

# RICOCLET

Monthly newsletter of VVAA Sunshine Coast Sub-Branch Inc. DECEMBER 2021/JANUARY 2022

## Further recognition for 2400 vets

Caloundra RSL Sub-Branch has released an app to help relatives of deceased veterans locate their Memorial Plaques on the Caloundra Headland.

The Headland is home to almost 2400 veterans' memorial plaques inset into the 1.2km-long walkway between Shelly Beach and Kings Beach, and for years many families have struggled to locate particular plaques.

The app was developed by Sub-Branch senior vice-president Terry O'Connor with the help of Memorial Walkway co-ordinator Frank Wratten and other Military Display volunteers.

"The Sub-Branch online app allows people seeking plaques to search by name and the app will indicate which of 11 zones the plaque is in, as well as which side of the walkway it is on; so searchers should never have to travel more than about 80 metres – instead of 1.2 kilometres – to find the plaque they want," Mr O'Connor said.

"The app can be accessed here: <https://www.caloundrarsl.org.au>, which will direct to the app. Those unfamiliar with the area will also find a map of the Headland, as well as GPS co-ordinates of the 11 zones.

"The Memorial Walkway was start-

ed in 1994 and was run for many years by the late Dick Allchin. It is now administered by Frank Wratten and the Caloundra RSL Sub Branch Military Display team, with the help and welcome cooperation of the Sunshine Coast Council.

"On Remembrance Day 1995 the Caloundra Headland Memorial Walkway was dedicated as a War Memorial and a monument and plaque were installed.

"Caloundra Headland marks the start of the 'Brisbane Line' during World War II and, to mark its historical

and strategic significance, the Caloundra City Council granted the request to install plaques bearing the names of deceased defence personnel, both military and civilian, along the walkway.

"It thus became a part of Caloundra's history and heritage as well as a personal and tangible memorial for all the military veterans honoured this way."

For further details contact Terry O'Connor (Ph. 0401 147 107) or email [vicepresident@caloundra.rslqld.net.au](mailto:vicepresident@caloundra.rslqld.net.au)



*ONE OF the most momentous sites in the world on Remembrance Day was the Sydney Opera House with poppy images superimposed. Local photos, Page 6.*



**OUR MISSION:** To assist ALL veterans and their dependents in all matters relating to their health, welfare and well-being.

**Our website:** [www.vietnamvetssc.org.au](http://www.vietnamvetssc.org.au)

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**General information** Page 2.

Veterans & Families Counselling

**OPEN ARMS**

**1800 011 046**



## VIETNAM VETERANS ASSN of AUSTRALIA SUNSHINE COAST

SUB-BRANCH Inc.

**PATRON:** Laurie Drinkwater (pictured)

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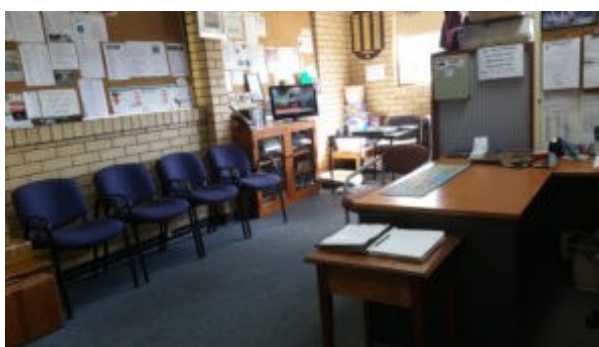
Located at the rear of the Library Complex Administration Building (upstairs) , Cnr Sixth Avenue and Beach Parade, Cotton Tree.

Office Phone 54794552 Fax. 5479 4558.

E-mail: [secretaryvvaasc@gmail.com](mailto:secretaryvvaasc@gmail.com)

**OFFICE HOURS:** From 1 November 2021,  
Monday to Friday 0900 to 1200 (9am — noon).  
(Closed from 20 December to reopen 10 January)

Next meetings 18 January, none in December



### Veterans & Families Counselling

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This service provides counselling and support to all veterans of overseas conflicts. The families of Vietnam Veterans are also able to receive counselling through us. Group programmes include the Lifestyle Management Program (5 days live-in with partner) and the Heart Safe Program (12 month gym). Other therapeutic/educational groups are being planned for the Sunshine Coast.

### Department of Veterans' Affairs

## Veterans' Advice Network (VAN)

129 Horton Parade, Maroochydore, QLD 4558.

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**OUR MISSION:** To assist all veterans and their dependents in all matters relating to their health, welfare and well-being.





### ***Out with the old, in with the new***

*Royal Australian Navy auxiliary oiler supply ship HMAS Sirius (left) has been farewelled in Sydney ahead of its decommissioning in Western Australia; (right) a new oiler vessel has been commissioned, HMAS Stalwart, based in WA.*



# **War Memorial celebrates 80 years**

The Australian War Memorial celebrated its 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary on Remembrance Day this year.

It was unveiled to the public by the Governor-General, Lord Gowrie on November 11, 1941, with more than 5000 people attending the event including Prime Minister John Curtin, General Sir Thomas Blamey and 18 recipients of the Victoria Cross.

The Memorial is more than a monument. Inside the sandstone building, with its copper-clad dome, selections from a vast National Collection of war relics, official and private records, art, photographs, film and sound are employed to tell the story of the Australian nation's experience in two world wars, regional conflicts, and international peacekeeping.

In 1927 an architectural competition to design an Australian war memorial failed to produce a clear winner. However, the work of two talented architects from Sydney stood out. As personalities they could not have been more different.

One was the flamboyant Emil Sodersteen, the other the more reserved yet no less innovative John Crust. Of all 69 entrants it was only Crust's design that came in under budget.

The two were encouraged to work together and submit a joint design. The new proposal incorporated both Sodersteen's monumental Art Deco vision, with its domed roof to the Hall of Memory, and Crust's concept of arched

cloisters to house the Roll of Honour and provide a place for contemplation and remembrance.

The joint design was accepted, but building work could not start till 1934. Emil Sodersteen resigned from the project in 1938, leaving the building to be completed by John Crust

As Australia entered the Second World War, the Memorial was still not complete. It finally was opened to the public, providing the essential form of the building we see today. It had been intended to be devoted primarily to the First World War; but it was clear that the new war was even more engulfing, and inevitably the scope of the Memorial would have to expand.

In 1941 the government extended the Memorial's charter to include the Second World War; in 1952 it was again extended to include all Australia's wars. The iconic design that was opened to the public in 1941 still forms the foundation and the heart of the building we see today.

As the centre for national commemoration, the Australian War Memorial is modernising and expanding its galleries as part of a \$500 million major development project to tell Australia's continuing story of service and sacrifice. It will include the experiences of Australians in conflict and on operations in Somalia, Rwanda, Cambodia, Solomon Islands, East Timor, Iraq, Afghanistan, northern Iraq, and Syria. – from <https://www.awm.gov.au/>

**BELOW LEFT: The Memorial just before the opening.**



## **DVA reviewing its home care, nursing**

The Nous Group and DVA are consulting with the veteran community and service providers on current arrangements for the Veterans' Home Care and Community Nursing programs and how they could be improved.

Service providers can access further details of how they can contribute to the review through the Veterans' Home Care and Community Nursing Bulletins.

More information: [dva.gov.au/newsroom](https://dva.gov.au/newsroom)

## From the President

I sincerely hope that you and yours are both fit and well. Well, this is my last report for the year and I can't believe that it's December already.

As in Garry's report, likewise, I'd like to sincerely thank all those who volunteered throughout the 2021 period. There is no doubt whatsoever that all members of the Association owe you a debt of gratitude for your continuous assistance throughout the year. Without your backing and support we would not be in the wholesome financial position that the Association currently finds itself in today. Well done!

Although things have been relatively quiet at the Drop-In Centre lately, we still manage to get the same old faces turning up for Thursday morning breakfast at the Surf Club. In fact, we have a few new ones. It's a great way to start the

day and most enjoyable to chat with members and friends alike. To 'Johnno' and 'Geoff', I offer thanks and appreciation not only from myself, but from all those who attend your Thursday morning 'banquet', and also your Committee members.

Speaking of your Committee members, I would also like to thank them for their time and efforts during the past year. They are a great group of people who never seem to tire when it comes to the question of 'what's good for the Association and/or its members.

In all we have a great Association being looked after by an excellent Committee with some outstanding members. I feel very proud to be the President of such a group.

As you would have read in a recent 'Heads-Up' message, the Drop-In Centre will be closed for a short

time over the Christmas period. If any member; partner of a member or widow of a past member feels depressed, miserable or disheartened, or has a need to talk to someone, then I can be contacted on my mobile; 0410 514204.

Having said that, I hope everyone has a wonderful Christmas, is able to catch up with family and friends, keeps safe and is able to celebrate the coming new year.

**Best Regards,  
Mick Howe,  
President.**



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## From the Secretary

I'd like to dedicate this month's report to the many volunteers who have assisted over the last year, and also those who now find it too difficult, but have assisted in years gone by.

This association was founded by volunteers and continues to operate on a day to day basis, because of those volunteers.

Despite losing regular fund raiser (Bunnings Sausage Sizzle) we have managed to continue to maintain a reasonable level of funds, to keep the treasurer smiling.

Volunteering can be a gratifying and satisfying task, especially with like minded people. This is reflected in the many people who continue to answer the call from our association as in the past year.

2021 was again a year of compliance because of Covid 19, and despite this, we have again had what can only be described as a very successful year.

To the volunteers that perform

duty officers Monday to Friday, a big thank you. Remember to drop in occasionally and say hello to these men and women who run the Drop In Centre and keep it open to share a cuppa and a chat.

It's amazing how that small talk regarding your service and life after can comfort some people.

I know a lot of members have avoided the DIC over the past couple of years because of restrictions, but with the high level of vaccinations we are currently experiencing, the risk factor is diminishing by the day.

The Ladies Day luncheon is fast becoming a reality and the RSL is prepared to again offer an outstanding lunch for lady members, partners of members and widows. If you could arrive at the function by 11.45hrs it would be appreciated.

In closing, I would like to thank those members and friends who have contributed in some way to our association over the past year.

**Kind regards**  
**Garry King**  
**Secretary**



*OUR good friends Thai and Diamond (both third from left) brought banh mi for lunch after the recent monthly meeting. Enjoying the fare were (from left) Scotty, Col Parkin, John Cunningham, Garry King, Mick Howe (sitting), Bob Johnson, Chrissy Wessels and Athol Johnson. — photo Win Fowles.*



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**Remembrance Day was commemorated across the Sunshine Coast and across the world:**



**AT Caloundra sub-branch president Heather Christie laid a wreath (above); Maroochydore SHS and Mooloolaba SS students provided music at Cotton Tree (above right) and students laid wreaths at the Tewantin-Noosa service. — Facebook photos.**



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**MORE than 50 veterans turned up at the November Rifleman's Lunch at Mooloolaba Surf Club. They included Afghanistan veteran Heston Russell, Managing Director at Veteran Support Force (top, dark shirt).**

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# How Australians avoided a massacre at Nui Le

**By Greg Dodds\***

This was the last major action by Australians in the Viet Nam War 50 years ago and not too many Australians know about it. Delta Company lost the last infantry soldier killed and the last National Serviceman to die in action, Pte Ralph Niblett, Machine Gunner 11 Platoon.

In the Battle of Nui Le the North Vietnamese 33rd Regiment came within a whisker of destroying an entire Australian infantry company. If they'd been successful, it would have been the greatest loss for the Australian Army since World War II. But what could have been a rout was turned around.

In the end six Australian and 18 North Vietnamese lives were lost. Colonel Nguyen Van Thuong – one of the brightest stars in the North Vietnamese Army – pronounced himself satisfied with their work.

The last of his 1100 men had arrived at Nui Le, 100km east of Saigon in Phuoc Tuy Province, at 5am. The hike from the base area in the May Tao in South Vietnam had been uneventful, but it was heavy going given the load of ammunition and heavy weapons they were carrying. Nevertheless, they got to work immediately digging defences and offensive positions – work that included all the refinements developed by experienced infantry soldiers over years of war: fire lanes, tunnels linking bunkers and a network of spider holes.

People often thought of the Vietnamese enemy as guerrillas who got around in black pyjamas. They were wrong. North Vietnam had a professional army made up of well-trained soldiers, organised in standard military units. The appearance of the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) units on a battlefield usually inspired dread

among Allied soldiers and the 33rd Regiment was among the best of the best.

By contrast, the Australian Army usually operated in companies of 120 men. This was more than enough to deal with Viet Cong units, but an unexpected encounter with NVA regulars could test their abilities to the limit.

As Thuong surveyed the scene, it was still just short of noon on September 20, 1971. Thuong stood atop a small hill and watched as his soldiers systematically turned the bunkers and trenches into a zone of death for any force that stumbled into the area. Lesser troops would have just gone through the motions, they were the reserve battalion after all, but these people really put their minds and souls into it.

Continuing his inspection, he noted a deep creek bed several hundred metres away from the main NVA position.

- Continued next page.

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**Darren Fletcher**  
Dip D.T Adv Dip D.P. (Syd)

Dental Prosthetist



**- from previous page**

The soldiers had paid no attention to it and after brief reflection, he endorsed their decision. It could be significant in other contexts but not for the defence of his headquarters.

Thuong's background was in military intelligence and he had built his reputation on an uncanny ability to predict enemy reactions. He had never fought the Australians, but he had heard they were not as brutish in their behaviour to the local population as the Americans. No matter; he had been ordered by Hanoi to inflict severe damage on the Australians before

they withdrew their troops to Australia. He was going to use the 3rd Battalion of the 33rd Regiment to do just that. Apart from being up to full strength of 400 men, that battalion had deep experience of ambushes in the past.

Of particular interest to him was the total absence of Australian artillery. Several reports from Viet Cong spies had reported that most of the regiment's artillery was being towed off and packed into crates in Vung Tau before being shipped back to Australia.

This would be a fight between infantry alone and Thuong was confident

that his own troops would not be found wanting.

Since it would be insane to attack the Australians in their main base at Nui Dat, Thuong had decided to 'lure the tiger from the mountain' and kill it on ground of his choosing. In other words, he had ordered his 3rd Battalion to prepare a major ambush just off Route 2.

These days, Route 2 is a major north-south highway in Vietnam. Then it was more of a goat track. He would stage a serious incident on Route 2 near Ngai Giao and when the Australians sent a reaction force (likely to be a company of soldiers in armoured personnel carriers), he would annihilate them in an even bigger ambush. He had done this successfully to US and South Vietnamese forces dozens of times. He could not see why this wouldn't work with the Australians.

About 5km away, Colonel Jim Hughes (photo), commander of 4RAR/NZ, sat on Courtenay Hill, just off Route 2, and about 10km from the Australian HQ at Nui Dat, and wondered.



Around him, his support and administration companies sat in their well-prepared bunkers and trenches; the place was better defended than even Nui Dat, but he was haunted by a deep personal unease.

There was little more than one month to go before his battalion withdrew from Nui Dat back to Australia, yet he was in the very north of Phuoc Tuy patrolling for "enemy activity." There had been brief sightings of lights in the deep jungle to the East and isolated gunshots.

There were also "unofficial" Special Air Service reports of large and recent NVA tracks (boot prints by the hundreds) through the jungle heading to Route 2, but personal checks with intelligence officers and his own staff had drawn a blank. Clearly nothing was being kept from him deliberately, but he still felt ill at ease.

**- continued Page 12.**

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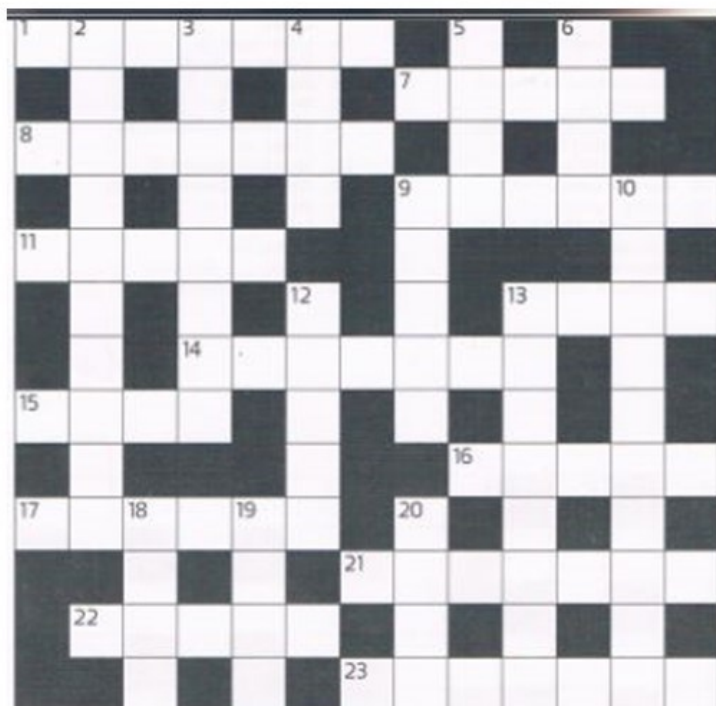
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# JC's BEFUDDLEMENT PAGE ....



## Across

1. Character for Dickens (7)
7. English royal house (5)
8. Kindergarten (7)
9. Recess (6)
11. Eskimo Boat (5)
13. Animal pen (4)
14. Satan ((7)
15. Shift (4)
16. Author of Three Musketeer's (5)
17. Wily (6)
21. South\_\_\_Musical (7)
22. Cavalry sword (5)
23. One of the senses (7)

## Down

2. Brave (10)
3. Hindrance (8)
4. Hindu spiritual teacher (4)
5. Lack-lustre (4)
6. Spinning toy (2-2)
9. In the air (5)
10. Non-flesh eater (10)
12. Get a goal (5)
13. Casino worker (8)
18. Ambush (4)
19. Rate (anag) (4)
20. Wan (4)

## Christmas Conundrums

1. What's so special about the Christmas alphabet?
2. What did Santa say when his toys were naughty?
3. What do you have in December that you don't have in any other month?
4. How did Darth Vader know what Luke Skywalker was getting for Christmas?
5. What happens if you eat the Christmas decorations?
6. What did Adam say on the day before Christmas?



## Christmas Trivia



1. Who was the star of the Christmas movie Jingle All the Way?
2. Who tries to stop Christmas from coming, by stealing all things of Christmas from "the Who's"?
3. Who was the star of the movie titled White Christmas?
4. What is the first name of Scrooge, the principal character of the novel, A Christmas Carol?
5. Who was the author of A Christmas Carol?
6. How many ghosts are there in A Christmas Carol?
7. What was the name of the animated Christmas movie featuring Tom Hanks?
8. What made Frosty come to life in the movie "Frosty the Snowman"?
9. Why did the other reindeer pick on Rudolph?
10. How many reindeer were in the story "Twas the Night Before Christmas?"
11. Who spies on kids and reports back to Santa?
12. What were the names of the Ghosts in A Christmas Carol?
13. What animated film depicted a train that took kids to the North Pole on Christmas Eve?
14. What does Santa say at the end of "A Visit from St. Nicholas" book?
15. What Bing Cosby song is the best-selling single ever?
16. What was the real department store featured in a Christmas movie? What movie?
17. Which of these companies was the first to use Santa Clause in an advertisement? (a Pepsi (b Coca-Cola (c 7-Up (d Fanta
18. Which country did the gingerbread house come from? (a Austria (b Switzerland (c Germany (d United States
19. What kind of Christmas does Elvis Presley sing about? (a White (b Red (c Blue (d Snowy
20. Which reindeer helps Rudolph fly at the reindeer games? (a Donner (b Clarice (c Dancer (d Blitzen
21. Which reindeer is Rudolph's dad? (a Dancer (b Dixon (c Donner (d Blitzen
22. Which Christmas movie has been played more than any other? (a A Christmas Story (b Home Alone (c Frosty the Snowman (d It's a Wonderful Life

• **ALL ANSWERS PAGE 17**



# When you're laughing, the whole world laughs with you

Apparently, you can't go alone. You have to be in Kahoots with someone.

I've also never been in Cognito. I hear no one recognises you there.

I have, however, been in Sane. They don't have an airport; you have to be driven there.

I have made several trips there, thanks to my children, friends, family and work.

I would like to go to Conclusions, but you have to jump, and I'm not too much on physical activity anymore.

I have also been in Doubt. That is a sad place to go, and I try not to visit there too often.

I've been in Flexible, but only when it was very important to stand firm.

Sometimes I'm in Capable, and I go there more often as I'm getting older.

One of my favourite places to be is in Suspense! It really gets the adrenaline flowing and pumps up the old heart!

At my age I need all the stimuli I can get!

I may have been in Continent, but I don't remember what country I was in. It's an age thing.

They tell me it is very wet and damp there. — from Gordon Hurford

- I find it ironic that the colours red, white, and blue stand for freedom, until they're flashing behind you.

- Today a man knocked on my door and asked for a small donation towards the local swimming pool, so I gave him a glass of water.

- I changed my password to "incorrect" so whenever I forget it the computer will say, "Your password is incorrect."

- If you can smile when things go wrong, you have someone in mind to blame.

- Never tell your problems to anyone, because 20 percent don't care and the other 80 per cent are glad you have them.

- Doesn't expecting the unexpected mean that the unexpected is actually expected?

- Take my advice — I'm not using it.

- I hate it when people use big words just to make themselves sound perspicacious.

- Hospitality is the art of making guests feel like they're at home when you wish they were.

- I bought a vacuum cleaner six months ago and so far all it's been doing is gathering dust.

- I'll bet you \$4,567 you can't guess how much I owe my bookie.

- Behind every great man is a woman rolling her eyes.

- If you keep your feet firmly on the ground, you'll have trouble putting on your pants.

- When I married Ms. Right, I had no idea her first name was Always.

- Give me ambiguity or give me something else.

- He who laughs last thinks slowest.

- I like long walks, especially when they're taken by people who annoy me.

- I was going to wear my camouflage shirt today, but I could-

n't find it.

- Sometimes I wake up grumpy; other times I let her sleep.

- Money is the root of all wealth.

- No matter how much you push the envelope, it'll still be stationery.

*Happiness is ...*

Infantry: a good rifle.

Cavalry: a big tank.

Artillery: a loud boom.

*A long route march with full kit*

Infantry: 20 kilometres.

Cavalry: from the barracks to the tank.

Artillery: what's a route march?

*Favourite mode of transportation*

Infantry: anything but walking.

Cavalry: tanks. Tanks. Tanks and more tanks.

Artillery: don't you have to move around to require transport?

*Other trades*

Infantry: waste of rations.

Cavalry: waste of rations.

Artillery: waste of rations.

*Biggest luxury in the field*

Infantry: engineers blowing trenches for them with explosives.

Cavalry: grunts to dig their trenches for them.

Artillery: cable television.

*Biggest gripe in the field*

Infantry: the weather.

Cavalry: coffee maker in tank not working.

Artillery: only having basic cable television.

*Breakfast in the field*

Infantry: I don't care what it is, as long as I can sit down to eat it.

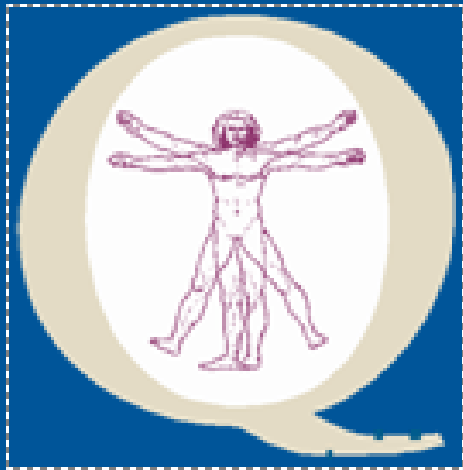
Cavalry: hot coffee and rum with a beer chaser.

Artillery: eggs over easy, bacon, sausages, toast and cappuccino. — from <https://rbh49.com/KVAA/humour.php>



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# Waiting for the NVA

- from Page 9.

Australian infantry fought in companies of 120 soldiers. Hughes had three companies at his disposal.

He had C company patrolling to the west of Route in real "tiger country," and he had given them three guns from the artillery battery to support them. D Company was on the east side of Route 2 and should have had the easier time; the jungle there was dense but appeared to be largely unoccupied.

B Company was to the south near Binh Ba, with the other three guns and a troop of armoured personnel carriers. It was all standard stuff but he still had that feeling of unease that he had missed something. He ordered each company to consolidate and patrol in company groups only and then settled down to wait.

He didn't have to wait long.

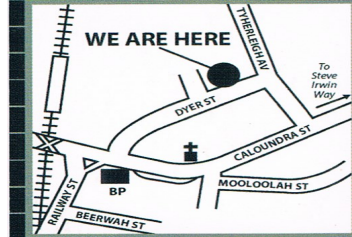
The first step of the tiger lure came at about midnight when NVA soldiers attacked the hamlet of Ngai Giao. This was occupied by mainly Vietnamese farmers but quick thinking by the village-militia commander turned it into an expensive fiasco for the attackers.

The second attempted lure came not long after. The following morning, a troop of Australian armoured vehicles returning from a supply run to Courtenay Hill was ambushed by an NVA squad. Fortunately for the Australians, a rocket grenade failed to go off when it hit the first vehicle and the small convoy just continued on its way to Nui Dat.

At this point, Colonel Thuong must have been more than a bit annoyed. His troops had staged two serious incidents that should have had an Australian reaction force barrelling out of Nui Dat, leading up to Route 2 and right into his ambush.

But the Viet Cong spies around the Australian base reported no activity. It was though the Australians were all asleep. There was no particular animus towards the Australians among the people of Phuoc Tuy province. But there was the real fear of an American B-52 bomber strike; unusually, Thuong's entire regiment was concentrated in one spot and a single bombing run could kill them all.

- Continued next page.



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- from previous page.

No, he would not take that chance, so he ordered the third battalion to lift the ambush and the entire regiment would return to their base area in the May Tao Mountains.

Mid-morning of September 21, D Company discovered the wide tracks left by the 33 Regiment as it moved to its ambush position two nights earlier. Unwisely, it decided to follow the tracks.

Thirty minutes later, it exchanged fire with the security elements of 33rd Regiments' headquarters. The battle of Nui Le had begun.

The initial NVA reaction was aggressive but relatively light. Their main purpose was to defend their regimental headquarters against direct attack. The Australians pulled back to a position from where they could resupply and evacuate their wounded.

But what the Australians did next must have struck the Vietnamese as insane. Instead of withdrawing down their path of approach and getting out of trouble, they headed off on a bearing that may have been intended to find a flank, but actually took them into the killing zone prepared by Thuong's 2nd battalion the day before. And, unlike the surprised elements of the NVA security force encountered first by D Company, the troops of 2nd Battalion were alert and waiting for them.

About 30 minutes into their new course, the soldiers of

## Nui Le battle had begun

D Company were hit with a wall of fire as Thuong's 2nd Battalion opened up at point blank range. Because they had held fire until the last moment, they had most of the company pinned down and unable to manoeuvre. The Australians could not fight their way out of this one and would have to be rescued.



The Task Force Commander ordered B Company mounted in APCs to assist them but a highly effective NVA mortar barrage put paid to that idea. Next the Australian Task Force Commander called on the US air force to help. The various items on their menu may have thrilled the Allied audience but did not concern the NVA very much. The thumping of the NVA's massive 12.7 heavy machine guns reminded the American pilots of what awaited them if they flew too low.

Whatever impact the napalm strike may have had on the rest of the regiment, it did not lift the crushing pressure on D Company one iota. But when the aircraft returned to their base, D Company received a report that the pilots had seen NVA soldiers pouring out of the rear of the bunker system.

- continued next page.

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### - from Page 13

An aggressive company attack now would see D Company storm an almost empty bunker system and break free of the NVA that was slowly crushing them.

Unfortunately for the Australians, this was an NVA “false flight” strategy — which deliberately sent soldiers running from the scene of an attack, to mislead aerial observation — and when D Company went to attack, it faced the full and undiminished fire of the entrenched NVA battalion.

Four dead and a dozen wounded Australians later, the attack was abandoned and the exhausted Australians hunkered down in an area the size of an average Australian backyard. Darkness began to fall.

At some point in the afternoon, while waiting out the airstrikes, Colonel Thuong devised a plan that would destroy the entrapped D Company at no great risk to his own soldiers. He had the Australian Company just where he wanted them (surrounded and with no chance of relief) and now there was nothing they could do to save themselves.

When the sun came up the next morning, the 33rd Regiment would be back in its base area in the May Tao Mountains. Only the 120 or so dead bodies of D Compa-

ny's soldiers would show that there had even been a battle there.

Thuong called the battlefield director and explained his plan, and the thinking behind it. This largely rested on the existence of the creek bed in front of the NVA battalion position. D Company was pinned down between the entrenched 2nd Battalion and the creek bed. If he could get enough soldiers into the creek bed, they could assault D Company from the rear and it would be all over in a few moments.

In the words of Cpl W Dowell of D Company, “I could only see two other blokes from my section and they both had just SLRs (self-loading rifles). We were not even going to delay those blokes in the creek bed. They'd cut through us like a hot knife through butter.”

Fortunately for him he was wrong. Although salvation came from an unlikely source. Kept separated from his charts and radio by the zealous attention of an NVA machine gunner, the artillery officer (FO) attached to D Company ended up lying face down in the mud in the rapidly gathering gloom of the jungle doing the trigonometry for an artillery strike in his head (thank you Mrs. Gibbs of the Math's class, Rockhampton High School) and then yelling the fire mission coordinates to the radio operator.

- continued page 16.



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your home environment and assist you to work out what item will best suit your needs and make sure you have somewhere safe and secure to store it and charge it. Once approved your OT will arrange a trial of suitable electric scooters or wheelchairs to take place at your home. Then once it is delivered your OT will continue to work with you to ensure you can safely operate the scooter or wheelchair.

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**2 December 1972:** With weeks of being elected, the Labor Government releases the last imprisoned resisters and begins to finalise the withdrawal of forces from Vietnam.

**8 December 1941:** A day after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States, Britain and Australia declared war on Japan.

**9 December 1971:** 4 RAR, the last Australian infantry battalion in South Vietnam, sails for Australia on board *HMAS Sydney*.

**18 December 1964:** In response to requests from the US president and South Vietnam prime minister for another 200 advisers, the Australian Government offers to send ground troops to South Vietnam.

**25 December:** Christmas Day, commemorating the birth of Jesus of Nazareth. The exact date is not known, but it has been celebrated on this day since 336 AD.

**25 December 1974:** Cyclone Tracy hit Darwin in the small hours of Christmas Day, killing 71 people and devastated 80 per cent of the city.

**26 December 1859:** European wild rabbits were introduced into Australia so they could be hunted for sport, within 50 years spreading devastatingly across almost the entire continent.

## December-January Timeline

**26 December 1906:** The first multi-reel, feature-length film in the world, *The Story of the Kelly Gang*, opened at the Athenaeum Theatre in Melbourne.

**1 January 1816:** The first public hospital in Australia, the Rum Hospital (pictured), opened. In 1894 it was renamed Sydney Hospital.

**1 January 1901:** Australia became a nation when the British Parliament passed legislation enabling the six Australian colonies to collectively govern in their own right as the Commonwealth of Australia.

**22 January 1825:** Moreton Bay Penal Settlement (now Brisbane) was established as a place of exile and punishment for re-offending convicts.

**22 January 1931:** Sir Isaac Alfred Isaacs became our first Australian-born governor-general. He was a politician, a High Court judge and a founding father of Federation.

**30 January 1968:** Beginning of the Tet Offensive in Vietnam as Northern troops attacked 36 provincial capitals and five major cities in the South. US forces eventually achieved victory militarily, but it was a propaganda victory for the Vietnamese.



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### - from Page 14

The message was flicked to the three Australian artillery guns to the west of Courtenay Hill. Theoretically they were just out of range but the gunners had a go anyway. A minute after his radio message, the distant stuttering of guns to the west told him the shells were on their way. He held his breath – where would the shells land and would they be in time?

Well, they were on time and right on target and they gave Colonel Thuong cause to reconsider. Accurate Australian artillery fire and the rapidly falling light had weakened his strong hand; the lives of his men were not worth the risk. That Viet Cong intelligence was wrong was bad enough, but how wrong was it?

There could be another 30 guns or so waiting patiently for the whistle blast that would get his soldiers to attack. His soldiers could be slaughtered by a blizzard of white-hot shrapnel. He just didn't know.

He may, too, have reflected that while victory was almost certain, it was going to cost him; the soldiers of 4RAR were not going down without a savage fight.

Possessed by those ideas, Thuong made the most fateful decision of that day; shortly thereafter his assault teams were glimpsed going back out of the creek bed. By the next morning, the 33rd Regiment had disappeared. The battle of Nui Le was over.

The next day there were all sorts of visits to the battlefield by Australian and American Generals (once it was certain that all of the 33rd Regiment had really gone).

Australian Brigadier Bruce McDonald murmured that the North Vietnamese advance at Nui Le was “politically motivated” (the Vietnamese presidential elections were a couple of weeks away) – as if this excused himself and his staff from inaccurate prediction and analysis. It was a view that suited his headquarters staff, particularly the intelligence officers, down to the ground. The political “explanation” survives in the final chapters of the official history published in 2014.

Several weeks later, the medals turned up with the rations, so to speak. Obsessed with getting the Task Force out of Vietnam, Canberra's treatment of awards was almost flippant. Jim Hughes got a DSO, that was a standard award for battalion commanders in Vietnam and the Commander of D Company received a Military Cross for enduring what must have been the worst afternoon of his life. And as for the artillery officer (the FO) whose extraordinary skill and coolness kept D Company alive and well when he summoned up the last minute rescue from the guns? He got nothing, nothing at all!!!

### Postscript :

A few weeks after the battle, I took an interrogation team to speak to a badly wounded North Vietnamese soldier, Sergeant Kot, from 33 Regiment who had been cap-



## All ‘politically motivated’?

tured after an attack on a US Army position in Long Khanh Province. We hoped to get some information from him on what happened at Nui Le.

It turned out we had the wrong man. As we made tracks back to base, I commented to one of our South Vietnamese corporals that I'd found one aspect of Sergeant Kot's behaviour quite odd: he kept staring at me. Staring a people is bad manners in Vietnam. It didn't seem to me to be right.

“I wouldn't worry about it Sir,” replied the corporal. “It's probably because you're the first one of you people that he's seen close up who's been alive.” For some reason, the other Vietnamese in our group all thought this was hilarious.

*\* By Greg Dodds (left) who, after a long illness, passed away in April 2020. His book, Ships in the Night: A Vietnam War Story, was published after his death by Denis Gustin and Martin Walsh and Estate of Gregory Ronald Dodds (5 Dec 2020). Greg Dodds was a Dun-*

*troon graduate and a member of the Australian intelligence staff at Nui Dat in 1971. He later served as a political staffer, senior diplomat and as Director, Australia Japan Foundation in Japan, Senior Trade Commissioner Japan and Executive General Manager, Austrade, North East Asia. This article was published by Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia.*







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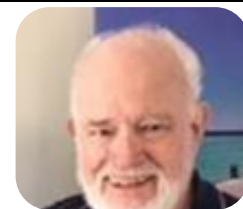
I do not have to tell anyone that this year is at an end, nor that this year appears to have flown faster than any other of living memory. Restrictions were enforced on us by the Covid-19 pandemic, yet, we have managed to manoeuvre our way through them, and now enjoy freedoms of daily life, denied to so many Australians for so long.

We have survived, or at least, most of us have, and we must surely thank our God for His safe deliverance for our nation.

Yet, Christmas 2021 for many of us will never be the same as previous Festive Seasons. Many of us have farewelled a loved one over the past 12 months, and not only will there be an empty chair at our Christmas table on the 25th, but there is a void in our hearts that can never be replaced. For those whose absence will be missed, we share this uneasy experience with you.

But amid the gloom of the pandemic, there have been some amazing and unexpected highs. Some of you know that our grandson, Toby, went to Melbourne as part of a team sent from the Sunshine Coast to establish a church in Ringwood. No sooner

## Fireside with the Padre



had they arrived in Melbourne, than the pandemic hit vigorously, and they were unable to meet in person.

They established a video ministry which reached out to many. When they had their first face-to-face meeting, their new church saw 80 worshippers attend. Despite on and off restrictions since, it is so good to see that their numbers are growing.

I have heard several other reports of churches that have expanded, both in numbers and in the types of ministries they have been able to offer to people shut out of regular worship. Our limited numbers at any function, our mask-wearing, our VR Codes check-in has not been all negative, but many positives have come out of the last 20 months of lockdown.

Did not the crowds that thronged to Armistice Day services around Australia, simply warm the cockles of your heart as they did mine?

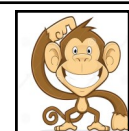
We still must hold up those who have suffered during the pandemic. For those who have lost loved ones, we pray for their families. For those who have lost jobs because of the pandemic, we uphold them in our thoughts and prayers. For the health professionals who have cared for the sick and often placed themselves in jeopardy, we thank them. Their care and bravery will never be forgotten.

May I, as usual, encourage you and your family to take time to attend a church of your choosing and hear again, the message of the Christ child. I can guarantee your Pastor or Priest will welcome you.

Blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year from Annette and me, and may God richly bless you and your family at this Holy and meaningful time.

**Arthur Fry**  
**Honorary Chaplain**

## Answers from page 11



### Trivia Answers

1. Arnold Schwarzenegger
2. The Grinch
3. Bing Crosby
4. Ebenezer (pictured)
5. Charles Dickens
6. Four
7. The Polar Express
8. His hat
9. His rudy red nose
10. Eight. Rudolph wasn't in the story.
11. Elf on a Shelf
12. Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present, and Yet to Come
13. The Polar Express
14. Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good night!
15. White Christmas
16. Macy's in Miracle on 34th Street
17. Coca-Cola
18. Germany
19. Blue
20. Clarice
21. Donner
22. It's a Wonderful Life



### Crossword Answers

**Across:** 1. Scrooge, 7. Tudor, 8. Nursery, 9. Alcove, 11. Kayak, 13. Cage, 14. Lucifer, 15. Move, 16. Dumas, 17. Astute, 21. Pacific, 22. Sabre, 23. Hearing.

**Down:-** 2. Courageous, 3. Obstacle, 4. Guru, 5. Dull, 6. Yo-yo, 9. Aloft, 10. Vegetarian, 12. Score, 13. Croupier, 18. Trap, 19. Tare, 20. Pale.

### Christmas Conundrums

1. There's Noel.
2. Toys will be toys.
3. The letter 'D'.
4. Because he felt his presents
5. You get tinselitis
6. It's Christmas, Eve



- From Alexsm—Dreamtime.com



## MARKING R.A.A.F. CENTENARY

A selection from the Australian War Memorial's highlights of the RAAF Centenary which can be viewed at <https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/airforce100>



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# Roll of Honour – Vietnam, December/January 1962-75 ...

## December 1965

Fotheringham, Alexander Henry T (36543), 28, 1RAR, Cpl, Inverell Cemetery, NSW.

Simpson, Thomas (36205), 27, 105 FldBtry, Gnr, Terendak Military Cemetery, Melaka, Malaysia.

## December 1966

Lithgow, Colin Thomas (214752), 27, 6RAR, LCpl (TempCpl), Rookwood Crematorium, Sydney.

Sullivan, Paul Charles (3786696), 21, 5RAR, Pte, Garden of Remembrance, Springvale, Melbourne.

## December 1967

Birse, Robert Graham (215349), 23, 4FldRegt, Lt, Lawn Cemetery and Memorial Park, Palmdale, NSW.

Fewquandie, Francis John (1411181), 23, 2RAR, Pte, Walkerston Cemetery, Walkerston, Qld.

Henderson, Malcolm Austin (51286), 36, AATTv, WO2, Karrakatta Cemetery, Karrakatta, Perth.

Hyland, Francis Arthur (6708488), 22, 2RAR, Pte, Wynyard Cemetery, Tas.

Robertson, Arthur James (2411510), 30, AATTv (Att.RAI), Sgt (TempWO2), Frenchs Forest Bushland Cemetery, Sydney.

Seiler, Ronald (212909), 28, AATTv (Att.RAI), Sgt (TempWO2), Rookwood Military Cemetery, Sydney.

## December 1968

Cox, Raymond John (2787020), 22, 1RAR, Pte, Goulburn Cemetery, NSW.

Gaffney, Ronald James (3793157), 21, 9RAR, Pte, Mudgee General Cemetery, NSW.

Garrigan, John (310089), 40, RAA (Att AATTv), WO2, Sale War Cemetery, Vic.

Hannaford, Michael John (3791920), 21, CSqdn, 1ArmRegt, Trp, Garden of Remembrance, Springvale, Melbourne.

Kalma, John Henry (215637), 22, 1RAR, LCpl, Garden of Remembrance, Rookwood, Sydney.

Rands, John Milton (2787069), 22, 1RAR, LCpl, Temora General Cemetery, NSW.

Roost, Christopher William (5715153), 22, 4RAR, Pte, Karrakatta Cemetery, Perth.

## December 1969

Brown, Allen Roy (3794895), 21, 6RAR, Pte, Springvale Crematorium, Melbourne.

Buchan, Robert (55613), 22, 6RAR, Pte, Garden of Remembrance, Perth (Ashes later sent to relatives in Scotland).

Cassano, "Nick" John (5716427), 22, 5RAR, Pte, Karrakatta Cemetery, Perth.

Donald, Barry Creig (29745), 29, 161 (Ind) RecceFlt, Capt., Ipswich, Qld.

Evans, Thomas Arthur (3794256), 21, 1ATF, Pte, Woronora Crematorium, Sutherland, Sydney.

Fitzpatrick, Bryan Francis (A34167), 37, 2SqdnRAAF, Cpl, Fawcner Crematorium & Memorial Park, Melbourne.

French, Vivian Albert (1202185), 19, 3CavRegt, Trp, Mount Gravatt Cemetery, Brisbane

Gould, Eric George (55890), 22, 8RAR, Pte, Garden of Remembrance, War Cemetery and Annex, Perth.

Greene, John Gerard (2791447), 21, 1FldSqdn, Spr, Woden Cemetery, Phillip, Canberra.

Jellie, Alan Douglas (39510), 22, 161 (Ind) RecceFlt, 2Lt, Centennial Park Cemetery, Adelaide.

Marks-Chapman, Peter Robert (38801), 25, 6RAR, Lt, Garden of Remembrance, Springvale, Melbourne.

Robertson, Malcolm Robert (3793978), 21, 1ALSG, Pte, Lilydale Cemetery, Melbourne.

Stanford, Gregory Ian (2790070), 22, 6RAR, LCpl, Forest Lawn Memorial Park, Leppington, NSW.

Voyzey, Douglas James (2137680), 22, 3CavRegt, Trp, Evergreen Memorial Park, Tamworth, NSW.

Woolley, Ivan Alfred (A118435), 22, 2SqdnRAAF, AC, Mount Gravatt Cemetery and Crematorium, Brisbane.

## December 1970

Galvin, Wallace James (214101), 32, Hq 26 CoyRAASC, Sgt, Eastern Suburbs Memorial Park, Matraville, Sydney.

Knight, Peter Raymond (A318937), 36, 1OSU, LAC, Brighton General Cemetery, Melbourne.

Lloyd, Allan (3797086), 20, 7RAR, Pte, Traralgon Cemetery, Vic.

Moss, Allan Brian (4410968), 22, Det52, SuppPlt (RAASC), Cpl (TempSgt), Evergreen Memorial Park, Enfield, Adelaide.

Nichols, Raymond Kevin (1797), 39, 106 FldWksp, Springvale Crematorium, Melbourne.

Luff, Neville Francis (28325), 36, 3CavRegt, Pinegrove Memorial Park, Minchinbury, Blacktown City, NSW.

## January 1966

Bade, Kenneth Wilfred (17071), 27, 105FldBtry, Capt, Mount Thompson Crematorium, Brisbane.

Bowtell, Robert Walter (213151), 33, 3FldTrp, Cpl, Macquarie Park Cemetery and Crematorium, Sydney.

Clark, Christopher (215214), 20, 1RAR, Pte, Woden Cemetery, Phillip, Canberra.

Coxon, Ronald Edward (38012), 27, 1RAR, LCpl, Shepparton Cemetery, Shepparton, Vic.

Home, Neville Wayne (215217), 19, 1RAR, Pte, War Cemetery, Rookwood General Cemetery, Sydney.

Lees, Ronald Victor (26182), 37, RAA (AttAATTv), Sgt (TempWO2), War Cemetery, Rookwood General Cemetery, Sydney.

Penn, Desmond Hugh (5411479), 26, 1RAR, Pte, Karrakatta Cemetery, Perth.

Petersen, Bror Ola (5411305), 25, 1RAR, Pte, Karrakatta Cemetery, Perth.

## ... Roll of Honour – Vietnam, December/January 1962-75

Wilson, Mervyn Arthur F. (213780), 29, 1RAR, Pte, War Cemetery, Rookwood General Cemetery, Sydney.

*January 1967*

Tweedie, Geoffrey Lawrence (3787416), 21, 6RAR, Pte, Garden of Remembrance, Springvale, Melbourne.

*January 1968*

Bell, Alec Ernest James (5714453), 21, 7RAR, Pte, Karrakatta Cemetery, Perth.

Binning, Raymond Paul (4410704), 21, 2RAR, Pte, Centennial Park Cemetery, Adelaide.

Davison, Walter Johnston (311546), 27, 8FIdAmb (att.2RAR), Pte, Garden of Remembrance, Springvale, Melbourne.

Morrison, Dayle William (1732186), 22, 2RAR, Pte, Pinnaroo Cemetery and Crematorium, Brisbane.

Norley, Graham Leonard (43058), 23, 2RAR, LCpl (Temp.Cpl), Centennial Park Cemetery, Adelaide.

Trzecinski, Paul Zigmund (216115), 21, 7RAR, Pte, Rookwood Military Cemetery, Sydney.

*January 1969*

Cock, John Raymond (42564), 29, 9RAR, Sgt, Centennial Park Cemetery, Adelaide.

Duroux, Jeffrey Max (15230), 28, 9RAR, Sgt, Centennial Park Cemetery, Adelaide.

Graham, Allan Walter (43528), 22, 9RAR, Cpl, Garden of Remembrance, Centennial Park Cemetery, Adelaide.

Graham, Samuel (2787716), 22, 4RAR, Pte, Woden Cemetery, Phillip, Canberra.

Harris, Ronald Arthur (5410968), 26, 2SASSqdn, LCpl (Temp.Cpl), Karrakatta Cemetery, Perth.

Huelin, Antony Jeffrey (O27710), 25, RAN HelFit, A/SubLt, Pinnaroo Cemetery and Crematorium, Brisbane.

Key, Robert MacDonald (39493), 21, 9RAR, Pte, Springvale Crematorium, Melbourne.

Malone, Peter Anthony (215983), 21, 3CavRegt, Trp, Liverpool Cemetery, Sydney.

Meredith, Thomas Frederick (2788798), 22, 9RAR, Pte, Rookwood Necropolis, Sydney.

Musicka, Harold Robert (4717754), 23, 9RAR, Cpl, Centennial Park Cemetery, Adelaide.

Nagle, George (39565), 23, 9RAR, Pte, Garden of Remembrance, Springvale, Melbourne.

Phillips, Reginald Arthur (4719545), 21, 9RAR, Pte, Murray Bridge Cemetery, SA.

Plane, Bruce James (4719981), 21, 9RAR, Pte, Ardrossan Cemetery, SA.

Ramsay, Joseph Steven (1733037), 22, 4RAR, Pte, Pinnaroo Cemetery and Crematorium, Brisbane.

Smith, Peter Charles (2788912), 24, 9RAR, Pte, Rookwood Crematorium, Sydney.

Sykes, Arnold (55431), 25, 9RAR, Pte, Bunbury General Cemetery, WA.



*January 1970*

Clifford, Laurence Ian (42132), 39, ASqdn3CavRegt, Centennial Park Cemetery, SA.

Engstrom, Ronald John (18797), 22, 1FIdSqdn, Cpl, Pinnaroo Cemetery and Crematorium, Brisbane.

Hollis, Anthony Edward (2786682), 23, 1FIdSqdn, Spr, Woronora General Cemetery, Sutherland, Sydney.

Stevens, John George (313122), 21, 5RAR, Pte, Woden Cemetery, Phillip, Canberra.

Wagstaff, Victor Neil (312756), 20, 8RAR, Pte, Maryborough Cemetery, Vic.

*January 1971*

Clark, Ross Tasman (3793971), 24, 1FIdSqdn, Fawkes Memorial Park, Melbourne.

Craig, Peter (2782049), 5RAR, 25, 5RAR, Pte, Wagga Wagga Lawn Cemetery & Crematorium, NSW.

Duffy, Milton Raymond (2792150), 22, 7RAR, Pte, West Kempsey Cemetery, West Kempsey, NSW.

Halkyard, Eric (311620), 27, 7RAR, LCpl, Garden of Remembrance, Springvale, Melbourne.

Hartney, Gilbert John (34854), 39, 102FIdWksp, WO2, Garden of Remembrance, Springvale, Melbourne.

Sheriff, Peter James (A119739), 20, 1OpSptUnit (att.9SqdnRAAF), Drayton and Toowoomba Cemetery, Toowoomba, Qld.

- *Information and photos from Australian War Memorial, Roll of Honour; Department of Veterans Affairs; Virtual War Memorial, Australia; Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Wall of Faces; Find A Grave.*

**'At the going down of the sun and in the morning we will remember them ...'**

**OUR MISSION:** To assist all veterans and their dependents in all matters relating to their health, welfare and well-being.