

BIG DAY FOR SAPPERS IN CANBERRA 18 FEBRUARY 2020

Last Post Ceremony at The Australian War Memorial, followed by drinks and dinner at the Hellenic Club, Civic, Canberra.

The Last Post Ceremony on 18th February 2020 at the Australian War Memorial is to remember the seven Australians and one American servicemen killed in action at Fire Support Base Andersen near Bien Hoa during the Tet Offensive of 1968.

This event will be the closest that the Sappers of 1 Field Squadron Vietnam will get to a Commemoration of the long forgotten and often overlooked Battle at FSB Andersen during Operation Coburg.



ABOVE: Troop BBQ at Nui Dat prior to Operation Coburg. Left to Right (standing) SPRS Geoff Coombs, Dave Steen and Vince Tobin, who were on the ill-fated standing patrol at FSB Andersen. Dave was one of the four sappers killed at Andersen, while Geoff and Vince survived that horror only to be killed in a mine incident a month later in the Long Hai Mountains.

This event has been in the AWM pipeline for nearly two years and is sponsored by the Vietnam Tunnel Rats Association, with the strong support of COL John Kemp AM (Retired), OC 1 Field Squadron at the time of Operation Coburg and FSB Andersen. It is hoped that our Head of Corps RAE, BRIG John Carey CSC and the Corps RSM Sean Chainey DSM might be in attendance on this occasion, their duties permitting.

The Tunnel Rats Association is looking at this ceremony also as a commemoration of all 36 of the Tunnel Rats KIA in Vietnam.

The Last Post Ceremony commences at 1655h and the AWM recommends that visitors arrive early for the ceremony as the Memorial is unable to reserve spaces for groups.

While the one person to be eulogized on this occasion, as per AWM protocol, is 3 Troop 1 Field Squadron Sapper Allan Pattison, wreaths will be laid by 3 Troop Veterans of Andersen for all the Australian soldiers, Infantry, Artillery and Engineers, who gave their lives that night.

At the invitation of the Vietnam Tunnel Rats Association, the United States Defence Attache Office Australia, Colonel Ray Powell, will be sending a US Army Officer to lay a wreath to remember Specialist 4 Buddy Heightland.

Family of Sapper Allan Pattison and Sapper Dave Steen will be attending from interstate.

The Tunnel Rats Assn primary point of contact for this activity is Peter Scott (Roo Dog), email: holdfast6970@gmail.com If you are attending and wish to place a wreath for a mate from 1 Field Squadron, please contact Peter to ensure proper arrangements are made with the AWM.

HONOUR ROLL - BATTLE AT FSB ANDERSEN, SOUTH VIETNAM, 1968

Outside the Wire:

The Standing Patrol, 11 Section, 3 Troop, 1st Field Squadron, RAE:

Staff Sergeant CW McLaughlin KIA 18th February 1968

Lance Corporal JE Garrett KIA 18th February 1968

Sapper AG Pattison KIA 18th February 1968

Sapper DJ Steen KIA 18th February 1968

Sapper GJ Coombs KIA 22nd March 1968 (on Operation Pinaroo)

Sapper VJ Tobin KIA 22nd March 1968 (on Operation Pinaroo)

Inside the Wire:

Private TJ De Vries Van Leeuwen 3rd Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment KIA 18th February 1968 Private JA Doherty 3rd Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment KIA 18th February 1968

Lance Bombardier JL Menz, Detachment, 131 Divisional Locating Battery, Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery, KIA 18th February 1968

Specialist 4 Orville W 'Buddy' Heightland Jr. B Battery, 2nd Battalion, 35th Field Artillery, US Army, KIA 18th February 1968

All welcome to join us for drinks and dinner following the ceremony

All who attend the ceremony are welcome to attend our simple drinks and dinner which will follow the ceremony and will be held at the Hellenic Club, 13 Moore St, Canberra. Drinks and food (bistro style) will be at our own individual cost on the night.

If you are joining us for the drinks and dinner please let us know so that we can advise the club of numbers to be catered for. Email Tunnel Rats Association President Jim Marett on: tunnelrats.vietnam@gmail.com