

## The Vietnam Swans'

### Inaugural ANZAC Friendship Match, 2010

45 years ago, a lot of TV footage from Vietnam was being beamed into Australian homes.

Last Sunday, we were at Tommy's 3 in Vung Tau, Vietnam, watching footage of the Collingwood-Essendon ANZAC match from the home of Australian Rules Football, the MCG. Vung Tau had been the home of the Australian Logistics base during the War.

The previous day, the Vietnam Swans played our Inaugural ANZAC Friendship Match as the Hanoi Hawks and Saigon Saints at the Greyhound Racing Track. We had a crowd of 400 supporters including Ambassadors, Vietnamese orphans, Consul Generals, Veterans, Defense Attaches, western children, University Presidents and adults. Just like at the MCG, we also observed a minute's silence. But unlike those at the MCG, we couldn't hear any trains rattling through the safety of the Jolimont railway yards. All we could hear were our own thoughts and reflections.

Highlights from Friday 23 April - Sunday 25 April 2010:

#### Friday

**Afternoon:** Swannies visit two orphanages. From babies to adolescents, we held them, played with them, laughed with them and distributed small gifts.

#### Saturday

**Morning:** tour to Nui Dat, Australian Army Base. Our group of 120 was led by two veterans, Kevin and John, and Warrant Officer Dan Kindness we were given an excellent detailed history.

**Afternoon:** Inaugural Vietnam Swans ANZAC Friendship Match. Hanoi Hawks beat Saigon Saints by one point. Tommy's Bar raised over \$1,000 for two local orphanages. Acknowledged the service of "5 Yr Swans" - Trav, MJ, Micky Francis, Scotty Stacey, Dave Kainey, Patsy and Willy.

**Evening:** Tommy's Bar and greyhounds.

#### Sunday

**Morning:** Dawn Service at Long Tan and tour

**Afternoon:** Watch telecast of Collingwood Vs Essendon ANZAC Day Match. Vietnam Swans raise \$1,030 for swimming program in Hoi An, Central Vietnam. Merchandise included a footy signed by Nathan Buckley and Gary O'Donnell (from their recent trip to Vietnam), an Essendon jumper signed by current Captain Jobe Watson and A Swannies footy kit.

It was an amazing weekend and judging from the feedback of those who were involved, it was a very well received. We seem to have successfully negotiated the political sensitivities. Next year, in Year 2, we expect to invite an international team.

The people we need to thank for organising this weekend come from Hanoi, Hoi An, Saigon, Vung Tau and Singapore. But special thanks to Dan Kindness and Glenn Nolan.

It was an incredible and moving weekend. It was made more special when two weeks ago, Sam Middleton contacted the Vietnam Swans. Sam served in Vung Tau in 1967-68 and reported that back then, there was a full scale Aussie Rules Competition played between 7 Australian Units twice per year. And where did they play? The Lord Mayor's Oval which has since become the Vung Tau Dog Racing Track. That's where we played our Friendship Match. Sam also has lots of photos of the footy during that period on his website at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/aodcurator/sets/72157615047181580/>

Apart from football, the weekend provided us all with a unique opportunity to meet some Veterans and learn about what had happened.

The Vietnam Swans visited two local orphanages to share some time holding, laughing and kicking the football (which had to be sugar coated with time spent kicking the soccer ball).

We supported Tommy's Bar (major organiser and venue for telecast of the Collingwood-Essendon ANZAC Match) to raise money for the orphanages. The Vietnam Swans auctioned off some memorabilia and all proceeds were donated to the Hoi An Children's Swimming Program. In Vietnam, more children die from drowning than road accidents. Going forward, this is an area that the Vietnam Swans are keen to offer additional support.

Strengthened by the very positive feedback that we have received about the ANZAC Friendship Match, the Vietnam Swans would like to continue this new tradition. Next year, rather than playing a "Heritage Round" match between the Hanoi Hawks and Saigon Saints, the Vietnam Swans will play an international team in Vung Tau.

The Swannies are keen to play footy and we're also keen to give something back to the communities in which we live. We think and hope that our ANZAC Friendship Match can play a positive role with multiple benefits, even if modest, for many parties.

#### Hong Kong Match a week ago

Last week, the Vietnam Swans made our first tour to Hong Kong to play the Hong Kong Dragons. Congratulations to the Dragons who were a powerhouse on the field and sensational hosts off it. The trip also served as the farewell tour to three champions of the Swannies: Captain Monkey, JD and Jerry. As expected, we gave them a fitting send off. We also welcomed six