



LONG TAN VETERANS ASSOCIATION

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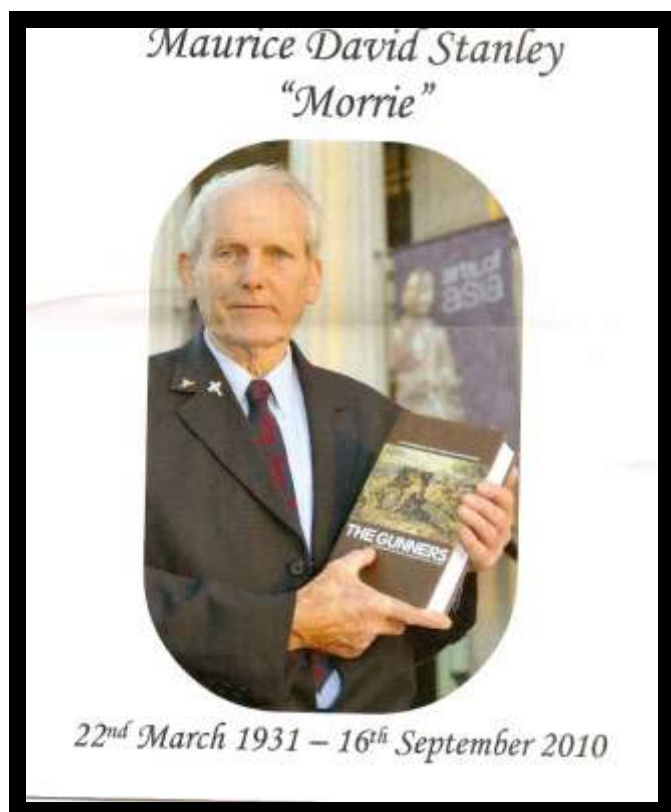
NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2010



**DAVE COLLINS, JOHN HESLEWOOD, PETER DOYLE, DAVE THOMAS AT THE LONG TAN
CROSS WITH TOURING PARTY**

VALE MORRIE STANLEY

It is my sad duty to begin this newsletter with the news of the passing of Morrie at his home in Campbell Bay N.Z. As advised in our last Newsletter Morrie had been ill for some time and finally succumbed to his illness on the 16th September in the company of his wife Alva and family. Morrie will be sorely missed by his family, friends and all members of this Association. He was one person who made every effort to say hello to as many Association members as possible when he visited Australia for reunions etc., and had the knack of remembering the names of the majority of us. I contacted Willie Walker regarding a floral tribute from the Association but as the family requested donations be made to the New Zealand Cancer Society I enclosed a cheque in a Letter of Condolence which I sent to Mrs. Stanley on behalf of all Association members. Mrs. Stanley thanked us for our wishes and is looking forward to attending the 45th Anniversary of Long Tan next year. Morrie was one person who could be truly described as an "Officer and a Gentleman"



WILLIE KILLICK

Most of you will remember Willie who was popularly known as the "Blowfly" during our tour in 1966/67. Willie passed away on the 27th October at the tender age of 80. He was a founding member of 6RAR and in total served 33 years in the Australian Army including service in Japan, Malaya, Vietnam and Singapore.

LONG TAN DAY 2010

As forecast, this year's Commemoration was a low key affair because of the Battalions deployment overseas. However this did not deter those Battalion members at Enoggera ensuring that Long Tan was suitably remembered. The Service was held at the RAR Memorial Walk where candles were lit in memory of those who fell at Long Tan. We then enjoyed a barbeque with Battalion members before adjourning to the Gaythorne RSL.

LONG TAN DAY ROCKHAMPTON

Harry Smith and Don (Jack) Thomson were invited to the opening of a new Long Tan Commemorative Garden in the Rockhampton Botanical Gardens on the 18th August. A new variety of hibiscus grown by a Vietnam Veteran, Colin Dennis, was chosen and 18 plants were placed in new garden beds.

Harry was given the honour of opening the Memorial and read the names of those who died that day at Long Tan. The following is part of Don's letter concerning the opening.

"I think it is great what the Rocky Council has done. I have enclosed newspaper articles as well. They have established the garden with two separate beds each having 9 plants. It's on a slope behind the War Memorial which has 12 large palms around it, one for each hour like a clock. The palm in the middle of the photo and the garden is known as the 4 o'clock palm, meaning that the garden is in the time zone that the battle took place. The flower of the Long Tan Hibiscus (the first) opened on the morning of the 18th, just in time for the opening of the garden. I would recommend to any of our guys travelling through Rocky they call in and take a look. I think it is very well done. John Castle at the

gardens was responsible for the garden and he would be happy to meet any of the Long Tan guys. Phone him on 0408224644.” Tommy Watt’s Widow Yvonne, was also in attendance and made herself known to Harry and Jack.



DON THOMSON AND HARRY SMITH

GEOFF KENDALL

On August 17th Harry Smith, Geoff Kendall and Dave Sabben were invited to Canberra to receive their updated awards from the Governor General. There was talk of the rest of the Company being invited to receive the recently approved “Unit Citation for Gallantry” but the Government was not prepared to meet transport costs for us and only Geoff went to Canberra. He told me he was honoured to receive his award in Canberra from the Governor General and was sorry Harry and Dave did not also attend. In Geoff’s case his ‘Mentioned in Dispatches’ award was upgraded to the “Medal for Gallantry” which is the equivalent of what he was originally recommended for, the “Military Cross”

With regard to the presentation of the “UCG”, nothing has been confirmed but I believe the Dept of Honours and Awards may contact those eligible for the award and forward it to you individually. If an official presentation is arranged next year and you are in attendance, the award can be handed back and then presented to you officially.

VIETNAM TOUR

Our long awaited return to Vietnam tour departed Australia on the 16th July for the much anticipated holiday. Members who went were Dave and Sue Collins, Peter Doyle and his partner Carolyn, Sue and Bob Ramsey, John and Jenny Pascoe, Paulene McGrath, myself and Glenda, Tony Sharp and Dave Thomas from B Company. Quite a few others were keen to go but when they began looking at Travel Insurance they found they could not be covered for some of their pre-existing medical conditions or a premium was placed on the price that made the cost too expensive. However their places were quickly taken up by family and friends and in all, 36 made the trip. Paulene McGrath’s two sisters and their husbands joined in, some friends from the Island and other friends of members made up the numbers.



**PAULENE MCGRATH WITH SISTERS
DIANNE AND PAMELA AND HUSBANDS
GARY AND WARREN. TONY SHARP AT BACK
LEFT OF PICTURE**

We flew to Saigon and stayed there until the 20th July. In Saigon, we visited the Presidential Palace, a War Remnants Museum, and several other landmarks including the Cu Chi tunnels. The 20th July began with a hydrofoil trip down to Vung Tau. For those who have not been back you would not recognize Vung Tau. Both front and back beach are now thickly populated with houses, apartments, hotels and shops etc. The Badcoe Club is completely gone now and a Chair Lift takes you to the top of the hills.



BACK BEACH VUNG TAU

The next day we visited Baria, Nui Dat, Long Tan and the Horseshoe. In the morning we walked around Nui Dat hill and the old 6RAR Headquarters area. After lunch we moved on to the Village of Long Tan where we picked up the plaque which was placed on the cross when we reached the battle area. At the cross we held a service and laid poppies in memory of those who died there, and also for the enemy who lay in unmarked graves. Our leader on the tour was Gary McKay who has written many books on Vietnam and on the bus to the Horseshoe he shared some information from one of his latest investigations. He and a friend have recently translated the History of the North Vietnamese 5th Division which was involved at Long Tan. It appears that a large ambush position had been prepared outside the village of Long Tan, in preparation for our being led to it. However whether by good management or good luck we moved in a different direction and they were forced to come out and engage us in the rubber plantation. Unfortunately the Horseshoe is off limits because of quarrying but we got as close as the front gate. That night we enjoyed a dinner at the “Ned Kelly Bar” which brought back a lot of memories with the bar girls there.



JENNY AND JOHN PASCOE AT “NED KELLY BAR”

The next day we visited the Long Hai hills which were a Viet Cong stronghold throughout the war. We then went looking for the Operation Bribie area. Dave Thomas from B Company was with us and after the bus let us off on the main road we walked along a track for around 700m and then into the bush where Dave believed the action took place. Although we were the reserve company that day we did sweep through the area the next morning and the thick bush and undergrowth convinced Dave and myself that we were close to the actual battle site. We placed poppies in memory of the 8 diggers who died that day. On the way into the bush I got tackled around the ankles by a “wait-a-while” plant and became the latest casualty of Operation Bribie. Luckily, we had a retired Doctor on the trip who got me anti-biotics and bandages which controlled the infection.



“OPERATION BRIBIE” AREA

Friday saw us heading for Bien Hoa and on the way visited the site of the “Battle of Binh Ba, the “Courtney Rubber” and the scene of the “Battle of Nui Le”, where Gary McKay was wounded and awarded the Military Cross. In Bien Hoa we visited the “Dong Nai” Museum which houses the original Long Tan Cross.



DAVE THOMAS, JOHN PASCOE, JOHN HESLEWOOD, DAVE COLLINS AND PETER DOYLE AT DONG NAI MUSEUM

On the way back to Saigon the next day we visited the area of Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral. The entire area has now been planted to rubber but two Vietnamese Monuments stand over mass graves where Australians buried more than 200 enemy during that operation.



SHRINE AT “CORAL-BALMORAL”

The last day in Saigon was spent on the Mekong Delta visiting floating markets, home factories and seeing the rural lifestyle of the people living there. Next day we were off to Hanoi where the highlight for some people was visiting Ho Chi Minh’s Mausoleum. The line up to get in was over a km long in the sun so I and a few others gave it a miss. Several other tourist sights were visited including the “Hanoi Hilton” where American Airmen were imprisoned under inhumane conditions during the war. The place has been tidied up and can only be described now as a propaganda tool for the North Vietnamese who proclaim how well their prisoners were treated there. The French influence in Hanoi is still very evident when you look at a lot of the buildings and houses.

We then had a night on a Junk on Halong Bay. The Junks were in beautiful condition with luxury self contained cabins, great meals and some scenery which has to be seen to be believed. If you were in the mood you could hire canoes to explore the caves or swim in the crystal clear waters. Next day we were back to Hanoi and a farewell dinner that night. When we were organizing the trip some expressed concerns about returning but I can honestly recommend you take the next opportunity to go. We all had a great time. There are so many sights to see, the people are friendly, the shopping is good for the ladies and accommodation and food is excellent.



HALONG BAY

Special thanks also go to the Travel Agent, “Trade Travel” Tweed Heads for organizing the tour so

well and also for their donation of \$2600 to the Association. Their contact is Erica Lock, Ph 0755366577 who will be pleased to discuss any travel requirements you may have. Mention the Long Tan Association when you ring.

DIGGERS COURT MARTIAL

Following the disclosure that three diggers will face court martial following a contact in Afghanistan the following poem was penned and did the rounds on the net.

They dare to criticize, who never stood patrol,
 Who never, ever, felt the chill of fright,
 When in some dark and terrifying place,
 They must decide what action will be right.

My mates are under fire from some darkened house,
 I should respond, but are there innocents inside?
 To quell the enemy I must take the risk.
 And put all thoughts of consequence aside.

But, if my firing causes some civilian death
 They tell me now that I'll be hauled before a court
 To justify the action that I took
 To prove to them I acted as a last resort.

The firing's worse. I must decide –
 So many doubts are coursing through my head –
 I must decide and I must act
 Too late, too late: My mates are dead.

KEY RINGS

Prior to our Vietnam trip Dave Thomas raised the idea of bringing back some soil from Long Tan and Operation Bribie areas with the intention of fundraising for the upcoming 45th reunions. Dave obtained the necessary approvals from the Quarantine Dept. and the soil was duly collected and brought back to Australia. We have now arranged to have key rings made which include the soil being sealed inside with a clear epoxy cover. In ours, the soil will be on the toes of the boots, and in B Coy's it will be below the Company's emblem (The Phantom). Our key rings will be numbered 1-500 and will be accompanied by a certificate

confirming the soil came from the Long Tan Battle site. Price will be \$20 each including postage and will be sent out as soon as your order and money is received. They are well made and would be a good present or a memento for your children etc. We will also be selling B Coy's Key rings and they will be helping sell ours. Both key rings come with a split ring and chain. Perhaps you may like to order the key ring with your Company number on the back. For example mine was VD79. There is also ample room on the back if you wish to have your Regimental Number engraved.



D COY AND B COY SAMPLES



Please forward the following Key Rings

<u>Number</u>	<u>UNIT</u>	<u>COST</u>
()	D Coy @ \$20 each	\$
()	B Coy @ \$20 each	\$

Company Number if available ()

I enclose payment for the ordered Key Rings

NAME _____

45th REUNION

Although it is 9 months away, the 45th reunion will come up quickly and it is time you started planning for it. The committee is already looking at options for the date and venue for our Dinner and accommodation for those wishing to stay for a few days or so. Perhaps you can look at putting aside some money each pay day to make it easier when next August comes around. Long Tan Day will be on the Thursday 18th so our dinner will be on Wednesday 17th. At the moment we are looking at the Holiday Inn for the main function. We have been there twice before and been well looked after, all buses and trains, including the Airport train come to the adjacent Transit Centre and is only a couple of hundred metres from the heart of the city. For those wishing to stay there the Hotel will provide us with a reduction on the room rate and car parking. If you have any ideas for the reunion please contact me as soon as possible.

TERRY BURSTALL

The popularity of Terry's first two books "The Soldiers Story" and "A Soldier Returns" continues with the extension of the audio production rights being requested for a further 10 years with the right of renewal thereafter.

LAURIE DRINKWATER

Laurie sent in this article from South Australia concerning the renaming of the Northern Expressway Bridges. "Five bridges along the Northern Expressway will be named in honour of some of Australia's most famous battles. Premier Mike Rann announced bridges along the expressway would be named after battles at Hamel, Tobruk, Kokoda, Kapyong and Long Tan. Hamel, Tobruk, Kokoda, Kapyong and Long Tan are sacred places for all Australians, having helped shape the very future of our nation, they remain etched in our history forever, Mr Rann said"

WELCOME HOME MARCH

6 RAR members who recently returned from Afghanistan were welcomed home during a march through Brisbane on the 20th Nov. Crowds were three and four deep in many places and it was great to see so many of our Association and 6 RAR Association members in attendance to cheer them along.

A reunion at Gaythorne RSL last Saturday brought to the fore that Long Tan is almost 45 years old now and the younger diggers are beginning to remember their own losses on overseas deployments. Several hundred current and ex Battalion members had a reunion to commemorate their deployment to East Timor 10 years ago. The general mood amongst the young diggers was that this was the first of several reunions which will be held on a regular basis over the coming years. I believe Long Tan will always be the Battalions mail focus but it is important that we support them as much as we can. As far as our connection with D Coy is concerned I have already been in contact with the new O.C. Major Andrew McQuirkin and will meet him personally when they return from Christmas leave.

HOUSEKEEPING

Following mention in the last newsletter concerning sending newsletters by email I now have approx 60 email addresses which will be utilized for this newsletter. As I pointed out this method gives you a colour copy and saves the Association money by way of printing and postage costs. If you want to join in just let me know your email address.

If you wish to order key rings please do so as soon as possible. First in first served. No limit on the number you order.

With regard to the reunion think about flight bookings as there is usually a fair saving by booking early. If you have any questions regarding next August please contact me at any time, but from next February newsletters will be more frequent as more information becomes available.

For now, with Christmas not far away I would like to wish you and all your families a very Merry Christmas and a happy New Year.



ANOTHER HAPPY SNAP FROM
HALONG BAY
GLEND A HESLEWOOD, PAULENE
McGRATH, KIM SNOW, CAROLYN AND
PETER DOYLE