



C Company Lines



6 RAR

Keighran, VC

A periodical newsletter for C Company 6 RAR Vietnam War veterans, their widows and family and interested others

July – August 2017

Volume 1

Edition 13



Relaxing between digging, sandbagging, wiring, patrolling and a hundred other tasks are from left to right: **Harry Prosser, Larry Holm, Mike 'Chuck' Connors and Brian Cosgrove.** Photo courtesy of Gerry O'Dea

Anzac Day Report

I was unable to attend the Brisbane City March due to having an SCC removed from my leg and a skin graft from my hip to cover the wound. I was given permission to participate in the local parade at Ekibin. The march and the service takes about an hour. I was parade marshal.

We contacted Wellers Hill State School and St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary School and arranged to have the fathers of the School Captains of both schools to carry our banners and flags. The School Captains and the two Principals march and lay wreaths. The Queensland State Government runs a programme titled "Community Link". Both schools mentioned above see this as a good reason to involve the fathers. These men really appreciate being asked to be involved. An estimate of the crowd was between 2500 - 3000. Peter McFarlane

As President of the local Mudgee Sub-Branch I will have a busy day on Anzac Day; up at 3-30, travel to town by 5am, conduct the Dawn Service from 5.45, followed by breakfast and then conducting the main service at 11am at the Cenotaph after marching through the main streets. A large crowd is expected. **Geoff 'Mouse' Robinson**

Our cruise on the Celebrity Constellation

Our cruise left Singapore sailing to Vietnam, which I thought would be different as I had vowed I would not return.

We tied up at Phu My on the Saigon River and I could see those damn Nui Dinh Hills which had given us so much grief in September 1966, whilst the factories around the port spewed out their pollution.

Sue and I decided to take the tour to Vung Tau instead of Saigon. The road is now a four-lane highway. We passed by Baria and onto Vung Tau, through paddy fields and small villages. Along the centre of the highway every 500 metres were poles with red flags, on one side a star and the other a hammer and sickle, all the way into Vung Tau, welcome to communism!!! Most houses and businesses displayed the Communist Vietnamese flag, a yellow star on a red background.



In Vung Tau looking to the north I could see the Long Hais. The only other landmark I could remember from fifty years ago was the Grand Hotel. The skyline was dotted with high rise hotels and apartment blocks. The place was still filthy and rubbish was everywhere especially along the seashore where you could look out to sea and see ships and oil platforms. One good sight was the lack of red betel nut stains or maybe I was not looking hard enough.

Our guide was very good, I gathered by his comments about the billboards along the seashore displaying the government's propaganda themes, he loathed the communists. It turned out his father was in the South Vietnamese Navy and after the war was incarcerated in a re-education camp for a number of years.

Our next stop on the cruise was Chiang Mai, Hong Kong, Manilla, Boracay, Kota Kinabalu and finally Singapore. The cruise was very good overall, plenty of booze and great food. We are going on another cruise in the new year around New Zealand out of Sydney.

Mark (Scrub) Minell

'Nobody in football should be called a genius. A genius is a guy like Norman Einstein'.

(Mick Malthouse - Collingwood)

Does C Company have a logo or mascot?

The following are email exchanges between me and BDR John Polley which are self-explanatory. Ed.

Hello Geoff

My name is John Polley and I am one of the section commanders from 46 Platoon at the 1st Recruit Training Battalion. I have been working the past year to refurb the platoon lines to suit the Platoon Affiliation being 6 RAR. I'm coming to a point where we are nearly finished but the one thing I have never found is if Charlie Company had a logo or mascot since raising in 1965.

I know Alpha Company had the black parade belt in the shape of an 'A', Bravo Company were the Phantoms, Delta Company had the pair of boots in the red triangle, but the one last piece of the puzzle is whether Charlie had a logo.

Is there any chance you'd be able to help with this or point me in the right direction as I want to make sure that all the history is correct and nothing is missed.

I look forward to hearing your response.

Kind regards,

John Polley

BDR

Platoon Sergeant

46 Platoon, Echo Company

1st Recruit Training Battalion

ARMY RECRUIT TRAINING CENTRE

Blamey Barracks, Kapooka NSW 2661

M: 0488 082 831 W: (02) 6933 8725

Dear John

Unlike the other rifle companies C Company did not adopt a logo or mascot on the forming of the battalion or during its tour of Vietnam.

However, the company subsequently adopted a banner which is used as a rallying point or at the head of a march.

See the photo below taken at a C Company reunion at Tamworth NSW in 2012. I hope this is helpful.

(continued page 3)



The C Company Banner sprang from **Merv Handley's** initiative. We will ever be indebted to Merv for this symbol of our shared identity and service. Ed.

I have copied MAJ Brian McFarlane (Retd), former OC C Coy, into this email.

Brian is the author of 'We Band of Brothers – A true Australian adventure story', a book rich in the history of C Company from its formation in 1965 to its pre-war training and preparedness and of its tour of Vietnam in 1966-67.

Brian will send you links to the book separately. Please let me know if I can be of further assistance. Kind regards

Geoff 'Doc' Jones

Hello Geoff,

I had thought that it might have been the case but thank you very much for clarifying that up for me. And that does help knowing it because I will be able to paint that banner on the wall with a description as to why Charlie Company adopted the banner. And thank you very much for CC'ing the OC, I will be grabbing a copy of that book to help finalize my research so thank you for adding that in too. I will be sure to contact yourself if I require any further information.

Kind regards,

John Polley

BDR

Platoon Sergeant

46 Platoon, Echo Company

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1 RTB: Generating Army's Trained Soldiers

Canungra was a picnic!



David and Lyn Beasley recently joined **Pam and me** and our grandson **Sam** for a picnic at the AATTV memorial on the site of the old Viet Cong village at Kokoda Barracks, Canungra. Sam is an Afghanistan veteran and is undergoing training at the School of Intelligence which is located at Kokoda Barracks. We had to be signed in by Sam and be escorted by him for the duration of our visit. Security is very tight. Ed.

VALE

Ted Stevenson

24 April 2017

John Winstone

9 June 2017

Mervyn 'Dutchy' Holland

13 June 2017

Tributes

Ted Stevenson

The Mass for Ted was excellent Big crowd, Guard of Honour and Bugler A good send off for a Good Soldier. Glen has asked me to thank all the old friends of Ted for their expressions of sympathy. Glen was very impressed with the lovely Wreath from B Company 6 RAR and the Sash from 6 RAR.

John O'Halloran

John Winstone



EULOGY FOR JOHN WINSTONE

By Geoff Jones

I am honoured to have been asked by Ben, Sylvia and Keith to eulogise John; step-father to Ben, a life-long friend of Sylvia and Keith, a mate, a companion and a comrade-in-arms. Our affectionate nick-name for John was Winno and you will hear this in our conversations today.

I thought I would begin by giving context to Winno's army service and to our coming together as young soldiers.

A carefree 19-year-old John Winstone did not balk when he received an official government letter directing him to register for national service. There was trouble in the North and the regular army was to be reinforced with 20-year-old conscripts. And, selective conscription based on birth date would decide who would serve.

What might have been John's thoughts when some months later a second official letter arrived? This, to confirm his call-up for two years army service and directing him to report to army authorities forthwith. Whatever his thoughts John took it on the chin, as did many of the men – now in their early 70's – who are here today to farewell their dear mate.

These young 20-year-olds understood the concept of service to their country and they accepted this responsibility whatever the outcome. They saw it as their duty.

John David Winstone was born on the 23rd of February 1945. He saw active service in the Vietnam War from the 6th of June 1966 to 13th February 1967 in C Company, 6th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment.

John was a born soldier. He took to it like a duck to water, but not without a bit of grumbling and the occasional healthy disdain for authority so typical of the Australian Digger. I really think he enjoyed army life.

We all have our favourite stories about John because they are invariably humorous, mocking or just plain funny. John was a humourist. He had a kit bag full of quips, witticisms, sayings and anecdotes. A girl with protruding teeth could "eat at an apple through a tennis racquet" for example, or, "he was as full as a state school hat rack". To be greeted by John with "Hey there, dog's breath", meant you were a friend.

The Vietnam War was hard on the nerves and physically demanding. Week after week, month after month of gruelling patrols and sharp deadly fire-fights with the enemy. When times were tough we could rely on John to say something pithy or amusing. His words had the effect of easing unbearable tension which lifted our spirits and encouraged us to keep going. He was a great man to have around.

John never-ever changed. On our holiday and pilgrimage to Vietnam in 2013 he teased our wives mercilessly with his humour, comments, observations and lessons for life. He was irreverent and funny and the girls loved him for it. Wine and laughter flowed. At the end of a nights dining, dancing and merriment, at the Grand Hotel no less, John observed the girls walking tentatively with linked arms; two steps forward, a sideways slide, stop and steady, forward again then one step backwards. John called this the 'chardonnay march'. They laughed even louder.

As we all know, John also had a mischievous side. Two or more days after Queensland had given NSW its customary smashing in State of Origin he would ring the ultimate Blues supporter, Pop Baker, in Newcastle and say, "Hey, Pop, I've been out of town"; "Who won?"

Or, Blue Foster, another Blues diehard who wrote, "When I rang Winno before each State of Origin he would say that he had taught his dog Buttons what to say when NSW wins a series, and I would always ask

what does he say"? He said, "I don't know, it hasn't happened yet!"

John loved his little dog, he loved the banter with his mates and he loved to see Queensland do over New South Wales. Be sure to watch the game on Wednesday, John, wherever you are.

John Winstone, this bear like man, had a sharp mind, and he was generous, caring and kind. At war, he enjoyed playing with the Vietnamese children, urchins that they were, who would sometimes hang around and, who, on any given day might roll a live hand grenade at you, such was the nature of that war.

John was a very fine infantry soldier; he was courageous, compassionate and thoroughly dependable. On the 25th of July 1966 John displayed all these qualities and more, and it was not for the last time. 7 Platoon led C Company's approach into enemy territory when it was suddenly engaged in a fierce battle with superior Viet Cong forces who were getting the upper hand.

As a machine gunner in Support Section John moved to a position where he could bring down sustained fire seemingly oblivious to the bullets cutting the air and to the mortar bombs crashing around him; his sole objective was to get to the front to take the pressure off his mates, now engaged in mortal combat. This was typical of John; he never let down his mates. To improve his effectiveness he again went forward, this time into the open and in full view of the advancing enemy, firing his 10 and half kilogram machine gun from the hip. His verballing of the Viet Cong to 'bring it on' would have made a sailor blush. It was an astonishing sight and one that I clearly witnessed. Talk about it being great to have him around.

When I later remarked to John of what I had seen and of his bravery he dismissed it. "Nah", he said. "That was Jacko, not me". And my response, "Bullshit, it wasn't Jacko at all, it was you".

If John had a fault it was that he underrated himself. For many years after the war, I tried to track him down, but without success. It seemed that he had just disappeared. In 1987, I was making my way into the Sydney Domain for the Vietnam veterans welcome home march. Standing alone on the fringe of the crowd stood a big man with a bushy ginger beard and a head of hair to match. You guessed it – it was John. I was overjoyed to see him and so were his other C Company mates. John said to me, "I didn't think anyone would want to see me".

These are examples of another side to John's character – he was modest and humble and perhaps a little shy. He never sought to be singled out for praise and he squirmed when it was given. I sense his embarrassment as I speak these words.

C Company Commanding Officer, Major Brian McFarlane, wrote this, 'John Winstone was the right man to have with you in a tight situation, steady, loyal, and efficient, and no matter the circumstance ready with a sometimes timely, insightful and pithy comment. He held C Company in good stead in those dangerous and heady days in Vietnam that we will never forget. I will forever bear in my mind the sight of John "carrying the gun". Big, strong and good to have

by your side. It has been sad to hear of his sufferings over the last few years, but when I last saw him he was

still the old cheerful Johnny Winstone we had all come to know and love'.

There are so many stories that could be told about Winno, but so little time. Harry Prosser could be persuaded to tell of their R & R leave together in Hong Kong – an unbelievably true adventure; if you can believe it. Others may have witnessed Winno's potato wine incident. An explosive affair to say the least.

Winno was a popular C Company man and he was loved and respected beyond words. He was a very fine soldier, a staunch comrade and a good and upright man.

We miss you already, John, but we know you are in good company. Reunited with mates; Gordon Knight and Jimmy Barrett who as young men left us long ago; Paddy Walker, Bluey Chant, Phil Crossingham, Kenny Mills, Tex McInnes, Skinny Wieben, Dutchy Holland and a whole lot of others; some, rascals who you might wonder if they actually made it into heaven. But, we all go to heaven, John; taken in by God's hand. We'll see you there, when it's our time.



Winno at rest - Gregson & Weight Chapel
Caloundra, QLD - 19 June 2017

I think that Geoff has said it all about John. He was one of a kind, and one of the greatest. As a soldier he carried out his duties with excellence, whilst inspiring those around him to do the same.

John was the right man to have with you in a tight situation, steady, loyal, and efficient, and no matter the circumstance ready with an appropriate quip.

I will forever bear in my mind the sight of John "carrying the gun". Big, strong and good to have by your side.

It has been sad to hear of his sufferings over the last few years, but when I last saw him he was still the old cheerful Johnny Winstone we had all come to know and love.

May he Rest in Peace...

Brian

*Brian McFarlane
OC C Company 6RAR
Vietnam 1966-67*

Dutchy Holland



In his early days of soldiering, Dutchy was on many occasions a Regimental Sergeant Major's nightmare. However, by the time he finally grounded arms he was the RSM's right hand man and highly regarded by all ranks.

He was a soldier of many years' experience

in both peace and war and always on hand to guide young reinforcements.

In my view, our mate personified the typical digger which generations of media have tried to capture but very few have mastered. Dutchy was the typical Aussie soldier who clearly demonstrated such characteristics and qualities they sought to portray.

He was never reluctant to question authority when rules or procedures seemed unfair. Yet he was often first to lead and set the example in dire circumstances. A soldier with quick wit, he always created humour when there was a need to break the tension, be it caused by exhaustion, fear or so many other demanding challenges which faced him and his companions.

Our beloved Dutchy would never admit it but above all was his love of country and mateship which he had clearly demonstrated, time and time again throughout his soldiering years. It was a great honour to have served alongside him in the ranks as a digger.

Sadly, he has now been posted and soon will join that familiar military column wherever it may be, for ever and ever

Safe journey, Cobber

George Mansford

It is another sad day for our "C Coy" brothers on the passing of Dutchy.

As one of the younger members of C Coy in 1966, Dutchy was an inspiration to watch and learn from. He showed extreme calmness and courage in all aspects of army life under all circumstances and he also had a ready wit to make light of different moments.

He will be sadly missed, Vale friend.

Brian Thompson

As those of us of C Company 6 RAR know, we have lost two of our most iconic comrades-in-arms during the last week, Johnny Winstone and Dutchy Holland.

Brian McFarlane

"Soldier, rest! thy warfare o'er,
Sleep the sleep that knows not breaking;
Dream of battled fields no more,
Days of danger, nights of waking."

Sir Walter Scott, Scottish author and playwright

Tributes continued

Thank you for your continued updating on such sad times.

The passing of Mervyn "Dutchy" Holland & John Winstone.

I was taken aback at their sudden deaths and seeing how quick our ranks are dwindling,

Please pass on our condolences to both families and also our prayers.

Blue & Gladys Pearce



L to R: Lyndon Giles, Ian Rasmussen, Geoff Jones, Dutchy Holland and Terry Hunt at Gaythorne RSL in 2015.

Don Parsons

I was saddened to read of Don Parson's death in the C Company Lines (Edition 12, March – April 2017). I remember, fondly, a few incidents with Don which I recount here.

My first real contact with him came when the battalion was out protecting a US engineering outfit. 8 Platoon was sent out to do an ambush, and after we'd settled in, I sent in a locstat. The duty officer sent back a "check locstat", so I did, and sent the same one in again, using a different code. Back came "check locstat". OK, did it again after consultation with my sergeant and corporal, and sent the same one in again. "Check locstat" came back.

In sheer frustration, I sent in "pre-arranged location". And that stopped the radio traffic. When we got back I stormed (not something I often did) into the duty officer ready to demand ... something. But before I could get going, Captain Parsons said that he had been working off the previous day's code sheets and calmed me down with a really nice apology.

Back in Australia, I was now assistant adjutant until I finished national service, with my main job being the transfer of 6 RAR to Townsville. Lots of stuff came up that I didn't have a clue about, but I was always able to ring the Staff Captain (A). That was, of course, Captain Don Parsons. He would usually start his answer to my problem by saying, "hang on Peter, I'll get my 'whereisit' book", and that book always worked.

We developed a good enough relationship for him to invite Bev and myself, together with our baby, John, home for dinner. And we had a very pleasant evening with Don and his wife.

Then, at the Enoggera reunion, I missed seeing him, and asked around at the parade whether he was there. He wasn't, but somehow I got his address and we called on him.

He met me at the door with "Peter Morgan, 2783234" which he had probably dug out of his "whereisit" book after I rang him. Now, I had forgotten about the dinner until Don's wife (sorry, I can't remember her name) said "you came to our house, and you had a little baby". I was moved that she remembered that.

Don was truly a gentleman, and he was a great and generous help to one second lieutenant who was better able to do his job; and one who still values his friendship, brief and intermittent as it was.

I met many good men in the army, and Don Parsons was one of the best.

Peter Morgan

From the Kvan in Port Lincoln.

Devonport Reunion

27 -29 October 2017

Who's coming so far

David & Lynne Beasley *
 Rick & Robin Bensley
 Ted & Joyce Daley*
 Jeff & Margaret Foster
 Ian & Carole Gibson*
 Lyndon & Val Giles plus 2 friends *
 Betty Godfrey
 Geoff & Pam Jones plus Phil & Josie Smith *
 Reg & Ann Lillywhite
 Peter & Narelle McFarlane *
 Ian & Ursula McGuire
 Mark & Sue Minell
 Gil & Leslie Mitchell *
 Peter & Patsy Moore
 Billy Winterford + partner + friend Trevor Wandel
 Mick & Lena Moon *
 Gerry & Heather O'Dea *
 Blue & Gladys Pearce *
 Harry & Sue Prosser
 Les (Shorty) & Dorothy Turner
 John (Strez) & Karen Wilson
 Norm & Marg Wotherspoon *
 Barry & Eleanor Zazoniuk *
 Frank & Mrs Zerafa *
 Geoff (Mousey) Robinson *
 Donald & Susan Spurr

Those marked with an asterisk have paid for their reunion dinner.

It's not too late to register for the reunion

Contact
 Gerry & Heather O'Dea

Phone: (03) 6424 1543 / 0418 140 622
 Email: gandhodea69@bigpond.com

DON'T MISS OUT - REGISTER TODAY

VIETNAM WAR - HONOURS AND AWARDS

The following list of honours and awards gazetted in the Commonwealth of Australia Gazette dated 2 November 2016 may have escaped your notice. We congratulate the 10 men, nine of whom are from our 6th Battalion, who were belatedly honoured with richly deserved gallantry awards.



Commonwealth
of Australia

Published by the Commonwealth of Australia

Gazette

GOVERNMENT NOTICES



Government House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

2 November 2016

It is notified for general information that the Governor-General has approved the following Gallantry awards for actions during the Vietnam War:

MEDAL FOR GALLANTRY

Australian Army

Mr (then Sergeant) Frank ALCORTA OAM

Qld

For acts of gallantry in hazardous circumstances as platoon sergeant of 2 Platoon, A Company, the 6th Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment, during the Battle of Long Tan, Phuoc Tuy Province, Vietnam on 18 August 1966.

The late Mr (then Lance Corporal) Barry Eugene MAGNUSSEN

Late of SA

For acts of gallantry in hazardous circumstances as member of 4 Section, 11 Platoon, D Company, 6th Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment, during the Battle of Long Tan, Phuoc Tuy Province, Vietnam on 18 August 1966.

Colonel (then Lieutenant) Francis Adrian ROBERTS OAM (Retd)

ACT

For acts of gallantry in hazardous circumstances as Commander 3 Troop, 1 Armoured Personnel Carrier Squadron, during the Battle of Long Tan, Phuoc Tuy Province, Vietnam on 18 August 1966.

COMMENDATION FOR GALLANTRY

Australian Army

Mr (then Private) Neil Raymond BEXTRUM

WA

For acts of gallantry in action as a member of 7 Section, 12 Platoon, D Company of the 6th Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment, during the Battle of Long Tan, Phuoc Tuy Province, Vietnam on 18 August 1966.

The late Mr (then Private) Ronald Howard BRETT

Late of Qld

For acts of gallantry in action as a member of 2 Platoon, A Company, 6th Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment, during the Battle of Long Tan, Phuoc Tuy Province, Vietnam on 18 August 1966.

Mr (then Private) Ian Martin CAMPBELL

NSW

For acts of gallantry in action as a member of 10 Platoon, D Company, 6th Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment, during the Battle of Long Tan, Phuoc Tuy Province, Vietnam on 18 August 1966.

Mr (then Private) Noel John GRIMES

NSW

For acts of gallantry in action as a member of 12 Platoon, D Company, 6th Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment, during the Battle of Long Tan, Phuoc Tuy Province, Vietnam on 18 August 1966.

Mr (then Private) Geoffrey Michael PETERS

Qld

For acts of gallantry in action as a member and later acting section commander of 1 Section, 10 Platoon, D Company, 6th Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment, during the Battle of Long Tan, Phuoc Tuy Province, Vietnam on 18 August 1966.

Mr (then Private) William Alfred ROCHE

Qld

For acts of gallantry in action as a section second in command and section commander in 10 Platoon, D Company, 6th Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment, during the Battle of Long Tan, Phuoc Tuy Province, Vietnam on 18 August 1966.

The late Mr (then Second Lieutenant) Gordon Cameron SHARP

Late of NSW

For acts of gallantry in action as the platoon commander of 11 Platoon, D Company, 6th Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment, during the Battle of Long Tan, Phuoc Tuy Province, Vietnam on 18 August 1966.

By His Excellency's command

Mark Fraser LVO OAM

Official Secretary to the Governor-General

AWOL no more

Bill Winterford travelled from Clare, South Australia for Winno's funeral. We look forward to again catching up with Bill, and to meeting his partner and friend, at the Devonport reunion.

Winno and Bill were good mates having met on 'Day One' at the army recruiting centre where they were allocated regimental numbers one digit apart.

Going forward, Bill hopes to participate more regularly in C Company activities.



Bill Winterford, MM and Geoff Jones at John Winstone's wake at Caloundra RSL



These three amigos slipped past Club security



Les and Strez



L to R: Trevor Jordan, Norm Wotherspoon, Ian 'Sting' Rae in background, Bill Winterford and John 'Strez' Wilson



L to R: Mark 'Scrub' Minell, Jeff 'Blue' Foster, David Beasley, Peter Moore and Merv Handley.

As a member of the Caloundra RSL Sub Branch Peter Moore booked the members bar and lounge for our exclusive use. This friendly and intimate venue is separate from the club's public spaces. For the purpose of celebrating Winno's life the sub branch members lounge could not have been better. Well done, Peter.

C Company Lines Publishing Guidelines

C Company Lines is a periodical newsletter for C Company 6 RAR Vietnam War veterans and interested others. It is a medium for members to contribute information, articles, stories and items of interest. It is distributed by email. C Company Lines is a family friendly newsletter. Its object is to foster the comradeship forged in service; to nurture goodwill; and to keep members and their families in touch with each other. Items for publication may be submitted by email or Australia Post. The Editor reserves the right to decide publication of any item, for any edition of the newsletter. *C Company Lines will be issued periodically subject to need or sufficient items being received.*

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