

AUSTRALIAN GUNNER OBITUARY RESOURCE

Warrant Office Class One Philip Murray 'Robbo' Robertson

(16 December 1964 – 31 August 2013)

By Peter Bruce, OAM

Philip 'Robbo' Robertson was the youngest child of Ian and Elizabeth (Betty) Robertson and was born in South Perth, Western Australia on the 16th of December 1964. Robbo's father Ian raised his four children, Kaetlyn, David, Steven and Robbo on his own for ten years after his wife Betty divorced him when Robbo was one. The family moved around Perth several times and therefore Robbo was unable to attend the same primary school for any reasonable length of time. Robbo's later schooling was at Scotch College and then Enfield High.

Robbo grew up loving sport and played footy, rugby, golf and darts. He left school at seventeen and joined the Army on the 20th of April 1982. Robbo had tried to join the Army when he was fifteen but was told to come back when he turned seventeen.

Following his recruit training he was allocated to the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery (RAA). His first posting was to 1st Field Regiment in Enoggera, Queensland. His initial employment was as a Gun Number however he soon qualified as a Signaller, Driver and Detachment Commander. Robbo gained his first promotion to Lance Bombardier in April 1986 and was further promoted to Bombardier in September 1987. He was awarded the 'Rammer' trophy as the best Detachment Commander of his Echo gun in 101 Battery.

In 1989 Robbo was to take up his first posting to the Proof and Experimental Establishment at Port Wakefield as a Bombardier. While on his first posting to Port Wakefield, Robbo had met Jodie and they were married on the 15th of December 1990. They had three sons, David, William and Jake. David was born in 1992, William was born in 1998 and Jake was born in 2000. Robbo and Jodie divorced after 20 years of marriage but remained good friends.

He then returned on promotion to Sergeant to his beloved 1st Field Regiment in Brisbane. Back in familiar territory he was again awarded the Rammer Trophy for best gun detachment.

In 1993, Robbo was posted to the School of Artillery as an instructor. It was here that he made such a direct influence on the ranks of the RAA. In January 1997, Robbo was promoted to Warrant Officer Class Two and posted back to Port Wakefield as Gun Captain. His professionalism and technical proficiency saw him appointed as the Range Warrant Officer in November 1998.

In January 2001, Robbo returned to 1 Field Regiment in Brisbane. He was initially posted as Battery Guide (BG) of 105 Field Battery and later assumed the appointment of Battery Sergeant Major (BSM) of 104 Field Battery. He was then posted as BSM of 103 Medium which was part of 8/12 Medium Regiment. As BSM of the 103 Battery he deployed with the Battery to Butterworth in Malaysia where the Battery served as the Deployed Rifle Company, providing protection for the Air Base at Butterworth. By 2005 Robbo was promoted to Warrant Office Class One and posted back to Port Wakefield for the third time.

In December 2006, Robbo was due to be deployed to Iraq with Australian Forces as part of the reconstruction and rehabilitation program.

On Wednesday the 15th of November 2006, Robbo had a massive heart attack and was taken to the Lyell McEwin Hospital. The following day the family were informed that the damage was so extensive they would have to turn off Robbo's life support on the Saturday, and the Army Chaplain

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came and gave Robbo the last rights. On the Friday, new hope arrived when the family were informed that Robbo had been accepted for the Heart Transplant program and was about to be transferred to St Vincent's Hospital in NSW. The Army relocated Jodie and the children so they could be close to him.

Robbo did not regain consciousness and become aware of his surrounding from the time of his heart attack on the 15th of November until the 5th of December. Robbo was given a mechanical heart known as 'ventricular assist device' which needed to be plugged in and recharged every night until his transplant. While awaiting his turn, Robbo was sent to the 1st Health Support Battalion as the Training Warrant Officer. On the 2nd of May 2008, eighteen months after his heart attack, Robbo had his heart transplant surgery.

In October 2011, Robbo met his new love, Kylie. Kylie had known of Robbo since the early 90's and after reconnecting they hit it off immediately. They soon became a couple, began living together and enjoyed all of the many things they had in common including sport and travelling. Kylie and Robbo were in the process of building their dream home, finalising plans for their January 2014 wedding and ticking off items on Robbo's bucket list. This included a trip to Canada for a 'white Christmas' in December 2014. Alas it was not to be. Robbo was assisting behind the bar at the local golf club when he suddenly collapsed. He passed away in the caring arms of a close mate surrounded by family and friends.

Robbo was a wonderful soldier, family man and respected member of the community. In 2013 Robbo and Kylie became sponsors of two holes at the Port Wakefield Golf Club. Robbo was instrumental in establishing fund raising event on most Saturdays. The proceeds of which were donated to the Cerebral Palsy League (Robbo's eldest son David has mild Cerebral Palsy). He was very much into establishing and maintaining the often enduring relationship between the Proof Range and the Community of Port Wakefield. At the Port Wakefield Bowls Club he organised the Range teams for the 'Night Owls' competition as well as co-ordinating the annual bowls day for members of the Range. He was also a stalwart of the annual Australia Day Cricket Extravaganza between the Range staff and the Townies – often humorous but lacking any true cricketing skill. Robbo was a passionate footballer and played (often notoriously) for the Port Wakefield Football Club over a number of years. He supported the club during home games and his heckling was second to none.

Robbo was so proud of his family and lived for his boys. In conversations he always talked about what the boys had been up to and what they were doing at school and how they were progressing. He was also very proud of his wider family. He often spoke about his brothers David and Stephen and sister Kaetlyn. He talked of them with pride and respect. He was proud of what they were doing and what they had achieved in their lives.

Robbo is survived by his Father Ian and stepmother Lu, his three sons David, William and Jake, his three older siblings, Kaetlyn, David and Steven and two younger brothers from his late mother Betty's second marriage, Peter and Michael.

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