

# Half Circle



Number 77 - May 2013

**(If this is hard to read, try increasing the picture size to 150%!!)**

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 - 2790819 LANCE CORPORAL EDWARD JAMES MOON.** It is with the deepest regret that we advise that Eddie Moon (Plonky, Suave), passed away on ANZAC Day eve 2013, after battling cancer. Ed will be remembered as a man big in stature and heart. He joined 9PL C Company in mid-1969, and quickly established himself as a totally reliable and hard-working soldier. A tribute to Ed has been placed on the 5RAR website and we ask that every member takes a few minutes to read this and reflect on the loss of a true Aussie. We offer Wanda and the family our every support. LEST WE FORGET.



At left is a photograph of the grave of PTE Nathanael Galagher, 2<sup>nd</sup> Commando Regiment, who died in a helicopter crash in Afghanistan on 30<sup>th</sup> August 2012. Nate was interred in the cemetery at Pilliga, in outback NSW. This is a fitting tribute to a man who was not only an infantryman, but also a commando. Nate's grave is in some of the harshest country in Australia, and his gravesite is protected by burrs. Lest We Forget.



**AT THE RAP:** **Bob (Tex) Cunningham** - oncology treatment  
**Max Postle** - knee surgery

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**ANZAC Day 2013, at Hervey Bay, Qld**

Ben Oram, Bill Titley, and Barry Baker

**VIETNAM VETERANS' COMMEMORATIVE MEMORIAL, SEYMOUR, VICTORIA:**

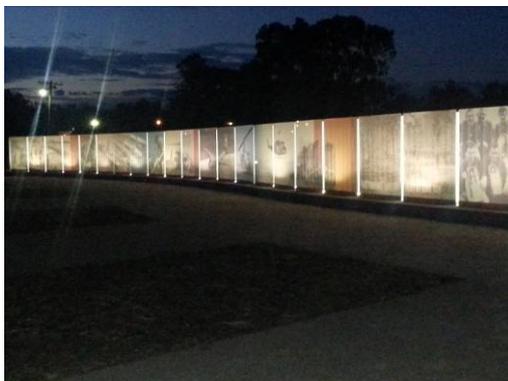
Many ex-service organisations and publications will now be featuring the above Memorial, located in Seymour, 100km north of Melbourne. Seymour is the closest town to the Puckapunyal Army Base. The Memorial depicts Australia's contribution during the Vietnam War, and contains the name of every person who served in the theatre. YOUR name is included. Below are some photos of the Memorial:



An aerial view



Recognition of the Battle of Binh Ba



The Memorial by night



Eddie Davies, Don Teichelman and Wally Magalas

## DAVE'S DIARY:

Continued from the previous edition of Half Circle.

My diary entries are in *italics* whilst additional data from Battalion and Task Force logs, as well as explanatory or descriptive commentary, are in plain text:

Charlie Company was on a search and destroy mission in the Dat Set region to the east of Long Tan. It was the last days of our final operation in Vietnam.

11 Feb 1970

*A bigger day than even yesterday.*

*With 7 Platoon and 9 Platoon in good ambush positions either side of an area I suspected as "likely" to contain enemy, 8 Platoon pushed towards it for checking.* I had noticed from previous intelligence reports that enemy movement and contacts had followed a pattern relating to the type of vegetation in the Dat Set area. It surrounded a dark green vegetated area on the map that I personally referred to as the "cauliflower ear" because it reminded me of many a rugby front rower's mangled ears (see map). Over a distance of about two clicks I set an area ambush with CHQ and 9 Pl in the base of the "cauliflower ear". 8 Pl was moving to the north-east to some thick scrub on the far side of an open kunai and dry paddi field area, and 7 Pl was a click further east of that on a small track next to the Song Rai ("Song" means river).

At about 1300 hours, *without warning from the customary signs of bunkers (cutting, smell, etc), 8 Platoon was suddenly involved in a heavy contact, which continued for 4 hours.* 8 Platoon's forward scout and his section commander had spotted the enemy from a distance of about 20 metres and engaged them just as the enemy saw them and scurried to their bunkers, which had until then gone unnoticed. Visibility was restricted in this dense bush to about the length of a cricket pitch. The platoon commander, 2Lt Peter Commerford, immediately put in a left flanking attack using Cpl Dave Fazackerley's section but this was quickly halted by accurate and intense enemy fire. *An estimated platoon of enemy was in the bunkers and returned accurate fire with AK47s, RPGs, RPDs (machine guns) and M79s. Both left and right flanking movements by 8 Platoon became pinned down and rendered useless.* The enemy green tracer could be seen and 8 Platoon were conscious of the constant crack of the rounds passing just above their heads or the smack of the lead striking the trees nearby.

I arranged for my artillery Forward Observer Captain Dave Bedford, to call in artillery fire, and for the MFC (I think Cpl Peter McCauley was still with us at this time, but I'm not sure) to give mortar support, whilst I radioed Zero-Alpha (the Battalion Command Post) to request a light fire team. I concluded that the best way in this situation was to attack, but to do it with more force. I was conscious of the need to boost 8 Platoon and was contemplating lifting the 9 Platoon and CHQ in-depth ambush for this. Then "Niner" (Genghis) suggested tanks or APC support. There was nothing better in a bunker assault than having tanks with you, so I readily accepted his offer. A troop of Centurion tanks would be coming from the Horseshoe (north of Dat Do village), but getting here would have them traversing just south of the Long Tan area, the site of the famous major battle in 1966. They had about 9 clicks to travel across country, it was getting late in

the day and the area to be covered might also hold waiting enemy forces. I was wary of a standard VC tactic of creating a situation, which would draw out a relief force so they could then ambush it, but this situation didn't really fit that scenario.

*By this stage 8 Platoon had suffered 5 casualties, and had begun using the light fire team, Bushranger, but its fire did not stop the enemy from engaging anyone who spoke or moved in 8 Platoon's area. Bushranger's mini guns were firing about 50 metres in front of 8 Platoon, but the enemy in their bunkers were closer in, only 10-20 metres away.*

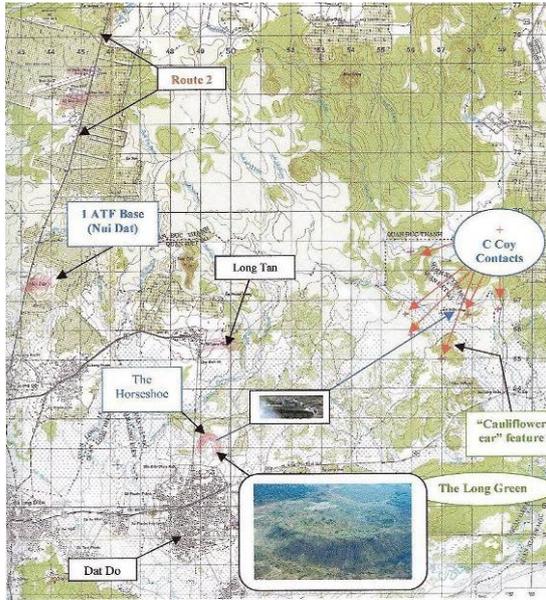
The five casualties were section commander Corporal Dave Fazackerley, machine gunner Private Tex Cunningham, gun number 2 Private Wally Magalis, and riflemen Privates Ken Black and Noel Cooper. At this stage the first three appeared to be seriously wounded.

The first was Cpl Dave Fazackerley who was hit in the side by a round, which struck his belt and bored through the belt sideways and then through his body, but fortunately missed his vital organs. Machine gun number two, Pte Wally Magalis, saw his section commander fall, called out "Dave is hit!" and crawled to him. Unstrapping the shell dressing from the butt of his SLR, Wally covered the gaping exit wound in Dave's back. Dave, still conscious, then instructed Wally to return to his machine gunner, Tex Cunningham, and help keep up the fire at the enemy. Wally and Tex began having machine gun stoppages and worked frantically to clear dirt and twigs from the breech. The Platoon Commander shouted to them "Keep that gun going" but the gun stopped again. As Wally cleared the twigs and leaves from the breech making the gun ready for firing again he felt a sudden thump to his head, followed by blinding flash and an explosion just above them, covering them in dust and smoke. Tex yelled "I can't see. I can't see." His face was covered with blood as he put his hands over his eyes. The shrapnel from the RPG explosion had also hit Wally in the head and upper arm, but initially he didn't realise it until Dave yelled to him that he was bleeding from the head. Disregarding his own injuries, Wally got Tex's shell dressing from his webbing and bound his mate's nose and eyes. Wally called out to his platoon commander, "Tex is hit". Above all the din, Platoon sergeant "Kiwi" Hill shouted for the machine gun to be passed to another member of the section and for Wally and Tex to pull back to better cover. This was done as Wally and Tex leopard crawled from their position to a large tree, Tex gripping Wally's ankle and blindly following. The crack of the rounds passing just over their heads echoed in the thick scrub. "Shits were trumps" as one of the 8 Platoon diggers told me later.

*Mortars were more effective as they rained down their barrage just behind the bunkers, which would cause problems for the enemy in their depth positions and hinder preparations for any enemy withdrawal in that northerly direction.*

It was late in the afternoon with the forward sections still pinned down, but now the 50-ton Centurion tanks were getting close and they would turn tide in this battle.

As well, Lt Ian Hosie's 7 Platoon was silently waiting in ambush on a small track a bit further east. That part of the trap would later be decisive.



(To be continued)

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**SOME THOUGHTS:**

- \* Roger Lambert reports that on his way to work this morning, he saw an NRMA patrolman parked by the side of the road, sobbing uncontrollably. Roger thought "This bloke's heading for a breakdown!"
  - Claustrophobia is a fear of closed spaces. For example, I am on my way to the local liquor store, and I'm scared that it's closed.
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We all spent a few weeks or more at the Jungle Training Centre before we embarked for the war in Vietnam, and included in our time at Canungra were the field exercises in the tropical primary forest of Levers Plateau. I'm sure none of you have forgotten the difficulty walking through the scrub there caused by that tenacious thorned vine we referred to as Wait-a-While. Well, just in case your memory is fading, allow me to jolt it back 45 years with this picture taken from another of Queensland's rain forests, the Daintree.

David Wilkins

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**A NOTE FROM YOUR EDITOR:** We had planned to have a segment in this issue on "The Rifleman", but have had a lot of trouble contacting anyone who wants to come forward and discuss their job. C'mon fellas, you won't get into trouble, and in any case, Jack Lake's away! Without your input, "Cogs in the Wheel" stop turning!



Why nobody pinches my grog!

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**WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU HAD A LOOK AT THE 5RAR WEBSITE -**  
[www.5rar.asn.au](http://www.5rar.asn.au) - there's something new being posted all the time. A great site.

I would also like to pass on to Ted Harrison, the Webmaster, the sincere congratulations of all of C Company on Ted being awarded Life Membership of the 5RAR Association. Well done, Ted!

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***In Sydney and want to hit the little white ball?** Then head for the Georges River Golf Course, Henry Lawson Drive Georges Hall. Geoff Grimish and his team will make you most welcome. Geoff is a Vietnam vet (RAA), and is a great supporter of this newsletter. Phone (02) 9724 1615.*

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**IN THE NEXT EDITION OF HALF CIRCLE:**

1. The Two-Tour Vietnam Veteran.

Half Circle was compiled and edited by Don Harrod - [donharrod@bigpond.com](mailto:donharrod@bigpond.com)  
(02) 6842 4913, 0418 423 313, with help from Wally Magalas, Don Teichelman, David Wilkins, Tex Cunningham, Roger Lambert, Pat Oram, and Bryan (Blue) Schafer.