

# Half Circle



Number 93 - September 2014

**(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.



## **AT THE RAP:**

**Barrie Taylor** – ongoing oncology treatment

**Peter Molloy** – extensive surgery and rehabilitation for a new prosthetic leg

**Wally Magalas** – ongoing oncology treatment

**Arleen Schafer** – knee reconstruction

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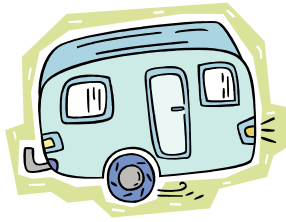


**FROM JOHN HUNTER:** I had the opportunity on Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> July to meet and speak with CPL Ben Roberts-Smith VC, MG for about 45 minutes. Ben was the guest speaker at Xavier Charity Dinner in Brisbane, and all I can say is “He is the real deal” – hero. He spoke about leadership and integrity to a packed house of over 600 leading businessmen. He outlined how he won

the Victoria Cross, and I would have to say you could have heard a pin drop. What a giant of a man (in all respects). He would be an ideal choice to speak at any reunion.

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***If you would like to have some input into Half Circle, please send any information to your editor at [donharrod@bigpond.com](mailto:donharrod@bigpond.com). I will edit your article for you, and send you a copy for your approval before publication. Half Circle is **YOUR** newsletter. You are a vital member of C Coy, and we want to hear from you.***



**TRAVELLING ABOUT: Alan (Bluey) Austin** - just returned from fishing the 3rd round of the Australian Bream Tournament at the Clarence River Yamba. Had a great time, finished with 10 fish out of 10 for the 2 days, that got me 3rd spot and a spot in the grand final to be held in November at the Hawkesbury River. That is the 2nd year I have made the grand final. I am stoked

that something I love doing has got me seeing old mates and having a great time.

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**FROM TED HARRISON, WEBMASTER OF THE 5RAR ASSOCIATION WEBSITE, AND A COY 5RAR (first tour):**

I note the interesting article from Fred McCarthy concerning **HMAS Sydney**. I had an experience with the Sydney. My last posting was to 1 Commando Company (Ares) as their parachute jump instructor. The army also had a diving role and as a qualified shallow water diver and with the **Sydney** moored in Sydney Harbour just prior to her being towed for scrap, I had a dive under her keel.

Also, A Company 5RAR flew to Papua New Guinea in December 1965 for a two-week exercise with the 1st Battalion Pacific Island Regiment. At the end of the exercise, A Company was ferried out to **HMAS Sydney** by Army Ducks from Wewak harbour for the week's trip back to Sydney. I can safely say I was one of the first 5RAR diggers to board **HMAS Sydney**.

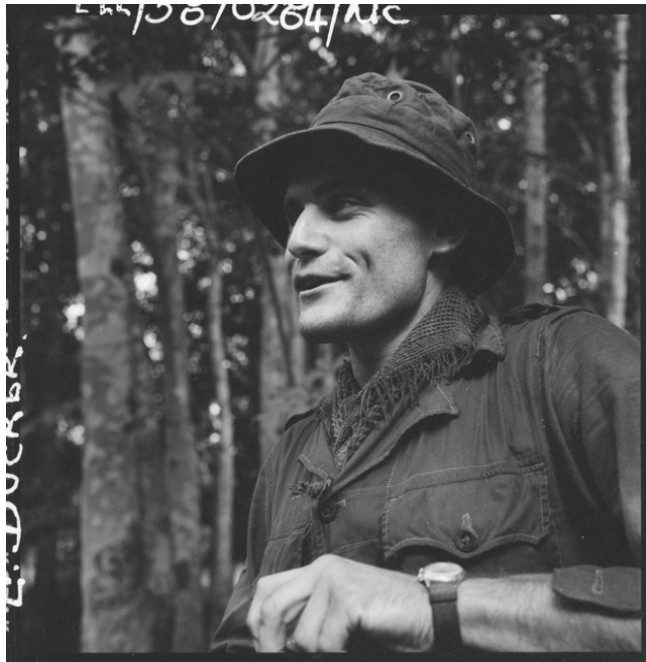
She holds a lot of memories for a lot of diggers.

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**FROM DENNIS (Digger) NEVINS:** I only returned from NT yesterday, and coincidentally was wearing the same slouchie and RM Williams moleskins as shown in the last Half Circle. These clothes take me back to my jackaroo days. Last Friday I was in some mongrel country – a place I've been going to for 30 years. These ranges adjoin three cattle stations, and it's an area that I keep to myself. It is untouched except for my footprints and those of the Dreamtime people. So there I was – knackered - on top of the range on a large stone slab between two massive outcrops of boulders. These were about the size of rooms, and in an area I haven't touched before. Down below was 700,000 acres of one station. My mind went back to when we thought that the communists may take it off us. It then dawned on me that Vietnam Vets Day is coming up, so I started collecting rocks (my steel knee joint was just plain angry), and for an hour and a half I placed them down on the slab of ancient stone. When I finished, I stepped back and looked at my work – "**Veitnam Digger**" in letters about 2m high. The commies didn't take our country, and I thought maybe one day a plane might fly over and see my work. This is my way of how a mug machine gunner remembers the blokes he served with in Vietnam, and how much Australia means to us.

***P.S: I made a blue and spelt Vietnam incorrectly. I'll have to go back and correct it!***

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Anyone recognize this young warrior? Clue – image taken in Malaya in 1958 ...

Answer:

Informal portrait of 3/35075 Lieutenant (Lt) (later Captain) Claude Henry Ducker, of Camberwell, Vic, Officer in Command, Tracker Team, 3rd Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (3RAR).

On 20 November 1958 an ambush patrol from A Company 3RAR found fresh tracks about ten miles north

north east from Sungei Siput and Lt Ducker and his team were hastily called in to follow the enemy trail, which they did for about 800 yards. Before long, the trackers sighted two pieces of green plastic about 40 yards ahead on a rocky bluff and realised that they had found a CT camp.

Lt Ducker split his team into two groups, six men remaining on the spur line as a stop group while the remaining five moved around the left flank behind the camp. Once in position the second group spotted one CT, threw a grenade and charged into the camp. The CTs immediately returned fire then fled, only to run into the stop group.

In total, three CTs were killed including a woman and a district committee member who had participated in the ambush and murder of Sir Henry Gurney, the British High Commissioner in 1951. A search of the camp and surrounding area failed to find any other CTs (probably two escaped who were not in camp) but a large amount of tinned food, clothing, maps, medical supplies, five large packs and some weapons and ammunition were recovered.

This Australian action received wide publicity in the leading Malayan and Singapore newspapers and Lt Ducker was awarded the Military Cross which was gazetted on 14 May 1959. Lt Ducker went on to serve in South Vietnam, firstly with Headquarters Australian Forces Vietnam (HQ AFV) in 1969 and later with 5th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (5RAR) in 1969. He also received a Mention in Despatches which was gazetted on 2 April 1970.

*Ed's note: Claude won't be happy about this article being printed as he is a very humble man, but I feel that we all should be aware of, and acknowledge his exemplary service to Australia, and his leadership as OC of C Coy when we were in Vietnam. In spite of some health issues, Claude is going full steam ahead with plans for our Company reunion in March 2016.*



**VIETNAM VETERANS' DAY,  
HERVEY BAY, QLD, 2014:**

Pictured are Max Postle, Barry Baker, Ben Oram, and Jack Bradd (seated). AWOL – Bill Titley, who took off to visit the grandchildren when he heard that Jack was on the loose.

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The RAR Association (SA) advises that Lt Colonel Fred Fairhead (Ret'd) has written a very informative and well illustrated book about the Royal Australian Regiment's operations in SVN.

The RAR Association (SA) are the publishers of the book and the sales will be operated through the RAR Association (SA)'s Inc Welfare Account.

The cost, including postage and handling, is \$30 and is required to be forwarded with your order. The surplus from this RAR Association (SA)'s initiative will be used for:

- . Supporting returned veterans in need.
- . The RAR Association's National Memorial Walk.

If you are interested, you can view an earlier edition of the book on the RAR Association (SA)'s website, <http://rarasa.org.au/>

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*Paddy's been arrested for punching his wife, again.  
The judge asks, "Tell me, Mr. Molloy, why do you keep beating her?"  
Paddy replies, "I think it's my weight advantage, longer reach and superior footwork."*



**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 police called at my place last night and asked where I was between five and six. They were very unimpressed when I replied "Kindergarten".

## WHAT MY MEDALS MEAN

I'd never worn my medals, they were left there in the draw,  
so when I finally took them out, it had been twenty years or more.  
My daughter saw me take them out, and asked me what they're for.  
I looked at her and calmly said, "They're a reminder of a war".

They remind me of the mates I had, who never made it back;  
Who died in a stinking paddy field, or on a jungle track.  
They remind me of the troubles, and the hardships we went through.  
They remind me why we went there; it was for people just like you.

They remind me of the hellhole, while we were over there.  
They remind me of our countrymen, who really didn't care.  
They remind me of the mateship, forged in a foreign land.  
They remind me of a certain mate, who lost a bloody hand.

They remind me when we went away; we thought the reason was just.  
They remind me of when we came back; they turned their backs on us.  
They remind me of the time we spent, left there on our own.  
They remind that it took twenty years, to welcome us back home.  
They remind me of the pain.  
They remind me if we're called upon, we'd do it all again.  
They remind me when I wear them next; the thoughts will come thru then,  
at the going down of the sun, and in the morning; "WE WILL REMEMBER THEM"

Then I looked down at her smiling face, and I knew it had not got thru.  
I said "Listen love, they're to remind me, I did it all for you.

Jim Egan Ex Delta 4 RAR 1971-72 Vietnam.

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## **C Company Reunion 15-17 March 2016 – a message from Claude Ducker:**

Greetings

I write to give you some further information on a couple of aspects of our Company Reunion in March 2016.

In regard to our final dinner on 17 March 2016, Andy McDougal has made a most generous offer to supply the wine for this event and to make a suitable commemorative label for this wine. It seems Andy may have temporarily forgotten how much alcohol C Company veterans can consume and may be well advised to put a limit on this offer!

You may be aware that the Australian War Memorial has been holding a Last Post ceremony each evening commencing at 4.55pm. Every day, they commemorate one soldier killed in the service of Australia, giving a brief summary of his life. It is their intention to have such a

service in turn for each of Australia's 102,000 fallen. I am advised that so far only eleven Vietnam veterans have been commemorated at one of these ceremonies.

The ceremony is streamed live every evening. You can watch this ceremony on any night at 1655 on your computer either by googling "Last Post Ceremony Live Stream Australian War Memorial" or using this link - <http://live.awm.gov.au>.

The War Memorial has agreed to a request from me to allocate their Last Post Ceremony on 17 March 2016 to one of the seven C Company KIA. They will advise the public that C Company are attending the ceremony and mention our seven KIA.

My original request to the AWM was that they give a brief summary of each of the seven C Company KIA in Vietnam. At this stage the AWM has not been prepared to lengthen their service to embrace the stories of all our seven KIA but will do so for one of ours on 17 March 2016, the others to be done on later dates.

We will of course be able to lay wreaths for each of our seven fallen at the ceremony on 17 March 2016.

C Company veterans may wish to wear their medals at the Last Post Ceremony on the last evening of our Canberra reunion, before going on to our final dinner which we hope to organise at a venue in fairly close proximity to the AWM. You might recall my earlier advice that Brigadier Colin Kahn has agreed to be the guest speaker at this dinner.

The AWM has also agreed to give our reunion attendees a highlights tour commencing at 3 pm or 3.30 pm before the Last Post ceremony. However I think many of you will go to the AWM at another more leisurely time so that you will be fresh for the dinner.

Finally there are still quite a few of you from whom we have not yet heard whether you might come to the Reunion in Canberra from 15 -17 March 2016. I appreciate that this is still a long way off but your indication (and your partner, of course) would help your committee to decide on venues etc. I realise that any indication from you at this early stage is not final but it will nevertheless assist our planning.

With my very best wishes,

Claude Ducker

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Half Circle was compiled and edited by Don Harrod - 0418 423 313 , (02) 6842 4913 [donharrod@bigpond.com](mailto:donharrod@bigpond.com), with help from Bluey Austin, Ted Harrison, John Hunter, Dennis Nevins, Roger Lambert. Jack Bradd, George Szczurko, Claude Ducker and the poem from Jim Egan, 4RAR.