

Chapter nine

Records of Service Achievement

All the members of **2 Field Troop Royal Australian Engineers 1963-1965** served the Corps with pride and dedication during the Malaysian deployment and in subsequent postings. As their period of engagement expired, many returned to civilian life, becoming valuable members of the community. They took with them the discipline, ingenuity and pride in achievement of the Sapper, often excelling in their chosen career, and making important contributions to their workplace and to the broader community. To record their achievements would be a worthwhile and challenging project, but one well beyond the scope of this book.

There were, however, those who continued their career in the Army, giving meritorious service to the Corps, and their record of service is much easier to document. The following members of **2 Field Troop RAE** and key figures from 11 Indep Field Sqn RE can be justly proud of their achievements:

Murray Aitken. A carpenter and joiner, Murray enlisted in 1962 and after recruit training and an FE3 course was posted to 1 Field Sqn. In March 1963 he was posted to 4 Troop in Malaya, remaining there with 2 Field Troop until March 1965 when he returned to Australia shortly before the Sarawak tour. He was not to miss out on Borneo however, deploying to Sabah with 21 Const Sqn. This was followed in 1970 with a Sgt's posting to 198 Works Section in Vietnam as Assistant Supervisor Construction and Maintenance. Promoted to WO2 in 1975, Murray served as Supervisor Construction and Maintenance in such diverse postings as ADAG in PNG, 19 CE Works Sydney, HQ 2nd Military District, Liverpool, and as Garrison Engineer at Kapooka. On retiring in 1984, Murray had served over 22 years with the Corps.

John Bending. John enlisted in February 1949, completing basic training at Greta, then, while at SME, spent two months of his early Army life in the Muswellbrook NSW coal mines during the miners' strike. After service in 21 and 22 Const Sqns he was posted to the British Commonwealth Engineer Regiment in Kure, Japan. John then saw service in Korea at Seoul and Inchon (the sharp end) with 7 Works Section RE. On his return to Australia, he was posted to 8 Army Engineer Regiment RAE at Broken Hill, then to PNG with one of the earliest construction squadrons sent to that area of operations. After returning from the deployment to Malaysia, John filled the role of plant sergeant in the fledgling 18 Field Sqn, before serving with 1 Field and 17 Const Sqns in Vietnam. After his discharge in 1971 he joined the Main Roads Department and was Works Supervisor on the Harvey Range Road project.

David 'Bing' Crosby. Bing graduated from the Army Apprentices School at Balcombe in 1953 as a 'Chippy'. By the time he joined 2 Field Troop in 1963 as Troop S/Sgt Field Engineer (but with the added benefit of being a qualified Clerk of Works), he had served with 17 Const Sqn, 25 Const Sqn and 7 Field Sqn. After deployment in Malaya, Thailand and Sarawak, David successfully completed the 32/66 Officer Qualifying Course at the Jungle Training Centre at Canungra and subsequently served in Wewak as Lieutenant, Garrison Engineer, PNG. On promotion to Captain, he was posted Troop Commander Resources Troop, 23 Const Sqn and later as the Works Officer of that unit. He was posted to Vietnam as OC 21 Engineer Support Troop. Medevaced home to Holsworthy, he was posted to Tasmania as the 2IC/Adjutant 12 Field Sqn (CMF) and later as Garrison Engineer, Headquarters Tasmania Command. David was promoted to Major and became Chief Engineer Tasmania Command (a position he held for 9 years and 19 days – an unofficial Army record). His final appointment before retirement in December 1983 (after over 30 years of service with the Corps) was OC District Support Unit, Hobart.

Alan Hodges. After graduating from the Royal Military College in 1960, Alan completed his civil engineering degree at Melbourne University before being posted to 24 Const Sqn. A posting as OC 2 Field Troop followed and he joined the troop half-way through its tour. He continued on as OC of the replacement troop for a further year, including a deployment for six months at Op Crown in Thailand. Subsequent appointments included: OC District Engineers Office in PNG, OC 23 Const Sqn, Staff College in Quetta, Pakistan, Directing Staff at the Joint Services Staff College, Commanding Officer/Chief Instructor School of Military Engineering, Commander 5th Military District WA, Chief of Staff Training Command in Sydney and several senior staff appointments in Army Office and Headquarters Australian Defence Force. He was awarded the Queen's Silver Jubilee Medal in 1977 and made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in 1992. He finished his career of 38 years in the Army as Director General Emergency Management Australia with the rank of Brigadier and continued in that appointment as a civilian for a further five years. He now conducts a consultancy business.

Michael 'Tassie' Holloway. Tassie Holloway joined 2 Field Troop in Sarawak as a replacement for the homeward-bound Jim Kimberley, remaining in Malaya until 1967. Two years in 18 Field Sqn was followed in 1969 by a posting to PNG as RAE Bomb Disposal Technician. He returned to Australia in 1972 to the Jungle Training Centre at Canungra as an instructor in the Battle Wing. Tassie's work in PNG as a sergeant earned him an Order of Australia (AM) in 1975. On promotion to WO2, he moved to SME FE wing, followed in 1976 by five months in the UK on the inaugural exercise 'Long-Look' where he was attached to 39 Explosive Ordnance Disposal Sqn. His CO was Gordon Chave, then a Lt Col. Returning to SME, Tassie remained at FE wing until the offer of an accompanied posting to the UK as a WO instructor. This was followed by the WO1 position with 5 Engineer Group at Haberfield, then from 1983 to his retirement in 1985, as RSM of 2/3 Field Engineer Regiment – a total of 27 years with the Royal Australian Engineers.

Bill Jones. Bill Jones graduated from the Army Apprentices School as a vehicle mechanic in 1960. After time with 17 Const Sqn and 20 Field Park Sqn he joined 4 Troop in Malaya in January 1963, staying on with 2 Field Troop, and returning to Australia in January 1965. As a sergeant in 1966, Bill narrowly avoided being Corps-

transferred to RAEME and by 1970 was in Vietnam with 21 Engineer Support Troop. This was followed by two years instructing at SME, then to PNG as WO2, where one of his Commanding Officers was Lt Col P M Jeffrey MC, (the recently-appointed Australian Governor General) On his return to Australia Bill's next three years were spent as an instructor at SME (for a period while Alan Hodges was CO/CI), and OCS, with a short stint as acting RSM of SME. Awarded the Queen's Silver Jubilee Medal in 1977, he was discharged in 1980 with the rank of WO1 and 22 years service in the Corps.

Jim Kimberley. Jim enlisted in 1961 and, following completion of basic training and FE3 course, was posted to 1 Field Sqn. In March 1963, he was posted to 4 Field Troop in Malaya and remained there with 2 Field Troop until March 1965. On return to Australia, he went to 22 Const Sqn in WA and was promoted to Cpl and then Sgt while in the unit. He went with the squadron to Sabah, Borneo in 1966. A posting to 17 Const Sqn in South Vietnam in 1969 was followed in 1970 with a transfer to the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam. On return to Australia, Jim was posted to SME as a Troop Sgt/Instructor with Corps Training Wing and in 1971 he returned to 22 Const Sqn as Troop/Training Sgt. In January 1975, he was promoted to WO2 and posted back to SME as WO Coordination. In 1977, he was posted as SSM 16 Field Sqn in 3 Field Engineer Regt, Townsville. Promotion to WO1 occurred in 1978 and an instructional posting as WO Training Wing, Land Warfare Centre, Canungra. His final posting was, once again, with 22 Const Sqn where he became SSM in 1980. In 1982, Jim took his discharge and joined the Main Roads Department of WA where he was employed as an engineering assistant until retirement in 1998.



Spr Jim Kimberley ready for action in the jungle.

Barry Lennon. Barry graduated from the Officer Cadet School, Portsea in 1961 and after completing the officers' 'Long Course' at SME was posted to 1 Field Sqn as troop commander before being given responsibility as Troop Officer for raising 2 Field Troop for service in Malaysia. On return from Malaysia, Barry raised 22 Field Support Troop and relocated it to Queensland in support of 7 Field Sqn. From there he was appointed as GSO3 Staff Duties at Army HQ in Canberra, followed by appointment initially as 2IC of 17 Const Sqn in Nui Dat Vietnam and then OC Land Clearing Operations and OC 17 Const Sqn detachment in Vung Tau. On return from Vietnam, he was appointed OC 7 Field Sqn in Queensland – his last assignment before being granted permission to transfer to the 'inactive list' in Canberra. While an 'inactive' Reservist he joined IBM World Trade Corporation and spent the bulk of his 30 years with that company as General Manager of various country operations in Asia – including Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand – the countries which he first experienced during service with 2 Field Troop.

Doug 'Lefty' Maddison. Lefty joined the Army Apprentice School at Balcombe as a vehicle mechanic in 1959. After completion of his trade, he was posted to 17 Const Sqn, and when the squadron deployed to PNG in 1963 he went with them. On his



Sgt Bruce Parsons all ready to parachute.

return to Australia, he was posted to 55 Advanced Engineer Stores Sqn at Penrith and from there volunteered for a posting to Malaya, where he replaced Bill Jones, arriving in 2 Troop in February 1965 and deploying with the troop to Sarawak, but he was injured shortly before the troop's return to Terendak. As a result of his injuries, he returned to Australia with 2 Troop in October 1965 for a medical board, but instead of returning to Malaya he was posted back to 17 Const Sqn, and in 1966 deployed with them to Vietnam. Back home to 7 Field Sqn Workshop, he was forced to transfer corps to RAEME. It was then back to Vietnam for another tour with 17 Const Sqn Workshop. Various postings to engineer units followed, then it was back to PNG once more, this time with PNGDF Engineer Workshop. After 12 months in PNG, he returned to Sydney and was then posted to several non-engineer units. Lefty left the service in April 1982, having completed 23 years service, the last four as a WO2.

Bruce 'Blair' Parsons. Blair Parsons joined 2 Field Troop as a section corporal from 1 Field Sqn. He had enlisted in 1952 in the 7th intake at the Army Apprentice School, graduating as a Carpenter and Joiner, and had served in PNG before

joining the troop. He was promoted to sergeant during 2 Troop's deployment in Malaya and then, after a brief posting in Australia, served in Vietnam during 1966-67 with 17 Const Sqn and 1 Field Sqn. Promotion to WO2 was followed by a variety of postings: 5 Field Sqn, where he was SSM, 11 CE Works and then SME. Blair was the SSM of 1 Field Sqn 1 Field Engineer Regiment when he took his discharge.

Peter Stokes. After his enlistment in 1960 Peter's first posting on completion of his FE3 course was to 7 Field Sqn in Enoggera. He joined 2 Field Troop in May 1963 as the Troop Clerk with the rank of corporal. When 2 Troop returned home in 1965, Peter and his family remained in Malaya and he completed a second deployment to Operation Crown before being posted to 55 AES at Penrith in 1966. In December 1967 Peter joined 17 Const Sqn in South Vietnam as the Sgt Clerk. This was followed by a return to 55 AES and, in 1971, a posting as S/Sgt to PNG where he remained until 1974. On his return to Australia and promotion to warrant officer, Peter was posted to 1 Field Engineer Regiment as Chief Clerk where he remained until discharge in 1976. He then undertook a career in the security industry and later in the justice system.

Malcolm van Gelder. After graduating from the Royal Military College in 1955, Malcolm completed his engineering degree at the University of Adelaide in 1957. After a posting as an instructor at the Royal Military College, he was Troop Commander in the Maralinga Range Support Unit followed by Works Officer at 21 Construction Sqn at Puckapunyal. In 1961 he was attached to 5 Airfield Construction Sqn RAAF at Darwin as Works Officer and then, in 1963, posted to Malaya to command 4 Troop and the replacement 2 Troop. On return to Australia, he served in succession as Major Instructor SME, OC 23 Construction Sqn at Holsworthy and of 17 Construction Sqn in Vietnam, and staff appointments as a Maj and Lt Col at Army Headquarters in the areas of personal services and personnel planning. He subsequently attended Staff College and the Joint Services Staff College. In 1972 he joined the Australian Public

Service in the Department of Territories as Assistant Secretary Administrative Planning and Development. On leaving the Public Service in 1988 he became a lawyer in practices in Sydney and Canberra, and is now a sole practitioner in Canberra. While in the Army, he completed Masters degrees in Engineering Science and Economics, and subsequently completed a Bachelor of Laws.

Simon 'Snow' Wilson. Snow enlisted in 1958 and after completing the FE3 course at SME served in 7 Indep Field Sqn (later renamed 7 Field Sqn) and 20 Field Park Sqn. He joined 2 Field Troop as a section corporal and after service with the troop in Malaya, Thailand and Sarawak, Snow was posted to the newly formed 18 Field Sqn. In 1967 he joined 17 Const Sqn in Vietnam and on his promotion to Sgt in May the same year was posted to 1 Field Sqn at Nui Dat. On his return to Australia he again spent a short time with 7 Field Sqn before receiving a posting to SME as an instructor in the FE wing, where he remained until his discharge in late 1970, with the rank of WO2 and 12 years service with the Corps.

Dave Wood. After completing National Service in 1959 Dave immediately signed on in the Regular army and subsequently served in a wide variety of Engineer units. Following the deployment to Malaya with 2 Troop, Dave completed two tours of Vietnam. In 1978, accompanied by wife Judy, Dave was posted to Fiji as part of a Defence Corps Project for the Royal Fiji Military Force. His role as Plant Troop Commander was to establish a plant troop and oversee Australian Military Aid projects involving plant and equipment. Dave and Judy returned to Australia in 1980 and he took up a position with 19 CE Works in Sydney, followed by several years as instructor at PRA (Plant Road and Airfield) wing at SME. After 26 years with the Corps, Dave was discharged in 1985 as a WO1.

The British Hierarchy

Gordon Chave. After serving with 11 Indep Field Sqn RE, Gordon returned to UK from Terendak to fill a staff appointment at the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment. This was followed by command of a squadron in the Arabian Gulf, which among other things included drilling for water for the Arab rulers in the days before oil was discovered. He then attended Joint Services Staff College. The Commandant was Maj Gen (later Lt Gen Sir) Terence McMeekin, and among the staff were Lt Col John Stevens and the Australian Lt Col



Maj Gordon Chave, Major John Stevens and WO2 Tom Thornton at 11 Indep Field Sqn.

(Later Gen Sir) Phillip Bennett. In due course he commanded a regiment, a Bomb Disposal unit. Following another staff tour, he was persuaded to join industry and, after a short spell with Dunlop Rubber, he became joint managing director of a firm manufacturing textile products for the army and for export. For five years Gordon was secretary and Vicky was a caseworker with the Soldiers, Sailors and Air Force Association, a charity which they used to support in Malaya.

Tony Stacey-Marks. Tony is well-remembered by all in 2 Troop, who proudly served under his command. He was always very loyal to his Australian Troop and took great pleasure in having 2 Troop as part of his unit. Immediately after commanding 11 Indep Field Sqn RE, he had a succession of postings in the UK, followed by attendance at the NATO Defence College in Rome. He then served in Europe at SHAPE (Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe) and SACEUR (Supreme Allied Commander Europe). He returned to his Corps in 1977 as the first Regimental Colonel. After leaving the Army, Tony became a district councillor for six years and ran residential homes for the elderly. Sadly, Tony Stacey-Marks died in December 1999 aged 75 years.

John Stevens. John left Terendak in December 1965 and returned to the UK to become the senior staff officer in the Engineer in Chief's Operations and Organisation department in the Ministry of Defence. In mid-1967 he was promoted to command 35 Corps Engineer Regiment in Hamelin, West Germany during the tense Cold War period of preparing for a possible Soviet invasion. This was followed by two related appointments: as Instructor at the Joint Services Staff College and then, on promotion to Colonel, as Senior Instructor at the Staff College, Camberley. His final appointment was as Deputy Commander 12 Engineer Brigade where he was responsible for construction projects undertaken by RE units world-wide. As a civilian, John worked for a consulting engineer firm and supervised the construction of major port developments in Bahrain and Libya, with four years in each country. He then transferred with the firm to Bangkok for two years. On return to the UK, he became Director of a housing association providing rented homes for ex-Service families until he retired in 1992. John then spent a further five years training young engineers to prepare them for disaster-relief operations worldwide. He now provides assistance to others as a Welfare Officer for the Royal British Legion. Norma continues to work for OXFAM and Traidcraft, an organisation providing aid through trade for developing countries.

Tom Thornton. Following his departure from 11 Indep Field Sqn in 1966, Tom took accumulated overseas leave before attending a QMSI course at the Royal School of Military Engineering. He then occupied a QMSI appointment in charge of the Training Wing at 21 Engineer Regt as part of the British Army of the Rhine. In 1969 he was promoted WO1 and became the RSM of 4 Divisional Engineer Regt and of 26 Engineer Regt. In the following year he was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal. Tom was commissioned as a Captain in 1970 and became OC HQ Sqn, 25 Engineer Regt. In 1972 he returned to UK and served for four years as Assistant Chief Instructor of No 1 Training Regt at Cove. His final two years in the Army saw him as a Personnel Selection Officer at the Army Junior Selection Centre at Harrogate. In 1978, he was discharged after 37½ years service and became a Sales and Marketing Manager for several years, followed by 12 years as the Service Manager at hospitals in Leeds and York.