

# Half Circle



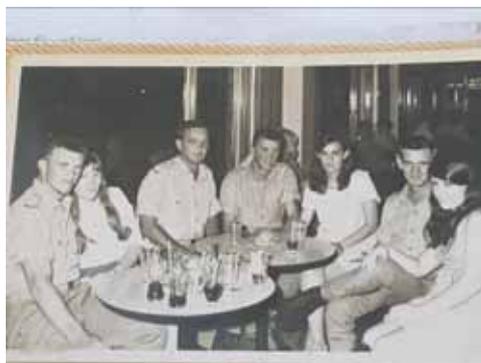
Number 145 – January 2019

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 – 5715691 PRIVATE KIMBERLEY WILLIAM LOCKE 21 July 1947 to 5 December 2018. Soldier.**

We are sorry to advise that our mate, Kim (Hippie) Locke has passed away at the age of 71. Kim had been a resident of a Mandurah (WA) nursing home for over ten years. He had suffered very poor health, including a series of strokes. Kim sailed to Vietnam with 5RAR on 8 February 1969, and remained a member of C Coy until he returned to Australia on 12 December 1969. He had served his tour of duty in 8PL. He soldiered well, never shirked a task, and was always seen as a reliable digger.

Hippie was a nuggetty little bloke who had the ability to find trouble without even Looking. I remember speaking with him after our return to Australia, and asked him how his leave was. He replied that his father wasn't very happy with him, as one day Hippie borrowed his car, but instead of driving, he went to the pub at Rockingham. After between some and plenty of ales, he drove home, roared into the driveway, and turned his father's garage into a carport – straight through the back wall! That was Hippie. We will all miss him. Rest in Peace, old Digger. *Don Harrod*



Eric Hamlin, unknown, Mick Dobbs, Ben and Pat Oram, Kim Locke, unknown, at the Hume Hotel, Yagoona, Sydney, just prior to embarkation to Vietnam, 1969

**AT THE RAP:** Peter Commerford, Barrie Taylor, Barry Morgan. We send our best wishes to our mates who are not as well as they would like to be.

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**A MESSAGE FROM THE OC:**

Thank you to all those who so kindly sent me your Christmas best wishes.

Because of my Parkinson's writing is not easy for me. I will try to telephone all those for whom I have contact numbers. It will be nice to catch up and many of you have already written about your current issues. It was good to hear how many of you are doing really well despite some tough times in Vietnam or since. Phoning you all might take several weeks as I have family coming to stay in Canberra for the holiday period but it will be done. I look forward to catching up.

Just as you guys gave me a fillip by contacting me it might also be possible for you to contact a guy in your platoon who is doing it tough. I assure you it does make a difference.

With all my best wishes,

Claude

PS My thanks to Judith for typing this for me.

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**REMEMBER – 50 YEARS AGO THIS MONTH**

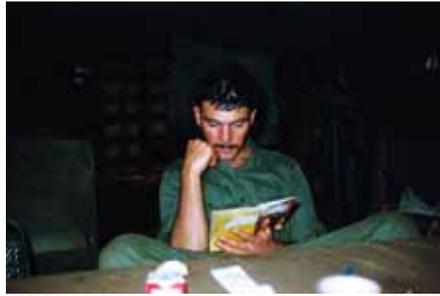
We were all set for our tour of Vietnam. The Advance Party was about to fly to Saigon, then be transferred by Caribou to Nui Dat to learn the local ropes from 1RAR.

The Main Body was taking a week's Pre-Embarkation Leave, cleaning out their lockers, packing trunks, making last visits to the local haunts, returning rented TV sets (Geoff Pearson will disagree with this – he assures us that the Rear Party was left all the dirty work!)

3<sup>rd</sup> February 1969 – The Main Body was transported to Garden Island Naval Dockyard, and embarked the HMAS Sydney.

8<sup>th</sup> February 1969 – the Sydney docked at Fremantle, refuelled, the Sandgroppers said a final farewell to their loved ones, and the next stop on the 15<sup>th</sup> February was Vung Tau.

More next issue.....



**Who is this man?** You guessed it – Phil Winney of 9PL in 1969 – young, slim and with plenty of black hair!



**Also from Phil** - Here is a photo of myself (on right), my daughter Peta, who is a Local Newcastle Councillor, Kevin Claydon (ex 7 RAR) and his daughter Sharron Claydon who is the Federal Member for Newcastle. We are two proud Vietnam Vets with our daughters, representing our City of Newcastle.

By the way, I came home early from Vietnam with a tropical skin rash and was not there when we vacated the lines at Nui Dat to allow 7RAR to come in, but Kevin Claydon 7 RAR always reminds me of the 'dreadful' drawings of Tigers 'doing terrible things to pigs' (to quote Kevin) all around the place when 7RAR took over our lines. *Ed's note – we know NOTHING of these alleged atrocities Phil, well, nothing that we will admit to!*

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### **TRAVELLING ABOUT:**

#### **FROM BILLIE WATERS (8PL):**

In November and my partner Nikki I visited Vietnam. It was my second trip and Nikki's first. We landed in Ho Chi Minh City and spent a couple of days there being tourists, then we spent three days in Vung Tau, visited the Long Tan Cross, the bottom of the Long Hais and Nui Dat. The Dat was completely clear – deserted - and the school at the end of the runway closed and knocked down, very sad.

Anyway the highlight of the of our trip was a three day push bike ride through the Mekong Delta. Bikes aren't really my thing, however is my partner and is a postie and much younger than me and was keen to do it.

The delta covers 40,500 square kilometres, and the has a population of 18 million people and is the food bowl of Vietnam.

We were picked up from our own hotel, and did the two hour trip to Vinh Long, the scenery was spectacular, open padi fields and clusters of palm trees, just like a scene from every Vietnam war movie you have ever watched. We jumped on our bikes near Vinh Long, and away we went. There was only the two of us plus driver and guide, no standing on ceremony, just follow me. Our first day was forty kms and was a mixture of back roads and narrow paths, anything wider than our footpaths is considered to a two lane highway and traffic was constant and considerable, combined with riding on the right hand side of the road, made life interesting, after one dive off a narrow, and I mean narrow bridge, less than a foot wide and drowning my phone, our guide, who called himself Austin decided to issue some instructions, hold your speed, hold your line, they will not run into you, and so it was, the people who were friendly calling out hello in English, looking around though, I wondered how the Americans ever fought a war here, it would be impossible to control ground. The first night we stayed at what we would call a b and b in Ben Tre Province, the owners were wonderful people who made us feel very welcome, cold beer under the bananas palms, beautiful.

The next day was a big day 65kms to Can Tho. We passed the old American air base, and rode over the new Can Tho bridge built by the Japanese. It's about the size and shape of the Westgate in Melbourne. Australia contributed some funds towards its building.

A stay in Can Tho that night and a visit to the floating markets at Cai Be, next morning, followed by another 30kms on the bike marked the end of our ride. The Vietnamese are a wonderful people, strong and resilient, but what struck me was the lack of old people. Apparently one in five people is under the age of fifteen and their old soldiers are haven't fared as well as we have.

I would recommend a trip to the delta for anyone wanting to see the real Vietnam, you can travel there from Ho Chi Minh city, by many ways - by bus, car, private taxi, even by speed boat. Vietnam is a wonderful destination, put it on your bucket list.

Regards to all, Bill Waters.

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#### **FROM GARY TOWNSEND, C Coy (first tour):**

On 4 May 1966 the majority of C Company's members arrived in South Vietnam onboard the HMAS Sydney, it had been a voyage of training with a bit of time to ourselves. The Company was loaded into a landing craft and ferried to shore, as we approached the beach we heard an order that has lived with us since that day, "FIX BAYONETS!". CSM WO2 Ross Wormald issued the order under instruction from the OC of C Coy, MAJ Noel Granter.

Had Vung Tau been over-run by the Viet Cong?

Should we put a round up the spout?

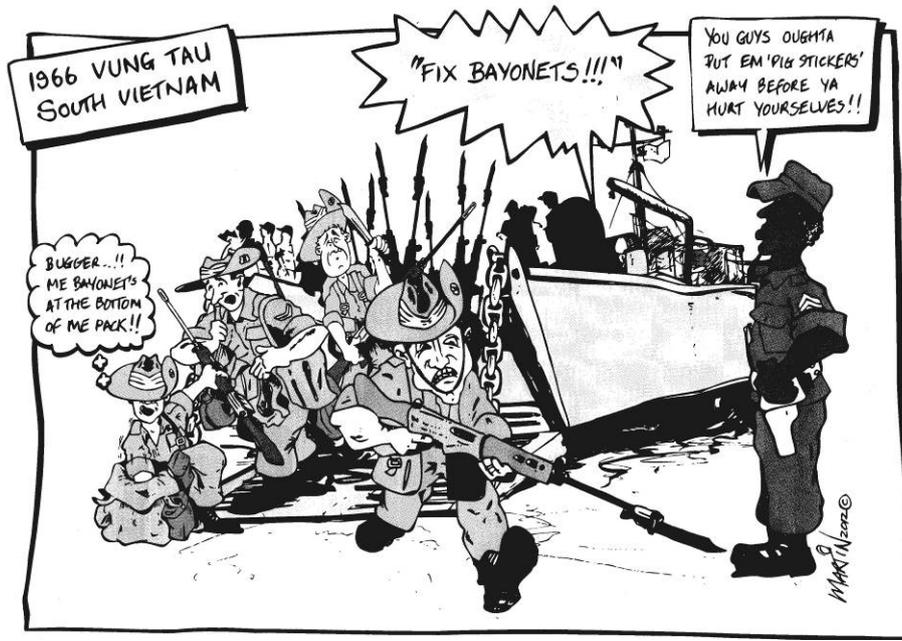
Then again, did we even have a round to put up the spout?

Q-SGT Bob Trenear heard the order with dismay and stated, "Fix bayonets, bloody hell packed mine in the bottom of my pack!"

We couldn't believe it, we were landing in a secured military area. The Yanks that were working on the beach thought it was a great joke, with comments such as; "Put those pigstickers away before you hurt yourselves".

The story made it back to Australia and my mother sent me a cartoon about the incident, from one of the newspapers. Unfortunately the newspaper clipping did not last long in the Vietnamese climate and I have been looking to see if I could find a copy of this cartoon ever since. Russell Briggs also had a cutting sent to him with the same result and we have

both done quite a bit of research trying to find the cartoon again. If anyone has a copy of this cartoon, which is a part of our history, I would greatly appreciate getting an image it. We still have not found the original cartoon, but Tom Davern's mate Richard Martin has created the one below for 'The Mushroom Club'. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Richard and also to award him an Honorary Membership of 'The Mushroom Club'. Until now C Company has not had a Company Motto, in remembering this incident I believe that we should now adopt as the Official C Company Motto, "FIX BAYONETS". Gary Townsend



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A very Happy New Year to all our C Coy Tigers, their families and friends. May 2019 be all that you could wish for. Don

Half Circle was compiled and edited by Don Harrod – [donharrod@bigpond.com](mailto:donharrod@bigpond.com), 0418 423 313, with help from Phil Winney, Billie Waters, Claude Ducker, behind-the-scenes assistance from Gary Townsend (the Tiger Tales Editor), Ted Harrison (the 5RAR Association Webmaster), supported by *The RB Co*, and powered by *the Lambs Valley Wine Company, Hunter Valley, NSW*.