

In Terry Burstall's book "The Soldiers Story" he quotes in his Preface (My concern was to describe what it was like to be caught in that nightmare ambush.) published in 1986.

Off the ABC Program Overnights 10th August 2004, Peter Blight discussed the background to Vietnams Veterans Day with Peter Haran who is a Veteran, journalist and author.

Talking about Long Tan part of Peters talk, quote "Delta Company, from the 6th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment - who were on patrol that particular day; the enemy lay in wait for them – a huge ambush in a rubber plantation called Long Tan. End quote.

The Australian mercenaries who are no less husky and beefy than their allies, the US aggressors, have proved as good fresh targets for the South Vietnamese Liberation fighters. On the 18 August (they) wiped out almost completely one Battalion (1000men) of Australian mercenaries in an Ambush in Long Tan Village. Announcement from Radio Hanoi, 27 August 1966, Announcements like this helped the myth.

Rebuff to Long Tan Ambush Theory.

It's always annoyed me over the years how some media articles have referred to the Battle of Long Tan as an ambush. I think a few books written since the war ended and radio broadcasts from Hanoi after the battle have given this impression. Having taken part in this battle from hearing the first shots fired to seeing the armoured personnel carriers arrive that evening, I can honestly say D Company was not ambushed in the rubber plantation at Long Tan.

Ambush: meaning to wait in a concealed position to make an attack.

The Battle started a short time after 11 Platoon became engaged with a small group of Viet Cong while sweeping through the rubber plantation we had just entered; it then built up to it's peak over a period of about one and a half hours, by this time all our platoons had made contact with the enemy.

The only part of this action that could be classed as an ambush was after 11 Platoon followed up the Viet Cong they'd clashed with in the rubber plantation and ran into a large force lying in wait. Obviously alerted by the earlier contact; 10 Platoon then engaged with the Viet Cong when they moved forward to help 11 Platoon. The Viet Cong they came in contact with were trying to move in behind 11 Platoon's position; they were surprised by 10 Platoon's presence in the area. After 10 Platoon were recalled back to Company HQ two sections of 12 Platoon 7 and 8 moved to an area about two hundred metres behind where 11 Platoon were. We were then about four hundred metres from Company HQ and pinned down by enemy fire. From here we could see the Viet Cong moving around in the trees on the right flank of 11 Platoon's position.

I was now facing in the direction of 11 Platoon, to my right about one hundred and fifty metres away was a rubber-tappers hut, from here I saw a large group of assembled Viet Cong moving to our right. This could have been part of the force the armoured personnel carriers and A Company ran into forming up behind us later in the evening.

After leaving Nui Dat heading for the edge of the Long Tan rubber plantation we patrolled in single file, which would have strung D Company out over quite some distance

The only way we could have been ambushed was if they knew we were entering the rubber plantation and regrouping after our two-hour patrol out. We did stop inside the edge of the rubber plantation for quite some time after meeting B Company (about two hours). It's quite obvious they were oblivious to our presence. If they were lying in wait for us why would they have a small group of soldiers wandering through the rubber plantation? B Company had been in the same area the previous day and harboured overnight, they never saw any Viet Cong. A and C Companies were patrolling around the area of Long Tan in the preceding days to the 18th August. All these Companies had seen evidence of Viet Cong activity in and around the area of the rubber plantation; no contact was made. The way Australian forces patrolled out in the bush would have made it extremely hard for our Companies to be ambushed as a whole unit.

All this conjecture as to the motives of the Viet Cong luring us out from Nui Dat, there were plenty of opportunities for them to try and ambush Australian patrols; they never did.

At no time heading out to the rubber or after our rendezvous with B Company were we in a position for the Company to be ambushed as a complete unit; after we left B Company we fanned out into quite a large area.

The reason I know it was not an ambush, the Company as a whole never became engaged with the enemy at the same time.

All our platoons made contact with the enemy at different times and in different locations of the rubber plantation over a period of about one and half hours. When we all returned to our final positions we were then in a reasonably small area, the surprise of an ambush had long gone by then. It had now turned into a full frontal assault on D Companies position. I was now on the extreme left of our area just inside the plantation; past the edge of the rubber trees I could see it was all thick scrub. The enemy were now coming straight at us down through the rubber trees, there were no VC or small arms fire coming from the left of my position. From where we were earlier in the day behind 11 Platoon to our position late in the battle would have been six hundred meters.

I think people researching the history of Long Tan who come to the conclusion we were ambushed don't fully understand that D Company could not have survived a well-prepared ambush due to the amount of Viet Cong in the area of the rubber plantation and also the time taken for reinforcements to arrive at our location from our base at Nui Dat.

My name is Alan L Parr and I was a member of 12 Platoon D Company on the 18th August 1966. I carried the M60 machine gun in 7 Section.