

# Half Circle



Number 133 - January 2018

This informal publication is for the members of C Coy 5 RAR (2<sup>nd</sup> tour), South Vietnam, 1969/70, and for the families of those who are no longer with us. It is non-political, and is designed for us to have a laugh at ourselves, re-live our memories, and maintain camaraderie. Formal advice, when needed, should be sourced from Veterans' Organisations.

## **VALE – 29534 STAFF SERGEANT CHARLES STUART McLEOD**

We regret to advise that SSgt Charlie (Mouse) Mcleod has passed away. We will remember Mouse as our CQMS from the commencement of our tour until October 1969 when he returned to Australia to take his discharge. Mouse was an excellent CQMS – a hard worker, great organiser, and one who made sure that each re-supply was accurate and accommodated the troops' needs. He was a very quiet man, and just went about his tasks without any fuss. He worked closely with storemen such as Blue Newberry and Ted Suttor during their tenures in that role.

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Bill Titley sums Mouse up perfectly: *He was CQMS when I joined CCoy in May '68. A quiet, but reliable NCO in my experience. He always worked well for me and together with "baitlayer" Paddy, he ensured the diggers didn't go wanting, on ops.*

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## **Long Tan Cross**

An important piece of Australia's military history will find a new home after the Vietnamese Government gifted the original Long Tan Cross to Australia.

Australia's Ambassador to Vietnam Craig Chittick received the Long Tan Cross from the Dong Nai Province People's Committee at a small ceremony at the Dong Nai Museum in Biên Hòa last month. An Australian Defence Force member then travelled with the cross on its journey to Australia.

The Australian Government thanks the Government of Vietnam for its generous gift.

The Long Tan Cross was erected by Australian soldiers as a memorial to their fellow diggers who fought and died at the Battle of Long Tan on 18 August 1966, Australia's most costly single engagement in the Vietnam War. It was removed from the Long Tan battle site some time after the end of the Vietnam War in 1975. It was reportedly used as a memorial for a Vietnamese Catholic priest until the 1980s when it was restored and eventually placed on display by the Dong Nai Province Museum in Biên Hòa in the late 1990s.

Approximately 60,000 Australian men and women served in the Vietnam War between 1962 and 1975, including 521 who lost their lives and more than 3,000 who were wounded.

For many Australians, the Long Tan Cross has come to symbolise our involvement in the Vietnam War. It is a powerful memorial to the service and suffering of Australian soldiers.

Thanks to the generosity of the Vietnamese Government, the Cross will now remain in Australia for perpetuity where it will be honoured, as we honour the men and women who served in the Vietnam War. The Long Tan Cross will go on display at its new permanent home at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra from 6 December.

*The above media release was issued by the Department of Veterans' Affairs, December 2017*

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Old 5RAR faces at a Christmas party – (clockwise from left) Rod Lees (D Coy), Vince Feenstra (C Coy), Peter Pezet (B Coy) and Peter McCauley (C Coy).

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**TRAVELLING ABOUT:** No reports, but many of us will have been visiting relatives and friends over Christmas and New Year.

### A “Blast” from the Past

A recent rolling thunder storm reminded me of one of the less pleasurable experiences of heeding the call of nature between combat operations in Nui Dat.

While there were ‘piss-a-phones’ strategically placed around the C Company lines, there was a communal ‘thunderbox’ located adjacent the showers. From memory, this was a four-seater affair where one could sit in solitude, reading a book or a newspaper from home while going about one’s ‘business’.

Located in the 1 ATF area was a Battery of American M109 155mm self-propelled howitzers. The M109 has a crew of six personnel; the section chief, the driver, the gunner, the assistant gunner and two ammunition handlers. The gunner aimed the cannon left or right while the assistant gunner aimed the cannon up and down. The M109 carried 28 rounds of 155 mm ammunition and was also armed with a .50cal machine gun with 500 rounds of ammunition.



One never knew when the Battery would be called upon for a fire mission. Every so often, the quiet solitude of the ‘thunderbox’ would be interrupted by M109s opening up in response to a call for fire support. Now, while one was used to explosions of all descriptions, it was not so much the noise of the howitzers but rather the concussive effect of their fire.

Such was the force of the concussion, that the midges, gnats and other little critters in the excreta pit would be literally blown up below one’s exposed buttocks and legs causing a rapid contraction of the sphincter and a hasty conclusion to one’s solitude.

Ah, the memories.

Roger Lambert

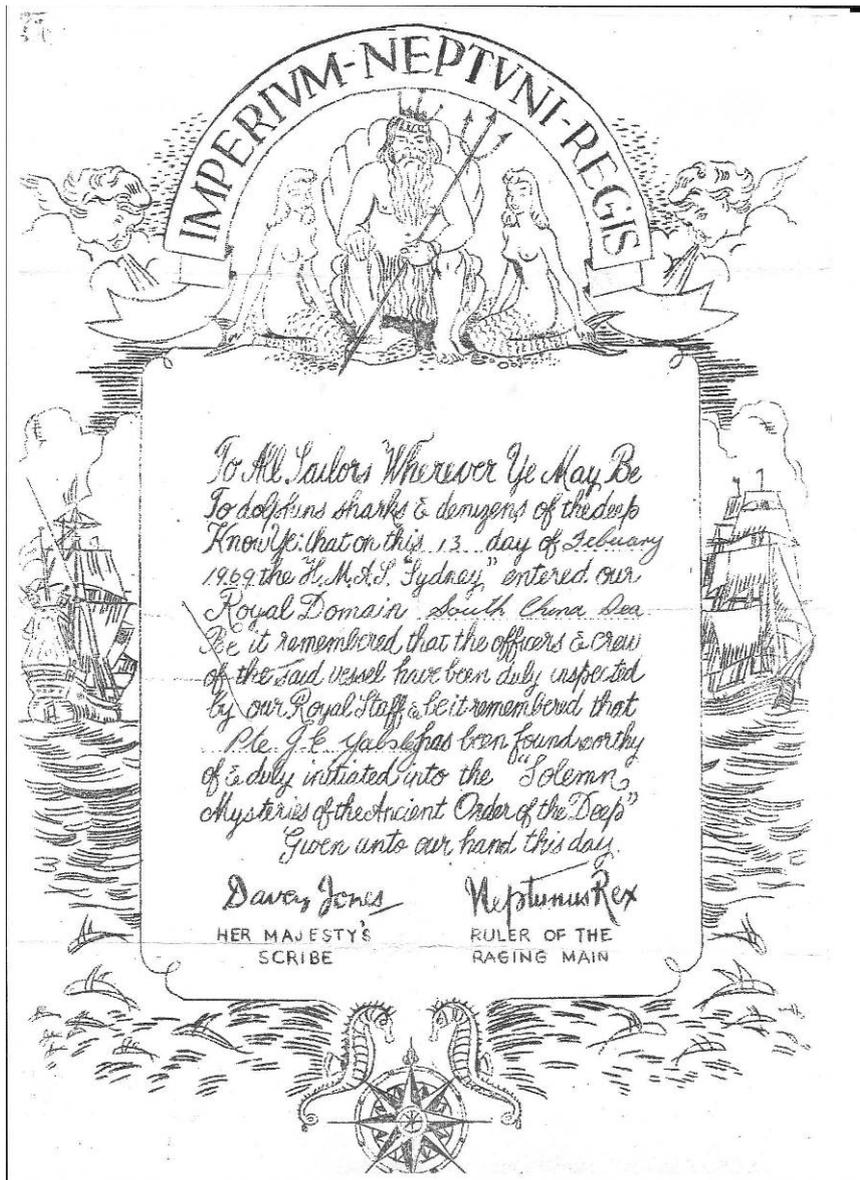
Platoon Commander 9 Platoon 1969/70

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### **AT THE RAP:**

Barrie Taylor, Wally Magalas, Claude Ducker, Barry Morgan, Colin Summerfield, Max Hedley.

**Max Hedley.** The 5RAR Association has been notified by Irene (Max's wife), that he suffered a stroke in 2016, and has now been admitted to a Nursing Home in South Australia. Max was the longest serving member of 7PL, and soldiered through almost to the end of our tour, before being wounded on 5<sup>th</sup> February 1970. Max was returned home on 23 February 1970. Anyone wishing to make contact with Max should contact Irene by post – PO Box 106, Stirling North, SA 5710. *Thanks to Gary Townsend for this information. Ed*



**Remember when we crossed the Equator?** February 1969 aboard HMAS Sydney, en route to Vietnam. Sgt Sid Davis assumed the role of King Neptune, and we had a great time going through the ceremony and getting doused in water - courtesy of the South China Sea. John Yabsley's certificate is reproduced above.



There must be a few Jack Lake's still about!

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## HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL!

**Ed's note:** *Thanks to Claude Ducker and David Wilkins for their Christmas/New Year messages to the men of C Company. We are very grateful to both these officers and leaders who have never forgotten their men, and still support them. The number of responses from diggers to your editor expressing their appreciation simply confirms what we already knew.*  
Don

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0418 423 313, with help from John Yabsley, Vince Feenstra, Bob Hooper, Bill Titley, Roger Lambert,  
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