

. **“Places” Survey** – We mentioned a “survey” in last month’s *Eyes & Ears*, well here are some responses –

Here are some stats taken from what the blokes sent in –

Can you believe that out of ALL the respondents there is one, yes one (well for this sample) that didn’t do a stint at North Head (see if you can find him?), about 75% got to scenic Tianjara (well scenic maybe in summer or when it wasn’t raining), almost 65% got to **Stan Brigg’s** old stomping ground north of Rocky at Shoalwater Bay, 90+% did “Jungle Jim” stuff at Canungra, but 50% missed out on climbing up and down all over Wiangaree just south of the border from Canungra in NSW and believe it or not almost 50% did Fire Picket Duty at Holsworthy, then think about the blokes who either never got to Holsworthy or for only about 15 minutes!!!

Here are some of the expanded responses...

Ron Mason – “Dicko, you requested a response about who went where. I was based at Holsworthy after Pucka, also spent some time at North Head prior to Vietnam, I guess North Head was better than Canungra! The powers to be could not send a person to both places at the same time, so I missed out on the latter, what a shame!

I do remember spending half of one Friday night in the back of a truck out next to Lucas Heights as a bushfire approached - ie someone hit the panic button – I don’t think the fire come close - just as well because our boots were the only fire fighting equipment we had, as I recall.

After Vietnam it was back to Holsworthy – I seem to recall an issue with Civil Aviation – something about the old radar interfering with the planes flying out of Sydney. Sent on leave soon after that till my time expired!

Ron Mason.”

Ron “Mook” Evans -

“1968-03-23 Holsworthy until 1968-06-07
1968-02-20 Saigon to Sydney on 727 then on to Melbourne, on leave until 1968-03-23
1967-12-11 Involved slightly in the investigation of the murder of Lt Birse at Fire Support Base Bravo
1967-08-21 R & R in Singapore, Hotel Shelford until 1967-08-26
1967-05-05 To Vietnam, Hercules to Vung Tau then Caribu to Nui Dat
1967-05-04 Sydney to RAAF Base Darwin
1967-04-25 Leave until 1967-05-01
1967-04-04 Canungra Jungle training School
1966-11-14 Holsworthy Barracks Holsworthy Barracks with 131 Divisional Locating Battery (Training at Tianjara 25 November to 13 December)
1966-09-21 School of Artillery North Head Sydney to 1966-11-14
1966-07-13 Started National Service at Pukapunyal Vic to 1966-09-21 Fifth Intake

Take care Mate, Mook”

Ernie Newbold – “G’day Paul, perhaps you should also ask if any of us got to Holsworthy too. Some of us apparently went straight to SVN from North Head, or spent only a few days at Holsworthy prior to embarkation. I certainly spent a fair bit of time at Holsworthy with you, 4th Intake, into Holsworthy around end of July ‘66, straight into an “Arty Sig” course run by WO2 Percy Ovenden.

I went on two exercises at Tianjara and finally got to North Head for an “Arty Int. Operators” course but I don’t recall going to the “Can” at Manly. The “Can” was the Canopus Room at Millers Manly Pacific Hotel which was a popular night spot for off duty personnel from North Head. I did go to the “Three Swallows” hotel at Bankstown and the “Sundowner” hotel at Punchbowl with other diggers from Holsworthy, both very crowded and very noisy venues. The only one of those three still operating is the “Three Swallows” at Bankstown, but a much quieter venue now than what it was in the 60s.

Canungra is also on my list, a “Battle Efficiency” course based at Canungra itself with only a two day/two night exercise out in the bush somewhere out of Canungra. I think that the worst part of Canungra was the overnight train trip either way to and from Holsworthy.

The places on your list that I didn’t get to were Shoalwater Bay (Barrawingia) and Wiangaree, I also missed out on the Christmas Fire Picket duty at Holsworthy.

And finally, last but not least one place that we both went to was the trip of a lifetime to Nui Dat in South Vietnam, not everyone from the Battery was lucky enough to go there ! Regards, Ernie.”

Then there’s more from Ernie... “G’day Paul, there is one more trip that I forgot to mention, 5 days R & R in Singapore followed by what may have been the worst night of all, an overnight stay at Camp Alpha, Saigon when there was no flight back to Nui Dat after returning from Singapore. Regards, Ernie.”

George Clark – “Gooday Paul, how are you?

In response to your query, I apologise for not answering earlier, but I can tell you that I received several postings to North Head between 1965 and 1968. I also attended an exercise at Tianjara, when they re-activated the Med Bty. I was on the first exercise in Sept 1966 at Shoalwater Bay, I think, and I attended Canungra before leaving for SVN, I have never heard of Wiangaree, but I did several stints fighting fires on the range at Holsworthy, especially when they started to get close to the village of Ingleburn.

On another matter, as I have told you before, (Leslie) Paul Smithlester, the last I heard lives in Goondiwindi, and if you really want to know I can find out for you.

All the best for the festive season and the new year Paul .Whatever you do or go, keep it safe and have a great holiday! Yours in fellowship, George Clark."

John l'Anson - I got to North Head ,Canungra and Shoalwater Bay.

Richard Chaplin - "Hi Paul, Sorry for my tardiness...

Kind regards, Richard Chaplin

North Head, YES, Tianjara, YES, Barra Winga/Shoal Water Bay, NO, Canungra, YES, Wiangaree (extension of Canungra) NO, Fire picket duty at Holsworthy NO"

John Lucas – "Hi Paul,

I did my recruit training at Pukapunyal as part of 16th intake, core training at North Head then on to 131 at Holsworthy. I clearly remember arriving at Holsworthy from North Head as they were not expecting us and didn't know what to do with us, we were subsequently tagged as the "funny little lot" Cheers, John"

Murray Smales – "Hi Paul,

I don't remember Tianjara (but remember doing some training south of Nowra), Barra Winga or Wiangaree but did attend Shoal Water Bay, we used to travel to Mt Etna each day and carry the gear up for Surveying, then climb down and have a beer at the local Pub.

North Head was our home before moving on to Holsworthy and Middle Head before going to Vietnam, I also attended training at Canungra and did do Picket duty at Holsworthy. Regards Murray."

Joe Librizzi – "Hi Paul, Yes, North Head, Canungra, Fire picket at Holsworthy, Xuan Moc for three months on a Pacification Programme, and a couple of other places.

Merry Christmas to all. Cheers Joe"

Peter Fletcher – "Hi Paul, I got to North Head, Canungra, and Fire Picket Duty in Holsworthy. Fletch"

David Negus – "Hi Paul,

We did our corp training at North Head, which was a great location, except that we did not escape fire picket. In fact we fought fires raging across the headland during the summer of '68. Yours truly got caught up in a barbed wire fence when the wind turned and blew the fire back on to us and we had to run for our lives. Finished the night in hospital being treated for smoke inhalation and getting stitches to barb wounds across chest and shoulder.

Re the photo referred to be Chris Chapple, with Les Connell in background, I recognise the guy in the foreground, might he be Bert? Can't remember surname though.

Great job with the newsletters, keep up the good work. cheers, Davidn"

Bruce Irvine – Covers the questions as asked, then Bruce goes on to add some really interesting photos with the "Who are the blokes in them?" and one of is this part of the Tianjara activities...read on and see what you think - "G'day Paul,

Yeah, I can own up to North head, Tianjara and Canungra/Wiangaree. Need a bit of time to recall stuff though. Attaching a couple of photos that may help (or not.....in trying to recognise who and what they are).



Scan10031 and Scan10034 (left and right) are Canungra.



Scan10056 and 10060 (Left and right) are Tianjara and wait for it...





Scan10061 also – did we hit the beach when at Tianjara??!?! I have no idea but the scan is in that sequence!

Scan10072 (at right) is on the roof at North Head.

Hope these help you out. All the best for Christmas Paul, to you and yours. Kind regards, Bruce”



Lionel Outen – “Hi Paul, I spent some time at North Head on courses. I also visited Tianjara, Canungra/Wiangaree and did pickets at Holsworthy but didn’t visit Barra Winga/Shoal Water Bay. Cheers, Lionel Outen”

Nick Armstrong – gives us a thorough details on activities – “Hello Paul, North Head

Because I did a Corps transfer from R A Svy Corps to RAA, I went straight to ‘C’ Troop, 130 Gun Loc Bty. Colloquially referred to as ‘F’ Troop.

Consequently, I never did any of the normal Corps training of those who went directly to RAA after Basic Training. I sometimes feel culturally deprived at RAA reunions.

My only experience at North Head, was a short ‘Sound Ranging Course’. I believe it lasted for about three weeks. It occurred to me that while Holsworthy did not have a lot going for it, the Army certainly knew how to pick prime real estate at North Head.

I was amused at the way the troops were roused by whistle in the morning. It sounded like a football umpire who had mislaid the game he was umpiring!

Shoal Water Bay

I went to Shoalwater Bay after I returned from Vietnam. Somehow I scored a job carrying an AR/PRC125 radio while 7 Bn did their last big exercise before going to Vietnam. I think I was with the Fire Control Officer. As a Regular soldier, I still had about nine months of residual service before my discharge. That time was spent with ‘8 Medium Regiment’. I think I learnt in Vietnam that for me, life was much simpler as far from ‘Bullshit Castle’ as possible. Wandering around the scrub in North Queensland for a few weeks seemed a reasonable alternative to killing time in Holsworthy.

Upon reflection, I think that philosophy has served me well through the intervening years in my Earthmoving Career. The more remote the location, the happier I am

Canungra

Like most people, I did my mandatory three-week Jungle Training Course. Just as our life in Vietnam seemed to involve being in small isolated groups, the group in my six-man tent comprised Naval Clearance Divers, a person from the Medical Corps, and a person from ASCO (Canteens).

Holsworthy Fire Picket Duty

I do recall the occasional picket duty, particularly wandering around the car park and transport compound. I don’t recall any formal training in the use of the Pick Handle we were issued! Because I was with ‘C’ Troop, we probably contributed numbers to the duties performed by ‘131’. I don’t remember having too many. When I was elevated to the rank of L/Bdr, I seem to remember manning the telephone in the ‘C’ Troop office. I don’t recall too many calls, and diverting incoming calls involved using a little button on the telephone and directing the call back through the PABX. I don’t recall the exact procedure now; in fact, I don’t think I really understood it properly even then.

Regarding the other places mentioned, I think they may have been Exercise areas. I never experienced them, and was merely a mildly interested outsider when they were being discussed.

Cheers and best wished for the future. Nick Armstrong”

Geoff Price – “Hi Paul, I got to North Head about four times with corps training and followed up with other training courses while based at Holsworthy eg radar. Went to Canungra for jungle training and was sent into the mountains to fight bushfires once, but I don’t know if that was classed as fire picket duty.

Thanks for the great job you’re doing for everyone. Regards, Geoff Price”

Keith Dean – “Hi Paul, I went to North Head, Tianjara, Canungra and Fire Picket Duty at Holsworthy. Regards, Keith Dean”

Dave Crowther – “Hi Dicko, Yes, I was at North Head School of Artillery for 18 months in radar troop with Warwick Hamilton and then with 131 at North Fort until our departure after St Barbara’s Day 1965. Whilst there we did exercises at several locations including Tianjara. I did not do Canungra nor Shoal Water Bay as I was on an exercise

with 5 RAR with Maj. Paddy Gowans, his driver Barry Uren, Fred Lennon, a Gnr Signaller, and Paddy's batman Garth Nicolls – I think. We were a liaison team with the Battalion and the exercise was in the Corricudgy region (between Singleton and Ryleston). It was the same area the Wollemi ancient pine was discovered some years later. I did fire picket at Holsworthy and I well remember our visits to the drive-in on various nights, thanks to the bargaining skills of Huey Hoddy (our then Tpt Sgt.). We also did fire watch on the Holsworthy range and being trapped on our normal exit and having to take the long way out. My detail were not deterred with it all. We stayed on the range overnight and I had the luxury of a sleeping bag. Spike Chase and Mick Mc Donnell, obviously jealous, zipped me up with my arms on the inside. All had a laugh at my expense. Our duty was to climb the lookout towers and give bearings to fires/hotspots.”

John Brewer – “Yes, went to all except BARRA WINGA as I was in Malaya at the time. Regards, John Brewer”

Mike Butler – “Hi Paul,

I attended: North Head - Survey course - Jan/Feb 1970, Canungra - Nov/Dec 1969.

Didn't do any of the others except I did do picket duty on the Holsworthy Firing range in pouring rain - we all had to be rescued at about midnight after our hutchys were flooded !!! Cheers, Mike Butler”

Allen Morley – “Hi Dicko, In response to your request I can advise that this Gunner (Ret'd) was either seen or not seen in the following locations in 66-68.

North Head: Never was invited there by the CO nor anyone else. At Pucka they told me I was going to Manly, and so my goods and chattels were despatched to NH. I was sent straight to Holsworthy where I waited for my stuff for over a week

Tianjara: Coldest place in NSW in 1967 and no fires – supposedly - were allowed. Cold rations and little sleep.

Barra Winga / Shoal Water Bay: I was there. The ground was extremely hard so my weapon pit was only a bit of a scrape hole. I shared a double hootchie with Mick Luff. The train journey was endless and we fought over the luggage racks as sleeping quarters

Canungra / Wiangaree: Canungra was probably one of the more enjoyable parts of my two years in retrospect, though I never got to Wiangaree.

Fire Picket Duty in Holsworthy: Christmas 1966 saw me as part of the fire picquet at Holsworthy. I clearly remember drinking warm, smuggled in beer, but saw no fires.

Watsons Bay: For my sins I attended a Q-store course at the Navy base at Watsons Bay. It was easy stuff and a terrific location for a couple of weeks. I was classified as a surveyor but never surveyed anything.

Nui Dat: The holiday time for me was from May 67 to January 68. I was too late for Long Tan and thankfully a day early for the start of the Tet offensive. Cheers, Allen”

Bob Billiard – “Dicko, Not sure if I replied, but my Artillery experience was North head – 3 months, 131 Holsworthy 2 weeks possibly only one. Canungra – 3 weeks?, 131 SVN 1 year 6 days, 12 Fld Regiment Holsworthy 6 weeks.

In all of my extensive Army experience I really liked North Head and was ready to do another 6 week course until the battery found us, and I really liked the time in SVN, except for those occasions when someone was trying to kill us, but we was only 20/21. I spent my 21st birthday at Nui Dat. When I got back to OZ, I was lost and just wanted to get the next plane back for some strange reason. Maybe it was all of the resettlement reorientation we received!!

Thank God for unjust and ill-conceived wars, but then the Vietnam incident is still referred to as “The South Vietnam Conflict” here in OZ. If it had never been, our paths would never have crossed and we would be lacking so many great and lifelong mates. Bob”

Ed – Bob's comments are poignant – coming home was full of mixed emotions, especially from some of our countrymen/women, but the “lifelong” mates have made it worthwhile.

I cracked the whole lot that were on offer, except for the Fire Picket duty. I wish I had taken photos out on North Head when we were doing radio communication exercises – the vista was magnificent.

I had my 21st at Shoalwater Bay – photo (at right) with Bob “Woofers” Bruce and me doing justice to the cake Mum had carefully packed and sent!

