

"Sitrep, Over!"



AUGUST 2014



Points of interest

A Centenary Parade and Gala Ball are to be held at Torrens Parade Ground on Saturday 22nd November 2014. The Ball is to be hosted by His Excellency the Governor of SA Mr Hieu Van Le.

The Parade & Ball will coincide with the 100th anniversary of the departure of 10th Battalion AIF troops to WW1 on 20th October 1914

See timings on Page 4

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Official Newsletter of the Royal South Australia Regiment Association Inc

An Experience of War

Part 6

It was this incident that made me fully realise the privileged position I held as the company medic, that my advice was important and that it was taken seriously. I knew then that I would have to live up to this responsibility and to the expectation that others had of my professional judgement and abilities.

In the field I carried an Owen sub-machine gun – later to be replaced by an AR 15, the early Armalite rifle – which I then traded in for the robust and ever reliable SLR. My bum pack was my medical store-house containing most of my medical consumables such as morphine, anti-biotics, anti-fungal tablets and an assortment of other pills and creams. Attached to the front of my webbing was my 'crash kit' or 'Medical Haversack NCO'. This was my emergency trauma kit which contained morphine, shell and field dressings, bandages, sticking plasters, instruments and the like. It hung from two clips at chest height but when laying prone it raised my body six inches above the ground when it was infinitely safer to be level with or below the ground.

After my first experience of feeling nakedly exposed to enemy fire I bodgied up the clasp so that I could quickly release one side to flick the pack under my arm and squirm as far into the ground as I could.

C Company's first major action occurred on 25 July 1966 when we contacted a reinforced enemy company.

In his book We Band of Brothers, C Company commander Brian McFarlane records, 'after patrolling for about 500 metres, the leading troops approached a cleared area where the padi



Bill Winterford (left) with Ken Wallace and Ken's sister and girlfriend at Enoggera prior to embarkation

fields made an in indent into the jungle.

7 Platoon saw two VC watching from a bamboo clump located about 60 metres out in the cleared area. Opening fire, the two VC were hit but immediately afterwards, on a front of about 125 metres, the tree line across the cleared indent erupted in a hail of fire directed at 7 Platoon.

The enemy advanced across the clearing in an attacking line with bugles sounding and guidons flying. Mortars slammed into our midst as we took up

firing positions. We were outnumbered by three to one. For more than 30 minutes belt after belt of machine gun fire was directed at the attacking line and our artillery fire began to cut the enemy down. The attack was beaten off but at the expense of three of our own men wounded'.

Les Prowse suffered a gun shot wound to the head, Bill Winterford an amputated arm and Rodney Cox had a shrapnel wound to the wrist.

I went forward to the casualties. The platoon stretcher-bearer had applied a field dressing to the wound of the unconscious Prowse who was now fitting and his body jerked uncontrollably. There was nothing more that could be done for him. Bill Winterford, his arm all but severed by hot shrapnel was lying by his wrecked machine gun and cursing the 'bastards' who were shooting at us. The fact that Bill had been hit by one of our own incoming artillery rounds was not known to him or to any of us at the time. While this was our first experience of being hit by so-called friendly fire it was not to be our last. **Continued next month**

Operation "Bribie" February 17 1967 - South Vietnam

Be all this as it may, there is no doubt in the writer's mind that Task Force was intended by the enemy to be led into a deliberate and well planned trap, the relieving cavalry vehicles and troops in them being the prime target.

If it were not for the tactical appreciation of Major (later Brigadier) Gordon "Guns" Murphy, OC "A" Sqn 3 Cav. Regt, (under whom the writer had the privilege to serve early in 1968) it may well have resulted in a disaster. Maj. Murphy arrived in theatre just before this operation was called on yet he had done his homework – he suspected a trap for his carriers. (Murphy, as one story goes, himself an armoured officer infuriated infantry types, particularly senior NCOs, by referring to rifles as guns 'careful with that gun, soldier', thus the nickname "guns").

The purpose of the enemy, as we have seen, was to draw the Australians into an ambush, the target being infantry transported in APCs while those lifted by helicopter were to be engaged on the ground as they advanced to where they expected to be intercepting a company or so of retiring VC who had attacked a nearby village (Lang Phuc Hai) garrisoned by a detachment of Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN).

These VC main forces, in fact, had already withdrawn in the direction of Dat Do to the North West while leaving a strong ambush detachments in and around the village of Ap Lo Gom which sits astride Route 44, the direct road to Lang Phuc Hai and the smaller hamlet of Lo Com where the VC had also engaged ARVN forces. In the event Murphy chose, against the wishes of his superiors, to ignore the roads and go cross country thus foiling the enemy's purpose.

The VC command knew that Task Force could not let his mischief in Australia's bailiwick go unchallenged and nor did it; Brigadier Graham, himself new in theatre, ordered a full battalion response from 6RAR. Right from the start things went wrong. The time of the warning order was 12.00n, very late in the day to organise even a company level operation, much less a full battalion attack quite some kilometres away from base. The attack itself could not, in the event, be initiated until 3.15pm.

Much worse, Graham had received "intelligence" to expect an attack on the Task Force that night, so he compounded the problem by ordering Lt Col Townsend C.O. 6 RAR to be back by 6.00 pm just two and three quarters of an hour after departing!



Part 2

Part 1

Just Soldiers

Sergeant William Wass MM

Only a dog tag

The machine-gun fire was murderous; it seemed to be coming from all directions at the same time. The Diggers unsuccessfully tried to edge their way forward as time and time again they stopped to burrow their faces into the ground in an attempt to avoid the barrage of bullets.

A young platoon commander raised his head to get his bearings but an enemy 7.92mm round blew it apart like a ripe melon, splattering his blood over those around him.

William Wass was born in Derby, England. He chose the life of a professional soldier and at an early age enlisted in the British Army, assigned to the local regiment, the Sherwood Foresters.

The young Wass thrived on the spit, polish and discipline of army life. With the outbreak of hostilities in South Africa, the Sherwood Foresters were deployed to fight the insurgent Dutch-Afrikaner settlers, known as Boers.

The climate was unforgiving—sweltering heat in summer and bone-chilling cold in winter. After a spell chasing an elusive enemy across the African veldt, Wass's battalion received orders to move to the docks for immediate embarkation.

Spirits were high as the men packed their equipment and loaded the supply wagons in anticipation of their impending journey home. As the lines were cast off and the ship moved from the quay, their reverie was shattered as they learned they were not going home; they were going to China. In their campaign against westerners, the militant 'Boxers' were carving a path of death and destruction across northern China; their targets, the European civilians and missionaries and westernised Chinese. A small, but well-armed multinational force was besieged in Peking and various nations hastily assembled a relief force to liberate the beleaguered garrison.

Wass's unit was soon in action, facing a human horde that swarmed towards them. The Foresters stood firm as the Boxers came closer and closer, their bloodcurdling cries of 'Sha!', 'Sha!' (Kill! Kill!) sending shivers down the Englishmen's spines. Coolly and calmly the orders were issued, 'At fifty yards, volley . . . fire!

Present . . . fire!' The hail of bullets brought down the entire first wave and most of the second. The orders were repeated and more Boxers fell. As the Foresters advanced up the narrow street, they clashed with the forward elements of the attacking mob, their bayonets dispatching many of the enemy assailants.

The overwhelmed rebels soon dispersed and fled, closely followed by the Foresters who took aim and fired a parting salvo. Wass observed the bodies littering the street. As he glanced down, he saw his boots were splattered with fresh blood. He closed his eyes, took a deep breath and awaited the next order. In the ensuing weeks, the rebellion was quelled and order finally restored. The Sherwood Foresters embarked yet again, this time bound for India to garrison the borders along the North West Frontier. Postings to Egypt, Singapore and Hong Kong followed.

After the thrill of action, the tedious life of garrison duty was not to Wass's liking. When his term of enlistment was up, he chose to take discharge and try his luck in Australia.

In 1914, William was working as a machine fitter in Sydney. One afternoon after he had knocked off work, he called into the local pub for a drink. The bar was abuzz with the talk of the German push across Europe and Britain's declaration of war against the invaders—the British Empire was again at war. Wass presented himself for enlistment in the AIF and was allocated to the newly formed 2nd Battalion. He was one of the originals and proud of it. With his military background, William was soon promoted to the rank of corporal in Battalion Headquarters. In October 1914, the 2nd Battalion boarded the troopship Suffolk, bound for Egypt.

At the desert training camp at Mena, Wass proved his worth within the headquarters time and time again. The young officers readily sought his advice and his cool, calm efficiency served as an inspiration to the younger soldiers.

By April 1915, the 1st Division was on the move; equipment was packed and loaded into wagons and the troops including the 2nd Battalion were moved to the docks and the waiting troopships.

The night of 24 April was deadly calm and the invasion fleet waited patiently beyond the horizon. Then, as the moon disappeared, the fleet edged closer to the darkened shoreline in preparation for a dawn assault landing.

As they abandoned their landing craft on the pebbly beach, Corporal Wass rallied his troops. 'Stay close to me and keep your heads down', he ordered as he led his section up the hill.

Part 2 next month

By courtesy Darryl Kelly and ADCC Publications. Kelly, Darryl 2004, Just Soldiers, ADCC Publications, Brisbane, pg 227 to 232

Inspirational Bravery

Overall there were about 15,000 bravery medals given to members of the AIF, of which the Victoria Cross was the highest, while the Military Medal was the most familiar. Lieutenant William Carne, historian of the 6th MG Company, observed, "[There] appeared to be an Army practice of awarding few decorations for an unsuccessful operation and granting generously for a successful one." Generally, it seems high awards were mostly given for contributing to, and inspiring others towards, success.

During the war the most usual decorations given – the Distinguished Service Order, Military Cross, Distinguished Conduct Medal and the Military Medal – could not be awarded posthumously. Those killed performing a brave deed mostly went unrecognised.

It is often imagined that rescuing wounded or saving lives is a standard criteria for bravery decorations. However, Colonel A.G. Butler, the official historian of the Australian Army Medical Services in the war, made the point that high awards for such actions were not normal.

Heroes are special, and men like these are few. Lord Moran, in his study of men in war, *The anatomy of courage*, drawn from his own First World War experiences as a British army medical officer, said; "I can find little ... to support the comfortable creed that all men are heroes. A few men had the stuff of leadership in them; they were like rafts to which all of the rest

VC WINNERS

Part 2

of humanity clung for support and for hope." Moran looked closely at fear, courage and cowardice.

Courage and fear are not separate subjects, although the latter is not so often written about. During battle, fear was a natural human response and was ever present among frontline troops, including the bravest of them. It existed in different forms and degrees. As Moran said, "Fear, even when morbid, is not cowardice."

The ordeal of heavy battle was a most severe test. In it, "the mask we wear through life drops off," said Moran. An Australian, Captain George Mitchell, said the same thing this way:



"In battle ... the soul of every participant is laid bare for all to see. Battle strips all masks and shams from every one, each having to stand naked to the gaze of his companions."

Continues next month

George Mersey Hammond, MC, MM, in May 1918. One month later Hammond died of wounds back on the Somme.





10th/27th Battalion, The Royal South Australia Regiment **Centenary Parade & Gala Bal** Torrens Parade Ground and Drill Hall Saturday 22nd November 2014 Parade at 1500 hrs Gala Ball at 1830 for 1900 hrs Further details to follow, however clear your calendars for an event not seen since the amalgamation of the 10th and 27th Battalions in November 1987





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Official Newsletter of the Royal South Australia Regiment Association Inc

HOW TO CONTACT US

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FACEBOOK

The Future of the Repatriation General Hospital

To all members of the veteran community

By now you may be aware of an article in the Advertiser newspaper of Saturday 18 July in which it was reported that the Repatriation General Hospital (Repat) faces possible closure or privatisation. The article also stated that the Minister of Health had declined to guarantee the hospital's future and that he would be guided by a group of doctors and nurses about how to best run the health system.



The SA Veterans Health Advisory Council (VHAC) has written to the Minister to express, in the strongest terms, that it believes that the Repat should be retained because of its significance to veterans, particularly older veterans, and because many of the services it provides continue to be relevant to all veterans. An example is the state-wide Veterans' Mental Health Service which is highly regarded by veterans and not only admits veterans from across South Australia but also from interstate.

VHAC understands and supports the Minister's desire to have strong clinical input into decisions relating to the provision of health services.

www.rsara.asn.au

However, VHAC asserts that the special significance of the Repat to the veteran community requires consideration of a broad range of issues other than just clinical when considering the hospital's future.

It is critical that the views of veterans are heard on this matter. We have made it clear that such views should be taken into account by any group reviewing the future of the Repat before decisions are formulated. We do not want to be in a position of being asked to comment on a proposal of which we have had no input.

I would expect that the various ex-service organisations will be putting in their own submission but, as the Council charged with the responsibility of advising the Health Minister on the delivery of health services to veterans, our submission will carry much weight. This will be particularly so if we can demonstrate that our position represents the views of veterans throughout the State.

I urge you, as a matter of urgently, to consult with your members regarding this issue and to provide VHAC with a consolidated response at the earliest opportunity. I will keep you informed of any further developments and of our progress in our dealings with the Minister.

Please contact our Executive Officer, Chris Lemmer at <u>christopher.lemmer@health.sa.gov.au</u> should you require further information or information. All submissions to VHAC should be forwarded to Chris.

Your urgent response to this matter would be appreciated and if possible no later than Monday 18 August

David Everitt

Presiding Member

Veterans Health Advisory Council



It is with sadness and regret we advise of the passing of RSAR Association member and former soldier from 10 and 27 Bn RSAR, Alan Gill.

Alan passed away suddenly whilst on holiday on the Gold Coast and will be farewelled in a service at Centennial Park on Thursday 14th August 2014. Members should check the Advertiser Death Notices for further details. Our condolences and thoughts go to Maureen and family at this sad time.

RIP Mate

MEMBERS

SM Abareh, Wadi Acton. Chris Adams, Aaron SM Apostolides. Chris Attenborough, Geoff Ayles, Jeff Baldwin, Bob Barrass, Mark Bates, Allan Beames, Rod CoM Beckett, David LM SM Bennet, Graham Bilsborow, Jason SM # Blackmore, William Blake, Sam SM Blondell, Mark SM Bloomfield, Max Bourne, Ian SM Boath, Ian Boothroyd, Lincoln SM Boscence, Bob Bras. Rilev SM Broadbent, Robert SM Brookes, Phil Brown, Bruce Brown, Harry Burton, Ray Carnachan, lan Chittleborough, Jeff Clyne, Lachlan SM Cooke. Nat CoM Contibas, Nikolaus SM Cotton, Bob Cram. Kevin Dart. John Davey, John Davey, Trevor Davey, Jack Del Vecchio, Victor Demasi, Nathan SM Demosani, Tony Dubsky, Eddie Dunn, Peter Dunn. Bob Dunn, Jeff Durdin, Russell Durrant, Chris Edson, Roger Elliott, Graham Elliss. Scott SM Eva. Keith Ewens, Mimi SM Field, Don Flanagan. Ted Fridday, Ross Gaborit, Lyndon LM

Genovese, John Gibson, Lindsav Giles, John Gilmore, Graham CoM Gordon, Frank Hardy, Robert SM Harrington, Malcolm Harrison, John Hawking, Don Hawkins. Des Havnes. Scott Hogan, Mark LM Hook, Alan LM CoM Hope, David Hudson, Mick Hudson, Rick Humphrvs. Jesse SM CoM James, Grant SM CoM Jeffrey, Scott SM Johnson, Barry LM Jollv. David Jones, Brett Keenan, Alan Kilford, Brian Klopf, Alex LM CoM Klopf, Paul Laing, David LM CoM Lampard, Ross Lee, Bob Lee, Pat Lloyd, Elmer Lockett, John Longstaff. Paul Loveder. Peter Main. Brian Marcus. Rav Martin, Bob Matchett. Bill Mau, Mark McCulloch. Don McLachlan. Joshua SM McMahon, Tyler SM McMullin, Jim Meissner. Terrv SM Milde. Peter SM Mitchell, Barry Mitchell, David Morony, Frank CoM Moore, Jeffrey Moore, Terry LM Moschis, James SM Munro, Ron Oliver, Peter Orrock. Alan CoM Ockenden, Marc Oswald, John Pach. Chol SM Paul, John Perkins, Bob Pollard, Barry Phillips, Don Phillips, Trevor

Pavne, Bob Parslow, Howard Preece. Brian Ranger, Denis Rathmann, John Rathmann, Norm CoM Ramm. Hank Robertson, Jim Rorie, Graham SM Rossetti. Lee Sage, Andrew Salamon, Peter Sanders, Ashley SM Sanderson, Max Sands. Mike Sexton, Mark SM Sprigg, Rob Staker, Cameron SM Standing, Michael CoM Stone. Eddie Strain. Doug Steer. Phil Stewart, Rob Stuart. Matthew SM Tiller. Garth Thomson, Jim Tolotta, Tarrant SM Tregenza, Norm Trezise, George Ullrich, Andreas SM Vella, Joe Wake, Stephen Waters, lan LM Weightman, Aidan SM Westover, Rhvs Wheeler, Chris Williams, Darrian SM Wilson, Graham LM Wilson, Neil Wood, George Woore, Phillip Yorke-Simpkin Reg LM Zuromski, Paul SM **ASSOCIATE MEMBERS** Ayles, Denise Beames, Cheryl Beames, Taryn Carnachan, Dom Dart, Caroline Demosani, Gail Elliott, Julie Eva. Gail Field. Shirlev Gill. Maureen Gilmour. Helen Hawking, Lorraine Hook, Phillipa Hudson, Margaret

Jolly, Sandra

Klopf, Josie

"Sitrep, Over!"

CoM

Laing, June Lampard, Kay Main, Raelene Marcus, Yvonne McCullagh, Anne Mitchell, Roma Phillips. Heather Sanderson, Lorraine Tregenza, Lyn

LM denotes LIFE MEMBER SM denotes SERVING ADF MEMBER # Denotes NEW MEMBER

186 members as at 30/07/14

FEES

Full Member \$20 per year. Associate Member \$10 per year. Serving ADF Member \$0 for the first year, and \$10 per year whilst still serving. Fees are payable on or after the AGM in August each year, OR at the time of joining, THEN on the AGM each year.

Fees can be paid by posting a cheque or Money Order to:-

The Secretary, David Laing **RSAR Association Inc** Riverglen Marina, RSD 3152A Murray Bridge SA 5253

Make the cheque or Money Order out to the "Royal South Australia Regiment Association Inc" or the "RSAR Association Inc"

Payment may be made by Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) to:-

BSB 015 211 Account 482 441 406

In the name of Royal South Australia Regiment Association Inc. or RSARA Inc

Please remember to include an identifier such as your surname, so the payment can be matched to you.

"Sitrep, Over!"



Private Gomad reckons......

Me first born child turned 18 and decided to join the Army. God only knows why!! I got this letter from the barracks about a month later.

Dear Mum & Dad,

I am well. Hope youse are too. Tell me big brothers Doug and Phil that the Army is better than workin' on the farm - tell them to get in bloody quick smart before the jobs are all gone! I wuz a bit slow in settling down at first, because ya don't hafta get outta bed until 6am. But I like sleeping in now, cuz all ya gotta do before brekky is make ya bed and shine ya boots and clean ya uniform. No bloody cows to milk, no calves to feed, no feed to stack - nothin'!! Ya haz gotta shower though, but its not so bad, coz there's lotsa hot water and even a light to see what ya doing!

At brekky ya get cereal, fruit and eggs but there's no kangaroo steaks or possum stew like wot Mum makes. You don't get fed again until noon and by that time all the city boys are buggered because we've been on a 'route march' - geez its only just like walking to the windmill in the back paddock!!

This one will kill me brothers Doug and Phil with laughter. I keep getting medals for shootin' - dunno why. The bullseye is as big as a possum's bum and it don't move and it's not firing back at ya like the Johnsons did when our big scrubber bull got into their prize cows before the Ekka last year! All ya gotta do is make yourself comfortable and hit the target - it's a piece of cake! You don't even load your own cartridges, they comes in little boxes, and ya don't have to steady yourself against the rollbar of the roo shooting truck when you reload!

Sometimes ya gotta wrestle with the city boys and I gotta be real careful coz they break easy - it's not like fighting with Doug and Phil and Jack and Boori and Steve and Muzza all at once like we do at home after the muster.

Turns out I'm not a bad boxer either and it looks like I'm the best the platoon's got, and I've only been beaten by this one bloke from the Engineers - he's 6 foot 5 and 15 stone and three pick handles across the shoulders and as ya know I'm only 5 foot 7 and eight stone wringin' wet, but I fought him till the other blokes carried me off to the boozer.

I can't complain about the Army - tell the boys to get in quick before word gets around how bloody good it is.

Your loving daughter,

Sheila







COMBINED REGIMENTS BATTLE OF LONG TAN COMMEMORATIVE SERVICE

LINDEN PARK 1100 HOURS 18TH AUGUST 2014

On the 18th of August 2014 the RAR Association (SA) and the RAAC Vietnam Veterans Association (SA) will conduct a combined commemorative service for the Battle of Long Tan at the RAR RSL, Linden Park commencing at 1100 hours.

Both the Royal Australian Regiment and the 3rd Cavalry Regiment were awarded the battle honour Long Tan for their actions on 18 August 1966.

The RAR Association will coordinate the service with key players from the 6 RAR Association, the RAAC Association and D Squadron 1st Armoured Regiment.

The service will be held inside the clubrooms because of the history of wet weather in August. A light lunch will follow and it is hoped to have some music entertainment during that lunch.

As a mark of respect to our war dead current and ex-service members are requested to wear decorations and medals.

Questions on the service and lunch should be addressed to the Ceremonial Officer RAR Assoc. SA Adrian Craig on 8263 4784 or <u>as.craig9rar@bigpond.com</u>



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Hi David

I have attached two photos, one being a photo of a Red Ensign and the other a photo of a handmade "2nd 10th flag". I am wondering if any of our members may have or had a relative who served with the 2nd 10th Battalion at Tobruk and may have mentioned a



group of 10 Bn soldiers who referred to themselves as the "Gate Crashers". If so I would really appreciate any information no matter how little on this bunch of blokes, the history of both the flags and why or how they were known as the "Gate Crashers"

The two flags were given to the Goolwa RSL a number of years back. Goolwa gave then to 10 Bn Association some time last year and they in turn have given them to the Army Museum at Keswick where they have been framed and are now on public display

The flags along with a short, hand written note were given to Goolwa RSL by an elderly lady who new nothing about

the flags, their origin or how they had come to be in her possession. A note that accompanied the flags stated that "Red Ensign" (which looks rather worn and tattered) is the official flag flown by the 2nd 10th Battalion at Tobruk. "The 2nd 10th" flag was made in Adelaide by a lady and sent to Tobruk. On the reverse side of the "2nd10th" flag there are about 100 names with their service numbers, and these fellows were referred to as "The Gate Crashers"

I spoke to Jeff Ayles (Curator, AMOSA) last week and he is getting his volunteers to try and trace the service numbers and names on the back of the flag. And then we may be able to speak to a descendant who can shed some light on the flags.

Meanwhile if any of your readers has any information whatsoever please contact me. Via email <u>suerobstewart@bigopond.com</u> or telephone mobile 0408 891 964

Regards

Stewy Stewart



Reverse side of 2/10th Bn flag with names of soldiers

