



RAM-RAMBLINGS

Volume 14 Edition 2, September 2017

From the Presidents Pen,

I am writing this Prez's Pen from the Hotel Equatorial in Malacca. The rest of the tour gang are out in Jonkers Street, no doubt looking forward to their lunchtime Tiger Beer and a dish of Kampong Chicken. This is a late RR because of my pretty complex working winter, followed immediately by coming on the Malaysia reunion. My apologies for this tardiness.

My personal winter was very busy on the snowfields of and NSW. Although I am approaching 70 now, I still feel like a youngster when I am dashing about like a sheepdog after the coach. Zara who is 9 years old, pictured here finishing one of races, is the reason I enjoy what I do.

I also continue to coach the Royal Australian Navy each Cross Country Ski Racing and Biathlon. I remain for the competition week when Army, Navy and Air Force compete various trophies. It's just wonderful to see people who have snow for the first time in their lives after leaving their billet in submarine a week earlier, race on skinny skis and thoroughly spirit, sweat and tears of the competition.

With the Winter Olympics approaching early next year, it's also amazing for me to be sharing my Jindabyne apartment with Australias best female cross country skier and double Olympian, Barbara Jezersek. Barbara is cleaning up the race scene this season and works for me in the ski school as an adjunct to her training.

I also have hopes for one of the Australian Biathlon team pictured here. I started this young lady on her skiing pathway some 9 years ago. Now she is the best senior female biathlete on the Aussie team and a hopeful for the Olympics if Australia gets an allocation.

Enough from me. Our Malaysian Reunion will get a feature next RR,

Have a Happy and Hayfever-less Spring,

Warren (Noddy) Feakes



Victoria
children I
her
August in
for
seen
a
enjoy the



in the

Around the Water Cart: Furphies and other sometimes good but often useless information acquired, scrounged and stolen by your Secretary; and others.



Artillery adds dignity to what would otherwise be a vulgar brawl.
Frederick the Great



Sadly, two Black Sheep accept their final posting to the Great Gun Park.



WE SHALL REMEMBER THEM, ALL OUR LOST RAMMERS - LEST WE FORGET

VALE:

Gnr Donald "Don" James ISON was conscripted into the Australian Army as a National Serviceman on 23 April 1969 and served in 107 Battery as a member of Echo Gun at Townsville 1969 and Vietnam in 1970 and 1971. He was discharged on completion of his national service obligation on 22 April 1971.



Don was a builder and returned to his in Sydney then on the Central Coast of NSW until his retirement where endured a long battle with cancer resulting in his death on 4 August 2017. Our Rammer sympathy to wife, Sue, and daughters Melainie and Simone.

Photo, Don Ison (right) with Daryl Madge by a gun pit in Vietnam in 1970

Bdr John Francis TUCK. Was born in Dandenong, Victoria, on 26 December 1948 and passes away on 21 February 2017, aged 68, John served with the Battery on Charlie Gun in Townsville and in Vietnam from 7 May 1970 to 5 May 1971. John attended the 2012 Reunion at Mildura. Condolences to his wife Corry and family.

It is also with great sadness that we report the loss to **Bob & Sue Marker** of their grandson to cancer last month. They lost a son some years ago and now their grandson. Our condolences and sympathy to Bob & Sue and their extended family.

Can any Rammer assist WO2 Robert John Johnson's son? Your Secretary received a request from Michael Robinson, a signal electrician with Sydney Trains. He is attempting to find details and a photograph of his father's service in 107 Battery. He believes that his father was 51587 WO2 Robert John Johnson. Neil Lunney has confirmed that 'John' or 'Ralph' served as a gun sergeant in Malaysia with 103 Battery. He then served with 107 Battery as gun sergeant of Echo Gun at Holsworthy (around 1966-67) and Malaysia (1967-69). He subsequently transferred to Q as the BQMS at Townsville (1969-1970) and Vietnam (29 April 1970- 5 May 1971).

Michael is particularly interested in any stories and photos of his father while serving in the Battery. Michael has an interesting story. He was born in Sydney in September 1948. His father was 21 and

mother 19. He was adopted out and grew up as Michael Robinson. On his original birth certificate, recently discovered, his first names are Robert John, although his father was not listed. His mother advised that his father was born in Perth, a soldier then through service records Michael discovered that his father was Robert John Johnson, who had died on 14 August 2001 and is buried at the Fremantle Cemetery. He then discovered 'Ralph' on our Vale website.

If you can assist Michael for his quest for information about his father, please contact the Secretary (Hiltonlenard at hotmail.com m: 0418695345) who will put you in contact with Michael.

From the Battery Commander – Major Brendan Perkins provided this report from one of his FOs, while the Battery is on exercise TS17 - Talisman Sabre 2017.

"Road to Ready" By Captain Karl Vatzlavik

The lead up training period prior to the assumption of the responsibility of the Ready Battle Group (RBG) (*Editor: The Battalion group including support elements on 24 hours notice to deploy anywhere*) is an intense and taxing time for both commanders and soldiers alike. Intrinsic to the 'Road to Ready' are challenges and rewards, and culminating in the Battle Group attaining the peak of its training proficiency at ATL/S 7. For 107 Battery this was keenly felt, as they hit the ground running at the start of the year. The Battery deployed on Exercise First Run on the 6th of February, a week after returning from Christmas leave, and this training intensity would continue for the next six months. Over which time the Battery developed its skills in three key areas: technical proficiency, tactical knowledge and our adaptability. All of which aided them to reach the end of the 'Road to Ready' In which they assumed the RBG responsibility confident in their ability to coordinate and provide joint fires and effects in support of the warfighting capability of the 1 RAR led Battle Group Coral.

The technical skills of 107 Battery were put to the test from the start of Exercise First Run. This was a two-week regimental technical gunnery exercise conducted in Townsville Field Training Area. Over this period, the Battery was tested on its ability to provide timely and accurate surface-to-surface fires. They fired a suite of technical mission profiles including coordinated illumination, laser registration, smoke and fireplanning. One particular achievement was the successful execution of an FO's laser fireplan in which targets were silently marked utilising the Vector laser range finder. By negating the need to adjust targets prior to H-Hour, his increased the first-round accuracy on the objectives without compromising surprise and security. The gun line also fired under modified safety, in which there was no requirement for the Safety Officer to check the guns. This allowed the Detachment Commanders to develop confidence in their skills and heightened the realism of training for the Battery. For the observers, the exercise concluded with a live fire danger close serial, with rounds falling 350 metres from the observers' location. This tested their technical skills and the confidence and trust in the gunline's skills. Throughout the exercise the Battery also developed their ability to use the in service digital fire control system; successfully calling in, adjusting and treating targets without a word being spoken on a radio. On returning from Exercise First Run these technical skills would be further tested along with our tactical acumen as we integrated with Battle Group Coral for the upcoming exercises.

The true test of the Battery came through integration with and support to the Battle Group. This was most evident in Exercises Warfighter and Brolga Strike. On Exercise Warfighter the Battery force concentrated with 1 RAR to form Battle Group Coral. The Battle Group deployed to the training area in March and were tested on Combat Team level operations by the Combat Training Centre.



107 Bty observers conduct 'Danger Close' mission during Exercise First Run in February 2017 at High Range Training Area.

A Company were motorised, B Company Mechanised and C Company dismounted. This required a different approach from each Joint Fires Team in how to support the tactical manoeuvre of the respective Combat Teams. This provided valuable experience, which was then disseminated across the Battery. The exercise culminated in a Battle Group attack on the Urban Operations Training Facility. This was a valuable experience for all elements of the Battery; proving that the Battery's ability to provide precision fires in a timely and highly effective manner, despite the close proximity of friendly troops and the inherent complexity of urban operations. Exercise Warfighter prepared the Battery well for Brigade level Exercise Brolga Strike. This exercise in May was the final certification for the 3rd Brigade prior to becoming the 'Ready' Brigade. This involved a series of Battle Group advances and attacks, a Brigade attack and a Battle Group live fire attack. Once again, the Battery's tactical knowledge and abilities were tested, particularly in how best to support a dismounted 40 kilometre advance to contact followed by a Battle Group clearance. The JFTs also integrated with BG reconnaissance assets, moving well forward of the main body to conduct close reconnaissance and shaping actions. This had a devastating effect on the enemy through the use of both harassing and interdicting fires from the guns and close air support from PC 9s to target and destroy enemy armoured vehicles and shape the enemy in preparation for the Battle Groups offensive actions. This exercise concluded with a Battle Group live fire attack, in which we were able to demonstrate the devastating effects of a gun regiment firing maximum rates of 155mm HE on the enemy. The responsibilities of the RBG, however, extend beyond the sphere of conventional operations. Operation Queensland Assist came as an opportunity to test the Battery's adaptability and prove that they are able to transition from high level warfare down to a humanitarian assistance and disaster relief capacity.



Bravo Gun, 107 Battery, commanded by Bombardier Mitchell Hamer, engages in support of a Battle Group attack during Exercise Brolga Strike in June 2017 at High Range Training Area.

In late March while 107 Battery were still out field Tropical Cyclone Debbie developed off the North Queensland coast and was predicted to make landfall within a week. As a result, the Battery returned to barracks and reorganised to provide the ADF's emergency response force and liaison teams to support the local community. This proved to be a real-time test of our adaptability and resourcefulness. The liaison teams were given a 24-hour turnaround time from returning from base to deploy out to townships across Far North Queensland, from Charters Towers to Rockhampton. The soldiers showed their true grit and determination; rapidly reorganising and making it to their locations ready and waiting for the cyclone to make landfall. Once in position they integrated with the local disaster management teams and were able to provide advice and support to the communities. This allowed them to give timely and appropriate aid to the civil community and as such, 107 Battery led the ADF response to cyclone relief. Although there was significant friction and uncertainty, the Battery was able to do an outstanding job. This was both a rewarding experience for all the soldiers involved and possibly the most realistic preparation for RBG duties.

The 'Road to Ready' has proved to be a busy and testing time for 107 Battery. All those within the Battery have been tested in their technical skills and ability to provide timely and accurate fires. They have been tested on their tactical ability to integrate with and support their manoeuvre arms on complex and austere operations. Finally, and possibly most importantly, they have been tested on their ability to adapt and rapidly reorganise to support the local community in the wake of a devastating natural disaster. Throughout all of this 107 Battery has not been found wanting, and are now ready to face the unknown future challenges, as the Australian Army's most highly trained and deployable contingency force, whatever they may be.

***Editor:** Captain Karl Vatzlavik is the Forward Observer supporting A Coy, 1 RAR. Prior to 107 Battery, he completed postings to 8/12 Regiment, and 1st Recruit Training Battalion.*

Military Anniversaries - August

2 August 1990: Iraq invades Kuwait, leading to Operation Desert Storm - the 1st Gulf War.

5 August 1844: Cowra Breakout by Japanese Prisoners of War.

6 August 1915: Battle for Lone Pine commenced

7 August 1967: Battle of Chau Phau, (after which the 4 Regt lines at Lavarack was named) by A Coy 7RAR and 106 Battery in direct support. Forward Observer Lieutenant Nobby Clark was awarded the Military Cross.

8 August 1818: Battel of Amiens began.

18 August 1966: Battle of Long Tan.

25-31 August 1942: Battle of Milne Bay, first defeat of Japanese's troops on land in WW2.

31 August 1921: Official end of the Great War (WW1).

107 Howitzer Battery and The Great War, a potted history by Hilton Lenard

In the last edition of Around the Water Cart, the key events of WW1 for 1914, 1915 and 1916 were covered including 107 Howitzer Battery taking its place in the line in December 1916. This and other editions of the RAM Ramblings are located on the Association website at www.107fdbty.com.

The Western Front into which 107th Howitzer Battery of the 7th FAB in direct support of the 3rd AIF Division arrived in the winter of December 1916 to March 1917, was the coldest and wettest on record. Every few weeks the infantry battalions were rotated through the water-logged and frozen front-line trenches then rest and finally buildup training before returning to the front line. Thus, there was some relief. But for the Gunners, their guns remained in action so there was none, other than by very small groups going to the rear at a time.

During 1916, the Royal Navy (RN) blockade of all shipping into Germany was having its effect and the civilians were close to starving. As a retaliatory action, from the February 1917, the German U Boats began attacking the shipping of any country on the high seas, not just British as it had been to date. The German high command knew the risk of bringing the United States of America into the war, but they authorised the attacks anyway. For the first four months, the effect was significant and Britain started to face significant shortages of food and raw materials of the massive war machine. But the RN changed to massively large convoys and quickly launched special anti U Boat frigates, which started to reduce the initial massive losses by mid 1917. Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, the General Officer commanding the British and Empire forces on the Atlantic coast half of the Western Front, decided that an offensive to capture the U Boat Pens on the Belgian coast was the next step in the war of attrition against Germany. The Passchendaele (also referred to as the third Ypres) offensive commenced in June 1917.

The U Boat action did bring America into the war. The first trickle of US troops, in company sized groups arrived to join the Australian Divisions late in 1917, thus forming the beginning of the Australian-American military alliance that exists a century later. But it was not until mid 1918 that a significant American presence existed on the Western Front.

The Anzac forces now comprised of I Anzac Corps (1 & 2 Anzac Divisions and two British Divisions) and II Anzac Corps (3 & 4 Anzac Divisions, New Zealand Division and 25 British Division) as part of the British Second Army, commanded by General Sir Herbert Plumer. The II Anzac Corps objective was the Messines Village region of the front and the 3rd Anzac Division was on the extreme right of that front.

The Anzac 5th Division was still being formed. A subsequent 6th Australian Division was planned. However, as it was raised in UK, with the resultant casualties of 1917, it was disbanded and the troops used to reinforce the other five divisions.

"Commemorating the 100th Year Anniversary of The Battle of Messines"

On 7 June 1917, the British Second Army launched its attack on Messines Ridge, detonating 19 giant mines beneath the German front-line positions. By the end of the day, one of the strongest positions on the Western Front had fallen, a place of such importance that the Germans had pledged to hold it at any cost. It was the greatest British victory in three years of war." Quoted from the dust cover of 'At Any Price - The Battle of Messines' by Craig Deayton, part of the Australian Army History Collection.

Supporting the third Division was the 7th Field Artillery Brigade, (7th FAB or the WW1 equivalent of our current RAA Regiment) comprising the 26, 27 and 28 Batteries equipped with 18-pounder guns and 107 Battery with the 4.5 howitzer.



Left: the 18-pounder field gun was the most common field artillery piece used by the British dominion forces during the First World War. They saw service with the AIF on both Gallipoli and the Western Front.

"The enemy must not get the Messines Ridge at any price ... It is difficult to overstate the importance of Messines for the Australians, whose first two years of war had represented an almost unending catalogue of disaster. This was both the first real victory for the AIF and the first test in senior command for Major General John Monash, who commanded the newly formed 3rd Division. Messines was a baptism of fire for the 3rd Division which came into the line alongside the battle-scarred 4th Australian Division, badly mauled at Bullecourt just six weeks earlier." From the dust cover of 'At any price' also by Craig Deayton,



On about the 1 August 1916, 28 Battery was re-equipped with 4.5-inch howitzers and re-designated 107th Howitzer Battery.

Forming part of the 3rd Division AIF and commanded by General John Monash, previously the commander of 4th Brigade at Gallipoli, and deployed to the Western Front in late 2016.

Above: 4.5-inch Howitzer used on the Western Front and displayed in the Australian War Memorial.

"In the eight days leading up to the launch of the battle, the British fired over three million shells at the Messines-Wytschaete Ridge across its 14-kilometre front, a weight of fire unimaginable at the beginning of the war. As the pre-battle artillery duel entered its second week, the Germans forced to endure it were beaten down, their morale crippled as, deafened and numbed, they waited for the inevitable."

"For those doling out the punishment, Gunner William Lyall wrote home enthusiastically about the work of his battery on 2 June 1917 of the Second Army's withering artillery attack, describing it as: ... Just wonderful and Fritz never had a ghost of a chance against it prisoners say it is pure murder to face it --- The infantry swear by the artillery and never cease praising their magnificent work. You see whenever we make an advance, the artillery puts up a barrage and paves the way for the infantry who follow behind a curtain of shells. After we've blown or Frit's front line to atoms, we lift our fire further ahead and so we go on advancing until our objective has been taken and consolidated."

Though gradually worn down, the German artillery was still dangerous. Private Alexander MacIntosh of the 7th FAB wrote home of the perils faced by the gunners. 'Worst of all is when they (shells) are falling around the guns and we have to get ready for action, and do some firing. I am not at all brave under such circumstances. Shells bursting give one a very funny feeling'. Unlike many of his German counterparts, MacIntosh and his gun survived the duel unscathed".

According the 7th FAB Yando (history) by the armistice, a year and half later, MacIntosh had been promoted to Sergeant.

At last the British commanders had learnt the art of modern twenty century mechanised warfare; planning, logistics, co-ordination and concentration of force and timing. However, these lessons were quickly lost again on Haig when later in the campaign he committed his forces into battle with the Germans without the proper planning and co-ordination of all the elements and without proper regard to the weather forecasters on his headquarters. By October 1917, the Passchendaele campaign had not reached any other objective nor anywhere near the U Boat bases. Passchendaele resulted in the largest loss of military life in any battle, even to this day. Paul Ham, in his book 'Passchendaele' subtitled it "Requiem for Doomed Youth" By winter of December 1917, the entire campaign achieved little other than the continuing wearing down on the German forces.

But the Germans had one big surprise up their sleeve for the early months of 1918! To be continued in subsequent RAM Ramblings

The other WW1 campaign in which the Anzac's played a significant part was the Sini & Palestine Campaign of 1916 to 1918. Australia had the equivalent of just under two divisions of light horse & camel corps troops and the New Zealander's a brigade of light horse. More on this also in subsequent RAM Ramblings. But in the mean time we remember the centenary of the charge of the Australian light horse at Beersheba.

Beersheba. On 31 October 1917, after riding through the desert for two days, the 4th and 12th Regiments of the Australian Light Horse were given the order to capture the wells at Beersheba. Their bold charge across five kilometres of open landscape against Turkish artillery and machine guns is remembered 100 years later as the last great cavalry charge.



To commemorate the centenary of Beersheba, 2/14 Light Horse Regiment (Queensland Mounted Infantry) will lead a Freedom of Entry to the City of Brisbane March on the morning of 28 October. This will be followed by a Family Fun Day hosted by RSL Queensland.

Belgian oak planting ceremony On 16 June 2017 Minister for Veterans' Affairs Dan Tehan and the Belgian Ambassador to Australia, His Excellency Jean-Luc Bodson, planted an oak tree in the grounds of the Belgian Embassy in Canberra in memory of the Australian soldiers who fought in Belgium in the First World War.

The tree was planted alongside a plaque that bears the names of Private James Mollison and Private Beaumont Philpott, the first two Australian soldiers to die in Belgium on 17 June 1916 near Messines. "The oak tree, and the names of Private Mollison and Private Philpott, will be a permanent reminder of the service and sacrifice of every Australian who fought in Belgium during World War I," Mr Tehan said. "Both nations will never forget the brave, young Australians fighting in a foreign country so far from home — their actions helped forge a bond between Australia and Belgium that endures today." Ambassador Bodson said Privates Philpott and Mollison, like many others, paid the ultimate sacrifice fighting for peace in Belgium in August hundred years ago.

"If we can't ever repay their sacrifice, we will honour it by remembering them, along with all the sons of Australia fallen in Belgium. This oak tree is dedicated to them so that their memory will grow strong over the years and never be forgotten. They are now forever sons of Belgium too and we shall never forget it," Ambassador Bodson said.

On 26 September 2017, with the assistance of Belgian authorities, Australia will honour the service and sacrifice of those who fought in the Third Battle of Ypres at a Dawn Service to mark the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Polygon Wood.

The service will be held at Buttes New British Cemetery, which is the site of the Australian 5th Division Memorial, and the last resting place of more than 500 Australians, half of whom have never been identified.

On 6 July 1918 – W.E. Brown awarded Victoria Cross. Born in Tasmania, Wally Brown was a grocer in Sydney when he enlisted in 1915. He was in the Light Horse and the Camel Corps before transferring to the Infantry. A brave soldier, he gained the Distinguished Conduct Medal in 1917.

On 6 July 1918, at Villers-Bretonneux, Brown's party had taken over some newly captured trenches. When told that an enemy sniper was causing trouble, Brown discarded his rifle and picked up two Mills bombs. Running towards the post, he threw one bomb, which fell short, but on reaching the position he attacked a German with his fists and threatened the others with his remaining grenade. They all promptly surrendered.

During the war Brown was twice wounded, and promoted to Sergeant. Although married and over-age, he served again in the Second World War. He went missing after the fall of Singapore. It is believed he escaped aboard a row boat with a small party of men. They made it to Sumatra, where Brown was separated from the group and was presumed to have been killed on 28 February 1942. Brown was awarded the Victoria Cross, Distinguished Conduct Medal, service medals for World War I and II, and the King George VI Coronation Medal. Story courtesy Australian War Memorial

The story of 107 Battery on the Western Front in 1917 and 1918, will continue in the December 2017 RAM Ramblings.

For more WW1 stories visit www.awm.gov.au and check out their Online Shop for lots of historical books including Artillery matters.

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Discount promo-code provided by Contact Magazine, see several stories in this edition of RAM Ramblings.

Brian Hartigan, Managing Editor Contact Publishing Pty Ltd PO Box 3091 Minnamurra NSW 2533.
Subscribe to their excellent mailing list at www.contactairlandandsea.com



From our Darwin reporter
Left is a photo of our secret Air Support from the 8th Fighter Squadron in the 1940s?

(One of a number of poster/signs at the Aviation Heritage Centre here in Darwin, so it may have been picked up before.)

Their Black Sheep was no where as Rampart as the 107 Black Sheep.

Cheers Jim Wright

(PS: See everyone in Singapore in a few days time for a Tiger or Two!

LAND 400 – the scale of things to come by Brian Hartigan from Contact Newsletter 44

Link: <http://www.contactairlandandsea.com/2017/06/21/land-400-scale-things-come/>

Project LAND 400 Phase 2 will acquire 225 Combat Reconnaissance Vehicles (CRV) to replace the Australian Light Armoured Vehicle (ASLAV) – and a recent gathering of all the vehicles, plus an Abrams tank, at Mount Bunney live-fire range gave an insight into the scale of things to come.



From left to right – Rheinmetall Boxer CRV, BAE Systems Australia/Patria AMV-35, an Australian Army Abrams main battle tank and an ASLAV at Mount Bunney, Northern Territory. Photographer unknown.

Rheinmetall has offered the Boxer Multi Role Armoured Vehicle integrated with the Rheinmetall Lance turret.

BAE Systems Australia has teamed with Patria of Finland to offer the Patria Armoured Modular Vehicle integrated with the BAE Hägglunds E35 turret.

On 28 July 2016, Defence announced that BAE Systems Australia and Rheinmetall had been shortlisted to participate in a Risk Mitigation Activity, which is the second stage of the tender evaluation process and on 19 August, Defence signed Risk Mitigation Activity contracts with BAE Systems Australia and Rheinmetall.



Rheinmetall Boxer CRV (left) prepares for another live-fire at Puckapunyal, while Defence members talk to BAE Systems Australia reps about the Patria AMV35 (right).
Photo by Corporal Sebastian Beurich.

The Risk Mitigation Activity encompasses a one-year test-and-evaluation program in conjunction with cost-and-capability trade-off assessments, the development of Australian Industry Capability Plans reflecting differing levels of Australian involvement, and the development of contract documentation including specifications and schedules.

Two vehicles from each tenderer have been delivered to Defence and are being used in the test-and-evaluation program, including comprehensive live-fire training at Puckapunyal, Victoria, and Mount Bunday near Darwin in the Northern Territory.

The eventual LAND 400 Phase 2 fleet will include seven variants, including fighting vehicles, command vehicles, reconnaissance and ambulance variants.

Editor: Contact is a privately owned and financially independent Defence publication produced by Brian Hartigan, a retired member of the ADF. Contact is always current, up to date and covers most, if not all, aspects of defence activities. Brian can be contacted at editor@militarycontact.com.

In the last edition, we reported on Rammer Rob Eade, passing through Canberra on his 'Ride Around Australia. The Queensland Rollingstone RSL Sub Branch (north of Townsville) reports that their member Rob Eade and his service dog are currently on a three-year trip around Australia on a motorised trike in memory of fallen soldiers. Rob will place a small Australian flag with names of local veterans who sacrificed their lives on war memorials around the country. His journey began in June 2016 in Baldivis, Western Australia, with plans to pass through Kalgoorlie and continue across the Nullarbor and through South Australia, Victoria, Tasmania, Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Queensland and the Northern Territory, before finishing back in Perth with a finale at King Park War Memorial. Rob expects to travel 6,176 kilometres through more than 30 towns across Queensland, starting in July 2017. He is hoping for assistance from RSL Sub Branches and veteran groups in the towns he visits, such as accommodation, a home cooked meal or even a hot shower. [Email Rob](#) or follow [Remembrance Ride Oz on Facebook](#).

Secretary's Report: With sadness, your Secretary advises the posting of Bdr John Tuck and Gunner Don Ison to the Great Gun Park. No new members have been accepted to the great fellowship of RAMMERS.

Upcoming Reunions.

Warning Order - full details to be included in August RAM Ramblings. Two mini-Reunions are planned for 2018. The Grey Nomads are particularly being considered to plan an Autumn 2018 tour of South

Australia and rural Victoria. The first reunion is at Murray Bridge, South Australia in late March 2018 and the second at Seymour, Victoria for Anzac Week 2018. Full details were planned be included in this RAM Ramblings, but contact with Wally Walford and Ian (Bozo) Simpson on this subject has been lost. If you require further information contact direct Wally on 0418 818 776 and Ian on 0423 610 794.

Order of the Day to the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery – Formation of 9th Regiment Royal Australian Artillery

I am honoured to advise that the Chief of Army, Lieutenant General AJ Campbell DSC, AM has approved the raising of a new Artillery Regimental Headquarters to command the 2nd /10th, 3rd, 5th/1st, 6th/13th, 7th and 23rd Light Batteries. The Regiment will be formally raised on 15 January 2018 under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Lachlan Searle. Regimental Headquarters will be based at the Kogarah Multi-User Depot in Sydney.

Based on advice from the Regimental Committee, the Chief of Army has agreed the Regiment be titled 9th Regiment, Royal Australian Artillery (9 Regt RAA). 9 Regt RAA has a distinguished history; one of which the new Regiment will be proud. Raised at Victoria Barracks, Paddington on 1st July 1903, it is the third oldest Australian Reserve Field Artillery unit. In 1914, as 4th Australian Artillery Brigade, it provided almost every one of its officers and a substantial cadre of non-commissioned officers and men to 1 Field Artillery Brigade and 1st Divisional Ammunition Column of the AIF. It was the senior Field Artillery Brigade of 2nd Division Artillery from 1921, and between 1939 and 1941 it carried out the home training for the Sydney University Regiment Field Battery, of which Sir Roden Cutler VC was a member. At the end of 1940 it was reorganised as 9 Field Regiment for the defence of Australia.

The Regimental Master Gunner is working through Army Headquarters to have the Regimental Committee's proposed Colour and Shoulder Patches approved.

This is an exciting development for the RAA. The establishment of this new Regimental Headquarters will enable greater technical competence, ensure all ranks within the 2nd Division are better supported with joint fires advice and capability, and enhance the career paths of Reserve Gunners. Importantly, the Reserve Gunner identity is a fundamental part of the RAA, so strengthening the Reserve by raising 9 Regt will help ensure the Gunner tradition and character are preserved.

Craig Furini AM, CSC - Brigadier - Head of Regiment - 21 June 2017

Committee: Your committee is:

ELECTED POSITIONS (Executive)

President: Warren (Noddy) Feakes – Wanniassa ACT – 0417 209 360
Vice President: Brian Tapp – Narrabeen NSW - 0410 543 743
Secretary/Treasurer: Hilton Lenard – Kambah ACT - 0418 695 345

State/Territory Representatives: (Elected)

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NSW: Bob Edmonds – Sydney - 0410 678 100
Victoria: Ken (Doc) Barclay – Mildura – 0428 251 364
Tasmania: Les Mullan – Launceston – 0408 449 006
SA: Adrian (Wally) Walford – Murray Bridge – 0418 818 776
WA: Bob White – Dudley Park - 08 9535 9411
ACT: Peter Moat – Weetangera - 0419 594 610
NT: Jim Wright – Palmerston – 0419 090 852

NON-ELECTED POSITIONS (Appointed by the Committee)

Editor RAM Ramblings: Warren (Noddy) Feakes – Wanniassa– 0417 209 360
Webmaster: Doc Barclay – Mildura – 0428 251 364

Historian:	Hilton Lenard – Kambah ACT – 0418 695 345
Welfare Officer:	Ian (Bozo) Simpson – Sydney - 0432 610 794
Hon Chaplin:	Rick Burley – Wallsend NSW - 0412 455 301
<u>Regional Representative:</u> <i>(Appointed by the Committee)</i>	
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Central Qld:	Jon Eaton – Sarina - 0402 248 716
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North NSW:	Col Lowe – Central Coast – 02 6761 8936
Sydney:	Ian (Bozo) Simpson – Sydney - 0432 610 794
South NSW:	Ian Hughes – Sanctuary Point – 0417 140 250
Melbourne:	Noel Paterson – Rosebud – 0411 568 103

BOARD of TRUSTREES: Warren Feakes - Wanniassa – 0417 209 360
Hilton Lenard – Kambah - 0418 695 345
Jim Wright – Palmerston - 0419 090 852

Election of Committee Members: As per our constitution, an election of committee members is due in 2018. Duties are not difficult and the more involved the easier it is for all.

Members List: There are 197 financial members. Association membership covers all regions of Australia plus Paul Gaff in USA, Gordon Pound & Peter (Jock) Sime in the UK and Mac (Rob) McKimmin in Thailand. Sixteen members are currently serving in the Defence Force. Membership covers all periods of 107 Battery's post 1965 history, with approx one third having served at Holsworthy and/or Malaysia (1965-1969) a further third at Townsville then Vietnam (1969-1971) and a third at Townsville since 1971. Many have served in more than one location. Like an updated membership list then contact the Secretary.

Treasurer's Report: With 168 life subscribers, all life subscriptions are held in the Trustee accounts. Your membership renewal information is included in this edition. Subscriptions for 2017 are now over-due, remaining at only \$15 PA and life subscription at \$150. As at 30 June 2017 the un audited Association accounts show a small trading loss of \$145.00 compared with a previous year profit of \$2271.48. Current assets are \$7,821.87 in working funds and \$28,515.88 held by the Trustees, representing all life subscriptions and resulting interest received to date. A copy of the accounts will be available on request, once the audit is complete.

Awards Inquiry for Coral, Balmoral and RANHFV Minister for Defence Personnel Dan Tehan has asked for an investigation into the issue of unit recognition for service with the Royal Australian Navy Helicopter Flight Vietnam (RANHFV), and service at the Battles of Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral. The independent Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal will conduct the investigation. Fighting at the Battles of Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral was some of the bloodiest and most intense fighting by Australians in the Vietnam War where 26 Australians lost their lives and many more were wounded.

Mr Tehan said the Royal Australian Navy Helicopter Flight Vietnam had served with distinction over four rotations of about one year each, between October 1967 and June 1971.

"I have asked for an inquiry after listening to veterans, their families and members of the public who believed the Royal Australian Navy Helicopter Flight Vietnam deserved a decoration for its service, Mr Tehan said. "The independent tribunal will take submissions and will give careful consideration to both matters. "I encourage all of those former members and those with an interest in these matters to take advantage of this opportunity to make a submission.

"Military honours are a special recognition for service and sacrifice and they are not awarded lightly."

Submissions to both inquiries are open until Friday 16 June 2017. Further information is on the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal website –RANHFV Inquiry can be found [here](#) and the Coral/Balmoral Inquiry can be found [here](#).

FUN, FEAR, FRIVOLITY Chapter 28: Our First Operation – A tale by an Aussie Nasho infantry soldier in 2 RARNZ during the VIETNAM WAR by Ian Cavanough.

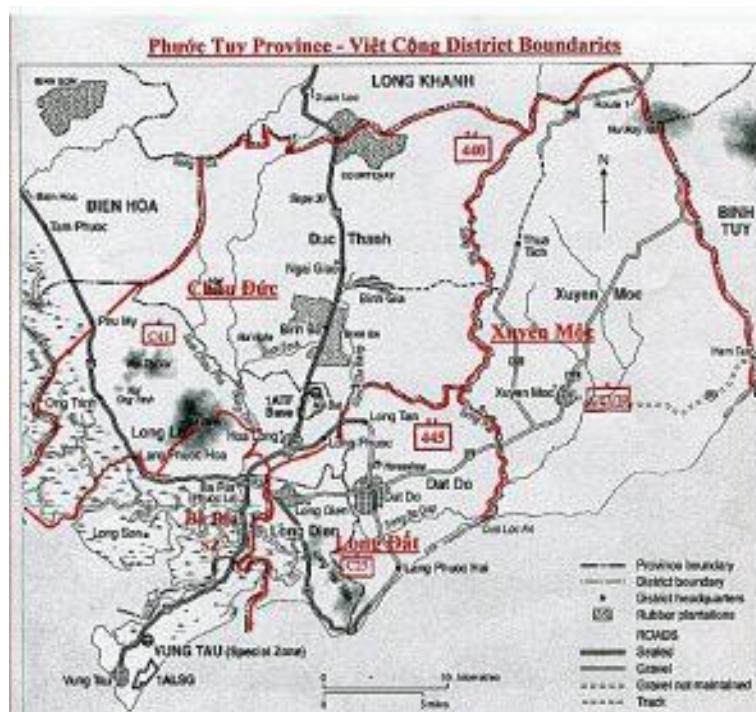
I'm going to pause for a minute or two and become an armchair general and give 'youse' blokes a bit of background.

Phuoc Tuy Province, or as my mate Smithy calls it, Fuck You Province, is located in the south-east corner of South Vietnam. To the east is the South China Sea. To the south is the delta region. In the corner between these two is Vung Tau; a rather large provincial city of French influence. It has a harbour and Australia's Logistical Support Group is located there. The yanks have a large airbase and the South Vietnamese have a military academy. It is also a centre for R&C (rest in country) for Australians, New Zealanders, Americans and the VC. Yes, the VC. Saigon is located to the west about a two-hour drive away.

The province is mostly flat save for a few scattered mountains. Most of the population is located in the east. As you move inland there are smaller and smaller hamlets surrounded by rice paddies until you meet the jungle. Up the centre of the province is route 2.

Our first operation was to deploy to the Nui Dinh Mountains. A fair bit of planning goes into each operation. The AO (area of operation) must be carved up for each company. The CO allocates areas to the company commanders and they break their AOs down for their platoons, depending upon how they want to operate.

The most important feature of Australian operations in Vietnam, and one of the main reasons for its success was the Artillery support. Wherever we went we had Artillery support. As we were nearly always outside of the range of guns from Nui Dat, temporary bases had to be set up and the guns were located closer to our AO. As you can imagine this was a logistical nightmare and involved a lot of personnel who prepared the fire support bases.



The enemy had three units in the province D440 Bn, D445 Bn and D67 NVA Engineer Bn. This map shows how they carved up the province.

The Australian infantry battalions carved up the province as well. 2RAR/NZ covered the area west of route 2 which was Chau Duc (C41 Company of D440 Bn) country and the D67 NVA engineer battalion were quite active as well.

Platoons are allocated guns which they have priority over, other guns may be made available should the need arise. The platoon commander prepares his orders and sets out a patrolling program. The FO (Forward Observer) in conjunction with the platoon commander identifies possible targets along the patrol route where the enemy could use for ambushes, forming up places (FUP), that kind of

thing; and registers them with the guns that night. The next day, as the platoon moves along its patrolling route, the FO advises the guns of the platoon's progress and the guns are set on each of those identified targets. So, let's say the FO has identified an FUP as M115. The guns will be set to drop rounds on that target. Should there be a contact near M115, the FO calls "M115, 3 rounds fire for effect," or something like that, on the radio and – bingo – rounds are in the air in seconds. He then adjusts the fall of shot by moving the fall of shot left or right; drop or add. These Artillery guys are life savers for the infantry.

Now you know as much as I know – or, maybe that should be as little as I know.

Enough of this bullshit and let's get back to us dumb grunts, and me. It's all about me.

Davo, our section commander, obtained his orders from Pat the platoon commander and relayed them to us. We all whinged and whined as required by tradition. We were heading to the Nui Dinh Mountains, the other rifle companies would deploy by helicopter. We were going to walk in. That's right, our first big operation and no insertion by chopper; we were going to walk across the rice paddies and then up that bloody great mountain. At least we are trained for it, walking up-hills, that is.

My gear is already packed, all I need is ammo. This is distributed by Tojo the platoon sergeant and given to our section 2IC. For my SLR I have seven magazines of 20 rounds: one magazine on the weapon and three magazines in each of my front pouches of my webbing. The webbing is a belt with a shoulder harness to spread the weight over my body. On the web belt I have, in addition to the ammo pouches, two water bottles, a bayonet; and a bum pack. In the bum pack I'd have the day's meals, mossie repellent, toilet paper, um, and 'lotsa' other stuff that escapes me now but was very important then.

I carried three hundred rounds for the machine gun: 100 rounds slung over each shoulder (just like those Mexican bandits in cowboy movies); and 100 rounds in my bum pack. I also carried the spare barrel for the machine gun which is in a 'golf bag' that I'd sling over my shoulder. The stuff for the gun must be available at any time, so the rounds and the golf bag are slung after I have my pack on. We carry six-days food and four-days water. In addition to the two water bottles on my webbing I also have another two on the outside of my pack and a small water bladder that sits inside the pack. The six-days food is made up of two days Australian and four days yank rations. The ration packs are broken down and most of it is thrown out as it is impossible to carry it all. We learn to swap stuff around and as I am a non-smoker I swap the cigarettes in the rations for something else. A typical day's food for me would be thus: breakfast – coffee and a tin of noodles (looks like Chinese short soup); lunch – jubie juice (I have a bottle of lime cordial concentrate) and a tin of pecan cake roll; and dinner – coffee and a tin of meat based food and a tin of fruit. Spread over the six days would be some dog biscuits, powdered chocolate drink, lollies, cheese and jam and stuff. We also had 2 small tubes of condensed milk for the six days. The yanks had powdered whitener which tasted like, well powdered whitener. We had barely enough food to survive on given the grueling physical demands on our bodies

Is it any wonder that we were always hungry and thirsty?

I'd place the food and water bladder in the top half of my pack together with some toiletries: a razor, toothpaste, boot cleaning gear; and a toothbrush. I also had a couple of smoke grenades and a pair of socks in there as well. In the bottom half, I had my sleeping gear: a groundsheet, hootchie; and silk inner liner (no sleeping bag as it wasn't cold).

I'd be dressed in the green shirt with sleeves rolled down, green trousers with the pocket on the side and tightening tabs at the waist which were really great; and no underwear.

All this gear was extremely heavy. In addition to making you grunt when you moved, your eyes bulged when you initially threw the pack (with all the other stuff) on ya back. The important thing was to ensure you had nothing on you that would snare in the jungle, so there was no gear hanging off anywhere – no grenades, no knives, no nuthin'. The movies where guys have grenades, knives and all sorts of shit hanging off the webbing may look tough but it can be very dangerous as it is so easy for stuff to get snagged. Grenades could easily lose their safety pin and 'boom' it's good night.

The final touches were the bush hat, known as the giggle hat, and a sweat rag around your neck to help wipe the sweat away from your eyes and to keep those little bits of debris like small twigs and leaves from falling down your neck and getting rubbed into your skin by the gear on your back. Oh, I mustn't forget the rifle, a 7.62mm SLR with a field dressing tapped around the butt. The SLR was hard hitter. Get hit by one of those 7.62 rounds and you don't get back up. The weapon is robust if a little heavy and it is perhaps a little too long for jungle work.

Going through the jungle was hard work. You've probably seen the movies with guys bashing at the jungle with machetes. We didn't use them because they were too noisy and after 10 minutes of slashing at the jungle you would be buggered anyway. No, for thick jungle we used secateurs and quietly cut our way through. Well the first few blokes did and the rest just followed in single file. For our first operation I was very apprehensive, who knows what is going to happen, but everyone puts on a brave face. We truck down to the south of the Nui Dinh. The company shakes out and heads for that big bloody mountain in front of us. It looks quite daunting. All I could think about was the other companies riding to their AOs in choppers. Bastards.

Patrolling across the rice paddies was very difficult. There was a shallow layer of water with a thin layer of mud and then a hard surface underneath. This meant that the boots slipped quite easily in the mud and it was hard to gain traction.

Past the rice paddies and into the foothills we grunted and bent our backs under the weight; and the going got worse. It was hot and humid as we sweated and grunted more and more on our way into the mountain. Progress was extremely slow and it wasn't long before we had a casualty with heat stroke. The guy was from another platoon and I could tell he was in trouble, he was delirious and I could hear him sobbing; there was no way he could go on. He was choppered out. I've mentioned before how tough it was in our training back in Australia. That was nothing. This mountain was really killing us, but we gritted our teeth and soldiered on.

A few days pass and we haven't seen any enemy. The Kiwis and the other companies had contacts: they found caves that had been occupied; and they came across bunker systems that had caretakers who bugged out when the good guys showed up. The only thing we saw was an old campsite that hadn't been used for some time.

Where are these bastards? Why don't they come out and fight? We soldiered on for a few more days. Nuthin'! Is there a war on here or not?

Reproduced with assumed permission from FUN, FEAR, FRIVOLITY – A tale by an Aussie infantry soldier in the VIETNAM WAR by Ian "Cav" Cavanough of Tumit NSW. Cav describes himself as "a good-looking, opinionated old fart who relishes a spirited debate on any topic regardless of how much I think I know about it." Your Watercart Editor had the pleasure of serving with Cav in A Company 4/3 RNSWR at the Docker Street Depot in Wagga Wagga during the early 1990's.

Is anger controlling your life? – by Dr Loretta Poerio, Mental Health Advisor,
Department of Veterans' Affairs.



In this edition, I want to talk about anger – a much-misunderstood emotion, which is often used as a catchall for a range of ills. Ekman (2007) argues that anger is one of seven basic human emotions, the others being sadness, joy, surprise, fear, disgust and contempt.

Emotions range along a continuum rather than being an on/off process. The anger continuum ranges from mild annoyance through to intense rage that can lead to physical aggression. Anger is the result

of a chain reaction of physiological changes within our body connected to the flight-fight response. Central to this is the amygdala, the part of our brain that scans for, and reacts to, perceived threats in our environment. Importantly, these physiological changes include blocking access to the logical, problem-solving parts of the brain. Does this sound familiar?

The Australian Psychological Society provides some useful advice about managing anger and debunks some myths, one of which is that venting anger is good for us. Research shows that venting can actually escalate feelings of anger and the potential for aggressive behaviour. Suppressing anger is also not recommended; the old pressure cooker analogy comes to mind here. Being able to take a step back (such as by counting to 10) and appropriately expressing what is happening for you in a way that engages your higher-order problem-solving abilities will allow you to begin working through the issues that are triggering the emotional response.

The thing about anger is that it can be seen as the tip of a very big iceberg, hiding a range of emotions that we may not be comfortable expressing. Anger can, for instance, hide fear, disappointment, embarrassment, worry, sadness, and loss. A poor communication style can also contribute to feelings of anger through miscommunication and a lack of trust.

If you, or those you love, think that anger could be managed better, then the suggestions below may be useful.

The first step is to increase awareness, both of the situations that trigger your anger and your body's early warning signs such as heart pounding, jaw clenching, chest tightening. This will provide information to manage difficult situations in your life more appropriately.

Learn strategies to manage anger, such as distraction, relaxation, taking time out and learning assertiveness skills. The Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service runs a range of courses, including 'Doing Anger Differently'. You can contact them on 1800 011 046 or visit their website to find the full list.

Acknowledge the issue that has triggered your anger to yourself and others. You may do this by writing down what is going on for you. Writing is a great way to engage the logical, problem-solving parts of the brain and provides a way to externalise your concerns and clarify them for yourself. Visualise a situation that would trigger anger and rehearse how you could deal with it without becoming angry. Replay this situation until it becomes a familiar scenario.

These are the first steps to changing your behaviour. Practice is the key, as is the motivation to change. You can do it!

References:

P Ekman, *Emotions revealed: Recognising faces and feelings to improve communication and emotional life*, Henry Holt & Company Inc, Owl Books, US, 2007

Australian Psychological Society website – 'Managing your anger' tip-sheet.

American Psychological Association website – 'Strategies for controlling your anger'

Editor: This is one of many articles on many health issues affecting veterans. The direct link to this article is <https://www.dva.gov.au/about-dva/publications/vetaffairs/vol-33-no2-winter-2017/anger-controlling-your-life>

It and other stories can also be accessed from the DVA website via www.dva.gov.au then: Home > About DVA > Publications > Vetaffairs > Vol 33 No.2 Winter 2017

Dildos, some more medical advice, this time from our own 'Doc'.

An elderly woman, well into her eighties, slowly entered the front door of a 'Sex Shop'. Obviously very unstable on her feet, she wobbled the few feet across to the counter. Finally grabbing the counter for support, and s-tut-ter-ing, she asked the sales clerk, "Dooo youuuu have dilllldooos?" The clerk, (trying hard not to laugh), politely replied, "Yes we do have dildos. Actually we carry many different models."

The old woman then asked: "Doooo youuuu carry aaa pppinkk onnee, tttenn inchessss lllong aaandd aabboutt ttwoo inchesss thhiickk ... aaand rrunns on bbaatteries?"

Trying not to laugh, and with a little smile creeping around his mouth, the clerk responded, "Yes we do, it is a very popular model."

She stammered, "Dddooo yyoouuu kknnnooww hhhoww ttooo tturrrnn iittt offff?"

Elective Surgery yet more medical advice from Jeff Roser, (Editor: Is this a true story mate?)

A man wakes up in a Brisbane hospital bandaged from head to foot.

The doctor comes in and says, "Ah, I see you've regained consciousness. Now you probably won't remember, but you were in a huge pile-up on the Bruce Highway. You're going to be ok, you'll walk again and your lungs will come good, but your penis was severed in the accident and we couldn't find it." The man groans, but the doctor goes on, "You have \$9000 in insurance compensation and we now have the technology to build a new penis. They work great but they don't come cheap. It's roughly \$1000 an inch."

The man perks up.

"So," the doctor says, "You must decide how many inches you want. But I understand that you have been married for over thirty years and this is something you should discuss with your wife. If you had a five incher before and get a nine incher now she might be a bit put out. If you had a nine incher before and you decide to only invest in a five incher now, she might be disappointed. It's important that she plays a role in helping you make a decision"

The man agrees to talk it over with his wife.

The doctor comes into the man's hospital ward the next day. "So, have you spoken with your wife?"

"Yes, I have." says the man.

"And has she helped you make a decision?"

"Yes" says the man.

"So what is your decision?" asks the doctor.

"Yep, we're going for just the granite bench-tops thanks."

A gentleman was ready to tee off on the first hole when a second golfer approached and asked if he could join him. The first said that he usually played alone, but agreed to the twosome. They were even after the first few holes.

The second guy said, "We're about evenly matched, how about playing for five bucks a hole?" The first guy said that he wasn't much for betting, but agreed to the terms. The second guy won the remaining sixteen holes with ease.

As they were walking off number eighteen, the second guy was busy counting his \$80.00. He confessed that he was the pro at the neighboring course and liked to pick on suckers. The first fellow revealed that he was the Parish Priest. The pro was flustered and apologetic, offering to return the money. The Priest said, "You won fair and square and I was foolish to bet with you. "You keep your winnings."

The pro said, "Is there anything I can do to make it up to you?" The Priest said, "Well, you could come to Mass on Sunday and donate. And, if you want to, bring your Mother and Father along, I'll will marry them."

Beer ~ Not to Be Taken Lightly with thanks to the personal experiences of Jeff Roser, we assume?

Now, as if everything else wasn't bad enough, we find out that beer isn't good for us?

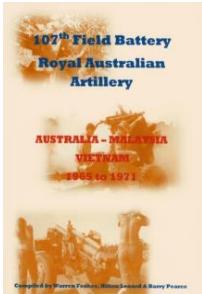
Beer contains female hormones! Last month, Montreal University scientists released the results of a recent analysis that revealed the presence of female hormones in beer. The theory is that Beer contains female hormones (hops contain Phytoestrogens) and that by drinking enough beer, men

turn into women. To test the theory, 100 men each drank 8 large drafts of beer within a one (1) hour period. It was then observed that 100% of the test subjects, yes, 100% of all these men:

- 1) Argued - over nothing.
- 2) Refused - to apologize when obviously wrong.
- 3) Gained - weight.
- 4) Talked - excessively without making sense.
- 5) Became - overly emotional
- 6) Couldn't - drive.
- 7) Failed - to think rationally, and
- 8) Had - to sit down while urinating.

No further testing was considered necessary!!

107 Field Battery Association
Association items for Members - fund raising



Association Book – 107 Fd Bty RAA – Australia, Malaysia and Vietnam, 1965-1971 – **SOLD OUT** (Members only price inc p&p).

Tracing the Battery and its members through the early years after re-raising at Holsworthy, through Malaysia, Townsville and to war in Vietnam, this book has 350 gloss pages, over 600 photos many in colour, vary many stories and lots of historical data. This is a must have in any military library or collection.

SORRY you are too late as all stocks are now SOLD OUT Coming soon, a electronic version of the book. Watch this space.

Association Key ring: similar to your membership key tag, Special two for \$17 (inc p&p) – Non-members price one for \$27.

RAM Pin: Our original discrete Black Sheep Association pin, Special two for \$17 (inc p&p) - Non-members price one for \$27.

The Black Sheep Cap The traditional Black Sheep Cap with 3D embroidered front & rear, \$30 (inc p&p) - Non-members NOT AVAILBLE. **Stocks are low**, order NOW to avoid disappointment.

RAM Stubby Holder: A black holder with 107 Black Sheep logo in red, black & silver with 107 Battery RAA on each side, Special two holders for \$25 (inc P&P) Non-members price one holder for \$25. **Stocks are low**, order NOW to avoid disappointment.

107 Bty Centenary Medallion: A collectors' (40 mm diameter and 5 mm thick) gold medallion, outline of 4.5 Howitzer on front 1916 side and M777 on 2016 reverse. \$15 (inc p&p). Non-members price \$27 (inc P&P).

ORDER: I am financial member; please send me the following (incl p&p):

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1. by cheque/MO and post to:
107 Battery Assn, PO Box 199
Erindale Centre, ACT 2903

2. Email order and direct credit to:
107 Bty a/c
BSB 803205 a/c 20689178

With your name in remarks

3. Use credit card form below.

Questions? E: [hiltonlenard at hotmail dot com](mailto:hiltonlenard@hotmail.com)

Mobile: 0418 695 345

Post this form or scan and email to [hiltonlenard at hotmail dot com](mailto:hiltonlenard@hotmail.com)

Please debit my Visa/MasterCard for \$ _____.00.

Card number

_____ - _____ - _____ - _____ Expiry date _____ / _____

Name on Credit Card: _____ Signature _____ Date: ____ / ____ / 2017

And even more with care from Jeff Roser:

Back in July a group of **Veteran Bikies** were riding north along the M1 when they saw a girl about to jump off the Gateway Bridge in to the Brisbane River. They stopped. George, their leader, a big burly man of 69, gets off his Harley, walks through a group of gawkers, past the Queenslander policeman, who was trying to talk her down off the railing and says, "Hey Baby.....whatcha doin' up there on that railin'?"

Tearfully, she replies, "I'm going to commit suicide!"

While he didn't want to appear 'sensitive', George also didn't want to miss this 'be-a-legend' opportunity either so he asked "Well, before you jump, Honey-Babe, why don't you give ole George here your best last kiss?"

So, with no hesitation at all, she leaned back over the railing and did just that. It was a long, deep, lingering kiss followed immediately by another even better one.

After they breathlessly finished, George gets a big thumbs-up approval from his biker-buddies, all the onlookers and even the Queensland policeman.

George the Biker then says, "Wow! That was the best kiss I have ever had, Honey! That's a real talent you're wasting, Sugar Shorts. You could be famous if you rode with me. Why in the world are you committing suicide?"

"My parents don't like me dressing up like a girl."

Defence inquiry probing claims SAS member killed Afghan businessman and planted gun on body

By National Reporting Team's [Dan Oakes](#) and [Sam Clark](#) - Thu 27 Jul 2017.

A secretive inquiry probing the activities of Australian special forces in Afghanistan is investigating allegations an SAS member gunned down an Afghan businessman and then planted a pistol on the body to make it look like self-defence.

The incident is one of [a growing list of killings that are being examined](#) by the Inspector General of the Australian Defence Force's inquiry, which is being overseen by New South Wales Supreme Court judge Paul Brereton.

In April 2011, SAS members raided a warehouse in the capital of Uruzgan Province, Tarin Kot, and shot dead prominent businessman Hayat Ustad. After the incident, the ADF said Ustad was a highly influential member of the Taliban and had been involved in arms smuggling, bomb-making and the transportation of fighters.

The ADF also said Ustad had been trying to escape and pulled a pistol on the Australian troops, and had been shot dead in self-defence.

However, a friend of Ustad, Mohammad Hassan, who was at the warehouse when he was killed, [told a reporter from the ABC's Four Corners in 2011](#) that when the Australians arrived they asked who the manager of the warehouse was.

Mr Hassan said that when Ustad raised his hand and said, "I am", an Australian soldier led him out of sight and then shot him dead.

Mr Hassan said Ustad was not armed and was not trying to flee.

The then-governor of Uruzgan province, Muhammad Omar Shirzad, told Four Corners that neither the Afghan intelligence services nor the police had any information that Ustad was a Taliban member.

A senator in Afghan's national parliament, Heela Achakzai, said she believed Australian special forces had been fed false intelligence by a business rival of Ustad's.

The ABC understands the IGADF inquiry is now examining allegations that a pistol was planted on Ustad's body immediately after the killing to create the illusion it was in self-defence. The inquiry has all the powers of a royal commission, such as the ability to compel people — including non-Defence Force members — to answer questions.



Hundreds of pages of secret defence force documents leaked to the ABC give an unprecedented insight into the clandestine operations of Australia's elite special forces in Afghanistan.

Although it was initially constituted to examine "rumours" surrounding the conduct of Australian special forces in Afghanistan, the ABC revealed recently it was probing a number of specific allegations, including the killing of at least two children.

An Australian special forces veteran recently told the ABC the use of so-called "drop weapons", usually pistols carried to plant on Afghans who had been shot dead, was at the very least discussed by Australian special forces soldiers in Afghanistan. Other sources have confirmed this.

A recent investigation by the Sunday Times newspaper in Britain revealed the Royal Military Police were examining a number of allegations about British SAS members in Afghanistan, including that they planted weapons after murdering unarmed Afghans.

Connie's Story – a tragic story of suicide, *from the ABC News*.

The following article is a first-person account by 35-year-old Melbourne woman Connie Boglis.

Connie was the partner of the late Jesse Bird, a 32-year-old Australian veteran who took his own life on June 27 this year. Jesse's death came just weeks after losing a claim for permanent impairment he had been pursuing for almost two years.

Jesse's family, who spoke to ABC's 7:30 program mid-July 2017, about Jesse's story, and Connie believe the Department of Veteran Affairs' handling of Jesse's case caused him to take his own life. Hack has contacted the Department of Veteran Affairs. "The passing of Jesse Bird, one of those who has proudly served Australia in uniform, is a tragic and heart breaking event," a DVA spokesperson said. The Minister for Veteran's Affairs, Dan Tehan, will soon be meeting with Jesse's parents and has asked DVA for a review into the handling of Jesse's discharge and case management.

A spokesperson for Defence also extended sympathies to Jesse Bird's loved ones and said, "It would be inappropriate for Defence to comment on individual cases or the content of other submissions made to the Inquiry which are under consideration by the Senate Committee."

Connie wrote the following as a submission to the Senate inquiry into suicide by veterans and ex-personnel. Hack has republished Connie's submission with her permission.

Connie's story

I want to invite you into two years of Jesse Bird's life behind closed doors, where only loved ones entered at times. I was a veteran's partner for over two years and supported Jesse to commence the process of his mental health rehabilitation and compensation claims through DVA. I write this in further support of his family's submission that went unnoticed in November 2016 when Jesse was still alive. On behalf of veteran's wives, partners and widows who have also lived by the side of their soldier's pain. (Names of professionals and specific details have been removed in this public forum.)



Connie Boglis and Jesse Bird

Our first date I met Jesse on the 30th of April in 2014. Our first date. We spent an afternoon getting to know one another; I spoke about everything that mattered to me from animal cruelty, travelling, career, and my love for helping others.

Jesse told me that he worked in Nauru as part of the Emergency Response Team and although it was financially rewarding, gave him no career satisfaction. He then spoke about being a veteran and having served in Afghanistan.

Jesse could not speak highly enough of the Army, hoping one day he would return to his role in which he felt a sense of purpose as a soldier, and I quote Jesse: "It's all I know how to be, Connie". As naive as I was that day about what Jesse was going though, I felt so proud to be walking in his company. The conversation with Jesse that day was one of many that continued and highlighted the debilitating plague that PTSD had on Jesse, myself and our relationship.

Our second date was at the airport. Three months later I returned from an overseas trip. Jesse picked me up at 2.30am just to see me and know that I was home safe. We had spoken every day I was away, and would be up at all hours just to stay connected with the time difference.

Sometimes Jesse would talk about his day, but I accepted that he was quiet and only spoke when he had something to say. The months to follow were so much fun. We met each other's families and friends, I travelled and attended veterans' weddings and events with all his friends, and I even surprised him with a 30th birthday

party in

November that same year.



Jesse and Connie at Jesse's 30th birthday

I was in love with my hero

Life for us was blissful. Jesse was such an intelligent man, he knew something about everything and his eye would light up teaching you. I can admit I was never interested in the TV show Game of Thrones but after a few conversations, Jesse had me hooked. He would come back from the store with a season of the DVD and we spend the weekends watching back to back episodes. Jesse would explain the plot, and I would forget it, Jesse would remind me of the character's names, and I would make

surprise

I loved his patience and Jesse was a natural born teacher, I was madly in love with him. Jesse was a champion swimmer. He had a natural instinct to protect people in danger, and responded like no one I had ever met. He was my hero.

While we were on holiday Jesse and I were swimming at a resort pool and I had playfully jumped on his back. I remember being thrown off only to see him powering through the water to save a child who was drowning and his parents hadn't even noticed. Jesse came back to me within seconds, not needing a thank you, not giving the parents a sermon for leaving their child alone he just returned the child to his parents and swam back to me.

I was so moved yet concerned because for the first time I noticed how detached Jesse had become

from his emotions.

Jesse moved in with me. It was around this time Jesse got news that his current position in Nauru as part of the Emergency Response Unit was now redundant and he would be unemployed and home full time.



Jesse Bird in uniform

Supplied: Karen Bird

If he wasn't being chased, attacked or tortured he was having to fight to save people from being killed. My Jesse was still at war.

If we had a small argument about the house chores or something trivial, Jesse would get flooded for days, Jesse would starve me of communication and although I was still hurting, angry and without any resolve, I would approach him and apologise so I could then hurt in silence.

Jesse would shut down at any sign of confrontation and retreat to his video games for hours on end. Jesse did the same with friends, family and anyone else who brought up anything personal or triggering emotionally for him. If there was a loud bang in the house or nearby he was startled so easily but without thought would walk straight outside in the dark waiting to attack whatever was out there with his bare hands. Who was this man that I was living with? I begged him. He needed to see a counsellor and in the end he only agreed to go because he felt I needed the counselling to help understand him better.

Finally, a diagnosis

So, I went. Thankfully this was the first session of many; Jesse began to see his own counsellor, psychiatrist and started a course of medication. Jesse and I attended numerous weeknight/end retreats and workshops with veterans and their partners to learn how to cope with mental health and support our soldiers. During this time we had a win; Jesse was finally diagnosed with PTSD by his psychiatrist.

This diagnosis meant that Jesse could begin the process of being acknowledged not only for what happened to him during his time in the army, but as a partner it gave me hope that Jesse could start to find peace in all the hurt he had to endure. So hand in hand we were learning how to work and live together as a couple with PTSD.



Connie and Jesse on
Connie's 34th birthday

The bureaucracy battle begins

So the paper trail began. With his diagnosis in hand, we worked together to find advocates in Melbourne who would assist Jesse with DVA and apply to get a white card and a pension for his PTSD, anxiety, severe depression and injury. We were told by veterans in passing that Jesse should try and make a claim through his superannuation fund to at least receive some money to get by, pay bills the basics until his paperwork was approved, so we did. Jesse and

I prepared and compiled all the information necessary that day but they also needed support letters and reports from treating Psychiatrist and Psychologist. Jesse made contact with these individuals at his next appointment and asked them both for this information and I know this because I was with him. Eight months after making his claim his superannuation fund sent me an email asking if we were still wanting to pursue a claim for compensation because they were still yet to receive support letters from his treating Psychiatrist and Psychologist.

His superannuation fund stated that they do not pursue specialists or support services; instead veterans making the application need to follow up these documents. This is just one example of the administrative red tape he was hit by.

Jesse was too embarrassed and ashamed to ask for these support letters again. Jesse never liked anyone calling on his behalf, so I couldn't help him. Instead he wanted to stop the process of pursuing the claim. He felt belittled, insignificant, and above all angry at the complexity of these processes given what he was going through. (Evidence is available upon request).

Persisting on minimum wage work

Jesse changed. Months went by without looking for work, Jesse refused to apply for meaningless jobs and I understood. Jesse saw job opportunities existed in other government agencies so he applied. All of Jesse's applications were rejected, we later found out one of these applications did not progress due to his medical records now showing he had PTSD!

Jesse became further withdrawn, moody and hours on end would lock himself in the bedroom to numb himself of yet another rejection. I couldn't sit back and watch the man I adored fall apart. I was so angry. I researched everything possible that existed for veterans in Melbourne. I came across a veteran's employment agency, Jesse was so hesitant but again I went with him, and he tried for me because he still had hope.

They found Jesse work, it was minimum wage, on the other side of Melbourne but he began the following week and I began to see parts of my old Jesse came back to me. This position only lasted a few months because he felt he had no sense of purpose cleaning and assisting at a timber yard site. Back to the drawing board. With Jesse's level of intelligence, his love of teaching children and interest in learning it was only natural that we then researched and applied for a course in teaching.



Jesse with Connie's dog Meeko

He started small applying to become a teacher's aide and if it went well, working his way up towards a degree. Jesse was accepted into this course and commenced his studies at home full time with the financial assistance of his parents.

Jesse was still medicated; we were still seeing a couple's counsellor, Jesse his own counsellor and treating Psychiatrist. On Christmas day Jesse presented me a ring that his father gave his mother on their wedding day, Karen had kept this for him when he was ready, to give it to someone special. Jesse told me on that morning that I was that special person in his life and it was Jesse's way of showing me he wasn't giving up.

Then we lost our angel

March 14th 2016 at 5am, my 34th birthday. I woke up with severe pains and found blood all over the bed sheets. Jesse took me to the emergency department and lied in bed with me for hours while I cried in agony. At 11am we were told we lost our baby, I was 7 weeks pregnant. We came home and just cried together, Jesse named our baby Gabrielle after the Arc Angel, because our baby was now in heaven. That tipped me off the edge. I knew my body and mind were defeated. I tried to help Jesse fight the war that was going on inside his head and I swear to god I gave him everything I had left to give.

The stress and anxiety had showed in various ways over the years and I had not thought up until that point that my mental health may have been compromised. I was always strong. The PTSD had won, and I was broken. My last effort attempt to save our relationship was a call and referral to a 13-week PTSD Clinic later that year. I told Jesse I needed a break in July 2016 and I wanted him to attend the program in November, try his best and come back to me when it was over. Jesse never did. Jesse did not have a "Part time" 6-10 scale PTSD, Jesse had PTSD Everyday! Jesse was trained to run into the face of fear, you taught him that. You broke him down before he even left for war and if that

wasn't enough, he was deployed to Afghanistan for 9 months when it was only meant to be 6. The day Jesse landed on Australian soil he should have been handed a white card, given a pension and options for supports thereafter if he choose. Instead Jesse was expected to pour out his wounds from the battlefield to a complete stranger and talk emotions, something you taught him to hide so well. Well he did it, Then you made him wait, in hope that his voice would be heard, So we continued to wait, I couldn't wait any longer, So Jesse tried to wait a little more and fight on his own but you never came.

Jesse's death cannot be in vain



A picture of Jesse Bird sits next to his medals on his coffin - ABC News

Have you lived with them each day? Slept by their side as they toss and turn, yell in their sleep and watched them relive their trauma? Have you witnessed abuse by their words? Seen them push friends and family away who are only trying to help? How about see them try and write a resume when all they have is the army? Have you seen them come home and drink themselves stupid, start smoking or take drugs just to make all the noise stop?

Well I have. I will one day find peace in all of this knowing in my heart that Jesse and I fought hard as a team to combat against the war that PTSD bought into our lives, but it is this government's bureaucratic red tape that killed my Jesse.

On behalf of Jesse and his family I ask for an immediate change in policy.

In my closing statement I ask you this;
Senators of the Australian Parliament,
psychiatrists, psychologists and Department
Agencies supporting our veterans across
Australia.

Have you even seen a loved one return from
war?

If you or someone you love needs help, support is available at Lifeline on 13 11 14. If you are an Australian veteran or family of a veteran, you can also call the Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service on 1800 011 046.