A FATAL FLAWED DECISION WAS MADE TO CREATE THE BARRIER MINEFIELD.

WAS THE NEXT BIG MISTAKE THE LACK OF TRAINING GIVEN TO THOSE BRAVE SAPPERS WHO HAD TO LAY THE MINES?
Troop staff made sure Tunnel Rats were kept busy on menial tasks when back in base off operations, after all, who knows what a Tunnel Rat might get up to with time on his hands! The work party above is based on standard army procedure - if there are three men working you need three men watching over them. The ‘watchers’ were (L to R) Jock Meldrum, Yorkie Schofield and Shorty Harrison. The fence mending is taking place at the back of the 3 Troop lines in Nui Dat, some time in 1970/71.

Seriously weird sign at a Vung Tau massage joint

With its half man half woman illustration was this massage house way ahead of its time in 1960’s Vung Tau? Were these trendsetters trying to appeal to trans-gender folk even before we’d heard of such a thing? Or perhaps the male soldier’s uniform and the female nurse’s uniform simply meant they were wanting to attract business from soldiers on leave plus the nurses in the US and Australian military hospitals in Vung Tau. After all, who wouldn’t be interested in a “Good body massage and EVERYTHING.”
Skinny as a rake but strong as an ox

Despite the terrain and the heat, this young Viet Cong soldier is taking the weight of the ammunition box in her stride. You had to admire the will and the staying power of our enemy when you also consider the very basic diet and living conditions they existed under. The markings on the box indicate it was ordnance of US origins. It likely got into enemy hands via the black market or a corrupt member of the South Vietnam forces. It was a complicated war! While our army is still struggling to integrate women into combat roles, it’s sobering to think the Viet Cong were doing it 50 years ago.

Sorting out your kit before an operation

Tunnel Rat, CPL Gordon Temby, 3 Troop 1969/71 is going through the ritual of sorting and preparing all the stuff he will need to carry with him on his next operation out bush. Rations needed to be culled down to only the items you actually wanted to eat. All the packing associated with the rations was discarded to reduce weight and increase available space in your pack. An initial demolitions pack was prepared, comprising usually eight blocks of C4 plastic explosive, a length of safety fuse, a longer length of demolitions cord and (packed separately) a few detonators. Pistol and rifle were checked and cleaned and clean ammunition loaded into magazines. Gordon is seen above maintaining and checking his mine detector (hopefully not tuning it so close to all those metallic objects!). Gordon did an extraordinarily long tour of duty of 19 months with the Tunnel Rats. Some guys just couldn’t get enough of it! Gordon has kindly provided us with a treasure trove of photos to publish in Holdfast.

Sappers doing their favourite thing - blowing stuff up!

These three lads are doing what Tunnel Rats love to do - blowing things up with excessive amounts of explosives. They have been tasked with destroying some unwanted ordnance and unusually are using TNT for the job. By far our most common explosive material was C4 plastic explosive slabs. Looking at the amount of TNT they are applying to this job we estimate they are using around six times the required amount. Superb! Seen left to right in the photo are ‘Rip’ Kirby of 3 Troop 1969/70 and Kenny Laughton of 3 Troop 1970/71, plus one other who at this stage we are unable to identify. Ordnance such as artillery rounds, mortar rounds, recoilless rifle rounds and general ammunition were often declared ‘unserviceable’ or ‘US’ due to excessive exposure to moisture. Once declared ‘US’ it had to be destroyed in case it was mistakenly used in a weapon which could result in it failing to work or worse, exploding in the breech.
If you stayed out bush long enough on an operation you started to look and smell like the jungle and earth around you. Proving the point above is Harry ‘Hi-Fi’ Klopcic, a Tunnel Rat with 1 Troop 1967/68. Two of Harry’s many passions are Hi-Fi systems and photography. Harry now lives in Nha Trang Vietnam and he is the official photographer on our tours back to Vietnam.

Tunnel Rat CPL. Jim Castles (2TP 1968/69) reckons this antique print would look a treat in his study back home, but Aussie soldiers don’t loot stuff, so it is probably still sitting where he left it all those years ago. Jim was commanding a section of Sappers tasked with demining the notorious Barrier Minefield. The lads took a break from the midday heat and discovered this deserted old temple on the outskirts of Dat Do.

A ‘swan’ was a job or operation which involved little danger and was a breeze to carry out. Sapper Peter Riedlinger served as a Tunnel Rat so he knows all about danger, but in the 1968 photo at left he is definitely on a ‘swan’. Back in base after an operation out bush, Peter has been ordered to go on OC Escort Duty for the day. This involved being the bodyguard for the Officer Commanding 1 Field Squadron as he travelled around the Province visiting contacts and jobs in progress. At least it was a good chance to see the villages close up. At that time travel out of Australia at our age was a rarity. So all of us remember the totally foreign sights, sounds and smells of local villages the first time we ventured into them. It was a million miles from home in every aspect. Earthen floors, burning incense, chickens roaming the house, pigs in a pen out the back, and impossibly skinny dogs. Peter’s brother Lester also served as a Tunnel Rat, two years later in 1970/71.
For some unknown reason these three Tunnel Rats from 2 Troop 1966/67 were having a Mad Hatter’s Party back at base in Nui Dat. It could be the hot sun or the beer - or it could be the sheer stress of their job, as all three of these lads worked on laying mines in the Barrier Minefield in May 1967. From left to right: Rod McClennan, Peter Hegarty and Dennis Quick. We’re not sure of the significance of the noose around Dennis Quick’s neck!

Armoured shade for Sappers on a mission

This Combat Team of Tunnel Rats from 3 Troop are sheltering under the shade of an armoured bridge layer and doing what soldiers have done for centuries - waited. They are on “Operation Massey Harris” and the bridge layer was used to span a river where a bridge had been blown up by local VC. Seen above (L to R) are: Ben Benningfield, Darrel Binns, Shorty Fulton, Kenny Laughton, Jock Wallace and Bob Reed. The objective of Operation Massey Harris was to locate and destroy illegal market gardens in the lower eastern Phuoc Tuy and Binh Tuy boundary area, where VC of 84 Rear Services Group were ingeniously growing crops below the jungle canopy.

Sometimes the hot sun and the beer can send sappers a bit Troppo!

It’s party time in Vung Tau!

Looking seriously sixties these balloon welding bargirls are obviously attempting to entice a few innocent Aussie Diggers into their den of iniquity. Once inside you were fair game for their skillfull tactics at extracting every last cent you had. They were pretty good too at making empty promises, like “I love you long time, no sweat.” Which was of course a promise impossible to keep in the intense heat of Vietnam!

Tanks for the luxuries

Being posted out bush with the tanks or APCs instead of infantry had its benefits. You rarely had to walk and there was always plenty of water and rations. Tunnel Rat Denis Crawford (2TP 1970/71) above enjoys a brew at the back of an APC. “The bloody tankies would never share their Jack Rations though,” recalls Denis!
‘Instructional Film’ night in the 2 Troop recreation hut

For the sake of decency and so the officers could attend, Blue Movie nights were dubbed ‘Instructional Film Nights. We have no idea who sourced the movies or who organised the nights, but if you were in camp it was always a hoot to attend. The quality of the productions was pretty ordinary and the film itself was invariably burnt out in some sections where previous viewers had tried to stop the motion to look at ‘finer detail’ thus exposing the film to the intense heat of the lamp. But the banter between the lads was always the highlight of the night. Identifiable in the top photo, from left to right are: Greg Gough in the red cap, and below him Bob Ottery. In the window, grinning like a Cheshire cat is “Roo Dog Scott, and below him is Ron Coman. Identifiable in the photo above are, from left to right (standing): Mick Van Poeteren and Tommy Ryan, and seated: Harry Hurst (Killed in action 29 April 1970), John Ronaldson and Captain Janis Atrens, Troop Commander 2 Troop.

Gordon Temby of 3 Troop snapped the top photo on Route 44 near Long Phouc Hai. These hunters are actually gathering river rats to eat them. The little rodents are considered a gourmet delight in parts of Vietnam and are much sought after during certain times of the year. The favoured method of cooking is to strip them of all their fur and smoke them on a bed of hay (see photo above). Rather alarmingly, they appear not to gut the rats before cooking or eating! Unfortunately our tour back to Vietnam in November this year doesn’t coincide with the peak rat eating season so it’s unlikely we’ll be able to do a restaurant review on the subject for you.
“It’s veal cutlets tonight Pierre”

The French certainly knew how to go to war in style during their long conflict with the Viet Minh in Vietnam. These two Legionnaires have obviously ‘obtained’ a young calf locally and intend enjoying some traditional veal dishes once back in camp. At their forward bases the French always had wine with meals for all ranks, and best of all they even operated their own brothels. This is not to distract from their brave efforts though, with official statistics revealing the armed forces of the French Union lost 92,800 killed and 76,400 wounded in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

Hoa Long’s killer smoothies

The village of Hoa Long was close to our base camp at Nui Dat. If you were travelling through the village and could convince the driver to stop, there was a real treat on offer at one of the road-side stores. They sold fruit smoothies made fresh from locally grown bananas and pineapples. The place was so popular you would often see Australian army trucks and Landrovers lined up waiting their turn. This was despite strong warnings from medics about the dangers of serious stomach woes from the untreated water and ice added to the mix. Our bravery materialised in many forms!

A sapper slips into ‘you can’t see me’ mode

Taking a break while on patrol with an infantry platoon, Tunnel Rat Ben Beningfield is on full alert, and at the same time doing his best not to be seen himself. While attached to infantry on operations the Tunnel Rats would be out bush for four to six weeks at a time, sleeping on the ground, eating C Rations and drinking water tainted with purification tabs. No shower, no decent wash, and maybe one change of greens during the Op if you were lucky. Despite all this, not one of us would have missed the experience for quids.
Negotiate your leave-pass and book now!

Focused on Tunnel Rats, our tour will visit key operational areas. For the first time we’ll visit a restored VC base camp in the mangrove swamps of the Rung Sat Secret Zone. And incredibly we’ll visit a tunnel system none of us knew about north of Binh Ba, and used by the NVA in the Battle of Binh Ba. We will meet several former enemy who lifted mines from the barrier minefield, and visit mine incident sites with the Tunnel Rats involved in those incidents. We will hold a service for our 36 fallen comrades at the memorial rock which still sits in our 1 Field Squadron area at Nui Dat - followed by a BBQ. Plus we visit the barrier minefield and the enemy caves in the Long Hai hills. And you’ll get the chance to do a nostalgic tour of Vungers, visiting The Flags area, the old Badcoe Club area and the Grand Hotel where you can have a beer, just for old time’s sake.

The trip is for ten days and nine nights in Vietnam, (two nights in Saigon, then five nights in Vung Tau followed by two more nights in Saigon). If you wish to stay extra nights in Saigon before the tour, we can extend your booking at the same low rate we negotiated at the hotel.

Getting there: Rather than adding to the costs and travel time by forcing everyone to depart from one city in Australia, each person will book and pay for their own return air ticket to Saigon, enabling them to find the best air ticket deal from their city. The plan is for us all to meet in Saigon on Monday 4th November and from there the Tour begins.

The first event is on the 4th November – welcome drinks and dinner at a nearby Sports Bar where we can buy food and drinks at incredibly low prices. Book your air travel carefully to ensure you arrive in Saigon in time to get to the hotel, check-in and make it to the 6pm function. If the airline you choose arrives too late, book your flight to arrive the day prior and we’ll book an extra night in the hotel for you.

Shop around for the best airfare. There are plenty of airlines flying into Saigon, so don’t grab the first airfare you find. Direct, non-stop flights take less...
time and there is no danger of missing a connecting flight, but it may be cheaper to fly on a non-direct flight via another city. There are regular flights out of Australia to Saigon via Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok or Brunei.

The return date for leaving Saigon to head home is 13 November. If you wish to stay extra nights in Saigon after the tour, let us know and we’ll extend your booking at the same low rate we have negotiated at the hotel.

Current serving Combat Engineers (male and female) are again most welcome to join the tour, and several are already coming. Apart from this, it’s a blokes only tour, with the Tunnel Rats welcome to have their sons and mates along on the trip to share the extraordinary experience.

When we return to our hotel each day there’s always the opportunity to enjoy drinks together at the ‘Designated Boozer’ before people go their own way for the evening. The comradeship of these drink sessions are an absolute highlight of the tour.

The cost of the tour is detailed in the panel opposite. We’ve been able to cut $400 off the tour cost, making it even better value than ever before.

Lots of new activities plus all the old favourites and the same incredible levels of comradeship. Plus, amazingly, we’ve been able to dramatically cut costs, making it even better value for us.

**HOW WE CUT THE COSTS**

1: We changed hotels in Saigon, so on a Twin Share basis we save $40 per night or $160 per person over the four nights we’re there.

2: We saved $150 per person more by cutting out the Welcome and Farewell set price dinners ($75 each dinner) at a flash hotel. Instead we’ll go to a Sports Bar buying our own food and drinks at low local prices.

3: Our tour company in Vietnam also negotiated savings in several other areas. The total of these savings enabled us to bring the price down from $1,480 on the last tour, to just $1,080 on this tour, saving us $400 each.

**TOTAL COST FOR THE TOUR**

The full cost for the 10 day, 9 night tour is $1,080 per person if you are sharing a room (twin share). If you prefer a room on your own, the extra cost is $400 to cover the hotel room costs for the nine nights. We’d appreciate receiving your booking and deposit payment ASAP so we can lock down all the rooms and tours. If for any reason you need to pull out later, you’ll receive a full refund.

**WHAT’S INCLUDED**

- Each guest will be met at the airport and transported to the hotel.
- Four nights in The Bong Sen hotel Saigon including buffet breakfast.
- Five nights in The Muong Thanh Hotel Vung Tau including buffet breakfast.
- Ferry tickets Saigon to Vung Tau and return to Saigon via Rung Sat zone.
- BBQ lunch at Nui Dat.
- All specified land tours.
- All permits to visit restricted zones.
- Entry to all scheduled tour venues.
- All wreaths for our ceremonies.
- All bus hire costs and driver costs.
- Cost of tour guides and interpreters.
- 2 tour shirts embroidered with your name and the Tunnel Rats tour logo.
- Each guest will be picked up at the hotel and transported to the airport at the end of the tour.
- All other activities, meals and drinks will be at our own cost. The following items are optional, but you may want to plan your finances for them:
  - Our dinner with the NVA musicians, around $25.
  - Donation to buy milk and rice for the orphanage, around $12 each.
  - Combined tip for the tour organiser, tour guides, bus driver etc: $25
  - Lunch on the Cu Chi tour, around $5.

NEW: We visit an enemy tunnel system north of Binh Ba none of us knew existed, yet it was used by the NVA during the Battle of Binh Ba!
Our itinerary
at a glance

DAY 1 - MONDAY 4 NOVEMBER
Australia to Saigon: People will be arriving at the airport at different times throughout the day. Every guest on the tour is met at the airport by our travel company and transferred to our hotel. After check-in you are free to roam, but be back in time for the 1800h start of our Welcome drinks and dinner gathering in a nearby Sports bar where we can order our own food and drinks at incredibly low local prices.

DAY 2 - TUESDAY 5 NOVEMBER (Optional)
Cu Chi Tunnels tour: Our bus departs at 0900h to the Cu Chi Tunnels where we’ll have a guided tour just for our group. You’ll also have the chance to fire AK47, M60 and M16 Armalite weapons at their rifle range (cost US$2 per bullet). We have lunch in a riverside restaurant, then head back to Saigon, where the rest of the afternoon and the evening are free. Note: You can opt out of this tour if you prefer to have a free day in Saigon or want to book a separate tour or activity for the day. Mr. Ha our tour organiser has many options available.

DAY 3 - WEDNESDAY 6 NOVEMBER
Saigon to Vung Tau by ferry: A 0900h departure by bus to the Ferry Terminal on the Saigon River. The bus will continue on to Vung Tau with our luggage. On arrival in Vung Tau we will check in to the Muong Thanh Hotel, then have a briefing on our planned activities for the next five days. You then have the rest of the afternoon and the evening free for you to check out the town, including our nearby Designated Boozer.

DAY 4 – THURSDAY 7 NOVEMBER
The orphanage at Baria, the Kim Long underground tunnel and the Binh Gia VC Memorial Cemetery: We depart by bus at 0900h to visit the orphanage where we donate rice and milk products for the children. The orphanage has been supported by Australian veterans for many years. We then visit the Kim Long underground tunnel north of Binh Ba, which none of us knew existed and was used by the NVA during the Battle of Binh Ba. We also visit a memorial cemetery for the NVA and VC killed in the area, before heading back to Vung Tau. In the evening (1800h) we will enjoy a music concert performed for us by former NVA and VC veterans, followed by a dinner, with the musicians as our guests.

DAY 5 – FRIDAY 8 NOVEMBER
Long Tan and Nui Dat: A 0900h bus departure to Long Tan Cross memorial where we’ll place a wreath in remembrance of all Australians killed in the Vietnam War. We’ll then tour our old base camp at Nui Dat, including Luscombe Field and our old Troop Lines. We’ll hold a memorial service for our fallen Tunnel Rat comrades at the site of our former Squadron HQ at Nui Dat. This will be followed by a traditional Troop BBQ amongst the rubber trees.

DAY 6 – SATURDAY 9 NOVEMBER (Optional)
The Long Hai Hills, mine incident sites and meeting with former enemy mine lifters: Our bus departs at 0900h for the Long Hai Mountains, which was the VC’s big base camp known as the “ Minh Dam Secret Zone”. We will walk the hills, look into the caves and visit their beautiful memorial temple to the fallen NVA and VC in the area. We then visit several mine incident sites where men involved in the incidents will talk of what took place. Then it’s time to head back to the hotel in Vung Tau. Note: You can opt out of this tour if you prefer to have a free day in Vung Tau or want to book a separate tour or activity for the day. Mr. Ha our tour organiser has many options available. Once the tour group is back at the hotel we will meet with former VC involved in lifting mines from our Barrier minefield. The rest of the afternoon and evening is free.

DAY 7 – SUNDAY 10 NOVEMBER
Vung Tau free day: You’ll have plenty of time to relax, explore Vung Tau, laze by the hotel pool, go shopping, walk along the beach, go for a nostalgic bar crawl with your mates, or simply stroll the streets and soak up the atmosphere. If there is a particular place out in the Province you wish to visit on this day, speak with our tour organiser Mr. Ha so he can arrange it for you.

DAY 8 - MONDAY 11 NOVEMBER
Ferry to Saigon via Can Gio and the former VC base in the Rung Sat zone: Our bus departs the hotel at 0900h to the ferry terminal for a 1000h ferry to Can Gio, while our bus takes our luggage to our hotel in Saigon. In Can Gio we tour through a restored VC camp in the mangrove swamp and meet with former VC there. We then return to the ferry terminal for the journey back to Saigon to check in to our hotel. The rest of the afternoon and evening are free.

DAY 9 - TUESDAY 12 NOVEMBER (Optional)
Subterranean Saigon tour plus Saigon Highlights tour: 0900h bus departure for the ‘Subterranean Saigon’ tour visiting VC bunkers and tunnels under homes and shops. Used by the VC for weapons storage, print shops and hideouts, these venues are now preserved as historic sites. We return to the hotel in time for lunch. After lunch those who wish to can enjoy the Saigon Highlights tour visiting key attractions of the city. Note: You can opt out of either or both of these tours if you prefer to have a free day in Saigon or want to book a separate tour or activity for the day. Mr. Ha our tour organiser has many options available. At 1800h we have our Farewell drinks and dinner gathering in a nearby Sports bar where we can order our own food and drinks at incredibly low local prices.

DAY 10 – WEDNESDAY 13 NOVEMBER
Time to head home: Time to head home: For those leaving today, pack, check out and be in the lobby at the time advised by our travel company for pickup and transport to the airport. Some of us will stay on for an extra day or so to chill out.
Just a few of the highlights you can expect on the tour

Visit the orphanage in Baria
The old orphanage we used to visit during the war is still there. We meet the kids and staff plus we donate heaps of rice and milk powder for the children. Always an emotional experience.

Spend time with some of today’s young Sappers
It’s a privilege to have current serving Sappers with us on the trip. Take the opportunity to chill out with them, buy them a beer and swap war stories.

Ceremony at The Rock
The original ceremonial rock that was in front of 1FD SQN HQ at Nui Dat is still there. We hold a remembrance ceremony at that rock for our 36 Tunnel Rat comrades killed in action in Vietnam.

Fire war era weapons
At the Cu Chi Tunnels we visit their rifle range to fire a selection of weapons including the AK47, the M60 Machine Gun and the M16 Armalite. Ear Muffs provided for any wimps on the tour!

Time-out highlights
In Saigon and in Vung Tau we nominate a designated boozers where we can gather after each day of touring. The humour, the conversations and the comradeship at these sessions are pure gold - and you can buy a stubby of beer for just US$1 each.

Nui Dat BBQ
Following our ceremony at The Rock we hold a fully catered sit-down ‘Troop BBQ’ amongst the rubber trees. And you can tour our old troop lines after lunch.

We visit a restored VC base in the Rung Sat mangroves
Aussie Infantry together with Tunnel Rats entered these perilous swamps several times, but we never found their main base camp. Now we will visit it via a ferry ride from Vung Tau. Bring your mozzie repellent!

Historic Long Tan Cross
We visit the Long Tan Cross, situated at the very site where the Battle of Long Tan took place. We hold a ceremony there in remembrance not only of those who fell at the battle, but all Australian soldiers who lost their lives in the Vietnam War.

The notorious Long Hai hills
We visit this former enemy base including the old caves. Aussie troops suffered big casualties every time we went near this place - mostly from M-16 mines. Step lightly lads!
Serving Sappers invited to join us on the tour

We have thrown all privacy rights to the wind and published (on the right) a complete list of the folks coming so far on the tour. It’s a fascinating mob, with plenty of Tunnel Rats and sons and friends of Tunnel Rats. We have two Veterans from 17 Construction Sqn who will no doubt tell us they built the very roads we will be travelling on! We have two ‘Drop-shorts’ from Artillery with us (in a nice role reversal, they can expect to cop a bit of flack from us this time). Best of all, we have six current era or current serving Sappers with us, four of them from SOER. It is always a highlight of the tour to enjoy the company (and tales) of these brave Sappers of today.

The 56 Tour Participants so far:
Our VIPs
1. Graham Ellis SOER Veteran, Afghanistan
2. Phil Grazier SOER Veteran - Afghanistan & 384. Two current serving members of SOER
5. A current serving Sapper from 1CER
6. A current serving NCO Trainer from SME
7. Ross Brewer, Tunnel Rats Grand Piper Sons of Tunnel Rats no longer with us
8. Karlis Atrens, son of Janis Atrens 68/69
9. Brad Matulick, son of Dave Matulick 67/68

Other Units/Corps
10. David Cowper, 17 Const Sqn 68/69
11. Terry Treasure, 17 Const Sqn 1971
12. Max Troyar, Artillery 67/68
13. Gordon Williams, Artillery 68/69
3 Field Troop
14. Keith Kermode, Tunnel Rat 65/66
1 Troop 1 Field Squadron
15. Bob Laird, Tunnel Rat 68/69
17. Ray Carroll, Tunnel Rat 70/71
18. Ray’s son Trent “Tommy” Carroll
19. Paul Taylor, Tunnel Rat 1971
20. Paul’s brother David Taylor
21. Harry Klopic, Tunnel Rat 68/69
22. Kerry McCormick, Tunnel Rat 68/71
23. Kerry’s mate
24. Graham Fletcher, Tunnel Rat 69/70
2 Troop 1 Field Squadron
25. Graeme Pengelly, Tunnel Rat 1970
26. Greg Gough, Tunnel Rat 69/70
27 & 28 Greg’s sons Shane and Paul
29. Gary McClintock, Tunnel Rat 70/71
30. Gary’s mate Geoff Cohen
31. Wayne Hynson, Tunnel Rat 68/69
32. “Ba Ba” Lamb, Tunnel Rat 69/70
33. Geoff Craven, Tunnel Rat 67/68
34. Geoff’s mate Darren Cummins
35. Bob Ottery, Tunnel Rat 69/70
36. Bob’s son Ben Ottery
37. Jim Maret, Tunnel Rat 69/70
38. Jim’s mate Alan Whiteley
39. Alan’s mate Steven Relf
40. Dennis Coghlan, Tunnel Rat 1971
41. Allan Pearson, Tunnel Rat 68/69
42. Alan’s grandson Ethan Pearson
43. Kevin Connor, Tunnel Rat 69/70
44. “Grumpy” Foster, Tunnel Rat 69/70
45. Grumpy’s mate Nick Maxwell
3 Troop 1 Field Squadron
46. Peter Thorp MID, Tunnel Rat 69/70
47. Peter’s son James
48. John Nulty, Tunnel Rat 68/69
49 & 50. John’s sons Matt and Tim
51 to 56. Mick O’Hearn Tunnel Rat 67/68, Mick’s son Trev, Mick’s mate Steve Lantry, Mick’s three relatives; Mick Cory, Kristian Bischoff and Graeme Bischoff.

Here’s some of the folks you’ll meet on the tour

Sons of Tunnel Rats no longer with us
8. Karlis Atrens, son of Janis Atrens 68/69
9. Brad Matulick, son of Dave Matulick 67/68

Current serving Sappers (male and female of all ranks) are invited to join our tour - as long as they have served or currently serve in a Combat Engineer unit.

On the tour they will get an understanding of how we operated in terms of combat engineer tasks, particularly when attached to Infantry and Armoured units. They’ll gain an insight into the casualties we suffered, and why, plus how we coped with it. They’ll see first-hand the similarities between our tasks in Vietnam and theirs today, and how much better trained and equipped they are than we were.

Plus there will be the unique experience of melding together the incredible comradeship the old and the young Sappers enjoy as a result of our service. And of course it’s a real treat for us old Sappers to be around these brave and bright young soldiers. If you’re a serving Sapper and you wish to join us on the tour, simply fill in the form and pay the deposit. Or if you are a serving Sapper and have any questions about the tour, contact Jim Marett on: 0403 041 962 or by email on: tunnelrats.vietnam@gmail.com

ABOVE LEFT (on the right): Tunnel Rat legend ‘Grumpy’ Foster will be with us - you’ve been warned! In the photo with Grumpy is Chris Koulouris. ABOVE RIGHT: Our Piper Ross Brewer will be joining our tour again and is seen above in his jungle camouflage regalia.

ABOVE LEFT: Tunnel Rat legend ‘Grumpy’ Foster will be with us - you’ve been warned! In the photo with Grumpy is Chris Koulouris. ABOVE RIGHT: Our Piper Ross Brewer will be joining our tour again and is seen above in his jungle camouflage regalia.
We have options now for you to tailor your own activities

We have quite a few regulars on our tours, including some who have been on all six tours so far. Others on our tours may have already visited Vietnam several times independently with family. We realise there is probably a limit on how many times you can visit the Cu Chi Tunnels or Long Hai Hills etc, when Vietnam has so much to offer.

Now, if you wish, you can opt out of any day’s activities (except our remembrance service at Nui Dat) and arrange your own tour or activity.

Our tour operator in Vietnam, Mr. Ha of Asia Travel Service has many options available including cooking classes, walking tours, fishing trips, a game of golf, day trips to the Mekong Delta, market tours, foodie experiences, exotic temple tours and much more.

Or you may prefer to enjoy a free day in Saigon or Vung Tau to wander the streets, eat some great food and visit some of the top bars for a cold beer or sip of wine. The choice is yours.

If you wish to pre-arrange any private trip or activity during your tour, contact Mr. Ha by email on: nguyendanhha2009@yahoo.com.vn or by mobile on: +84 98 998 95 97
Our hotel in Vung Tau is right in the heart of everything

Muong Thanh Hotel Vung Tau

We’ll be staying in the perfectly located Muong Thanh Hotel in the Front Beach area of Vung Tau. It's a great base for our tours to the old operational areas of Phuoc Tuy Province. The hotel is next to the famous Grand Hotel, and is close to popular bars and restaurants and just up the road from our ‘Designated Boozer’. It has a pool and an excellent buffet breakfast which is included in the tour. For those with more money than sense, there is a casino nearby as well.

Perfect central Saigon location and great value for us

The Bong Sen Hotel Saigon

Our first two nights and last two nights of the tour are at the Bong Sen Hotel. It’s in a great location on Dong Khoi Street in the heart of Saigon. There are lots of shops and restaurants nearby and plenty of taxis available out front. The hotel represents great value and provides a superb buffet breakfast which is included in our tour price. Conveniently there’s a Beer House/restaurant right next door which looks perfect as our ‘Designated Boozer’.

TUNNEL RATS TOUR BACK TO VIETNAM - 4 NOV TO 13 NOV 2019

(14)
VIETNAM TRIP $300 DEPOSIT BOOKING FORM – ONE PERSON PER FORM

Full cost of the 10 day, 9 night tour will be $1,080 (shared room) or an extra $400 for a room on your own ($1,480). Any extra nights you may require in the Huong Sen Hotel Saigon before or after the tour can be calculated later once you have your flight details.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mobile number:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone number (landline):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postcode:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email address:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you are a Vietnam Tunnel Rat please list Troop served with and approximate dates:

If you are a current serving soldier please provide rank and name of CER unit serving or served with:

If you are the son or mate of a Tunnel Rat on the tour, please provide his name:

- [ ] I want to share a room and I will be sharing the room with:
- [ ] I want to share a room, please arrange someone for me to share with.
- [ ] I want a room on my own

Please tick your shirt size:

- [ ] Sml
- [ ] Med
- [ ] Lge
- [ ] XLge
- [ ] XXLge
- [ ] XXXLge
- [ ] XXXXLge

Any nickname you prefer to be known by:

The deposit is $300 and is fully refundable if you have to cancel for any reason

Please tick below your method of payment:

- [ ] By EFT deposit into our bank account
  
  **Bank**: Commonwealth Bank
  
  **BSB**: 063165  
  **Account Number**: 10494523  
  **Account name**: Vietnam Tunnel Rats Association

  Please email us to advise you have paid by EFT – email to tunnelrats.vietnam@gmail.com

- [ ] By credit card

  **Type of card**: 
  - [ ] Visa
  - [ ] Mastercard

  **Name on card**:  
  **Card number**:  
  **Expiry date**:  
  **Three digit code on back of card**:

  (Please note: Statement will read “Ultimate Design Graphics Pty Ltd”)

- [ ] Cheque or Australia Post Money Order – payable to Vietnam Tunnel Rats Association

  **Post this form to**: Vietnam Tunnel Rats Assoc 43 Heyington Place Toorak Vic 3142

  **Or email this form to**: tunnelrats.vietnam@gmail.com

If you don’t have a scanner you can:

  (A): Simply email the same information requested above to: tunnelrats.vietnam@gmail.com

  Or (B): Complete the form, photograph it with your phone and text it to Jim Marett at 0403 041 962
The tours to Vietnam organised by the Tunnel Rats Association have been an extraordinary success since the first one back in 2007. Our numbers on each tour have ranged from 50 to 80 participants which is amazing considering we were such a small unit during the war. We know of no other veteran association which has anywhere near as many participants as ours on their tours back to Vietnam.

One of the very special things we have enjoyed on the tours since the first one, is the unique level of access we have to ‘restricted’ areas, combined with our ability to meet with former enemy and discuss our experiences openly.

Anyone who has ever tried to organise anything in Vietnam will know that this is an exceptional achievement. Vietnam is still a very controlled society, and experiences like these just don’t happen without the right connections.

Our connections are the combination of our tour operator Nguyen Danh Ha (who we know affectionately as ‘Mr. Ha’), and his father, Nguyen Dong Chuyen (who we know affectionately as ‘Mr Chuyen’).

Whilst Mr. Ha is the incredible organiser of all our tours, accommodation and activities, it is his father, Mr. Chuyen who is our ‘secret weapon’.

Mr. Chuyen is a proud War Veteran, a former soldier of the Vietnam People’s Army (VPA) who served bravely and was wounded in battle. Mr. Chuyen is widely respected and connected amongst the Vietnamese Veteran community and within the local Vung Tau community where he and Mr. Ha live and where Mr. Ha has his travel company headquarters.

So it is Mr. Chuyen, a fellow Veteran and former enemy who is our secret weapon!

Mr. Chuyen was born in 1946 and joined the VPA in 1963 as a volunteer at the age of 17. His motivation for joining at such an early age was an event which took place in 1953 when he was just seven years old. His father that year was captured and tortured by French forces.

His mother then had to struggle through life doing her very best to provide for their six children. And as a farming family they all had to work long hard hours in the fields to gain a livelihood.

Most Vietnamese men during the Vietnam War were called up into the army at 18 years of age. So when the determined young Mr. Chuyen volunteered at just 17 years of age he first went through nine months of basic training at a drill-ground near his home before officially joining the VPA in February 1964 when he turned 18. Following
training he was quickly sent out into the battle zones where he spent five years until 1969 when he was wounded in battle. During that five years he moved rapidly through the ranks, being a Private from 1963 to 1964, then a Corporal from 1965 to 1967, and a Lieutenant from 1968 to 1969.

His main area of operations was the Quang Nam and Da Nang zones, and it was south of Da Nang where he was wounded, by rocket fire from an aircraft.

He was evacuated to a field hospital in Quang Nam for emergency treatment then when he was well enough to travel he was transported to a medical recovery unit. After three months of recovery he was able to re-join the VPA but his wounds restricted him from any further frontline duty.

He was sent back to Hanoi for training from 1969 to 1972 as an engineer and driver, then returned to active duty when posted to the Transportation Unit Number 4 – C7 – C11 from 1972 until 1982. This unit was tasked with moving weapons and supplies in logistic support of actions in the Da Nang, Hai Phong and Laos regions.

With health issues emerging related to his wounds from 1969, he retired from the VPA in 1982 with the rank of Major, and in 1994 moved to live in Vungtau where he now lives with his extended family.

We thank Mr. Chuyen for so generously sharing his connections with us and trusting us with the very special access to areas and people that he facilitates for us.
The Tunnel Rats laying the Barrier Minefield continued to carry out their dangerous task, even in the face of the horrendous casualties happening among them. In a period of just 22 days, five men were killed and eleven wounded while laying the minefield. The first tragic error was the decision to create the minefield, was the second error the sending of Sappers in to lay the minefield without proper training?

Following are a series of stories revealing the sheer stupidity of the decision to create the minefield, and giving clear indications of inadequately trained men being sent in to lay the mines. The bright light shining out from this tragedy though, is of course the brave young Sappers who as always carried out their job to the very best of their abilities. They deserved better leadership and wiser decisions at that critical time when such a risky and highly dangerous course had been set.

The decision that did all the damage

“In 1967, the Australian Task Force Commander Brigadier Stuart Graham issued the calamitous order: ATF would construct an 11 kilometre barrier fence minefield containing over 20,000 M16 landmines in southern Vietnam’s Phuoc Tuy Province. The purpose of the ‘barrier’ was to separate and shield the majority of the population in the south-west of the province from enemy forces in the north and east. What Graham failed to realise was that the enemy would steal thousands of the mines and turn them back against the Australian Task Force with horrendous, far reaching results.”


Mines lifted from our own minefield became our enemy’s most effective strike weapons, causing close to 50 per cent of Australian casualties. We gifted our enemy thousands of these mines, ideal weapons to defend their vital areas and base complexes.

And to add to the tragedy, our young Sappers needlessly lost life and limb in the process of laying those mines.
“The disaster waiting to happen came to a head”

By “Jethro” Thompson

My troop, 1 Troop was attached mainly to 6 Battalion and 2 Troop supported 5 Battalion, but regardless of my posting as a Plant Operator, I was a Field Engineer first, and I was involved in laying the minefield – for six days before I literally got blown to bits.

The laying of the minefield comprised of two tasks - digging and preparing the holes for the mines, and placing and arming the mines in the holes. Protective gear was only worn by the actual arming parties. This consisted of a flak jacket and helmet. No doubt, today a full bomb suit would be dress of the day.

As you can imagine, the flack jacket was extremely uncomfortable in the intense heat. This added to the stress of the task, as did being dangerously close to five other arming parties. If they stuffed up, there was a good chance you’d cop the flack as well.

I was given the job of arming mines almost immediately – and we were arming the tricky combination of an M-16 landmine perched on a hand grenade, fitted with an anti lift switch. Today, I don’t think Work Practices would even allow such a task.

And how was I trained for this job? I had never seen an M-16 mine before. On arrival at the minefield the rest of the Troop had the benefit of two weeks experience laying two small minefields at each end of the Fire Support Base known as The Horseshoe.

Those minefields did not have the anti lift device beneath them, but by working on that task those sappers had received familiarization training in preparation for laying the barrier minefield. Myself and other plant operators rushed in with indecent haste to increase the troop numbers, never had any prior training.

Arriving at the minefield with five other Plant Operators who’d been ordered to work on this task, we watched an Officer and an NCO demonstrate the process once. Each of us then had a turn at arming a mine and its anti-lift grenade beneath. Training was now complete!

Originally the Troop was arming a total of about 400 mines a day, and individuals were very much at liberty to perform the tasks they were comfortable with. But pressure came from Task Force HQ, wanting us to now lay 1000 mines a day to get the minefield finished before the approaching rice harvest season.

On May 9th a new system was introduced, the three field sections in the Troop would each work on a specific task, with each section rotating across the three tasks of digging, carrying and arming.

Arming was the most stressful task by far, and our Troop Commander made the wise decision to ease the stress by setting a quota of 20 mines for the arming section – about two hours work. The plan was,
that each time the arming team reached their quota, they would swap tasks - rotating with the other two sections.

Then, on May 9th, my sixth day at the minefield, the disaster waiting to happen came to a head.

After two hours of arming mines, my team had completed its quota, and we knew we could now take a brief rest, then move on to one of the safer tasks of digging or laying.

I can’t stress enough how much of a relief it was to complete that quota and get off the arming task. It was an alarmingly dangerous job, and we were totally unprepared for it.

Relieved, our team then moved out to a safe area where we relaxed and drank from our water bottles. As we waited to be directed to our next task, an NCO approached our team and angrily demanded to know what we were doing “lazing about”.

We informed the NCO we’d done our arming quota - and as the Boss said, now we can rest then move on to digging or laying”.

Either knowing nothing about the Troop Commander’s rotating plan, or choosing to ignore it, the NCO chewed us out again and pushed us back to do more arming.

Amidst a lot of grumbling, our team moved back to carry on arming. I was slower to move off, and incredibly, in this tense environment, the NCO gave me another verbal serve – the third rasping in as many minutes.

This exhibition of bad man-management by the way, is inside a minefield, and with our team heading back into an extremely dangerous task.

In a turning point of my life, I lost my cool, abandoned my normal self-discipline and abused the NCO – big time. Angrily, I headed towards my partner to continue arming, but I was further up the safe lane than I thought I was and I struck the last mine I’d laid.

The explosion hit six sappers, killing two of them, and wounding four, including myself. I was a good Sapper - and my lack of discipline that day in the minefield was out of character – but it happened.

It happened in an atmosphere where we were in a highly dangerous situation without the training we needed, to give us the confidence to carry out the task. We were stressed to the max – and then pushed by a bad leader displaying his own lack of discipline.

The system let us down, the leaders let us down, and I let us down too. But there’s no doubt that if the system and the leaders hadn’t failed, I wouldn’t have been pushed to the point where I triggered that terrible incident.

As bad as that day on the minefield was for me, it was also the day someone made a decision that saved my life. I’d lost a couple of limbs and had dozens of other wounds. On the medevac helicopter ride to hospital, the medic informed the pilot I was going to run out of blood shortly, and wouldn’t make it to the hospital alive.

In a flash, the RAAF pilot diverted to a Korean Army medical unit he knew was nearby. We dropped in, stocked up with blood product and continued on to the hospital. I arrived alive because of a decision made on the spot by that Pilot.

A few years ago I searched out and found that pilot, and arranged for us to meet. He was Pilot Officer Mike Haxel, and in Vietnam he was just 25 years old – the youngest pilot in 9 Squadron at the time. His tour in Vietnam would see him being awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

When we got together after all those years - it was an emotional meeting. I gave him a very unmanly hug – and I don’t mind admitting that, in the process, I left a few tears of thanks on his shoulder.

On the day of my mine incident back in May 1967, at just 21 years old, I reckoned I still had a lot of living to do, and this young man, God bless him, made a live or die decision – about me.
Sapper training in the 1950/60s followed lessons learned in the Western Desert in WW2 and to a lesser extent, the Korean War. Experience in the jungles of New Guinea, later Malaysia and Borneo did little to develop such knowledge and skills, although booby trap use in those campaigns had some influence.

Hence, when Sappers deployed to SVN in 1965 we took a somewhat outdated skill base.

Sappers doing FE3 courses and later FE2 and FE1 courses practised drills for laying and breaching minefields using mainly Mk V and Mk VII anti-tank and M14 and Dingbat anti-personnel mines. The M16 mine wasn’t used in such training. Typically, sappers saw a sectioned model or diagram of one of these mines during training, along with some Soviet or Chicom mines. Officers did similar training and conducted short practical minefield exercises during the FE component of their post-graduation training, known as either Long or Short Officers courses.

In Vietnam in March 1967 the decision was taken to more permanently occupy The Horsehoe north of Dat Do with a reinforced infantry company. It was to be a firm base for a FSB and to ‘anchor’ the minefield that Brig Stuart Graham had decided to have built to separate the populous line of towns and villages from the largely unoccupied areas in the south east of Phuoc Tuy province.

With A Coy 6 RAR, 1 Troop with a detachment from 17 Const Sqn, assisted digging and building bunkers and CPs, putting in a well and laying two protective minefields. This was the first opportunity for some of 1 Troop’s Sappers to gain on-the-job experience with these mines.

Unlike the later work on the larger so-called barrier minefield, which was done on more gently undulating ground, some of The Horsehoe protective fields were on steeper ground making pacing interestingly variable. This early work highlighted the huge amount of waste generated from packaging for large numbers of mines. It also identified some quality issues with the mines and their M605 igniter or fuze themselves.

Once the protective minefields were completed to international standards with fences, signs and paperwork recorded, the bigger task was commenced. The Squadron had been tasked to lay the minefield within the infantry constructed wire fences at a rate of 1000 mines a day. Work around The Horsehoe protective fields had given cause to doubt the likelihood of reaching this target without significant reinforcement.

Additional sappers involved in other work such as base development, ongoing maintenance tasks and other operations, were redirected to augment the troops already on the ground.

To endeavour to bring these less experienced troops across several non-FE trades in some cases, parties were formed to spread the experienced ones with the less experienced, where possible sticking to normal sectional structures. Keep in mind that irrespective of what task people had, the Squadron was constantly inducting newly ar-

---

Minelaying – the training and the task

*By Joe Cazey*

_Troop Officer, 1 Troop 1 Field Squadron Vietnam 1966/67_

---

**BELOW LEFT:** Sappers and Infantrymen were tasked with constructing the 11km long minefield fence. **BELOW RIGHT:** The Horseshoe feature at the starting point of the minefield became a permanent Australian base.
rived replacements, so some people arrived from Australia and their first job in theatre was laying mines.

Besides the usual digging, laying and arming duties of different parties, there was also the simple, but time and labour demanding, logistic tasks of unpacking, testing and distributing mines, as well as managing the tons of packaging mentioned earlier.

Troops on arming duties were using our limited number of flak jackets, passing them on as each relief occurred throughout the working day. Sappers in boots (usually no socks or jocks), shorts or longs, helmet and a sweat soaked “hand-me-down” flak jacket were sweating buckets as they went about their work in an open field totally void of any shade.

Frequent rotation of duties was organised so that smoking and rehydration breaks could be taken as well as relieving the intense concentration needed to lay the mines with the anti lift devices – the M5 pressure release switch with detonator inserted into a US M26 grenade.

While all ranks had weapons with them in the field, arming parties less the OIC (usually a Cpl or Lcpl) didn’t have their weapons physically with them, but had them stacked nearby. Outside the fence to the east, infantry platoons were arrayed to protect us in the close protection role, with ambushes set further away.

The OIC of the arming party was well armed but not against VC/NVA threats. He carried his usual M16 and M79 with a canister up the spout plus a pump action shot gun. Besides supervising and keeping a recording of clusters completed, he was on the lookout for dogs or other animals inside the wire fences who, when they’d set off a trip wired mine, would race along the fence setting off others. Being lower down they didn’t appear to suffer the worst effects of the jumping mine. However, as they got nearer to the arming party, the OIC was using his arsenal to kill the animal. As a result of this, we ate a deer one night at The Horseshoe, my first ever taste of venison.

Despite a long and stressful day laying mines, sappers of 1 (and later 2) Troop, had the usual picquet at night back at The Horseshoe where we manned the south west corner of the perimeter. The hootchies were sandbagged to about half a metre and then quartered into individual sleeping bays or were Armco culvert halves with sandbags over the metal.

Although daily rates lifted as confidence grew, we were under regular pressure from HQ 1 ATF to speed things up. We only seemed able to achieve the desired 1000 mines per day when we had maximum availability of sappers and the holes were being dug by infantry working parties.

It must be remembered that the hole needed to be deep enough for a grenade, pressure release switch, the mine and the majority of the length of the protruding igniter (fuze), which is in the order of 325mm deep.

Then the grenade with pressure release switch in place, was placed in the bottom of the hole and tamped with loose soil. The metal rods specially shaped
to go into the spare holes in the switch and bent up to above the surface level replaced the switch’s safety pin, which was withdrawn at this point and was pocketed for counting purposes.

The mine complete with M605 fuze was then sat upon the M5 switch and backfilled with soil and tamped down firmly. This left the mine’s fuze proud of the ground level by barely 10mm.

What could be seen at this point was the fuze’s three prongs and the metal rod sticking above the ground. The mine fuze’s safety pin was now withdrawn (or if the mine was to be trip wire activated, the wire was attached, after having been laid out and fastened at the other end).

The mine was now armed ready to go, but the anti-lift grenade was still held safe by the metal rod. Two men were now required to act together. Facing each other on their knees with the mine between them, the last step could be undertaken.

While one man held the ground and the mine still, the other carefully withdrew the metal rod thereby arming the grenade. The whole device was now ready to blow. Both men carefully stood and withdrew to the strip centre line to move onto the next cluster.

With four mines per cluster, this process was a choreographed sequence so nobody was stepping over an armed mine.

As mines were set off by animals either intentionally pushed through into the minefield or smaller ones who made it by themselves, these had to be replaced.

Two men carrying packs with grenades, fuzed mines and switches would follow the compass bearings back along the strip centre line and relay mines into the obvious holes, which had spread soil debris over the other mines in that cluster. This was a nerve racking task which needed to be done daily.

While never easy, the whole task was made all the harder as casualties occurred. Motivating men to simply go back to doing what they were doing before the bang was heard, after the Dustoff choppers had departed, was a challenge that had to be faced.
Rod McClennan was tasked with laying the Barrier Minefield while serving as a Tunnel Rat with 2 Troop 1 Field Squadron in 1967. He first learned he would be laying the minefield when told that 2 Troop would be relieving 1 Troop after the series of mine incidents that troop had suffered.

“To be honest I wasn’t shocked to hear we would be doing this - it was just another job,” says Rod. “They did tell us it was the M-16 ‘Jumping Jack’ mine we’d be laying, and at that point I had never seen an M-16 mine, as most of the training back at SME was on anti-tank mines and very basic mine laying drills.

“They did explain at the start that we’d be laying the mines with the added anti-lift device, comprising the M-26 Grenade with the switch sitting between the grenade and the mine – but I didn’t receive any training on carrying out that task.

“Any training given was an ‘as required’ thing to those doing a particular task. On the first day I was preparing the grenade with the switch. I assume the people starting the laying received training.

“Laying was paused after our two guys were killed on May 20th, and that evening my Corporal took Dennis Quick and myself aside and told us we would be taking their place. He then gave us some instructions on the procedure, which I would say took about three to four minutes. I would like to say in his defence though, that he was still in shock as he was knocked unconscious from the blast when our two troop mates were killed.

“That bit of training we received from our Corporal covered how to place the grenade under the M16 and remove the pins. We felt this wasn’t really an adequate level of training for the task, and that we should have had some rehearsal back at Nui Dat.

“On the first day we were to actually lay mines we were nervous but slowly became confident. The task was obviously an extremely dangerous one, but I worked with Dennis Quick from the start and I was confident in his and my ability to be safe as we could.

“The most dangerous aspect of the job was in getting the grenade firmly stabilised below the mine and then removing the pins.

“When John O’Hara and Greg Brady from our Troop were killed on 20th May I didn’t know what had gone wrong and it was not discussed at the time to the best of my memory.

“Our NCO’s were good men, and despite the pressure put on them to reach daily laying levels, they continually stressed to us that we were to work at our own pace and no faster.

“The NCO’s we had then were the best I have ever served with,” says Rod. “I believe most of them were qualified to Sergeant, and Graeme Leach was promoted to Sergeant before returning home. My Corporal, Charlie Reynolds who was promoted soon after, also received the Military Medal. Sadly though, he was simply not the same after this incident.”
A young Sapper caught up in the aftermath of the flawed decision by the Task Force Commander

By Peter “Roo Dog” Scott
Tunnel Rat - 2 Troop
1 Field Squadron 1969/70

Ramon John Peter (Ray) Deed was one of four children, born in Melbourne but spent most of his young life in the north western Victorian city of Mildura. Ray was a boy with obvious initiative and a strong work ethic. Whenever the circus came to town he would hound them for a part time job. When he left school he worked in the transport industry, often travelling by truck to and from the Melbourne markets, accompanied his mate Robert Duscher.

All this changed when National Service was introduced, and Ray was conscripted into the Australian Army. Because of his background and aptitude determined during recruit training, Ramon John Peter Deed became 3788300 Sapper Deed and was allocated to the Corps of the Royal Australian Engineers. He was sent to specialist army engineer training at the School of Military Engineering, Casula before being posted on 13 March 1967 to 1 Field Squadron, based at Nui Dat, South Vietnam.

The role of Australian Army combat engineers in Vietnam was to provide close support for other combat elements (Infantry, Armour and Artillery) as part of combat teams and battle groups. Their everyday tasks included searching for and making safe anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines, locating and demolishing unexploded aerial bombs and artillery shells, and searching underground enemy bunkers and tunnels for arms caches and documents. They became known as the ‘Tunnel Rats’.

In the same month Ray Deed arrived in Vietnam, the Officer Commanding 1 Field Squadron at this time, Major Brian Florence was ordered to lay the deadly (and subsequently catastrophic) Barrier Minefield by the then Australian Task Force Commander, Brigadier Stuart Graham. Florence resisted the idea from the start, based on his knowledge and shared experience with other old hands at combat engineering.

“I don’t like bloody minefields” said Florence to Brigadier Graham “they are a double-edged weapon and eventually someone has to pick the damn things up”. But Florence’s advice was ignored as the Brigadier had made up his mind to have his minefield laid.

With reservations and some reluctance, in March 1967 Major Florence ordered the officers and men of 1 Field Squadron to commence planning and laying the 11km long minefield. These were the background circumstances that Sapper Ray Deed and his mates found themselves in when posted to 1 Troop of 1 Field Squadron in early 1967. They were rapidly organised into teams tasked with laying thousands of landmines. The danger of their task was greatly increased by having to fit the majority of those mines with an anti-lifting device. This device consisted of an M26 grenade with an anti-lift switch on top of it fitted under the mines.

Their mine-laying task...
started at ‘The Horseshoe’ feature just north of Dat Do. The sappers had little prior training in laying the US-made mines and were quickly under pressure to get up to the target speed of laying 1000 mines per day, including those with the complicated and dangerous anti-lift devices.

On May 9th a member of Ray’s mine arming party, under pressure to resume work after a short break, lost concentration and accidently stepped on an armed mine.

In the resulting explosion, Sappers Dennis Brooks, Ashley Culkin, Ramon Deed, Eric Holst and John ‘Jethro’ Thompson, as well as Corporal Tony Evans, were wounded. Ray Deed died of injuries the following day at the US Army Hospital at Long Binh, while Dennis Brooks died of his wounds on 22 May. John Thompson lost a leg and a hand in the incident, as well as fingers on his other hand, but survived after intensive hospital care in Vietnam and back in Australia.

Ray Deed’s body was returned to Australia to his widow Marie and his family, and Mildura had its first ever Military Funeral (the bodies of soldiers killed in WWI and WWII were not returned home, but buried in military cemeteries throughout Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Asia).

At the time of Ray’s death his younger brother Brian (now deceased), a Regular Soldier, was also in Vietnam with the Royal Australian Signals Corps. Brian returned home for the funeral, then went back to Vietnam a year later for a 13 month tour of duty.

It is the families of the fallen that paid the highest price for Australia’s participation in the Vietnam War. And they continue to pay that price to this day. Ray’s parents were naturally devastated at his loss, particularly his mother. So were Ray’s siblings Lorraine, Brian and Hilary.

Our message to Ray’s family and to all the families of our fallen comrades is that we too have not forgotten them. We still see their faces and hear their voices. We continue to honour them at every opportunity. May they rest in peace.

1 Field Squadron casualties suffered during 22 days of laying the minefield

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank / Name</th>
<th>Casualty Date / Age</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAPT. Moon G.J.</td>
<td>08.05.67 / Age 28</td>
<td>WIA Minor shrap wds from M16 mine tripped by dog in minefield.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T/SSGT. Nolen B.H.</td>
<td>08.05.67 / Age 33</td>
<td>WIA Minor shrap wds from M16 mine tripped by dog in minefield.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPR. Brooks D.L.</td>
<td>09.05.67 / Age 22</td>
<td>WIA M16 mine during mine laying ops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPR. Culkin A.J.</td>
<td>09.05.67 / Age 22</td>
<td>WIA M16 mine during mine laying ops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPR. Deed R.J.P.</td>
<td>09.05.67 / Age 21</td>
<td>WIA M16 mine during mine laying ops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPL. Evans A.G.</td>
<td>09.05.67 / Age 22</td>
<td>WIA M16 mine during mine laying ops. shrap wds to head.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPR. Holst E.W.</td>
<td>09.05.67 / Age 24</td>
<td>WIA M16 mine during mine laying ops. shrap to R.arm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPR. Thompson J.C.</td>
<td>09.05.67 / Age 22</td>
<td>WIA M16 mine during mine laying ops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPR. Deed R.J.P.</td>
<td>10.05.67 / Age 21</td>
<td>DOW At 34EVACHOSP from wds the previous day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPR. Bartholomew G.T.</td>
<td>18.05.67 / Age 22</td>
<td>KBA Result of a .45 pistol shot at the Horseshoe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPR. Brady G.V.</td>
<td>20.05.67 / Age 22</td>
<td>KIA M16 mine during mine laying ops. Anti-lift device exploded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPR. O’Hara J.L.</td>
<td>20.05.67 / Age 22</td>
<td>KIA M16 mine during mine laying ops. Anti-lift device exploded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPL. Rendalls L.C.</td>
<td>20.05.67 / Age 24</td>
<td>WIA M16 Mine during laying ops. Frag wds from mine O’Hara laid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPR. Roberts B.G.</td>
<td>20.05.67 / Age 22</td>
<td>WIA M16 mine during laying ops. Frag wds from mine O’Hara laid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPR. Brooks D.L.</td>
<td>22.05.67 / Age 22</td>
<td>DOW At 24EVACHOSP from mine wounds on 09.05.67.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPR. Bevan B.N.</td>
<td>30.05.67 / Age 22</td>
<td>M16 mine during mine laying ops SW of Hoi My.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPR. Renshaw T.J.</td>
<td>30.05.67 / Age 22</td>
<td>KIA M16 mine during mine laying SW of Hoi My.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPR. Sempel L.S.</td>
<td>30.05.67 / Age 21</td>
<td>WIA M16 mine during mine laying ops SW of Hoi My.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tunnel Rat Officer goes to the dogs!

The author of the newly launched book, “In Dogs we Trust” is LTCOL George Hulse who was a Tunnel Rat in Vietnam, serving as Troop Officer 1 Troop 1 Field Squadron in 1968/69. He then went on to command the Army Engineer dog wing in the early 1970s and is currently the Vice-President of the Australian Defence Force Trackers and War Dogs Association, Vice-President of the Toowong RSL sub/branch and President of the 1 FD SQN GP Association.

Taken from first-hand accounts of war in difficult places, this newly launched book reveals what it’s like to be in a fight for your life and your best mate in that fight is a dog.

To be the very first person that an enemy soldier sees and not be able to look for the enemy yourself while you concentrate on any indication of trouble from your dog in front of you requires a special kind of combat soldier, and a very special kind of dog.

Readers will gain an understanding of what it’s like to be that person as a military working dog handler in both the Australian Army and the Royal Australian Air Force. The many captivating accounts of this special asset in the Australian Defence Force provide a rare insight into a different kind of soldiering.

The book faithfully records first-hand accounts of a range of Australian soldiers at war with their war dogs, including the experiences of Corporal Mark Donaldson VC.

One of the objectives in publishing this book is to create a fund-raising platform in support of the Australian Defence Force Trackers and War Dogs Association.

Copies of ‘In Dogs We Trust’ can be purchased through the Australian War Dog website at www.aussiewardogs.org for $30 each including postage within Australia.

TOP: 6RAR/NZ trackers during Operation Burnham, Vietnam 1969. Left to right: PVT Bruce Williams with tracker dog Milo, PVT Russell “Mooka” McDonald with tracker dog Trajan. ABOVE: Sapper Darren Smith and Explosives Detection Dog Herbie. Sapper Smith and his EDD Herbie were killed in action together on 7 June 2010 in Afghanistan. LEFT: Sapper Joshua Colbourne and EDD Harry in Afghanistan.
Our wives, sons and daughters are all welcome to the ceremony and our gathering afterwards. If you are in contact with family members of our fallen comrades, let them know of this occasion, and how honoured we would be if they attended.

The first Last Post Ceremony was held at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra on 17 April 2013, and is now held at the Memorial each day at 4.55 pm. Each ceremony is presented as a tribute to one of the 102,700 Australians named on the Roll of Honour. It is a testament to the terrible cost of war that it will take nearly 300 years to commemorate every person on the Roll of Honour, and the Memorial is committed to ensuring that each story will eventually be told.

As the tradition is set that each ceremony is a tribute to one individual, we needed technically to follow that tradition, but (being Engineers) bend it a little to suit our needs. So we chose that individual from our 36 fallen comrades then wrote a commemorative script which talks of him and honours him, along with our 35 other fallen comrades. Individual wreathes will be laid at the ceremony for each of these 36 Tunnel Rats – some, we hope, by their family members.

The ceremony begins with the Australian national anthem followed by the piper’s lament. Visitors are then invited to lay wreaths and floral tributes beside the Pool of Reflection. The individual’s story is told, which in our case also covers the story of the Tunnel Rats and of all of the men we lost. The Ode is then recited by an Australian Defence Force member, and the ceremony ends with the sounding of the Last Post. After the ceremony we will meet up at a suitable venue for drinks and dinner.

Our wives, sons and daughters are all welcome to the ceremony and our gathering afterwards. If you are in contact with family members of our fallen comrades, let them know of this occasion, and how honoured we would be if they attended.

The Vietnam Tunnel Rats Association has reserved the Australian War Memorial Last Post Ceremony for 18 February next year. We will use this occasion to honour our 36 comrades who lost their lives while serving as Tunnel Rats with 1 Troop, 2 Troop and 3 Troop of 1 Field Squadron (35 KIA) and with 3 Field Troop (1 KIA). Mark 18 February 2020 in your diary now as we aim to make this an important and memorable national commemoration of our fallen.
Itinerary (approx) for Tuesday 18th February 2020
2:15pm - meet at the Australian War Memorial entrance area
2:30pm - commence a two hour conducted tour of the Memorial
4:30pm - make our way to the courtyard area for the ceremony
4:55pm - the ceremony commences
Following the ceremony make your way to the drinks and dinner venue

If you plan to join us on 18 February 2020 in Canberra for the above activities it is important you advise us you are coming so we will know how many are coming and we can plan accordingly for the events during the afternoon and evening. Provide your name, the number of people coming and a phone number or email address

Email Jim Marett at: tunnelrats.vietnam@gmail.com
Text or call Jim Marett on: 0403 041 962
Post to: Vietnam Tunnel Rats Assoc 43 Heyington Place Toorak Vic 3142
We have written extensively in past issues of ‘Holdfast’ on the horrendous mine incident suffered by 6RAR’s 3 Platoon on July 21st 1969, the day man landed on the moon. The two Tunnel Rats attached to that platoon were Corporal Phil Baxter, the “No.1” of the Splinter Team, and Sapper Dave Sturmer his “No.2” on the team, both of 1 Troop, 1 Field Squadron.

A fascinating side-story to the mine incident has emerged involving the six-man Combat Engineer team sent in to take over from Phil and Dave who had both been wounded in the incident.

Two M-16 mines were set off in the incident, devastating the platoon and the sappers attached to it. The first mine was triggered by the Platoon Commander, LT Peter Hines at around 0940h, causing 18 initial casualties.

Despite them both being wounded by the first mine, Phil and Dave cleared safe lanes to the other wounded and then cleared a landing zone so helicopters could come in to extract the casualties, including Phil and Dave, and bring in the Combat Engineer team to continue the mine clearing.

The incoming Combat Engineer Team led by Sapper David Wright included Sappers John Fleming and Bill Wilcox from 1 Troop plus several others whose identities we don’t have. Also flown in were the Battalion CO 6RAR Lt Col David Butler and the Regimental Medical Officer (RMO) from 6RAR, Captain Robert Anderson who would assist with the seriously wounded.

With Dave Wright’s team of Sappers on the ground, Phil Baxter and Dave Sturmer, along with other wounded were able to be evacuated to hospital.

Unfortunately for those still on the ground at the scene, the nightmare continued. In moving about to tend to the wounded, at around 1430h the RMO, Captain Anderson stepped on and detonated another M-16 mine.

This mine caused another seven casualties, including Sappers John Fleming and Bill Wilcox who had just landed, the CO 6RAR Lt Col David Butler, Captain Anderson who lost his sight in both eyes from the incident, and Corporal John Needs who was KIA.

“We were working in the Long Hai Hills when we got word that 6RAR had walked into a minefield,” recalls Bill Wilcox. “Then we heard we were to be winched in by helicopter to replace the wounded Sappers and take over the mine clearing process. As soon as we landed we started moving carefully towards the wounded. Phil and Dave had indicated ‘safe lanes’ on the

**BELOW LEFT.** Bill’s battered watch. **BELOW RIGHT: Bill during Rookie Training at Kapooka.**
ground, so it was clear where it was safe to walk,” says Bill.

“As we made our way carefully to help the wounded men, the RMO stepped outside the safe lane and directly onto a hidden mine. The explosion was massive,” recalls Bill. “The only thing that saved my life was the fact the M-16 ‘Jumping Jack’ mine had malfunctioned, going off under the soil rather than leaping up to hip height before igniting.

“The officer who stepped on the mine was flung to one side, and myself and several others were knocked off our feet by an intense blast of shrapnel and dirt.

“I lay on the ground with around 60 schrapnel wounds on my left side and my hand and knee were smashed up. Only one spot on my left side was untouched, and that was where the battery pack for the mine detector I was carrying sat on my upper leg,” recalls Bill. Placed on a stretcher and strapped to the skid of a helicopter, Bill was flown to hospital in Vung Tau where he was read his last rites.

“They didn’t think I would live,” says Bill. “But the incredible nurses and doctors pulled me through. I spent six days in intensive care in an American hospital at Vung Tau, and was then transferred to the Australian hospital in Vung Tau for a week before flying home to Australia, where it was over three months before I could walk.”

The watch Bill was wearing when hit by the exploding mine stopped at 2:20pm, exactly when the explosion took place. Bill still has the watch, complete with schrapnel dents, though one of the hands has fallen off.

On July 21st this year (the 50th anniversary of the incident) Bill revisited Vietnam and the site where he nearly lost his life. He had his old watch with him - and at 2.20pm on that day his watch showed the right time again - Vietnam time!

### Casualties from the two mines on 21st July 1969

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank &amp; Name</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Corps</th>
<th>Casualty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lt P A Hines</td>
<td>6RAR</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>RAINF</td>
<td>KIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cpl P T Baxter</td>
<td>1FDSQN</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>RAE</td>
<td>WIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cpl G N Cooper</td>
<td>6RAR</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>RAINF</td>
<td>WIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCpl D W Hall</td>
<td>6RAR</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>RAINF</td>
<td>WIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pt P C Hoskin</td>
<td>6RAR</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>RAINF</td>
<td>WIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pte F J Hunt</td>
<td>6RAR</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>RAINF</td>
<td>WIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCpl J Kelly</td>
<td>6RAR</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>RAINF</td>
<td>WIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pte A C Lamb</td>
<td>6RAR</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>RAINF</td>
<td>WIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pte D J Lumby</td>
<td>6RAR</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>RAINF</td>
<td>WIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pte B E McDowell</td>
<td>6RAR</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>RAINF</td>
<td>WIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pte M W Mclnnes</td>
<td>6RAR</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>RAINF</td>
<td>WIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pte D J Morrison</td>
<td>6RAR</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>RAINF</td>
<td>WIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sgt C H Newbery</td>
<td>6RAR</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>RAINF</td>
<td>WIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pte C F Renehan</td>
<td>6RAR</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>RAINF</td>
<td>WIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pte M W Storen</td>
<td>6RAR</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>RAINF</td>
<td>WIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spr D L Sturmer</td>
<td>1FDSQN</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>RAE</td>
<td>WIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pte K C Thomas</td>
<td>6RAR</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>RAINF</td>
<td>WIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pte R J Walters</td>
<td>6RAR</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>RAINF</td>
<td>WIA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank &amp; Name</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Corps</th>
<th>Casualty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capt R T Anderson</td>
<td>6RAR</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>RAINF</td>
<td>WIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pte R J Ballard</td>
<td>6RAR</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>RAINF</td>
<td>WIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lt Col D M Butler</td>
<td>6RAR</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>RAINF</td>
<td>WIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pte G C Davis</td>
<td>6RAR</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>RAINF</td>
<td>WIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spr J G Fleming</td>
<td>1FDSQN</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>RAE</td>
<td>WIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pt J R Goslett</td>
<td>6RAR</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>RAINF</td>
<td>WIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cpl D J Needs</td>
<td>6RAR</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>RAINF</td>
<td>KIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spr W R Wilcox</td>
<td>1FDSQN</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>RAE</td>
<td>WIA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A big contingent of Vietnam 1966/67 era Sappers from all over Australia hit Melbourne in late April to join with the Tunnel Rats in the ANZAC Day march. Basing themselves in a South Melbourne motel, all was going well until they tried to catch one of Melbourne’s famous trams to get them to the march.

Only problem was trams were scarce because it was ANZAC Day! And anyway they had no idea which tram to catch. Seeing the group was clearly lost and bewildered the Tram Supervisor on duty made radio contact with base, let the lads know which number tram to catch and exactly when the next one would arrive which was ‘disabled friendly’.

On the verge of becoming grumpy old Sappers at the time, the lads were mightily impressed with the Supervisor. And he was equally impressed with the Sappers, insisting on a photo being taken of the occasion.

Seen in the photo above, from the left are: Graham Boyd, Bob Coleman, Michael McCallum, Col Treasure, Dave Hoggarth, Max Staggard, Ian Kelk, Kevin Smith, Tony Evans, Ivan Scully, Kevin Kenny, Peter Cuthbertson. In front of them is Jethro Thompson and Bill Graham, and in the very front is the now legendary Tram Supervisor and Kevin Stephens (Kevin suffered gunshot wounds to both legs while serving with 7 RAR, and he and Jethro were often under treatment in the same rehabilitation hospital together.

Tunnel Rats gathering on Vietnam Veterans Day at Coffs Harbour

With the support of Coffs Harbour RSL Sub Branch, Rodney O’Regan (2 Troop 1970/71) has put together a Vietnam Veteran’s Day gathering for Tunnel Rats at Coffs Harbour NSW.

The RSL Sub Branch is holding their Vietnam Veterans day ceremony at 5pm on Sunday 18th August 2019 and all Tunnel Rats (and indeed all RAE Vietnam veterans) are invited to join in with them. Rodney has arranged for a bugler and piper for the ceremony, and two of our war widows will lay wreaths on behalf of 2 Troop.

After the ceremony the Sub Branch will provide nibbles and be putting a substantial amount of money over the bar. This will be followed by a dinner on a pay-as-you-go basis.

The President of the club is a former Vietnam Artillery WO1 and he is right behind the gathering. Several members of the Sub Branch were with 3RAR when they were involved in the Battle of Long Khanh in early June 1971 during Operation Overlord. This makes the gathering of special interest to 2 Troop Tunnel Rats of that era as they supported 3RAR on the operation and in the battle.

The Troop Commander of 2 Troop at that time, John Tick is guest speaker at the dinner. Rodney has arranged accommodation at the Chelsea Motel across the road from the RSL at a very good rate of $85 for a Double Room.

If you are interested in attending the event, contact Rodney on 0419 431 779 so he can coordinate the accommodation and the numbers for the drinks and dinner.
Military Medal for leader of Sapper team on a WWII obstacle clearance mission made while under enemy fire

The primary objective for the Allied attack on Tarakan (code-named “Oboe One”) was to secure and develop the island’s airstrip so that it could be used to provide air cover for subsequent landings in Brunei, Labuan and Balikpapan. The secondary objective for the operation was to secure Tarakan’s oilfields and bring them into operation as a source of oil for the Allied forces in the theatre.

The task of clearing the beach obstacles at Lingkas was assigned to the 2/13th Field Company. These defences comprised rows of barbed wire, wooden posts and steel rails which extended 125 yards from the beach. At 1100h on 30 April, eight parties of engineers went forward in LVTs and landing craft to clear the obstacles. The engineers were supported by the guns on Sadau Island and Allied warships and aircraft. Operating under Japanese fire the engineers cleared all the obstacles obstructing the landing beaches. While heavy casualties had been expected, the 2/13th completed their task without loss.

The Military Medal award

“Lance-Corporal Mace was the non-commissioned officer in command of a demolition team engaged in the breaching of underwater beach obstacles on Tarakan. Despite the intermittent fire of the enemy the working party coolly kept on and completed and sign-posted the gap in thirty five minutes. Lance-Corporal Mace then withdrew his party and went to the rescue of another party who were hampered by the depth of the mud. He attempted to carry a line to secure one of the obstacles to enable the Section to drag themselves to the proposed gap but sank in the mud and had to be dragged back. He then took his L.V.T. to the oil pier and led his party to the beach and attacked the obstacles from the shore side with success. Lance-Corporal Mace’s personal endurance, courage and leadership were wholly responsible for the effective completion of the two gaps.”

Both Ray Mace and Reg Stevenson survived the war.
This is our latest list of former Tunnel Rats. If you are not on THE LIST all list enquires to Graeme Gartside (contact details below).
Peter Pont 07 4095 0159
Tom Simons RIP
Kevin Shugg 0411140560
Mervyn Spear 0431212960
Frank Sweeney RIP
Brian Thompson 0428551368
Vic Underwood 0429 90 2199
Marky Walker 08 9332 6410
Glen Wealce 0488741174
Mick Woodhams 08 9459 0130
Bob Yewen 0435051475
Ken Young 0409124096
3 Troop (1968-69)
Geoff Box 08 9731 2757
Col Campbell 04176587790
Barry Chambers 0410111999
Neil Garrett 03 5799 1522
Brian Glyde 02 4455 7404
Peter Graham 0428325182
Peter Gray 02 4285 8877
Derwyn Hage 0408802038
John Hollis 0437711348
“Sam” Houston 07 5495 5480
Phil Lamb 08 8564 2001
Ian Lauder 09 4194 5375
Kent Luttrel 0408376841
John Murphy 08 9493 3771
John Nulty 02 6927 3535
Ted O’Malley 0428243350
Barry Parnell 04 9747 1976
Bob Pritchard RIP Sapper
Art Richardson 0407055036
Greg Roberts 03 5941 2269
Walter Schwartz 04395222322
Don Shidells 08 8297 6919
Kevin Simper 0432524584
Tony Toussaint 0417240235
Ray Vanderheiden 0410 312 807
Wal Warby 0418240394
Ray White 03 9740 7141
Three Troop (1969-70)
Chris Brooks 0407168207
Jim Burrough 0400856633
Terry Cartlidge 0411252869
Bruce Crawford 02 6628 0846
Greg Cullen 0427050208
Richard Day 08 8088 4129
Phil Devine 0439066012
Bob Done RIP Sapper
Ray Fulton 03 6288 1176
Graham Fromm 0429322561
Douglas George 0419475246
Graham Harvey 07 5445 2636
Robert Hewett 0422165003
Trevor Hughes 0418983281
Darrel Jensen 0428387203
Mike King 08 9764 1060
Rod Kirby 07 4973 7726
Peter Knight 02 6247 6272
Gerry Lylly RIP Sapper
Phil McCann 0417423450
Chris MacGregor 02 4472 3250
Norm Martin 02 4953 1331
Jock Meldrum MID 0406 002 701
Roelof Methorst 0416383486
Gary Miller MM 0407586241
“Jacko” Miller 03 6288 2191
Chris Muller 0436650113
Denny Mulvany RIP Sapper
Vin Neale 03 9786 1549
Peter Phillips 0429362935
G. Rentmeester 03 9735 5236
Brian “BC” Scott 04007 13994
Paul Scott 02 6656 0730
Gordon Temby 0419546568
Peter Thorp MID 0405457878
“Curly” Tuttleby 08 8953 2335
Hank Vennhuizen 0407 487 167
Jock Wallace 07 3882 6513
“Wozzer” White 02 9833 0580
Three Troop (1970-71)
Robert Allardice 0439076891
Steve Ambrust RIP Sapper
Errol Barmitage 07 5598 8018
Geoff Ansell 0434176896
Bob Barnet 02 6671 3527
Mike Barnett 02 9869 7132
John Benigni 07 4778 4473
Darryl Binns 0417170171
Trevor Bodeen 0448160944
Mal Bothfield 0434536435
Ian Campbell 08 9780 0313
Terry Cartlidge 0411252569
Phil Christian 07 4778 6602
Bob Clarke 03 5439 5532
Graeme Clarke 07 4128 4660
Ted Clarke 0438225845
Allan J Coleman 02 9838 4848
Steve Collett 08 9371 0075
John Davey 07 3378 4316
Chris Ellis 0409299520
Kevin Hodge 08 8322 2619
John Jones 08 8357 5226
Kenny Laughton 08 8297 4010
Garry Louragen 02 4844 5545
Darcy McKenzie 0405499780
R. McKenzie-Clark 08 7929 1162
Robert McLeay 0429861122
Jock Meldrum MID 0456 002 701
Roelof Methorst 0416384986
Carl Mikkelsen
(Ne, Zealand) 0064 9 3776322
Ben Passarelli 0411304236
Robert Reed RIP Sapper
Paul Scott 02 6656 0730
Les Shelley 07 3264 4041
John Steen 0497723775
John Tatler - RIP Sapper
Gordon Temby 08 9757 2016
Peter Vandenberg 03 9798 3947
Brian Wakefield 0427350713
David Wilson RIP Sapper
Three Troop (1971-72)
Bradley Bauer 0749281152
Trevor “Zip” Button 0443332789
Ron Byron 0439910568
Jim Dewing 0402433776
Mike Dutton 0438627140
Alan Gorman 0413 963 336
John Jones 0418736538
Brenton J Smith 0408506685
Peter Weingott 0418706498
US Tunnel Rats
Stephen “Shorty” Menendez
menendez@toast.net
John Thiel
drtjthiel@gmail.com
Mark Morrison
lmorrison18@cox.net
“The ultimate evolvement of the Combat Engineer”

SPECIAL OPERATIONS ENGINEER REGIMENT

ADMIRATION  AWE AND RESPECT (Heaps of it)

FROM THE VIETNAM TUNNEL RATS ASSOCIATION