

**Newcastle Vietnam War Remembrance Day Ceremony**

**Vietnam War Memorial Civic Park**

**King Street Newcastle**

**Saturday 19 August 2017**

**Profile of Private Richard Edward Lloyd 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion RAR**

**Researched and read by James Mackay OAM**

**Honorary historian**

**Newcastle & Hunter Region Vietnam Veterans Inc.**

Good afternoon

The names of the 19 men from the Hunter Region who served and lost their lives during the Vietnam War appear on this memorial in Civic Park. It has become a tradition to tell the story of one these men in Remembrance during this service.

This year we remember the life of **Private Richard Edward Lloyd**, a National Serviceman army number 27 84 015, 5 Battalion Royal Australian Regiment who was 21 years old when he died.

I acknowledge the information and assistance given by members of the Lloyd family, friends and veterans of the Royal Australian Regiment in the preparation of this profile.

Other sources include the Central Army Records Office, 5 RAR Association and the Australian War Memorial Canberra.

Richard Edward Lloyd was born at Kurri Kurri Hospital on 2 June 1945, the first child of Richie Senior and Evelyn, (known as Jean) Lloyd who lived at Weston. Siblings Lyn and Cheryl followed, completing the family. The Lloyds moved to 35 Abermain Street Pelaw Main which became the family home.

It is believed that Richie Senior worked at Richmond Main Colliery when Richie was born.

Jean kept house and worked as a domestic at Kurri Kurri Hospital.

He was educated at Weston and Pelaw Main Public Schools and then Kurri Kurri High School.

Richie completed his Intermediate Certificate with a straight A's pass in 1960.

Richard was a naturally talented sportsman who quickly mastered any sport that he tried. He particularly excelled at cricket and rugby league.

His nickname was Ted, possibly because of his second name being Edward or taken from Ted Dexter known as "Lord Ted", a famous English cricketer at the time.

Richie played rugby league for the Kurri Kurri Bulldogs in junior grades and later in the reserve grade 1964 grand finalist side. In 1966 he was a member of the A Grade premiership team. After games the boys would have a beer or two at the Kurri Kurri Hotel.

He also enjoyed fishing and loved greyhound racing.

Richie pursued a career as a boilermaker, completing a boilermaking course at Newcastle Technical College in 1964 whilst undertaking an apprenticeship at Stewart and Lloyds, steel pipe manufacturers, in Newcastle.

It is likely that Richie would have travelled between home and work in a Rover Motors double decker bus service for steelworkers.

He met and teamed up with Neil Colquhoun both as a Tech student and apprentice. Richie and Neil were also destined to be in the same National Service intake and served together until being posted to different battalions in South Vietnam.

During this time Richie's birth date was selected in the national service ballot, however the army agreed to defer call up until completion of his apprenticeship.

Six months later on 20 April 1966 Richie began full time duty as a national servicemen, undertaking basic training at 3 Training Battalion Singleton with a fellow Nasho Mike Eggleston from Merewether. The pair became mates and would follow a similar pathway in the Army.

Soon Richie's nickname "Ted" or sometimes "Lord Ted" for a bit of extra ribbing, followed him to the Army.

He was then posted to the Royal Australian Infantry, undertaking corps training at the Infantry Centre also at Singleton.

Following corps training Richie was posted to the Re-inforcement Centre at Bardia Barracks Ingleburn Army Camp where training continued.

After completing a Battle Efficiency Course at the Jungle Training Centre Canungra, Richie was posted to 1 Australian Re-inforcement Unit South Vietnam.

Prior to departure for SVN Richie came home on pre-embarkation leave. He attended the wedding of lifelong friends Ross Roderick who lived over the back lane and Maureen Frances who lived across the road. After the reception Richie was taken by car by the family to Maitland Railway Station for the train trip to Ingleburn to rejoin his unit prior to the flight to Saigon.

The unit departed Mascot Airport on 12 December 1966, arriving in Saigon on 13 December. There, an American transport aircraft transferred them to 1 Australian Logistics Support Base Vung Tau for the night.

Next day they boarded Australian Army trucks for transport to 1 Australian Taskforce Base Nui Dat. The trucks stopped just out of Vung Tau where the soldiers were issued with live ammunition. That's when the reality of being in a war zone hit them.

The REO's were posted to the Defence and Employment Platoon attached to HQ Company for familiarisation. Richie was then posted to 4

Platoon B Company 5 RAR on 9 January 1967. Neil Colquhoun and Mike Eggleston were posted to 6RAR.

Richie made plans for life after finishing his conscription. In letters home he wrote of his ambition to train greyhounds and even selected two names "Lord Ted" and "Flag Ale" for his proposed dogs.

5RAR had been in country since April/May 1966. The Battalion was to be relieved by 7RAR in late April 1967.

The Battalion had been very busy during its deployment and the high workload continued into 1967.

In one of the most costly incidents for Australia in the Vietnam War, B Company 5RAR was caught up in a landmine attack whilst patrolling in Armoured Patrol Carriers known as APCs in the Long Hai Hills.

The lead APC triggered a huge mine resulting a massive explosion. The 12 tonne APC was blasted into the air, landing on its side. Three soldiers and two troopers were killed and nine injured. Soldiers on the following APC's dismounted and rushed forward to defend and assist, one of them triggering a jumping jack anti-personnel mine seriously wounding two officers and a sergeant and injuring a further 19 soldiers, including Richie Lloyd. The officers subsequently died of their wounds.

Regimental Medical Officer Captain Tony White was choppered in to assist treat the wounded. Richie was medevac'd to the American 3 Field Hospital Saigon for treatment. His physical wounds were not serious and he was discharged from hospital five days later, returning to Nui Dat.

Soldiers involved in the Long Hai's incident were not compelled to return to the bush. Instead they had the option of performing duties inside the Task Force Base.

Richie, however despite having misgivings expressed in a letter to his mother, made a decision to return to active duty in the bush outside the safety of the base.

B Company was tasked to work on construction of the notorious Barrier minefield outside the village of Dat Do. The Barrier Minefield was possibly the worst episode for the Australian Military Forces in the entire Vietnam War.

The previous day Richie's platoon had been laying mines. This day the soldiers were building a double fence bordering the minefield. They had stopped work for a brew. Private Ken Wright had just returned from a patrol. Richie gave Ken his coffee and joined the fence work party in his place to give Ken a break. There was an explosion. Richie had triggered a mine and was killed instantly. Two soldiers working with him, Privates Geoff Perry and David Jones were badly wounded. Overnight the Viet Cong had lifted mines from the minefield and placed them in the area where the soldiers were building the fence.

Private Richard Lloyd died less than 12 months after his enlistment in the Australian Army. He was the first Coalfields man to lose his life in the Vietnam War.

Richie's family were informed of his death by the Australian Army. The Lloyd family, his friends, the Kurri Kurri and coalfields community and workmates at Stewarts and Lloyds were devastated.

The body was returned to Australia.

A military funeral for Richie was held at St Pauls Anglican Church Kurri Kurri followed by cremation at Beresfield Crematorium on 5 May 1967. His ashes are located in the columbarium at St Pauls.

The funeral was perhaps the largest that Kurri had ever seen when 4,500 people lined the streets to watch the procession. The funeral was described by the media as one of the most solemn and sorrowful events ever held in Kurri Kurri.

Lloyd Park in Pelaw Main was named in Richie's honour.

Vic and Gladys Harrison, publicans at the Kurri Hotel donated the Richie Lloyd Memorial Shield for Sportsman of the Year for players in the Kurri Kurri Junior Rugby League in his memory.

The shield was awarded annually from 1967 to 2007. Interestingly, the shield was awarded to a G Johns in 1968, an A Johns in 1990 and a M Hughes in 1993. The shield is on display at the Sir Edgeworth David Memorial Museum in Kurri.

Plaques located on the cenotaph at Weston remember Richie Lloyd and fellow local boy Errol Bailey, both killed in action during the Vietnam War.

Lest we forget.

(END)

James Mackay OAM