

## Death of a Scheyvillian – 2Lt Leonard Alexander Taylor, Class 1/66



3787987 Leonard Taylor was born on 16<sup>th</sup> August 1945 and was a trainee sales representative from Sydney. He was called up with the first intake in 1966 commencing Recruit Training on 2<sup>nd</sup> February. 16 days later he commenced his Officer Training at OTU. He graduated on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1966 as Graduate 189 and was posted to 3 RAR. Len was due for discharge at the end of his 2 years on 1<sup>st</sup> February 1968, however, 3 RAR commenced its 'Tour' of Vietnam on 12<sup>th</sup> December and Len signed on for twelve months for the 'Tour'. Len died from gunshot wounds on 8<sup>th</sup> February 1968 at Long Dien. He is buried in the Box Hill Cemetery in Melbourne. 3 RAR's 'Tour' ended on 5<sup>th</sup> December 1968.

The following information came via 3791271 Brian McKenzie, a Nasho who continued serving after his NS and retired as a Major in the Army Reserve's 2 RVR, having served as a Company Commander at the Shepparton barracks. Brian's 'Tour' with 3 RAR was from 20<sup>th</sup>

December 1967 to 28<sup>th</sup> November 1968. For some time Brian was the President of the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia.

The following records tell of the battle.

CONTACT AFTER ACTION REPORT NO. 1 PART 1, PL SGT 5 PL, B COY, 5 RAR

Operation: LONG DIEN, Sub-sector 8 Feb 68 Strength of Pl in contact – 1 Offr, 24 ORs

Date/Duration: 081830H – 1920H

Feb 68 Location: YS 434587

Pl Task: To secure the LEFT flank at YS 433587 while 4 Pl searched in the area YS 431589 with two sections up. Approximately 40 metres to the front a figure dressed in greens was seen to run across the road from RIGHT to LEFT. All sections were informed and the platoon commander (*Len Taylor*) ran forward with his signaller (*Nasho Geoff Mathews*). Both forward sections were then engaged by heavy automatic fire from the front. This fire was immediately returned and voices were then heard calling 'UC DA LOI, Don't shoot, Don't shoot, ARVN.' The platoon stopped momentarily and the platoon commander stood up and was shot through the leg. At the same time 15 VC moved across the road from LEFT to RIGHT and deployed in front of the RIGHT forward section. This group of enemy was engaged. The rear section had deployed facing outwards on the LEFT flank and further VC were heard close to their location. The platoon was now under fire from front and two flanks. The RIGHT forward section commander advised the platoon commander that two of his section were wounded and was ordered to pull back. The LEFT forward section were then ordered to pull back and in doing so received three casualties. At this time the platoon commander was killed and his signaller seriously shot through the head. Both the LEFT forward section and the rear section pulled back and deployed in rear of a large house. The RIGHT forward sections withdrew and met up with 6 platoon who had closed up in rear. The wounded were then treated and shortly afterwards the Company Commander and 4 Pl arrived.

The RIGHT forward section commander advised the platoon commander that two of his section were wounded and was ordered to pull back. The LEFT forward section were then ordered to pull back and in doing so received three casualties. At this time the platoon commander was killed and his signaller seriously shot through the head. Both the LEFT forward section and the rear section pulled back and deployed in rear of a large house. The RIGHT forward sections withdrew and met up with 6 pl who had closed up in rear. The wounded were then treated and shortly afterwards the Company Commander and 4 Pl arrived.

Note: According to the DVA Website Mathews died the following day.

#### GREG ARENDSEN'S TRIBUTE TO LEN TAYLOR

Len Taylor (1/66) (right) and Greg Arendsen (2/66) went to school together in the 1960s at Xavier College, a Jesuit college in Melbourne. They left school and their paths divided until they both posted to OTU. Len signed on for a further year, while Greg didn't. This led to Len doing a tour in Viet Nam in early 1968.



Len was a Platoon Commander in B Coy 3 RAR, when he was shot in an enemy action on the 8<sup>th</sup> February 1968 about 6.30pm in Long Dien, about a week after his arrival in Vietnam. Len's body was returned to Melbourne and Greg attended his funeral.

David Ward (2/66) was a class mate of Greg Arendsen's took over as platoon commander after Len was killed.

After more than forty years Greg decided to holiday in Vietnam and a part of his mission was to try and locate where Len was killed. In so doing he had hoped to find some place he might leave Len's photograph as a mark of respect.

He had old maps from colleagues in the Army and whilst he located the general area his guides advised him that these maps were inaccurate and there no place appropriate to leave the photo. In any event most of the surrounding area was paddy fields.

Greg then attended the Memorial Service for the battle of Long Tan and pondered what to do. He thought that the best thing would be to leave the photograph at a nearby Catholic Church as Len was Catholic. Greg left Len's photograph for safe keeping with Father Phero Dang Owy Linh at the Oat Do Church after attending the church service at short notice before leaving Vietnam.

As we all know war is a shocking thing. The loss of a friend so many years ago had always given Greg much sadness. The visit to Vietnam has helped him to lighten that burden. It should also be a solace to his family to know that he is not forgotten by others.