Vietnam Veterans' Day.

Vietnam Veterans Day is commemorated on 18 August every year. The day was originally known as Long Tan Day, chosen to commemorate the men of D Company, 6RAR who fought in the battle of Long Tan in 1966. On that day, 108 Australian and New Zealand soldiers fought a pitched battle against over 2,000 North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops in a rubber plantation not far from the small village of Long Tan. The Australians prevailed, but only after fighting in torrential rain for four hours. They were nearly overrun, but were saved by a timely ammunition resupply, accurate artillery fire from the nearby Australian base, and the arrival of reinforcements by armoured personnel carrier. Eighteen Australians lost their lives and 24 were wounded, the largest number of casualties in one operation since the Australian task force had arrived a few months earlier. After the battle the bodies of 245 enemy soldiers were found, but there was evidence that many more bodies had been carried away.

On the third anniversary of Long Tan, 18 August 1969, a cross was raised on the site of the battle by the men of 6RAR. Veterans from the battle gathered at the cross to commemorate the fallen, and the day was commemorated by them as Long Tan Day from then on.

Over time, all Vietnam veterans adopted the day as one to commemorate those who served and died in Vietnam. In 1987, following the very successful Welcome Home parade for Vietnam veterans in Sydney, Prime Minister Bob Hawke announced that Long Tan Day would be known

as Vietnam Veterans Day. Since then, it has been commemorated every year as the day on which the service of all those men and women who served in Vietnam is remembered.

In November of 2017, the Long Tan Cross was brought to Australia and is now on display at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. The cross's return came after Vietnamese authorities cancelled official commemorations at the site of the battle in 2016, on its 50th anniversary. See HERE.

With the Brisbane event cancelled (see Later), quite a few Veterans travelled north to Cotton Tree, at Maroochydore, to take part in the Ceremony organised by the Sunshine Coast Sub-Branch of the VVAA. The event was organised with strong support from the Sunshine Coast Council which also supports the Vietnam Vets Drop-In Centre located upstairs at the Maroochydore Library precinct at Cotton Tree.

From about 10.30am on the 18th August, the Vets began to form up in the beach side park at Cotton Tree, about 250 metres to the east of the Cenotaph, then at 11.00, to the bugled sounds of "Fall In", and under the barked orders of Col Parkin, the Parade Marshall, the troops "marched" around the pathway beside the Maroochy River to the Cenotaph for the Ceremony.

B

MC for the event was Michael Sheahan, the Advertising and Marketing Officer for the Sunshine Coast branch of the VVAA.

John "Sambo" Sambrooks, Courtney Duncan, Mal Sayers.

John represented those that served in Vietnam with RTFV/35Sqn Squadron (Wallaby Airlines) which operated in Vietnam from 1964 and left in 1972.

C

Courtney and her wonderful trumpet have been in demand for military services for many years. Both her father and her uncle hadserved in the Army, so she is very familiar with things military. She nurtured an interest in the trumpet when she was still a young girl and was selected to play the Last Post at an ANZAC Day service at Mooloolaba back in 2010 when she was only 15 years old and still at high school. Since then, as well as being a part of various musical concerts, she has played the Last Post and Rouse at many military ceremonies.

Mal, an ex-RadtechA, is the Secretary of the VVAA Sunshine Coast Sub-Branch and is one of those tireless "behind the scenes" organisers of events such as this.

The Cenotaph at Cotton Tree was dedicated in 1986 and is inscribed with the words *"In glorious Memory of Veterans and Peace Keepers of all Wars and Conflicts."*

D

Also present at the Remembrance Ceremony were members from the Vietnamese Community of Brisbane, once again, organised by Thai and Diamond Dang.

Thai, Damond and Tuyet-Van Pham lay a wreath on behalf of the Vietnamese Community.

Thai was born in Vietnam and won a UNICEF bursary which allowed him to study at the local university. When Saigon fell to the North in 1975, Thai and his older brother, along with a bunch of other people, escaped in a small boat. All went well until they were inundated by a severe storm and were in danger of sinking when luckily they were rescued by a large fishing vessel.

They were taken to a refugee camp in Indonesia where Thai spent 8 months before he was sponsored by a benefactor who repatriated him to Minnesota in the USA. He enrolled at the University of Minnesota and finished his mechanical engineering degree.

You can see his story HERE

E

John Sambrooks laid a wreath on behalf of RTFV/35 Sqn (Wallaby Airlines).

The beautiful ladies from the Vietnam Community travelled up from Brisbane and showed their appreciation for the efforts made by the Australian Defence Forces during the War.

F

The Ode to the Fallen was spoken by the VVAA Sunshine Coast Secretary, Mal Sayers.

The RAAF had promised a C-17 fly-past but the aircraft was in the hangars so that never happened.

As he has done for many years, Bruce Fraser piped the lament around the cenotaph.

Getting old sucks. I used to wake up feeling like a million bucks.
Now I feel more like a bounced cheque.

G

After the ceremony, everyone was invited to the Maroochydore RSL for lunch.

Crissie and Steve Wessels.

Geoff and Judy Morris.

H

Arthur and Annette Fry.

Arthur is the Chaplain to the Vietnam Vets Association – Sunshine Coast. He speaks, reads and writes Vietnamese and Chinese Mandarin.

Peter Nolan.

Peter joined the RAAF back in 1958, was posted to Ballarat to complete his Radmech, Radtech Air courses, which he finished in 1960. After Ballarat he was posted to various bases, Laverton,

I

Richmond, Butterworth and Thailand. As a Sergeant, he was "loaned' to the Army and spent time at Nui Dat in Vietnam from Feb 67 to Feb 68. He was commissioned in 1970 and was OIC Radio at East Sale then 3AD at Amberley. In 1975, he was posted down to ARDU at Laverton, then in 1977, followed ARDU as it was transferred to Edinburgh.

In 1979, when promoted to Sqn Ldr, he was posted to Washington for a 2 year term, which he extended to 3½ years. He retired in the mid 1980's, and obtained an Economics degree and pursued a career in the economics field.

Mal Sayers and Joan Blinco.

Thank You.

As they have done so for many years Thai and Diamond, both accomplished musicians, wished to thank the ADF community for their efforts during the Vietnam war. As a thank you gesture, and from their own pockets, they made available an iPad which they offered to the organisers to be made available to a person as "a lucky door prize."

Thai explained to all that he feels a great debt of gratitude towards Vietnam Vets as without their help he feels sure he would not be here today.

I'm sure everyone would agree, the slate is now clear mate – you don't owe us anything, you've well and truly paid your dues. We just enjoy your company – especially when you bring those beautiful ladies along !!!

J

Then, and appreciated by all those present, the lovely ladies performed traditional dances, in traditional costumes. Really brightened up the afternoon.

The 180 Vets enjoying wonderful company, wonderful food, a few drinks, a few lies and a great Queensland Saturday afternoon.

Reporters interviewing a 104-year-old woman asked: "And what do you think is the best thing about being 104?"   She simply replied, "No peer pressure."

K

Some of the lovely Vietnamese ladies:

Kim and Thuy.

Lisa Scott

L

Ha Linh

Ngan Dai.

M

N

The Brisbane Ceremony.

There was a lot of Ho-Ha concerning the cancellation of the Brisbane VVAA March this year, both TV and newspapers roamed the streets until they found someone who was willing to put the blame squarely on the back of that dastardly council people who deliberately and nastily would not allow the Vets to meet and march to the Brisbane Shrine of Remembrance.

We wonder if the condition of the place, which is full of back-hoes and Bob-cats, has anything to do with their decision……

I've surely got old! I have outlived my feet and my teeth. I've had two bypass surgeries, a hip replacement, new knees, fought prostate cancer and diabetes. I'm half blind, can't hear anything quieter than a jet engine, take 40 different medications that make me dizzy, winded, and subject to blackouts. Have bouts with dementia. Have poor circulation; hardly feel my hands and feet anymore. Can't remember if I'm 85 or 92. Have lost all my friends. But, thank God, I still have my driver's license.

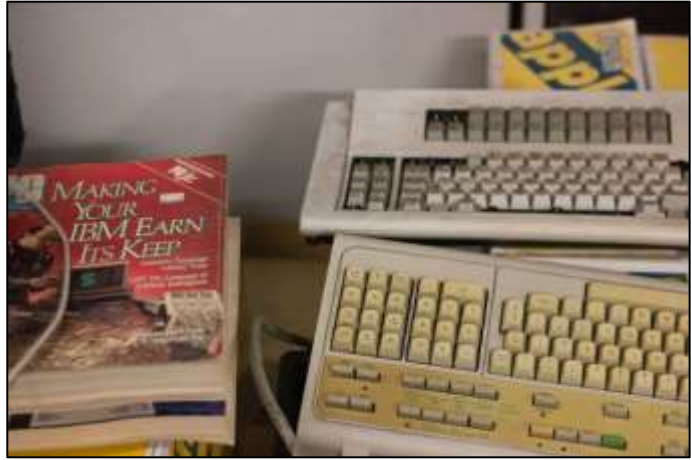# Australian Computer Museum Society collection at risk from bulldozers

Just off the Hume Highway in Western Sydney, Australia's computing history is stacked in dusty roof-high piles — all in urgent need of a good home.

O

This is the Australian Computer Museum Society (ACMS): caretakers of long-forgotten Olivetti personal computers, unloved Apple floppy drives and even an Interdata 8/32 from the 1970s, a baby blue computing unit with the build of a rugby player.

Their storage space in Villawood is set to be demolished, which prompted a plea for computer fans to come and take what they can for safekeeping by Friday, August 10.

John Geremin, or "Big John", (below) is the society's honorary treasurer and curator. He said the ACMS just needs an empty warehouse to guarantee the collection's immediate future, but ideally it would be properly housed and displayed. "There's tape drives, there's disk drives, there's processors. There's basically anything and everything," he said.

Local resident Iain Reed, who has some spare space in a Milperra warehouse, pulled up in a large white removalist truck on Friday with plans to carry off 13 tonnes worth.

"It's all too good to throw out," he said.
"It's our heritage. If this goes, there's 50 years of human history gone."

Big John carries decades of Australia's computing history in his head, contained by an old baseball cap. Born in 1942, he remembers seeing his first computer at a Sydney University open day in the late 1950s, where he laid eyes on the SILLIAC system, which did "all sorts of magic things". The hulking machine apparently played digital tunes like Happy Birthday, and so began John's life lived alongside splendid machines. He was there as computers shrunk from room-sized beasts to sleek, compact units. He did traffic research on an IBM 1620, once dubbed the CADET and later got his hands on a minicomputer, the Hewlett Packard 2100.

The society tried to maintain a representative sample from each decade of computing, but judging by the precarious piles of keyboards, old-fashioned calculators and oddities in the Villawood storage space, they've never said no to people's old units.

"The problem has been of course that the word got out, and we've had thousands and thousands of donations," Mr Geremin said.

There's an IBM 1401 system outside, that is probably the only one left in Australia, and it's six-foot-long, three-foot-wide, five-foot-high and weighs 800 kilos. In another room is an Interdata 8/32 that calculated the national debt in the 1970s. Its mode of storage? Cassette tapes!

Much of the society's Apple collection has already found a home, John Geremin said, but there's plenty left, especially if you count the thousands of computer manuals the society has stored in milk crates. "I did a rough guess at one stage, and said that we probably had in excess of 50,000 artefacts," he added. "It could be 200,000 artefacts if you count every document that we've got."

George Murdocca of Turramurra was also taking a few pieces home, half a car boot full, he estimated. He runs a technology training school called LinuxDojo and hopes to make a small display of items for his students. For now, Mr Murdocca planned to take items from his own computing history.

"My history started in the early 1980s, so anything from that sort of era. It was the dawn of the desktop back then," he said. "I just sort of want to see what's around, feast my eyeballs a little bit."

Will the society keep collecting? Mr Geremin admitted he doesn't thrill to 2018's technology (although he has an iPhone), it's too same-same; too hostile to tinkering. "In in the early days, if you wanted to change the way that the computer looked and felt, you could have a go at it," he explained. "Nowadays you don't do that sort of thing, you just get a few apps off the web and do what somebody else's designed it to do. "Some of the things that are out there in 'never-never land', on the way past the moon, are simple 1960s technology and they are still doing their job."

Mr Murdocca said he considers computers to be an extension of ourselves and deserving of a good home. "[They] allow us to get on with more human things, like being creative," he added. "And here is a stash of its very, very humble roots."

The ACMS is located at 888 Woodville Road, Villawood and will be open weekdays 10am to 10pm until August 10.

Q

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