



THE BRIBIE “BUGLE”

FEBRUARY 2022

A Newsletter of the Bribie Island R.S.L. Sub-Branch Library

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Produced and edited by Graham Bradshaw

IT HAPPENED IN FEBRUARY

OPERATION BRIBIE

Most of us who were members of The Royal Australian Regiment (Infantry Battalions) during the '60s had the sad experience of losing good mates during the Vietnam conflict. The first close friend I lost was Lance Corporal Kerry Rooney MID who was killed in action during Operation Bribie. I will write about Kerry shortly. This significant battle took place on the **17th of February 1967** when 6RAR on a follow up operation in Phuoc Tuy Province encountered companies of the VC D445 battalion who had established a defensive position in dense jungle. “A” Company suffered the first casualties when they came under unexpected, heavy machine gun cross fire from multiple weapon positions and were pinned to the ground until they could extricate themselves. B Company arrived by helicopters and

were almost immediately fired on by the enemy machine guns. C Company arrived in APCs and D Company flew in.

Artillery fire was called in while an attack was planned. Commanders believed that the enemy position was only a small base camp and not a defensive position and ordered 6 Platoon to assault a machine gun position but they were immediately cut to pieces and forced to ground. A 5 Platoon Section (commanded by Corporal “Spike” Jones) was then ordered to destroy the same machine gun and had advanced only 25 metres before eight of the nine members were killed or wounded. APCs of A squadron, The 3rd Cavalry Regiment arrived to collect the wounded and help the survivors extricate themselves. After some wounded were loaded into the APCs a vehicle was hit by a rifle grenade which

killed the driver and again wounding the wounded.

The battle then ended after five hours with the loss of 8 dead and 27 wounded. The VC losses were estimated at over 50 dead. **Veterans of 6 RAR meet every year here on Bribie on the afternoon of the 17th to remember the fallen.**

Lance Corporal KERRY MICHAEL ROONEY MID

On 17 February 1967, 6th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment engaged an enemy force near Lang Phuoc Hai, in Phuoc Tuy Province, in the Republic of South Vietnam. Lance Corporal Kerry Michael Rooney was a Section Commander in B Company. In the middle of the afternoon B Company assaulted a defensive position manned by a well-trained well-led Viet Cong force equipped with heavy machine guns, mortars, and recoilless rifles. Soon after the assault commenced the whole Company came under sniper and machine gun fire. Movement forward continued until the left flank became pinned down by heavy machine gun fire. At this stage Lance Corporal Rooney's platoon was ordered to continue the assault to endeavour to outflank the guns. After reporting that there was at least one enemy machine gun directly to his front Lance Corporal Rooney charged straight at the enemy post firing continuously trying to draw fire away from the

rest of his section. He dropped to one knee to throw grenades and then continued to lead the assault until he was killed just in front of the enemy positions. This action was not an isolated instance of his courage and leadership. On 6 February 1967, he had demonstrated skill and bravery of a high order in killing one Viet Cong whilst under automatic fire from another enemy weapon which engaged him from his left. Then on 16 February, the day preceding the battle, Lance Corporal Rooney displayed aggressive leadership and a disregard for his own personal safety in a contact with Viet Cong guerrillas to the east of Dat Do. By his superb leadership and outstanding bravery, Lance Corporal Rooney was an inspiration to all who knew him. (Reference: An extract from “Vietnam Veterans, Honours and Awards, Army” by Alexander M Palmer 1995.) If Kerry Rooney had lived it would probably been an MM instead of the MID. Fellow Section Commander Corporal “Spike” Jones was awarded the MM and justly deserved.



6 RAR at Operation Bribie

Photo: AWM



Photo: Graham Bradshaw

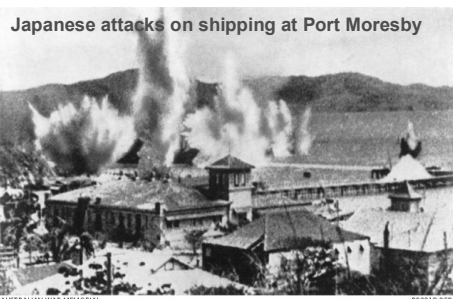
KM's plaque in the RAR National Memorial Walk, Enoggera, Brisbane.

Kerry Rooney had been my friend since we joined 3 RAR in 1960. He died on the 17th, was 17 days older than I am and his Regimental Number was 17 after mine. "KM" as he liked to be called was a true soldier through and through. That was all he wanted in life and I am sure that he actually dreamed of charging an enemy machine gun position as a good soldier would. This he did on Operation Bribie when he was killed charging a machine gun and throwing grenades. "KM" and I spent several months together at JTC, Canungra as members of the Demonstration Platoon where we discovered Bundaberg Rum. During our time at JTC KM bought an FJ Holden and I am sure he got his licence out of a cornflakes packet because his driving scared the \$#%\$ out of me. From July 1963 until September 1965 we served together with D Company 3RAR in Malaya/Thai Border and Borneo. On our return to Australia I left the Army and "KM" soldiered on in 6 RAR. I think of you often old mate when **"We Remember Them"**.

1st of February 1943

On this day the last Australian Troops left the Middle East to return home to face the Japanese threat in our own backyard after the Australian Government declined to comply with British requests to continue the fight in North Africa and Europe.

3rd of February 1942



Japanese attacks on shipping at Port Moresby

The first Japanese air raids on Port Moresby took place on this day. The Japanese had hoped to eventually take Port Moresby and

use it as a base to attack shipping.

3RAR Retakes Ba Ria

As part of the Tet Offensive the Viet Cong D445 Provincial Battalion had taken possession of the Phuoc Tuy town of Ba Ria. After some fierce fighting and with strong support from US airstrikes and New Zealand gunners, A Company defeated the enemy and forced them to flee the town on the **2nd of February 1968**. The Australians suffered few casualties.

SINGAPORE FALLS

The Japanese forces stormed across the Johor Strait from Malaya and attacked allied units in Singapore on the **8th of February 1942**. After heavy fighting they had a strangle hold on the island by the **14th of February** and General Percival was forced to sign the surrender documents the next day (the **15th**). The frightening brutality of the Japanese emerged as they shot wounded men even as they lie in the hospital beds. (A prelude to three years of Hell). Almost 100,000 British and Commonwealth troops were captured in what was supposed to be an impregnable fortress.



Lt-General Percival and Lt-General Yamashita sign the surrender documents

S.S. Vyner Brooke Sunk

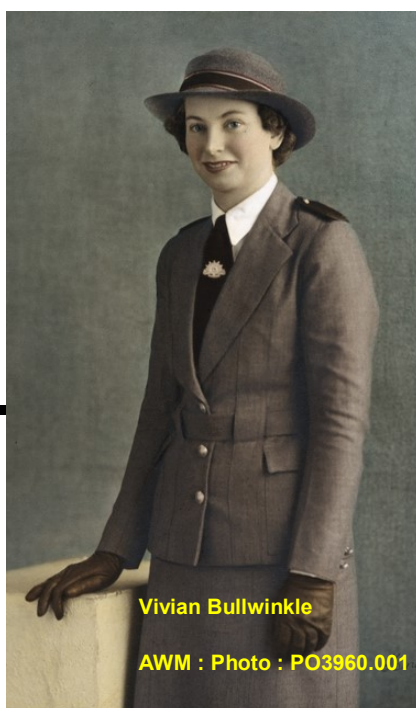
The SS Vyner Brooke which had sailed from Singapore with refugees and 65 Australian Army Nurses was sunk

by Japanese planes on the **14 of February 1942**.

Most survivors reached Banka Island, however, 21 of the Australian nurses and dozens of servicemen were massacred by the Japanese on Radji Beach. Vivian Bullwinkle and a British Soldier, Private Cecil Kinsley, were the only survivors. Of the

original 65 nurses, 12 had died in the air attack, 21 were murdered on the beach and

32 became internees. (8 of these died in captivity before the War ended).



Vivian Bullwinkle

AWM : Photo : PO3960.001

1st Air Raids on DARWIN

Darwin was bombed 64 times during the War and the first attack occurred on the **19th of February 1942** when 260 Japanese aircraft battered the Harbour and City areas sinking ships and killing 252 servicemen and civilians. These attacks continued until November 1943.

Troops inspect bomb damage after the February air raids.

AWM Photo: 042870

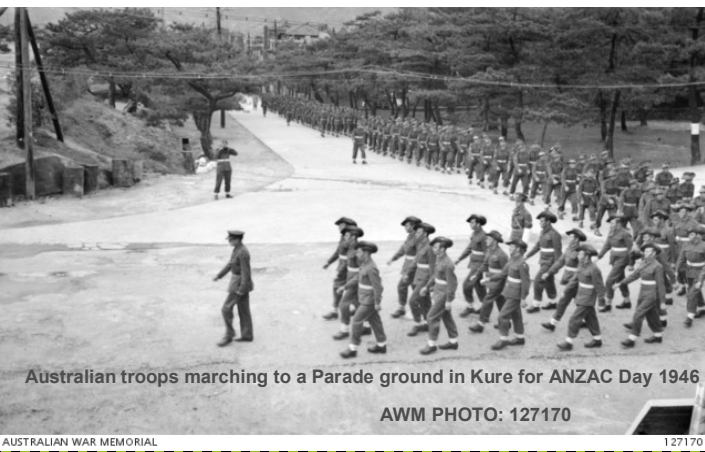


AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

042870

AUSTRALIAN BCOF TO JAPAN

The main Australian contingent of BCOF sailed for Japan from Morotai on the **13th of February 1946**. The main body of Australians arrived on the **21st of January**. The Army was assigned the Hiroshima prefecture, The RAAF went to Bofu in the Yamaguchi Prefecture and the Navy's Base was located at the former Japanese Naval Base at Kure. By the end of 1948 the BCOF was composed entirely of Australians and remained as such until activities were handed over to the British Commonwealth Forces Korea in 1952.



Australian troops marching to a Parade ground in Kure for ANZAC Day 1946

AWM PHOTO: 127170

AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

127170

1st SAS Party to Borneo

On the **13th of February 1965** an advance party from No.1 Squadron SAS departed for Borneo where they would gain their first experience of active service overseas. The oper-

ational patrols began in March, however, during the next three months they gained valuable experience which was later put to good use in Vietnam. Sadly, during this period the SAS lost the first member of the Squadron to die on overseas service when Lance Corporal Paul Denehey was gored by a rogue elephant and died of his wounds.

HMAS VOYAGER IS SUNK

The Royal Australian Navy's greatest peacetime tragedy occurred on the night of the **10th of February 1964** off the coast at Jarvis Bay when the Destroyer HMAS Voyager was sliced in two by the Aircraft Carrier HMAS Melbourne and sank with 82 lives lost. What followed were two poorly run Royal Commission Inquiries which failed to establish why the Voyager suddenly turned across the bow of the Melbourne. The loss of the Voyager, along with several other serious accidents, severely damaged the standing of the RAN in the eyes of the Government and the Australian people. The survivors were poorly treated by the Navy and fought for years to receive just compensation. (what's new).

The Voyager & Melbourne together in happier times. The other destroyer is the Vendetta



Photo courtesy: RAN.gov.au

Japanese Defeat at Guadalcanal

Those Japanese forces who had not been evacuated from Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands were finally defeated on the **9th of February 1943**. This battle was a significant turning point in the Pacific War with Japan. Around 25,000 Japanese and 7,000 Americans died on Guadalcanal and the last Japanese soldier surrendered in 1947. It was the first defeat suffered by the Japanese Army on land and they were so shocked by it they did not report on the battle in Japan.



Guadalcanal photo courtesy of: World Prints.com

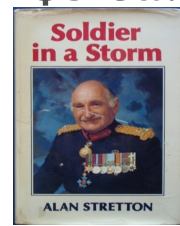
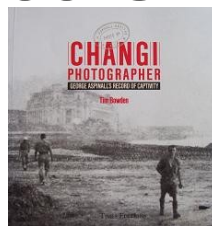
THE MEMORABILIA - PAGE

Compiled and Edited by Graham Bradshaw with the grateful assistance of Col "Taffy" Phillips, Memorabilia Curator

MEMORABILIA DONATIONS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME—CONTACT "TAFFY" THROUGH THE OFFICE....YOU CAN VIEW DISPLAYS OF MEMORABILIA IN THE ANZAC ROOM AND THE GLASS CABINETS LOCATED ON THE GROUND FLOOR.

This month's metal monster is the Italian made 105 mm L5 Pack Howitzer L3A1 on a carriage which is situated in the grounds between the carpark and Toorbul Street. This particular gun belonged to 105 Battery RAA and was probably used in Vietnam prior to 1967. The L3A1 was replaced in that year because it could not sustain the high rates of fire demanded by many of the Vietnam battles (3000 rounds at Long Tan). It could fire 5 five rounds per minute over a range of 10,000 metres. It was designed as a Pack Howitzer which could be disassembled into smaller parts to be transported more easily.

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Many thanks to Terry Bell for his magnificent donation of over 30 books in excellent condition. Thanks also to the anonymous doner who left several books at reception.



Photo: Graham Bradshaw 2021



Photo: Graham Bradshaw 2022

The photo below is the Bridge of HMAS Brisbane displayed at the War Memorial, Canberra

"Taffy" has built a new display in the ground floor cabinets featuring interesting pieces of "Trench Art". This display features pieces fashioned mainly from war scrap material which includes empty shells, wind-screen glass (from aircraft), bullets, pieces of brass, copper and wood etc.

This magnificent model of HMAS Brisbane built by Martin Roberts is located in the display case near the Sub-Branch Office.



Photo: Graham Bradshaw 2011

The medals featured here date from the Egypt/Sudan Wars of the 1880's. They were awarded to Private W. Gunn of the 1st Battalion, The Gordon Highlanders. The blue and white striped Egypt Medal (Queen Victoria) carries the clasps EL-TEB-TAMAAI and THE NILE 1884-1891. The simple blue ribbon on the right is for The Khedive's Star 1882-1891. The attached badge is the Gordon Highlander's Regimental Badge with the motto "BYDAND" which originates from the old Doric language as "Byde & Fetch" meaning "Stand & Fight". The "Fetch" was dropped because if you stood your ground you were fighting anyway.



Photo: Graham Bradshaw 2021



Uniform of A Gordon Highlander