

# Half Circle



Number 94 - October 2014

## **VALE – 218345 Corporal Ellis “Bunny” Hyde**

We are sad to report that we have been advised that Ellis “Bunny” Hyde passed away recently. No other details are available at this stage. We take this opportunity to convey to Bunny’s family the sincere condolences of all those men of C Coy who served with him. May he Rest in Peace.

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### **AT THE RAP:**

**Peter Molloy** – new prosthetic leg. Peter is now at home, with the rehab process continuing.

**Barrie Taylor** – ongoing oncology treatment

**Wally Magalas** – ongoing oncology treatment

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23<sup>rd</sup> December 1975 – the day that the HMAS Sydney – our old friend the Vung Tau Ferry – left Sydney Harbour for its final journey. This time, with no glory. It was to be towed by tug to the Dongkuk Steel Mill in Seoul, South Korea, to be scrapped. A sad day for a grand old lady, and an emotional time for those servicemen who travelled to and from Vietnam in her.

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**RETIRING:** Roger Lambert has advised that as of the end of September, he is retiring. Not sure why - he only did 26 years in the Army, rising to the rank of LTCOL, followed by 21 years in the NSW State Government (environment) in a senior management role. Happy retirement, Roger!

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**TRAVELLING ABOUT:** From Dave Wilkins (Sep 14)

I am leaving at sparrow's tomorrow for volcano country at Rabaul, Papua New Guinea.

I am travelling side-saddle on a RAAF C130 Hercules canvas seat which should be a good test for the artificial hip- not sure how long the flight is but we have been told it is lengthy, cold and not particularly comfortable,

and to bring a bottle of water. That should bring the memories of my Army days rushing back to me. Maybe the RAAF needs to improve its inflight service or dip out on getting passengers in this competitive world of international travel.

I was fortunate to have been invited to join a service group travelling to Rabaul for the commemoration of a century since Australia's first battle in World War 1 and the loss of the submarine AE1 with all its crew. Within 2 weeks of war being declared on 4 August 1914 Australia had recruited, enlisted, kitted and despatched a combined force of Army and Navy for German New Guinea to wrest that land and its waters from German occupation. This was important so as to knock out the German bases and its wireless stations that were used to coordinate raids on our shipping lanes in the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

Australia's first casualties of the war occurred when the Aussie force captured Rabaul and a wireless station at nearby Kabakaul 100 years ago.

Enough of the history lesson, but I thought you might like to know why I was going there.

And hopefully the volcano that has been misbehaving recently will settle down as the Rabaul Travelodge where I am staying is the motel closest to it. Hmmm

**David has now returned to Australia, and added the following:**

To provide you with a little nostalgia see attached photo of travel by C130 Hercules, although in our day we didn't have any camp followers. As you can see the troops here are a motley lot. Apart from some press reps with us most were descendants of those who died in the Rabaul area in September 1914 (not me).

At one of the ceremonies at Bitipaka War Cemetery I was wearing my Tigers tie which a woman noticed and said, "Oh my husband was in 5RAR" and so I met up with Wayne Binns who was in our Mortar Platoon. He is shown in WW1 re-enactor's tropical uniform worn by members of the AN&MEF (Australian Naval & Military Expeditionary Force) that went to German New Guinea.

The Rabaul Travelodge where I stayed turned out to be very run down and basic as a result of the volcano activity and we came to understand there may have been some extra curricular activities going on to boost its income (judging by the bedside accoutrements- see picture).

I had first visited Rabaul in 1967 when I was posted to the PIR in PNG and represented the Port Moresby cricket team to play Rabaul. That was before any recent volcano activity (previous blow was in 1937) and Rabaul was tropical and absolutely beautiful. Streets then were lined with lush trees and flowers bloomed everywhere. So, despite some beauty remaining today where the ash hasn't fallen, there are many areas destroyed by the 1994 eruption of Mt Tavurvur, including much of the town itself. Consequently, the government province capital administration was moved from poor Rabaul to Kokopo, a 40 minutes drive away- on the other side of the huge bay. It's quite sad really.



There were a few journos with us, including Celina Edmonds, Sky News.



The beautifully kept Bitipaka War Cemetery



Wayne Binns, pictured with David Wilkins

The following article was submitted by Ben Oram. It was published in the QLD RSL news, with the suggestion from Ben that it may be edited to be more applicable to our situation. I decided to print it in its entirety – this is a part of Australia's history, and it really hits home that our situation with our mates was no different. Don

## **THEY WORE THE KHAKE AND GREEN**

The bond fostered among soldiers during wartime has a strength and resilience that time, personal grievance and even death cannot nullify. This special mateship has its beginnings the moment a soldier is issued with his first uniform, and continues to develop and strengthen throughout his military service.

In my case, some of the friendships made during my early training days at Bathurst lasted a lifetime. 'Rigger' Lonaghan, 'Shag' Aldridge, and 'Bluey' Bray from Forbes have now all passed on, but their memories remain as if 1942 were only yesterday. Memories are now so easily triggered of route marches, night stunts, and nights at the wet canteen or days spent on leave in strange towns, the dances and the girls. The great thing about these mates is that they were always mates; we followed each other's fortunes by letter, by the grapevine, or through brief meetings whenever paths crossed at the transit camps or the like. One way or another we always kept in touch. Unqualified acceptance by this great brotherhood of men comes with the posting to a front-line unit and your baptism of fire. It is here you learn exactly what true mates are all about. Although you may only get to know a few of the names outside your own Platoon or Company, the common bond was always present; you could actually feel it like a tangible thing. Living the close insular life we did, especially in isolated areas of New Guinea, Borneo or any of the combat zones, there developed a closeness to any dependence on each other that others could not possibly understand.

A section of 10 or a dozen men lived so closely that we eventually began thinking and acting as one. Everything was shared: food, tobacco, even private mail. Nothing was private; we knew each other's moods intimately and relied on each other for support at all times. We mourned our fallen comrades, but only briefly as there was always so much to do, but we never forgot them. Their fate could easily have been your own so we went forward, always placing full trust in the mates around us. This feeling existed amount all troops, but with the infantry it seemed more finely boned.

Time places no bounds on these friendships, and as the years roll on those past happenings rise closer to the surface until the time comes when a chance word, scent, colour or song can bring those ghostly memories flooding back as if it were only yesterday.

I always wondered about those army reunions my father attended and just what they got up to: Now I know and realise that we simply have to have them. The yearning to relive those experiences of more than 50 years ago is so great only sickness or exceptional circumstances could keep me from the 1000-kilometre round trip to Taroom each year.

Instead of falling off as more and more are drafted to that big camp in the sky, the attendance at this and many other reunions is actually growing.

Ex-Battalion members come from all over – New South Wales, North Queensland, even as far afield as Adelaide, often at great personal cost to either health, finances, or both – to renew old friendships. What do we talk about? Very rarely the battlefield or the suffering, and even when this is raised it is usually done to recall some

embarrassing or humorous incident. The yarns chewed over enable us to relive for a moment in time life in the tent, on leave, at work or at play, but most of all it's the mates, those who died then or since or those with whom we have lost touch but love to recall. They were very special people from a very special time.

Probably the most poignant reminders of these sentiments come when we are called on to attend the funeral of one of our mates, which happens all too frequently these days. The most touching occasion for me came when I was given the honour of reciting a eulogy at the funeral of my ole section mate, Allan Britton. The flood of memories was nearly too great and it was only with great difficulty that I managed to finish without a full breakdown.

I am putting these few thoughts to paper in a very inadequate attempt to explain my determination to attend such events as the Bundaberg and Adelaide 7<sup>th</sup> Division reunions, or the annual Taroom meetings.

The satisfaction derived from these reunions can never be adequately described by the written word.

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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 (FSB Coral, 1968), and is a good mate. Phone (02) 9724 1615.

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The former  
Luscome Field –  
Now a main road

(Photo supplied  
By Roger  
Lambert).

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**The C Coy 5RAR (2<sup>nd</sup> tour of Vietnam) reunion in Canberra is only 18 months away! If you haven't yet indicated your intention or otherwise to attend, please contact Claude Ducker at [duckden@bigpond.net.au](mailto:duckden@bigpond.net.au). At this stage, numbers are required to assist with planning for activities and the reunion dinner, with the guest speaker to be Brig (Ret) Colin Khan DSO. This will probably be our one and only chance to have a C Coy reunion. Your input is essential.**