



THE EYES and EARS

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

Editor: Paul 'Dicko' Dickson email: three-zero@hotmail.com Vol. 5 No. 5 Plaque Dedication Special – 31/05/2012

Official newsletter of the **131 Locators Association Inc**
ABN 92 663 816 973

web site: [http://. 131locators.org.au](http://131locators.org.au)

Supported by the Department of Veterans Affairs

This edition of *Eyes & Ears* is dedicated to the Plaque Unveiling Ceremony, which coincidentally happened on the 46th Anniversary of the Detachment putting their collective feet onto South Vietnam soil.

The lead up to this Unveiling and Dedication Ceremony has been a culmination of specific events which started with the re-invention of the *Eyes & Ears* newsletter in February, 2009 and an ever growing circulation to some 209 plus readers, then the formation of the 131 Locators Association in March 2011, the creation and establishment of the Association's website, the commissioning of the plaque and then finally the acceptance of its placement by the Australian War Memorial.

The Plaque in itself is dedicated to the Members of the Detachment, who served in South Vietnam from 1966 to 1971 however it can and is also an expression of gratitude and conscience to those Battery Members who supported us on Australian soil during this time.

The day proceeded along these lines...

Commemorative Plaque Dedication Ceremony



in recognition of the sacrifice and service of
members of the

131 Divisional Locating Battery

2pm, Friday 4 May 2012

Western Courtyard
Australian War Memorial



Order of Service

WELCOME

Nola Anderson
Aig Director
Australian War Memorial

COMMEMORATIVE ADDRESS

Lieutenant Colonel Warwick R. Hamilton (Ret'd)
Officer Commanding
Detachment 131 Divisional Locating Battery, RAA
South Vietnam, 1967 – 1968

PRAYERS

Chaplain Darren Jaensch
Senior Chaplain
Royal Military College

UNVEILING OF COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUE

Mr Norman McManus
and
Mr Peter Colman

DEDICATION OF COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUE

Chaplain Darren Jaensch

THE ODE

Mr David H Doyle OAM

*They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old;
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.*

Response – *We will remember them*

LAST POST

ONE MINUTE'S SILENCE

ROUSE

Lest we forget

Response – *Lest we forget*

THE NATIONAL ANTHEM

*Australians all let us rejoice,
For we are young and free;
We've golden soil and wealth for toil;
Our home is girt by sea;
Our land abounds in nature's gifts
Of beauty rich and rare;
In history's page, let every stage
Advance Australia Fair.
In joyful strains then let us sing,
Advance Australia Fair.*

BENEDICTION

Chaplain Darren Jaensch

THANKS AND FAREWELL

Mr Allen Morley
President
131 Locators Association

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Chaplain Darren Jaensch, Senior Chaplain, Royal Military
College
Leading Aircraftsman Timothy Biliards, RAAF Band



For images from today's ceremony please visit:
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/australianwar memorial/>



The actual day, Friday May 4th, saw a cold start to the day in Canberra - minus 1C as the sun rose. The soldiers from the Detachment were assembling for the Plaque Dedication later in the afternoon - thankfully.

By the time the 1400hrs ceremony started at the Australian War Memorial the skies were sapphire blue, the wind minimal and the sun shining. **Nola Anderson**, A/g Director of the AWM spoke to welcome the audience, then "Blue Leader", **Warwick Hamilton** reminded us exactly why we were there.

An excellent turn out of 131ers was a pleasing aspect, with some unseen within the group for more than 40 years. A fine body of former soldiers they were too, totalling over 70 including wives, partners, family and friends.

Chaplain **Darren Jaensch** from Royal Military College Duntroon led the prayers and later dedicated the plaque appropriately unveiled by **Norm McManus** and **Peter Colman**. The familiar words for the Ode were spoken by **Dave Doyle**. Then in a pleasing generational and inter-service contribution **Tim Billiards**, son of **Bob Billiards**, SVN 1967-68, played the Last Post and Rouse. **Allen Morley** closed with the thanks and farewell.

Later that evening it was *on parade* at the Pavilion Hotel. The random seating arrangements turned up some interesting dinner partners. The night was full of reminiscences, identification of some of the subjects from those photos where the blokes had not been previously identified, catching up and promises that it should not be so long before we met again - a great night for a great group of soldiers. The schedule called for disbursement on Saturday morning. Nevertheless, Saturday morning saw some of the group meet for breakfast then go to Mt Pleasant, where the Royal regiment of Australian Artillery National Monument is located, for a team photo and a panoramic view over Canberra. Some even made it to lunch before the celebrations came to an end.

Anyway, back to the beginning and let's start it off with...

Warwick Hamilton – Officer Commanding the Detachment in 1967-68 who presented us with -



"Nola Anderson, Acting Director Australian War Memorial,
Craig Castona, US 1/83 Artillery Association Representative
Fellow Det 131 Div Loc Bty members, Artillery and RAEME
Ladies and Gentlemen

Welcome

It is an honour to address you this afternoon.

I believe there are three parts to this dedication.

The first is that this plaque will provide a lasting, tangible memory of the Detachment 131 Divisional Locating Battery, South Vietnam - a small, but the longest continually serving Artillery unit, in the Australian Task Force in Vietnam; from the advance party in April 1966 to May 1971.

Indeed today, 4 May, is the day 46 years ago when the whole Detachment arrived in South Vietnam

All other units rotated as a whole identity after about twelve months, whereas we rotated people while the unit name remained.

During the five years and two months of deployment, 463 artillery members and I regret I'm not sure how many RAEME served, some on multiple tours.

Additionally we were the only locating unit in the western world on active operations, with the result that our advice and assistance was sought by others, including the US Army and Marines. Not bad credentials for a small unit.

Our role was to identify and provide intelligence on the Viet Cong and NVA heavy weapons (mainly mortars, guns and rockets), and control and coordinate counter bombardment fire.

To do this we employed both high tech and low tech methods, initially using radar together with listening posts who saw flashes, movements or heard and pin pointed sounds of weapons firing. This information was passed to the artillery intelligence section at TF HQ (known as Arty Tac) for response from our guns. After the event analysis of craters and fragments allowed positive identification of weapons and surprisingly accurate determination of their firing points.

Later infrared and thermal imagery, sound ranging and seismic sensors were added.

It was essential that the location of all devices, and our own and other friendly artillery was accurately known and linked. This was the painstaking and often quite 'challenging' job of our Artillery Surveyors.

To maintain our complex equipment the detachment had a workshop of about 35 RAEME technicians performing miracles daily.

Essentially the detachment was the eyes and ears of the Task Force - with a bit of brain in the artillery tactical HQ ... and on duty 24 hours a day seven days a week.

Another point of difference from a "normal" unit was that the detachment was not in one single location. There were independent posts located in other units including friendly allied forces such as the US 1/83 Artillery. Unfortunately few other task force units really understood what our posts were doing – even though they were constantly briefed.

Sometimes this resulted in situations where a listening post might be in, or ahead of, the main defensive line of troops; questions asked such as “why does the radar need to have its generator running”; and the demolition, by our own forces, of sound ranging microphones and other sensors.

“What’s this thing here Fred?”

“Dunno. Might be a mine. Better blow it!”

The day to day liaison with these host units placed a lot of responsibility on the shoulders of our junior post commanders – Bdrs, L Bdrs, and sometimes Gunners. All rose to the occasion.

Having a large proportion of quite highly trained and independent National Servicemen however sometimes created interesting situations, particularly in ARTY TAC. Often an “order” to do something non-operational became a group discussion until consensus was achieved!

Did the detachment achieve its role over the whole period? YES!

The 2nd aspect of dedication is to remember all the Artillery, RAEME and other personnel who have served in the detachment. Those still with us, and those who are not.

Now a little about the plaque you will see. The design is based on the original unit wall plaque developed in country in 1967.

Prominent is the dragon, which also resembles and represents the shape of Vietnam. In Asian mythology no creature is as impressive as the dragon. Since the first millennium BC the dragon has existed on Vietnamese artefacts usually as a symbol of the fourfold deity – clouds, rain, thunder and lightning ... the last two definitely linked to artillery.

I’m sure you are all aware that this year, 2012, is the Lunar Year of the Dragon. Definitely a good omen.

The next symbol on the plaque is the atom, representing the hi-tech nature of the unit. The seven electrons are radar, survey, artillery intelligence, listening posts, sound ranging, sensors and workshop, all orbiting the HQ nucleus. Each individual and essential, and linking to make a powerful entity.

The centre of the plaque, representing our Regiment, is the gunner badge.

I mentioned three aspects of dedication.

The third is of another form. This is the dedication of a small enthusiastic band who have sought to find and bring together our scattered comrades and their stories, forming en route a well organised and active association which is recording and preserving our part in history. They have also arranged this dedication ceremony today – no mean feat. To them, on behalf of us all, a very large thank you.

I would also like to thank the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the AWM, especially Adam O’Sullivan, and particularly Chaplain Jaensch for organising such great weather!

Thank you – Warwick Hamilton”

The Unveiling of the Commemorative Plaque by both Peter Colman and Norm McManus





"The Ode"
Dave Doyle



The "Last Post" and "Rouse"
Tim Billiards



**"Dedication of the
Commemorative Plaque"**
Chaplain Darren Jaensch
Senior Chaplain
Royal Military College



"Thanks and Farewell"
Allen Morley
President
131 Locators Association

The Plaque...



The Dedication Ceremony...highlighting the many moods of the service



The Group Photo – not too bad after 46 years less and counting



Top Row (left to right) – Warwick Hamilton, Barry Campton, John Chilton, Allen Morley, John Blake, Peter Colman, Craig Castona (1/83rd), Leigh Hemming, Graeme Owen, Terry Westerway, Ian Board, Ron Mason, Ken McNamara, Geoff Blackwell, Nick Proskurin, Norm McManus, Vic Danko, Frank Ipsa, Greg Green, Dave Doyle

Middle Row (left to right) – Jim Fitzgerald, Dave Dougherty, Ernie Newbold, Rob Retrot, Paul Dickson, George Lane, Ray Smith, Stan Briggs, Geoff Jebb, Eric Marques, Kevin Browning

Front Row (left to right) – Terry Erbs, Ian Amos, Ken Woodbine, Bob Billiards, Barry Guzder, Bert Blink, Al Adams, Ged Carroll, Bruce Irvine, Warwick Brooker, Grahame Dignam, Max McPherson.

The After-Ceremony collage...





The AWM tour and into the Archives for some very well presented written material and maps...





Dinner that night...



The next day...breakfast, Mt Pleasant - where the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery National Monument is located at Duntroon and then lunch -



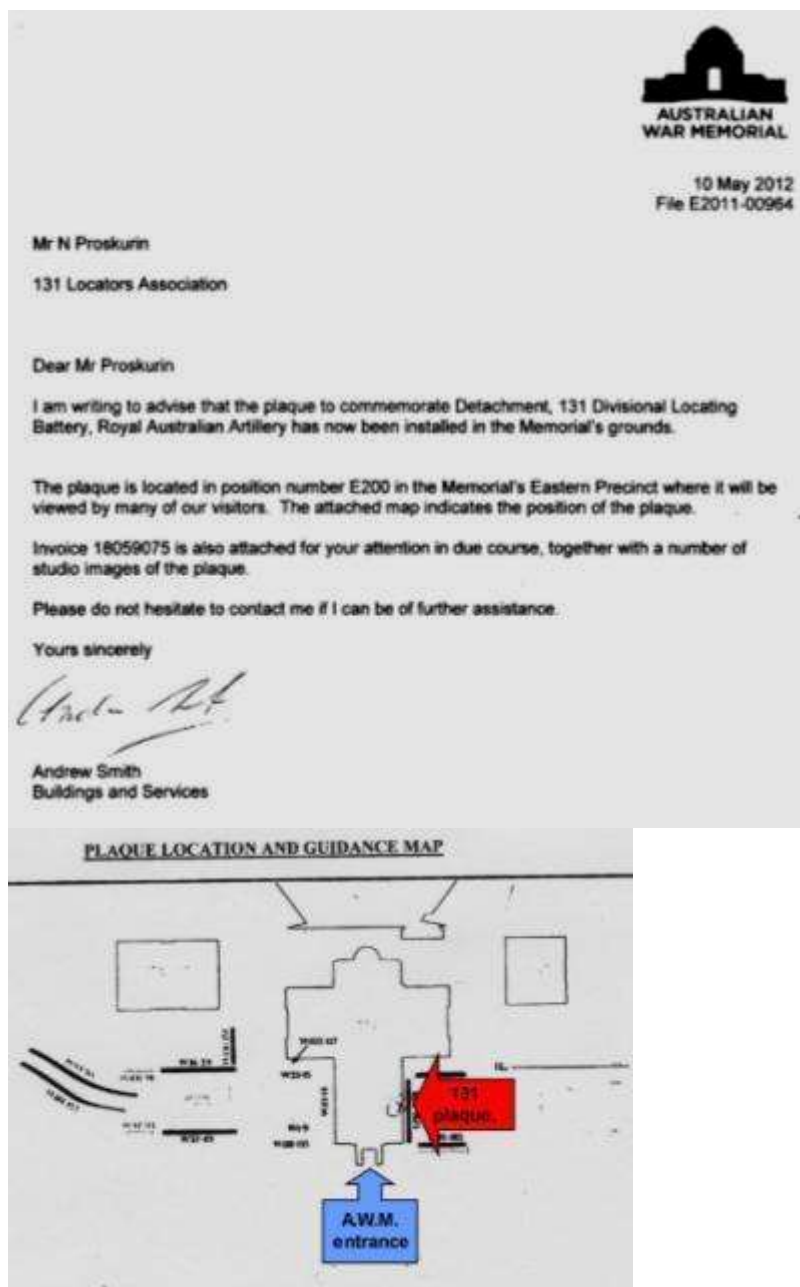
Left to right – Kevin Browning, John Blake, Leigh Hemming, Bob Billiards, Ernie Newbold, Vic Danko, Frank Ipsa, Craig Castona (1/83rd), Stan Briggs, Rob Retrot, Al Adams, Grahame Dignam and Paul Dickson.



Hey, some of the getting to know you started Thursday night...



And here's the Plaque's permanent home – position **No E200** in the Memorial's Eastern Precinct - go and visit it sometime! Maybe the Surveyors can give us a grid reference?



...as a lead up to the Ceremony we'd received the following –

Bill Taggart (1/83rd) – “On behalf of the 1/83rd, I wanted to wish all the members of the 131 DLB a great day this Friday in Canberra and I hope that the plaque dedication ceremony is a big success. I am sure you are very proud to see this day arrive. It will be a wonderful day for all of you I am certain and I want you to know how proud we are of you all and for this well deserved honor.
Best wishes to all of you, Bill”

Kevin Grime – “Hi Dicko,
Have an enjoyable time in Canberra, my best to all attendees, if you keep your eyes open, you will see our 1 Aust Civil Affairs Plaque on the same footpath, that we dedicated a few years ago, on the left about 80 plus metres from the car park.
Sorry we are unable to be with you, just once again, but are in central Queensland attending to family affairs after the loss of a brother at Christmas.
Will be with you all in spirit and in spirits late on Friday at Clermont RSL, will raise a glass to all those 131 guys both living and passed yonder, and will look out for the new plaque when in Canberra later in the year.
Best from Moo & Mee – keving”

...As a post script to the event we've received the following – the following sentiments expressed will make you feel slightly prouder to have been and now be involved with these blokes as for some of them, catching up has taken 46 years plus – you could see the special gleam in their eyes...here are the emails in the order that they were received -

Ron Mason – “Graham, I have just transferred membership to the Locators account, trust it arrives ok. Next & most important, a very big thank you to you and the committee for all the work that you people put in to make the 3rd & 4th of May such great days, both as social and ceremonial occasions. Both Margaret & I are well aware of the work required to organise such events as we have both been involved on various committees for many years.

Many thanks

Ron & Margaret Mason”

John Chilton – “Thanks for a good night Dicko. I checked my copy - only signature is Kevin Browning. Take care mate. John Chilton”

Bruce Irvine – “Hi Paul,

No I don't have Stan's book and I hope it finds its way back to him - I'm sure it will. It was great to catch up with Stan and others I who haven't seen (in some cases) since Vietnam.

I'd like to thank the committee who brought the whole dedication to fruition. It was a great culmination for everybody and will be remembered, particularly by those who went to SVN.

Your re-ignition of the E&E and your continuing efforts to bring our veteran community together has and continues to show benefit for all of us. Thank you most sincerely and keep up the great work.

Kind regards, Bruce Irvine”

Barry Campton sent in a combo email covering Stan Brigg's missing “Tracks...” and in another email asked me not to hang **KB (Kevin Browning)** out in public for the mix up! Bah humbug, for the first time in my life I've managed to snare KB – grrreat! Then Barry did continue on with thanks and some points in relation to the contents of “Tracks...” - “Paul

“**Kevin Browning** handed me what was now obviously not my copy as I was leaving. Get Stan to contact me to arrange an exchange

As a matter of interest I have found a couple of slight discrepancies.

Page 104

The Armco is not “housed” at the entrance to the School of Artillery.

Page 228

Major Mick Burge was OC 103 Bty not the CO. The CO was Lt Col Dick Cubis.

What a great event the dedication and dinner turned out to be. Congratulations to all concerned.

Regards Barry”

Keith Ayliffe – “G'day Paul

To all who partook in the instigation, preparation, and dedication of the plaque, I believe you all should pat yourselves on the back. It was a great achievement I am sorry I was unable to attend, so as to convey my thanks to all personally.

Regards Keith”

John Chilton – “Hi Grahame, I wanted to thank you for the Ceremonial and the Dinner. The dinner went so quickly. Terry Erbs and myself never stopped talking, trying to catch up on 45 years of not seeing each other. I never even had time to say goodbye to you and all the other boys, and thank you all for a wonderful time.

Take Care Mate, John Chilton.”

Rob Retrot – “Hi Dicko,

Here are a few of the photos Judith and I took during our visit to Canberra for the 131 Plaque Dedication. We arrived on Thursday and, after a minor adjustment to the existing plan beautifully co-ordinated by Dig, met up with a bunch of old friends at the aptly named “Ainsley” Football Club. No choppers or 105mm howitzers but a great evening to start things off.

More old friends at breakfast on Friday: it was fantastic, almost surreal to meet up with you and all the others after so long. Entirely my fault, I know, and it won't be allowed to happen again. The ceremony was excellent with the speeches relevant and entertaining. I particularly enjoyed Warwick Hamilton's recollections of dealing with 'Nashos'. I have some idea of the amount of work, negotiations and organisation that goes into an event like this and my sincere thanks and compliments to the committee for the work you have done. The guided tour of the AWM afterwards was also a good idea, although Judith and I returned the next day for a more leisurely and detailed look at some of the exhibits.

Then came the dinner which I would say was a roaring success even though we didn't win any of the raffles! I thoroughly enjoyed the steak and the Shiraz, locally produced. But best of all was seeing everyone enjoy the occasion and the company.

After another rousing breakfast on Saturday, most of those who were not leaving immediately went to Duntroon Military College for another photo opportunity at the Artillery Memorial on the hill. After a bit more fun and a great view we headed our various ways. Vic dropped Judith and me off at the AWM where we spent the next several hours while Vic went home to Sydney. Thanks for the lift, Vic! And thanks again to the committee for organising such a memorable and enjoyable event!

Regards Rob Retrot”

Terry Erbs – “Giddy Paul,

Many thanks to the committee for all their hard work, planning and the final outcome of a wonderful couple of days in Canberra culminating with the plaque dedication service. Lesley and I had a great time socialising with fellow locators and wives, what an interesting and engaging group of people. Another highlight for me was catching up with Johnny Chiltern after 46 years and to discover he too lives in SE Queensland! Again many thanks and I hope everybody had safe journey home. Cheers Terry Erbs”

Kevin Browning - (an extract of an email sent to Grahame Dignam) – “I have you may I congratulate all concerned in arranging and organizing the activity in Canberra for a job extremely well done. Regards Kevin”

...and last, but not least, a word from Tim Ford -



Tel: 02 83949161

Major General Tim Ford, AO (Retd)
Representative Colonel Commandant Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery

PO Box 744
Surry Hill NSW 2010
Australia

Message from the RAA Representative Colonel Commandant
Major General Tim Ford, AO (Retd)
On the occasion of the dedication of the Detachment 131 Divisional Locating Battery
RAA Plaque at the AWM on 4th May 2012

Dear Fellow Locators, Gunners and supporters,

As RAA Representative Colonel Commandant, a Locator and a previous Commander Det 131 Div Loc Bty In South Vietnam, let me first apologise for not being able to join you today at this important dedication. I wish you all the very best for a most memorable service and day.

On behalf of all Gunners, past and present, I also wish to express our admiration and thanks to those many who served with the Detachment in Vietnam with distinction and valour and in the very fine tradition of Australian Gunners and Locators that continues today.

I congratulate the 131 Locators Association President Allen Morley and its members in arranging the laying and dedication of this plaque today and the Dinner tonight. I trust you will have a great day and be very pleased that the memory of the service and sacrifice of Australians as members of the Detachment 131 Divisional Locating Battery RAA will always be recorded and remembered at the Australian War Memorial through this plaque.

Ubique,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim Ford'.

Tim Ford

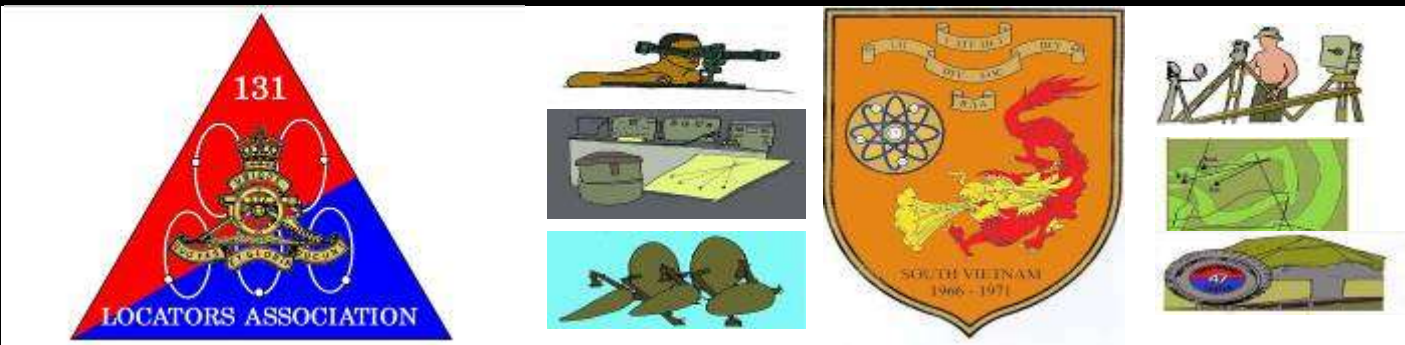
Ed – just as a final note on the occasion which was a credit to the group that put it together as it is something that we should be ever thankful for. The photo of a very proud **Nick Proskurin** alongside the Plaque says it all.

The actual event was amazing as it allowed faces and names to be linked, some after 45 years. One of my fond memories will be someone pointing out **Frank Ipsa** to me, my saying g'day, then later in the evening Frank saying that he actually remembered me – I hadn't changed – always worth a laugh (he was being kind)!

Another highlight was **Norm McManus's** impromptu heartfelt words relating to the camaraderie fostered by the interaction of the ARA members and the Nashos – that put a gloss on the night.

It was good to see friends and family there and as I tried to express at the dinner, that if it wasn't for their support over the past 40 plus years we would not be here on that night.

Fellas, let's not wait too long to do it again!



Committee members: President – Allen Morley, **Tresurer/Secretary** – Grahame Dignam, **Public Officer** – Victor Danko, **Webmaster** – Bob Billiards, **Research Officer** – Ernie Newbold, **General members** – Ian Amos, Ged Carroll 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

<http://www.131locators.org.au>

The Association would like to thank those who attended, contributed comments and a special thanks to those who sent in photos – all of which made this special occasion more memorable.

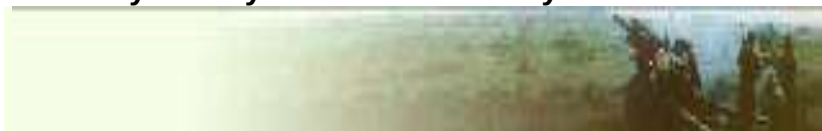


131 Locators Association is always on the lookout for new financial members. With the upcoming establishment of the web site we are going to be burdened with the ongoing cost of maintenance etc and we need to be able to support this effort equally.
 So, if you're a non-financial Associate receiving emails 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?

Web site - <http://www.131locators.org.au/131locators/>

. 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>

. Locating Artillery Association...



LOCATING ARTILLERY ASSOCIATION

The Eyes And Ears Of The Battlefield



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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