

# Half Circle

Number 56 - August 2011



**NEW CO OF 5RAR:** Lieutenant Colonel Andrew FORBES has been appointed the new CO of 5RAR, replacing LT COL Darren HUXLEY. We wish both of these officers every success in their new roles, and are confident that the traditions and achievements of the Battalion will be maintained.

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**COMING HOME:** C Coy 5RAR, currently known as Combat Team Charlie - MTF 2 - has completed its tour of Afghanistan, and is heading home. Congratulations to Major David French and his team for a magnificent effort.

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**9 PLATOON REUNION:** If you were a member of 9Pl and have not yet heard from Terry Major regarding the next reunion, please contact him at [tezmajor@bigpond.net.au](mailto:tezmajor@bigpond.net.au)

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**AT THE RAP:** Ian Cooper, Robert (Yogi) Earl. Best wishes from all of us.

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**FROM PETER (FRED) McCARTHY:** Get onto Google and type "*The Lonely Forward Scout*". This is a poem by Rupert McCall, and gives a chilling account of the role of the forward scout in Vietnam. Highly recommended reading.

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**FROM BOB HOOPER:** Get onto Google and type in "*Vietnam Veterans museum Phillip Island*". This site shows the new museum, and is well worth exploring.

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Two lovers stood on Sydney Bridge  
Her lips were all aquiver  
He kissed her and her leg fell off  
And floated down the river.

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## DAVE'S DIARY

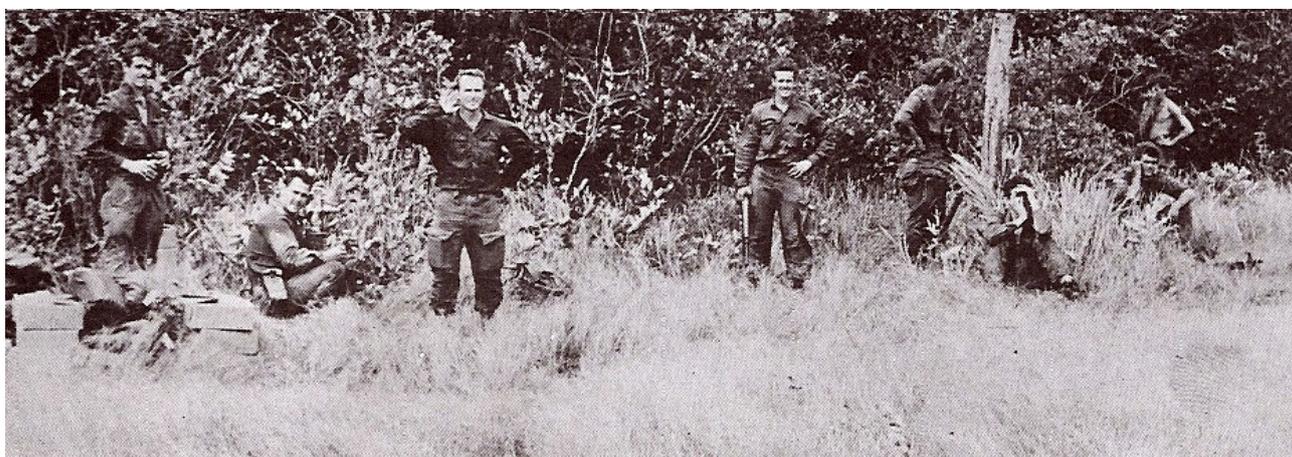
Continued from an earlier edition of Half Circle.

My diary entries are in *italics* whilst additional explanatory or descriptive commentary is in plain text:

17-18 Nov

*Further contacts in the same area, this time between a moving enemy and 7 Pl and CHQ combined. My sleep was somewhat disturbed on night 17/18 November when our ambush suddenly erupted into a rattle of activity. By morning we had also fired about 300 rounds of artillery in support of the contact, as the enemy attempted to probe our flanks in order to by-pass us.*

19 Nov: Resupply.



C Company group during a resupply. From left, includes: Pte Don Frohmuller, Pte Ossie Beale (radio operator), Capt Dave Wilkins (with hand to ear- the beginning of my deafness?), 2Lt Jan Hood? Cpl Eddie Kime?, Pte Bill Murphy?

(to be continued)

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**RUMOUR HAS IT** that one of us scored a hole-in-one at golf recently. Any enquiries as to how this can be done should be directed to Barry Morgan. Congratulations, Barry!

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**CATCHING UP:** Claude and Judith Ducker stopped in Coonabarabran on their way from Canberra to Coolum recently, and hosted your editor and his wife Roslyn to dinner. A great reunion and a good night. Thanks, and have a good trip, Judith and Claude.

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**CORRECTION:** In Half Circle Number 55 (July 2011), the telephone number for VET ASSIST was wrong. The correct number is **1800 801 945**. Thanks to Max Hedley for letting us know.

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**IAN LEIS REMEMBERS HIS  
MATES:  
2788500 Pte John "Yabs" "Skippy"  
YABSLEY**

**(12<sup>th</sup> National Service Intake)**  
Pictured with Pte Peter "Fred" McCarthy  
(left), as Fred departed Nui Dat for R&R  
Leave.

It was a big upset to John's life when his numbers dropped and he answered his call to duty. He was employed as a trainee butcher in his home town of Kempsey, NSW, owned his late model VW sedan and had a few extra dollars, life was good.

John was able to entertain a few of the local young ladies also enjoying a beer and a smoke. He had a good family lifestyle until the military upset it. Military life was a shock to the system for John Yabsley.

*"This is bullshit" - "This blokes bloody mad" - "He's gotta be kidding"* were some of his favourite sayings. Early life in uniform at Singleton was helped by Peter McCarthy "Freddie", Mick Bolton "Bolts: and others, where lifelong friendships were formed. Allocated to Infantry Corps and posted to 5RAR life at Holsworthy began with being placed in the mortar platoon. He completed the mortar course, also a Vietnamese language course and this occupied his first few months with the Battalion. Later he was transferred to 5 Section 8 Platoon Company.

Note: The original members of 5 section were: L/Cpl Barry Morgan, L/Cpl Ted Suttor, Pte Bob Wyatt, Pte Neal Davis, Pte John Yabsley, Pte Peter McCarthy, Pte Matt Smith, Pte Ian Leis and Pte Ray Fitzpatrick. The tenth member being a digger waiting in Nui Dat from the previous battalion (Pte McMahon?) who firmly believed the other nine of us were CRAZY.

At Holsworthy Freddie and Yabs shared a room and they rented a TV. After last parade Yabs was always off to watch his favourite TV show "Skippy the bush kangaroo". Thus he became known as Skippy.

Whilst at Holsworthy the little VW's of Skippy and Freddie were quite often used for a day out, usually over to Bondi Beach for surf and of course a few cold ales in the "Bondi Hotel". It was at this Hotel that Skippy and Freddie acquired a very rude t-shirt each. These shirts very explicitly showed an enjoyable activity that related to the year "1969". I bet they never wore those shirts home on leave. The trips to Bondi usually involved a bit of drag racing from the lights. The fully loaded VW's being easy prey for my old FX sedan. I don't think any of us ever received a ticket for these activities but we were cautioned on at least one occasion that I remember (Not a good idea today).

Skippy went to SVN as a rifleman/scout in 5 Section, a position he kept until being transferred back to mortars, where he finished his tour. Whilst in SVN I remember a day when being L.O.B. (left on base) with Skippy. He had some kind of mind blockage. It involved a 9mm pistol - an A.D. (accidental discharge) that wasn't an A.D. It was heard by Sgt Stan Arnold but never traced. Ask Skippy about this when you next see him.

On completion of his military service Skippy returned to Kempsey, NSW where he continued on in the butcher shop for a period and then tried a number of different jobs. He married Nerida who has looked after him and put up with him for forty years. Having a son and daughter who have given them seven precious grandchildren. Sadly their son's death a few years back has left a big hole in their lives.

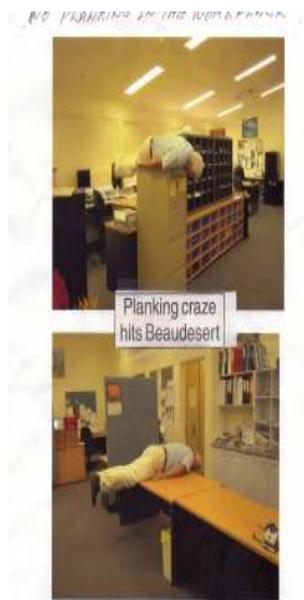
My contact with Skippy in 1998 was to be one that helped me break the cocoon that I had around my life and family. By joining him to attend a reunion in Tamworth with many C Company members I began to share a little of that life with my family. A good move - to experience the support and understanding that I didn't know existed with those I served with.

For a period of time Skippy lived in Brisbane being employed in the courier business, a job he was left alone to complete. In company with Rouster, I enjoyed a number of visits to the Yabsley residence. Skippy lived a quiet life kept to himself and enjoyed his family and his employment.

A few years back after a few health issues for Skippy (especially from the cigarettes consumed over many years) and some family issues saw the Yabsley family return to Kempsey. Retirement for both Nerida and John has given a more relaxed lifestyle. Like many of us medications for "Skippy" are part of this process. DVA have been of great assistance with health and ageing issues. Today boating, fishing and travelling as well as family fill their days.

Skippy-Yabs - John, our paths in life have crossed occasionally. They were enjoyable. Whilst in your company you have always been a happy easy going friend. I value that friendship. You are one of life's silent achievers that Australians are privileged to have in our midst.

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**PLANKING CRAZE HITS BEAUDESERT:** Not to be outdone by others around the World, Dennis "Digger" Nevins had a go whilst at work. The management? Not amused. Jack Bradd also tried it, but got caught up in his wheelchair. The Ambos spent two hours extricating him. *Not really, but it makes a good story.*

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Half Circle was compiled and edited by Don Harrod - 02 6842 4913, 0418 423 313, ([donharrod@bigpond.com](mailto:donharrod@bigpond.com)), with help from David Wilkins, David French, Dave Wilkins, Dennis Nevins, Max Hedley, Terry Major, Ian Leis, Peter McCarthy and Bob Hooper.