

ISSUE 4 **\$8.95**

# CONTACT

AIR, LAND & SEA

THE AUSTRALIAN MILITARY MAGAZINE

## HIGHWAY TO HELL

DESERT RAT FIGHTS LAST BATTLE

## HAPPY WANDERER

SASR VETERAN STEPS BACK

## EX TASMAN CANOPY 2004

KIWIS SPREAD THEIR WINGS

# DEEP WATER

ON OPERATIONS WITH THE RAN'S CLEARANCE DIVERS

**PLUS** YOUR LETTERS//THE BIG PICTURE//MILITARY NEWS//RAAF  
AMBERLEY AIRSHOW//EDINBURGH MILITARY TATTOO  
//UNCLE'S GHOST CALLS OUT//KIT GUIDE//REVIEWS//SOMALIA//  
INTRODUCING HENRY WRIGHT//JUST SOLDIERS//PRIVATE NOBBER



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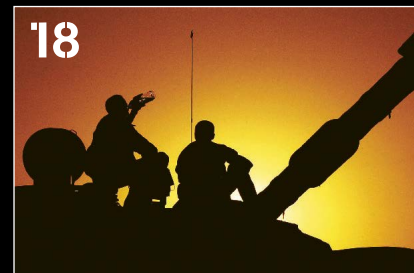
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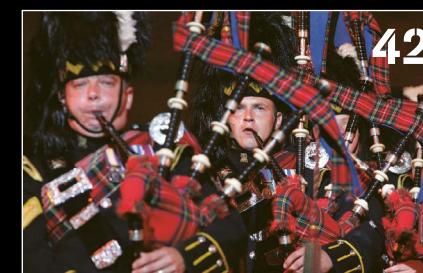
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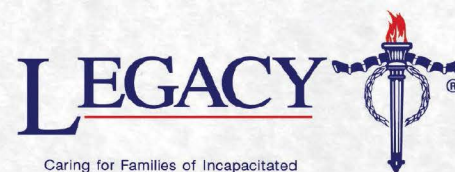
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## THE EDITOR'S LETTER

It's a year since Sean and I set out on this grand adventure. It's been a  
huge learning curve and we are enjoying every challenging minute of it  
- well, almost every minute.

Thank you for your continuing support.

Before I get into what's on offer this issue, I'd like to direct you to our  
new-look website. We've had some expert assistance with this - thanks GD  
- and I am very pleased with the direction we are taking. I'd like to get your  
feedback and suggestions so that we may continue to improve and expand.

Our main feature this issue delves into the murky, underwater world of the  
Navy clearance diver. These guys are tasked to find and neutralise all things  
that go BANG - the only catch being that they have to do it by feel, in water  
so dark and polluted they literally can't even see their own hands raised in  
front of their faces. But their charter doesn't confine them to the depths. In  
Iraq and elsewhere, these guys deal with all kinds of nasties both in and out  
of the water. They may not be considered Special Forces in the true military  
sense, but I reckon, in the Macquarie dictionary sense of the term, they can't  
get much closer.

Also on the menu this issue we serve up seconds for Desert Rat lovers. After  
whipping up a storm in The Gulf, Phil Kellow finishes his service in the deserts  
of Iraq and finds himself patrolling a new desert in outback Australia.

Terry O'Farrell joined the Army in 1966 and, thanks to typical Aussie  
larrikinism, found himself accidentally signed up with the SAS. Now, in the  
regiment's 40th year, Major Terry O'Farrell has pulled the pin on 38 years of  
special-forces soldiering. Obviously, here's a man with a few things to say  
before he goes.

Nothing draws a crowd like an airshow, as RAAF Base Amberley proved  
recently when it helped the City of Ipswich to celebrate its birthday - and we  
were there to record the action.

About the same time that the Wallabies whopped the All Blacks earlier  
this year, another bunch of Aussies was dropping in to say g'day to their  
parachuting brothers in Auckland. And for one Digger, it was a case of  
visiting the old country.

I hope you like the picture spread we have for you from the world-famous  
Edinburgh Tattoo. When we decided to cover this great event we could think  
of no better agent than a wee Scottish bairn turned Aussie and one of the  
ADF's former top photographers, Gary Ramage - even if he has gone a wee  
bit feral of late.

Last issue we brought you a book review on *The Bridge at Parit Sulong*,  
which sparked the interest of a NSW man who believed the book may shed  
some light on an old family mystery. This issue, we bring you what I'm sure  
will not be the last instalment in a heart-rending story of the fate of Private  
Robert Patterson.

We also have another old Digger to introduce you to. Private Henry Wright  
was a prolific letter writer from the front lines at Gallipoli and France and,  
thanks to his family, we intend to bring you Henry's letters in chronological  
order so you can get to know the young soldier and follow his exploits  
through years of war.

And of course, what issue would  
be complete without checking  
in with Wayne Cooper and 3/4  
Cav Regt as they trundle through  
the streets of the city of death  
in Baidoa, while Private Nobber  
continues his own private war.

Brian Hartigan, Editor







# SOLDIER ON HELPING OUR WOUNDED WARRIORS



**SOLDIER ON** IS ABOUT AUSTRALIANS COMING TOGETHER TO SHOW THEIR SUPPORT FOR OUR WOUNDED. IT'S ABOUT TELLING OUR DIGGERS THAT WE WILL ALWAYS HAVE THEIR BACKS; THAT WE WILL REMEMBER THOSE WHO HAVE COME HOME, AS WELL AS THOSE THAT HAVE DIED. IT'S ABOUT GIVING THE WOUNDED THE DIGNITY THEY DESERVE AND THE CHANCE TO DO AND BE WHATEVER THEY CHOOSE.

**SOLDIER ON** IS ABOUT THE ANZAC SPIRIT, AND MATESHIP AND ALL AUSTRALIANS KEEPING THEIR PROMISE TO TAKE CARE OF OUR WOUNDED WARRIORS.



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## FEEDBACK

### PSYCHIC ON CD

I first bought a copy of your magazine when the story about Navy boarding parties caught my eye. I've since kept an eye out for **CONTACT**, because I'm sick of magazines with too many ads, ridiculous stories about 'badass' Americans or that always sing the praises of SAS or Commandos every issue (not that they're undeserving). Thanks for balancing news and information about all arms of the ADF, amongst other things.

I also agree with Paul G of Hillcrest, (in his letter in the third edition) that first-person accounts like 'Somalia' were really interesting - as someone thinking of joining up, I like to read articles that give a realistic insight into military life.

I'm sure you get a lot of requests for stories, but I'd really like to see a story on our RAN Clearance Divers. I've been planning to sign up after going to uni, and I've found there's not a lot of information about CDs from DoD and the military, other than broad, vague descriptions of roles and pay. I read with interest the article on landmine clearing, and thought it'd be great if we could see an article on this neglected arm of the Defence Force.

**Kim H**

*Kim, are you psychic or something? We had planned an article on CDs sooner or later. Your letter prompted immediate action - Ed*

### CONGRATULATIONS

I'd just like to congratulate you on the magazine. I picked up a copy of Issue #2 the other day and found every article extremely interesting. I'm sure the magazine will be popular and look forward to reading future issues.

**Andrew B**

### HARD-CORPS DECISION

The article in Issue #2, on why we need the Abrams tank is full of basic inaccuracies. The lead-up to the main

points suffered from a description of weapons as wooden-tipped and the basic Hollywood mistake of Knights needing a lift onto their horses because of the weight of armour. One of the basic tests of Knighthood was to mount your horse, in full armour, without stirrups. This leads one to question the rest of the article, and with only basic research more inaccuracies are found. 1) While the Leopard tank is reaching the end of its useful life and needs some sort of replacement it is still the heaviest armour in the region.

2) The threat of shoulder-fired missiles and rockets are still a threat to the Abrams with all those lost in the current Gulf War being victims of the "cheap" RPG-type weapons.

3) Their cost effectiveness against other armour is overrated, with Bradley APCs destroying more armour in the Gulf.

If we must have compatibility with US forces, a TOW-armed Bradley can do most jobs an Abrams can with less weight and better range. The scout/APC role would at best be filled with the new Striker vehicles. Both should have the anti HEAT grids seen on Striker to defeat shoulder-launched weapons.

If a non US vehicle is to be chosen or designed, something along the lines of the South African wheeled tank (I'm not sure of the designation) to support a LAV-25 APC or LAV-75 type vehicle [would be good].

A third, long-term option is an Australian designed vehicle. The main job of a tank is to break through and suppress infantry units, not to hunt other tanks. Infantry with modern missiles are more cost effective tank hunters. The vehicle should be wheeled rather than tracked as the conditions that lead to the need for tracks are very few these days and the maintenance on wheels is markedly less. This will also allow us to move them about with some degree of speed and deliver more armour in a short time rather than the

piecemeal deployment that the sheer weight of Abrams and our limited lift/transport facilities will allow.

Apart from this, I enjoyed the mag.

**Peter B**

*Thanks for your feedback Peter, but surely an argument on armour options is moot if the decision is already made - like it or not Abrams it is - Ed*

### THE THINKING MAN'S MAG

The magazine looks fantastic. Discussions around the office concur that it seems to be the thinking-man's military magazine. Good luck for the future. It's obvious you are onto a good thing.

**Jim H**

### STAR MAN ON WATCH

Thanks **CONTACT**. It was great to read that I had the star letter for last issue.

I loved the 3RAR parachute info, and love the series. I look forward to your next issue. Keep the good features coming.

And thanks once again - the watch is excellent.

**Jacob M**

### A MINE OF INFORMATION

I was an NGO aid worker who worked in Africa and Cambodia in the 1980s where I witnessed the horror of landmines on innocent civilians.

My son, and soon to be soldier, showed me the feature on Landmines you ran in issue #3 of your magazine.

The de-miner Lieutenant Colonel David Barnes is testament to the people in the ADF who do great deeds without any real public recognition.

The article was very informative and the pictures were great.

It's good to see something different about the quiet achievements that otherwise go unnoticed in the ADF.

Keep up the good work and thanks Aussie deminers.

**Tim H**

## STAR LETTER

THIS ISSUE'S STAR LETTER WINS AN EXCELLENT LITTLE DIGITAL CAMERA FROM OUR FRIENDS AT MINOLTA



### SPECIAL FORCES... HOPEFULLY ONE DAY

Hi, my name is Andreas and I'm 15. I'm writing to you guys at **CONTACT** to tell you what a great magazine you have released. I bought your third issue a couple of weeks ago, and because I liked it so much I sent away to get the other two issues I missed. I would probably subscribe but I don't shave!

The story I really found interesting was about the

mines. It's amazing how many people, especially kids, die from mines or get severely injured. It said that something like every 22 minutes someone steps on a mine - that's unreal!

The other story I really liked was The Bomber by WO1 Darryl Kelly. I was reading it to dad in the car. He couldn't believe that a bloke would catch grenades and throw them back before they blew.

When I get older I'm hoping to get into Special Forces. Don't worry, I know the odds of getting into it, but with a lot of training... hopefully one day.

It would be really cool if you guys could get some stories on the Australian SF because I'm really keen on that sort of stuff.

Keep up the good work.

**Andreas M**

*Thanks for the feedback, mate. Good luck with SF - Ed*





## BIRD STRIKE! ↘

PICS GARY RAMAGE

After suffering severe fuselage damage when a seagull flew into its nose, this Royal Air Force Hawk fighter trainer managed to land safely at St Athan's airbase near Cardiff in Wales. The unfortunate seagull smashed into the port side of the jet and ended up a metre inside the fuselage – as fluffy mincemeat. The pilot managed to land the jet without too much trouble. Both crew members were unhurt after their mid-air collision.







## BIG BANDS ROCK BAGHDAD

Soldiers, sailors and airmen in the Middle East Area of Operations (MEAO) played host to a range of Aussie entertainers during the Tour de Force II concert tour.

Rock group The Choirboys headlined the program, supported by comedian George Smilovici, singer/songwriter Drew McAlister, crowd sweetheart Bessie Bardot and the mercurial talents of the Royal Australian Air Force Central Band.

"This has been a real privilege to get out and speak to the guys and girls from the ADF who are doing such a great job here in the Middle East," Ms Bardot said.



"Being involved in this great tour is one way I can show my appreciation for their commitment."

## IF YOU'RE NOT SHOPPING ARMY...

The first commercial product ever to be produced in association with the British Army is a new high performance running shoe.

The shoe, named the PT-03 and produced by sportswear company UK Gear, bears the

Army's crossed swords logo and Union Jack flag.

As well as advising on the design of the shoe, Army fitness instructors from the Army Physical Training Corps (APTC) tested the shoe over a six-month period.

The entire project from concept through design, testing and manufacture has taken UK Gear 18 months to complete.

David Hinde, managing director of UK Gear said the shoe had been designed and manufactured to high standards and met the demands of some of the toughest runners.

"It's been created with the help of some of the fittest people on the planet – the Army's own fitness instructors – which means it will stand up to the demands of any runner, from the elite athlete to the occasional jogger," he said.

During testing one senior APTC officer covered more than 800km in the same pair of PT-03s and reported that they were an outstanding pair of running shoes.

The shoes are currently being distributed to all APTC instructors, a total of more than 450, around the world.

In addition, orders for the PT-03 have already been placed by some of the UK's top specialist running stores and major sports-shoe retailers.

The PT-03 will retail at around AUS\$180, making it very competitive – but not cheap enough for the MoD who say they can't afford to issue the shoes to recruits.

Between 5 and 15 per cent of profits from the sale of the shoes will be pumped back into the APTC – which could mean



## ARMY LANDS NEW CHOPPERS

The Australian Army will be equipped with 12 new troop-lift helicopters after the winner of a \$1 billion project was recently announced.

Australian Aerospace, manufacturer of the Tiger helicopter, will supply the new MRH-90 aircraft to form an additional troop-lift helicopter squadron, based in Townsville, under Project AIR9000.

This move will also release a Black Hawk squadron to provide dedicated support to Australia's counter-terrorism forces based at Holsworthy in Sydney.

bigger mirrors and tighter shorts for PTIs, perhaps.

## LIGHT YOWIE BLENDER

So what is the fashion conscious sniper stalking the catwalks in this season? If he's lucky, a racy little number from SAAB. The Special Operations Tactical Suit (SOTACS) effectively conceals snipers in the visual, and near infra-red

"The MRH-90 is a new generation of multi-role helicopters, equipped with state-of-the-art technology, a rear ramp that can be used to load small vehicles, a full fly-by-wire flight control system and digital cockpit," Defence Minister Robert Hill said.

He said the MRH-90 was purpose-built for amphibious operations and would allow the Army to move more soldiers further and faster from platforms such as HMA Ships Kanimbla and Manoora.

The first airframe will be delivered in 2007, with all 12 expected by 2008.

wavebands, blending them in with the background.

The suit provides thermal concealment as well as blocking up to 80 per cent of body heat, but still breathes, leaving the wearer fairly comfortable on long stalks.

SOTACS can withstand robust wet-weather conditions as it won't absorb water and will maintain its ridiculously light 2.9kg dry weight.

## HEADS UP



## RAAF CRUISES TO NEW MISSILE BUY

Australia's F/A-18 Hornets and AP-3C Orion maritime patrol aircraft will soon be equipped with long-range missiles following a recent acquisition announced by Defence.

Defence will choose from the following three long-range air-to-surface weapons:

- Lockheed Martin's Joint Air-to-Surface Stand-off Missile (JASSM) – a stealthy missile with 400km range;
- A variant of the precision-attack cruise missile KEPD 350 made by the European company Taurus Systems GmbH – with a range of about 350km; and
- Boeing's Stand-off Land Attack Missile - Expanded Response (SLAM-ER) – modelled on the Harpoon anti-shiping missile currently used by the ADF and with a range of more than 250km.

With these new missiles, combined with upgraded precision-guided bombs and new air-to-air missiles, Australia's fighters are set to become the region's most lethal air combat and strike platforms.

The project, worth up to an estimated \$450 million, will come on line between 2007 and 2009.

## TWO MINUTE BRIEF....

### MANPADS

Approximately 700,000 MANPADS have been manufactured worldwide and have become the global terrorist's weapon of choice. **MANPADS? You mean a purse for a bloke?**

No, those are man-bags. MANPADS are Man Portable

Air Defense Systems such as the US-made Stinger or Russian SA18 surface-to-air missile. **So why are they a 'weapon of choice' for my local terrorist?**

They're easy to use, cheap for the value-conscious terrorist at about \$7000 a pop and, hard to counter. They have destroyed 270 military and civil aircraft in 10 years.

**Why are they hard to counter?**

As of yet, there's no practical, cost-effective

countermeasure. They can fit into a golf bag and have a range of about 6km, which means they can be fired far from the eyes of airport security and, with infra-red homing, can be fired and forgotten for a quick getaway. **So why don't our aircraft send out a fricken laser beam to jam the MANPADS?**

Not as simple as that Dr Evil. A fail-safe jamming system is being developed with a

version currently being used by Israeli airliners. But until that's developed, military aircraft on operations counter MANPADS by flying like roller-coasters near airbases while dispersing burning flares to act as heat decoys.

**Good drills RAAF! But I don't fly Herc' when I go on holiday, so why should I be worried?**

An airliner is a softer target for the less discerning terrorist who, for \$7000, can

now make his ideological campaign worldwide news and give himself a place in the terror top 10. **But wasn't the government talking about putting jamming devices on our airliners?**

If they do, they probably won't tell us. However, it would cost approximately \$1.7 million for each Australian airliner to be fitted with a jamming device like

the Israelis use. A cheaper alternative is for security patrols to sweep deep outside the perimeters of the major airports looking for MANPADS. **So who's been shopping at their local arms bazaar?**

MANPADS are in the hands of at least 30 terrorist groups world wide, including the Colombian FARC, Chechen guerrillas, Iraqi insurgents, Hezbollah, Tamil Tigers and Al-Qa'ida. And, more worrying

for us, their SE Asian brothers. **SE Asian brothers! You mean in our backyard? Like who?**

Well, the Islamic separatists in the southern Philippines have been trained by Al-Qa'ida, as have the Indonesian JI. And things are starting to get ugly in southern Thailand now as well. There are no specific threats just yet but, depending on your destination, buckle up, as you could be in for a bumpy ride.







## TARTAN TERROR RETURNS FROM GULF DUTY

Bristling with .50 calibre machineguns that protrude from the ship like echidna spines, the frigate HMAS Stuart recently returned from a six-month tour of duty in the North Arabian Gulf, protecting oil platforms at the mouth of the Shatt al Arab waterway.

In April, only 10 days after taking up station, Stuart was at the centre of the action. Insurgents exploded a fishing dhow killing three members of a boarding party from USS Firebolt. That was followed by a coordinated speedboat attack on the oil platforms.

Stuart's captain, Commander Phil Spedding, quickly initiated response and recovery operations, sending his Seahawk helicopter and RHIBs to rescue the wounded and transfer them into the care of his crew.

Off-watch combat systems operators became the ship's emergency medical team, patching up the American sailors'

injuries – and witnessing first-hand, the stark realities of conflict.

The incident created a close bond between the two vessels.

"Firebolt was doing the same job we were – it could easily have been us," Commander Spedding said.

Aside from this incident, the RAN and US Navy have developed a close working relationship.

"The Americans place great store in our little ship", he said. "For half of this deployment we have commanded a task group of up to nine vessels. That's pretty good trust."

As the captain reflects on his ship's tour, his thoughts are for her crew.

"Some of our sailors' first day at sea was during our work-up before this deployment," he said.

"It was a real wild ride, but the incident in April certainly helped to create a more cohesive ship's company."

With her hi-tech hardware, HMAS Stuart was equipped to deal with any high-end naval threat and, on this tour, enabled her to command other naval forces.

## EX STAR LEOPARD 04

Commandos from 1 Commando Regiment (1 Cdo Regt) and soldiers from the Royal Brunei Armed Forces (RBAF) Special Combat Squadron conducted joint parachute training during the regional engagement program Exercise Star Leopard 04.

The exercise included 60 soldiers from the Sydney based 1 Coy, 1 Cdo Regt and the RBAF parachuting into Pittwater Bay, NSW.

Officer Commanding 1 Coy Major David Savvas said the exercise was an important part of the ADF's international engagement schedule and reflected the increasing importance of cooperation with regional Special Forces.

"This was an excellent opportunity to exchange ideas, enhance the skills, techniques and tactics employed by the RBAF and the ADF's Reserve Special Forces," he said.

The RBAF is a small but relatively well-trained all-volunteer force consisting of 3900 regular soldiers including three infantry battalions and a company of Special Forces.

Brunei is a Muslim monarchy, increasingly looking to Australia as a regional source of support for training and military expertise.

Previous military activities with the RBAF have included reciprocal company-level exercises and patrol-boat exercises.

1 Cdo Regt celebrates its 50th Anniversary next year. See [www.1commando.com.au](http://www.1commando.com.au) for info.



## THE RATS DON'T MINE

Authorities in Mozambique are training rats to root out landmines.

The country is littered with landmine's thanks to a long civil war, so African giant pouch rats have been successfully trained by

APOPO, a Belgian research company, to detect and pinpoint the devices.

When the animal smells explosives it scratches at the spot. But because of the rat's light weight, it doesn't detonate the mine, which is

then removed by a human de-miner.

A rat and its handler can search 180 square yards (150 square metres) in about half an hour.

A trained rat costs about US\$2000 – about \$10k less than a mine-sniffing dog.

APOPO plans to use the rats in other affected areas.

# TRADE VISITORS WELCOME

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## MORTUARY AFFAIRS: WE TAKE CARE OF OUR OWN

After we lose service members in a war, many do not think about who gets them back home. For those US Marines who died during Operation Iraqi Freedom, there is a small, virtually unknown company of reservists who answered the call.

Mortuary Affairs (MA) Company, Combat Service Support Group-11, has been tasked with the sometimes difficult job of recovering, processing and shipping their fallen brothers and sisters back to the United States quickly.

"We make sure everyone gets home, regardless," Staff Sergeant Ralph Patterson, MA Company, said.

"We honour them by getting them home – we go by the Marine Corps philosophy 'We take care of our own'."

The Marine Corps did not have a dedicated mortuary affairs unit before Operation Iraqi Freedom, according to Patterson. The US Marine Corps relied on an Army unit and about 10 Marines that trained others during the first Gulf War, but there was no unit dedicated to bringing fallen Marines home.

Three reserve units each dedicated about 80 Marines and sent them to the Mortuary Affairs Army School in January, as the US was preparing to deploy. These trained Marines became part of the first Mortuary Affairs Company to serve in combat.

"I am really glad the Marine Corps is doing this now," Sergeant Jeremy Davis, MA Platoon Sergeant, said.

"It's not a glorious job, but it needs to be done, and it needs to be done by fellow Marines."

Marines sometimes had to sift through ashes and vehicle remains for days to find personal identification, such as dog tags or

nametapes. They don't stop until they know they have identified all the missing service members in an area. "Dog tags always seem to make it. I don't know what they're made of but they seem to survive anything," Patterson said.

"One of our Marines was looking through the wreckage of an Amtrack and found a melted glob that used to be a rifle. There was a chain hanging out of that metal glob and when we cut it open there was a dog tag inside."

"If it is possible to have someone identified, you want to," Lance Corporal William Smith said. "We don't want a KIA turned into an MIA."

Patterson said he spent two days in a pile of debris that used to be the driver's area of an amphibious assault vehicle that was hit by a missile. He almost quit, but something inside told him to keep looking. A few hours later, he found the dog tag of

the last Marine still missing from the vehicle. He saw that name again later.

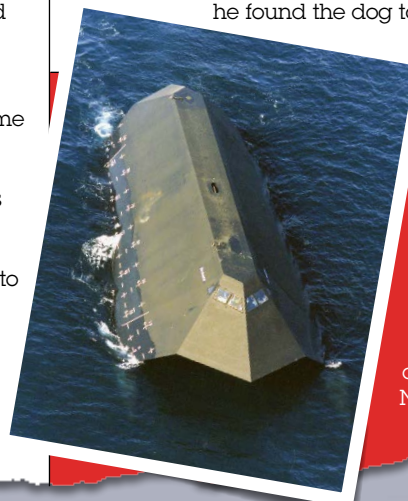
"There was a story in the Marine Corps Times about a woman who was left at home caring for her children while her husband was fighting in Iraq," he said.

"It went into depth about the family and at the end said, 'In memory of (the Marine's name)'. That's a part of the job that makes it all worthwhile."

The mortuary affairs Marines take their job seriously because they aren't doing it for themselves – they are doing it for fallen comrades, their friends and families back home.

"Our CO told us before we left that you can judge a civilisation by how they treat their children, their elderly and their dead," Smith said.

"The last part is our job."



## SEA SHADOW

US Navy test craft, Sea Shadow, recently visited San Diego, California for Fleet Week 2004.

The experimental twin-hulled vessel is a stealth ship designed to test new technologies including control, structures, automation for reduced manning, sea keeping and signature control. The program was initiated in the mid '80s.

Fleet Week is a three-week tribute to the military and their families who give California the largest Navy and Marine community in the world.

## NO MORE NAVY BLUES

The US Navy has introduced a set of four concept working uniforms for its sailors to take the place of seven different uniforms currently in service.

Navy Working Uniforms (NWU) are designed to last up to 18 months, compared to the current wear-life of six.

NWU design isn't intended to camouflage sailors against a ship. The colors used are common in the working environment, making the patterned uniform a more practical choice.

Sailors aboard ship had complained that a small spot of paint or grease on a pair of solid-colour utilities or coveralls, was highly visible and detracted from the uniform's appearance, but with the NWU multicolor pattern, a small spot or stain may be almost unnoticeable.

The new uniform will be wash-and-wear with no ironing required.

Feedback on each uniform will be used to determine the final design.





# HIGHWAY TO HELL

Even today, when NT police officer Phil Kellow attends a burning vehicle in Australia's outback desert, it reminds him of Iraq's Highway to Hell.

WORDS SEAN BURTON PICS JASON WEEDING AND UK MOD

**T**he Highway to Hell still lay ahead for Phil and the Desert Rats as the dawn of Tuesday 26 February crept over the desert horizon revealing another grey day of wind and rain in the 1991 Gulf War.

The morning after his first major contact on objective Copper, Trooper Phil Kellow slipped in and out of fitful sleep.

Good sleep was something that didn't really happen for a lot of the tankies during the 100-hour land war – most lived on adrenalin.

During the lead up to the war, the crew usually slept on the rear decks of the tank, where the engine heat would keep them warm for a few hours against the cold desert night air. Snug as a bug in a rug. But now they were at war and couldn't take any chances. When there was a pause in the advance to Kuwait, they snatched sleep inside the tank, which was

OK for the driver, Trooper Ian Sturrock, as his seat fully reclined – but not for the gunners like Phil.

"Probably the worst place to sleep was in the gunner's seat," he laughs shaking his head, recalling the 10 square inch foam pad seat.

"The only way I could sleep in my seat was sitting upright with my face resting against the eyepieces of the gun sights."

That morning, cat-napping with his face against the sights, his thoughts were constantly interrupted by radio reports, bursts of static and electronic beeps – the crew slept with one ear open.

Phil switched on his pocket radio to listen to the Iraqi propaganda station for some comedic relief.

The station actually played the latest MTV hits, which was better than listening to the fuzzy BBC World Service, however it was the speeches between songs that always gave the crew the best laugh.

A very stern Arab with perfect plum-in-the-mouth Pommy accent was goading coalition troops, "Why are you American and British soldiers here?"

"Don't you realise that while you are away your wives and girlfriends are at home having sex with Hollywood stars like Burt Reynolds, Clint Eastwood and Bart Simpson?"

Bart Simpson!!! – the crew all awake now, laughed out loud. It was the best laugh the boys had in ages and it certainly took their minds off what lay ahead – another 24 hours closed down?

There was little privacy nor comfort left for the crew. Being closed down in the tank meant that all bodily functions had to be done inside the vehicle, into plastic bags that were thrown outside through a small air lock and, after living on rat-packs, it was getting used regularly.

Properly awake now with the thought of his girlfriend back in UK having sex





with Bart Simpson, Phil scanned the ground through his gun sights.

He could see one of the 19 AFVs and countless trucks destroyed the night before as they took Objective Copper. The blackened T55 sat smoldering in the desert rain, its 100mm gun blown apart like a cartoon cigar.

A pathetic windswept line of Iraqi POWs snaked their way towards his position, some holding a Koran above their heads, others holding white jocks as flags of surrender.

Some men cried, some were clearly shell shocked, as they wandered aimlessly, following comrades. Others, laughing in relief that their war was over, carried wounded brothers onward.

Looking back now, Phil says he has pity for his former enemy as they were more like victims than a fighting force.

"It was hard not to pity them when you are confronted by crying men who have little or no decent clothing."

stayed and fought, it was almost certain death against our tanks.

"As a professional soldier, I couldn't help but feel sorry for people like that."

The Desert Rats next objective was Platinum which contained an Iraqi Armoured Division.

The two other Desert Rat battle groups were pushing on to take out Platinum while the Scots DGs Battlegroup would catch up from Copper, deploying as the brigade reserve until ordered to attack their new objective, Lead.

Lead was to be pounded by air and indirect fire support before the attack.

As they advanced, the Desert Rats were becoming increasingly reluctant to fire on enemy infantry who usually surrendered quickly when faced with the battle group bearing down on them.

By late afternoon a sandstorm had whipped up as Phil's D Squadron advanced

"Fin, tank on," shouted Phil.

Instantly inside the tank, the four-man crew broke into the firing drill, switches were flicked, ranges calculated and fire positions selected, all now a reflex to the crew after months of training.

"One zero, this is one one. Contact wait out," the sig and loader Lance Corporal Eddie Smith reported. He snatched an orange charge and rammed it into the breach, connecting it with the depleted-uranium round already up the spout.

Slamming the breach shut, he screamed, "Loaded!"

Phil flipped the safety cover open on his control stick and flicked the switch as the firing circuits and laser fan automatically began whining.

"Fire," the commander replied instantly.

"Lasing!" shouted Phil. The rangefinder shoots out to the APC and calculates the distance in the blink of an eye. At the same

"Target," shouts Phil. "Target stop," the commander confirms.

From "contact!" to "target" taking a mere five seconds.

After Objective Lead was taken that evening, the brigade moved on to take another, Objective Varsity – the Basra Road. The Iraqi Republican Guard was beginning to escape back to Iraq as a ceasefire was being negotiated. The Desert Rats were tasked to cut off their escape via the Basra Highway, the main road running north out of Kuwait City all the way to Basra in southern Iraq.

With no move before 0600hrs, it would be a flat-out race for the Rats over 40 miles of desert before the ceasefire, declared at 0800hrs on 28 February, meant no further action for the coalition. The Desert Rats' war had lasted 66 hours.

"There was plenty of back slapping and the odd canteen cup was passed round

of the road were the bodies of men who had tried to flee only to be taken out by the A10s, or who were already burning when they left their vehicles and managed to stagger a few extra paces before dropping."

The outback cop says that even today, when he attends a burning vehicle incident at work, he still remembers the smell from the Basra Road.

"It was a weird mix of acrid smoke from the oil-well fires, burning vehicles and rotting bodies."

He says one of his most vivid memories from the Highway to Hell was when, along with crew mates, he came across an abandoned Russian-built BMP APC, which they approached with curiosity, with a view to opening its two rear doors for a look.

"Being young squaddies, who had only seen pictures of Russian equipment, we couldn't wait to get inside and have a look up close, and maybe get a few souvenirs."

"We placed the bodies in bags and buried them in shallow graves. We then marked and plotted the grave so that the Red Cross or Red Crescent could later come and retrieve the bodies."

As the massive clean up went on, Phil was assigned as the Squadron Liaison Officer's driver, a good job that meant he got to drive a Ferret Scout Car to places his mates would not get the chance to see – like the middle of Kuwait City.

"I saw the complete horror of the Basra Road and the journey took some time because we had to pick our way around bodies and burnt-out vehicles."

"As the boss and I drove into Kuwait City, the destruction totally blew us away."

"On top of this was the incredible sight of the extent of stealing and looting that had taken place."

"If it hadn't been bolted down it had been taken."



The large number of prisoners meant volunteers were needed to escort them through the position to the rear echelon. Phil was up and out, revelling in the fresh air as he popped the hatch.

"Some of the prisoners we took were no more than 15 years old. I gave one a pair of my running shoes. He had walked miles to surrender and had nothing on his feet, which were in a really bad way, all cut up and bleeding."

As the medics treated his bloody and torn feet, the POW managed to explain in broken English and gestures that most Iraqi men had been forced at gunpoint to the front line and given no military equipment except an overcoat – and a death sentence.

"If they fled the advancing coalition they had the Iraqi Republican Guard behind them executing fleeing men. If they surrendered and word got back to the higher authorities, who knew what would happen to their families back home? If they

## SIXTY-TWO-THOUSAND KILOS OF TANK ROCKED BACK AND SHUDDERED AS THE ROUND STREAKED TOWARDS THE BMP1

onto Objective Lead and through a mortar attack, bypassing those who didn't want to fight but showing no hesitation with those who did.

"Contact. BMP slight left!" shouted crew commander Corporal Geoff Penders – the Challenger MBT immediately swerving violently, starting its contact drill.

An Iraqi BMP APC was static behind a poorly dug sand berm 1400 metres away, most of its flat turret visible, its 73mm gun slowly traversing, trying to get a bead.

An Iraqi crewman popped up into its cupola with a Russian-built anti-tank Sagger missile in his hands, hurriedly trying to fix it to the firing rail. A weaponless Iraqi ran away from the back of the APC, jumped into a hole and out of sight.

time, the massive sloping Challenger turret glides round and lays the gun on the target 1400 metres away.

"Firing now!" Phil shouts, squeezing the red trigger with his left hand.

Sixty-two-thousand kilos of tank rocked back and shuddered as the round streaked towards the BMP1. Travelling at approximately 1500 metres per second, the hyper velocity round smashed into the turret with the hapless crewman still trying to prepare his missile.

In an instant the APCs turret is popped off like a champagne cork, shooting high into the air, riding on top of a black and orange ball of smoke and flame. It spins in the air like a giant frying pan, as the vehicle begins cooking off ammunition.

with our disgusting bootleg alcohol. I was chuffed as hell I'd come through it OK but now I just wanted to get home."

But there was little to celebrate as 12 hours earlier A10 Tank Busters had turned the road to Basra into the Highway to Hell. The Republican Guard, realising their war was lost, began to flee back to Iraq from Kuwait, but not before they had managed to steal and loot every conceivable item and vehicle they could find in Kuwait City. So huge was the convoy that it created a massive traffic jam along the entire six-lane highway all the way to the Iraqi border.

The A10's had swooped on their prey leaving the Desert Rats to survey an unbelievable scene of carnage, one which Phil hopes he will never see the likes of again.

"As far as we could see were the burnt-out shells of vehicles, many still with their occupants inside. There must have been mass panic in the convoy as people tried to escape the US air attack. Along the sides

Unbeknown to Phil and his mates, the APC had taken a direct hit through the front. They eagerly pulled open the double rear doors, and suddenly jumped back in disgust at the grizzly scene they found.

There were eight blackened, charred bodies of Iraqi squaddies, still sitting in the vehicle facing each other.

"After that we were a lot less inquisitive."

The Desert Rats sat astride the Basra Road for two weeks while the ceasefire was being implemented. During that time there was an urgency to clear the road of vehicle and human wreckage.

Each squadron had a tank fitted with a dozer blade. These were used to clear the road of debris, pushing vehicles to the sides. The hundreds of rotting Iraqi dead that littered the highway were now a serious health risk and for the sake of decency they needed to be buried quickly. The Scots DGs were tasked with burying any bodies found within a certain radius.

The cease fire was declared and it was all over. Initially there was jubilation that they had made it through the war but the celebrations were soon dampened by the realisation that they could still be there for some time waiting to be back-loaded.

Luckily that didn't happen and the Desert Rats flew back to their base in Germany on 16 March.

By the end of the Gulf War the Desert Rats had, as part of 1 Armoured (British) Division, destroyed three Iraqi armoured divisions and captured more than 7000 POWs, during a 400km advance to liberate Kuwait.

For some, their 100-hour Gulf War was an anti-climax. For others, like Phil, who had seen action, it was a relief to be finished.

But garrison life back in Germany took some getting used to.

Getting back to the routine of normal life was hard, although the eight weeks of leave helped.



After the Gulf War, Phil spent another year in Germany before the regiment moved back to the UK. He spent a further two years at the Royal Armored Corps Gunnery School in Dorset.

Eventually Phil left the Army in July 1994 feeling that no further service would ever give him the experiences the Gulf had.

After leaving, he worked in the UK telecommunications industry before eventually putting on a backpack and heading to Australia for a working holiday, in 1998.

The backpacker became a resident as he began working for Australian Defence Industries (ADI).

But there was a nagging feeling in the back of his mind that something was missing. There just wasn't the same job satisfaction and camaraderie the Army had given him.

population as recently as 60 years ago. You have to be sensitive to thousands of years of culture."

Alcohol and substance abuse are big problems in the Red Centre, which unfortunately no one appears to have an answer for – including the politicians.

"I was in Sydney during the Everley Street riot and a politician said, "Everley Street was Australia's Embarrassment".

"I had to laugh. I thought, 'He's never even been to the Alice.'"

The Alice Springs cop shop is the busiest in Australia.

"Everley Street pales into insignificance compared to the problems faced by the Aboriginals here," Phil says.

NT outback cops have huge areas of responsibility, something their urban counterparts don't comprehend.

"We recently attended a fatal motor vehicle accident at Uluru (Ayers Rock),

toasting the off-duty cop with a stubby before returning to his newspaper.

Another pair of beers miraculously appear in front of us on the soggy bar mat.

"This town seems to attract some really interesting characters," Phil says.

"I bet everyone in here tonight has a story of how they got here.

"For me, the gulf war has never left me. I'm reminded of it every time I smell a burning car in the outback.

"It's a cliché but it's so true, it really was the best of times and the worst of times."

After a pause, he recounts another contemporary warrie.

"A young lad who'd had too much to drink was causing a few problems in a pub, so we were called to escort him off the premises – usual stuff, no big deal."

Typically, he wasn't going home quietly. After bit of a ruck he was put in the back of the wagon and was off to spend a night



"I wanted a job that was going to give me something different every day.

"I eventually decided on the Northern Territory police after I had worked up at RAAF Tindal, with ADI.

"The territory is like no other place in Australia with its unique landscapes, people and weather. It still has a pioneering feel about it that I love."

He says that there are real job similarities between the Army and Police – things such as mateship.

"Everyone looks out for each other and you know that if you ever get in a tight spot that your mates won't be far behind to back you up.

"Working in the NT is an amazing experience.

"We have a huge indigenous population, which brings its own challenges. You have to remember that Central Australian Aboriginals only really began living among the white

## EVERLEY STREET PALES TO INSIGNIFICANCE COMPARED TO THE PROBLEMS FACED BY THE ABORIGINALS OUT HERE

450km's away. We drove there at 6pm, did the job and returned the following morning. All up, a 900km round trip – and that was after a nine-hour day shift.

"People either love or hate Alice Springs. It depends what you make of it.

"Personally I love it.

"Being a fairly small town you get to know most of the people here, which I really like."

As we sit at the RSL Club bar, a group of patrons next to us erupt in laughter to an animated joke told by an old digger holding court.

Propping up the bar, Phil acknowledges a patron with a nod.

"How are ya mate?" he says.

"Yeah, good Phil," the old-timer replies,

at Alice Springs' least disconcerting 24-hour Bed and Breakfast, the drunk tank.

"All the way back to the cop shop he was kicking the inside of the wagon shouting, "You cowards! Why don't you join the Army and fight like real men? You can't because you aint tough enough," he continued.

"My partner looked at me and rolled his eyes. The lad obviously wasn't in the Army and I don't think he ever had anything to do with it. All we could do was laugh at his carrying on.

"Do you think he'll read this?" Phil asks with a grin.

"Maybe he might go home quietly next time. I doubt it.

"Anyway. Cheers, mate!"



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# THE HAPPY WANDERER

Thirty-eight years in any job is an achievement – 38 years with the SASR is a milestone almost too big to contemplate.

WORDS BRIAN HARTIGAN PICS ADF

In February 1966, a young lad with fiery Irish-Sicilian blood, joined the Australian Army and, after basic and infantry training, found himself trying out – almost by accident – for entry to Australia's then two-year-old Special Air Service Regiment. More than two years of training later, Trooper Terry O'Farrell was patrolling behind enemy lines in Vietnam.

Terry O'Farrell was born in 1947 in Rockhampton, central Queensland, to Irish and Sicilian parents. The marriage was doomed to fail, consigning Terry and a younger brother to a less than idyllic childhood that included surviving a murder attempt at the hands of a drunken father and time in an orphanage.

At 19, he enlisted in the army and shipped off to boot camp at Kapooka. Later, while still in basic training at the Infantry School, the young soldier found himself sitting across a table from a pair of high-ranking officers asking him some very strange questions. It soon dawned on Terry that a mate, Ned, had pulled a prank, volunteering Terry for SASR selection. But that was OK – he did the same for Ned!

So, on 1 August 1966, Terry O'Farrell marched into a unit he would remain loyal to for the next 38 years.

In a book published in 2001 – *Behind Enemy Lines* – Terry O'Farrell describes the basic role of the SAS troopers as; trained to operate behind enemy lines in patrols of four to five men; avoiding contact at all costs; observing, making close, undetected contact with the enemy; relying on superior tactics, camouflage, guile and deception; never firing until absolutely forced to; at times within arms length of him. Probing his camps, locating his rest sites, observing his track patterns, the patrol becomes familiar with enemy haunts and modus operandi. The work was both mentally and physically debilitating.

But the unit was also tasked with a new and unfamiliar role as well – offensive operations. These were overtly aggressive,

the troopers prepared to initiate action, to risk exposure through ambushing and raiding – initiating contact rather than laying low.

*"I hear it first, splashing sounds in the creek to our left. Jesus, God is it them? Almost immediately the question is answered as nasal singsong voices swiftly close our position. I hear a quiet snick as Kim eases the safety forward on the M60. Simultaneously, I ease the safety bale forward on the [M18 Claymore anti-personnel] mine's firing device, imagining Pete doing the same on the eight he commands."*

Terry O'Farrell completed two tours of Vietnam, the second as patrol commander, before returning to the Regiment's home in Western Australia and a distinguished soldiering career.

This year, after 38 years, Major Terry O'Farrell retires as the Regiment's 2IC. CONTACT caught up with him for a chat before he left.

**Thirty-eight years in any field is dedication, but it must have been tough in the SAS.**

As you progress through the ranks, a lot of the physical stuff tends to drop away as you get more involved in planning, operations and training. So you get a bit of a letoff in that respect – but otherwise it's full on. It was reasonably tough – a lot of sacrifices, especially for the family.

**What sort of sacrifices did your family have to endure?**

Because we are a high-readiness unit – that is, we get very little notice to move;

for example when I deployed to East Timor I got three days notice – that's pretty tough on the family. It never really got any easier over the years – if anything it got tougher as the kids grew up and needed their Dad around – but it did become kind of routine; "Oh, yeah. Dad's going away again".

Then when you come home, adjustments have to be made. They have survived without you and settled into a routine and Mum's had to play two roles all the while, and then suddenly Dad's back. It takes some adjusting. And of course, you've been out bush with the boys and you come back to a much more genteel way of life. So, frequently, big adjustments have to be made all 'round.

**The SASR is 40 years old this year and you've been with them for 38 of those – what changes have you seen?**

The SAS has certainly become a more complex organisation. It's required to take on much more complex warfighting and peacekeeping roles than when I joined. Vietnam was very much on the boil then and it was a fairly straightforward business. But these days operations are a lot more complex in that many of them don't involve actual combat but are as close to combat conditions as you can get

**TODAY'S SAS IS REQUIRED TO TAKE ON MUCH MORE COMPLEX WARFIGHTING ROLES THAN WHEN I JOINED**





– so there's a lot more restraint required of soldiers.

Soldiers are much better trained these days, they have a lot more skills to keep current in. That in itself is a conundrum in that it is very difficult to find the time to train, given the tempo of operations these days.

I think the other big thing is that it used to be fun, whereas these days, people are a lot more conservative – there doesn't seem to be the same characters around as when I joined up. **Tell us a bit about the blokes you served with and how they compare with the soldier of today.**

In many ways they are the same sort of beast. They are obviously physically tough, they are mentally sharp, intelligent, robust sorts of guys. They are strongly individual – but most of them can subjugate that individuality to work in close teams. There were probably more larrikins in the old days, prepared to play up a bit, have a drink and so on. These days they are more regimented in many ways, probably in keeping with the mores of society, reflective of the way society has changed.

**After Vietnam, the Australian Army went through a relatively quiet period. What was that like for the SAS?**

The SAS was nearly disbanded after Vietnam. We suddenly found ourselves without a raison d'être and the Army was coming down from about 45,000 men to about 32,000. People were looking around for economies and it was suggested that we didn't need an SAS anymore. So the SAS worked very hard under our then CO McFarland and, later, our now Governor General Michael Jeffreys to carve out a new role – long-range surveillance and reconnaissance of the north-west of Australia. Once that concept was proven, the SAS was on the front foot and we consolidated for a period until the late '70s when we had the bombing of the Sydney Hilton. The Government turned to us then as a counter-terrorism force and for many years that kept us going. Then things like Somalia, Rwanda and East Timor started to happen and suddenly we were the force of choice.

**So, since the late '80s it pretty much hasn't stopped?**

That's right. Since Iraq, the first time, we've evaluated lessons learnt from past campaigns, consolidated those lessons and taken a long hard look at SAS 2020 and what that might look like. So, while focusing on current operations, we always have an eye on the horizon and not forgetting the past either.

**What lessons has the SAS learned and adapted over the years?**

Vietnam taught us the value of small teams – to rely on each other, to be independent because there wasn't a lot of support and when there was support, it was a long time coming. We also learned the value of good fieldcraft – the way you moved, your camouflage, your shooting skills, all had to be first class.

On later operations we have tended to operate in larger groups, which was another steep learning curve for us, but once we mastered that, we became quite adept at it.

But now we've sort of reverted to our roots – small groups, operating out at strategic range.

## NOW WE HAVE REVERTED TO OUR ROOTS – SMALL GROUPS OPERATING OUT TO STRATEGIC RANGE

**What does the SAS actually do these days and how does it compare to its overseas counterparts?**

We are probably one of the few Special Forces units in the world that takes on the broad range of missions we do. If you compare us with say the American Delta Force – they are primarily concerned with direct action, but no reconnaissance or surveillance. The British SAS still take on a wide variety of missions, but they still don't have the amphibious role we do. So, we are definitely at least on a par but in many respects better. And I say that having seen these units first-hand, I might add.

**Tell me a bit about SAS in Afghanistan.**

Almost immediately after 9/11 we were in Afghanistan, operating there for 12 months. It was very interesting for us there, attached to large American units for the first time in a long time. They very quickly realised the worth of the SAS – so few men able to do so many complex tasks and tying down a large portion of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border with both overt and clandestine patrolling missions.

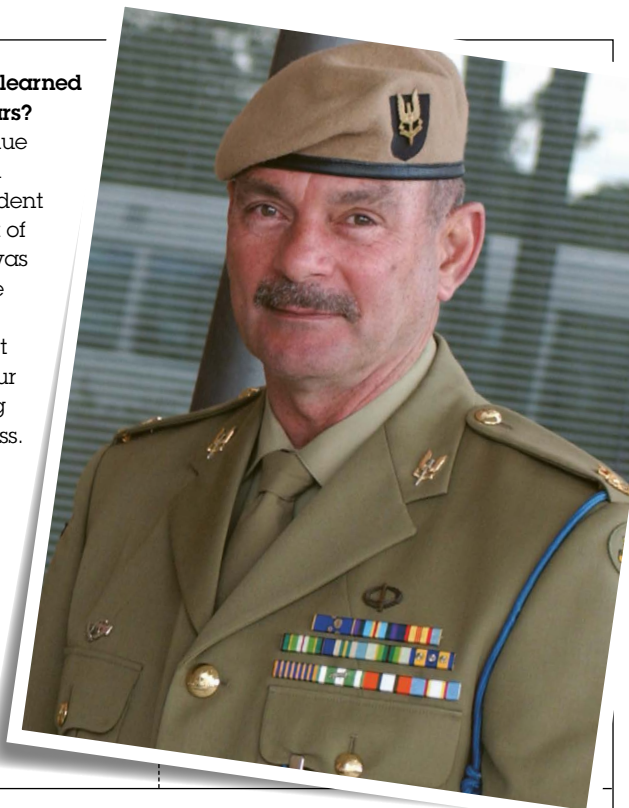
We were based in Baghram – an old Russian airbase – at about 5000ft elevation and surrounded by 12,000ft mountains. Even in the middle of summer when it was 52-53°C in Baghram, it was well below freezing up in the snow-capped mountains.

We had to do a lot of vehicle patrols there to cover our area of operations and the boys were frequently out for 20 or 30 days at a time.

The other big problem in Afghanistan was trying to determine who was actually the enemy. They were all allowed to carry weapons and very often you couldn't tell who was an enemy until they unmasked and opened fire at you. There was also a constant, what we called a green-on-green problem there – intermittent warfare with village against village and when you asked one village where the enemy was they'd point you to the other village across the road. It was a very difficult and complex environment to operate in. You had to be very careful about rules of engagement and identifying potential targets.

**What would you class as a highlight of a long career?**

I would have to say being senior instructor at the Reinforcement Wing was a highlight – being responsible for selecting and training new SAS soldiers. But, as I said in farewell to the Regiment recently, commanding men on operations in Vietnam would have to be the absolute highlight of it all. It was dangerous, it was exciting and nine times out of 10 you were shitting yourself – but when you look back on it, they were pretty exciting times.



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## CANEFIELD RAIDERS

Innisfail in far north Queensland became the “capital” of a foreign country in September and was the site of a drop zone for a major Australian airborne force.

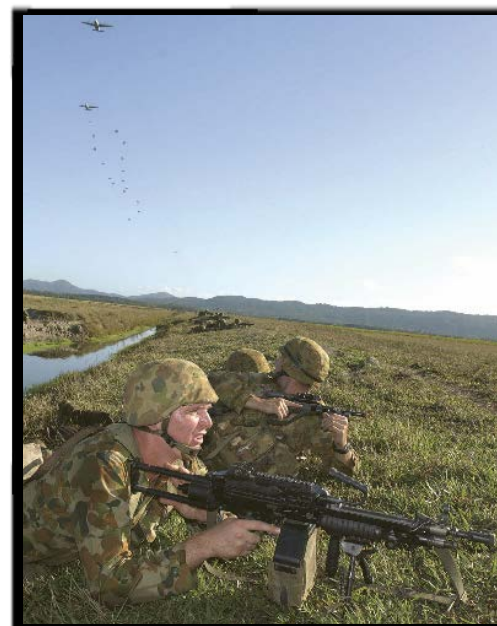
Townsville-based 3 Brigade, augmented by 3RAR and a company of infantry from New Zealand, supported by Navy and RAAF elements, conducted Exercise Swift Eagle, training for the military-assisted evacuation of Australian citizens from foreign soil.

Civilian evacuation operations are considered part of 3 Brigade’s ‘bread and butter’, with regular training in various scenarios over recent years.

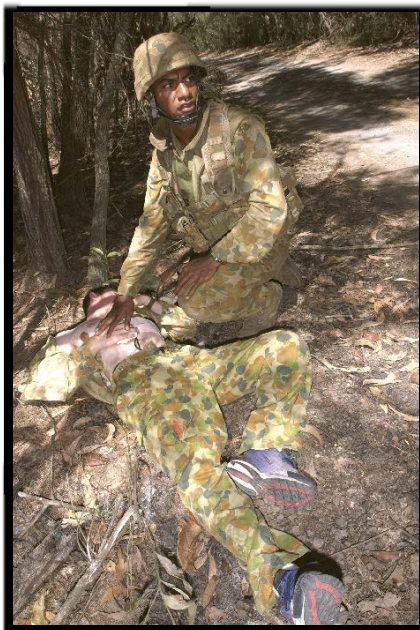
Swift Eagle follows six months of liaison with north Queensland land owners and authorities. An area from Tully to the Atherton Tablelands became the fictitious island nation of Capronesia for the exercise, with local residents actually participating as Capronesian citizens and pressure groups.

Deputy Shire Mayor, Councillor George Pervan, welcomed the troops to Johnstone Shire as parachutes rained down between cane fields.

“It looks like fun, but these blokes are very professional. We’re glad to have them here.”







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# ANZAC AIR DROP

WORDS KIWI MAC PICS RNZAF

**F**oreign aircraft disgorging paratroopers over a major New Zealand city – no it's not a WWII drama gone wrong, but just the start of Exercise Tasman Canopy.

Hosted by the Parachute Training and Support Unit [PTSU], in Auckland, this year's exercise was more than just checking rigging lines and looking for a safe landing spot, according to the Commanding Officer of Australia's Parachute Training School [PTS], Lieutenant Colonel Steve Evans.

"This training offers a unique opportunity for the two organisations – PTS and the Kiwi's PTSU – to see where we're at, and compare the training techniques of both.

"We are keen to look at increasing the training together, as I believe it is very beneficial."

Tasman Canopy is an annual freefall parachuting exercise hosted alternately by the ANZAC partners, its objective – the exchange of parachuting ideas and operating techniques.

While each country hosts the event on alternate years, last year's exercise was cancelled because of Australia's operational commitments.

"Aside from being a good trip to familiarise ourselves with the Kiwis and them with us, it also goes a long way to keeping the ANZAC relationship alive," PTS RSM Warrant Officer Class One Garry Mychael says.

Arriving in Auckland, the Aussies were welcomed by the OC of PTSU, Squadron Leader Severn Smith.

Clear weather the next day meant the ANZAC parachutists were in the air early and completed three descents above Auckland, followed the next day by a massed decent into the Rotorua show grounds – where the Aussies were treated to a cultural display.

The group's return to Auckland was greeted by foul weather over the next three days which meant parachuting was brought

to a halt and the exercise took on a more social flavour, the young soldiers enjoying all the attractions Auckland has to offer.

New Zealand Air Force Parachute Jump Instructor, Flight Sergeant Brent Iggo, said the Australian visit offered the Kiwis an insight into a different way of doing things.

"Everything they do is on a bigger scale. We have to fight just to get an available aircraft for sorties – for this, the RAAF provide an aircraft [C130J] tasked solely to our needs.

"And then the weather packs in – it was bloody disappointing."

The exercise wound up with the Australians sampling what was for some, their first traditional Maori Hangi.

But, all too soon, mission requirements saw the C130 forced to return to Australia, meaning the two units could not enjoy the Bledisloe Cup match between both nations, something the Kiwi's weren't that disappointed about following the All Black loss to the Wallabies.

## NOT ALL KIWIS ARE FLIGHTLESS...

For one of the 25 Australian Army parachutists participating in this year's Exercise Tasman Canopy, being in New Zealand meant more than just jumping over green DZs.

Captain James Kiwi, Adjutant PTS, was born in Christchurch, the son of Albert 'Albie' Kiwi who served in Special Forces in both the New Zealand and Australian armies for many years.

"Coming back to New Zealand as a soldier was something I had always wanted to do – it's awesome," says the PTS instructor.

Captain Kiwi was conscious the relationship between PTS and PTSU was one of rich and poor cousins.

"That's not saying that because we're bigger we're necessarily better – the guys over here are very professional and achieve a lot with the resources available."

Being part of the larger ADF's 3RAR and serving twice in East Timor had meant that Captain Kiwi had not been able to keep in as close contact with his family in New Zealand as he would have liked. But, as luck would have it, inclement weather cancelling jumping operations meant he had a good opportunity to see his family and reacquaint himself with his Kiwi roots.





AMBERLEY AIRSHOW

# IPSWICH FLIES HIGH FOR BIRTHDAY

WORDS CONTACT PICS GARY RAMAGE

The people of Ipswich came out in throngs to celebrate their city's Centenary in October – and it was the RAAF who hosted the party.

Clear skies, high temperatures and fantastic aerial entertainment drew crowds of almost 100,000 people over two days to the Defence Force Airshow 2004 at RAAF Base Amberley.

Almost all aircraft currently in service with the ADF took to the skies in aerial ballet over several hours each day, as did a variety of types long since retired.

While F/A18s, F-111s and the Hawk lead-in fighter trainer tore the skies apart with typical thunder, Army and Navy took their share of limelight with helicopter-dominated static and aerial displays.

Cancelled twice in recent history, this year's Amberley Airshow broke a long drought for thousands of air buffs of all ages from across south-east Queensland and northern New South Wales. The 2001 show was cancelled in the wake of 9/11. Before that, Mother Nature was responsible when the 1996 event was canned at the last minute.





# WHERE EAGLES WOULDN'T DARE

The Royal Australian Navy fields very special teams of underwater operators putting themselves in harms way to secure safe passage for shipping.

WORDS BRIAN HARTIGAN PICS PHIL BARLING AND ADF

We all know, in broad terms, what a diver is – not the Olympic kind, elegantly entering the water from a height, but the black-rubber-suited kind, flopping backwards off the side of a boat, breathing air through a mouthpiece attached to cylinders on his back.

Many divers the world over pursue underwater activity for pleasure or sport. But there are also those who make their living under the water.

Abalone fishermen, biologists, treasure hunters, oil-rig

maintainers, pipeline welders, the list goes on. And then there are the military types.

In Australia, both the Army and Navy train men for working-diver specialties. The Navy, as one might expect, requires divers for tasks as obvious as ship maintenance below the waterline.

But, perhaps less obvious, and certainly less well known in any great detail, is a Navy diving specialty that pushes men to the very edge of what any sane person would consider the comfort zone – the Navy clearance diver (CD).

The Royal Australian Navy has two clearance diving teams – AUSCDT1 based in Sydney and Perth-based AUSCDT4.

Each of those teams has three main elements – mine counter-

measures, maritime tactical operations and underwater battle damage and repair.

In addition to their diving and explosives skills, clearance divers are trained to a much higher standard of fitness and weapon handling than just about anyone outside special-forces elements.

Navy clearance diving, as the name merely hints, is a specialty predominantly concerned with clearing mines and other hazards to naval shipping.

Sound simple? Well consider for a moment the task before AUSCDT3 (Australian Clearance Diving Team 3 – raised when concentrations of CDs deploy overseas) at the opening of the current involvement in Iraq. Working in murky water where visibility was so poor that they literally couldn't see their own hands raised close to their diving masks, their task was to explore every inch of





the Umm Qasr facilities, declaring the port free from anti-ship mines or other nautical hazards. And this with the added pressure of political and humanitarian deadlines bearing down from on high.

But even this description doesn't clarify what they actually do under the water. They look for objects, deliberately seeded below the surface, that are primarily designed to explode. Mines, bombs, booby traps – call them what you will – objects with enough destructive power to blow catastrophic holes in the plating of modern battleships. And the clearance diver's job is to find these objects in water so dark and murky that they can't see their own hands.

So how do they find what they seek? Fingers, probing the gloom, seeking out unexploded devices by touch!

There are modern sonar and other detection devices available, of course, but using these in the confines and clutter of a modern port facility is next to useless. So the diver must rely on the sensitivity of his own fingertips to find unexploded bombs literally by bumping into them in the dark.

Did they find anything in Umm Qasr? You bet. Among hundreds of other things tagged, mapped and dealt with, was a sunken mine-laying boat complete with a full load of modern anti-ship mines, each having to be

removed from the boat before being removed from the water. On top of that, hundreds of suspicious objects eventually dismissed as simply part of the detritus of a modern port, none-the-less had to be examined and classified before being dismissed or removed. And none-the-less causing at least a momentary spike in adrenaline as probing fingers found them in the dark loneliness of up to 20 metres of tide-affected, turbid water.

There was also a time limit on how long the AUSCDT3 members could work at Umm Qasr, as huge tidal differences caused dangerous currents to sweep through the port. Tidal streams could get as strong as 5 knots according to Sub Lieutenant Jace Hutchison, Maritime Tactical Operations Element Officer, normally based in Western Australia with AUSCDT4.

"With water running that strong on the changing tides there were only two or three windows of between 20 minutes to an hour a day where we could enter the water to get the job done," he says.

"At the time, we also had a really strong push from both the Australian and US governments to open up the port as quickly as possible, at the same time keeping the infrastructure intact and to provide the humanitarian support to the people of Iraq.

"So there certainly were deadlines to meet."

Australian clearance divers don't just clear mines, however, and in fact, are not always employed as divers.

There were 34 Australians attached to AUSCDT3 in Umm Qasr, under US command, working closely with their American and British counterparts. When not in the water fulfilling their core tasking, they performed a similar function on dry land – clearing the wharves and port facilities of explosive ordnance. They were also responsible for their own security in the port.

"Facilities for the team were nothing special. We were in the field the whole time, providing our own protection," Sub Lieutenant Hutchison says.

## "THE DIVER MUST RELY ON THE SENSITIVITY OF HIS FINGERTIPS TO FIND UNEXPLODED BOMBS BY BUMPING INTO THEM IN THE DARK"

"There was us, the British and the US counter-mine teams all living together in one of the warehouses with not much more than our own sleeping bags and so on, and eating ration packs the whole time. "But it was a terrific experience. I'm really enjoying this job so far and I can't see any reason why I'd want to give it away."

Navy Clearance Divers are the Australian Defence Forces' specialist divers whose primary focus, as discussed, is the detection and disposal of explosive ordnance. This role is conducted at sea in ships, in the approaches to ports and anchorages and on land in port facilities and the littoral environment associated with amphibious operations. The clearance diving fraternity is, in fact, the largest single ADF element with a direct and primary interest in EOD (explosive ordnance disposal).

All personnel wishing to join this elite fraternity, including officers, must undergo rigorous acceptance testing and psychological evaluation.

Lieutenant Commander Steve Bliss, Commanding Officer AUSCDT4, says that once a suitable applicant is found, he will undergo a Clearance Diver Acceptance Test – a two-week program on the shores of HMAS Penguin in Sydney, home of the RAN Diving School.

"This is a very condensed period. It is very demanding both physically and mentally," he says.

"If they pass that, they then go on to the Clearance Diver Course."

This course is run over 34 weeks and the demands placed on potential applicants are probably not seen anywhere else in the ADF outside of Special Forces.

Leading Seaman Ashe Konig who grew up on a dairy farm in Milanda, near Cairns, says he didn't do any diving before joining the Navy but was a keen swimmer and loved the outdoors, and so saw clearance diving as a very attractive prospect.

"I was actually on the first Clearance Diver Acceptance Course, as it's known today, back in 1995.

"It was very challenging and they actually made a lot of changes after our course because we had a lot of blokes go down [eliminated] on the course.

"I was only 17 at the time and it was certainly very different to anything else I had done in my life – it was very difficult."

But in the intervening 10 years, the young lad from country Queensland has

seen a thing or three beyond the farm gate.

"Now, as a Leading Seaman, I'm the link between the senior sailors and the junior level. The seniors tell me what needs to be done and I work with my team of juniors to get that job done. And that can be challenging – keeping both sides happy."

He says he has been in the Navy for 10 years and one week – 10 really good years.

"My posting to Cairns was probably the highlight so far. We actually got to do a lot of work with live ordnance up there.

"There are still a lot of WWII mines out around the reef, so we got lots of hands-on experience with the real thing – opportunities you probably wouldn't experience on a posting to Sydney or Perth.

"It was a real thrill to work on those things – things I used to read about as a kid.

"Most of it was old British stuff – old contact mines. They look scary and were actually a bit scary to work on, but some of them were in remarkably good condition considering how long they've been floating around out there."

Clearance diving as we know it today owes much of its heritage to a Royal Navy concept developed mainly during WWII that saw teams, known as P Parties (Pilotage Parties), responsible for clandestine reconnaissance and obstacle clearance in the maritime environment.

Since its inception in 1951, the Royal Australian Navy Clearance Diving Branch

## CLEARANCE DIVER SKILL SETS

### MINE COUNTER-MEASURES



### BATTLE-DAMAGE REPAIR



### MARITIME TACTICAL OPS



### TAG (EAST) WATER OPERATOR



## SPECIAL DIVERS

Clearance Divers (CDs) are the ADF's specialist divers. CD tasks include but are not limited to the rendering safe and disposal of all ordnance, including missiles, artillery projectiles and air-delivered

munitions in ships, on land and underwater; also includes the demolition of maritime assets.

Clearance Divers undertake all military diving tasks to a depth of 54 metres, however initiatives are underway to conduct diving to 90 metres.

During his career, a CD will be rotated through the following operational areas:

### HUON CLASS MINE HUNTER COASTAL (IMHC)

Mine Counter Measures. Activities include diving using self-contained, mixed-gas equipment for mine counter measures tasks, identification and disposal of sea mines. SCUBA (air) is used for underwater maintenance and underwater demolition.

### CD TEAMS

a. **Maritime Tactical Operations.** Duties include diving on pure oxygen and mixed-gas equipment. Trains in small arms, escape and evasion, combat survival and insertion techniques, including parachuting. Tasks include amphibious operations and ordnance disposal.

### b. Mine Counter Measures.

Focuses on the location, identification, rendering safe and disposal of underwater ordnance in areas where conventional mine-hunting methods are not feasible.

c. **Underwater Battle Damage Repair.** Diving on air equipment, both self-contained and surface-supplied, for the

maintenance and repair of ships' underwater fittings, harbour installations and underwater ranges. Trains in skills such as underwater welding, salvage techniques and non-destructive testing.

**MAJOR FLEET UNITS** Service in major warships conducting diving, demolitions and seamanship duties.

### SUPPORT ROLES

RAN Diving School in support of training operations as well as various admin positions throughout the Navy.

During all postings the Clearance Diver will be required to carry out seamanship and ships' husbandry duties in addition to diving-related duties.



has used contemporary diving equipment to its full capacity and, indeed, has been a forerunner in the development of new technologies in sub-aqua exploration and exploitation.

After 25 years, Lieutenant Commander Bliss has seen many changes in technology.

"Wet suits and breathing equipment are two areas we've seen a lot of changes in over the years," he says.

"I recall the all-purpose set we used to use and it certainly looks an antiquated piece of kit now when you compare it with today's standards.

"We had incidents with the all-purpose sets where divers would be breathing basically a mixture of air and salt water, because the demand valves weren't nearly as good as they are today.

"There were instances where you'd be breathing in bits of glue used in fixing exhaust ports and so on, where you'd get a little flake of glue caught in the back of your throat and you'd be choking and coughing at God knows what depth.

"Today's equipment is certainly far more advanced and, in fact, Australia is at the forefront when it comes to mixed and closed-circuit breathing apparatus development."

Another, perhaps surprising, technological development is on the horizon for our CDs when, in the very near future, they will take personal computers under water with them. A mine countermeasures underwater computer system, to be introduced soon, will provide clearance divers with an electronic means to navigate in open water, conduct searches of inshore waters and log various data elements in real time along the way.

Far from being secretive or miserly about their equipment and procedures, however, AUSCDTs work closely and



cooperatively with their foreign counterparts, on operations and exercise.

Recent activity in the Gulf is testament not only to their interoperability with coalition forces, but proof of the high regard in which they are held within the international diving community.

Lieutenant Commander Bliss says CDs train regularly with their international counterparts.

"Team 1 recently participated in RIMPAC around the Hawaiian islands. They are also conducting exercises with the Malaysians and Singaporeans.

"And we've just finished Exercise Dugong in Jervis Bay with the Americans.

"This is all building up to our major exercise next year – Exercise Talisman Sabre – where Australia will host about 25,000 personnel in Shoalwater Bay."

He says he truly believes that the Royal Australian Navy clearance divers are well advanced as far as search techniques and capabilities are concerned.

But like so many other Australian military units, their real strength and value comes from the diversity of skills developed within a small fraternity.

"We are a composite unit, able to perform myriad tasks that our US and

## "LIKE SO MANY OTHER AUSTRALIAN MILITARY UNITS, THEIR REAL STRENGTH COMES FROM THE DIVERSITY OF SKILLS DEVELOPED"

other allies can't do and we are well ahead of the game in that respect.

"In the US, individual sections tend to focus on special roles whereas we are pretty much Jack of all trades – and masters of a few of them. We are able to perform at a level in many different tasks and roles that would require five or six or even seven American units to fulfil."

He says CDs are often described as "special forces" in the military sense or mistaken for Navy SEALs.

"We are neither. We are Royal Australian Navy Clearance Divers.

"True, there has been a lot of redefining in certain areas and we are all evolving and moving to counter the terrorist threat since 9/11.

"Our role may change and we'll just have to wait for guidance on that. But whatever is required, Navy clearance divers will be there to meet the task."

## TOUGH ENOUGH?

BASIC FITNESS TESTS FOR ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY DIVERS COURSES

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Clearance Diving Course	9.00 Min	50	120	18	9.15 Min



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EDINBURGH 2004

# SCOTLAND THE BRAVE

WORDS &amp; PICS GARY RAMAGE

The birthplace of Robert the Bruce and the now-famous William Wallace (thanks to Mel's Brave Heart) certainly knows how to put on a grand spectacle.

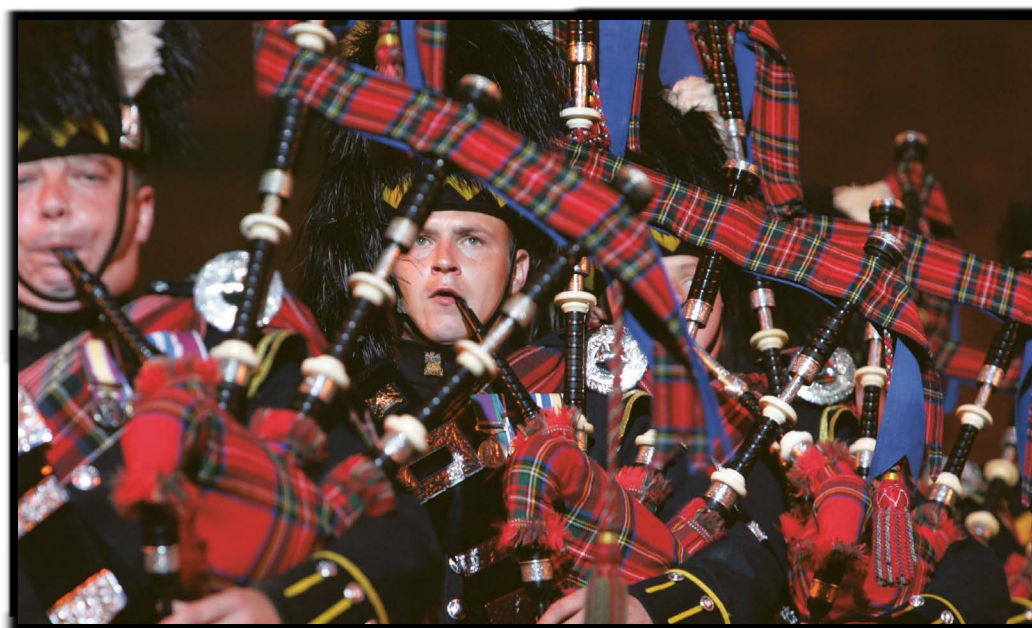
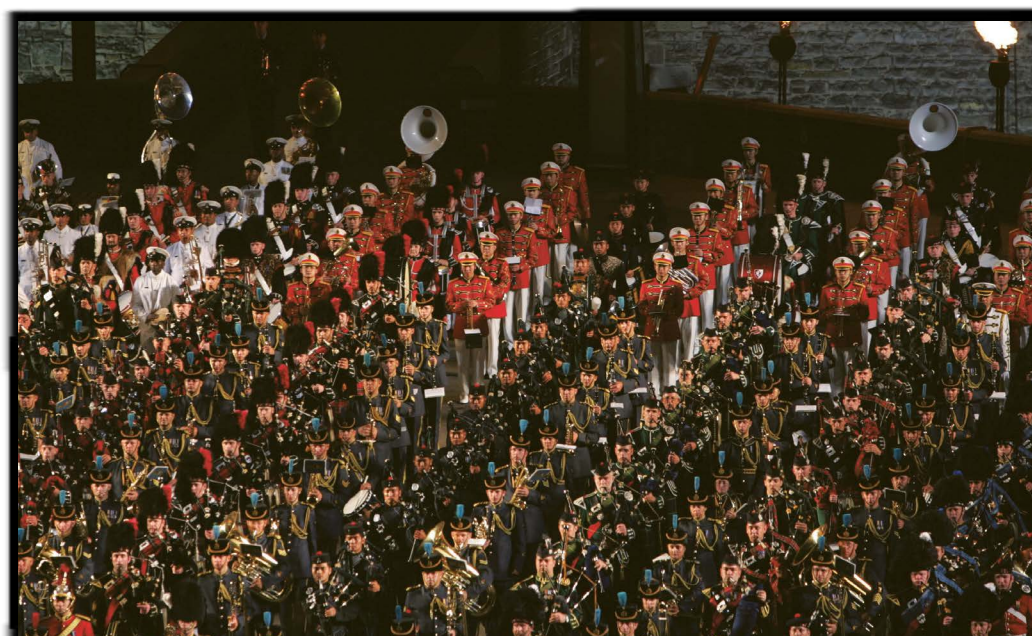
I returned to my own birthplace this year to cover the Edinburgh Military Tattoo – about which I had heard many a tall tale from my parents and grandparents, about the magic of this classical event, full of colour, music and military precision. I was not disappointed.

I was lucky enough to cover the Tattoo, from the inside, for a few nights thanks to the great people who organise the event.

The spine-chilling sights and sounds of the world famous Massed Pipes and Drums sent shivers all over me as they marched up and down the castle forecourt.

The Queens Colour Squadron of the Royal Air Force Drill Team performed flawless drill without words of command. Volleys were fired on the march, which surprised the hell out of the crowd, who stood in boisterous salute.

Massed Highland Dancers, a combination of the Edinburgh Military Tattoo Highland Spring Dancers and Australia's own Ozscot Highland Dancers, also received a standing ovation.





EDINBURGH 2004

One of the biggest hits of the Tattoo was the Military Band of the Peoples Liberation Army of China, who not only performed for the first time at the Tattoo, but it was the first time in history any Chinese military unit stepped foot on British soil.

About 600 musicians came together to form the Massed Military Bands and the Massed Military Pipes and Drums to generate the unique, and very loud, Edinburgh Tattoo sound that thundered around me, in the shadow of the famous castle, bathed colourful lights that danced to the music – talk about spine tingling!

But it was far from over as a cast of 1000 took the whole experience to new heights before, half way up the castle's wall, a lone bugler, silhouetted against a vibrant blue background, played the most poignant tune to any serviceman's ear – The Last Post. It was the most haunting rendition I had ever heard.

Maybe it was the surroundings, or the lights or even just being in an ancient city with a history as old as time – but at that moment, with that tune echoing all around, I was proud to have once worn a uniform.

But finally, to break the spell, a rendition of Scotland the Brave and, with fireworks crackling, the Massed Pipes and Drums, plus entire cast, marched off to familiar Celtic tunes.

If you ever get to Edinburgh for the Festival, book early, as tickets to this show sell out up to a year in advance – and no serviceman should miss this spectacle.



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PARIT SULONG

## ONE DARK EVENING

An uncle's ghost calls out through the pages of **CONTACT** magazine.



AWM ART26529

**T**he first large-scale massacre of Australian troops in WWII by Japanese forces took place at Parit Sulong on the west coast of Malaya on 22 January 1942.

Badly wounded Australian and Indian survivors from the battle of Muar were left at Parit Sulong to take their chances at the hands of the advancing Japanese Army. No mercy was shown and their brutal deaths quickly followed, leaving their sacrifice to go largely unrecognised for many years.

In her latest book, *The Bridge at Parit Sulong*, highly acclaimed author Lynette Silver traces what happened to those still listed as missing in action and discloses where she is certain their bodies lie.

It is hoped that Lynette's book will convince the Department of Defence to launch an official investigation into this massacre and authorise the retrieval of their remains, giving them the funerals they and their families truly deserve.

CONTACT recently received this letter...

Dear CONTACT,  
In your last magazine (Issue 3) you had a review of Lynette Silver's new book *The Bridge at Parit Sulong* (Sean Burton pg 59).

Upon reading this review I realised this book may shed some light on a family mystery.

My uncle Private Robert (Bob) Paterson, 2/29 Infantry Battalion, was listed as "missing in action presumed killed" during the Malayan Campaign, 1942. His "date of death" is listed as 22 January 1942. This is also the date of the massacre that took place at the bridge.

I had in my possession some primary documents such as letters and photographs, which I thought might be useful so I contacted the publisher who put me in contact with the author. Lynette told me the book was finished, but thanked me anyhow.

I took the opportunity to ask her if she knew what had happened to my uncle. According to her research my uncle had been wounded and was



last seen on the convoy that was left behind at the bridge when Colonel Anderson gave the every-man-for-himself order. Consequently he was one of the men massacred by the Japanese in appalling circumstances.

Lynette asked if I would like to attend the book launch at Victoria Barracks in Sydney on the following Tuesday (I purchased CONTACT on Saturday morning and the conversations with Lynette took place on Sunday and Monday). She extended the invitation to my father. I thanked her and accepted on his behalf, but said that he did not know how his brother had died.

I had been aware for several years that my uncle was probably one of the men left behind at the bridge but I had held off telling dad until I could confirm this fact. Now I knew for sure.

There were also my dad's three brothers and three sisters to consider.

Lynette suggested it would be advisable to tell him before the event because he would certainly learn the truth on the day of the book launch. My sister helped by speaking to our dad and letting him know what had probably transpired on that dark evening in 1942.

On the Monday, a producer from the ABC called and asked if I would like to appear on TV. I said the best person for that would be my father, and so it was agreed. I called dad and suggested he wear his suit.

The launch went well; we met many men involved in the Battles of Muar, Bakri and Parit Sulong, however, most were from the NSW units 2/15 Field Regiment and 2/18 Infantry Battalion. We spoke to many people including a chap from 2/15 who helped load the wounded onto trucks at the bridge. My father made enquiry of Lynette and others and, after 63 years, found with near certainty what had happened to his brother and how he had died.

It seems that Bob survived the initial battle but was wounded in the fight at Parit Sulong and consequently left behind.

My father's reaction was unexpected – for the first time I can remember he expressed an interest in travelling overseas – he wants to go to Parit Sulong and find his brother's remains. When my father was very young he lived next door to the cattle sales yards in Sale, Victoria. One day while he was playing in the back yard, a bull burst through the fence and charged towards him. His brother Bob ran out and snatched the toddler from the path of the bull.

Now, a lifetime later, the boy that was would like to do something for his brother in return. My father was interviewed for the ABC's 7:30 Report, the dialog from his interview used by the producer as the basis for a story about Parit Sulong shown on Friday 17 September. Dad had some keen words for the Japanese during the interview, but this must be viewed in light of the fact he had only just learnt how his brother had died.

Lynette, who did a thorough investigation, says she knows with a fair degree of certainty where the remains are. However, a representative from Australian War Graves said it was up to the Army to determine if they should go and look for the remains. Whether the Army acts or not, one thing I'm certain of is I will be going to Parit Sulong with my father sometime in the next few years.

**James M. Paterson**  
School of Law, UWS  
Penrith, NSW



**"I HAD BEEN AWARE FOR SEVERAL YEARS THAT MY UNCLE WAS PROBABLY ONE OF THE MEN LEFT BEHIND AT THE BRIDGE – NOW I KNEW FOR SURE."**



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# BAIDOA VAMPIRES

After the first action-packed day in Baidoa, Wayne Cooper and Two-Three Section head out for the first of many night patrols in the City of Death.

WORDS WAYNE COOPER PICS PETE REEVES, WAYNE COOPER & ADF

The city of Baidoa at night was a surreal place. The lack of functioning streetlights meant what illumination was generated from kerosene lamps, fires and the occasional generator-powered electric bulb filled the city with dappled light. While by day the city resembled Mad Max's Barter Town, at night it took on a more sinister aspect. Its menace and danger was palpable.

The bustle of the day only marginally subsided in the hours leading to midnight. Like insects around a giant hive, the people of the city seemed to scuttle in and out of the shadows. Those who were not wandering the streets sat in their doorways or widows and watched the world go by with vague indifference. Seething young men stood in groups and watched us rumble past, their disdain for our intrusion amplified by the abuse of the local narcotic, Khaat.

Patrolling the streets at night was an eerie experience. You could sense people moving everywhere, all around you, but you were unable to see them much of the time. You could sometimes hear their voices or jeers over the engine noise, but there was only so much you could keep illuminated at any one time. Our M113 APCs had been recently equipped with spotlights on the turrets, though even in concert with the vehicle's driving lights there was an awful lot that escaped your view.

In our first few days and nights, the infantry and the cavalry had to quickly develop SOPs for what was to become our bread-and-butter task in

Baidoa over the next 17 weeks – combined-arms urban patrolling. There was no real precedence or doctrine in the Australian Army at that time for what we were doing. Although we were all well versed in infantry/armour combined-arms tactics, these were predominately practiced in the conventional, open-warfare scenario, where armour and infantry were used in company/troop- or battalion/squadron-level offensive or defensive operations on the battlefield.

No one in the Australian Army had conducted combined arms patrolling in a built-up area by day or night to any great extent since WWII. Weapons and equipment had changed dramatically since the '40s (though the ammunition I first loaded onto my vehicle was older than I was and the vehicle itself had been in service five years before I was born). Even during the Vietnam War, the combined-arms operations conducted by Australians were primarily outside the urban areas.

If we didn't carry any direct lessons from our forebears, we did have the well-established Aussie resourcefulness and ability to adapt quickly. The Australian soldier has a hard-won reputation for being able to operate in virtually any environment or situation and we were determined Somalia would be no exception. Though it would be a steep learning curve, we would quickly adapt some pretty effective procedures that would catch out more than just a few of the bad guys.

In the relatively quiet daytime, the infantry usually patrolled independently on foot, while the cavalry maintained high visibility, driving through





town or occupying street corners. This meant the grunts were able to get a feel for the ground they would later patrol at night, either on foot or mounted in our vehicles.

Now, the infantry definitely had the most strenuous job and were justifiably proud of their status as grunts. They were hard working, doing the tough jobs few wanted, or were even capable of doing. Though we cavalry were combat soldiers as well, we freely acknowledged that we didn't do it as hard as the 'peeeds. But where the infantry thought they were better than us because they did it tough on foot, carrying huge loads on their backs in the heat, we thought we were better for exactly the same reason.

As such, the cavalry's reputation for arrogance was well founded. But that didn't make us totally unsympathetic to the plight of the infantry. As the temperature steadily rose through the monsoon months, and the 'peeeds laboured in body armour

situation when patrolling through town at night. On the one hand, having the extra guns and all those extra sets of eyes watching the multitude of small alleys, windows and dark hiding places was a relief from the innate sense of paranoia one felt driving a large target through the tight back streets. On the other hand, having grunts in the back meant we had to have the large cargo hatch on the top of the vehicle open for them to look out. This in turn meant it would be very easy for someone to drop a grenade or incendiary device from a high window or other vantage point into the back. No need to explain what a mess that would make inside a crowded armoured vehicle.

My comrades and I in 23 Section were to become rather expert in the unnerving practice of night patrolling in the M113 over the first months of Operation Solace. Because of the rotation of the squadron's

chased a suspected technical (armed four-wheel drive) through the bush and, earlier, deployed snipers in a series of 'hot drops' in the bush to the east of Baidoa.

A hot drop involved the APCs slowing down to about walking pace a few hundred metres short of the designated drop point and, as the vehicles approached the area, the driver would slowly lower the ramp while keeping the vehicle moving forward. This was no easy task as it involved lowering his seat in the driver's hole, taking his hands off the lateral controls that steered the M113 and using one hand to disengage the ramp locking lever and the other to manipulate the ramp control lever – all the while alternately looking through the periscopes to avoid crashing into something, and back over his shoulder to ensure the ramp was not lowered completely onto the ground, leaving tell-tale marks in the dirt. As the

The Aussie snipers were to have an eventful tour of Somalia. They were involved in some of the more intense contacts of the next few months and would enforce their reputation as being among the best exponents of their trade anywhere in the world.

As cavalry soldiers, we were to insert and extract the snipers in and around town on many occasions. Though they worked in coordination with the infantry companies and the patrol plan, they were independent of the larger formations. By their nature, they worked only in pairs and, although we never actually saw them at work, we all felt their presence and did, on occasion, see the results of their handiwork.

One story I heard later in the tour involved a sniper pair that had been forced to move from their primary position by some locals occupying the previously abandoned building the pair were in.

and it seemed the first night would prove to be equally exciting. With the snipers set loose for their night's activities, 23 and Recon Platoon began their first mounted patrol through the City of Death in fading twilight. It wasn't long before things got interesting again.

As we moved through our AO, the members of Recon Platoon riding in the back of Lance Corporal Mick 'Micky P' Holmes' vehicle, 23B, reported they had seen someone get bundled forcefully into a car. In what was reminiscent of a Chicago gangland kidnapping, the victim had been walking along the street when the car began to slowly shadow him. Two Somali men jumped out, grabbed the man and force him into the back seat, accelerating towards the city's marketplace.

It seemed there would never be a dull moment. My section commander, Corporal Darren "Moose" Ferriday's first reaction

men wondering what the hell they had done to attract so much attention.

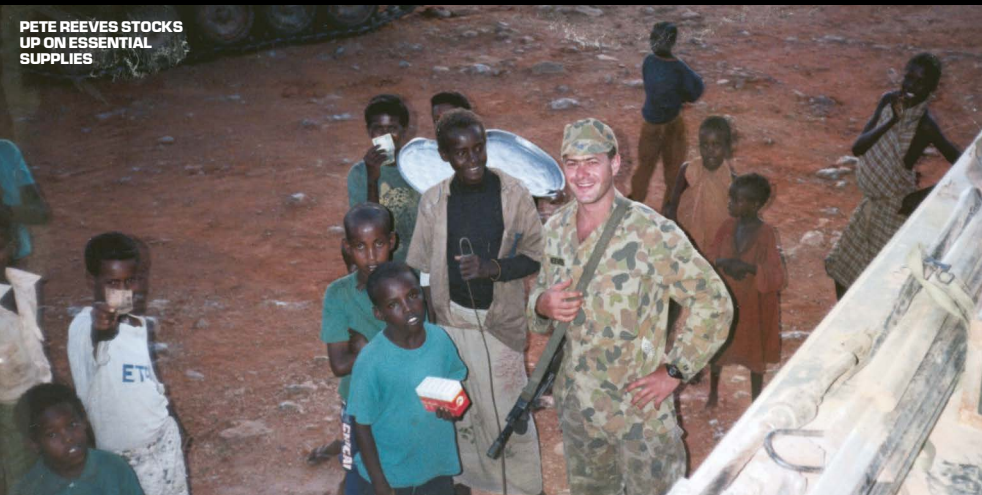
Disappointed and a little embarrassed that the suspected kidnappers got away, the grunts remounted and we set off to complete our patrol.

This was not to be the last time the soldiers on the ground were hamstrung by overcautious and bureaucratic hierarchy. Over the five months of Operation Solace the reins would be loosened slightly, but more than one bad guy would escape us for this very reason.

The rest of the night's patrols were tense, but ultimately uneventful – at least for us. Other platoons patrolling in different AOs were in contact through the night and the front gate of the airfield was braced up in a drive-by shooting. Our night ended after extracting the snipers before dawn – 23 Section, Recon Platoon and the snipers heading back to the airfield for some



TINO SILATO DOES SOME HOUSEKEEPING



PETE REEVES STOCKS UP ON ESSENTIAL SUPPLIES



WAYNE COOPER AND FRIENDS



under the 50-degree midday sun, I thanked the Armoured Corps Gods many times for allowing me to pity the poor souls from the relative comfort of my mobile home. The grunts may have been tougher, but we were definitely smarter.

At night, patrol methods varied depending on the desired results. On occasions the cavalry would drop the grunts at a point in town from which they then patrolled back to a base compound. Other times the grunts were dropped and the vehicles would loop around and patrol down a pre-designated route from the opposite direction, the logic being that any bad guys might flee the sound of the approaching armoured vehicles and run into the oncoming infantry. At other times the infantry patrolled 50 to 100 metres in front of the vehicles, or mounted in them.

Having the infantry mounted in the back of the vehicle was always a catch 22

## HAVING THE INFANTRY IN THE BACK WAS ALWAYS A CATCH 22 SITUATION WHEN PATROLLING THROUGH TOWN AT NIGHT

APC troops through patrolling tasks, 23 would have the dubious honour of conducting what we thought were more than our fair share of the vehicle patrols through the city at night. For this reason we dubbed ourselves the 23 Vampires – 'cause we only came out at night.

23A's driver, Trooper Tino Silato's comment, "Fucking great. Death Patrol!" upon hearing of our task for the first night, was to haunt us for the next few weeks.

As we began the first of these night patrols I reflected on the events of the past several hours. Since setting out from the 3/4 Cav lines within the Baidoa airfield compound, the section had lost its 2IC who had the top of his finger blown off before making it past the front gate, we had

ramp levelled out, the snipers would step out of the APC and melt into the bush. The ramp was raised as the vehicles ambled on for another hundred or so metres so as not to make it obvious that anything out of the ordinary had taken place.

Before dusk we would repeat the manoeuvre in reverse by slowly driving through a pre-designated extraction point with the ramps lowered. The snipers would flash a red light toward the vehicle as it approached and then two silhouettes would appear out of the darkness and step onto the ramp as the M113 crept by. After a thumbs-up from the snipers to the crew commander, the vehicle would slowly ramp up and gradually pick up speed before heading for home.

As the snipers moved quietly through the dark streets to another pre-planned position, the number two led with his night vision goggles held up to his eyes with one hand and his Steyr rifle in the other. As they rounded a corner, so did a group of five or six bandits armed with automatic weapons. The group were in loose patrol formation and as the sniper appeared in front of him, the lead man raised his weapon to fire. The number two fired first – two rounds instinctive from the hip across about 25 metres, hitting the lead bandit twice in the chest, dropping him where he stood, before he got a shot off. Apparently, the rest of the bandits chose discretion over valour and fled the scene.

However, at this point of my story it all still lay ahead of us. The battalion group had just begun to learn the first of many lessons and experience the first of many dramatic events. Day one on the job was proving to be an exciting introduction

after reporting the incident to the patrol master was to set off in pursuit, but the Recon Platoon commander was unwilling to do so without permission from his company OC. As we impatiently watched the vehicle disappear into the mass of cars and people, a couple of minutes ticked by before we finally got the word to go. We set off in the direction we last saw the car but it seemed there was not much chance of apprehending it now.

As the carriers moved through the busy marketplace, the infantry in the lead APC reported they may have spotted the offending vehicle. With renewed hope that we may catch some bad guys, we barrelled up to the vehicle, which had been slowed by the market crowd. 23B did a quick stop-drop and an infantry section surrounded the suspect car.

But alas, it seemed we had the wrong vehicle. All the search of the car turned up were two very scared and confused Somali

well-earned rest before turning out in the afternoon to do it all again.

Although none of us had any real idea what to expect, the eventfulness of our first full day and night of patrolling had taken me by surprise. I wondered how we would be able to sustain the intensity over the coming months. And given the frequency of the engagements in those first few days, I also wondered how long it would be until an Aussie was killed or seriously injured.

But as the first few days rolled into the first few weeks, the operational intensity was to slowly decline as 1RAR, 3/4 Cavalry Regiment and the rest of the group exerted their dominance over the streets of Baidoa. Though the pace of work was never to become leisurely, the operational tempo would become more routine. And, as the level of action settled into the clichéd realms of 90 per cent boredom, 10 per cent terror, that 10 per cent would be more than enough to keep us all entertained.



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# TWO PLATINUM TICKETS TO THE EDINBURGH TATTOO IN AUSTRALIA TO GIVE AWAY

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The Edinburgh Military Tattoo, one of the most celebrated entertainment attractions in the world, will visit Australia for the first time on 3, 4 and 5 February 2005. More than 1200

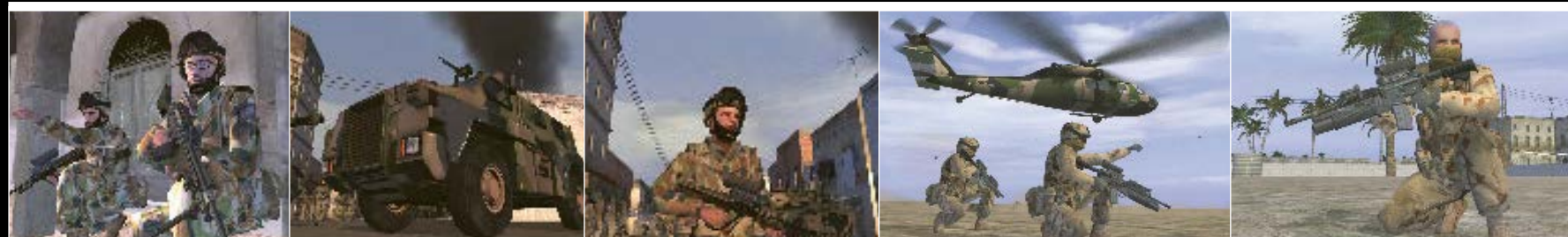
military bands from five countries, pipes and drums and supporting performers will take part in this once-in-a-lifetime event.

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ADF2 is the second addition to the Australian Defence Force range of VBS1 modules. It introduces many new vehicles and units to the ones already available in the ADF1 Module. These include units currently serving in the ADF such as RAR soldiers, Tactical Assault Group units, Clearance Divers (and ops), F/A-18 Hornet, ASLAV-PC, M113-AS, M978, Rapier System, M119 artillery. In addition, ADF2 includes some vehicles which will soon be bought into the ADF such as the Bushmaster, M1A1, ARH Tiger, NH-90. Soldiers can now practice with vehicles before they even receive them in the field! As with most addons for VBS1 the vehicles are fully functional, they can be driven or flown, carry passengers and fire mounted

weapons. More than just eye-candy (though the models in ADF2 are some of the most detailed yet) these new units provide increased training functionality and immersion into the virtual battlefield. The content of this module was put together from recommendations from DSTO, ADFA, VESL and the ADF Land Warfare office.

VBS1 allows soldiers to practice tactics and movement drills against both AI and human-controlled OPFOR. From standard drills to reactive "what if" type scenarios in a virtual environment, the advanced mission editor provides the tools to set up for any mission scenario. Combine infantry with helicopter gunship and armoured support. Simulate integrated tactics in urban and open-area maps from 144 to 625 square kilometres (larger if required).

Some of the new features in ADF2 Module, include a new VBS1 Fastrope System allowing for very specialised training and visual effects. Watching TAG units deploy into an area via fast-rope is utterly realistic, even to

the point the ropes are cut away and fall to the ground in piles as the UH-60 Black Hawks depart. This system is dynamic and can simulate deployment onto buildings and ships.

There is also a new forward observer function which can call artillery and direct close air support via radio operators and is very effective.

Watching a demonstration in a VBS1 desert environment resembling Afghanistan, it was amazing to watch a forward observer directing artillery onto a group of OPFOR units. I was also able to watch close air support functions using two F/A-18 Hornets destroy a column of T55 tanks with precision laser-guided bombs – again very realistic.

The new artillery command system is dynamic, and can

be used with conventional artillery as well as mortar units. Combining with the new GSR (ground surveillance radar) system in ADF2 with mortar teams is very effective in perimeter defense training.

One thing to note is the amazing attention to detail of all the units, in particular the TAG units and clearance divers. Every detail is captured, from helmet straps and boots to gas masks. Even the TAG MP5 carries incredible detail, and the F/A-18, ARH and M1A1 are simply amazing and look completely real.

What's ahead for VBS1?

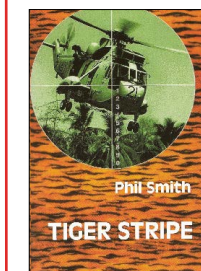
The future looks bright for all VBS1 users. In coming months, there are more and more modules being released. The ADF are now looking to implement VBS1 on a much larger scale in

2005, the almost endless training possibilities of VBS1 are reported to have been well received in the ADF and the feedback has all been positive.

I was also able to take a look at the new US Army Module (in development) which looks incredible and has just about every possible US Army fighting and support unit reproduced. There is also a new Special Forces Pack 2 in development which covers all aspects of special-forces units from British and Australian through to US Special Forces including all variations of SEALs, Delta Force and more. One that I'm very much looking forward to is the Command and Control Module, which allows a commander to control multiple platoons or companies of mixed AI and human players. The system allows the commander, from



## BOOK REVIEW



## TIGER STRIPE

PHIL SMITH  
ZEUS PUBLICATIONS  
\$24.95

[www.zeus-publications.com](http://www.zeus-publications.com)

Phil Smith is a RAAF Reserve PR officer and ABC journo. Not surprising then that his key characters are a TV newshound, his camera operator and a tapestry of military types.

For this very reason and because I have worked with Defence PROs, I picked up this book with a good deal of cynicism. Thankfully, though, I gave the man a chance – and damn glad I did in the end.

Tiger Stripe benefits greatly from the author's diverse background. His civilian characters are painted with a depth of credibility that could only be derived of insider knowledge, while his military characters and his descriptions of their thoughts, actions and dialogue speaks volumes for his observance of the beast from close quarters.

What I was particularly pleased with was the author's masterful use of language to relay the nuance of military life and military jargon without stooping to either oversimplification or long-winded explanation.

As the plot develops, I found myself drawn into the real-world situation of being unable or unwilling to put the book down. I also found myself speed-reading (something I don't normally do) as if trying to keep pace with the tempo of the yarn. Quite literally, also, I found my heart and breathing step up a gear in sympathy.

I commend Phil Smith to you as a storyteller of high calibre and I suggest you grab a copy of Tiger Stripe without delay. His previous work, Shooting Script, is also worth a look.

Brian Hartigan

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INTRODUCING

# HENRY WRIGHT'S LETTERS FROM THE FRONT LINE



This issue, we begin the story of Henry James Wright, who enlisted in the Australian Imperial Forces in 1915. His parents, Edward and Marion Wright and their seven sons and two daughters lived at No 1 Winfred Street, North Essendon, a suburb of Melbourne.

When war was declared on 4 August 1914, patriotic fever spread throughout Australia. Henry was the first of the sons to answer the call to fight for King and Country.

Henry was not the only family member to enlist and fight in the Great War and their contribution to the war effort was equally important. The Wright family in 1915 were; Father – Edward; Mother – Marion; Daughters – Florence [married], Elizabeth [unknown]; Sons – Walter [married], Henry

[married to Pauline], Leslie, Albert, Charlie, Gordon and Fredrick, all single. Gordon would go on to participate in WW2.

While he was overseas, Henry was a prolific letter writer, but most of those letters have now been lost as his brothers and sisters have long since died.

The information used to present Henry's story here is from the postcards and letters that have survived.

It should be noted that many of the dates and locations stamped on his mail were removed by military censors.

Henry's decision was final. No matter what his new wife Pauline said, or his

parents, or any of his six brothers and two sisters – he was going to enlist.

War had been declared and the Australian Imperial Forces needed men to fight.

Besides, he argued, it was his duty to go.

Henry left the comfort of the family home for the spartan Army barracks at Broadmeadows (Melbourne) and, on 1

October 1914, became Private HJ Wright, regimental number 151, A Company, 14th Battalion. He was 26.

After 15 weeks basic training, Private Wright sailed from Port Melbourne aboard the troopship A38 bound for the Middle East. He went ashore at Gallipoli at 10.30am on 26 April 1915 and describes his early experiences in a letter to a brother from the firing line on 27 June...

Dear Les,

Just a few lines in answer to your welcome letter received here 23rd June and dated May 14th. Well Les, I am pleased to hear you are well and like your place. I had a letter from Mother saying Bert and Fred had sailed but did not know what place they were going to. I thought that we still had a few brothers left who would enlist. I suppose you would have had a try had you been old enough.

Well Les, I have up to now managed to dodge the bullets which fall pretty thick at times. We are giving the Turks all the fight they want. They are very frightened of the bayonet. They squeal like blue hell when they get a touch.

We live in dugouts cut in the side of the hill just like rabbits. They are pretty safe from bullets and shrapnel. We do our own cooking and are getting experts at it. Now Les, I will close hoping you are well and will always be pleased to hear from you.

I remain your loving brother,  
Henry.

There were lighter sides to being in action;

'How Private H.J. Wright ended the War.'

Is it true there's a war old Wright said to me, said I, 'I dunno, lets go and see'. So off to investigate both of us went, to try and find out what the Word War really meant.

Over the creeks and up great big hills, Having no sleep and missing our meals. One day in the distance some big Turks we saw, We knew what it was like to be playing at War.

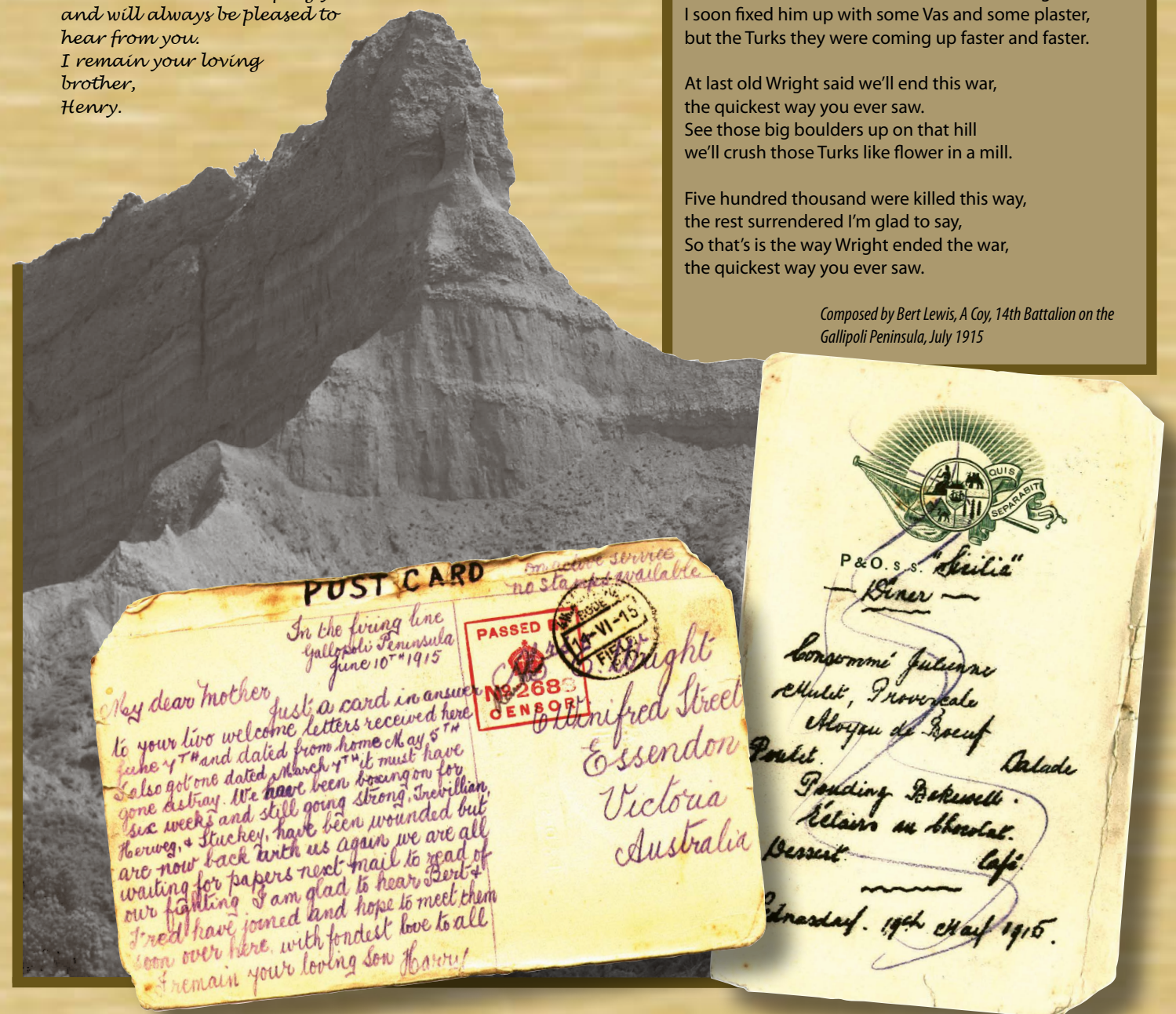
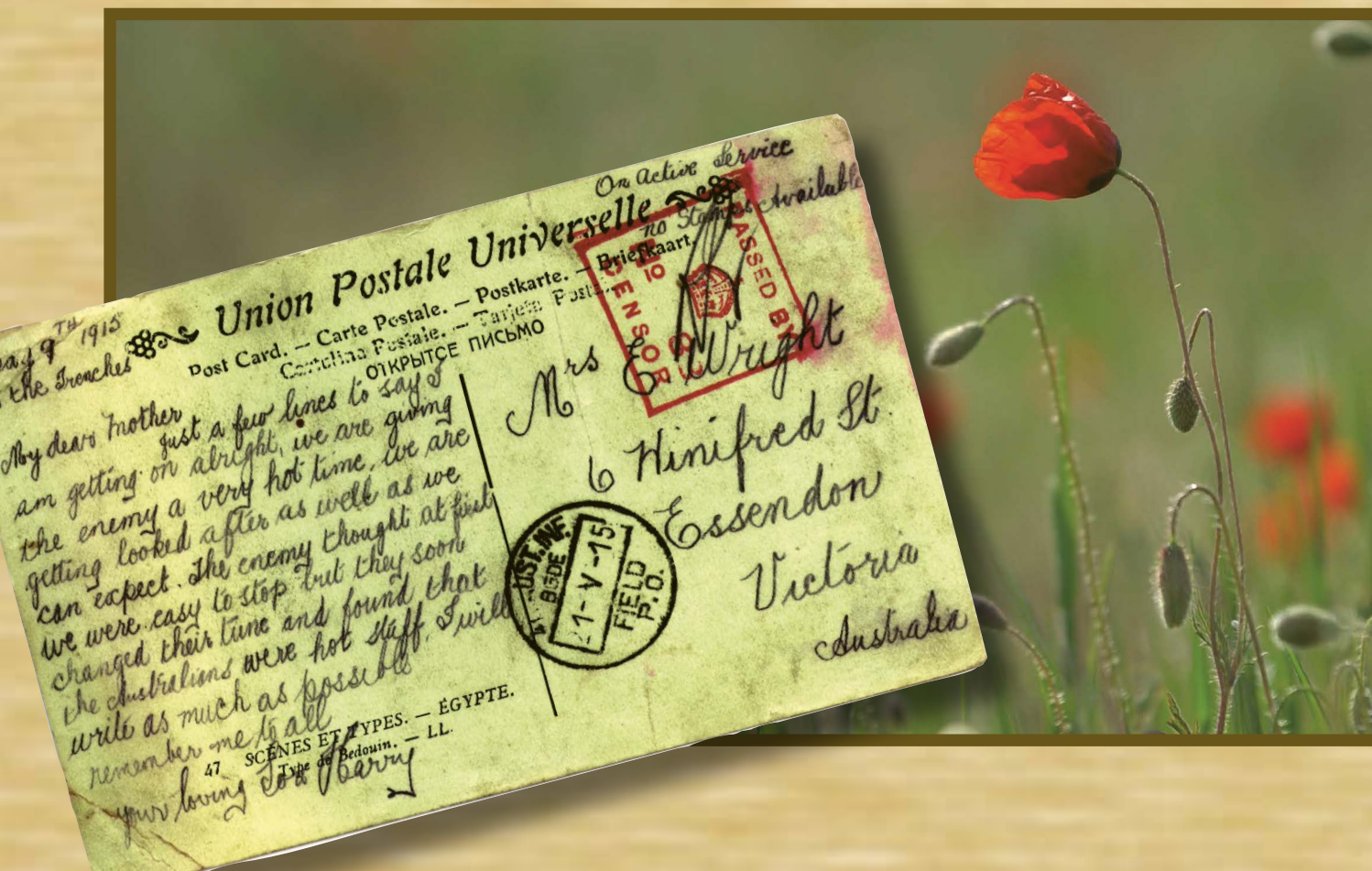
When around a few bombs and some Jack Johnsons fell, Old Wright said I'm off its too much like hell. So away we both scooted with the Turks at our heels, Old Wright gasped I wonder how a bayonet feels. At last a Jack Johnson caught Wright on the bot, and sent him along at a very fast trot. I'm off home he shouted, as he whizzed past my head but he hung in a tree half alive and half dead.

When I helped him get down he was a bit dazed, his clothes were all torn and his backside was grazed. I soon fixed him up with some Vas and some plaster, but the Turks they were coming up faster and faster.

At last old Wright said we'll end this war, the quickest way you ever saw. See those big boulders up on that hill we'll crush those Turks like flower in a mill.

Five hundred thousand were killed this way, the rest surrendered I'm glad to say, So that's is the way Wright ended the war, the quickest way you ever saw.

Composed by Bert Lewis, A Coy, 14th Battalion on the Gallipoli Peninsula, July 1915





CHAPLAIN ALFRED GOLLER

Soldiers fight wars in many different ways, using a variety of weapons. Some use a rifle or machine-gun, while many are part of a team. Others serve as nurses or stretcher-bearers armed with medicine and compassion. But a padre's weapon is faith – faith in his God, faith in the cause for which his flock fight, and faith in his fellow man. This is the story of one such soldier of the cross.

# THE INSUBORDINATE PADRE

WORDS WO1 DARRYL KELLY PICS AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

**A**lfred Ernest Goller was born in Bannockburn, Victoria in July 1883. His parents were simple people with strong religious convictions who raised their son with the same values. Alfred did well at school and continued tertiary studies at Melbourne University. A keen footballer, he was awarded a coveted 'blue' for his skill on the field. He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts with Honours and was ordained a Presbyterian minister in March 1908. Until the outbreak of war in 1914, he served the church in the Victorian country around Birchip and Mia Mia.

Australians from all walks of life had flocked to join the newly formed Australian Imperial Force and it was not long before many of them were engaged in the battles on the Gallipoli Peninsula.

A duty that befell members of the clergy in every city and town across the nation was the delivery of news from the front. Ministers of all denominations were called upon to deliver the telegrams advising families that a loved one had been killed, wounded or was missing in action.

It was not long before the sight of an approaching clergyman caused people to cringe in fear, lest they be the ones to receive the dreaded piece of paper detailing the death of a husband, son, brother or father.

After years of being welcome in the homes of his parishioners, Alfred Goller tired of being a 'messenger of death' and the fear his presence brought to local people. Despite the fact it meant leaving behind a loving family, Goller decided he would be more useful at the front.

On 16 January 1917, he enlisted in the AIF and, a month later, Padre Goller climbed the gangplank of the troopship Ballarat. As the ship pulled away from the quay, he bid farewell to his beloved wife and three young children.

The padre was extremely active during the long voyage. To maintain morale, he organised concerts, sports events and a newspaper to occupy the 1600 troops.

As the Ballarat steamed through the English Channel, and the troops on board commemorated the second anniversary of the Gallipoli landings, without warning a German torpedo slammed into the side of the ship. There were 1792 aboard the ship when the torpedo hit, but there was little panic as the Diggers collected their equipment and assembled on the decks. Padre Goller scurried through the lower decks, checking to ensure that no one had been left behind. Back on the main deck, he moved casually through the ranks, lighting cigarettes and reassuring the troops – he was an inspiration to all.

Within 15 minutes of the torpedo strike, destroyers of the Royal Navy arrived at the scene and pulled alongside the stricken vessel to transfer the troops and crew. The intrepid padre was one of the last to leave and was an observer of the final moments of the Ballarat – offering a silent prayer as the ship slowly slipped beneath the icy waters of the channel. He was later commended for his composure and support at the time of the sinking.

On his arrival in England, Padre Goller was attached to a number of training battalions.

He pestered his commanders to send him closer to the front, for this was where he felt he could do the most good. Finally his persistence was rewarded and, in September 1917, he set sail for France.

Initially he was attached to the 2nd Australian General Hospital, where he witnessed first-hand some of the worst carnage brought about by war – men with horrific wounds, amputated limbs, gassed, blinded and most likely maimed for life. Again he felt he could do more and pleaded to be attached to a front-line unit. His request was granted and Chaplain Alfred Goller was posted as padre of the 37th Battalion, 10th Brigade.

The padre's presence produced immediate results. Although he could have exercised his privilege to remain in the transport lines, he chose to be permanently attached to the battalion's medical officer during times of action. The battalion was in the thick of the fighting, in such places as Ypres, Messines, Mondicourt, Marrett Wood and Dernancourt. The dauntless padre was ever-present, scouring the battlefields for wounded – both Allied and enemy.

With two conscription referendums defeated at home, the number of reinforcements was decreasing. The AIF Divisions were continually going into action undermanned, yet pressure was being applied by the British Government for more Australian recruits.

A decision was made to disband some battalions to provide additional men for others. The 37th, which had been reduced to little more than company strength, was one of those chosen to suffer this fate.

The Diggers were horrified. 'Why us?' was the cry. A meeting was convened by the men. They were adamant they were staying with the 37th and all agreed they would carry out every order except the command to 'fall out'. The final parade was scheduled for 10am. The brigadier assumed his position and gave the order for the men to fall out to their new battalion. Officers, warrant officers and most of the senior non-commissioned officers obeyed the command. Padre Goller stood fast. The commanding officer (CO) said, "You can fall out too, Padre."

"No, sir," was the reply. "If ever the men needed a chaplain, they need one now."

The senior officers tried to persuade the men to carry out the order, but they would not be swayed, so they were left to ponder their fate. A corporal was elected 'CO'; parades were held, guards and picket lines were maintained and battalion administration was conducted as usual. The men were out to prove that, within their old battalion, there was a bigger issue than insubordination – one of honour and commitment. The battalion and all it stood for meant everything to the men.

Padre Goller, always available when needed most, was instrumental in maintaining the morale of protesting Diggers. He often toured the picket line late at night to bolster their spirits and reinforce the morality of their resolve to stand up for their beliefs.

As a retaliatory measure, the high command cut off the men's rations – but other units in the area readily gave up half of theirs to feed the protesters. Supply units changed the routes of their convoys

and arranged for boxes of food to 'fall off' as they passed the 37th's lines. As a contingency, the battalion had a specially trained party ready to raid the nearby light railway at Mont St Quentin.

Days later, the CO visited the rebelling troops and approached the chaplain.

"Well Padre, the men have got their wish."

With a wisdom that matched the pride of these men, the authorities allowed the 37th to retain its identity and return to the battlefield, its burden made more onerous by its lack of numbers.

A brisk autumn wind was blowing as the CO placed a whistle to his lips and checked his watch. The second hand moved slowly towards 12. The shrill blast of the whistle broke the silence and the men surged forward, their mission – to breach the reportedly impregnable Hindenburg Line.

As the battalion reached the belts of black barbed wire entanglements, German machineguns opened fire. Deadly salvos destroyed the front ranks of the 37th. The remainder of the battalion consolidated in a hollow and readied themselves for the next push. To the front, the wounded could be heard moaning.

Without hesitation, Padre Goller crawled forward and dragged the injured men back to the safety of the depression.

When the battalion again sortied forward, the padre stumbled across the bodies of three A Company men. As he collected their personal belongings, he paused and offered a silent prayer over each body. Suddenly, a single shot rang out and the padre fell dead.

The men of the battalion were deeply

traumatised. Not only had they lost their padre, but a mate as well. They reflected on the man who had been Alfred Goller. His Christianity was exemplified by his life. Chaplain Alfred Goller was no fire-and-brimstone preacher, but one who earnestly lived to serve his fellow man and selflessly chose to share the risks taken by the brave Diggers to whom he had ministered.

Sadly, the padre was killed just before his scheduled return to Australia. Ironically, it would also be the final action for the 37th.

The admiration of his men can be summed up in the words they placed above his grave: Our Padre – Semper Idem Passed from Death to Life.



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# NOBBER ON THE ATTACK

WORDS JONATHAN GARLAND ILLUSTRATION GREG@TWIST

The incident occurred on Subject 1 for Corporal, during Nobber's assessment as section leader.

In previous days, Nobber had taken part in other section attacks as a rifleman. Section attacks being physically and mentally demanding, and Nobber having the coordination of a cow on roller skates, he had by now amassed an impressive collection of bruises, abrasions and enemies among the section.

One of the difficulties was that Nobber had less aggression than a pop-up toaster. He had heard of the so-called 'adrenaline buzz' that affected others in moments of crisis but had never experienced it himself. Because of this lack, Nobber looked forward to his own assessment with fear and trepidation – as did his instructors.

On the day in question, Nobber and his section were patrolling alongside a creek in a lightly wooded area. A shot rang out and the section went flawlessly into well-rehearsed drills as their leader assessed possible courses of action.

Enemy fire was coming from beyond the wall of a dam. Crouching low, as he had seen soldiers in so many movies do, Nobber ran forward to peek over the dam and direct his troops accordingly.

He threw himself into the dirt and poked his head up for a quick look. The single enemy rifleman was identified and Nobber mentally drew up his plan of attack. He called in the 2IC and number-one rifleman, gave them orders and set the time of assault at two minutes away.

They scurried off and Nobber risked another look over the dam. Everything to this point had gone very well and he took a moment to congratulate himself.

It was during this moment of relative repose that Nobber became aware of a tingling sensation. He wondered with almost scientific detachment if he was finally experiencing the mysterious adrenaline buzz of which so many others had spoken.

Soon, however, our hero's keen mind became aware that the tingling was somewhat localised around his mid-section and was moving up the sensation scale from 'pins and needles' through 'pain' until the needle passed into the big red 'agony' zone.

Nobber looked down to find his entire body covered with ants. In typical style, he had gone to ground on an ants nest and the creatures had responded in predictable fashion.

It would be nice to report that Nobber calmly and swiftly assessed his situation, evaluating and prioritising possible responses before springing into action. Sadly, this was not the case. Equal amounts of panic, instinct and aversion to pain drove him to drop his rifle and roll about in the dust in an attempt to rid himself of the biting insects.

It didn't work. Now they were really pissed off.

The ants had by now succeeded in getting inside his clothing. The pain-o-metre cranked up another notch.

At this point, what seemed a perfectly rational though occurred to Nobber

– water soothes stings. He remembered he was on the wall of a dam.

Imagine the surprise of the soldier playing enemy when a weaponless figure rose from behind the safety of the dam and charged, tearing his clothes off and screaming at the top of his lungs like a berserker of legend.

All weapons-fire ceased as Nobber hit the water and threshed about, still tearing clothes off and yelling like a madman. Initial shocked disbelief turned into uncontrollable laughter as the maelstrom gradually subsided, followed by hushed silence as the instructor strolled over to the waterlogged soldier. Nobody wanted to miss this conversation.

Nobber looked up as the instructor came to a halt at the waterline and beckoned him out.

The junior soldier stood and immediately fell on his face. Pulling his pants up, he tried again, water pouring from his fly as he went.

With amazing self-control, the instructor gently explained that he couldn't mark the exercise as a pass despite the imaginative use of surprise tactics rarely seen on the modern battlefield.

He invited Nobber to make a second attempt using more traditional methods.

The second attempt was delayed for some time by the inability of the section to stop laughing.

**THE ANTS HAD NOW SUCCEEDED IN GETTING INSIDE HIS CLOTHING. THE PAIN-O-METRE CRANKED UP ANOTHER NOTCH**



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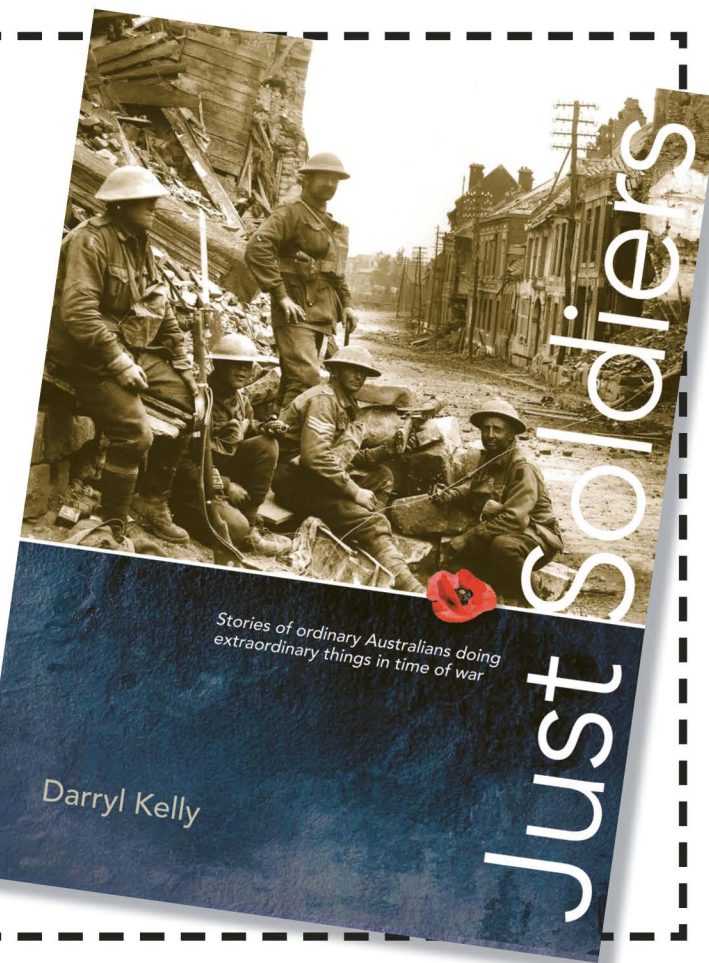


## JUST SOLDIERS: STORIES OF ORDINARY AUSTRALIANS DOING EXTRAORDINARY THINGS IN TIME OF WAR

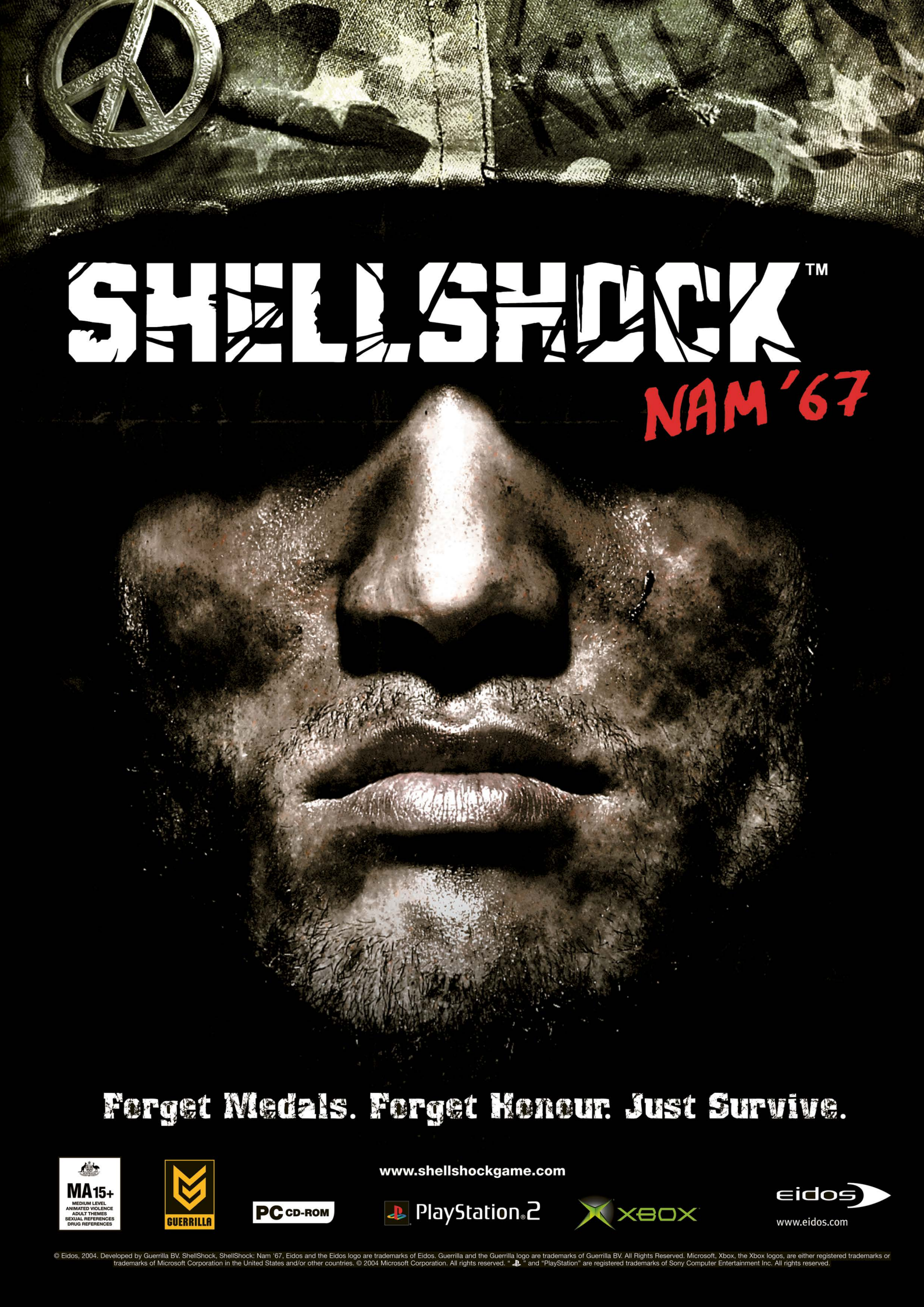
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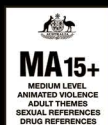




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