than a bug in the ointment).

APOD is now free for DVA-registered military veterans, while eligible family members of Veteran Card

holders can also access APOD's benefits on a monthly or yearly subscription basis. Ms Waller said the range of offers APOD had secured to date was comprehensive, but, with the government's support, it would only get better.

"It brings me great joy to know that veterans and their families can benefit from this program daily, and I hope that every time they do, they are reminded of their country's gratitude. "We have established a thriving platform in the seven years we have been in operation and we are delighted to be such an important part of the Australian Defence Veterans' Covenant."

Ms Waller said that federal government endorsement would add weight to the ongoing process of attracting business partners to the program. "With APOD now being part of the Australian Defence Veterans' Covenant, it has been empowered to reach its full potential and make a difference to the lives of veterans across the country."



**Veterans card/lapel pin/covenant officially launched.**

The long-awaited and much talked about Veteran Card, lapel pin and covenant were officially launched last Sunday and will soon be distributed to all DVA-registered veterans as a practical demonstration of respect and recognition for their service.

**CAPTION:** Scenes from the official launch of the Veterans' Covenant package, in Canberra.

Minister for Veterans and Defence Personnel Darren Chester officially launched the Veteran Card, which gives Australian business owners the opportunity to practically demonstrate thanks and respect for those who have served Australia in military uniform.

**"Australian Defence Force veterans will be able to access thousands of special discounts as businesses across the nation say 'thank you for your service'," Mr Chester said.**

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said Australians had a great deal of respect for those who served our nation in the uniforms of the Navy, Army and Air Force and, through the Veteran Card, veterans would have access to more than 10,000 offers from around 500 businesses, both over the counter and online.

**"Much like the lapel pin gives everyday Australians the opportunity to recognise veterans and thank them for their service, the offers available through the veteran card allow the business community to show its thanks," Mr Morrison said.**

**"The broader recognition package, which includes the Veterans Covenant, the lapel pin and card is a way each and every one of us, including the business community, can say to our veterans 'thank you for your service'."**

**More than 33,000 veterans and reservists have already applied and will begin receiving their covenant packs in coming days.**

**Mr Chester will launch the card at Pushys in Fyshwick this morning along with representatives from other participating businesses and Australian Partners of Defence - APOD -**

**which is partnering with the Department of Veterans' Affairs to connect clients with the**

**business community.**

**"Bringing corporate Australia on board will be a tangible benefit to the veteran community, with the card providing access to services and benefits for eligible veterans," Mr Chester said.**

**"We are proud to be partnering with APOD – an organisation founded and run by veteran families for veteran families – to ensure veterans can easily find local businesses in their area that are showing that respect and recognition of their service.**

**"There are a wide range of businesses already participating, from retailers with hundreds of outlets Australia-wide through to veteran-owned and operated small businesses [including CONTACT, which received more than 400 new subscribers in the first two days, via its APOD listing, which is 'TRENDING' on the APOD web site].**

**"There is no set criteria for how businesses choose to show that respect and recognition, but I have no doubt we will see the numbers grow with more businesses supporting the covenant and veterans and their families have made.**

**"I encourage all businesses to get on board with the Australian Defence Veterans' Covenant and show their respect and recognition for those who have served to defend our nation."**



## **THE BEST FROM THE WEST**

From all PIGS in the WEST, all the best to PIGS everywhere else and we wish you all a very merry Christmas and a safe and healthy 2020.

## **XMAS PIGS SWILL**

Unfortunately, our annual PIGS SWILL will be held a bit later this year, on December 11th so of course we'll miss this edition of the Newsletter. The lunch will be held this year at "The Shoe", near the Horseshoe Bridge in Yagan Square and due to the size of the venue, numbers will unfortunately be limited. Notes of the event will follow in the next edition of the newsletter.

## **BRUCE ROCK - BACK TO THE BUSH SERVICE (By Don Cruden)**

On Sat. 2nd Nov. with my grandson Matthew in tow we headed for Bruce Rock and the Return to the Bush Vietnam Veterans march. So, with "Banner" in place, carried by Don Mantach and Keith Lewis, (both regulars to this event) I made up No. 3 of 7RAR marchers. Thankfully some veterans from other battalions with no banner in sight joined us to eventually make up 6 marchers and two banner carriers. Well for a 500km return trip it is not worth my effort. But each year I head to Bruce Rock so one can only hope for improved numbers from our WA branch members.

## **50TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATION SERVICES**

The WA association is planning to hold 50th Anniversary Commemoration Services in 2020 for Noel Crouch, kia 21st May 1970 and Paul Navarre, kia 6th June 1970. Noel's service in his hometown of Katanning is being organized by Graham Edwards, who attended school with Noel. Paul's service will be held in Joondalup where his sister lives and is being organized by Mick O'Halloran who was in the same section as Paul. If any PIGS have any stories or anecdotes about either Noel or Paul, please pass them onto Graham or Mick as per contacts below:

Graham Edwards 0418952162

Mick O'Halloran michael.ohalloran1@bigpond.com or 08 95343091



## SICK PARADE

Jock Henderson has taken himself off to hospital for a little holiday but he's now back home and looking forward to some ongoing tests over the next few weeks to ensure all ok.

## PIGS TRAVELLING FAR AND WIDE

Recently Pete and Sandra Vlachou and Gordon and Dianne Dickson attended the Kulin Bush Races, along with Dale Marshall and Gary Williams.



Pete Vlachou and Gordon Dickson with 7RAR flag.



Note the 7RAR flag leading the parade.



They stayed at Camp Hart, honouring a local digger kia Vietnam

Gordon and Dianne then travelled further afield and visited the Port Pirie RSL, where they found their museum to be fantastic. Below is a selection of photos taken at the museum.



**Huey**





## Weapons Display





## 7RAR Royal Australian Regiment First Tour April 1967

In April 1967, 7RAR embarked upon HMAS Sydney, bound for South Vietnam where they relieved the 9th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment. By this time, the single Australian battalion, which had previously been considered had been replaced by the 1st Australian Task Force (1 ATF), consisting of two infantry battalions and various supporting units, based in Phuoc Tuy Province. Upon arrival the battalion joined 1 ATF's base at Nui Dat, however, the following month 6RAR was replaced by 7RAR and it was with 7RAR that the battalion served out its first year long tour of duty in South Vietnam.

Over the course of these 12 months, 7RAR took part in 26 battalion-level operations, as well as numerous small unit actions. Initially 7RAR undertook security operations around Nui Dat as well as carrying out a few search and destroy tasks at a local level, however, their first major operation saw them take up a blocking position near Nuyen Mui in support of US and South Vietnamese forces who advanced through the May Tien mountains in an effort to locate the VC 27th Regiment and drive them towards 7RAR's position. Ultimately, however, this operation failed as the VC unit was not located. In August 1967 the battalion was tasked to undertake an independent search and destroy operation to the north-west of Nui Dat, in the Hai Duh area. This operation, codenamed Operation Bullard, led to the Battle of Sui Chou Pha when 'A' Company, under Major Ewart O'Donnell fought an encounter battle with a reinforced Viet Cong company from the 3rd Battalion, 27th Regiment. Five Australians were killed during the fighting, while another died of wounds later, and 19 others were wounded. It is believed that the Viet Cong suffered over 200 casualties in the battle, largely from supporting artillery and mortars.

Throughout August and September 7RAR took part in recital operations around Na Bang. Later in September, the battalion lost a large number of its national servicemen who, having completed their two year obligation, were rotated back in Australia for discharge. The following month they took part in an Australian, US and South Vietnamese operation codenamed Sui Fe which was launched in the May Tien Secret Zone in an attempt to find the Viet Cong's 5th Division. After this they undertook search and destroy operations around Nui Dat, however contact with the Viet Cong during this time was limited. In December 1967, 1 ATF was expanded to a brigade group with the arrival of a third infantry battalion, 3RAR, and a quantity of Canadian tanks. Between 24th January and 14 March 1968, 7RAR deployed to Binh Hoa-Long Khanh border along with 2RAR, and subsequently took part in Operation Cobra during the Tet Offensive.

On 9 April 1968, 7RAR was relieved by 1RAR and subsequently rotated back to Australia. Upon arrival in Sydney, the battalion was welcomed home by a large crowd and conducted a march through the streets. Throughout their deployment over 1,180 men had served in the battalion's ranks, of whom 14 had been killed and 124 wounded. Members of the battalion received the following decorations:

One Distinguished Service Order (DSO),  
Two Members of Order of the British Empire (MBEs),  
Two Military Crosses (MCs),  
Two Distinguished Conduct Medals (DCMs),  
Three Military Medals (MMs) and  
14 Mentions in Despatches (MIDs)

## Second Tour February 1970

They arrived in Vietnam in February under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Ronald Grey, replacing 3RAR. They arrived under an effort to pacify Phuoc Tuy. This effort involved 7RAR in a long continuous operation, in an attempt to keep the Viet Cong off balance and separate them from the civilian population. During April and May 1970, 7RAR took part in the task force level Operation Conquest which took place around Nuyen Mui with the aim of destroying the Viet Cong's D-445th Battalion.

Throughout June 1970 and February 1971, 1 ATF undertook a four-phased pacification operation known as Cong Chong in concert with South Vietnamese forces. This involved extensive patrolling, ambush and cordon and search operations. During one such operation on the night of 30 December 1970 Headquarters 'B' Company, 7RAR and four APCs from 3rd Cavalry Regiment were contacted by a large group of Viet Cong. The company was assaulted by the Australians four times before being repelled by heavy fire from the M113s. The following morning a clearing patrol found 21 bodies and a large quantity of weapons and ammunition. Intelligence later assessed that a company from VC D445 Battalion had been destroyed.

On 25 February 1971, 1RAR relieved 7RAR, and the battalion returned to Sydney, arriving there on 10th March 1971. This was the battalion's last tour of Vietnam. For its second tour, members of 7RAR received the following decorations: one DSO, two MBEs, two MCs, two MMs, 5 MIDs and one British Empire Medal. Casualties included 17 killed and 89 wounded, many of them caused by mines fired by the Viet Cong from the controversial barrier minefield laid previously by the Australians at Dat Da. Over the course of its two deployments, over 2,400 men served with 7RAR of which 33 men killed and 220 wounded.

8RAR was formed by the Army due to the strength of 170 RAR. The battalion was

After a period that it would be August to 6th Commonwealth units.

8RAR returned deployed to 3 replaced 9RAR formed part of

In early 1970 Long Hai are a large bank air raids. They and conduct successful, a Commendation operation.

8RAR's men in Phuoc Tuy and prevent these operations of Vietnam suffered 10 was not reported.

The reduction War led to won the 15 discharge of the Army to five battalions and on 31.

Members

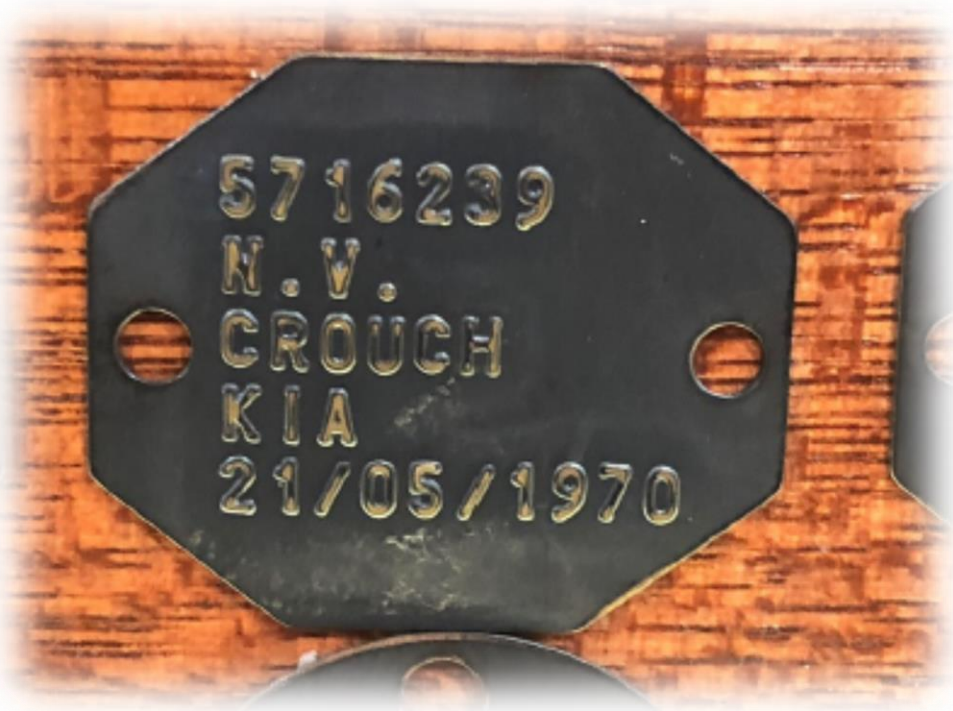
## **7RAR History**



## **Huey**



**Huey**



**Noel Crouch "Dog Tag"**





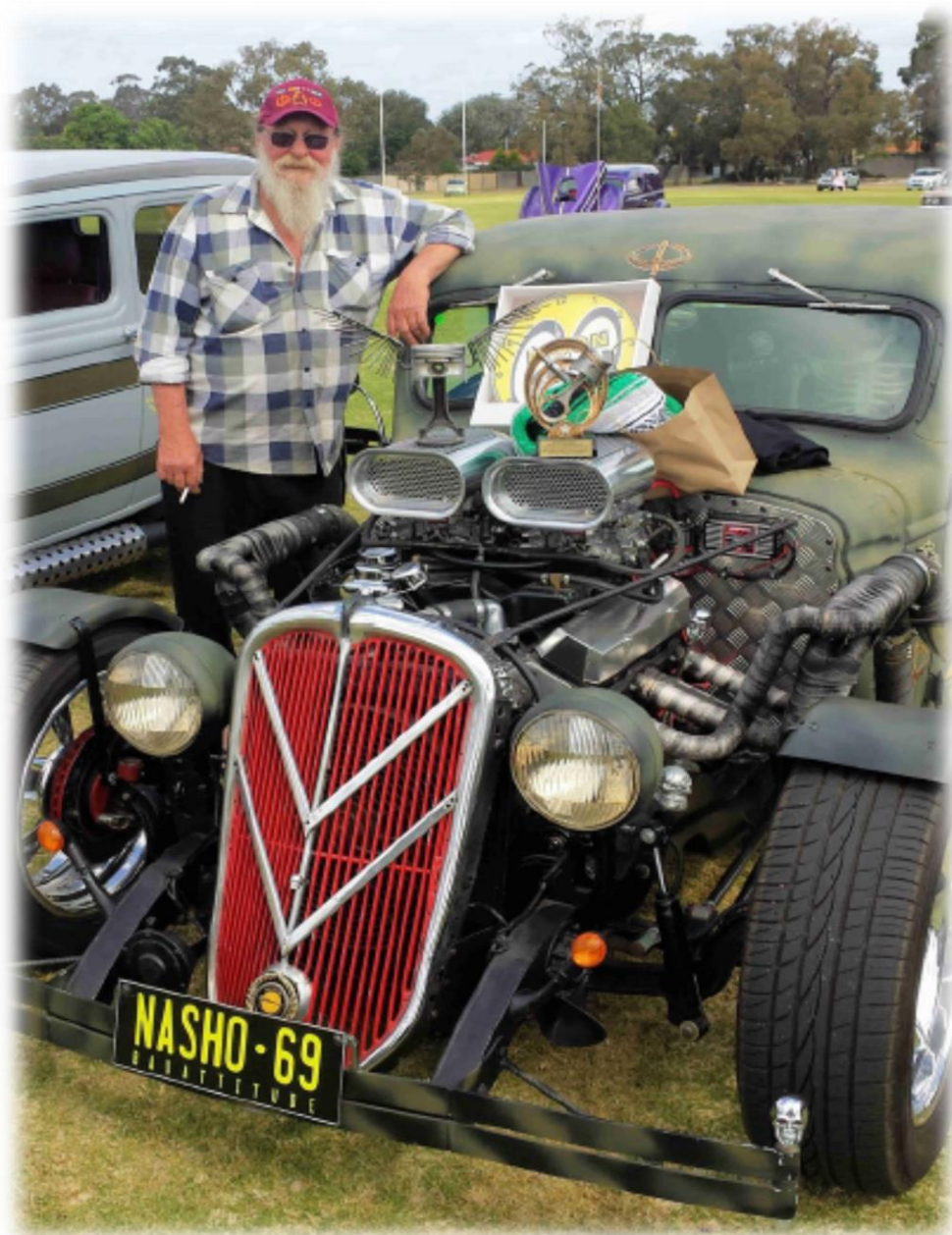
A Coy diggers on the cover of a book, Tony Blake centre.

Port Pirie, RSL and Museum, well worth a visit. Thanks Gordon and Dianne for these pics.



## WALLY KLESZCZ'S HOT ROD

Great pic of Wally Kleszcz's hot rod. Thanks Dave Ingles for the photo.



## MEMBERSHIP DETAILS

Please let Don Cruden or Geoff Murray know if you change address, phone number or email as this is the only way we can contact you. Call Don after 1800 on 9374 0014 or email [dcruden1@bigpond.com](mailto:dcruden1@bigpond.com)



## **NAMETAGS (Note: For BOTH Men and Women)**

Our NAMETAGS are available in two sizes, small at \$13, large \$18, prices include delivery. Contact Geoff Murray as per details below and provide the correct name to be included on the TAG and the correct postal address. To ensure prompt delivery, pop a cheque (made payable to Geoff Murray) or money order in the post when you place your order, delivery is about three weeks. Post it to:

**Geoff Murray**

**30 Bouvardia Way**

**GREENWOOD WA 6024**

**Alternatively, you can do an Electronic Funds Transfer to:**

**BSB 066132 Account 00913220**



**Approx. 6.0cm x 4.0cm**



**Approx. 9.0cm x 6.0cm**

## **NEWSLETTER**

Remember, the newsletter is only as good as the contents, so please contact Geoff Murray if you have anything to report, no matter how trivial. Geoff can be contacted on:

**Mobile: 0432253043**

**Email: geoffandlorraine@yahoo.com.au**

**Cheers - Geoff Murray**



## PEARLS FROM VICTORIA

### Anzac Day Themes

The Anzac Commemorative Committee met recently and decided to set Anzac Day themes as there were some significant commemorative dates coming up or to acknowledge one of our historic regiments.

2020 75th Anniversary of the end of WW2

2021 Royal Australian Artillery

2022 60th Anniversary of the end of our SVN involvement

2023 70th Anniversary Korean War's end

2024 Salute to Peacekeeping

### Anzac/Remembrance Comparison Thoughts

A recent Kindred & Unit Associations Forum noted some confusion/blurring was occurring between Anzac Day and Remembrance Day with the wearing of Poppies becoming quite noticeable on Anzac Day

Broadly speaking the feeling was that Anzac Day was set aside for veterans themselves to march in memory of fellow veterans whilst Remembrance Day was for all members of the community to the sacrifice of defence personnel. The Shrine of Remembrance to be approached to place heavier emphasis on Remembrance Day similar to the programme they ran this year.

### AGM February 2020

Originally scheduled for Nov 2019 but no advice to members would have been sent to members it was agreed that we defer the AGM until the first meeting to be held on Wednesday 12th February 2020. At this stage we don't have a venue because East Malvern RSL has effectively closed except for evening trading 3 nights a week and consequently not suitable for our meetings. We are hoping to move to Watsonia RSL and, subject to confirmation, will become our regular meeting spot.

We are in need of new members to come in and bring some new ideas. We have lost stalwarts Bob and Karen Arnott through resignation and regulars Allan/Jan McGuinness and 'Roo' Dowley now live well away from Melbourne (South

Australia and San Remo respectively) and will only be able to visit occasionally. Duties are not onerous and younger veterans are warmly invited to join.

### **Tom Bourke's Memorial Service (November 22 2019)**

Tom Bourke died appropriately on Remembrance Day this year – a soldier to the last. Tom was most insistent that he wanted a private cremation (with private underlined) and his family carried out his wishes but decided that he needed a memorial service for his family, friends and especially his army

mates to remember him. The service held at Watsonia RSL was simple in his presentation with his son Mark acting as the MC to control the flow. There were two slide shows backed by music highlighting Tom's army and civilian life as well as some moving family eulogies. Ian Dunn had compiled a list of email tributes from a range of contributors and he and I were given the chance to share these stories/thoughts with the assembled people. Of necessity the tributes were abridged but a copy of the unabridged version is available by emailing Ian Dunn (dunn@techinfo.com.au ) or me. Copies of the tributes were given to Tom's children - Sarah and Mark.

A short RSL ceremony was conducted by Jeff Mawkes (Watsonia RSL President and a 9RAR veteran).

I'm not good at estimating crowds but I would guess that there were about 120 in attendance along with quite a number of apologies. Some travelled quite a distance to be there – several from WA, SA and Queensland.

Possibly the Memorial could be best summed up by Chris Read (1Pl/2nd) and the shortest tribute:-

**"Tom – the best of us all"**

Our thoughts and condolences go to Sarah, Mark and their families as well as to Ailsa his long-time companion of 16 years.





**Some of Tom's Mates**

## **Christmas/New Year**

**On behalf of the Victorian Committee we'd like to wish fellow Pigs and their families a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.**

## **Parting Shot**

**Coffee keeps me busy until it's acceptable to drink wine.**

**Anonymous**

**Bill Anderson**

**0419-877-463 [lastwill@hotmail.net.au](mailto:lastwill@hotmail.net.au)**

Comrades,

Just a short email, to thank you for your tributes to Tom and to send you the final version of those tributes as a PDF file. Bill Anderson and I quoted heavily from the tributes in delivering our speech at Tom's Memorial Service today. You made our job very easy, by expressing yourselves so openly and truthfully about Tom.

Your words seemed to make a big impression on the many people who attended the service and I'm sure they will be remembered by Tom's family for a very long time. We are making the Tributes readily available to anyone who asks for them, and have already provided copies to Mark and Sarah. Please feel free to share the file with Tom's mates.

The Order of Service, prepared by Tom's children Sarah and Mark, was:

1:10pm Welcome to all, Sarah & Mark Bourke

First speakers- Tom's Brother, Paul Bourke—said that Tom was one of 11 children; grew up as a very good horseman and bushman; and after working on sheep stations in the NSW outback had intended joining the Northern Territory Police, but joined the Army instead.

1 song with photos

Second speakers- Ian Dunn (7RAR 2nd Tour) and Bill Anderson (7RAR 1st Tour)—spoke, almost exclusively, by quoting from the tributes (seven pages) provided by Tom's Army mates—Ian reciting Jim's Robbie Burns poem in full.

1 song with photos

Neil Mitchell interview—about 3 minutes of a much longer interview was played; a copy of which we expect to be able to make available to all.

Third speakers- Lorna's brother, Allan Carbis—Allan Denis Carbis, 3793897, 17th Construction Squadron, SVN 1968-69, spoke of surprise marriage his experiences of getting to know the Bourke family after the of Lorna and Tom just before Tom's second tour of SVN; described the Bourkes as a family of giants (all of Allan's family not being at all tall).



Last speaker- Tom's nephew, Paul Sam James – spoke of growing up with “Uncle Tom” there to frequently order him to “get a haircut” and being (rightly) in awe of Tom as a hero.

RSL Service- President of Watsonia RSL, Jeff Mawkes (8RAR) – remarked on the fact that the “brief” summary of Tom's military service ran to two pages; something he had not seen before during his long service with the RSL.

### Refreshments

It all went very, very well. I think that we did the right thing by Tom, just as he always did the right thing by us. I'm hoping to get copies of some great photos of Tom, from Sarah and Mark – will send them on to you when I do.

Thank you for your invaluable assistance.

Regards, Ian

There were two slide shows backed by music highlighting Tom's army and civilian life as well as some moving family eulogies. Ian Dunn had compiled a list of email tributes from a range of contributors and he and I were given the chance to share these stories/thoughts with the assembled people. Of necessity the tributes were abridged but a copy of the unabridged version is available by emailing Ian Dunn (dunn@techinfo.com.au ) or me. Copies of the tributes were given to Tom's children - Sarah and Mark.

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“Tom – the best of us all”

Our thoughts and condolences go to Sarah, Mark and their families as well as to Ailsa his long-time companion of 16 years.

TRIBUTES FROM TOM'S ARMY MATES

### **TRIBUTES FROM TOM'S MATES**

**CHRIS READ** 7 RAR 2 Platoon 2<sup>nd</sup> Tour

... a great leader, a great man, a great soldier and a great friend. It was a great privilege to have served with him and with so many other good mates around him.

Tom was, and still is, a great inspiration to all.

And what a coincidental time to call it quits ... on Remembrance Day.

Yes, Tom you will be sadly missed by all who had the privilege of serving with you.

**BOB PRICE** 7 RAR 2 Platoon 2<sup>nd</sup> Tour

Tom will be sadly missed by all who knew him.

**KEVIN "BLUE" ANDERTON** 7 RAR 2 Platoon 1<sup>st</sup> Tour

Belly and myself were very close mates, always at each other's throats, both of us West Aussies. When Alec was killed, I went off the rails for a while; it was big Tom that got me back on track – made sure I stayed ... there the rest of the time we were over there.

Big man, big heart; the best Platoon Sarg ever ...

Lest We Forget.

**GORDON "DICKO" & DI DICKSON** 7 RAR 2 Platoon 2<sup>nd</sup> Tour

... sad day indeed with the passing of Tom. As young men in 7 Battalion we respected and loved our sergeant. We relied on him for mentoring and leadership and we got it. He probably had doubts about our capabilities but as time went on he could rely on us, mainly because we were a team.

Please pass on our condolences to Tom's family he will always be in our hearts.



**PHIL CLARK 7 RAR 2 Platoon 2<sup>nd</sup> Tour**

Very sad news about Tom. Hutch, Benny Ball and I will be coming down. I wonder how many Tom hooked in with his old "Will you scratch my leg please" trick!??  
I recall him saying words to the effect 'my job is to get you all back home'. He was just that sort of bloke.

**GREG & PAM MILLER 7 RAR 2 Platoon 2<sup>nd</sup> Tour**

Tom ... will be missed by many of us, but not forgotten. He in many ways kept us, young and lacking in knowledge, from becoming statistics while overseas. Please pass on to all his family our thoughts and well wishes at this sad time.

**BILL WILLIAMS 1 RAR & 7 RAR**

**LETTER TO PAUL JAMES (TOM'S NEPHEW):**

I am very sorry to hear of Tom passing ... I also served with Tom at 7 RAR in Puckapunyal Vic and with Michael in 1 RAR Vietnam

It just seems yesterday when I returned from Vietnam and Michael's sister was at Spencer Street Station to meet us and reflect on Michael's tragic death in the grenade accident a year earlier in June 1965. ...

I will not be able to attend Tom's funeral as I'm attending Jim Harper's (1 RAR) funeral late on Thursday where I am going to give the eulogy, Jim was a medic with 1 RAR Vietnam 1965/66 and a close mate.

Jim was one of the first people on the scene to help and give first aid to Michael and the others in the horrific grenade accident on the 26<sup>th</sup> June 1965, only a few weeks after we arrived in Vietnam; 4 KIA and 8 WIA. ...

Your family should be very proud of the service you have given to Australia, very few have suffered the effects of war like yours. When I met Tom at the

memorial service in the wheelchair it hit me once again the price your family had paid and suffering the Vietnam War had inflicted.

Michael 1 RAR Vietnam KIA, Tom 7 RAR Vietnam WIA and Peter 9 RAR Vietnam.

“Lest we Forget”

**TONY KEECH** 7 RAR 1st & 2nd Tours

PASS ON TO ALL THE FAMILY ... THAT HE WAS ONE OF THE BEST I KNEW.

**GEOFF WOODALL** 7 RAR 2 Platoon 2<sup>nd</sup> Tour

One of my memories of Tom, as everyone knows he got married a week before he went over.

Jos and I came home approximately two weeks or so after Tom stepped on the mine.

When we landed at Essendon Airport Jos's Mum met us and picked us up. On the way home we called at the repat centre at Heidelberg.

At 8.30am they were not going to let us in, but we were not going to take no for an answer.

When we finally got in he was sitting up in bed as large as life, the only thing he was worried about was whether his old Fella was gonna work.

**GRAEME CHAPMAN** 2 RAR & 7 RAR OC “C” Coy 1<sup>st</sup> Tour

We go back a long way – we met in 1959 at Holsworthy playing footy (that's Aust Rules) for 2RAR, then Army NSW – he was the ruck and I was the ruck-rover so we played together as a mini-team.

We served together in Mortar Platoon when Tom was ... often carrying the base plate or 6 x mortar rounds and I was Platoon 21C. We went to Malaysia

in 1961 when I was Acting OC Support Coy ex-Ron Grey, but there was no footy and I moved away from Support Coy.

Tom was in the time I knew him from 1959 to end of Malaysian period in 1963 an imperturbable, solid, totally reliable soldier who kept to the rules and was one of my few totally reliable good soldiers. He was a model of what good soldiers should be – no self-interest was ever evident, he an exemplar of a team player for others.

If there were vacancies on Promotion Courses Tom was the one who be at the head of the selection queue as he stood out as one who was totally reliable.

I was grateful to have him in my Company in the build-up of C Coy 7RAR prior to our 1st tour SVN in 1967-1968. Tom was a great role model for the younger soldiers, especially the NS, as he epitomised the best of how a professional Regular soldier should behave. Being several years old than most of his Section members Tom was the “senior” in all respects and he was the elder brother to his soldiers not only in soldierly skills but as a “wise and sensible good bloke” – he was the best of all role models, as some other the ARA soldiers who also became NCOs’ assumed it was their “right” but were too often found to be lesser people and needed a bit of a boot from time to time. While Tom was a “good mixer” he was never an excessive drinker or one who needed to drink to forget the shitty bits.

Perhaps one of the most illustrative stories of Tom’s influence to our team was in Dec 1967 when we C Coy 7RAR after a difficult time in the bush were pressured to provide Task Force security on Xmas Day manning the on-the wire defences of the forward units while they ignored the nastiness of war, put their weapons aside, and mostly got boozed. Maybe we could have momentarily ducked the honour of being “one of the best” but if you are given that honour you have to front up – and we, with staunch fellows like Tom, had never shirked anything in the previous 9 months so why now?

For our own early Xmas Day we had negotiated especially good food and lots and lots of booze. I was pressured to open the “boozier” 30mins early, so we were in good form by the time the Xmas meal was served. And good tucker,

good companionship, the C.O. visiting to tell us were a top team reinforced our team and made us feel extra good.

After the celebratory meal some wandered off to have a siesta when a bunch (say 6) SAS troopers wandered in for a drink and found lots of bonhomie – perhaps too much as they decided they could liberate some of our captured and prized weapon collection. The history shows I was about to launch into the fray when Tom arrived and took over sending the SAS quickly on their way. To have been involved in a fracas like that would have ended my military career and Tom took that involvement away from me.

I missed Tom at last year's ANZAC Day march as we always had a quiet personal chat and he continued to call me "Sir".

**"we band of brothers; for he ... shall be my brother"**

**RON GREY 7 RAR Commanding Officer 2<sup>nd</sup> Tour**

Tom had served with me previously. I was his company commander in 2 RAR in 1960-1961.

Having known Tom all that period of time, I viewed him as amongst the staunchest of the true – and I viewed him as a friend.

Though he was very taciturn, he was one of the characters of the battalion. In my opinion Tom was a typical Australian Infantry Soldier.

If you wanted to have the perfect NCO in terms of style and character, then you have him in Tom.



**JIM HUSBAND** 7 RAR CSM "A" Coy 2<sup>nd</sup> Tour

A Verse for Tom, by Robert Burns, 1784:

An honest man here lies at rest  
As e'er God with his image blest;  
The friend of man, the friend of truth,  
The friend of age, and guide of youth:  
Few hearts like his, with virtue warm'd,  
Few heads with knowledge so informed:  
If there's another world, he lives in bliss;  
If there is none, he made the best of this.

**ROBERT "BOB" HARRISON** 7 RAR 9 Platoon 1<sup>st</sup> Tour

I had the privilege of serving with Tom in 7 RAR at Pucka and on our first tour of S.V.N.

I was a very naive young national serviceman when I first met Tom, I remember him calling out to me one day, 'Hey soldier', when I went to reply he answered 'Not you, I will be on the pension by the time it takes me to make a soldier out of you'. I was taken aback but then saw a grin from him that I will never forget.

Being one of the first national servicemen in 7 RAR and seeing blokes like Paddie Craig, Spunky MacFarlane, Gabby Hayes, Brian Walsh, Mazza Clark etc, I was very pleased that those were the real soldiers that would be leading us through the ordeals we would face in S.V.N.

Tom's bush craft was amazing and his ability to teach and earn respect was renowned, but as a dedicated soldier it would be hard to find Tom an equal. When on an operation in Vietnam I had the misfortune to find myself in a minefield and under fire. Tom, Walshie and Spunky MacFarlane came to my aid; for which I was most grateful.

On another occasion I saw Tom expose himself to almost certain death when he ran across a burst of incoming fire to protect a young soldier and then

proceed to get the situation under control. Even Graeme Chapman made a comment with regard to Tom's swift and calculated actions. Tom often spoke to me about looking where I was going when in the jungle, little knowing what the future held for him on his next tour.

On my discharge I lost touch with Tom for a while, but our next meeting was when Tom was in rehab. in a wheelchair still carrying that charismatic smile and behaving with total mischief.

Some years later, on ANZAC DAY, we had refreshments at the Sarah Sands Hotel in Sydney Rd Brunswick when in walks Bourkey and breasts up to the bar declaring to all to move aside as he was now was two feet taller and had priority to the bar. When I was leaving he said that there was good accommodation near his place for me and gave me the phone number to Pentridge where he had been doing some training.

On a whale watching trip, during a reunion near Sawtell, Tom became very seasick and a photographer thought it an ideal time to take some movies of Tom but after a few terse words from myself and a reminder of what this man had done for his country and the cost to him, the photographer soon began to respect one of the true gentlemen ... of the 7th Battalion RAR.

I have no doubt at all that Tom (mooka) Bourke was one of the greatest Soldier's that 7 RAR had on its first tour, and no doubt that this would also be true for his second tour. He was a professional soldier that never boasted about his deeds and always made those around him feel safe, except from his wicked sense of humour, that was impossible to escape; but there was never an ounce of malice in his mischievous pranks.

Vale Tommy

Your Skill, Deeds, and Personal Courage Created A Legend That Will Live On Forever In 7 RAR.

REST EASY TOM

IAN DUNN

7 RAR 2 Platoon 2<sup>nd</sup> Tour

For nearly all of us in Tom's platoon, Vietnam in 1970 was our first experience of war. We all relied on Tom, both in training and in Vietnam, to show us how things should be done.

Our first "contact" happened when we were sitting in the jungle, astride a track, with machine guns pointing in each direction. One of the guns opened up in the early hours of the morning, with a very long burst. Most of us, including me, had been fast asleep. We woke in fright and fear to the sound of the shooting, and heard something crashing through the jungle, going anti-clockwise around the platoon. There was no return fire, it just kept moving around us—and then we picked up a foul smell, which Tom quickly identified as that of a tiger. He'd encountered them before, in Malaya. But for Tom's knowledge we'd still be wondering about the indestructible monster which terrified us that night.

And that's how it was for us, time after time, in Vietnam. When we thought we were in trouble, Tom showed us how to cope with our fear, how to fight, and how to survive.

We had lots of great NCOs in the Infantry Corps; nearly all the sergeants seemed to have at least ten years of really solid experience. They truly were the backbone of the Army. But I don't think that any of them could have been better than Tom Bourke.

I never saw Tom show any sign of fear—though he must have been afraid at times—he just did his job and, leading by example, showed us how to do ours.

And he had such a quirky sense of humour. On occasions in the bush, when everything was settled and quiet, I'd hear a "hssst" from Tom and would turn around to see him pointing his hand as a revolver at me, pretending to cock the hammer with his thumb. And always with a cheeky grin. Much later he told me that he'd lost two platoon commanders on the 1<sup>st</sup> Tour, and he had just been putting me on notice.

He was quirky, funny, brave, and strong – a great soldier and a great bloke. And he never really changed.

**LEIGH CHRISTIE**

7 RAR 2 Platoon 2<sup>nd</sup> Tour

Thomas Bourke was the quintessential soldier. He was big, he was strong, he was tough. He was the real deal. As a young newly recruited soldier he appeared formidable and someone I looked up to in awe. We were all glad to be on the same side as Tom. As we got to know Tom he proved to have all the above qualities and more.

Tom really cared for his men and was instrumental in turning them into confident, competent soldiers. We were training for war and he was the perfect man to do this and as a result he had the utmost respect of all those who came into contact with him. There were not many sergeants in the Army who were loved, but that's how we felt about Tom (I don't know what Tom's reaction would be if he could see this).

I do not wish this to be a war story, however Tom was a soldier and it's hard to speak of Tom without speaking of his military service. On the 15/7/1970 Tom was severely injured in a land mine explosion with myself and Graham Bellette. Although in severe pain we did not hear a whimper from him. He did not want to compromise our position any more than it had been compromised.

The training that Tom, together our other instructors, drilled into us took over and led to the timely extraction of the wounded.

Despite his wounds Tom went on to live a long and happy life, as only Tom could do.

It was a pleasure to be a tiny part of Toms Life

Vale Tom, the world is a lesser place with your passing.

To all of Tom's family Vicki and I would like to pass on our sincere condolences.



### **ALAN "ROO" DOWLEY 7 RAR 2 Platoon 2<sup>nd</sup> Tour**

For a lot of people they will meet a very special person in their life. For me it was Tom Bourke.

Tom was the sort of person that was an inspiration to us all. His job was to make sure that we all knew what we had to do and to do it with the skill we were trained for. Sometimes we didn't do as well as we should have and we all knew it, but Tom was always hard but fair and made sure we all learnt from the experience. For me he was the soldier you would go anywhere with. For the last 50 years or so he has suffered without complaining and this is testimony to his courage.

For me I will always cherish my friendship with Tom and I hope that I may be half the man he was.

May he rest in peace, in no more pain, something he richly deserves.

### **ALLAN MCGUINNESS 2 RAR & 7 RAR 2<sup>nd</sup> Tour**

I first met Tom when I marched into 2RAR as a raw digger, at Holsworthy. Back then when there were only three battalions it didn't take long to get to know the wags and heroes of the Regiment. Tom fitted that mould, with fellas like Bluey Thompson and the like. I mention Blue as he featured in a fair bit of Tom's early soldiering days.

Fast forward to Malaya in 1961 and Terendak Garrison of which 2 Battalion was the first Australian battalion into those lines. Our favourite spot when not on duty was the Sydney Bar, the first boozer outside the gates. Many a time you would find the usual suspects getting rounded up there to get back to the lines Tom, Don Bean, George Newton etc ... unfortunately Tom always seemed to create the ire of Bluey after such nights. Tom spoke quite often of the run-ins he had with Blue over our late night visitations to the Bar. One time he was even threatened with a court martial. But Tom always boasted that he "beat the bastard".

We lost touch for many years until I marched into 7RAR and being introduced to the Sergeants mess that night, and there was Tom. As the night progressed Tom pulled out this scrappy bit of paper and stated it was a bar chit from the Sydney Bar from 1961 and the manager gave it to him for him to pay but he stated it was mine and I should pay it. This was the standing joke. After Tom was medevaced back to Australia I again met up with him at

the Q store in Watsonia barracks. Yes, you guessed it he produced this scrap of paper. And had the same dialog. Over the years, during the monthly meetings he inevitably asked the question of when I was going to pay my bar chit.

So what about Tom and Bluey? Tom still had the usual run-ins with Bluey during the time at 7RAR, but much more professionally. So be prepared if you see lightning and hear thunder; you can guarantee it will be these two antagonists still sorting each other out up there. It could be that they will end the drought with their squabbles.

No matter what mischief Tom got up to he was always a soldier first and damn good leader and a fine mentor to the younger digs.

You have served your nation well Tom—stand down mate, your duty is done!

**BILL ANDERSON 7 RAR 1<sup>st</sup> Tour**

Being in CHQ at the time I had the chance to see him in action as a Platoon Sergeant – from my mates in 2 Platoon I know he had their respect.

I enjoyed his company and his anecdotes during our committee meetings.

He was a fine friend

**CHRIS JOHNSON 7 RAR 1 Platoon 2<sup>nd</sup> Tour**

Tom – the best of us all.

## **Web Master**

### **I got this email from Chad Sherrin, MM**

G'day men,

As I think you all know I work with Charlie Lynn's Adventure Kokoda guiding battlefield history treks across the Kokoda Trail. Prompted by the comments of a couple of RAR Vietnam veterans I am trying to put together an exclusive RAR trek

for Regiment members, both past and present; I think it would be a great experience for all involved to have the opportunity to share the experience of the Trail and to swap stories of their respective careers as soldiers. I can imagine the tales around the campfire at night!

I would lead the trek myself and here are the outline details of the proposed trek:

- 10 Day Premium Campaign History Trek – In outline the trek follows the original Kokoda Trail, visiting all the major battle sites, including detailed briefings on each of the battles. The detailed trek itinerary is on our website <https://www.kokodatreks.com/treks/our-treks/charlies-premium-kokoda-campaign-trek/#trek-page-itinerary>
- Kokoda itself is pivotal for Vietnam veterans as it was there that our soldiers learned, the hard way, the jungle warfare skills that we used and many of us were taught by veterans of the Kokoda campaign in our early years as soldiers.
- Dates: 18<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> September 2020 - 12 days in total, which includes travel to and from Australia.
- Cost: Flights depart Australia from either Sydney, Brisbane or Cairns, with the option for people to arrange their own flights to Port Moresby using Frequent Flyer points, etc. For this trek we are offering a \$400 discount on the standard cost – detail as follows:
  - Ex Sydney: \$5,195
  - Ex Brisbane: \$4,995
  - Ex Cairns: \$4,895
  - Ex Port Moresby: \$4,195
- Inclusions: The cost is all inclusive except for personal clothing and equipment and travel insurance. A detailed trek preparation guide, including a recommended clothing and equipment checklist is available on our website <https://www.kokodatreks.com/treks/trek-planning/pre-trek-preparation/> We do recommend that people consider engaging a personal carrier, which eases the burden on the trekker and, importantly, provides employment for the villagers along the Trail. The cost for a personal carrier is \$790.

We will require a minimum 15 people for the trek and I would appreciate it if you could promote this to your members and, if you have any contacts, to the RAR units in your area because I think it would be great to have some serving soldiers along with us..



To book people can follow this link <https://www.kokodatreks.com/book-now/?id=FF03C2C0-5044-4AC5-88A95B6FCBD8BD7F> Alternatively, I am happy to come and speak to groups if required to provide further information, or I am happy for individuals to contact me direct on either [chad@kokodatreks.com.au](mailto:chad@kokodatreks.com.au) or phone 0416 192 303

Kind regards,

Chad Sherrin Trek Leader



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[www.kokodatreks.com](http://www.kokodatreks.com)

## The history of the Slouch Hat from a Yank

The history of the Slouch Hat from the History Guy. If you receive this newsletter by email then simply click on the link below. Otherwise type in the link in your browser. [https://youtu.be/OZ72V\\_9MF\\_k](https://youtu.be/OZ72V_9MF_k)

Kev Gillett

Brisbane