

did you know?

INFORMATION FROM THE TSS ARCHIVES

John Fraser (1945-1968)

National Serviceman and Army Officer, was born on 12 January 1945 in Brisbane. Educated at St Joseph's College, Nudgee, and at The Southport School (McK 1962-63), Johnny studied medicine for a term in 1964 at the University of Queensland. One of the best-known junior Rugby Union footballers in Queensland, he played for the Combined Great Public Schools first XV and for the firsts at both his schools. He was employed as a cadet with the Australian Estates Co. Ltd when he was called up for National Service on 29 September 1965.

Selected for Officer-Training, Fraser was sent to Scheyville, New South Wales, where he was described as 'steady', 'intelligent' and 'possessing leadership qualities'. In April 1966 he was commissioned second lieutenant in the Royal Australian Infantry Corps and posted to the 2nd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment. Next year he successfully applied for an extension of his national service to enable him to be considered for a one-year deployment to the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam). In October 1967 he was transferred to the 3rd Battalion, R.A.R. As commander of 'C' Company's No.9 Platoon, he sailed with the battalion to Vung Tau in December. Known for his 'gap-toothed ever-ready grin', Fraser often led the singing of the 3RAR's ballad, 'There Won't be Many Coming Back'.

In March 1968 the unit began Operation Pinnaroo—probably the most dangerous it conducted in South Vietnam—with the object of capturing and destroying bases of the People's Liberation Armed Forces (Viet Cong) in the Long Hai hills. The Viet Cong designated this area the Minh Dam Secret Zone. Its natural caves and subterranean streams provided a haven from which they launched raids and propaganda missions into the surrounding countryside. By 19 March 'C' Company occupied the Hon Vung foothills where it began to locate and neutralize enemy mines and booby traps.

On 24 March 1968, No.9 platoon was engaged in clearing a safe lane along a gully towards a suspected tunnel entrance. During this slow and deliberate phase, Fraser accidentally triggered a captured M16 anti-personnel mine which had been placed by the Viet Cong to protect the tunnel's mouth. The M16 was of American manufacture and designed to jump about 3 ft (91 cm) into the air before exploding. When he heard the mine arming, Fraser deliberately used his body in an effort to smother the effects of the blast and minimize injuries to those members of his platoon who were close by. The explosion fatally wounded him and seriously injured three of his men. As he lay on the ground, he told his comrades not to approach because there were more mines around him. Fraser died that day while being evacuated by helicopter; the other wounded soldiers recovered in hospital. He was buried with Catholic rites and military honours in the Allambe Garden of Memories cemetery, Nerang, Queensland.

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A park in which he had played as a child, near his home at Surfers Paradise, was named in his memory.

In 1968 a Rugby trophy named The Lieutenant John Fraser Memorial trophy was donated to TSS by his family in honour of John's memory and for his love of Rugby.

It is awarded each year for the Footballer of the Year Tackling Essential and is highly coveted amongst the Rugby boys.

Our current staff members, Bruce Wright and Leigh Holtsbaum have both won this award during their Rugby days at TSS.

At the moment the trophy is in the shop getting a makeover, as it has no more space left for names and needed a new coat of varnish.

It will arrive back at TSS in a few weeks, looking refurbished and ready to be awarded again at the end of this Rugby season.



