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Lest We Forget

THE BRIBIE "BUGLE"

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Produced and edited by Graham Bradshaw
email: ggbrad@bigpond.com

In this edition—N.Z. VC Winners continued

The SAS in Borneo

Continuing the "Konfrontazi" story from the last edition

The Australian Special Air Service (SAS) gained its first experience of active service overseas in Borneo during the Confrontation. **The first SAS soldiers reached Brunei in February 1965.** While cross-border operations into Indonesia's Kalimantan had been taking place before the Australians arrived in Borneo, participation was limited to experienced troops. The Australian SAS's first patrols took place on the Malaysian side of the border and were mainly intended to obtain topographical information on tracks, rivers and villages as well as conducting surveillance of known border crossing points and shadowing Indonesian infiltrators. Patrols were ordered to avoid contact, but if an incident took place a 'shoot and scoot' policy was employed, offensive action was to be avoided unless specifically ordered. Most patrols were instead engaged in 'hearts and minds' operations. A film showing an encounter between an SAS patrol and some villagers is on this site.

SAS troops began patrolling in Borneo on **28 March 1965.** For many who participated in these patrols the experience was one of moving through jungle that was home to abundant and exotic wildlife. There was, however, a price to be paid for patrolling through such beguiling scenery – mosquitoes, sand flies, leeches, fire ants and numerous other creatures could inflict painful bites which often became infected. Heat and humidity caused problems and as one ill-fated patrol learnt, even wild elephants could inflict mortal wounds on men who had no experience of dealing with such creatures. The first member of the SAS to die on active service was killed not by the enemy, but by a rogue elephant. Sadly, Lance Corporal Paul Denehey died an agonising death in the jungle, suffering unimaginable pain for several days from the terrible wound inflicted by the elephant's tusk.

Many of the patrols encountered villagers and on more than one occasion the hospitality offered in return for medical care and other types of aid detained the Australians for longer than had been anticipated. In **May 1965** the Australian SAS began their first cross-border patrols, known by the codename **Claret**. Like any Commonwealth troops involved in cross-border patrols, the SAS operated under a set of rules, primary among which was that offensive operations could not be carried out without the sanction of the Director of Borneo Operations. Unlike 3RAR, the SAS were eventually permitted to operate up to 20,000 yards on the Indonesian side of the border, beyond the limit set for infantry patrols. During their four months in Borneo the Australian SAS conducted more than 40 patrols on both sides of the border, almost half of which were solely for reconnaissance. Patrols were usually inserted into the patrol area by helicopter which landed at an established landing zone. If it was not possible to land, soldiers would either abseil to the ground or be winched. Patrols were conducted entirely by foot and without resupply so everyone involved had to carry everything they needed on their backs. Those men from the regiment who went on to serve in Vietnam remembered operations in Borneo as having been far more physically demanding due mainly to the nature of the terrain, the length of the patrols (one of which lasted 89 days) and the need to live off short rations. Borneo did, however, prove to be a valuable proving ground for the SAS ahead of their deployment to Vietnam.

DVA (Department of Veterans' Affairs) (2020), *The SAS in Borneo*, DVA Anzac Portal, accessed 31 March 2024, <https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/wars-and-missions/indonesian-confrontation-1963-1966/australian-operations-borneo/sas-borneo>

Artillery in Borneo

Australian artillery served in Malaya during the Emergency and Royal Australian Artillery units remained in the country after 1960 as part of Australia's contribution to the Far Eastern Strategic Reserve. Within a few years the artillery was once again involved in operations in what was by then Malaysia, this time against the Indonesians during the Confrontation. Unlike the communists against whom the Australians fought in the Emergency, the Indonesian military possessed both artillery and heavy mortars. Commonwealth forces thus needed the ability to counter this capability, but artillery was also needed to provide support to patrols and to defend company bases.

103 Battery served in west Malaysia during the early months of the Confrontation but its replacement, **102 Battery**, took part in operations on Borneo beginning in **May 1965.** Along with British artillery, the Australians were engaged mainly in supporting clandestine cross-border infantry operations known by the codename **Claret**. For this reason the artillery was often deployed along the Indonesian border, usually guns were sited individually or in pairs in order to have the ability to bring as much territory as possible under fire. Each battery also kept one gun in reserve, ready to be moved at short notice by helicopter to any area in which it was needed. Infantry patrols into Indonesian territory were often accompanied by an artillery forward observer.

During their service on Borneo, the Australian artillerymen engaged in daily defensive and harassing fire missions but, according to the Australian Official Historian of the Confrontation, boredom was one of the main problems facing gunners. Bouts of intense activity would be followed by long periods of relative inactivity. The Australian artillery spent three months in Borneo, leaving in late **July 1965.** The Indonesians' field artillery, and fears that they might augment their efforts against Malaysia with air assaults, led to the deployment of Australia's **111 Light Anti-Aircraft Battery** to Butterworth in **June 1964.** The airfield was home to **two RAAF Sabre squadrons** and a **Canberra bomber squadron**, all thought to be possible targets for an air raid. However, the raid never came and the battery was not required to fire in anger during its deployment. At the conclusion of its deployment, the battery was replaced by the **110th Light Anti-Aircraft Battery** which remained at Butterworth until **1969.**

DVA (Department of Veterans' Affairs) (2020), *Artillery in Borneo*, DVA Anzac Portal, accessed 1 April 2024, <https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/wars-and-missions/indonesian-confrontation-1963-1966/australian-operations-borneo/artillery-borneo>

Lest We Forget

The largest and most costly battle fought by Australians since World War Two ended, was:

The Battle of Kapyong, 23 to 25 April 1951

In late **April 1951** three Chinese army groups launched the Fifth Phase Offensive...North-east of Seoul, The **19th Chinese Corps** destroyed the **6th South Korean Division** leaving the road to Kapyong open. The route was quickly blocked by the **27 Commonwealth Brigade**.

The heights overlooking the road on either side were occupied by **3RAR** on the right and **2nd Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry**, (2PPCLI) on the left. In support behind these 2 battalions, which would bear the brunt of the attack, was **1st Battalion the Middlesex Regiment**, (1MR), **one company of United States (US) tanks**, **2 US mortar companies** and **16th Field Regiment, Royal New Zealand Artillery**. This combined UN Command force of 2,800 soldiers was facing the Chinese 118th Division with 10,600 men. To block the valley through which the road to Kapyong ran, the Brigade needed to hold a long front. A continuous line was not possible, so the infantry companies of both 3RAR and 2PPCLI deployed an all-round defence several hundred metres apart from each other. Each fought its own small battle.

The night of **23-24 April** was clear and cold, with snow on north-facing slopes. At 9:30 pm, 118th Division, having decided to deal with the Australians first, drove back the US tanks supporting B Company 3RAR. By midnight two Chinese battalions assaulted B and A Companies. The attack continued until dawn, while C and D Companies were subject to probes as the Chinese tried to locate the extent of the Australian position. Meanwhile, the third Chinese battalion of 354th Regiment went around the left of the Australians and attacked Battalion Headquarters (BHQ) on the low ground by the Kapyong River. The BHQ was withdrawn before dawn. The Battalion commander Lieutenant Colonel Bruce Ferguson then ordered B Company to pull back to the protection of other companies. As this was done, daylight allowed the New Zealand artillery to fire on the massed Chinese infantry now assaulting D and C companies. By midday, threatened with encirclement, and with a second Chinese Regiment now deploying to attack it, 3RAR was withdrawn from its exposed position. All other companies fell back through D Company which was the last to leave. By 7:30 pm, 3RAR was deployed safely within the 1MR position. The following night the 2PPCLI became the focus of Chinese attention. The Canadians held on until dawn on **25 April** when the Chinese, having lost over 2,000 men to the Australians and the Canadians, called off their attempt to break through to Kapyong.

DVA (Department of Veterans' Affairs) (2023), *The Battle of Kapyong, 23 to 25 April 1951*, DVA Anzac Portal, accessed 30 March 2024, <https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/wars-and-missions/korean-war-1950-1953/events/china-intervenes-korean-war/battle-kapyong-23-25-april-1951>

COMMEMORATION:

Lest We Forget

The Battle of Kapyong was costly for the Australians, with the loss of 32 lives, more than 50 wounded and 3 taken prisoner. Following the battle, 3RAR, along with Canadian and US forces, was awarded the United States Presidential Distinguished Unit Citation for its part in the battle. **Each year on 24 April, we pause to honour those who served in the Battle of Kapyong and all those who served in the Korean War, and those who lost their lives.**

The AWM Diorama of the Battle of Kapyong

"We Will Remember Them" as We Gather In Korea Place on AnZac Day.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

ART93183



Members of No 4 Platoon, B Company, the Royal Australian Regiment (3RAR) who served with distinction as part of the 27th British Commonwealth Brigade in the Battle of Kapyong, Korea, 23 to 25 April 1951. AWM 147351

AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

147351

An Australian Army veteran of the Battle of Kapyong receives the US Presidential Distinguished Unit Citation Device from General James Van Fleet, Commanding the 8th US Army in Korea, on 4 December 1951.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

HO8J2713

A Blast from the Past

ANZAC SERVICE HELD NEAR DUNES

The first Dawn service on Bribie Island was conducted by Father Fred Ailwood of the Anglican Parish, Caboolture, near the dunes at Woorim to commemorate the 52nd. Anniversary of the landing at Gallipoli. A good attendance of about 60 persons stood under overcast skies and were chilled by pre-dawn breezes as they stood to attention. The silence was broken by the bugle call Reveille and a simple poignant ceremony followed.

At 8.30am, March Marshall E. Schragg formed the Anzac Parade outside the Bribie State school, in which a contingent of ex-servicemen, and one ex-servicewoman and a serving member of the Australian Army, as well as representatives of the Caboolture shire Council, Boy Scouts and School Children participated.

Most sincere

The Bribie State School Band in their distinctive uniforms provided music for the occasion. Parade halted at the flagpole at the junction of First Avenue, Campbell Road and Toorbul Streets, where crowds gathered for the Service. President of the Bribie Island Sub-branch RSL, Mr. G. Dyer in his opening address stated that although the numbers who attended Anzac Day Services on the Island were not large, they were most sincere. He was proud and honoured to have their support.

This story was featured in a 1967 edition of the "Bribie Star" .

A Veteran's Wife

A uniform I do not wear
A gun I do not carry,
But I serve my country proudly
Through the man I chose to marry.
I may not wear a dog tag
But I have a mission just the same,
My husband defends my freedom
An I'll defend his name.
A purple heart I'll never wear,
No ribbons adorn my chest,
But this ring upon my finger,
Shows that I am truly blessed.
My husband is a warrior,
Both in battle and at home,
He loves and guards us fiercely,
No greater love I've known.
When the shadows of his darkest days,
Come back to haunt his mind,
His wife will faithfully stand beside,
and love he'll always find.
A Veteran's wife I'm proud to be,
No greater honour could I know,
Than to proudly love and honour,
My husband, my hero.

By: Heather Tabery

We're all Australians now!!

Australia takes her pen in hand,
To write a line to you, To let you fellows understand,
How proud we are of you.

From shearing shed and cattle run,
From Broome to Hobsons Bay,
Each native-born Australian son,
Stands straighter up today.

The man who used to "hump his drum",
On far-out Queensland runs,
Is fighting side by side with some
Tasmanian farmer's sons.

The fisher-boys dropped sail and oar
To grimly stand the test,
Along that storm-swept Turkish shore,
With miners from the west.

The old state jealousies of yore
Are dead as Pharaoh's sow,
We're not State children any more
We're all Australians now!

Our six-starred flag that used to fly,
Half-shyly to the breeze,
Unknown where older nations ply
Their trade on foreign seas,

Flies out to meet the morning blue
With Vict'ry at the prow;
For that's the flag the Sydney flew,
The wide seas know it now!

The mettle that a race can show
Is proved with shot and steel,
And now we know what nations know
And feel what nations feel.

The honoured graves beneath the crest
Of Gaba Tepe hill, May hold our bravest and our best,
But we have brave men still.

With all our petty quarrels done,
Dissensions overthrown,
We have, through what you boys have done,
A history of our own.

Our old world diff'rences are dead,
Like weeds beneath the plough,
For English, Scotch, and Irish-bred,
They're all Australians now!

So now we'll toast the Third Brigade,
That led Australia's van,
For never shall their glory fade
In minds Australian.

Fight on, fight on, unflinchingly,
Till right and justice reign.
Fight on, fight on, till Victory
Shall send you home again.

And with Australia's flag shall fly
A spray of wattle bough,
To symbolise our unity,

We're all Australians now.

(AB "Banjo" Paterson)

The New Zealand Victoria Cross winners, There are 23 recipients over a period of 160 years.—continued from previous editions.

9/523 **Sgt. Richard Charles Travis, D.C.M., M.M.**, late, 2nd Battalion, Otago Infantry Regiment. 1NZE. For most conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty. Date of action: **24 July 1918**. During "surprise" operations it was necessary to destroy an impassable wire block. Sgt. Travis, regardless of all personal danger, volunteered for this duty. Before zero hour, in broad daylight, and in close proximity to enemy posts, he crawled out and successfully destroyed the block with bombs, thus enabling the attacking parties to pass through. A few minutes later a bombing party on the right of the attack was held up by two enemy machine guns, and the success of the whole operation was in danger. Perceiving this, Sgt. Travis, with great gallantry and utter disregard of danger, rushed the position, killed the crew, and captured the guns. An enemy officer and three men immediately rushed at him from a bend in the trench and attempted to retake the guns. These four he killed single-handed, thus allowing the bombing party, on which much depended, to advance. The success of the operation was almost entirely due to the heroic work of this gallant N.C.O.,

and to the vigour with which he made and used opportunities for inflicting casualties on the enemy. He was killed twenty-four hours later, when, under a most intense bombardment prior to an enemy counter-attack, he was going from post to post, encouraging the men. Opōtiki-born Richard Travis was renowned for his daring exploits as a scout and sniper on the Western Front. After arriving in France in April 1916, Travis began conducting night-time patrols between the New Zealand and German trenches. A deadly marksman, he became known as 'The King of No Man's Land'..



Sergeant R C Travis, VC, DCM, MM, painted by Richard Wallwork, circa 1920.

Sergeant James Allen Ward, RNZAF (attached to RAF)



James Ward was the first New Zealand airman to win the VC. Date of Action: **7 July 1941** (over the Netherlands). The Whanganui born school-teacher joined the RNZAF in July 1940 and left for great Britain to serve with the RAF after training.

He earned his VC while returning from a raid on the German city of munster on 7 July 1941.

Sergeant Ward was second pilot of a Vickers Wellington bomber returning from an attack on Munster. When flying over the Zuider Zee at 13,000 feet, the aircraft was attacked from beneath by a Messerschmitt which secured hits with cannon shell and incendiary bullets. The rear gunner was wounded in the foot but delivered a burst of fire which sent the enemy fighter down, apparently out of control. Fire then broke out near the starboard engine and, fed by petrol from a split pipe, quickly gained an alarming hold and threatened to spread to the entire wing. The crew forced a hole in the fuselage and made strenuous efforts to reduce the fire with extinguishers and even the coffee in their vacuum flasks, but without success. They were then warned to be ready to abandon the aircraft. As a last resort, Sergeant Ward volunteered to make an attempt to smother the fire with an engine cover which happened to be in use as a cushion. At first he proposed to discard his parachute, to reduce wind resistance, but was finally persuaded to take it. A rope from the dinghy was tied to him, though this was of little help and might have become a danger had he been blown off the aircraft. With the help of the navigator, he then climbed through the narrow astro-hatch and put on his parachute. The bomber was flying at a reduced speed but the wind pressure must have been sufficient to render the operation one of extreme difficulty. Breaking the fabric to make hand and foot holds where necessary, and also taking advantage of existing holes in the fabric, Sergeant Ward succeeded in descending three feet to the wing and proceeding another three feet to a position behind the engine, despite the slipstream from the airscrew, which nearly blew him off the wing. Lying in this precarious position, he smothered the fire in the wing fabric and tried to push the cover into the hole in the wing and on to the leaking pipe from which the fire came. As soon as he removed his hand, however, the terrific wind blew the cover out and when he tried again it was lost. Tired as he was, he was able with the navigator's assistance, to make successfully the perilous journey back into the aircraft. There was now no danger of the fire, spreading from the petrol pipe, as there was no fabric left nearby, and in due course it burnt itself out. When the aircraft was, nearly home some petrol which had collected, in the wing blazed up furiously but died down quite suddenly. A safe landing was then made despite the damage sustained by the aircraft. The flight home had been made possible by the gallant action of Sergeant Ward in extinguishing the fire on the wing, in circumstances of the greatest difficulty and at the risk of his life.

Content for these articles has been sourced from the pages of NZ Victoria Cross winners on the New Zealand Government History website with photos compliments of the Alexander Turnbull Library. More stories in the next "Bugle edition".

