

**31932 WO1 Ian McPherson ROBERTSON**  
**BCOF - 3RAR - AATTV - 6RVR - MUR**  
**Passed away 24 February 2014 aged 87**

"Mr. Robbie", a truly colourful character of 3 DIV and OR Trg Wing of 3 TRG GP and veteran of many campaigns. In 1943, at 16, he almost bluffed his way into the army, which would have meant fighting in New Guinea, but the recruiting sergeant told his father, who told Robbie that if the Japanese invaded he should be home to protect his mother and sisters. He finally enlisted when he was 18, missing the end of WWII, and was sent to Kure in Japan in 1946 serving in the British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF). With the rank of Sergeant he served twice in Korea with 3RAR (September 1950 to April 1951) where he was 3RAR's battalion photographer and Australia's most renowned Korean War sniper (left photo). He briefly served again in Korea with 1RAR in 1953.



Robbie served in South Vietnam with the renowned Australian Army Training Team Vietnam (AATTV) from September 1970 to January 1971 at JWTC, Nui Dat and from January to April as RSM, AATTV Saigon. May 1971 with 1st ARVN Division, TOC forward near Quang Tri and from June to August 1971, 1st ARVN Division TOC, Hue. He returned to Australia in September 1971. He was RSM, 6th Battalion RVR, a stalwart of the Division Battle School, the founder of the 3 Training Group MUR Drum Corps in the 1980's, a member of a Light Horse Re-enactment Troop, and a pretty good ball room dancer. A man with the capacity to stimulate the imagination of the young soldier. John Tuckfield who served with Robbie wrote:-



*"I have so many memories of Mr Robbie. I joined the Battle School and learned more from him than anyone else in the army - not just practical things, but also that Robbie attitude. We did bayonet fighting, set up ranges, 'storm and stealth' courses, 'bomb, bullet and bayonet' ranges, at years of parades on a Thursday night and weekends at Pucka. Interestingly, for someone with such an amazing war record, most of the stories around the campfire were of the ridiculous incidents of war and army life - I remember rolling around in fits of laughter at his stories of Hamburger Bill and his Pie Cart (a former CO, I believe). He was a great man and a true mentor, and I fear we will never see his like again."*

After his "retirement" Robbie was personally asked by the then General of the Army, to come back, choosing any rank he liked, and use his extraordinary enthusiasm to pass on skills rapidly being lost by the Army. He said he just wanted his old WO rank.



He set up the Battle School and Drum Corp, staffed on courses at Puckapunyal. He headed a Army Reserve promotion course where he personally gave drill lessons, *wait for it.....before breakfast!* The March Out Parade demonstrated left and right forms, on the march, with all orders called from the ranks. The parade received a standing ovation from OR Training Wing regular army personnel. It was filmed and later used as a training video. On many ANZAC Day marches Robbie's Drum Corp would march to the Shrine dozens of times in front of different units with Robbie at the front keeping perfect control or on the base drum to keep the old diggers in step. On several ANZAC Day marches where old soldiers from seemingly every campaign called out fondly to him, such things as

*"Robbie, all these years and only a drummer boy"* or afterwards quietly thanked him with phrases like, *"I would n've got through it without you"*. WO Robbie, was an inspiration to many to just get on with it. For a detailed article on this legend of a soldier go to:-

<http://www.militaryphotos.net/forums/showthread.php?36288-3RAR-Sniper-in-Korea>