

THE GUIDON  
OF THE  
3RD CAVALRY REGIMENT



## 3rd Cavalry Regiment

The 3rd Cavalry Regiment had a squadron serving in South Vietnam for nearly six years. Between 1967 and 1972 the men from the regiment served in every major operation conducted by the 1st Australian Task Force (1ATF), including the Tet Offensive, the 1968 battles for Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral, and the battle of Binh Ba in 1969. Using Armoured Personal Carriers (APCs), the regiment's squadron was a highly mobile force that served throughout Phuoc Tuy province.

Australian APCs had been serving in Vietnam since 1965: initially with the 1st Troop, A Squadron, 4th/19th Prince of Wales Light Horse Regiment, subsequently named the 1st APC Troop; and then with 1st APC Squadron. In January 1967 1st APC Squadron became A Squadron, 3rd Cavalry Regiment. The squadron's strength in South Vietnam at the time was 117: ten officers, 14 warrant officers/sergeants, and 93 other ranks. The squadron's strength increased

over time and by August 1971 had grown to 169 men: 15 officers, 22 warrant officers/sergeants, and 132 other ranks.

While A Squadron was located with the Task Force at Nui Dat, the regiment's B Squadron was initially based at Puckapunyal, Victoria, later moving to Holsworthy, New South Wales. The role of the squadron's regiment in Australia was to provide support and relief for the squadron serving in Vietnam. The regiment operated a "man-for-man" replacement system – when a member of the squadron completed his tour in Vietnam, he was replaced by a man from the squadron in Australia.

Although it now belonged to a new regiment, the squadron continued to carry out the same type of work it had done previously: inserting, redeploying, and extracting troops, including patrols conducted by the Special Air Service; acting as an armoured ambulance for medical evacuations; serving as a ready deployment force; being used as mobile machine-gun and mortar platforms; protecting convoys and escorts; conducting reconnaissance; supporting cordon-and-search operations; and providing armoured command vehicles.

The squadron was involved in particularly heavy fighting on 16 February 1967, in support of the 6th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (6RAR), during Operation Bribie. At one point during the battle, B Company became pinned down in the middle of an arc of Viet Cong (VC) machine-guns. APCs had been on the edge of the battle but were called forward to assist B Company, having to almost "blindly" crash through thick scrub in an effort to find the infantry. Having located B Company, the wounded were evacuated in the back of the carriers. One APC was hit by two rounds from a 75 mm recoilless rifle, killing the driver and wounding the crew commander and several passengers.

A Squadron became B Squadron on 13 May 1969, coinciding with the arrival of new. B Squadron's tour lasted until 6 January 1971, when it was relieved by A Squadron. In mid-1971 the squadron received six M113A1 Fire Support Vehicles (FSVs), carrier mounted with a Saladin turret and armed with a 76 mm gun. The majority of the FSVs crew were seconded from the 2nd Cavalry Regiment and posted to the 3rd Cavalry Regiment. More heavily armed than M113A1s, the FSVs were still only lightly armoured and were not intended to replace Centurion tanks in offensive tasks. It was felt however, they could relieve the Centurions from their role in protecting the fire support bases, thereby allowing the tanks a greater role in supporting 1ATF's operations.

In August the Australian government announced it would withdrawal 1ATF from Vietnam. 1ATF was gradually reduced and in October the remaining Australian troops moved to the port city of Vung Tau; a company from the 4th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment/NZ (ANZAC)(4RAR/NZ), the squadron's No. 1 Troop, and some support troops remained at Nui Dat. Most of the squadron returned to Australia in December, while No. 1 Troop moved to Vung Tau. The detachment returned to Australia in March 1972.

## **Glossary**

### **Puckapunyal**

## **Battle Honours**

- **Vietnam (1965-72)**
- **Long Tan**
- **Bien Hoa**
- Coral-Balmoral
- **Hat Dich**
- **Binh Ba**

## **Casualties**

- 20 died
- 115 wounded

## **Commanding Officers**

- Costes. Henry John
- Hagerty, Robert Edmund
- Keldie, John David
- Murphy. Gordon James
- O'Donnell, Lawrence George
- Rooks. Ronald Ellis
- Stephens, Christopher Effey
- Walker. Terence Harvey

## **Decorations**

- 1 MBE
- 3 MC
- 1 DCM
- 2 MM
- 3 CDS
- 16 MID



3rd Cavalry Regiment M113A1 APC in South Vietnam



3rd Cavalry Regiment APCs  
with 6 RAR Troops - Long Tan August 1966

**Track Nickname  
"The Sandgroper"  
Vietnam Australian  
Cavalry.**



The 3rd Cavalry Regiment was raised on 1st July 1965 as the 1st Armoured Personnel Carrier (APC) Squadron and was renamed the 3rd Cavalry Regiment on 24th November 1966. The regiment served extensively in South Vietnam as an APC regiment attached to the Australian Task Force. It amalgamated with the 4th Cavalry Regiment in 1981 to become the 3rd/4th Cavalry Regiment...



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