

AUSTRALIAN GUNNER OBITUARY RESOURCE

Richard John (Dick) Creek

22 February 1938 – 6 June 2015

By Peter Bruce, OAM

There is a saying in the military that some individuals are born wearing the rank they hold. Such could be said for Warrant Officer Class Two Richard John (Dick) Creek. Dick was born in Warren NSW on the 22nd of March 1938. His first taste of life in the Army was as a National Serviceman in 13 National Service Training Battalion at Ingleburn. He had registered and was called up on the 7th of January 1958.

His compulsory 176 days was cut short when he transferred to the Citizens Military Force (CMF) on the 25th March 1958. His original CMF service was with 12 Company, Royal Australian Army Service Corps.

It seems Dick and the Army got on well as he transferred to the Australian Regular Army on the 12th of April 1960. Despite having done time as a National Serviceman and time in the CMF, Dick was required to complete his basic training at 1st Recruit Training Battalion at Kapooka. Dick was then allocated to Artillery and completed his Initial Employment Training at the School of Artillery, North Head in August 1960. Dick's first posting to an Artillery unit was to 1st Field Regiment, then at Holsworthy, where he arrived on the 23rd of November 1960. 1st Regiment was part of the restructured 1st Brigade and were equipped with the American M2A2 Howitzers.

In August 1963, Dick was posted to 102nd Field Battery and deployed to Malay with the battery on the 14th of November 1963. The battery was under command of Major Brien Forward and was under command of 45 Light Regiment, Royal Artillery. The battery saw action in Malacca and Borneo and Dick was recorded as having Special Service Malaya from 3 September 1964 to 16 October 1964. He again had Special Service Sarawak from 27 April 1965 to 18 July 1965. Borneo was to be the scene of the main Indonesian effort and 45 Regiment deployed its batteries in support of the infantry along the Indonesian/Malay border.

Dick returned to Australia with the battery in October 1965 and was posted to 1st Field Regiment. Dick returned to 12th Field Regiment at Holsworthy on the 18th of April 1966 before a stint with 107th Field Battery from the 1st of April 1967 until the 24th of August 1967. During 1967, 102nd Field Battery was warned for operational service in South Vietnam. Dick was back in the battery when it deployed to South Vietnam on the 4th of March 1968. The battery was part of 12th Field Regiment and was allocated in direct support of 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment. At this stage, Dick was the Operator Command Post Sergeant in the Command Post. In May 1968, the battery deployed To War Zone D as part of the 1st Australian Task Force and were helicopter deployed to Fire Support Base Coral.

Ian Ahearn, Gun Position Officer (GPO) of 102nd Field Battery at the time recalls: *"Dick served as my Command Post Sergeant in Australia during 1967 then in Vietnam from February 1968 to February 1969. Dick's technical expertise was first rate and I had no hesitation in employing him as a duty officer in the Command Post (CP). Dick demanded high standards from all Operator Command Post Staff - the same high standards he held himself to. He was well remembered for adding lashings of curry to any centrally prepared CP meal. If you didn't like curry - too bad! I trusted him completely as a CP duty officer and did not hesitate to place him in the CP when we split into two sections and deployed to separate Fire Support Bases. He managed the CP in one location and I managed it in the other. For that week, I considered Dick the only person for the job. Dick was not all sweetness and light and although the CP staff acknowledged his technical skills he was harsh in his administration and brooked no questioning of his decisions on anything, be*

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that rations, work parties, rosters or any of the other aspects of personnel management. A good but gruff senior NCO who made a great contribution to a capable and efficient CP team."

Dick returned to Australia with the battery and was posted as an instructor at the School of Artillery, North Head. His technical expertise was well noted and his reward was a posting to the Royal School of Artillery at Larkhill in England. Dick attended the Long Gunnery Staff Course (Field) from 12 December 1974 until his return to North Head on the 7th of August 1976. Dick remained as an Assistant Instructor Gunnery (AIG) until his next posting as Battery Sergeant Major (BSM) of 102nd Field Battery, part of 12th Field Regiment at Holsworthy.

Dick had wonderful technical gunnery knowledge as seen by his selection to attend the Long Gunnery Staff course in the UK. He was very well respected for his instructional knowledge and techniques on many NCO and Officer courses on Gunnery Wing at the School of Artillery. His imaginary blackboard calculations with imaginary chalk and imaginary eraser became part of his mystic as an instructor. Many young officers and NCOs owe much of their own technical gunnery skills to Dick.

Dick was an excellent BSM in many ways who was well regarded by all in the battery, especially his sergeants. Dick was hard but fair and looked after his soldiers. His contempt for their excuses for being late for work became legendary. He was a regular Sergeants' Mess attendee and could often be found at the local hotel on Saturday mornings, having a beer with his soldiers. It was the time of route marches and Dick was always with the battery for the compulsory ten kilometres per week.

As his posting as BSM came to an end in March 1978, Dick opted for a posting to 23rd Field Regiment at Kogarah. This was to see out his time in the Regular Army. Dick, having completed 20 years' service, transferred to the Army Reserve on the 13th of May 1974. He stayed on with 23rd Field Regiment until his discharge on the 3rd of April 1989.

Warrant Officer Class Two Richard John Creek's honours and awards include:

- Australian Active Service Medal 1945-75 with clasp SE Asia;
- General Service Medal 1962 with Clasps Borneo and Malay Peninsula;
- Vietnam Medal;
- Australian Service Medal 1945-75 with First Clasp;
- National Medal;
- Australian Defence Medal;
- Anniversary of National Service 1951-1972 Medal;
- Vietnamese Campaign Medal;
- Pingat Hasa Malaysia
- Returned from Active Service Badge.

Dick died on the 6th of June 2015. He was survived by his wife Gwen (54 years) and children, Margaret, Richard, Stephen (deceased) and Warren. Dick was Grandfather of 8 and Great Grandfather of 5. A funeral service was held on Friday the 12th of June 2015 at St Philip's Anglican Church, Kingswood NSW. In keeping with Dick's wishes, no black clothing was worn at the service.

Acknowledgements:

- Ian Ahearn
- Chris Jobson

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