

GILBERT'S GRAVE

ADVENTURE TRAINING

Mortar Platoon, two mechanics from Tech Spt, three drivers from 9 Transport Sqn and a party from the James Cook University History Department led by Professor Brian Dalton set out on 30th September this year to follow the expedition of Ludwig Leichardt and his party in 1845 through North West Queensland. The platoon had been thwarted just west of Chillagoe last year when early seasonal rains had made the ground impassable.

This year was to be far more successful, as not only was Leichardt's route traced, but the grave of John Gilbert was discovered. John Gilbert was a naturalist and bird-watcher who accompanied Leichardt, noting carefully all the variations in flora and fauna he saw as they went. He was speared to death on the 28th June 1845 by aboriginals seeking revenge from the party for stealing water lily bulbs, an important food source.

Professor Dalton knew where the grave might be, as Mortars led him to the spot, following Leichardt's and Gilbert's travel journals. They proved to be remarkably accurate, and the task of finding the waterhole where they had camped that night

(about 250 km north of Normanton) was not as daunting as it seemed.

The army supported the University in every way, providing fuel, rations (that last stew was a beauty Pricey), repairs to vehicles (thanks to GITARD INC — Mick Arden and Jeff Gittos), communications with Townsville, medical support and, of course, navigational skills.

We covered the journey in a week, in comparison to eight months in 1845. Even so, it was a long hot drive to the water hole, and Mortars wanted people to know we were only the second party to visit! GITARD INC helped out, welding up an old barbeque plate with the message in the photo. It gave everyone who went on the trip a great sense of achievement and a strong bond now exists between Mortars and the History Department at JCU. My personal thanks to everyone who took part.

P.S. Watch for Professor Dalton's book — he has assured me we will feature.

Captain Justin Dwyer.



Commemorating the find



The Searchers



The water hole near Gilbert's Grave



Dr John Stanley and Mal McGregor using the Magnetometer



CFN Arden welds the sign



Pte Rice — Grave Digger