

Half Circle

Number 18 - May 2008

A publication for the members
of C Coy 5 RAR (2nd tour) South Vietnam,
and especially for the families of those who are no longer with us.

Someone said.....

Why does that bloody Harrod publish Half Circle in such small print? Doesn't he know that we are now half blind? The answer - to try and get more information to you without using too much computer space. If the print is too small, just increase the Zoom to 150% using the toolbars on your machine.

Jack Bradd said.....BATTLEFIELD CLEARANCE

The words simply mean to clean up the battlefield after the fighting. Once the wounded were out of the way all enemy equipment and documents were stockpiled and removed to the rear as soon as possible. Personal gear of the enemy was another matter and some of this was 'Souvenired' by the diggers (our grandfathers of the 1st AIF had this down to a fine art and could, in their slang, 'Rat' an enemy position in seconds flat).

It was a two Section up attack; Bowie's Section was in amongst the swine on the right and as we were about to move forward again Mr. Hosie flopped down beside me. He was smiling, as he normally was when the shit was flying, he ordered me to push past the enemy position about 50 meters then pointed at a black object about a meter off the ground ahead of us. It was a noggie hammock (made of silk and much prized as it allowed you get off the wet ground) 'That's mine' he said then took off. Don't think so Boss, I reckoned as I put a burst of SLR through it.

After we had Re-organised we started gathering all the nog gear and took it into PLHQ dumping it with the PLSGT Doc Halliday. Of course the diggers had been through the gear and items such as radios, watches etc had disappeared but the diggers wouldn't touch documents or maps as they knew the intelligence value of these items. On one of these trips I noticed Mr. Hosie poking his finger through the bullet holes in the nog hammock he had pointed out. 'Some of your Section was firing high' he said, giving me a suspicious look 'I'll warn them Boss' I said.

One of the diggers bought over a nog pack and showed me some of the items he had found; one was a rolled cloth belt which, when unrolled, was full of glass vials of some liquid, we thought the bloke may have been a Medic, but they contained perfume. Must have been some tradition left over from the poffter French. The other items were Aust and US food tins from ration packs which had been punctured and discarded (we received 4 days supply of ration packs, 2xAust and 2xUS, at each resupply and would puncture and bury everything we couldn't carry) so it looked like the nogs knew how to rat too. I reported this to the Boss also telling how sorry I felt for the nogs having to eat Aust and US ration packs.

One item found in every nog pack was a tin of 'Mackerel in Tomato Sauce' it must have been their equivalent of Bully Beef. I tried it once, bloody horrible, worst then Bully Beef. (Believe it or not 'Mackerel in Tomato Sauce' is sold today in Aussie, same stuff, and they also have a Chilli flavoured one).

7 PLATOON, COOBER PEDY - ANZAC DAY 2008

Dave Bowman has attended many Anzac Day celebrations around the country. Last year Dave suggested to "Buddah" Martini that 7 Plt spend 2008 Anzac Day in Coober Pedy. Dave had been crook so we all thought that was a great idea.

We assembled as many as possible that could make the trip to Coober Pedy - the only town between Port Augusta and Alice Springs, about 850 km north west of Adelaide. Our contingent consisted of Mick Brown (Brownie) and Jimmy Reid (Jimmy) from Western Australia; John Martini (Buddah) and Ken Leggett (Legs) from Melbourne; Max Hedley from Port Augusta; Bill Hartley from Tamworth; Andy MacDougal (Doggie) from the Hunter Valley and "Bowie" from Coober Pedy.

Brownie and Jimmy took 2 days to make the trip from WA after a short cut of 284km through the dirt. They arrived on Wednesday 23rd, camping in swags along the way. On the other side of the continent, Bill Hartley left Tamworth at 6am on Monday 21st and drove to Andy's property 35ks out of Singleton. They then drove to Williamtown airport north of Newcastle and flew to Melbourne. They were met by Legs and Buddah and the four immediately set off. First stop was Horsham in Western Victoria to visit Jim McMillan's grave (Jim was killed in action on July 31 1969. Sandy McKinnon and Buddah were wounded in the same action). Legs and Andy then visited Jim's mother Venie. Jim's sisters Venie and husband Allan, Joy and husband Ed and Dianne all came over to see us (Jim's brother Robert lives in Queensland). It was a wonderful to learn more about Jim's early life in, and to learn that he volunteered for National Service. It was especially good to hear that Ian Leis and Sandy McKinnon were in regular contact with the family. Visiting and keeping in contact with the families of our departed mates is so important.

Next overnight stop was Port Augusta. We called Max early Tuesday morning. He and his wife Irene, and their grandson Ethen were just setting off, and we arranged to meet at Bowies place later in the day. We arrived late afternoon, and met his two beautiful daughters Renee and Chelsea. For those who haven't been to Coober Pedy it's a real eye popper! Bowie has been there for 32 years, and lives in a very comfortable 3-bedroom dugout with a constant year round temperature of 24 degrees. Some of us stayed at Bowie's, and the rest of us at the Oasis Caravan Park run by another vet George.

Dave has been President and Vice President of the Coober Pedy RSL for many years. He and his mate "Boof" Tony Flaherty OAM (ex 8RAR) organised some very special entertainment for the visit. James Blundell, Patrick McMahon, and John Gillmore all made the trip to Coober Pedy specifically for Anzac Day. James is Patron of the Vietnam Veterans Association. He was in Adelaide for a concert on Monday night. He flew back to Sydney, picked up his two boys and two dogs, and drove for 2 days to get to Coober Pedy in time for Anzac Day.

We all converged on the RSL to help get everything ready for the services next morning. The RSL itself is a wonderful structure, with the bar and memorabilia in a room the size of 2 x 40foot containers, a covered open-air area with tables, two-up pit, and a half open shed with kitchen. Dave had organised two competitions for the local kids - a poetry competition for the older children and a colouring competition for the young ones. They were wonderful!

At the Dawn Service, an estimated crowd of over 200 assembled, including around 30 vets and many locals. The march was led by 6 of the local police, followed by flags, children, vets and RSL members and others. We all had duties - carrying flags, laying wreaths, reading the ode, introducing the ceremony, raising the flag. The Greek flag was carried by 89 year old "gentleman Jimmy" who has been marching for many years. He refuses to have a wheel chair or to sit down, but needs 3 support staff to make sure he stays upright! The wives of members served a

breakfast of bacon and eggs and the traditional tot of rum. The march from the RSL to the Church started at 0930 and was over by 1030hrs. Lots of locals were there and quite a few "grey nomads". Had a snooze in the afternoon before the concert at the RSL open air of course, with James, Paddy and the boys performing on the back of a flat bed truck. An absolutely fantastic event that was continuous from 1830 to 1100. Between the swirls of dry red dust that regularly engulfed the truck, we had quite a few beers and made many friends among the locals - including Tiffany, George, Carrie, Trevor, Peter, John, Marjory, Marilyn, Kate and many others.

We all agreed that this was the best Anzac Day we have had the privilege of attending. In addition to catching up with old friends, the opportunity of participating in an Anzac Day ceremony in one of Australia's most remote communities was unforgettable. Thanks Bowie from us all.



L to R - Bill Hartley, Andy MacDougal, Dave Bowman, Ken Leggett, Max Hedley, Jim Reid, Mick Brown, John Martini.

The Chinese are cluey people; their currency is the Yuan (pronounced 'Wun'). It makes it easy to count their money, as in 'Wun, another Wun another Wun' etc.

Found..... George Szczurko and Barry Baker.

Lost..... Len Smith, Max Aitken, Eddie Davies and Greg Dick. Your mail comes back as having an INVALID email address. If anyone can assist, please let Don know at rosdon@bigpond.net.au.

A bloke went into the Chemist shop and asked the assistant "Do you have any talcum powder?"
The assistant replied "Of course sir, walk this way".

He replied "If I could walk that way, I wouldn't need any talcum powder".

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REMEMBER.....



5RAR Remembers

Nui Dat, South Vietnam. February 1970.

The Tiger Battalion, 5th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (5RAR), remembers fallen comrades at a memorial parade.

The Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Colin Khan, is framed against a steel sword set in concrete which is a memorial to the unit's dead.

The service, part of 5RAR's farewell parade, was held just before the Battalion left for Australia aboard HMAS Sydney.

During its tour of duty 5RAR lost twenty five soldiers and killed 353 enemy: a ratio of fourteen to one. The Battalion sustained 10% of the total Australian casualties during its two tours of South Vietnam

The cross and surrounds were designed and built by Pte George Szczurko, ex C Coy 5RAR.

Our Battalion book - *The Year of the Tigers*, is out of stock. The decision has been taken to update certain parts of it, prior to it being reprinted. Who else is going to coordinate it, other than our illustrious adjutant and end-of-tour company commander, Dave Wilkins. Claude Ducker, Bill Titley, and many other officers and men of 5RAR will also be involved. Please refer to the "Notice Board" and "Message Forum" of the 5RAR website - www.5rar.asn.au. Your input and assistance is required - come out from wherever you are!

Patient: "Doctor, I keep thinking that I am pair of curtains"
 Doctor: "Don't be stupid - pull yourself together"

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Jack Bradd and Don Harrod said.....

LOBs and TG. LOB (Left out of Battle) was a British Army term dating from WW1, where a nucleus of officers and other ranks would be left behind from the Battalion as it went into combat. These LOBs would guard the Battalion area, and in the event of heavy casualties, be used to re-form the Battalion.

The Battalion Pay Sergeant, SGT Trevor George (TG) Smith was from the Service Corps (Nervous Corps). TG's job, when rostered as the Battalion Duty Officer, was to check the LOBs manning the machine gun picquets, especially at night, and especially Charlie Coy.

We were having a drink in the C Coy OR's boozier after an operation, when one of the LOBs mentioned TG. The digger reckoned that TG was forever checking Charlie Coy because he suspected that the gun picquets were asleep. The digger went on to say that TG would sneak down at night hoping to catch Charlie Coy out. TG's method of sneaking up on the picquet was to bump into trees, trip over sandbags, cough, fart, and fall into weapon pits so the picquet had heaps of warning. They would wait until TG was about two feet from the gun, and with a very audible "CLICK" of a safety catch and a distinct "HALT", scare the shit out of TG, and laugh as they heard the pitter patter of a size 6 GP heading away from Charlie Coy.





