



TARANAKI AIRSOFT RANGERS 2009 - 2019

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Thank you to everyone who contributed to the making of this book. To our founders Josh Sheed and Nathan Hodge, thank you for your vision in starting our club! To all our presidents and committee members who have built this club into what it is, and for the stories you have contributed to this book - thank you.

Special thanks to the Johns family for supporting us from the beginning, allowing us to use your land for our games and events, and for your help in developing the field into what it is today.

To all our TAR members - happy 10th anniversary! We wouldn't have a club without you! We are proud to call TAR our home of airsoft, and look forward to another 10 years of fun.



We gratefully acknowledge the use of TB Photography in a number of photos in this book.



# Josh Sheed & Nathan Hodge

## Founders 2009

“The start was me and Nathan deciding what would work and what wouldn't. I wrote the first actual rules and safety stuff and sorted the game day while Nathan managed the money stuff and guns.”

- **Josh Sheed**



“I met Josh in 2009 through the Vineyard Church in Stratford and he showed me an airsoft MP5 that was semi-automatic. WOW. He told me that he wanted to make club in Taranaki to play airsoft. I was keen too.”

- **Nathan Hodge**







I remember finding out about airsoft, probably the same way everyone else in the early days found it. Trademe. There was a booming second hand market before import permits and SEGs (semi electric guns) were plentiful, and cheap!

I was in awe when I was scrolling through page after page of airsoft guns and accessories. After much gawking I got hold of a Galaxy MP5 on my 18th birthday - firing 420fps out of the box it was a great little shooter. But the battery that came with it was terrible NIMH 8.4v - so I promptly jammed it. Fearing the worst I took to Google and stumbled across the ASNZ forum - after reading and asking questions I unjammed the gun. At the same time, I realised airsoft clubs were an actual thing! This was exciting.

Cue Nathan Hodge. He had recently started attending my Dad's church. As is church fashion we had a 'get to know you' dinner, where the Hodge family came to my parents' place. Halfway through dinner he starts talking about BB guns and highschool BB wars. I couldn't believe my luck, here's someone else who wants to play airsoft! I got out the MP5 and he thought it was the coolest thing he had ever seen.

From that dinner TAR was born. We agreed on a very informal group that would focus on fun. For us TAR was going to be a place to live out the years of reading 'commandos' comics. A place where I could bring my Xbox addicted teenagers and get them out and show them some fun. A place where sons and fathers could come and be men. But mostly a place for those people who hadn't found somewhere to belong. I had just started youth work and Airsoft was the answer to a lot of teenage angst. We had always had a group that didn't fit in the popular groups and never had anything cool to do. This became that thing for many of them.



We talked to Johnsy, he was a young leader at my youth group. He was so keen to get involved, he knew the perfect spot to set up and so what is now the lower field was setup. With Al Tee's help we secured a bunch of gas pistols and after reading through numerous rules sets from around the world I drafted TAR's first official rule set. Nathan took care of the money and I set up the game days. We grew rapidly from the original seven. When we hit twenty five we knew we had to move to a bigger field. Johnsy led us to Matt's field.

Over the last ten years the club has taken many twists and turns. Nathan, Marcel and I with numerous others pushed for TAR to become even bigger - the Cellus Youtube channel really added to our numbers. Those were exciting videos for so many. Now in 2019 TAR is bigger and better than Nathan and I could probably ever imagine, the crew who took over from us have continued to keep what matters to TAR the main thing while making this incredible club even better.

What can we say about TAR? Well it's a safe place to come and be a 'commando' for a day. A fun place to bring family and friends and have a great day out. We put the cool in tacti-cool.

**- Josh Sheed**

We signed up on ASNZ and started asking questions. Luckily for us, Drew Jefferies (Al tee) was married to someone who was able to verify we were real people wanting to create a real club (they were hesitant towards us at first as airsoft was kind of an underground sport which not many people had heard of and they wanted to protect their sport). Drew told us he could bring in some pistols for us to start a club. So I paid him to get us 10 x KJ Works Mk1 pistols. The first game was at what was called "The Lower Field" in August 2009. There were 8 of us. Nathan Hodge, Josh Sheed, Nick Enright, Reece Saywell, Mike Tudor, Drew Jefferies, Shane Clement and Shane Martin.

**- Nathan Hodge**





# Who was Matt Van der Lee?



Mattheus Van der Lee was a vibrant, outgoing, loyal young man who began playing a month or two after our first game. He was 16 and played at almost every game, up until he unexpectedly and tragically passed away on 10th December 2011.

When he played, he was always honest and he showed integrity and courage and he always had a good sense of humour.

He died from a hereditary condition where the signal from the brain to the heart just stops. The Westpac helicopter was called in and it landed in what we call the "Helicopter landing Pad".

The Veteran Patch was designed for TAR players in recognition of Matt's contribution to airsoft. ASNZ has a sportsmanship trophy in memory of Matt.





# Cellus - Marcel Schadt

## President 2014 - 2017

I started playing Airsoft with TAR in January 2012. My friend, Hone Rata found out about the club online and where stoked to find there was a club in Taranaki and we just had to check it out. Our first game was the one after the passing of Mattheus Van der Lee. This was a sad first game for us but one that showed me how amazing the people in the club were and how much heart TAR had.

I was instantly hooked on Airsoft and on TAR. Over the next year I became more and more involved and with mentoring from the likes of Nathan Hodge, Josh Sheed and Andrew Johns, I learnt more and more about the game, the gear and the Airsoft scene in New Zealand. After a while I started helping out behind the scenes and in January 2013, I helped TAR become an Incorporated Society, making TAR an official club.



Back then we were lucky to get around 20 people turn up to a game, a big day would be 30 people, which blew us away. So to complete the paperwork I needed everyone who was old enough at a game day to sign the application so we could get the 15 names we needed to register. Nathan Hodge was the club President, I was the secretary and Josh Sheed was the treasurer. The inaugural committee meeting was in March 2013. Soon we had more committee members with Nic Burroughs. Ray Landon and Phil Landon joining. Over the next few years we had a number of committee members come and go like Jonathan Vesseur and Nathan Pease. The committee's purpose was to improve the club by listening to its members, sharing the workload and introducing new ways to communicate with the club members.

Through 2013, we created a Facebook page, started a club newsletter, ran the first members survey and I started the CellusNZ YouTube channel to provide TAR and Airsoft. Also, in 2013 the Mattheus Van der Lee 'Veterans' patch was created. This patch was issued to members of the club who upheld the sportsmanship ideals set by Mattheus. It was a way to honour him and acknowledge our most dedicated members.

The club was being promoted publicly and attracting more and more members. To keep things fresh for older members we were adding new games styles and site to play at. We started to have CQB games in Patea, at both the old hospital and the old docks. New game types were being introduced and people were bring ideas for games and running the games themselves. We had STALKER, Milsim, CQB and some really fun green field games. A lot of this direction came from the members survey, the club itself was driving its own direction and it was awesome.

In 2015, Andrew Bartlett did amazing job creating TAR's first website, which was another huge milestone for the Club. We now had many ways to promote the club and were now regularly seeing 30 plus people at games. Nationally, the club was truly seen as one of the most respected in the country. This was not only due to our promotion of airsoft but also our regular attendance at interclub games and ASNZ Nationals. We started seeing players attending our games from out of region and raving about them.



The next few years were busy and after around a 3 year stint as club President I stepped down from the role in 2017, later that year I also stepped down from the committee. I felt ready to hand the reins on to Jono Kirkby.

I feel like the club achieved so much in over this period, there was so much growth and so many milestones reached. What has been truly impressive is seeing how much more has been achieved since 2017. But I'll leave that story to Jono.

**- Marcel Schadt**





# Jono Kirkby

## President 2017-present

I first started playing Airsoft off and on mid 2015 as I was still living in Australia. Every time I was back for a holiday I made sure I caught up with my buddy Jonno Robinson and got out to the TAR field.

During this time my wife and I decided to move home, not long after the move I joined up as a TAR member. It had only been a few months into being a TAR member when a couple of positions became available on the committee, Jonno R and I decided to go along to a committee meeting which was held at the original TAR field down the road from our current field. There I was elected as the club's Primary ASNZ rep.

2016-2017 turned out to be huge years for the club and myself. As the club progressed we saw founding member and long time president Nathan Hodge stand down from his position in the club. The committee meeting that followed would forever change who I was as an airsofter. The call was made for an interim president to be elected until the following AGM, I looked around the table expecting a senior member to throw their hand up but nothing happened. Then for whatever reason I blurted out, "I'll give it a go," and the rest is history.





During my time as president this club has transformed into a forever moving powerhouse. We are now considered within the airsoft community to be the largest club in the country. Early in my presidency the committee sat down and restructured how the club operates to further benefit its members. These structure changes has seen our club grow from 18 members to a staggering 75 members we continue to grow. A lot of these members are not just new guys either - a lot of old members are dusting off their gear and hitting the field too.

Other changes within the club have been major field development due to the amazing relationship we have created with the Johns family. The field is now the proud owner of 2 CQB villages and there are plans for more, these villages add a perfect balance between urban and bushland elements and have led to new game modes being introduced.

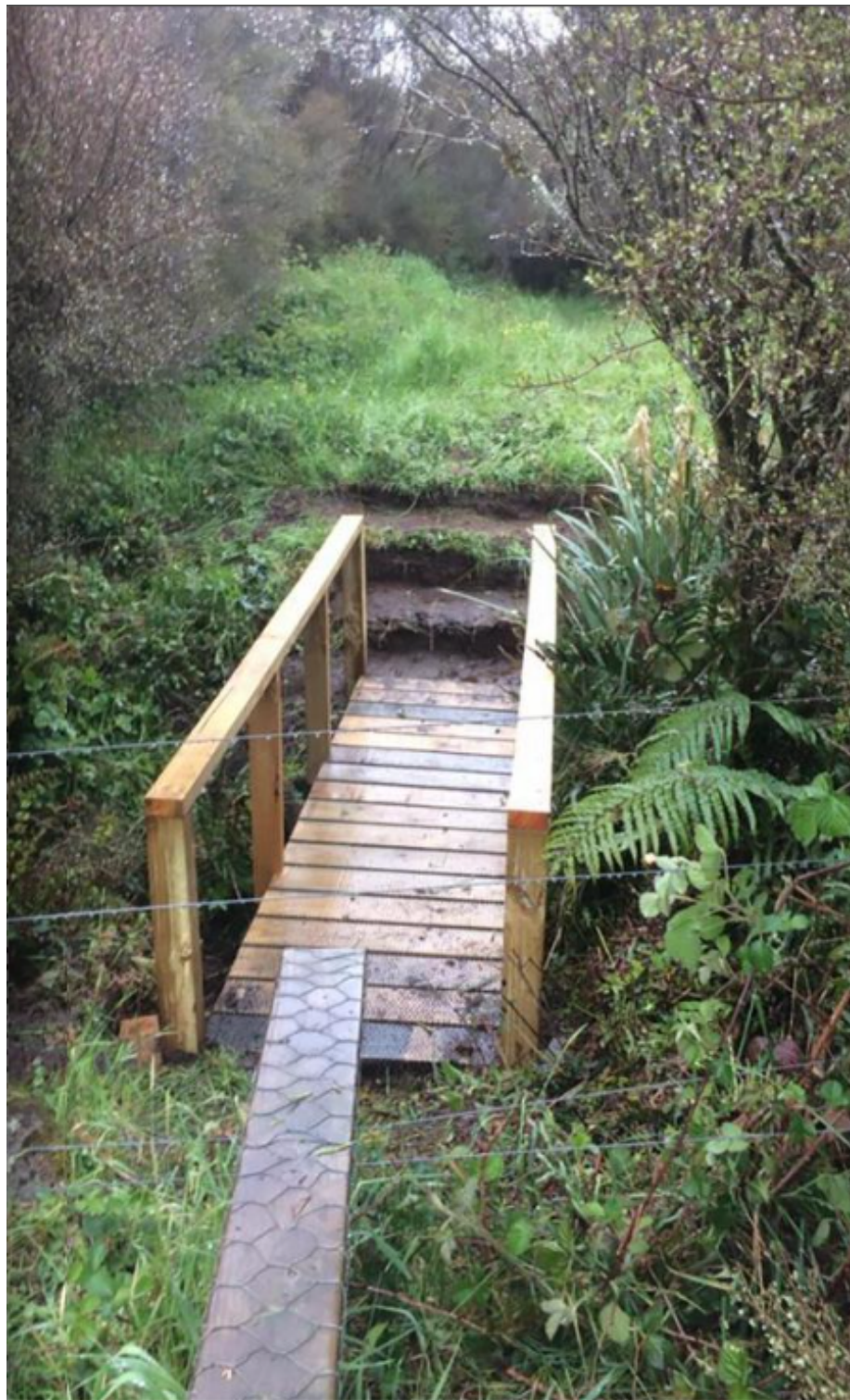
Finally the club have entered the modern world by going paperless, the new iPad working in conjunction with the new website has streamlined the way the club operates and has taken a lot of stress out of the way we do things at TAR.

I look forward to the future of this fine club and plan to be around for many years to come, the current committee is a well oiled machine with a solid work ethic and the current position of the club is a true testament to the hard work they have put in over the past few years.

**-Jono Kirkby**









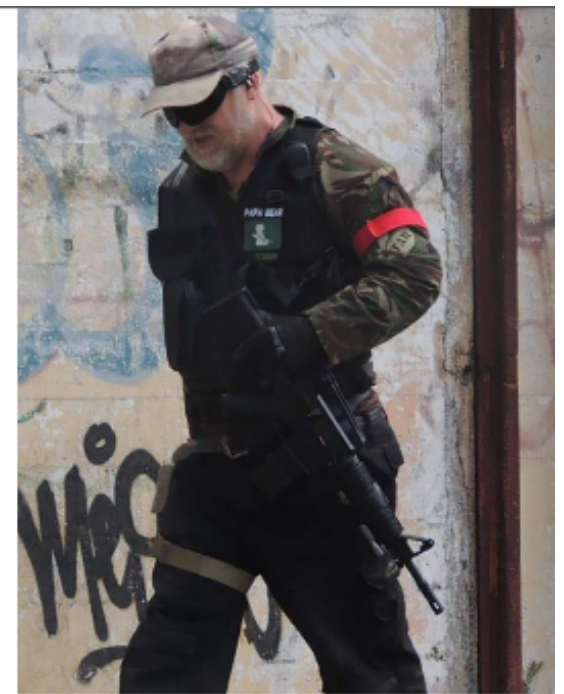


**TAR at Airsoft Nationals  
in Nelson, 2016**





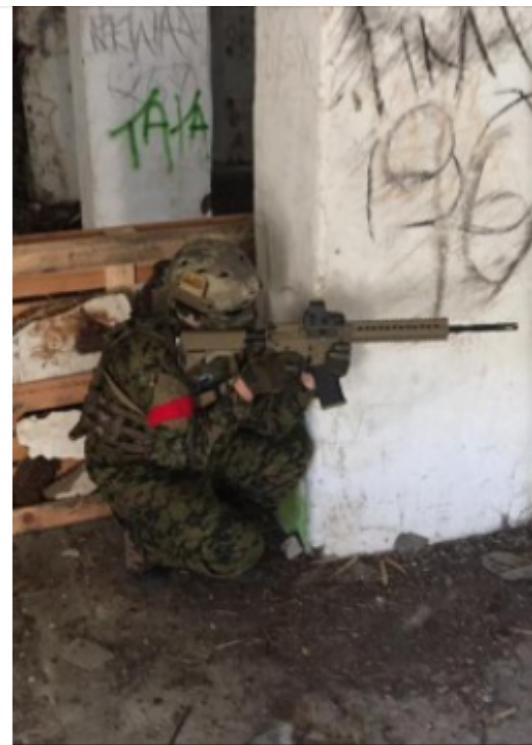




## Patea Wharf CQB











## The Taranaki Gun Show



The gun show is an event which travels around the country drawing in a large number of people from within the firearms community and generally creating interest in those who wish to see what it's all about.

The main bulk of the show is built up of antique arms dealers and military memorabilia traders, accompanied by exhibitors such as ourselves.

In 2017 we were approached by the event coordinators to set up a display stand at their upcoming Taranaki show, we saw this as a great opportunity to promote the club and the sport of airsoft.

Our first year having a stand at the show could not have got any better, we had a lot of interest with people checking out the stand and engaging in conversation with us about airsoft. Over the 2 days a lot of Taranaki Airsoft Ranger flyers left with people through the main doors and a lot even tried to give us a vote for best stand, sadly exhibitors were not included in the prize giving. The following year we decided to step it up a level with more hardware, more gear and more awesomeness. The stand was an absolute hit with even more people checking out what we had to offer and the follow on of people attending game days after seeing our stand at the show.

Based on the popularity of the exhibitors tables in 2017 the coordinators decided to add an award to the following year which we won. Our display stand took out best exhibitor 2018, we were amazed with the achievement and felt we had done our stand justice.



TAR's first ever Sportsman of the Year Cup  
2019 - Curtis Luke





## Operation: Armoured Fury



We had three major elements that had never been used together in NZ airsoft history, so we knew that this was an event for the record books, but we knew that we needed adequate time to pull this event off and some smart planning. A date was presented, giving us six months to put it all together, and a five man work team was assembled which was made up of the most dedicated airsofters that I knew, so now the real work started.

We had to combine a 13 ton tank that had an operational blank firing 37mm main gun, warbirds that would fly at low altitude and pyrotechnics used in a way that would create amazing airsoft game play for the players to be part of but all of which had to be safe! As this had never been done before we had to just rely on the combined experience from everyone that was working on the project.

On top of that, this event was set to have the largest attendance that the club had catered for, so we had a lot of pressure to overcome but we were all damn excited about it. As this was a brand new event for our club, we also wanted to go about it in a professional way and we wanted it to be the most well promoted and advanced event for New Zealand airsoft. We didn't just want to host an event, we wanted to do something great.

We drafted a game that brought all elements together in a functional way and then spent the next six months working alongside the tank crew, pilots and pyrotechnic team to bring everything together in a way that worked for everyone. We were extremely lucky as everyone involved were very experienced in their individual fields so the game development flowed easily until we had a solid plan on how to pull such a scenario off. We also focused on all other areas of the event and wanted to push all aspects. We put together a structured marketing plan, upgraded our website, invested in an online registration and ticketing system. We felt all this would improve a player's experience from start to finish. But the biggest question was: would all of this investment sell tickets? Well, once the tickets went live and we all held our breath while we waited for tickets to start selling, it wasn't long before tickets were selling at a crazy rate and the event sold out in 12 days and we had to create a reserve list.

We also had big ideas on not only getting sponsorship but we wanted the sponsors themselves to be part of the event. By having sponsors being directly involved and having them attend the event, it gave them the opportunity to be part of and understand exactly what we were trying to achieve. It was awesome to spend time with sponsors at the event as we also got to know them as people and had time to learn more about their business and their own ambitions.



After almost six months of solid planning, we had a meeting with the tank crew six days before the event so they could look at all the tracks that the tank would be driving on. It was a miserable day out at the field which wasn't a good start to a very important meeting. As we took the crew around the field and pointed out all the tracks that the tank would be using, the concerned look on the tank owner's face said it all - the tracks weren't good enough and there was a real fear that the tank would get stuck. Even though we had worked on the event for six months, it was at that moment that I felt the most stressed I had ever been throughout the whole process, and I wondered whether we would pull it off.

If the tank got stuck, this could ruin the game and the event would be a failure. We had invested six months into making this event work but the weather was grinding us down and we only had five more days to fix the situation. We weren't about to quit, we had promised all our players that they were going to be part of an epic event and we were determined to do it no matter what. So with the help of the land owner and our team we spent the next five days getting everything finished.

As the sun rose on the first day of the event, a massive amount of pressure was taken off our shoulders as we realised that the sun was shining and by sheer determination we had completed all the prep work.

**-Jonno Robinson**







Some of our players

















