

THE EYES and EARS

"FIRST PUBLISHED 22nd JULY 1967
at Nui Dat, South Vietnam"

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Allen Morley sent the photo above photo in and it's so appropriate..."From Nui Dat the Ghost of Christmas Past sends greetings to all former 131ers - The time - Christmas 1967. The place - the 131 Locators Lounge the precursor to the Jimmy Menz Club. Cheers Allen"

Seasons Greetings

wishing all locators
and their families

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

Heard and seen...

. **Grahame Dignam** sent Ed this and it provoked a thought that what the hell do we do on any given day? –

"G'day Dicko

I have just finished printing the E&E and readying the postage for the "Tech challenged" people etc so I thought I would let you know that the "Capacity Limiter" on a DL size envelope (used to snail mail each months edition) is currently set at 14 A4 pages printed single sided (duplex printing would push the envelope- so to speak!). If the ink were to rub off during transit it would not surprise me.

Having coped with that thought, I looked around the desk to plan the day ahead.

My day revolved around:

- . I need to pay the Council rates- it's raining and I want to keep a roof over my head (Bob Billiard works for the FCC so I don't want to jeopardise his job either- kill 2 birds etc.)
- . Post the E & E to those guys hanging out for words of wisdom from "El Presidente" - the Editor. Careful on opening the envelope may explode.
- . Renew membership of the VVP & PAA for 2011 now \$30 and worth it.
- . Bank the latest membership cheque
- . Buy a cable for the brakes on a mobility walker- don't ask! - Unless you want to bid on eBay
- . Buy the Ice Cream - no help required.

So then I had another thought (3 in one day is not bad - no one said they were all good) - start a reader contribution item "On my desk today-----".

I reckon with our diverse readership we would be treated to a wondrous variety of stories which would be interesting to hear about. It would give the readership a chance to tell THEIR story for a day. For instance, what interesting events did you encounter in your trip "though the jungle". One would be enough and you would be sure to choose a more interesting day!

Regards, Dig. Grahame Dignam - Secretary / Treasurer 131 Locators Association Inc."

. "Dear Ed...



I am advised that the first Centurion tanks were in SVN in February 1968. You were well short of the place by then being an early returner. The blokes involved with FSB Coral and Balmoral will be familiar with these weapons. There were some operational issues associated with these British made behemoths, as the tropics were not the ideal environment for their military application.

During a recent visit to *Sculpture by the Sea*, held on the headland between Bondi and Tamarama beaches, I came across a new Army tank design. The photos

show the strategic importance of the new tank. Note the filing cabinet drawer fronts (to hold all that paperwork), the lady driver, the former Nasho observer (complete with back pack) and the beer barrel tops for the driving wheels. The pushchair seems to be some sort of ancillary escape pod.

I hope the information might be of interest to your readers.

Yours militarily concerned, Sydney"



. **Stuart Sporn** sent in the following...

"Gnr Sporn about to head for the last FSB mid to late Jan 1968 - 32 Bravo Radar
Keep up the good work and sounds like it's a full time job Cheers/Ubique"



. **Bert Blink** sent the following in with two good points...- "Hi Paul

I certainly spent Xmas day 1967 at Nui Dat & had Lunch served to me by the Officers. Apart from this I have few other memories and no photos? So if anyone has photos would appreciate some copies.

Paul this might also be of interest VV Commemorative walk Seymour Victoria, see attached. It has been around as a possibility for 3-4 years & looks like it might actually eventuate.

Bert

Vietnam Veterans Commemorative Walk – Seymour Victoria



In 2006 the Mayor of the Mitchell shire, in Victoria, was looking for an attraction to lure people to the shire when a chance conversation with a Vietnam Veteran led to the idea of the Vietnam Veteran's Commemorative Walk. The final concept grew out of two requirements (1) not wanting just another memorial or statue together with (2) using some of the symbols unique to South Vietnam (SVN).

The proposal is to provide a meandering path approximately 300 metres in length *that* will take visitors through native landscape reminiscent of the geometric landscapes of rice paddies and rubber tree plantations. *A unique feature will be a set of stainless steel walls etched with the 62,100 names of those Australians who served in SVN and which will reinforce the path experience.* An artist's impression above shows a representation of the red earth walk, name walls, and rice paddies.

In addition a number of "military artefacts" such as an Iroquois "Huey" Helicopter, 105mm howitzer, Fire Support Base, Chinook helicopter, Luscombe bowl will dot the Commemorative Walk landscape.

The Walk



3D Diagrams: showing potential layering of elements

Apart from fundraising, which includes \$1.2M as promised by the incoming Victorian Liberal Government, the Commemorative Walk involves a number of Stages:-

Stage 1 - Replica Luscombe Bowl, (interpretive centre) and Memorial Cairn. Construction under way.

The estimated completion time should be the end of February early March 2011. Official opening to be announced

Stage 2 - Red earth path, rubber trees (Australian natives resembling rubber), stainless steel walls, placement of military artefacts and furniture are being decided and priced and work should commence after stage one opening.

The estimated completion will be December 2012. Progress will be advertised.

Sources:

- (1) <http://www.vvaavic.org.au/mitchell.asp> in particular the PowerPoint presentation.
- (2) Ross Gregson, Secretary Commemorative Walk Committee.

Ed – I'm curious as to both of Bert's statements – a) does anyone have any Christmas dinner or whatever else photos in SVN and b) has anyone seen or has more information on the Seymour project?

. John Browne forwarded this onto us... - "Please circulate to your members - you never know!!

Browny - G'day all.



Here is a letter from Brian Cleaver (11PI D Coy 3 RAR - 67/68 Tour) and a photo of a bloke who was present at FSPB Balmoral. Does anyone recognize him and if so could you contact Brian on bjc@jenmar.biz

Perhaps you can help him with the info on the senior "Tanky" officer as well. Thanks, now read on,

E. "Dutchy" Lensing 3 RAR 67/68

How about putting this guys photo out to all on your email list and see if we can put a name to his face. I am very curious, as he was filmed and still photographed at Balmoral on the morning of 28th May, when the NVA POW's and wounded were brought in for medical treatment. He was at the medical treatment point.

In addition, do you recall a Senior Armoured Corps Officer arriving at Balmoral on morning of 28th May to oversee the burial procedure? According to the then Lt. Col.

J J Shelton (CO 3 RAR), a senior officer was dispatched from Australia, probably about the time of the first assault on Coral (13th May). J J cannot recall his name but has assured the then, Maj Peter Phillips (OC D Coy 3 RAR) that this Officer did visit and knew him at the time at Balmoral. Coincidentally, it was at the same time that peace talks were taking place in Paris.

I should be returning to the Balmoral site sometime in November for one last chance of finding these 42 NVA, MIA's. This time I have been guaranteed a Ground Penetrating Radar Unit will be at our disposal. When I say we, I mean the Australian Military Attaché to Hanoi, Colonel Stuart Dodds.

Col. Dodds has a personal project on hand being a 1RAR soldier. During the course of my research, I was given photographs that depicted a second mass grave at Coral. This site has not been exhumed and Col Dodds would like to locate the grave whilst on his watch as Australia's Military Attaché, which concludes early 2011.

Best Regards, Brian Cleaver"

. Jim Fitzgerald's photos from his Locator profile...

The photos did get some response with both **Andrew Opie** and **George Lane** responding with -



Andrew Opie says that's him far right, then George Lane came up with Bob Ness, Paul Jones, "Shortie" Gow, and "Jock" White and confirms Andrew as well.



George Lane can name Des Bury with the beer, then Jock White, Benny Lombardo and Ron Mason in the chair, but is stuck with the others?

. **The “Concerned” nutter** is back with – “Hi Ed

None of us is exempt - No-one. A contribution for the Doppelganger Dossier in E&E- I expect to see it included. No excuses. No piking.

Paul Dickson is a famous - nay, infamous - National Service representative, having excelled at not much whilst holidaying in Nui Dat more than 40 years ago. He is now almost a resident Mexican. Paul Barry is a well-known Australian journalist, with biographies of Alan Bond and Kerry Packer amongst his better known books. Were these two twins separated at birth? They even have the same first name. I guess that we will never know.

Cheers - Concerned, Sydney”



Ed disputes any resemblance as he states that his shirt is striped and can actually put his arm up his back and over his shoulder!



. **Warwick Hamilton** is into the Christmas spirit with the flowing “brain-teaser” – “Hi Paul,

Season's Greetings to you.

Just for a change of pace we are in Canberra, as we returned home for the 50th...yes 50th...Anniversary of my graduation from the Royal Military College, Duntroon. Have just finished 4 days of functions, or as my daughter impolitely calls it, a talkfest and piss-up, culminating in being the honoured guests at the 2010 Graduation Parade at Duntroon - this meant we didn't have to pay for our morning tea!!!! Ahhh, it's good to see that the Army is as generous as ever! We will be returning overseas in Feb to visit the Middle East while it is still cool and then in about June we will move from Morocco back up into Europe. We are still enjoying our slow travel!

We were in Sarajevo but a short while ago and I was fascinated, and quite confused, about the 1992-1995 sieges there. It's really quite terrible. A tunnel was built under the UN controlled airport runway to allow some supplies in and out of the city (see the photo of the map) and there was an example of a Soviet mortar round which hit the concrete reinforcement at the 'hot' end of the tunnel. It makes a really interesting study in crater analysis since it hit concrete. Perhaps it could be a Christmas Quiz, with the correct answer being awarded a smiley face or some such thing.

The photo is quite clear I think. The questions are:

What calibre mortar?

What would be a bearing to the base plate?

This might rekindle some of the little grey cells of our compatriots!

Sarajevo was quite an interesting place to visit, and I thought that visiting their museums etc would clarify what went on there during the war, but while in some ways it helped to understand, the situation was very confusing to everyone.

Keep up the good work, and may the Festive Season be nice to you, and the New Year everything you wish,
Warwick”

Ed – It'll give those intrepid crater examiner officinados something to mull over after Christmas lunch and long into the night!

Warwick's prize is sounding very RMC-ish though!!



. Extracts From "Cracker's" Blotter in November 1967...



This photo has been added to show a bit of the Det Christmas spirit to go along with the Extracts from the same era...

Annex // to 4 FD REGT RAA
Operational Report
Jan 68

OPERATIONAL REPORT - 1st ATF Det, 131 DIV LOC BTY RAA
1-31 December 1967

Operational Activities

General

1. A reasonably quiet month with the continuation of the Rice Denial Operation, Operation FORREST, the departure of those persons scheduled for Nov and Dec 67, the continuation of various projects and the Christmas - New Year period activities.
2. During the Christmas and New Year truce periods the Detachment did not stand down, and everyone continued as usual.

Arty Int Section

3. There was only one mortaring incident when on the night 21/22 Dec 67, the outpost at XA BANG was mortared by 60mm mortars on two occasions. Annex A shows the detail.
4. As is often the case around isolated outposts, rounds which do not fall in the compound itself fall in the nearby minefield, in most cases prohibiting examination. This was the case again, except that later intelligence tends to indicate that the VC were not bad shots in completely missing the compound, but that this was deliberate and the attacks were staged to try to relieve the suspicion on 3 suspected VC sympathisers in the outpost.
5. On the morning of the 27 Dec 67, the Listening Posts gave early warning of an ambush of a column of 3/5 Cav at YS 454864. Even though 1 ATF did not fire in support of the contact we were able to quickly offer our support if necessary.
9. Work has started on a new bunker at the LP on NUT DAT. This will replace the old bunker which was connected by a 10ft tunnel to the LP proper. The excavation has been almost completed and the building material has been obtained.
10. A preliminary recon of the new 3 RAR area, with a view to shifting the Engineers LP, has been completed. The final recon and choice of site will take place once the company area layout has been fixed and decisions have been made on the extent of ground clearing to be done. Liaison with HQ 3 RAR and companies in whose area sites are possible has been made.

11. The LP in 1/83 Arty Bn area are currently testing a seismic detector system for the 1/83 Arty Bn. So far it has proved fairly successful, with two confirmed sightings and a number of suspect sightings. The LP's location in the South West corner, and its commanding view made it the obvious choice for the detector control station.

Radar Section

12. ALPHA RADAR. This set remained at the HORSESHOE throughout December to continue supporting Operation FORREST. There were no enemy mortaring attacks during the period. The detachment has almost completed the construction of a permanent 12ft x 10ft (internal) radar bunker at the site. Completion date is aimed for 8 Jan 68.

19. BRAVO RADAR. This Det remained in base location during December 67. This allowed the new Detachment No 1, Sgt LAWLER, time to settle in. Sgt HALLIDAY left on 12 December and Sgt LAWLER arrived on 19 December. This is not to be held as normally accepted practise, for there should be a complete handover between No 1's, but there were a number of reasons for Sgt HALLIDAY returning on that date. Bdr DODDS did a good job of running the detachment and of handing over to Sgt LAWLER.

Survey Section

23. Once again another quiet month for the surveyors, with only three small survey jobs.

a. On 18 Dec, 161 Bty established a FSPB in YS2962. The Bty was put on theatre grid by a traverse from NUI LOW (YS264472) directly into the FSPB.

b. On 23 Dec, 106 Bty established a FSPB in YS4471. Theatre grid was provided by a traverse from NUI DAT (YS434675) into the FSPB.

c. On 27 Dec 108 Bty established a FSPB in YS5365. The intended plan was to traverse from the HORSESHOE into the FSPB. However, owing to the location of the FSPB and the surrounding trees, this method was not possible. After examining all other feasible methods, the Bty was put on regimental grid.

Other Activities

27. Replacements. The scheduled Nov draft for RTA departed here 11 Dec 67 and the scheduled Dec RTA draft departed on 12 Dec 67. So far all but one Bdr and 2 gnr replacements have arrived. The system of notifying units when replacements are due to arrive has been under investigation by AFV and should improve considerably from now onwards.

Note - isn't this great Army logistics when the "Nov draft for RTA departed here on Dec 11"!!

30. Sgt WIGHORN has completed a demolitions course at SME which is extremely handy but not the complete answer. The OC personally has found that basic explosive and fuze training plus instruction in specific fields by qualified persons has been of great use.

31. It is recommended that if possible both the TFAIO and the Arty Int Sgt be trained in basic explosive principles as outlined above. A demolition course plus additional specific training may be the answer.

32. It is appreciated that there is no time to train the next Arty Int Sgt, but Capt P M PERPIN has received such training at AOWAU and this should help considerably. This then leaves time to examine the problem for the replacement after next.

33. Welfare.

- a. A total of 11 persons went on R & R or R & C leave during the period.
- b. The enlarger for the darkroom finally arrived. The only holdup now is chemicals.
- c. There were very few health problems during the month.
- d. L/Bdr BAKER was appointed and is in charge of LP 31D in 1/83 Arty (US) area.
- e. There was one farewell party for those RTA on the 11 and 12 Dec 67. There was also a Christmas Barbeque held on 24 Dec 67 at which those members not on duty were able to attend. With the assistance of the RAAF most of LP 31B and Alpha Radar were returned for the party and delivered back afterwards. There were no great incidents over the Christmas - New Year period, with detachments having Christmas Dinner with their fostering units.

Conclusion

34. A relatively quiet month, the main emphasis lay on training aspects.

Sandy Saunders
Capt
OC 1st ATF Det,
131 Div Loc Bty RAA

. Going Home / Getting Out...

Here's another version in this series, this time from **Allen Morley** –
“Leaving on a jet plane”

My departure from Nui Dat for RTA was a sequence somewhat along the following lines:

a compulsory parade on Operation Duntroon at FSB from 10th-21 January 1968 together with Nick Proskurin, Ernie Newbold, Bob Wilson, Mick King and others this was the only occasion of my two years, fully paid army holiday where I did not have to shave every day – as the photo illustrates



(L to R) John Vickary, Lionel Outen, Bob Retrot, Self, Terry Bruce, Stuart Sporn, Joe Clendenin, Max Troynar, Ernie Newbold and Sandy Saunders; (photo thanks to Ernie N)



after returning to Nui Dat, shaving and sorting a few things out I became part of a small, but happy departing group on January 30, 1968 we flew to Tan Son Nhut, hopped onto a Qantas Boeing 707, and arrived in Sydney about ten hours later; unfortunately my memory cannot even process who I sat with on the way back

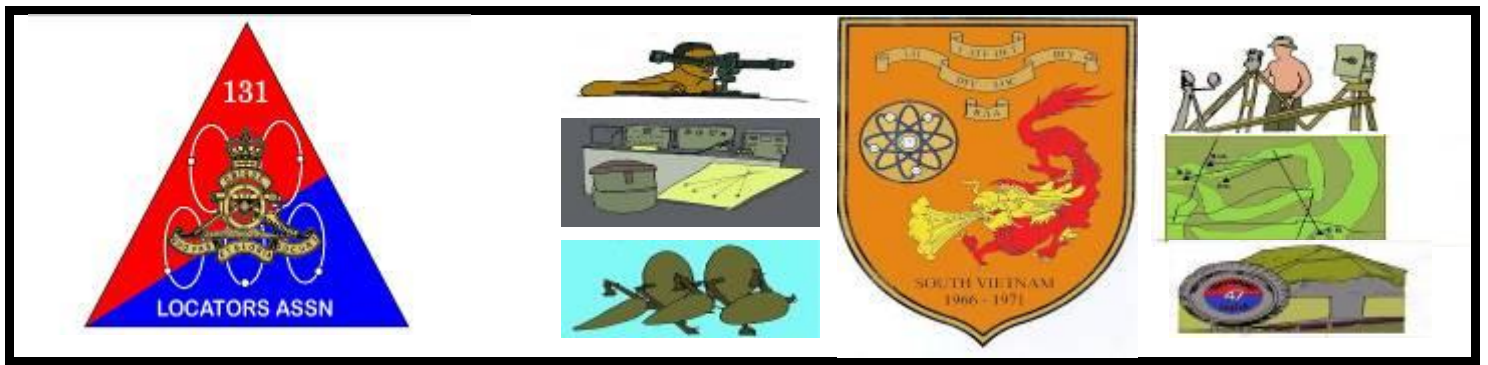
I continued solo on to Melbourne in uniform still; the remainder of the 131 group separated to Sydney and Brisbane after some leave I was assigned to a CMF unit based in Richmond, Victoria and two weeks later found myself on a training exercise in the bush

finally, on April 19th I had my medical at Watsonia Army Barracks before becoming a civilian again
I celebrated over a beer with Mick Campbell, Roger Long and Frank Ipsa that week.

...Allen also sent the following photo in...



This is another fun memory of the things you do out in the scrub -
Bob Wilson shampooing – mightn't have had a shower or wash though!
This was on Operation Duntroon Jan 1968.



. **The Association Committee** would like to wish all of our Members, Associates and Affiliates the very best for the festive season.

The year has been a great one –

. We now have some 171 blokes we have contacted

. The 8th July we successfully Incorporated the 131 Locators Association.

. In August we submitted an application to the DVA for financial assistance to develop a website. This is currently still being assessed.

. The Committee canvassed a design for a lapel badge and it is currently being manufactured and will be out to financial members in late early February.

. This is our 26th E&E's in this series.

In general terms, I am extremely proud to be a part of a group of blokes who have achieved a lot, getting over a few road humps along the way, but we have managed to connect a number of Locators and next year we will step up to another level with our archiving and communications via a website.

And to our financial members I would like to thank you for your support, contributions and confidence.

We'll be back better and brighter with all of your help in 2011.

Paul.

...the **Locators Association** welcomes more new members as at 16th December –

Members – Ken McNamara and Warwick Hamilton

Affiliate – Ron Ray

Thanks again fellas for the additional funds provided in the way of donations.

. **Birthdays in the Battery**...well December has it all with twins etc don't think we have quins in any month of the year!

However, we do kick the month off with triplets being **David Dougherty**, **Kevin Bush** and Nev Smith rounding off the 1st, the 3rd gave us the late Ray Minns (03.12.41-Unknown) and Clive Dreis, Alan Robb claimed the 6th to himself, the 7th introduced the late Anthony O'Mara, ex RAEME, (07.12.40-01.01.85) and **Terry Westerway** into the world, the late Robert White (08.12.37-1992) saw the light of day on the 8th, Andrew Opie cracked it on the 9th, followed by Hans Weber and Kevin Grime on the 10th, and then **John Stanford** on the 13th, Pete Fletcher took his first smell of salt air along with **Tom King** on the 14th, **Geoff Price** had the 15th to himself, as did **Phil Perrin** on the 16th followed by Barry Guzder and **Tony Goldsmith** on the 17th, Jim Hognos shares the 18th with the late Tom Checkley (18.12.38-05.08.66) but their hospitals were many kilometres away, the 19th saw a quadrella with Geoff Blackwell, Peter Gault, the late Rodney Beasley (19.12.48-2001) and **Michael Ferris** (who started his tour in 1969 with 1st Armoured Regt then with us in RAEME later in the year), **Bob Retrot** (who is in the farewell photo of Allen Morley's above) made it on the 21st, then **John McGregor**, **Michael Burgess** and Peter Meaney saturated the 22nd, Ron "Mook" Evans took the 24th by the throat, and **Stewart McAlpine**, **Robert Holsworth** and **Peter Bremner** laid claim to the 25th, **Chris Bouilly** has the 26th solo, then Lionel Outen shares the 28th with **Geoff Macaulay** and **John Martin**, then to finish the month off on the 29th are **Brian Hawkey** and **Fred Lennon** (who as one of the "Pioneers" – SVN 20.05.66-11.12.66 - cracked it for 83 this year!) **Ed** – the 20 blokes in bold are not accounted for – c'mon fellas!

. **Locator Profiles** – we've received **49** and we've sent out **44**. **Ed** – Once we get some more photos and some comments in we'll be off and running again.

. **Found...**

. **Ian Finlay** contacted us with some info on **John l'Anson** with the following, plus part of John's response to Fin - "G'day All, Found John l'Anson thanks to Wally, so wrote to him and below is his reply. So thought I would pass his Regards Fin."

The following is part of John's email...

From: John l'Anson

To: Ian Finlay

Sent: Sunday, December 12, 2010 5:38 PM

Subject: Re: Merry Christmas John

Fin

I don't mind who you give my address to would be happy to hear from some of the blokes. You certainly have had your

share of problems with your back I hope this latest op fixes it for good.

I have been back in Thailand now for 2 months and don't know when I'll be back I love it here and it is so cheap to live. The women here would have to be the most beautiful in the world and they are so friendly. There seems to be more women than men here. I live in a town called Chanthaburi which is 230 kilos from Bangkok it is a nice town with no tourists which is great. I am 2 hours drive from Cambodia where I am involved with a foundation set up by a Kiwi who lives next door to me. We do work with schools as they are in need of a lot of help any money goes all to the school there are no rake offs unlike some of the other so called charities working in Cambodia. We have a website it is www.moremiraclesfoundation.com. If you go onto it you will see my name mentioned as I have donated some stuff. I have bought myself a car and rent a house it has 5 bedrooms and 3 bathrooms and costs \$210 dollars a month so you could come over and have a cheap holiday. I will send you some photos. Give my love to Dallene and hope to hear from you soon JOHN"

. **Pre-Christmas didn't** escape the Assoc committee...



Five of the Committee blokes got together at "Zest" at City Tatts in Sydney (the scene of legendary ANZAC Day post March re-unions) to have a bit of pre-Christmas lunch. In the photo (l to r) are Ernie Newbold, Nick Proskurin, Allen Morley, Vic Danko and Grahame Dignam (all looking very well I must add – ok this was taken before the lunch!) with the hands on the shoulders of the not-present Ian Amos, George Lane and yours truly.

I like the name tags Ernie!

. **Closure of the Australian Army Artillery Museum at North Head** - It was a great shock when we received the following email forwarded on by **Grahame Dignam** with regards to the closure of the Australian Army Artillery Museum at North Head...

"From: john Gallagher Date: Fri, 3 Dec 2010 18:28:40
To: North Fort Home of the National Artillery
Subject: Closure of the Australian Army Artillery Museum at North Head

Dear Volunteers and Museum Supporters,

At a meeting of 60 volunteers and staff in Artillery Hall yesterday, the Head of Army History Unit advised Army will be closing the Museum at North Fort at the end of 2010.

This follows unacceptable conditions of access and rent required by the nominal land owner SHFT to be implemented as from 01 Feb 2011.

I believe this is SHFT's loss as the value added to North Head by the Army, the Museum and the Volunteers is in excess of \$1 million dollars per year.

The announcement was made 20 years to the day since the Museum was opened in 1990 by Sir Roden Cutler, VC and ends over 100 years of direct Army involvement with North Head and longer with Sydney Harbour.

The last Museum open day will be Sunday, 19th of December 2010.

The Last Volunteers Christmas Party will go ahead on Saturday, 11 Dec from 1500. Helpers from 1430. Please RSVP to WO2 Peter Armstrong. Cost \$20 per head.

I have invited representatives from a number of RSLs who have generously supported the Museum in recent years.

The Museum will be open for Volunteers and friends as usual on Boxing Day on a BYO basis. Please contact WO2 Peter Armstrong for details and passes.

Military staff will continue to be in regular attendance while preparation and packing for the move goes ahead. Volunteers are welcome as usual of course.

Please check with Peter or myself on which days someone will be there. The Christmas stand down period is TBA.

The Army Collection will be moved to Bandiana for storage until a new Museum can be funded and built at Puckapunyal, co-located with the School of Artillery.

Administrative procedures and packing will take some months and Volunteers are welcome to assist or come in for a coffee.

Ongoing arrangements with SHFT and the RAAHC, if any, are unknown.

This news is extremely disappointing for all Volunteers, staff and supporters of the Australian Army Artillery Museum who have contributed years of outstanding support to the Museum and the Collection.

A huge amount of work, particularly by Volunteers, has gone into the Museum over the past twenty years. The knowledge, skill and dedication of the Museum Volunteers, in all areas, but particularly in the areas of restoration of historic guns and other Artillery heritage items has been outstanding, the best I have seen in any military Museum I have visited anywhere in the world and is something all involved can be justly proud of. The loss of much of this knowledge and skill to the Artillery Museum will have a huge negative effect on the collection of the Australian Army Artillery Museum, the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery and the nation.

At last, in the past 12 months the Museum is finally running on a successful financial basis. Volunteer numbers, morale and the number of projects being undertaken and completed have been at unprecedented levels. The commitment of volunteers to the Museum has never been higher and we have been able to fund restoration projects and the purchase of significant items of Australian Artillery history.

However, nothing is forever and the Museum's time at North Head will soon be over. Other Army Museums have security of tenure within Army bases. Unfortunately, this was not the case with the Artillery Museum. I am sure the Engineers Museum at Moorebank, the Infantry Museum at Singleton and the Army Museum at Victoria Barracks would welcome any Volunteers who wished to transfer to these Museums.

Please see Peter or myself for contact details.

We will have an MAC meeting tomorrow as scheduled and we will discuss the best way forward in the circumstances we have been confronted with. I will keep all advised of any developments.

I look forward to seeing all of you at the Volunteers Christmas Party and will have more to say then.

For the moment I would like to record that of the six Army units I have been privileged to be OC of, the Gunners' Museum at North head will always stand out as having the finest team of people I have worked with in the Army. I hope to maintain my friendships with you for many years to come.

Hoping to see you all at the Christmas Party,

Thank you and Best Regards,

John Gallagher

Major

Manager

Australian Army Artillery Museum.

..This prompted Ed's somewhat short reply...

"John Gallagher

Manager

Australian Army Artillery Museum

John,

I am writing to you on behalf of the 169 members of our Association, most of which had some connection with North Head during their service time, to express our absolute shock and disgust with the lack of support given by the Army in this negotiation process regarding the future of the Museum. It is our belief that the Army's intention was to allow this to happen and take the easy road and removes the Museum to Victoria.

We are not going to let this action pass without voicing our feelings to the Minister responsible.

Because our Association represents Veterans of 1 ATF Det 131 Div Loc Bty RAA, including the members who were instrumental in designing and having our banner made we are going to take actions to have the banner removed from the Museum and stored in Sydney to be used for ceremonial purposes. One of our committee members Bob Billiards will be attending the LAA re-union on Sunday, December 5 and will start this process in motion.

We look forward to any assistance you may be able to provide to make this process happen as seamlessly as possible.

We thank you for your service to the Museum and wish you all the best in your future endeavours.

Paul Dickson

President

131 Locators Association Inc

then...Bob Billiards, attended a meeting along with Allen Morley, at North Head on Sunday , 4th September and agreed to suggestions put up by Joe Kaplun, LAA Vice President and Museum Liaison Officer submitted the following...

"G'day all,

After yesterday's meeting at North Fort, we decided to leave the banner where it is for the moment as it is in a display case and safe until the end of January. The LAA is looking to organize that the banners be held by an RSL club and that we be sponsored by them. The banners would remain in the display cases at the RSL club and be available whenever it is required by us. This is so that it does not disappear again as it had previously until the LAA actually found it and put it into their trust.

Having RSL sponsorship means that we may be able to have free room hire for our association meetings as part of this deal. Burwood RSL is thought of as the club as they have been extremely supportive of the RAE group, and the Sub Branch and Club have a good relationship.

On behalf of us all I agreed with these steps being looked into before removing the banner and the LAA has again assured us as we (the LAA executive) discussed a couple of meetings ago, that we (the 131 locators association) can take the banner whenever we want it. They also ask that we make it available for special occasions, such as the Gunner's Dinner where many of our members attend.

I like the idea that we have it stored for us as it will be safe and not suffer any deterioration from being rolled up in someone's garage/shed. I leave it up to our committee to either ratify the decision that I have unilaterally made on our behalf, or come up with a better idea of how and where to store the banner.

The North Fort museum is definitely closing and the Army is moving all of their stuff to Bandiana where it will be stored for who knows how long as the Pucker museum building is not on the radar. Cost of the building is \$8M, so who knows when, but we need to contact the state and federal ministers to ensure that the museum goes ahead at Pucker. They will definitely not move back to north fort, it is now a done deal.

Regards Bob"

...Kevin Browning sent in an email – "Paul,

I note your call to arms but ask people to make themselves aware of the facts before jumping off.

The present situation at North Fort is far from ideal but it is not the making of one organization alone. It has always been the intention of Army to move the Museum from North Fort to Puckapunyal and the demands placed on them by the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust have forced the issue to a head.

Army made the decision to close it now and move now rather than seek discussion to try and resolve the matter. SHFT may need to be more flexible in their approach as well. But what is being said and the actual facts seem very clouded.

The need to move the Museum to Puckapunyal is based on a high directive that the Corps Museums are to be located with their School as a vehicle for training. That is the justification for funding. Whilst this directive is more recent than when the decision to leave the Museum at North Fort was made it is the present Army position.

SHFT have said they want a Museum at North head but are yet to clarify what that really entails. Whilst moving the Museum is not ideal there may be a reasonable alternative. In my opinion there is more than sufficient items in the collection to meet the requirements of both sites.

What we should be asking is what a Museum at North Fort will offer. Perhaps it might be better than is presenting available. Army have done a lot for the area but it is not the main focus for funds and when the intention to move the Puckapunyal was taken into account it received even less attention.

We should be asking in any correspondence that the best outcome for the North Fort site be achieved with no impact on the volunteers who have made the Museum and collection what it is today and that best protects and displays the story. Regards Kevin"

...then the ever vigilant Ernie Newbold sent the following newspaper article in...



Restoration ... Ray Bell and Roy Meller, both volunteers, work on a World War II anti-aircraft gun. Photo: Peter Rae

Last rounds for artillery museum at North Head

Kelsey Munro
URBAN AFFAIRS

THE local MP Tony Abbott calls it "cultural vandalism" and the NSW RSL's retired gunners are "deeply disappointed", but this weekend the Australian Army Artillery Museum at North Head is closing and moving to Victoria.

The Sydney Harbour Federation Trust owns the land and plans to open the North Fort museum site to the public seven days a week; the artillery collection will go to an army facility in Bandiana.

The executive director of the



harbour trust, Geoff Bailey, denied reports it was to begin charging the army \$1 million a year to rent North Fort, saying the

figure was "nothing like that". Under army management, the site is closed to the public five days a week and has an access fee.

"We've said to Defence if they're going to keep the site closed we'll charge them rent, but we'd rather they fully open the site to the public," Mr Bailey said. "This is a highly significant historic site and we'd like to have people access it freely to look at the memorials."

The head of the army's history unit, Roger Lee, said in a time of budget cuts Defence would not pay to keep the museum there but there were also security and practical problems with North

Fort, including the erosion of the collection in the salt air.

"I run a museum that's got unusual and highly valuable objects in it, including small arms, and for me it's totally incompatible to have 24-hour access when I can't have staff there to protect it."

Unit museums are funded by the army chiefly for training junior soldiers and, since the School of Artillery moved to Puckapunyal, Victoria, in the mid-1990s, the museum had virtually never been used for training, he said.

Since 1990 North Fort has housed a collection of guns,

including one of the few remaining 4.5-inch Howitzers from World War I; four Victoria Crosses; and memorabilia from Australian gunners.

The NSW RSL president, Don Rowe, said retired gunners were deeply disappointed by the decision. "They put a great lot of work into the restoration of the equipment there and they've been the ones who have actually manned it."

The trust plans to create a new museum at North Fort that will focus on the defence of Sydney.

The artillery museum will open for the last time tomorrow and Sunday.

...then Ron Ray gave us some facts - "Hi Paul

As you may recall, as well as an ex gunner, I am also a volunteer with the Sydney Harbour Trust. Below is what is on the Trust's website.

From what we are being told, the land will not be sold off but will move to the control and protection of the Trust who plan to open and interpret the entire North Head site (including the memorial walkway, tunnels and memorials) as one location, seven days a week, with no entry fee.

SHFT communications have stated the following.

The SHFT charter is to maximise public access to the site while preserving the sites military and cultural history. The Trust prides itself and has a track record of being a guardian of heritage sites rich in military memories and believes that these sites should be accessible to local residents and the broader public.

Currently the North Fort is only open to visitors two days a week (Wednesday and Sunday).

The decision to relocate parts of the Artillery Museum to Puckapunyal was made by the Department of Defence, not the Trust.

Parts of the Artillery collection relevant to North Fort and the Defence of Sydney will remain on display on the site. The Trust has started to engage with the volunteers at North Fort who will continue to restore military artifacts, including those presently inaccessible to the general public.

Rumours about requests for funding and issues around the cost of rent, are just rumours. The Trust wants to open the site full time with no entry fee and will do this within present resource and funding allocations – mainly relying on volunteers as with other Trust sites.

SHFT plans for the site include

- Improved access to two commemorative memorials at North Fort
 - Opening up of the Avenue of Honour
 - Improved trails and signage connecting Fairfax Lookout and Shelly Beach
 - Regular tours and school programs with bbq and picnic areas over the entire 29 acres of the North Head site
- FYI Ron Ray”

Ed - Ron Ray finally sent the following extract from the SHFT, I thank him for it, as it gives a balanced outcome and invites interested parties to communicate...

“NORTH FORT MUSEUM and the SYDNEY HARBOUR FEDERATION TRUST

Background.

The Army closed the Artillery School at North Head in 1996, and relocated the facility to Puckapunyal in Victoria. Defence have advised the Trust that the Australian Army Artillery Museum is a Corps Museum within the Army History Unit. Corps Museums exist primarily to support corps in training, and the development of doctrine based on experience as well as preserving corps history. The relocation of the museum to Puckapunyal, where the Artillery School is currently based is in line with this principle.

Since the Artillery School left North Head, the Museum has continued operate with some paid Defence personnel and a large number of volunteers working on a range of programs, including restoration of military hardware, creation of interpretive displays and taking guided tours. The resources provided by Defence have been highly constrained resulting in the site being increasingly closed to the general public. The Museum and guided tours are now only open 2 days out of 7 and with an entry fee payable.

The land was owned by the State Government and was loaned to Defence on a permissive occupancy basis conditional upon it being used for defence purposes. In 2006/7 the NSW Government decided to transfer ownership (and property title) to the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust so that the Trust could implement its plans for the site.

Recently, in discussions with Defence, the Trust has expressed its growing concern that such a historically significant and scenically beautiful site is largely closed to the public. Defence, for its part has stated that they cannot provide increased public access, and even with the current limited access, they are unable to adequately secure the site and its collection. This discussion has come to a head with Defence deciding that it is time to "bite the bullet" and relocate the museum to Puckapunyal. In effect Defence has no further use for the site.

The following the contents of a letter recently sent to the Manly Daily which helps to clarify the Trust's position. The letter was sent following recent articles that did not properly reflect the facts and issues associated with North Head.

Letter to the Manly Daily dated December 2010

I refer to the Manly Daily's recent articles regarding the future of North Fort. As the Executive Director off the SHFT I would like to make the following points:

- *Firstly, the Harbour Trust's charter is to maximise public access and to conserve and interpret the historic artefacts and heritage stories of the sites we manage. Our record demonstrates our bona fides in this area. We have been doing this at Cockatoo Island, Georges Heights, Chowder Bay, Woolwich Dock and our other sites for a decade.*
- *The decision by Defence to depart from North Fort whilst sad in one sense, creates opportunities that I believe most people in the community would welcome. In particular, the many people who have strong ties with the military heritage of the site.*
- *The Trust has for some time been concerned that the North Fort site (29 acres of historic fortifications and artefacts, memorials and walkways, as well as pristine bushland with spectacular harbour and ocean views) has been largely off-limits to the general public. The site is currently closed five days out of seven and is only open between 10am and 4pm on the 2 days it is open.*

Defence has determined that they cannot adequately secure the site and the collection of armaments even now, with or without full public access. This is the primary reason for their decision to relocate the collection. There was never a request for \$1 million dollars and the Trust is not sure of the origin of this staggering figure.

- *The Trust has obtained Defence's agreement to retain, on loan, those parts of the collection that are relevant to the history of North Head and to the story of the defence of Sydney. Much of the collection has always been in storage and there has never been the capacity to display it.*

- We want the volunteers to continue to work at the site and there is no reason why they cannot continue to do so. They are currently engaged in a broad range of activities and we would like to maintain and expand the volunteer program across all of these activities. We understand that there are no better people to tell those stories than the men and women who have worked at the site or who have first-hand experience of the military hardware.
- The decision by Defence to leave the site allows the Trust to provide free access to the site and all of its facilities and memorials, seven days a week with improved public amenities. We will continue the guided tours of the tunnels and the volunteer led restoration of historic artefacts and sites.
- In a nutshell we can maintain the status quo or we can open up the 29 acres of historic artefacts, and military memorials at North Fort for the entire community to enjoy, without a fee to enter, in one of Sydney's most spectacular locations. We welcome the opportunity to talk through these possibilities with the people who have a strong commitment to the site.

The Future

From the information outlined above the Trust's intentions as to the future of the site are clear. The most important issue is to continue the relationship with the volunteers at the North Head site. There has been a lot of voluntary work carried out on the site by many dedicated people over the years. As with the other sites owned and operated by the Trust we want this to continue, so that we are able to invite the people of Sydney and visitors to enjoy the historical story that North Head has to tell.

What we need to do as soon as possible is to have a meeting with the representatives of the major stakeholders associated with the North Head operation. We need to meet and agree on a plan of action to continue and enhance the exposure of the site to the general public. The success of North Fort into the future will be greatly enhanced with your participation and support.

Following a call from your local state representative Mr Mike Baird, I contacted the State President of the RSL, Mr Don Rowe. Following that conversation I had a meeting with Mr Bill Hardman who is on the State Council of the RSL and well known to many of you. Bill has advised me that he spoke to all present at the North Fort Christmas Function inviting those representatives of the stakeholders to contact him so that a meeting with the Trust can be arranged.

I invite you to be part of our future plans so please contact Bill Hardman or myself as soon as possible.

Geoff Bailey Executive Director,
Sydney Harbour Federation Trust
13th December 2010."

. Artillery Surveyors 131 Div Loc Bty...



ARTILLERY SURVEYORS 131 DIV LOC BTY

"Elements of 131 came wandering in from the bush"

(A quote whose origins are lost, yet the sentiments expressed will not be lost on many who served with 131 Div Loc Bty SVN.)

This website seeks to make contact with the Artillery Surveyors of 131 Div Loc Bty. We welcome your relevant contributions of photos, insights and observances so we might endeavour to expand 131 Artillery Surveying

Vietnam record, beyond this window. Please use the contacts page for details: <http://www.artillerysurveyors131.com.au/>

. Locating Artillery Assoc...notes taken from their website –

Committee meetings are held regularly with most held at Paddington RSL commencing at 1115 hrs.

The next Committee Meeting will be held at the Paddington RSL on 6 March 2011. Members are cordially invited to attend. Details of scheduled Committee meetings will be available in the next issue of the *Associations Newsletter* LOCREP.

. 1st Battalion 83rd Artillery...



Dedicated to the men of the 1st Battalion 83rd Artillery who served in Vietnam from 1966-1971. We left Fort Sill in October 1966 for Vietnam. We originally were at Bear Cat, Nui Dat and Xuan Loc. We later were in many other locations in Vietnam. We also welcome our Australian and New Zealand Allies to whom we owe so much.

It is also dedicated to those members of the 1/8rd who did not return. We will never forget their sacrifice. Website: http://83rd_artillery.home.comcast.net/~83rd_artillery/

Editor contact email: three-zero@hotmail.com Ed – Paul 'Dicko' Dickson

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