



THE EYES and EARS

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Heard and seen...

. Vic Danko – sent in the following story and I just had to start this issue off with it, because it does hit a certain spot very well –

Hi Paul, I first saw this photo a few years ago, I found it today as I was re packing after our renovation . I can't help but write to you.

This might be headed...

"So tell us about the army?"

The photo was taken around March of 1965. The place is a cluster of farms about 100 km from Quirindi, NSW. There's a one teacher school and they add me to the school, using a local hall as a classroom. Here you see me at morning assembly, leading morning prayer! (priceless!) . The photo must have been taken by one of the parents from a car. They sent it to my sister years ago.

I'm fresh out of Teachers College. Do I have plans for the future, ambition? Nope.

A few months later I'm transferred to a larger school



100 kms from Dubbo. The numbers in the first school did not justify 2 teachers, however, by that time I know that I will be in the 3rd intake, Singleton, January 1966. What might have happened to / for me if there was no conscription? - Probably not a lot!

Ah - but what about this conscription?

In 1943 my parents were taken by the occupying German forces from Russia to southern Austria. At the end of the War I'm born and we're in the British sector. My mother decides to record my birth date as 01/01/1945. Not 31/12/1944 as it was in fact (she told me this years later).

Why? Because they expected to be forcibly sent back to the Soviet Union and then and still now, compulsory military service starts for all boys from the beginning of the year in which they turn 18 years of age.

She didn't want me to be the youngest kid in the intake and be bullied / abused etc. Sweet.

So here I am in Australia (thank God) and we start Nasho's at 01/01/1965, 20 yrs of age. Got me!

Singleton and or the army were a tough ask. It reminded me of refugee camps.

From Singleton I'm sent to North Head. Signals course. Survey pays more but the class is full. Then I am retained at NH to do an Advanced Signals course.

In this second course there are fellows who are already at the Batteries / Holsworthy. One of the fellows is from 131 Div Loc. (never saw him again after NH??)

One day he says "you ought to ask to go to 131; you're so slack you'll fit in well!"

Well I didn't ask , then , and they send me to 116 LAA (or whatever) , Woodside , SA .

I suppose I could have spent the rest of conscription defending the SA coastline from enemy aircraft. Or school teaching natives in New Guinea.

But when at North Head I'd met a girl at the Canopus Room - and enjoyed Doug Parkinson.

So I asked the South Australian commanders (or whatever) to send me to 131 Div Loc Bty - which they promptly did.

Here I meet Warwick Hamilton and I asked him to send me to a Vietnamese language course at Georges Heights (not far from where the future bride lived). I don't remember much time at Holsworthy.

Had the army changed my life yet? Well I've only just met a girl, so far.

At a point of time in Vietnam I knew that I would not be a school teacher and I came back, Dec 1967 fired with ambition and determination. More than I realised and more than those around me could easily take.

I enrolled at Macquarie University - Economics and Finance. Part time and later almost full time (had to be a teacher in the meantime to pay the rent).

I finished with very good grades in 4 years, then off to London where I jagged a job in stockbroking in the most fortunate of circumstances, then merchant banking.

From there I had 8yrs in London, 12 years in New York. This phase was investment bank, ego driven - Concorde flights, Savoy and Plaza Hotel etc. I worked in a range of countries from Brazil, Norway, Indonesia, Korea, Egypt, and Japan. I ended up doing Harvard Business School.

But I always knew I'd come home.

Three wives (English/Australian, American and Russian), two children, one now 36 the other 12 later I now lead a quiet and reclusive life in Cremorne, Sydney

A long and winding road from morning assembly and leading a prayer for a dozen 5, 6 and 7 year olds 100kms from a town in a two teacher school in western NSW!

Maybe my mother knew the path all along? she just placed two bets, Soviet Union or Australia!!

But it was also very painful at times.

Regards, Victor"

. Photos, photos, photos...Ian Finlay really kicked a winning goal by sending in 31 really great photos.

Here's a bit of a squiz at some of them – names, places and dates hopefully are on the way and the rest will eventually be on the web site...



...actually they almost don't need an accompanying narrative, they're self explanatory of a mood and a moment in time.

. The 3rd October, 1987 North Head article in October's E&Es has attracted some more great photos taken by **Bob King**. The following is just a sample for you all to have a squiz at. When we get the web site up and running we'll get all of these downloaded and from there and then you can contact us to order specific ones...



. **Ed** – fairdinkum I can't help myself sometimes, but emails and the series that I get them in (some of them) make me want to cack myself!

The following from **Warwick "Brookey" Brooker** was a response from my "Where were you and when?" inquisition, which by the way got great responses, however "Army anomalies" not being allowed for in my table and Surveyors doing additional piquet duties all over the shop, people forgetting where the hell things were, and of course, Operations being on and "fill-in" LP recruits being dragged from all over the place and add to that someone like **Kevin Browning** dabbling in all sorts of areas!!

However here's **"Brookey" first – almost...** actually here's a response from **John "Kanga" McFadden**, to a question form **"Brookey"** - **Subject:** Fw: Radar Piquet

– "Just my thoughts on radar piquet, I thought in Nui Dat the one we did piquet on was Alpha??

Yeah 31 G was Surveyors on operation, usually plugging up FSB perimeter defence. Kanga"

...then "Brookey" to me – "Dicko, I'm assured that 32A is what I should have in my profile. Alpha Radar was near the survey lines. We had to negotiate 'Hold-up Alley' (Kanga's terminology) to get to the radar. Brookey

. We had to pass in front of the new Infantry arrivals and they were notoriously trigger-happy after dark. There was high likelihood of being challenged en route to the radar (or dunny). We used to follow a trail of white-painted stones so we wouldn't deviate from the route and run into a bloody bayonet or 7.62 mm round."

Ed – "white-painted stones" very techno stuff, well I suppose it was better than leaving crumbs!

...then "**Brookey's**" last to me – "Dicko, I thought the radar near the survey lines was Bravo. Kanga thinks it was Alpha. I told you my piquet call-sign was 32B. If Kanga's right, which he usually is, my piquet call-sign would have been 32A, not 32B.

Do you remember which radar was in front of the survey lines? Brookey"

Ed – no I don't, but I can cheat by looking at the 1ATF Road Map we published in the November 2010 *Eyes & Ears* ...and see that "**Kanga**" is indeed correct – well in 1967-68 anyway!! "Alpha" was a bit nomadic!

...then **Kevin Browning** really put a cat amongst the budgerigars with his input to "Where were you and when" with his gypsy moving target break-down –

"Hi Dicko, You will have to add new lines to your Position column for "Surveillance" which took over with the demise of Radar and Sound Ranging in 1970 in the Detachment and a line for Meteorology in the Battery. As for the Survey and Sound ranging fold it was a twin job between Nov 68 until it left in 1970 (date unsure), so those who were Survey also did the sound ranging. For myself on your list in "Battery" you can add me to Survey (I was a GNR/BDR/SGT at Holsworthy), add me to "HQ" (I was BSM WO1 at Enoggera). For the "Detachment" add my name to Sound Ranging (dual hatted Nov 68 to Sep 69) for Survey period of time Sep 68 – Sep 69 and April 71 to Nov 71 (June to Nov with HQ Bty 12 Fd after Det went home). See attached. Kevin"

Ed – I've yet to find out whether Kevin's paybook was produced in Volumes and did he turn out his light when he left in '71 – that'll come later!

. **Keith Ayliffe** sent the following in and **Ed** thought that this was as good a spot as any to include it as it involves **Kevin Browning** and he is quoted in the previous article above – "G'day Dicko - Had an interesting email from Kevin Browning, to inform me that Arty Met and Arty Survey that Radar operators ECN 271 no longer exists... Does this mean ex Locators are

A. Redundant...B Over the hill...C No longer employable...Or as Kev Puts it...D Dinosaurs starting to fossilise. Just a thought – Keith"

Ed – does anyone take offence or ~~resent~~ resemble any of the above?

. **Ed** – Now another cracker of a yarn from **Geoff Blackwell** which came about with his reply to my ongoing inquisition into "Where were you and when?" **Geoff** stated that he went to 31D for a month after having his ~~appendage~~ (that's a bad typo!) appendix removed.

Now it struck me as very bloody curious – someone going to hospital in SVN for other than an injury – I'd never heard of anyone going to hospital – the RAP yes, hospital NO! So read this classic from **Geoff** and you might understand why nobody did – "Yes Dicko I remember it well. Crook for a few days. Never felt so crook in the guts. I went to the RAP in the morning, I think the 23rd of November. The Doc diagnosed Peritonitis and ordered a dust-off helicopter. There were none available so I had to go by landrover to the Australian Hospital in Vung Tau. The trip nearly killed me! I arrived just on noon; they put me on a stretcher and carried me straight into the operating theatre...2 hours it took them to get my guts sorted out, (by a nasho surgeon from Melbourne). There were wounded coming in from an operation and at 4.30 they had no beds left so I had to get up and go. (41/2 hours in hospital for a burst appendix!) I was sent to the Australian R&C Hotel as a walking wounded, stooped nearly double, and the pricks gave me a room on the 3rd floor. No lifts, took me nearly an hour to get up the stairs. After a few days of going up and down the bloody stairs, I was so pissed off I hitched a ride back to Nui Dat on a truck full of pissed Kiwis from 161 Battery. (There was an incident on the way back- they fired off a few shots going through Baria- but that's another story.)

Now I am AWOL with no medical clearance. Nobody was more surprised than Hammo to see me. They didn't know I was gone at Vung Tau until that night. When I got to Arty Tac he sent me down to 31D, and somehow sorted the paper work out. (More black marks with Reg G - the Regimental CO). It seems I was supposed to RTA from Vung Tau. I think the Battery must have been short of personnel

They took the stitches out at the RAP and the medic at the 1/83rd kept it together. I finished up with a fairly decent scar. The wound kept kind of weeping, so in early January I got an R&R in Hong Kong.

When I got back from Honkers Phil Perrin had taken over and I left for FSB Andersen. The rest as they say is HISTORY.

Incidentally, I have not had any problems at all since then, so it must have been a job well done.

As an aside, the guy in the room with me at the Vung Tau rehab hotel was a Reg who had just been circumcised. Seems they could get it done and had a 50/50 chance of a direct RTA. If it went well - it was return to unit, but still a few weeks holiday in Vung Tau.

Regards Geoff"

Ed – does anyone else have an Army medical story to tell – none about the clap thanks!

Ed is going to do a "Molly Meldrum" and ask you to "do yourself a favour" and go to the following link which **Bob Billiards** initially sent to **Bill Taggart** at the 1/83rd.

- <http://youtu.be/apScD-kcP84> - it's a call "to support" piece which as **Bill** says "*I have seen many of the excellent videos done in the US but this one brought tears to my eyes and is really well done in photos and words*". "[Do You Support Me 2011.wmv](#)" runs for just over 8 minutes and the music by the Seekers and

John Williamson is pretty poignant. It takes you back 40 years and to realise the support we had was from our loved ones, mates, friends etc but easily slipped from the public's eye to page 8 somewhere.

. John Blake is somewhat relieved at our "stuff up" (his words) then goes on with a defying the odds tale of endurance – "Paul - Hey it was wonderful; the stuff up about Stan Briggs. When I heard he had gone it flattened me. One of our blokes! Made me feel quite vulnerable! Welcome back Stan!!!"

I am denying my age. 2 weekends ago I went in the BUPA, Around the Bay in a Day bike ride. It's a charity event where kind friends of mine sponsored me for over \$400. I had thought about letting the guys know about the event as sponsors or to get out as my riding companions. Finished the 210k ride around Port Philip Bay in a little over 10 hours of riding time. Got the finishers' line medal hanging on the wall as evidence - had about 90 mins wait (thankfully) at Sorrento and then on the barge to Queenscliff. I stayed with Frank Ipsa for a couple of nights before the ride. I came out of it tired but no injuries. I took it easy for a week and back into it again now.

Have we got any starters for charity rides as a 131 group? JB"

Ed – do we have any other cyclists etc out there with a tale?

Peter Ravelje sent this in (followed very closely by **Ian Finlay**) – it could be a different way to do a different ANZAC Day!!

"Great Southern Railways are running a Special Anzac Day Train from Darwin to Adelaide next year (2012). Costs to Darwin and from Adelaide are one's own care.

Proposed Itinerary is :-

Day 1 Tuesday 24/4/12. Depart Darwin 3.30pm for Adelaide River.

Go to Adelaide River War Cemetery. Depart 6.30 pm for Katherine and pull into siding at some ungodly hour.

Day 2 Wed 25/4/12 Dawn Service at Katherine

Breakfast at Katherine R.S.L. Participate in Anzac Day March at Katherine if you wish - tour of Katherine.

Depart Katherine 6.00pm for Alice Springs

Day 3 Thurs 26/4/12 Arrive Alice Springs 9.10 am

Local tours (at your own cost). Depart for Port Augusta

Day 4 Fri 27/4/12 Take Old "Pitchie Ritchie" War Train from Port Augusta to Quorn & return

Depart for Adelaide. End of Tour.

Cost Gold Kangaroo For TPI \$1206 includes all meals in Queen Adelaide Restaurant. Carers Same Price. Price includes all of the above except Alice Springs Tours. Bookings are now open.

. Ian Finlay sent the link to this story "The last Vietnam victim" by: *Terry Brown* From: [Herald Sun](http://www.heraldsun.com.au/ipad/the-last-vietnam-victim/story-fn6bfmgc-1226180817481) October 31, 2011 (Melbourne). **Ed**, along with **Ian** thought it was worth cutting and pasting and reproducing – <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/ipad/the-last-vietnam-victim/story-fn6bfmgc-1226180817481>



"MICK Berrigan went to war in 1967 - a bright spark who loved a drink and the girls. The shell of a man who came back injured never recovered from his private hell.

PRIVATE Mick Berrigan died from combat injuries last Sunday and was buried on Thursday.

There weren't any politicians there, or news cameras, because death didn't come swiftly.

It ate at him for 44 years, tore at his body and soul and drove his parents, Rosemary and Gerald,

to an early grave.

The artillery shell shrapnel that hit him, so-called friendly fire, took the best part of his life in Vietnam, and then took its time with the rest.

When soldiers die on the battlefield, they are said to have made the ultimate sacrifice.

To live on in pain, anger and confusion as a brain injury progressively destroys you and everybody you love, is worse than that.

Comrades count Mick as an Australian combat casualty of the Vietnam War, as much as any of the official 500 fallen.

They think, dead at 66, he may be the last.

"We commemorate the dead but we forget about the wounded," unofficial 7th Battalion historian Mike O'Brien says bitterly.

And Mick's younger brother Chris, who has spent most of his life watching his brother's cruel decline, says there are worse things than a battlefield death.

"If you're killed outright, there's traumatic suffering and terrible sadness. But the terrible sadness goes away eventually, doesn't it?" Chris says.

"I think this was worse than what they usually call the ultimate sacrifice."

In 1967, while the rest of the world embraced flower power and the Beatles sang that love was all you need, Mick Berrigan, the fourth of eight kids, went to war.

He was smart, with a year of Melbourne University law under his belt, and headstrong.

He liked a beer a little too much, liked to chase girls at South Side Six in Moorabbin, and took a gap year from uni to build a bankroll for the rest of his course.

When the call-up came for national service, Mick was up for the pay and the adventure.

He landed in Vietnam in April 1967 and took a hit in November ahead of an attack on a Viet Cong camp 1km east of Nui Toc Tien.

Australian guns were called in to soften up the camp and five of the six shells hit.

The other exploded against a tree 50m from Pte Berrigan and shrapnel from it tore through his skull and his brain.

"We couldn't keep him quiet," a Digger mate of Mick's wrote in a diary.

"We gave him dose after dose of morphine. We believed we had no alternative. We were close to the enemy and had to keep him quiet."

But the story didn't stop there. Mick died and was resuscitated. His mother was flown to Vietnam to say her goodbyes to her comatose son, but he was strong and fit and lived.

"Operating on his skull, they had to remove fragments that were blown into his brain. Then they patched him up," Chris says.

"I remember him in bed at Heidelberg (Repatriation Hospital) and he looked remarkably fit and very, very tanned, brown as a berry.

"He was already paralysed, flat in bed and he couldn't turn to one side. His speech was slurred already, but he knew people."

With calipers and a four-pronged walking stick, somehow the hospital got Mick on his feet and home.

"There was a time when he was at home and we were living in East Malvern when he used to walk up to the front gate, walk 100m down the street," Chris says.

But it was a false dawn.

"There was a great hopefulness that he would improve. That changed into 'nothing's happening', and that changed into a feeling of hopelessness, awful for any family," Chris says.

Mick suffered seizures and each one took a part of him away. His short-term memory was shot and his useless limbs, once so strong, grew twisted.

"It's like he's been a 22-year-old soldier all his life. In that sense he was stuck in time," Chris says, but adds:

"Whatever brain damage there was, he did have some episodes of clarity and deep insights. We wondered how much he knew."

In an earlier war, Mick would have died. A later one, and he would have caught medical advances and better treatment.

As it was, his life became a round of psychiatric hospitals, frustrated outbursts and harsh drugs to bomb him out.

The family's fight for the best for Mick was unending.

And also, so bittersweet, there were times when he touched his carers and family, connecting in small ways that meant everything to them.

"He was quite an assertive, macho guy, intensely independent," Chris says.

"It was very difficult for him to have that taken. Often he would lash out at people, try to hit people. He would get angry and this would lead to him being heavily tranquillised.

"It was just a gradual decline. It's hard to express. My mum was particularly devastated by it. It was a real heartbreak to go out and see him.

"He went through unpleasant repat hospitals for many years, and nursing homes and things like that."

Family priest Fr Peter Matheson spoke of the toll on Mick's parents at Thursday's service.

"They died before their time because of that weight," he said.

Mick's last 11 years were spent surrounded by kindness, helped by Yooralla at a home in Highett, but the brain injury was relentless and paralysis spread to his throat muscles.

"There was not much in his life. The only pleasures were a beer and a smoke and his food," Chris says. "In the end you'd give him food and instead of swallowing it, he was breathing it in."

On Sunday, his battle ended. The war was over for Mick and his family.

"The ultimate sacrifice? This is even more, isn't it, really? What a waste," Chris says.

"He died in his sleep. That's something, isn't it?"

And a comrade, John Johnston, one of the 30-odd Vietnam veterans in a guard of honour for the flag-draped coffin, spoke for all of them.

"There just couldn't be a greater sacrifice," he said. "There couldn't be." brownt@heraldsun.com.au

Related Coverage -

[Diggers angry at Vietnam 'betrayal'](#) *Herald Sun*, 18 Oct 2011

[Final siren sounds for mighty Mick](#) *Herald Sun*, 2 Oct 2011

[Mick's grand finale as head coach](#) *Herald Sun*, 26 Sep 2011

[Malthouse: how mum and dad inspired me](#) *Herald Sun*, 25 Sep 2011

[Boy died because we didn't do enough](#) *Perth Now*, 17 Sep 2011

Ed – by the grace of something or someone most of us were spared this as a life

.Tianjara continues...Warwick Brooker has some fond and not so fond memories and explains in this email – “Dicko I read E&E Vol.4 No.8 and thought I'd add my two bob's worth on Tianjara. When I returned from Vietnam in Feb 1968, the nation still required my expertise for seven months. In July 68 I was included in a Tianjara exercise as survey driver. I can't remember whether or not I was privileged to do some surveying.

Well, Tianjara was Tianjara: bitterly cold, frozen puddles, etc. The attached photos indicate that we lit fires on that occasion. I remember humming over the corrugations at 80 kph with surveyors in the back of the Land Rover, a trailer load of survey equipment and, unfortunately, our survey officer beside me. I can't remember his name, possibly Lt Smith. Anyway, I'll just call him Survey Officer X (SOX). All was going well when SOX suddenly suggested that I was driving too fast for this terrain. I told him that the vehicle and trailer were handling well on the corrugations at this speed and I was accustomed to this kind of road surface. He insisted that we slow down, to which I replied that if we did, the ride would become very uncomfortable and the trailer with its delicate cargo would bounce precariously.

'Gunner Brooker, slow down. That's an order!'

'Yes sir!'

You can probably imagine what happened: there were cries from the rear of the vehicle, the equipment bounced around in the trailer and on arrival at our destination my passengers berated me severely, to which I could only respond, with a nod towards SOX, 'Talk to him about it.'

I can't remember anything about the survey exercises, but one could never forget the ice on the ground and the piercing cold. On the evening before our return to Sydney, SOX ordered me to load the survey equipment onto the trailer early in the morning. (Apparently that was my job as driver; in Vietnam we had shared the task.) So while everyone else shaved and brewed up, I was loading equipment. Fortunately, I had a balaclava with me and I kept that on as we headed back to Sydney at 4 a.m. on that icy morning, SOX by my side. As we travelled north from Tianjara the temperature rose markedly and the balaclava became uncomfortably warm. By the time we reached Sydney, I was perspiring freely but couldn't remove the balaclava from my unshaven face, for which SOX would almost certainly have placed me on a charge. Struth, they might have returned me to Nui Dat for my final two months of service!

Brookey”

. Then There's The Tianjara Tangle – In October's E&Es we ran **Grahame “Dig” Dignam's** version with photos of his picnic in the NSW southern highlands and here is the photo (on the right) that has caused some major dramas.

It got an instant response (air-waves burning!) from **Barry “Big Game Hunter” Guzder** – “Hi Dicko, I am very upset! The last *Eyes& Ears* (volume 4) has a photo of me (bloody Dignam) that purports to be bloody Boutlis! He was not that good looking! It is me on safari at Tianjara Regards Gunner Guzder.”

Ed – we're hoping that our apologetic, cowering response to Barry over what we believe was **Ed's** cock-up has stopped a possible law suit!

Being mistaken for “Boots” – that is serious?



. Allen Morley did a Battlefields Tour in late September/October and his project was to connect with his maternal grandfather - it's a poignant interesting read –

“An Odyssey to the Battlefields of France, September 2011”

Private Sidney Ernest Martin No 4244 was my maternal grandfather. His enlistment papers show he changed the spelling of his first name to Sydney upon enlistment.

Sydney was born October 29, 1884 in Gravesend, Kent. I have not yet been able to find out when and how he came to Australia. He signed up in the Australian Imperial Force on 4th August 1915, subsequent to marrying my grandmother, Evelyn Kirkwood Staley, on 27th April 1915.

He reached France via Egypt – and spent an inordinate amount of time in hospital. He embarked 29 December 1915 and was part of the 13 Infantry Reinforcements for the Australian 5th Division and on 17th March 1916 was transferred from 5th Pioneer Battalion to D Company, 1st Pioneer Battalion.

On 10th July he was WIA but remained on duty. The location was in the Villers-Bretonneaux area of France, in the Somme Valley. Sydney Martin was KIA on 23 August 1918, ironically in St Martins Wood, east of Villers-Bretonneaux and near the village of Proyart. Australian National Archives show that Private John Cheverton No 828 and Captain George Ernest Johnston No 387 were also KIA in St Martin Wood on the same day.

The Australian Red Cross Society report reads,

'He was the first man killed on the morning of 23 August after the hop off at St Martin's Wood at about 4.30 am. A piece of shell hit him in the mouth and came out of the back of his head. He must have died instantly. I was a little in front of him and did not actually see him hit, but next day I helped to bury him where he fell. Our Padre, Captain Moorehouse conducted the service. A rough cross was erected, and about a fortnight later a Battalion cross was taken out and put up'. Informant Pte WG Duff No 3743 , D Coy 1st Pioneers

'I saw Martin, D Company, killed instantly by a shell through head at St Martin's Wood near Proyard, in the morning during the hop over about 6/7 am as we were going up to dig in a machine gun position. He was buried where he fell. Martin: Very slight build, fair-complex abt 27/28 years. Came from Melbourne'. Informant Pte M Brown No 3556, D Coy 1st Pioneers

Sydney Martin was reinterred after the Armistice. He is now buried at Heath Cemetery, Harbonnieres, Plot 4, Row D, and Grave 20. His burial site looks out toward St Martin Wood and is about 3000 metres distant, to the north east. Allen Morley October 2011 - With acknowledgement to Bill McQuade from Bartlett's Battlefield Tours for assistance in background research.



Paying my respects to my late grandfather at Heath Cemetery



St Martin Wood (right distance) as seen from Heath Cemetery looking east



This photo was taken by member of the 2nd Battalion AIF, from newly dug pits next to St Martins Wood, Proyard, France (source National Archives of Australia)

. Continuing the series by Ian Kuring which we started in Octobers Eyes & Ears...

THE AUSTRALIAN ARMY AND THE VIETNAM WAR 1962-1972

AUSTRALIAN TASK FORCE OPERATIONS IN SOUTH VIETNAM 1966-1971 by Ian Kuring

Mobility

Helicopters and armoured personnel carriers were usually used to transport infantrymen and their combat support into and out of areas of operations. This meant that infantry and their combat support could be deployed over long distances into an area of operations, with the added operational advantage that the force could be quickly redeployed to another area to meet a changed situation. For the infantry based Australian Army this was a revolutionary development that greatly increased the operational capability of each infantry battalion.

Other methods of deployment into and out of an area of operations included movement on foot, on the backs of trucks, watercraft and by short takeoff and landing transport aircraft (such as the RAAF Caribou).

During an operation the infantry patrolled on foot, loaded down by weapons, ammunition, combat equipment, rations and water. The weights carried by individual infantrymen were usually in the vicinity of 30-45 kilograms.

Battle of Long Tan

It did not take long for the Viet Cong to find out that the Australian infantry operated in a different manner from that of the American and South Vietnamese infantry units. On 18 August 1966, 108 men of 'D' Company, 6RAR, supported by superb artillery fire and a relief force of armoured personnel carriers carrying 'A' Company, 6RAR, defeated a force of at least 1500 Viet Cong in the Battle of Long Tan. Australian casualties from the battle were eighteen killed and 24 wounded, with known enemy casualties of 245 dead.

The Viet Cong withdrew from Long Tan believing that they had fought with an Australian battalion. Whether this was due to the amount of ground covered by 'D' Company at Long Tan in comparison with the tactical movement of American and South Vietnamese infantry units, or a piece of face saving enemy propaganda is a point of interest.

The importance of the Battle of Long Tan was that the newly-arrived Australian Task Force had been tested in a major battle and the era of Viet Cong domination in Phuoc Tuy Province was being challenged. Unfortunately the Task Force lacked the resources to mount an immediate operation to trap and destroy the enemy force during its withdrawal.

Counter Revolutionary Warfare Operations

In line with Australian Army doctrine for counter revolutionary warfare, most operations carried out by the Task Force were search and clear, cordon and search, and operations related to the protective security of base areas and roads. Most Australian combat operations were carried out within range of artillery fire.

Cordon and search operations were carried out to isolate and search a town or village; with the aim of separating the Viet Cong from any support they received from the population. A cordon was placed around the village to provide security and prevent movement in and out of the village while it was being searched. These operations were usually of a day's duration, with the cordon inserted during the night and the search commencing just after first light. Local government officials and police were usually used to carry out detailed administrative checks on the people and to deal with those that were apprehended during these operations. The civil affairs unit usually provided medical and dental aid to the villagers as well. During the systematic and detailed search of buildings and surrounding ground, the search teams of soldiers were likely to locate the entrances to underground storage tunnels and hides. These had to be searched in detail by small teams of field engineers and infantry assault pioneers known as 'tunnel rats' and if being used to support Viet Cong activities, cleared of their contents and destroyed. This was a difficult and dangerous task carried out in narrow tunnels and hides constructed by small in stature Asians, with the additional risk of booby traps.

In Vietnam, the search and clear operations of Australian Army counter revolutionary warfare doctrine were called 'search and destroy' operations until mid-1968, when the terminology changed to 'reconnaissance in force'. These operations were carried out in the bush, forest, jungle and hill areas where the Viet Cong Local and Main Force and North Vietnamese Army units lived, trained and moved while preparing for their next operational activity. Australian search and clear operations involved the detailed and systematic search of ground by infantry patrols to locate the enemy and either bring him to battle or disrupt his activities by forcing him to move and then destroy his camps and storage areas. Once the enemy was located in a camp or bunker system, it usually became necessary for infantry and armour to be redeployed to reinforce the unit in contact with the enemy and for blocking forces and fire support to be employed on likely withdrawal routes, in a hammer and anvil concept trap. As the need to increase Australian military influence in Phuoc Tuy Province became necessary, fire support bases were established, so that combat operations to be carried out well away from Nui Dat could still remain within range of supporting artillery fire.

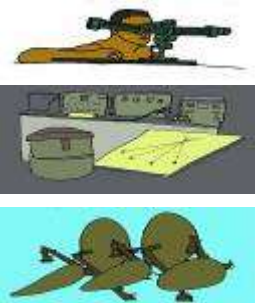
Infantry Firepower and Close Combat

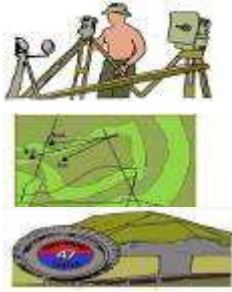
The popular perception of the Vietnam War is that the Allied forces always had an overwhelming superiority in firepower. When considering the war from a broad perspective this is true, however what is usually overlooked is that when an Australian infantry platoon and a Viet Cong or North Vietnamese Army (NVA) platoon made contact with each other in an encounter battle, they were on most occasions roughly equal in firepower. Without going into the characteristics of individual weapons, the infantrymen of both sides employed automatic and semi-automatic rifles, machine guns, grenade and rocket launchers that fired high explosive projectiles, hand grenades and command detonated, directional anti-personnel mines. The great advantage for the Australian platoon was that it carried a radio which could be used to request a variety of quick response fire support to assist the immediate battle, followed up by reinforcement, medical evacuation and resupply. In almost all cases, the enemy did not have this advantage. During 1967 there were occasions where Australian infantrymen, well supported by accurate artillery fire, fought intense battles with determined Viet Cong units, but were unable to develop sufficient combat power to overcome them or to prevent their eventual withdrawal from the area.

In the middle of February 1967, during Operation BRIBIE, 6RAR, supported by armoured personnel carriers, artillery and close air support, spent an afternoon and evening fighting a battle with a dug-in, reinforced company from D445 battalion east of Long Phuoc Hai. 6RAR was unable to defeat the Viet Cong defensive position or to prevent the occupants from withdrawing during the night.

On 5 August 1967, during Operation BALLARAT, a search and destroy operation to the north-west of Nui Dat, 'A' Company 7RAR, supported by artillery fire, fought a battle with a reinforced company from 274 Main Force Regiment. The Viet Cong attempted to nullify the artillery fire support called in by the Australians by maintaining very close contact with them throughout the fighting. Later in the operation, 7RAR discovered a recently evacuated Viet Cong camp about a kilometre from where the battle had taken place. The Viet Cong company had been fighting to cover the withdrawal of a Viet Cong battalion from the camp. In 7RAR this was known as the Battle of Suoi Chau Pha.

In February 1970, 8RAR supported by tanks carried out the last major Australian operation into the Long Hai Hills. A successful ambush and battle with a bunker system had to be balanced with Australian casualties of nine killed and fifteen wounded from two mine incidents and the withdrawal of the enemy battalion from the area as the Australian forces repositioned for a B52 bombing strike to take place. While 42 enemy were confirmed killed, intelligence information later indicated that over 100 enemy had been killed during Operation HAMMERSLEY...to be concluded in December's Eyes & Ears.



Committee members: President – Allen Morley, Tresurer/Secretary – Grahame Dignam, Webmaster – Bob Billiards, Research Officer – Ernie Newbold, General members – Ian Amos, Ged Carroll and George Lane.
Eyes & Ears Editor – Paul Dickson **Regional Representatives:** **ACT** – Bert Blink, **Qld** – Terry Erbs, **SA** - Geoff Blackwell, **Vic** (Melb) – Alan Adams, **WA** - Barry Guzder

The Association’s AGM was held last month and we’ve got a new President, **Allen Morley** and we welcome **Ged Carroll** as our new committee member - as you can see by the new list above.



Here they are from left to right – Allen Morley, Ged Carroll, George Lane, Nick Proskurin, Bob Billiards (is Bob sitting down?), Ian Amos, Ernie Newbold, Vic Danko and Grahame Dignam.

The Association is pretty solvent with 83 Financial Members and the Commemoration Memorial Plaque donations are more than healthy – thanks fellas.

. Bob B gave us a sneak preview of the web site and **Ed** had to go and change his underwear!

. Don’t change the dial! – Nick Proskurin has some exciting news about the Commemoration Plaque, the place and timing for a Ceremony to unveil it – very soon!

. Birthdays in the Battery...December...Fred Lennon cracks 84 this month!

December	Name	Regt No	Y o B	In SVN	Out SVN	Comments
1	DAVID DOUGHERTY	2786594	1946	17 01 1968	04 02 1969	
1	KEVEN BUSH	3792069	1946	18 02 1968	21 02 1969	
1	NEVILLE SMITH	1734352	1946	01 07 1969	25 03 1970	
3	RAYMOND MINNS	4410744	1941	20 05 1966	28 02 1967	† Unknown
3	CLIVE DREIS	2785766	1945	05 02 1968	03 12 1968	
6	ALAN ROBB	5715343	1946	29 01 1968	21 01 1969	
7	ANTHONY O'MARA	38334	1940	15 03 1968	18 03 1969	RAEME † 01.01.85
7	TERRY WESTERWAY	215818	1945	04 05 1966	07 05 1967	
8	ROBERT WHITE	311537	1937	22 04 1966	16 05 1967	† 1992
9	ANDREW OPIE 2Lt.	43611	1944	04 05 1966	06 01 1967	
10	HANS WEBER	3789591	1945	04 05 1967	02 04 1968	
12	MICHAEL DAVIS	4720736	1948	20 01 1970	30 01 1971	
12	CHRISTOPHER BRAZIER	2792185	1948	24 02 1970	25 02 1971	
13	JOHN STANFORD	217765	1949	29 01 1969	21 01 1970	
13	LAURENCE DARCY	215649	1945	04 03 1968	04 02 1969	12 Fd Regt.
13	" "	215649	1945	20 05 1971	05 08 1971	131
14	PETER FLETCHER	2783429	1945	04 05 1967	12 12 1967	
14	TOM KING	1411018	1937	12 12 1966	12 12 1967	
15	GEOFFREY PRICE	5715931	1947	08 05 1969	25 02 1970	
16	PHILLIP PERRIN Capt.	53105	1936	29 01 1968	21 01 1969	
17	TONY. GOLDSMITH	1732029	1945	04 05 1967	12 12 1967	
18	JIM HOGNO	2783680	1945	03 01 1967	27 09 1967	
18	TOM CHECKLEY	311534	1938	22 04 1966	05 08 1966	† 05.08.66 KBA
19	GEOFF BLACKWELL	4718307	1945	20 06 1967	21 05 1968	

19	PETER GAULT	2783644	1945	04 05 1967	27 09 1967	
19	RODNEY BEASLEY	3797746	1948	04 03 1971	05 08 1971	† 2001
19	MICHAEL FERRIS	1733794	1945	23 12 1968	28 03 1969	1st Armoured Regt.
	" "			30 03 1969	03 12 1969	131-RAEME
21	BOB RETROT	1731922	1945	05 05 1967	30 01 1968	
21	MICHAEL BOYLE Lt.	217004	1946	17 02 1970	11 02 1971	
21	BLAIR SHEPPARD	1735563	1948	01 04 1970	04 03 1971	
22	JOHN McGREGOR	3787376	1945	20 05 1966	30 04 1967	
22	MICHAEL BURGESS	242895	1938	24 03 1968	26 03 1969	RAEME
22	PETER MEANEY	4719804	1947	03 06 1969	25 03 1970	
22	RONALD RYAN	2793176	1948	19 08 1970	09 06 1971	
24	RON. EVANS	3789614	1945	04 05 1967	20 02 1968	
25	STEWART McALPINE	2787471	1946	08 07 1968	04 06 1969	
25	ROBERT HOLDSWORTH	3793058	1945	04 01 1969	03 12 1969	AACC
25	PETER BREMNER	1734544	1947	16 04 1969	16 04 1970	
26	CHRIS BOULLY	4717884	1945	17 04 1967	12 12 1967	
26	DAVID BILLINGS	2793071	1946	19 08 1970	05 05 1971	4 Fd Regt.
28	GEOF. MACAULAY WO2	35753	1936	27 11 1969	05 11 1970	WO2
28	LIONEL OUTEN	1732195	1945	05 05 1967	30 01 1968	
28	JOHN MARTIN Lt.	43613	1941	25 02 1968	21 02 1969	
29	BRIAN HAWKEY	1200572	1946	20 05 1966	29 04 1967	AACC
29	FRED LENNON Sgt.	29712	1927	20 05 1966	11 12 1966	

Ed – 24 blokes not highlighted is still a bit disappointing. Though we do have 195 blokes we contact with E&Es. The 200 number is getting close!!

. **Locator Profiles** – we started off November with **John l'Anson** at #063, **John Richmond** came into print as #064, then #065 introduced **Kevin Grime** – could be called the “human dynamo”! #066 gave an insight into **Jeff Price** - We’ve now received **72 Completes** with another **5** waiting for photos and we’ve sent out **66**. So that still leaves a heap of blanks that were sent out waiting for the boomerang return!

Kevin Grime's Profile got this response – “Paul, what a great read, Kevin really excelled in giving us his profile. One good thing is he has the same birth date as me. Happy b'day for Dec 10 - Cheers Grahame Smith”

. Found...

Firstly apologies to **Jeff Reid** for calling him “**Kev Reid**” in last month's E&Es, but we redeemed ourselves slightly by being able to help **Jeff** out with a query about getting in touch with **Gordon Malcolm** and **Phillip Perrin** and it was great to be able to help make the connection.



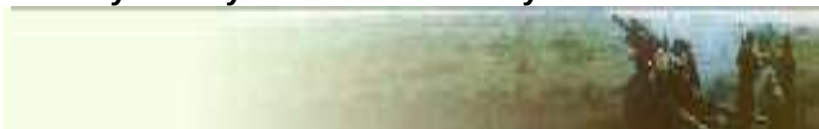
131 Locators Association is always on the lookout for new financial members. With the upcoming establishment of the web site we are going to be burdened with the ongoing cost of maintenance etc and we need to be able to support this effort equally.

So, if you're a non-financial Associate receiving emails and the Eyes & Ears regularly you could bite the bullet and email **Grahame Dignam**: Sectreas131locators@gmail.com and he could forward you the relevant forms to join.

Memberships are available for 1 or 5 years. Hope we hear from you?

. Other related sites...

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/>

<http://www.artillerysurveyors131.com.au/operations/coburg.html>

Ed – it's worth having a look at the Surveyors' websites above as they cover Operation Coburg in some very interesting detail

. Locating Artillery Association...



LOCATING ARTILLERY ASSOCIATION

The Eyes And Ears Of The Battlefield

The next **Meeting** will be held at Paddington RSL on **19 February 2012**. Members are cordially invited to attend. Details of scheduled Committee meetings will be available in the next issue of the *Associations* Newsletter LOCREP. Meetings scheduled for 2012 to be held at Paddington RSL commencing at 11.15am.



Website link - <http://www.vvaa.org.au/>



Website link - <http://www.dva.gov.au/Pages/home.aspx>

. VETERAN'S AFFAIRS WEBSITE

The Dept of Veteran's Affairs has launched a new mental health initiative to assist veteran's experiencing the affects of mental illness and their families. Providing information and fact sheets about understanding mental illness, links and contact information for accessing support, and online resources for health professionals, this website focuses on helping veterans identify early warning signs of mental illness to effectively manage their mental illness and seek treatment. For more info or to access, please visit www.at-ease.dva.gov.au

. 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 1/83rd 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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