

1 FIELD SQUADRON GROUP  
**'FOLLOW THE SAPPER'**  
 THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ENGINEERS  
 QUEENSLAND INCORPORATED



Website - [www.1fieldsappers.org](http://www.1fieldsappers.org)  
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**Greetings fellow Sappers and Friends.**

**\* Darren Smith with EDD Herbie**

I am sure most will have participated in ANZAC Day services with more involvement and larger crowds than past years. Certainly this year's commemorations were markedly different to 2020 although one must hail the success of the 'driveway' Dawn Services that saw so many communities participate in remembering our service men and women.

I was in Redcliffe visiting my 98 year old Mum. While there I was privileged to give the ANZAC address at my old primary school – Scarborough State – where I began studies 70 years ago. My Dad also went to this school 83 years ago, so there is family history there. I had an audience of about 700 children. My theme was animals in conflicts. This included elephants, glow worms, horses and of course dogs. I screened Power Point images including one of EDD dog Herbie who was tragically killed along with two Sappers, Darren Smith and Jake Moreland in 2010 when an IED was detonated. Herbie came from the Redcliffe animal shelter so that was an important link for the kids to be aware of.

That same day I gave an address to my Mum's retirement village – Ballycara. I have included my speech below.

*"Not so many years ago the Australian Army produced a publication titled FUNDAMENTALS OF LAND WARFARE. It was circulated to Army units throughout Australia for comment.*

*In the foreword it wrote of "The ANZAC Spirit." The qualities of mateship, courage, initiative and the rye humour of the Aussie Digger.*

*I recall that in my Army unit at that time, we were assembled to discuss this publication. I recall that there were some who argued that this ANZAC Spirit was something of the past; that times had changed; that today's soldier was very different to those who served in the Great War. The ANZAC Spirit was out dated.*

*I disagreed then and I disagree now.*

*It is true that the battle field of the 21st century is very different to that of Gallipoli and Europe but we are all here this afternoon. WHY?*

*Are we just rembering past conflicts or are we honouring something much deeper?*

*On 25th April, 106 years ago, the cream of Australia's youth were flung into the horrors of "The Peninsular". It is said that as this was the first major conflict our very new Nation was committed to, that from this was born The ANZAC Spirit.*

*Yet are not our service men and women of today not displaying those same qualities of mateship, courage, initiative and humour? Yes. I believe it is who we are. It is what being an Aussie is all about. It was there when the first settlers and convicts arrived. It was there at Gallipoli, Tobruk, Kokoda, Korea, Malaya, Borneo, Vietnam, Timor, Iraq, Bougainville, Solomon Islands and Afghanistan.*

*It has been there during our peace-keeping, peace-making and humanitarian missions. It is what gets us through tough times.*

*The ANZAC Spirit is alive and well just as it should be. We are all here today to remember past sacrifices, but also to keep the eternal flame of The ANZAC Spirit burning strong."*

We all, across this great Nation of ours, must ensure that flame never goes out.

**LEST WE FORGET**  
 Derek Smith OAM  
 Editor

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**A hearty welcome to our new Patron and Head of Corps, BRIG Matthew Galton DSC.**

**Contact Details**

**Please ensure your mail and contact details are correct!**

If you have relocated or your contact details have changed please message our Hon Secretary directly at:

[info@1fieldsappers.org](mailto:info@1fieldsappers.org)  
 or  
 P O Box 236 Raymond Terrace  
 NSW 2324



### Vale - 1 FD SQN GP RAE members:

The following list is of our brothers who have marched out since our last newsletter.

- BRIG David Lindsay Howard BURING AM** ..... 1 FD SQN GP 1966/67 Passed away 20 November 2020
- SPR Thomas John (Paddy) MADIGAN**..... 1 FD SQN GP 1967/68 Passed away 25 January 2021
- SPR John William SCANLAN** ..... 21 EST/1 FD SQN 1971 Passed away 26 April 2021
- SGT Robert William EMBREY** ..... 1 FD SQN GP 1967/68 Passed away 10 May 2021
- SGT Leslie McIntosh STEPHENSON** ..... 21 EST 1966/67 and  
55 EWPS 1971/72 Passed away 17 April 2019



The Corps also lost **Major General Peter Julian DAY** who passed away on 8 May 2021. During his service he served in Vietnam in 17 Const Sqn in 1966 then at HQ AFV 1966/67. He was our Corps Director, was Deputy Chief of General Staff and Commandant of ADFA.

The Corps also lost **Major James Francis (Jim) TRUSCOTT OAM** who passed away on 28 April 2021. Jim had served as a Troop Commander in 1 FD SQN in 1977/78 as well as Commando/SASR.

Our Association lost a great supporter and member since 2015. **Catherine Job** passed away on 29 April 2021. She was a journalist who produced a TV show titled "The First Wave" for 60 Minutes 2015. Her research clearly confirmed that the first boots ashore at Gallipoli were those engineers of 1 FD COY AE. Her great-granduncle was Sapper Cleve Page (Regimental Number 70) who was one of the first killed on the sands of ANZAC Cove.

**BRIG (rtd) Michael George Holton RAE** passed away on 3 June 2021. He served as 1st Mate on AV1356 Clive Steele (LSM) in 1965. Derek Smith was the clerk on board at that time and remembers Mike as a top young officer. He also served in Vietnam at HQ AFV in 1966-1967.

Our deepest sympathies to all those families of those we have lost.



Pictured L to R Mr. Peter Parrish Redcliffe VVA, Ben Hay (past student and now Redcliffe High) who played the bugle, Year 6 school leaders Zara, Spencer and Kapri, **Derek Smith OAM**, school principal Mr. Matthew Meharg. (See more in cover story.)

### Now listen up you lot.

**We got a reunion lurking – real soon – so you need to be there. Best register now or my handler just might let me off my leash. Trust me, my bite is way worse than my bark.**

**And while you're at it, renew your membership. Or even better sign up a couple of mates. My very clever handler has made a few notes on the reunion so check it out below. Best wishes from the land shark. I am really a dog.**



#### Contact Address:

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#### 1 Field Squadron Group Web Site

is maintained by John Robertson at  
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We acknowledge photos marked with \* are from AWM, ADF Media or Wikipedia  
All others are from private collections and in some cases source is unknown.



Follow The Sapper

BQ23520354

**1 Field Squadron RAE Association  
Vietnam Tunnel Rats Association**

**Dear 1 Field Squadron Associations,**

**1 Field Squadron QUARTERLY update**

Thank you again to George Hulse, Jim Marett, John Pritchard, and John Hopman for taking the time to visit the squadron and for sharing your vast experience with us. The opportunity to start the year by learning from our squadron's past was an extremely valuable one! I would also like to further thank George for his ongoing leadership of efforts to have 1 Field Squadron's rich history recognised through an award of the Meritorious Unit Citation.

The squadron has commenced 2021 without the domestic operational commitments that characterised 2020, however it has been a busy start to the year nevertheless! We have deliberately sought to overcome the limitations of the wet season to maximise opportunities to train key skills early. The squadron found itself conducting the first live fire of any Darwin based unit in 2021, heading to the range at the very first opportunity to conduct marksmanship training and demolitions confidence practices. Our squadron and troop headquarters teams conducted a week long command post exercise to refine their procedures, including leveraging the capabilities of simulation training systems. Individual members of the squadron have been busy attaining key qualifications, particularly through driver and promotion courses. This initial hard work, led by our enthusiastic team of junior leaders, will pay dividends for the remainder of the year.

Building on our smaller training events, the key activity during the first quarter was Exercise MONSOON SAPPER 21. This exercise saw each troop complete motorised tactics training, urban operations training, demolitions ranges, and live fire attacks (enabled by the ongoing fantastic support of our partners from the 5th Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment). The demolitions ranges were a key highlight of the exercise, enabling our teams to revise old skills, test new concepts, and enhance their ability to adapt to complex problems.

Looking to the future, I'm very pleased to let you know that Captain Adam Mowat will return to the squadron on promotion in 2022 to assume the role of Officer Commanding. Adam has previously served within the squadron as 3 Troop Commander, Reconnaissance Officer, and Second-In-Command. Once again, we hope that all former members of the squadron and their families remain safe and look forward to seeing you again in the near future.

Yours sincerely  
Matthew Scott (Major)  
18 June 2021

*This letter gives a brief on what our current 1 FD SQN folks have been doing these past few months and is re-produced with the kind permission of OC 1 FD SQN.*

*Good Morning Gentleman,*

*I've received approval for the attached photos and letter to be used in the Follow the Sapper and Holdfast should you wish to do so.*

*I'm working on getting some other photos approved, I'll send them through if I'm successful.*

*Matthew Scott*

**Matthew Scott**  
MAJ  
OC 1 Fd Sqn

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Pictures from OC 1 FD SQN showing Sapper activities in training and participating in the ANZAC commemoration ceremony at the NRL game in Darwin on 23 April 2021. Parramatta Eels defeated Brisbane Broncos 46 to 6.

## President's Report June 2021

### Patron of 1 FD SQN GP RAE Association Inc – Brigadier Matthew Galton DSC

The Association is very fortunate to have the Head of Corps RAE, Brigadier Matthew Galton DSC, as our Patron. Brigadier Galton's background is described on our website and it is a pleasure to welcome the Brigadier back to the fold of 1 FD SQN members. Brigadier Galton is a 1 FD SQN veteran.

### Reunion 22, 23 and 24 October 2021

The Association's committee can confirm that our reunion for 2021 will be at the Toowong RSL sub/branch in Brisbane on 22, 23 and 24 October 2021. The cost per person is \$100 each and the program of events is exactly the same as for the 2019 reunion. Details are on our website, in this edition of Follow The Sapper and our Facebook page. I urge everyone to book early and to make arrangements for travel and accommodation – its only five months away and counting down.

As a part of our reunion we conduct an Annual General Meeting (commencing at 1100hrs in the Figs Restaurant area of 65 Sylvan Road Toowong). The pre-AGM paperwork will be distributed prior to the reunion.

### Engineer Monument to WWI Sappers in France

As a consequence of COVID-19, our memorial bridge in Amiens France has been rescheduled for Sunday 7 August 2022. All the arrangements as previously advised for the construction and dedication of it remain the same except moved forward to 7 August 2022. The ongoing COVID-19 situation in France is improving and the Amiens City Council will confirm arrangements with us in February 2022 at which time the Association will commence an immediate and robust promotion campaign. This campaign will include encouragement of veterans to attend the dedication of the bridge and also a concerted re-boot of our stalled fund-raising campaign to help pay for the bridge and all associated costs.

### Meritorious Unit Citation for 1 FD SQN

The 1 FD SQN Association submission requesting that the MUC be awarded to 1 FD SQN has been knocked back by Defence HQ in Canberra – as predicted. Our next phase is to appeal to the Minister for Defence, Mr Peter Dutton requesting that he direct the DHAAT to conduct a public enquiry into our submission. The request for the Minister to do that was handed to Mr Andrew Hastie MP (Deputy to Mr Peter Dutton) on 7 May 2021 at a lunch time meeting at the Gaythorne RSL. We await a response from the Minister for Defence.

### Visit to 1 CER 25/26 February 2021

John Pritchard and I represented the Association at a 1 FD SQN visit to Robertson Barracks on 25 and 26 February 2021. The visit was arranged by the OC 1 FD SQN, Major Matthew Scott, and we delivered a couple of presentations on the history of the SQN and some experiences of our sappers during the Vietnam War. Three sappers joined the Association. They are Sapper J. Lewitzka, Sapper J.D. Simpson and Sapper J Lee. The association welcomes our new members with delight and can see some interest in our younger brethren in the succession of the Association going forward. Tony Andrews who is a 1980s 1 FD SQN veteran has been working diligently as a committee member and we appreciate the drive, youth and energy he brings to the Association.

### Kapooka Tragedy 21 May 1945

The Association remembers the 26 Sappers who lost their lives to a shocking explosive accident at Kapooka on 21 May 1945. A memorial service was held at the site to mark the 75th anniversary of the loss of our sappers.

We will remember them. Ubique.

### 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Operation Overlord – the Battle of Long Khan 7 June 2021

On 7 June 2021 in ANZAC Parade, Bardon, Canberra, DVA hosted a commemoration of the 50th anniversary of Operation Overlord including the Battle of Long Khan. This was a significant battle involving 3RAR, Tanks, Cavalry, Artillery RAAF helos and Engineers. There were ten Australians KIA including a RAAF helo that was shot down and two crew members KIA.

The engineers, commanded by LT John Tick of 2 TP (supported by 1 TP and Plant TP) searched numerous bunkers and a huge gallery of tunnels in the area while the battles and contacts raged on the ground above them. Mr Rodney O'Reagan OAM VA laid the wreath for our Association.

An RAE dinner was held in the Canberra-Rex Hotel dining area on the evening of 7 June 2021 and a group of currently serving Sappers from 1CER accompanied our group for the evening meal.

### Military Working Dog Day 7 June 2021

Every year on 7 June the Australian Defence Force Trackers and War Dogs Association holds a memorial service celebrating Military Working Dog Day. This date holds in precious memory the loss of Sapper Darren Smith, Sapper Jacob Moerland and EDD Herbie KIA by a roadside bomb in Afghanistan on 7 June 2010.

The service commences at 1100hrs and everyone is welcome to attend.

### 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Operation Ivanhoe – the Battle of Nui Le 20 September 2021

On 20 September 2021 in ANZAC Parade, Bardon, Canberra the DVA is conducting a 50th anniversary memorial service to the five Australian soldiers KIA during Operation Ivanhoe including the Battle of Nui Le. This action was the last engagement by Australians with the enemy during the Vietnam War. 1 FD SQN Association will be represented by George Hulse and John Pritchard who together, will lay a wreath in memory of all sappers lost to the Vietnam War.

It is intended to hold a sapper dinner in Canberra – details to be confirmed. Watch the website and Facebook pages for further information as it becomes available.

### Sapper John Kimmorley Appeal

The fund-raising campaign that raised \$22,000 recently to help this struggling 1 FD SQN Vietnam veteran is to be augmented with financial support from the RSL and DVA working in conjunction with John and his daughter Brooke Denholm. More information on this project will be posted when the job is finalised later this year.

### Membership Renewal Time

Don't forget that 1 July is the renewal date for our memberships. Please fill out the details and send in your subscription as soon as you can. We appreciate the funds because they help to pay for our website, newsletter and the admin and log that affects every registered organisation with the governing bodies who regulate us.

Catch you at the reunion in October!

Stay safe and get vaccinated.



George Hulse OAM  
President

30 June 2021



## 1 FD SQN GP RAE Association Reunion: 22, 23 and 24 October 2021

The 1 FD SQN GP RAE Association 2021 reunion is to be held at Figs Restaurant in the Wests Rugby Football Centre, 65 Sylvan Road, Toowong, Brisbane Qld on 22, 23 and 24 October 2021.

Cost is \$100-00 per person. This does not include drinks – individuals pay for whatever choice of drinks they prefer during the dinner on 23 October and the buffet lunch on 24 October 2021.

The format will be:

1. Friday 22 October 2020 commencing at 5:00 pm until 7:00 pm.  
Registration and Meet and Greet at Figs Restaurant.
2. Saturday 23 October 2021 commencing at 9:00 am until 12:00 pm.  
Registration and Meet and Greet at Figs Restaurant.
3. Saturday 23 October 2021 commencing at 4:00 pm until 5:15 pm a commemoration service at the RSL Cenotaph (on top of a small hill) adjacent to Figs Restaurant.
4. Saturday 23 October 2021 the reunion dinner commencing at 6:30 pm in Figs Restaurant until 11:30 pm.
5. Sunday 24 October 2021 AGM commencing at 11:00 am in the Figs Restaurant area.
6. Sunday 24 October 2021 commencing at 12:00 pm until 2:00 pm a buffet lunch in Figs Restaurant.

### Accommodation

There are numerous hotels, motels and Airbnb in Toowong and surrounds. Two establishments that have provided good quality accommodation for conventions like our reunion include the Jephson Hotel [www.jephsonhotel.com.au](http://www.jephsonhotel.com.au) (07 3736 4400) and the Benson Court Motel [www.bensoncourt.com.au](http://www.bensoncourt.com.au) (1800 350 244). Both places are within walking distance to trains, buses and ferries connecting Toowong with the City of Brisbane as well as the shopping centre and a number of eateries including the iconic Regatta Hotel. The reunion venue is about a ten-minute walk from either of these establishments. More accommodation in the area of Brisbane City is available through search engines such as Booking.com etc. Toowong is about 35 Kms from Brisbane Airport.

### Things to do in Brisbane in Late October

Visit [www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/things-to-see-and-do](http://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/things-to-see-and-do).

Check the FTS website [www.1fieldsappers.org](http://www.1fieldsappers.org) and our newsletters for more information on visiting Brisbane.

Go to 2021 REUNION REGISTRATION at:  
[www.1fieldsappers.org/reunion-registration](http://www.1fieldsappers.org/reunion-registration)

## Colonel John Kemp AM

Every member of 1 FD SQN GP RAE, both past and present, can celebrate a belated but highly significant award being conferred on Colonel John Kemp AM. The Defence Honours and Awards Appeals tribunal (DHAAT) has recommended to the Minister for Defence that John be awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his command, control and leadership of 1 FD SQN GP RAE during the Vietnam War in 1967-68. The principal reasons for this award include:

1. Command, control and leadership of the Unit Combat Engineering capability providing:
  - a. close combat support to three infantry battalions, one tank squadron, a cavalry squadron, an armoured personnel carrier squadron, an artillery regiment of three batteries, and other combat support units;
  - b. protection of administrative and logistic units traversing the main supply route between Yung Tau and Nui Dat;
  - c. combat engineering tasks associated with the detection and clearance of land, mines, booby traps, improvised explosive devices, enemy caches and store dumps;
  - d. the provision of helicopter landing zones for the expedient evacuation of casualties; and
  - e. assistance with the recovery of friendly casualties in areas that had been attacked by enemy counter-mobility action.
2. Command and control of a land clearance team whose role was to clear expansive areas of jungle to enable friendly troops to detect and repel enemy activity.
3. Essential services such as the construction and maintenance of roads, bridges, helicopter landing zones, airstrips, hard-stand areas, the built environment including headquarters installations, Q-stores, catering facilities, living accommodation and sanitation facilities, quarries, timber mills, water supply, electrical energy supply to the I51 Australian Task Force (IATF) base at Nui Dat, plus the short-notice maintenance response for any or all of these services.
4. Coordination and collaboration with provincial civil engineers and the civil affairs team.



5. Ongoing liaison between Australian and United States Engineer command elements at provincial and Headquarters Australian Forces - Vietnam level for all engineer projects that impacted areas under operational control other than 1 A TF sources.
  6. In addition to Major Kemp's extraordinary span of command, he was the last commander of the 1 FD SQN GP in Vietnam to serve a twelve-month tour of duty and that officers posted to the position subsequent to Major Kemp served six-month tours.
  7. The DHAAT also accepted that Major Kemp's command was not just distinguished by the size and complexity of the unit under his command but also by his achievements during his tenure. Achievements noted by the Tribunal included:
    - developing and trialling new systems for clearing mine fields;
    - personally retrieving the bodies of his soldiers from an active minefield;
    - consistent demonstration of effective leadership of men employed across a diversity of tasks, through his personal example, contact and encouragement;
    - effective perimeter defence while under significant enemy attack at FSB Coral;
    - effective leadership and command of a much larger Field Squadron than would be deployed in the current context; and
    - effective management of engineering tasks in a complex (multi-national) chain of command environment.
- We await the progress of this action with eager anticipation.

## OUR HISTORY – LOOKING BACK

*The Association has embarked on an initiative aimed at providing our current members of 1 Field Squadron, a glimpse of the Squadron's origins. This historical snapshot will be published over several editions of FTS and each member of the Squadron will be given a free copy. It gives the Association a wonderful opportunity to enlighten today's members of 1 Field Squadron of the outstanding history of our unit. Please read on.*

### A Short History of 1 FD SQN RAE



1 Field Squadron (1 FD SQN) is the most battle-hardened combat engineer unit in the ADF.

We can trace our roots back to the 1st Field Company AE of WWI whose boots were among the first Australians to hit the sand at ANZAC Cove on 25 April 1915. The 1 FD SQN of WWI provided essential combat support to our Mounted Divisions during the Middle East campaign particularly before and after the Battle of Beersheba. During WWII, our 2/1 FD COY RAE and 1 FD SQN RAE provided extraordinary support to the combat units fighting the enemy both in the Middle East/Greece and Crete and in the New Guinea campaigns.

The following short history of 1 FD SQN demonstrates where the DNA for the current day RAE was laid down.

### World War One

1 FD SQN has a battle-cry: "Follow The Sapper". On 25 April 1915 that is what happened when soldiers of the 9th Battalion followed ashore the sappers of 1 FD COY AE at ANZAC Cove on the Gallipoli peninsula. Among the first Australians KIA at Gallipoli were four 1 FD COY men. One of those – Sapper Fred Reynolds excelled himself on the beach before being KIA and the Reynolds Club in 1CER is named after him.



In those days we had FD COYs and FD SQNs to satisfy the mounted units (SQN) and the unmounted units (FD COY). Both 1 FD COY AE and 1 FD SQN AE are our background forbears. The abbreviation AE - Australian Engineers – changed to Royal Australian Engineers on 31 January 1936.

This map of the area of Turkey and Greece where Gallipoli is located (Goli-bolu on the map) shows what a small area of geography this campaign was fought in. Our job was to penetrate through the Turkish lines and capture the coastal guns covering the Dardanelles seaway. That done, the Royal Navy would enter the Sea of Marmara and capture the Turkish Capital – Constantinople, thereby knocking Turkey out of WWI.



The ANZAC Force needed beach access for its logistics, fortifications, trenches, water supply and many other essential services to conduct an intense operation. Piers were essential to this success. The small area in which to work guaranteed that the Sappers would be operating under fire from the enemy. We took our casualties and kept working. The resilience of the sapper was unbreakable.

Here is a famous photo of Watson's pier being constructed with a piledriver fashioned from a UXB.



Our lads together with the New Zealand engineers dug enormous amounts of soil, clay and rock away to make roads, mule tracks and saps for communication.

Here are an Australian and a New Zealand soldier standing in a sap that was recently completed. It all looks like hard work under the pressure of being shot at in combination with all the pests and diseases that go with the territory.



We all know about the clever trick, when our troops withdrew from Gallipoli, of the self-firing rifle.

But did you know that if the Turks had not been fooled by that ruse and attacked anyway, they would have been met by three sets of huge mines leaving craters such as this one and would have lost a lot of men trying to close with the ANZACs as they left the beach? This meant that the last soldiers off ANZAC Cove were engineers of the AE still clutching their firing devices for the exploders.



As terrible a campaign as Gallipoli was, it was small change when compared to the Western Front in France and Belgium. This is where our Sappers were consigned to after the disappointing outcome of Gallipoli. They were shipped from the Middle East to France through Marseilles and then by train through France to Picardy and de-trained at Armentieres, close to the Belgian border.

To left is a map of the area.



Paris, Amiens and Armentieres.

On the next page the image gives an idea of what the lines of communication looked like – and that was before it rained or enemy shells tore it up. The roads turned into quagmires when wet and the job of the engineer was a never-ending challenge of trying to keep these essential lines of communication open.

This image gives an idea of what the lines of communication looked like – and that was before it rained or enemy shells tore it up. The roads turned into quagmires when wet and the job of the engineer was a never-ending challenge of trying to keep these essential lines of communication open.



Bridges of all sorts were required. Many were built in close proximity to the enemy and sometimes under fire such as this one near Peronne. Many bridges were expedient local designed arrangements using whatever resources were to hand. There was one bridge made from cork in an assembly area, then floated downstream in pieces during the darkness of night to the assault point and then just before the dawn attack by the Australian infantry, the sappers quickly joined the cork segments and floated the bridge across the wet gap and successfully assisted the infantry in an assault river crossing. Many other floating bridges were made from emptied 200 litre fuel drums.

This image shows expedient pedestrian and vehicle bridges.



Many of the bridges became permanent fixtures and used for many years after the war ended such as this one across a railway line. This demonstrates that sappers in all wars have had to turn their hand to any challenge and deliver expedient temporary answers as well as well-designed pieces of infrastructure.



Mobility overland was always a problem where rough weather combined with earth-crushing artillery bombardments churned up the ground into an unpassable morass. The simple duckboard helped but required the timber to be sourced, cut, transported to site, made up into man-transportable lengths and then laid down as a pedestrian passageway. Simple solution – complex supply challenges.



Broader and stronger mobility measures were provided by plank roads such as seen here next to this destroyed tank. Again, a simple solution backed by a complex logistic chain. Remember these expedient mobility measures, you may need to do this all over again one day. The Pacific Islands, Asia and tropical Australia during the wet season are a never-ending challenge to the combat engineer.

Lots of mud and lots of trees – join the dots. And don't be put off by new "terror-weapons" such as this tank. It did cause deep concern when first encountered, but the Germans soon found the weakness of the tank and exploited it.

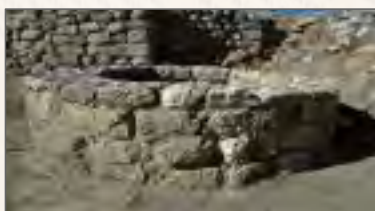


Our infantry needed trenches, "jumping-off points" (LD), guides, maps and tapes laid on the LD so that confusion would be minimal. It was the job of the sapper to provide for all of these requirements and our lads excelled themselves, very often under direct rifle and sniper fire.

Sappers are often referred to as "First in and Last Out". The first Australian casualties of WWI occurred at Gallipoli at dawn on 25 April 1918 where four sappers of 1 FD COY AE made the Supreme Sacrifice. The final Australian casualties of WWI were five sappers of the 1st Tunnelling Company AE on 5 November 1918 – they completed a bridge under enemy fire.

## We move on to the War in The Middle East.

We are about to tell you something that may re-shape your idea of military history in the Middle East. Remember the iconic Battle of Beersheba and the Charge of the Mounted Infantry? The biggest challenge that faced both sides in these campaigns was the supply of water. Many times water came from ancient water wells like this.



Here is the place where it all happened.



The water wells at Khalsa and Asluj were indispensable to the success of the Australian LH charges at Beersheba on 30th October 1917.

Water wells came in a variety of shapes and sizes with many sporting a cover with a rope and bucket or animal driven system to win the water. History records the Battle of Beersheba as a stunning success by Australian Light Horsemen over an entrenched enemy.



There they go – CHARGE!. But did you know that this charge may never have taken place if it wasn't for 1 FD SQN?

That's right, before the Australian charge, 1 FD SQN had opened a number of water wells at Khalasa and Asluj and watered the Australian Light Horse Brigades. They had to work continuously 24 hours a day for seven days in disputed territory to recover destroyed ancient wells in the desert before the infamous charge. This water was used for the charging horses. When Beersheba was carried, 1 FD SQN and 2 FD SQN AE were rushed to Beersheba to capture the 15 wells that were rigged with demolition charges. The sappers removed the explosives and then delivered 1.755 million litres of water a day for the Mounted Division so that it could maintain the momentum against the enemy. Without that water and therefore without the engineers, it may have been a different story.

1 FD SQN was involved in an assault recovery of a bridge at Ghorinye. The engineers were being shelled on both banks by the enemy while they were constructing this floating bridge. Undeterred by the dangerous battle-space, the sappers got the job done and their supported combat units crossed into enemy territory with speed and success.

## World War Two

For WW II the engineer units were designated as 2/1 FD COY RAE and 1 FD SQN RAE. The units of the 2nd AIF had a prefix of the number 2 but those of the AMF continued with their original unit designator.



This is a map of Greece where our lads undertook some remarkable combat engineering. Corporal Leslie Thomas of the 2/1 FD COY RAE and his men were working on a major demolition charge to destroy a road when he realised that his Section had been cut off by destroyed withdrawal routes behind him and with the enemy 400 metres to his front. He fired his charge and then instead of surrendering, he adopted escape and evasion tactics for two days and led his sappers back to the friendly side where his Section went back to work. The enemy advance was relentless and our troops were forced out of Greece and onto the Island of Crete. This is Crete in 1942.



Despite a very spirited defence of Crete, the Allied units were doomed. Either they escaped by ship to Egypt or they became PW. 2/1 FD COY made it to the beach area of Sfakia but only half of the unit could be evacuated. 71 Sappers of 2/1 FD COY were captured and spent the rest of the war as PW.

The unit was reinforced in time for it to be deployed to the New Guinea Campaign.



The enemy soldiers in PNG were tenacious and at times fanatical. Death was no big deal for most of the Japanese troops engaged in the New Guinea campaign. Once they had been driven out of Milne Bay, Buna, Gona, Kokoda, and Lae, a major Operation was mounted to drive them out of the Aitape to Wewak area. Incidentally, the Battle of Milne Bay was the first time that the Japanese had been defeated on a battlefield of their choosing. The Aitape Wewak line was a quagmire of very rapidly flowing rivers, broad swamps and wild weather. This was the first and only time in any war that both the 2/1 FD COY RAE and 1 FD SQN RAE had been deployed in the same AO. Bridges were imperative and many expedient and equipment bridges were built – such as this one near Aitape.



Many of our bridges were swept away by raging flood waters and it was a constant job to keep the lines of communication open. Remember that image of Watson's Pier at Gallipoli? Well take a look at this one in New Guinea. About the only difference is the hammer.



New Guinea



Gallipoli

The engineers were also engaged on Commando raids. One of them was on a Japanese heavy artillery gun in the mountains close to the MSR. It was the same design as these:



It was shelling the Australians at inconvenient times and a decision was made to destroy it by stealth. Sappers from 1 FD SQN were assigned to an infantry fighting patrol who despite their best endeavours could not get close enough to the gun to destroy it with their explosives. Later in the campaign, the sappers penetrated a large Japanese ammunition dump by stealth and destroyed it successfully under the very noses of the Japanese guards.

WWII in the Pacific area ended just after Wewak was captured. The bombing of Japan with nuclear bombs saw to that. 2/1 FD COY returned to Australia and was disbanded in 1948, 1 FD SQN was temporarily disbanded but reassigned as 28 FD COY in Japan before being reinstated as the 1 FD SQN we know today.

The SQN continues in the tradition of our forbears with resolve, intelligence, resilience and a total commitment to get the job done.

Follow The Sapper!



Floating bridge at Ghorinye

(See details - bottom right of Page 7)



## THE QUARTERMASTERS CALENDAR

This ought to bring a smile to your face. I plucked it from Issue No. 9 of the Nui Dat News – 25 July 1971.

FRI	MON	TUE	WED	THU	MON	SAME DAY
7	6	5	4	3	2	1
14	13	12	11	10	9	8
21	20	19	18	17	16	15
28	27	26	25	24	23	22
35	34	33	32	31	30	29

1. Everybody wants everything yesterday. With this calendar toe Officer Commanding (OC) asks for something on the 7th and gets t on the 3rd.
2. Most things are wonted on Monday, so there are two (2) Monday's in each week.
3. There are several extra days at the end of the month to meet that 'end of the month rush' and to help finish the returns required by the end of the month.
4. No 'non productive' Saturday's and Sunday's are part of this calendar.
5. There is a new day each week – 'Same Day.' On this day, 'while you wait' and 'same day' jobs may be handled without interruption to the normal weekly schedule of promises. Everyone will be happy and we will have an ulcer free Quartermaster.....we hope.

## WE HONOUR 100 YEARS OF RAAF SERVICE

I am currently reading "Black April: The Fall of South Vietnam, 1973-75" by George J Veith and came across this section below. I had no idea our RAAF had been involved in this dark chapter which was the collapse of South Vietnam. Our RAAF fellows were incredibly courageous to undertake such a mission.

"In the midst of this bedlam, fortune again smiled on Brigadier General Sang. The Australian government had responded to South Vietnam's pleas for humanitarian assistance with its massive refugee problem by sending several C-130 military transport planes to assist in the evacuation. The first one arrived at Tan Son Nhut on the morning of 31 March, with its initial mission to help move civilians out of Thanh Son.

The Australian C-130 flew to the airfield on 1 April, but because of the chaotic conditions resulting from the arrival of the airplanes and helicopters from Nha Trang, it was unable to land. It returned to Tan Son Nhut. A second C-130 arrived in Saigon later that same day, and another attempt was made with both planes on 2 April. At first the flights went smoothly, but turmoil soon broke out again. According to an Australian historian, "In the course of making five or six flights that day, the two aircraft became caught up in the pandemonium associated with the evacuation of the city in the face of the expected enemy onslaught. At one stage a C-130 was mobbed by refugees and ARVN personnel who panicked when four rockets landed about 400 [yards] away, prompting a soldier to fire warning shots into the air. Unfortunately this man was standing under the aircraft's elevator at the time, and several rounds holed the aircraft's tail.... Later . . . on the last flight of the day, [the plane was] blocked by two fuel tankers while the control tower sought some assurances that [the planes] would be returning. Although he knew this would not be the case, only after [the pilot] said they would be back were the tankers driven aside to let him take off. In the course of this day's operations some 1,500–1,800 refugees were taken out to Can Tho." Given the chaos, the Australians decided to halt the emergency flights.

Meanwhile, in addition to the hundreds of civilians mobbing the airbase, thousands of other people escaping south on Route 1 were now engulfing Phan Rang. Worse, the ARVN deserters from I Corps who had arrived on the ships docking at Cam Ranh Bay, plus the remnants of some II Corps units, had formed a convoy and were streaming down Route 1, looting as they went. Unable to cope with the armed rioters, and fearing the imminent arrival of PAVN tanks, the Ninh Thuan province chief fled Phan Rang on 2 April, along with most of the local police, provincial administrators, and RF troops. Only a Catholic priest in the small village of Ho Diem on Route 1 east of Phan Rang, who also commanded the local Self-Defense Force, held his position and prevented local guerrillas from entering Phan Rang. After the province chief deserted, communication with Saigon was lost. The communication breakdown and the hurried departure of the 2nd Air Division from Nha Trang led to speculation in U.S. intelligence circles that the VNAF had abandoned the Thanh Son airbase, and that Phan Rang had fallen to the Communist advance.

## Executive and Committee Members 2020 - 2021

### Patron:

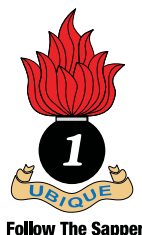
Brigadier Matthew Galton DSC

### Executive Committee:

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Mob: 0412 341 363

**Hon: Vice President:** Bob Pfeiffer  
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**Hon: Treasurer:** Jim Weston  
P O Box 236 Raymond Terrace NSW 2324  
Email: james.weston5@icloud.com  
Mob: 0419 260 463



Follow The Sapper

### Honorary Committee Members:

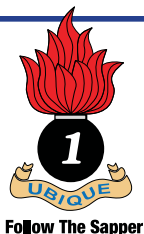
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1 Field Squadron Group  
Royal Australian Engineers Qld Inc.  
22<sup>nd</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup> October 2021

## 2021 FAMILY REUNION REGISTRATION FORM

Venue: Toowong RSL 7/65 Sylvan Road Toowong QLD 4066

### Personal Details

Family Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_ @ \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Address: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

#### 'Nickname' or

Preferred Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Partners Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Required for ID Tags at Reunion) (Required for ID Tags at Reunion)

Other guests attending - Number ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) Preferred guests names: \_\_\_\_\_  
It is preferred by the Executive Committee that all Members Guests are over the age of 18 years.

### Cost of Events

**Cost: \$100.00 per person.**

Covers all events, Friday Meet and Greet, including Saturday Memorial Service,  
Saturday Evening Family Reunion Banquet and Sunday Luncheon.

### Payment Details

#### Please accept my Registration for:

Number attending: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Method of Payment:  Cheque.  Money Order.  Direct Deposit into account.

When making a Direct Deposit, ensure you mark it '**Reunion**' and then your '**Family Name**'  
Heritage Building Society: **BSB 638-070. Account No: 10045570.**

Amount enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Make cheques, money orders payable to: **1 Fd Sqn Gp RAE Qld Inc.**

#### All registrations to be pre-paid by Friday the 8th October 2021

(This is a huge catering event. Much goes on behind the scenes, therefore  
**'No Late Numbers will be taken—DEFINITELY!')**

Please send this Registration Form to:  
2021 Reunion Treasurer  
1 FD Sqn Gp RAE Qld Inc.  
P O Box 236 Raymond Terrace NSW 2324  
e-mail: info@1fieldsappers.org

#### DONATION FORM

AMOUNT: \_\_\_\_\_ Receipt required: Yes  
No

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATION**

# 1 FIELD SQUADRON GROUP

THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ENGINEERS  
QUEENSLAND INCORPORATED

( Including 1 Field Squadron Workshops and 21 Engineer Support Troop )

## 'NEW MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION'

Mrs \_\_\_\_\_  
Surname Ms \_\_\_\_\_ First Names \_\_\_\_\_  
(Family Name) Mr \_\_\_\_\_ (Given Names)

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Wife/Partners Name \_\_\_\_\_  
(Confidential if ticked)  (Confidential if ticked)

Residential Address \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Private Phone ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_ @ \_\_\_\_\_  
(Confidential if ticked)  (Confidential if ticked)

Veteren's Service Details or other appropriate information. (If possible)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Service No. \_\_\_\_\_

Period of Service: From \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ To \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ Active Service: Yes  NO

Unit/Units \_\_\_\_\_ Which Country Served for? Australia or Other \_\_\_\_\_

Which duties? ( F.E, Plant, Mine Clearing, etc. ) \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Year is 1st July to 30th June in each year. Fees are accepted until 30th September, in accordance with the Association's Constitution. Unfinancial members will not be able to vote at the Annual General Meeting.

New Member Entrance Fee \$ 10.00 (Once Only - Inclusive of Association Badge.) \*Lost Badge \$5.00 each  
Annual Subscription Renewal \$ 30.00 (Includes Newsletters)  
**TOTAL \$ 40.00**

MEMBERS SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_



## MEMBERSHIP 'RENEWAL / UP-DATE' FORM

\$30.00 per year. (1st July to 30th June)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

STATE \_\_\_\_\_ POSTCODE \_\_\_\_\_

Private Phone ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_ @ \_\_\_\_\_

Wife/Partners Name \_\_\_\_\_  
(Confidential if ticked)

EXTRA or 'LOST' Membership Lapel Pins Required, please tick - How many?  \$5.00 each P&H included.

MEMBERS SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Return application with Cheque/ Postal Order to PO Box 236 Raymond Terrace NSW 2324 or  
Direct Deposit to Heritage Bank BSB 638-070 Account 10045570 with your details.

Ensure you mark it, 'Membership' and then your 'Surname' or 'Regimental Number' for identification.

IF YOU USE THE DIRECT DEPOSIT FACILITY PLEASE FORWARD THIS FORM AS WELL. NO CASH IN MAIL PLEASE.

## 50th Anniversary of Operation Overlord Including the Battle of Long Khan 7 June 1971



The Department of Veterans Affairs hosted the 50th anniversary National Commemorative Service of Operation Overlord—including the Battle of Long Khan at the Vietnam Memorial in AN-ZAC Parade, Barton, Canberra on Monday 7 June 2021. The event included a parade of unit Colours, Banners and Guidons and a memorial service at which the Sovereign's Banner of the RAE was on-parade.

There were numerous Sappers of 1 FD SQN GP who contributed to this Opera-

tion particularly 2TP, 1 TP and the Plant TP commanded by Lieutenant John Tick. The main role of the Sappers was the clearance and destruction of numerous bunkers and tunnels including counter-mine warfare.

During the service unit representatives laid a wreath. The nominated 1 FD SQN GP RAE representative was Rodney O'Reagan OAM VA accompanied by Keith Burley.

An RAE celebratory dinner was held at the Canberra-Rex Hotel where veteran and currently serving Sappers from 1 FD SQN enjoyed the comraderie and humour of fellow sappers.

Our Association is grateful to Rod O'Reagan who represented us at the 50th anniversary commemoration as well as acting as the MC at the dinner afterward.

## Sorry to see you go, but we would like you to stay on: Notice to expired memberships

We notice that several memberships have been expired for at least three years. Our annual membership dues of \$30-00 are paid from 1 July every year. If you would like to renew your membership, please fill out the renew membership form in this newsletter and we can all stay together as the Association of the most battle-hardened combat engineer unit of the ADF – 1 FD SQN .

If you prefer not to renew your membership, you will not be receiving future copies of our newsletter "Follow The Sapper".

## Notice to members of the current-day 1 FD SQN.

**FREE MEMBERSHIP until 1 July 2022.** If you are currently serving in 1 FD SQN you are warmly invited to join the Association at no cost. Just fill out the membership form in this newsletter and email/post it to us. When you join the 1 FD SQN Association you will be able to influence what goes into the newsletter and where and how we run future reunions. You are the future of the 1 FD SQN Association – why not join it now?



1 Fd. Sqn Gp. RAE Tie - \$30.00 + P&H  
'Aussie Made' 100% Polyester  
1 Fd. Sqn. Gp. Logo at the bottom &  
'1 Field Squadron Group' raised print  
diagonally across navy blue area.

## 1 Field Squadron Group Merchandise NEW STYLE CAPS AND SHIRTS



1 Fd. Sqn. Gp. Polo Shirt - \$40.00 + P&H  
Check out the fabric - breathable  
and definitely no ironing.

*Note: Sizes are limited to Small  
(Suitable for the Girls),  
Medium, Large & Extra Large*



BUMPER STICKERS—\$5.00

Show your support for the Afghanistan veterans by  
putting this under your Vietnam sticker.



Follow the Sapper Cap - \$17.50 + P&H  
One size fits most.

### ORDER FORM

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Town: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

* 1 Fd Sqn Gp RAE Unit Tie.	[ ]	No. required	\$30.00 ea + \$8.50 P&H=	\$ .....
* 1 Fd Sqn Gp RAE Cap.	[ ]	No. required	\$17.50 ea. + \$8.50 P&H=	\$ .....
* 1 Fd Sqn Gp RAE Polo Shirts. Size: { }	[ ]	No. required	\$25.00 ea. + \$8.50 P&H=	\$ .....
* Veterans Supporting Veterans' Bumper Stickers	[ ]	No. Required	\$5.00 ea.	\$ .....

(Postage free with other purchases)

ALL Order Forms to the Honorary Treasurer = P O Box 236 Raymond Terrace NSW 2324 Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

'Cheque, Money Order or Direct Deposit by NetBank' (Confirm by email-Please)