



Parker - Gillson Update

Digging Starts

Test digging in sites of interest has begun at the site.



OAH volunteer David Thomas (photo above) has begun supervising the first test holes on the Parker - Gillson site 40 kilometres north-east of Bien Hoa City on Tuesday April 11, 2007.

The test digs were based on data provided by detailed searches of the area using two Ground Penetrating Radar.

The data showed what the operators called "anomalies" in the soil profile.

Two sites have been dug so far but they have failed to reveal any new evidence relating to the two missing servicemen.

The ground is hard packed clay with a lot of lateritic stones. Lateritic stones are high in iron and this has created difficulties in analysing the area searched by the Ground Penetrating Radar.

It is also extremely hard to dig by hand and OAH has decided to use an mechanical excavator to speed up the digs.

Team Works In Extreme Heat

The OAH team working on the Parker-Gillson search are encountering typical late dry season weather with extreme heat and rising humidity

Temperatures reach 33 - 40 degrees by day often with little or no breeze.

This has forced to limited the hours of work each day to protect the health of the team members.

The team packs the vehicle and leaves for the site at 6.30 am reaching the site about 8.00 am.

Work continues from 8.00 am to 11.30 am with a break during the hottest part of the day until 2.00 pm.

Afternoon work begins at 2.00 pm and continues until 4.00 before returning to the Hotel for data processing and planning for the next day's work.

The team has been working two or three days followed by a day's administration and and recuperation.

LOCAL WORKERS MAKE SEARCH POSSIBLE

OAH Team Leader Jim Bourke has praised the work of local village people hired to do the vital work of clearing and preparing the ground for the GPR.

The ground has had to be raked smooth and cleared of

small loose stones which interfere with the radar's signal.

It is extremely hard work in the heat of the dry season and essential to the successful collection of good radar data.

The clearing team is predominantly women from the village of Tri An.





PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SECTORS CO-OPERATE IN GPR SEARCH



Above: GPR Operators Paul Brugman and Jeff Wullaert confer.

Two sets of Ground Penetrating Radar arrived in Bien on the evening of Wednesday April 4, along with operator Paul Brugman of the Australian National University.

The other operator Jeff Wullaert of Canberra-based Diverse Data Communications arrived the same afternoon with his wife Donna. The couple had been honeymooning in Phuket.

On Thursday, Vietnamese authorities gave the units a technical inspection and authorised their use.

That afternoon, the operators visited the site and completed a couple of test runs on the road in the centre of the site.

The search began in earnest on Friday and continued through Saturday.

The team took a break on Sunday to catch up on administration matters and to recuperate from the extreme heat.

Jeff's wife Donna made a huge contribution to the first two days' search assisting Jeff to set and do his scans of the search areas.

Paul Brugman returned to Australia on April 12, leaving one radar to continue to April 18.



Above: DDC's Jeff Wullaert does a data collection run.



Above: Donna says good-bye to local workers before returning to work in Australia

ACCURATE RECORDS OF VITAL CONCERN TO SEARCH TEAM

The Parker-Gillson Site search team are maintaining complete and detailed records of the areas searched by radar and the sites where excavations take place. Former RAE WO 1 Peter Aylett (photo right) has played a central part in setting out search areas and ensuring good data collection. Without a detailed and accurate survey of the search grids, data could prove unreliable.

In the event that the search is postponed due to the early onset of the wet or through some other unforeseen circumstance, the search can be recommenced quickly based on the team's records.

Peter's experience as a plant operator has also been vital in the selection of an appropriate mechanical excavator and its use on the site.



ARMY TEAM TO REPORT TO MINISTER ON GILLESPIE



The Army Team sent to investigate the Gillespie Crash Site (photo left) is to report back to the Assistant Minister For Defence, Mr Bruce Billson before the end of April.

The major part of the report will be the assessment made by the two technical experts in the team, an archaeologist and a forensic anthropologist.

OAH led the team to the site and assisted in the dig of the area which turned up a collection of debris confirming that the site was indeed the place where the helicopter crashed.

No human remains were found.