

# THE EYES and EARS

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## The Mystery of 131 Divisional Locating Battery Banners...?





**Grahame Dignam** has picked up the baton once more on this very important and somewhat troubling predicament – the “missing 131 Div Loc Bty banner” (pictured above – “yes the blue one”)! Well, it’s not something that would have been left on the steps at North Head or inadvertently used a table cloth and had tomato sauce spilled on it in ’87?

**Grahame explains** - At a meeting of 131 Locators Assn Inc. Ernie Newbold handed over a collection of various material given to him by Joe Kaplun that had been with the Museum at North Head. Among the material were registers of the personnel that were contacted for the Welcome Home Parade, black & white prints of the gathered personnel on the School of Artillery Parade Ground steps with a banner in front (another colour picture in the collection revealed the blue colour in the banner – see above).

Also Included was a neatly folded piece of silky material with a gold tasselled fringe. The main part badly faded but was once a red triangle over a blue triangle with “131 BTY” in black material in the centre.

Initially I was more concerned with the names listed in the Register as I knew a lot of those names and memories were triggered when I recollected the faces and attempted to place them. The 131 BTY flag was not so momentous and was overlooked.

Sometime later, I thought of establishing the origin of the 131 Div Loc bty flag. It was curious in that it had 2 brass toggle clips sewn in that indicated that it hung with 131 Div Loc Bty top to bottom (not displayed horizontally as a banner).

I then asked questions of those I knew had been in the ARA and who might have known about the flag. I harassed Kevin Browning and also Jeff Bassford and Peter Summers simply because they had been active in the formation of the early 131 DLB Association. I was given a lot of info but nothing really regarding the flag. I let the matter lie as I had other things to pursue.

While in Seymour in May this year (2015), I spoke to Peter Summers again and the interest piqued once more and I restarted this time with different faces who might know the story, someone like Keith Ayliffe who had co-authored “Tracks of the Dragon”. Also present in Seymour was Major Russell Hamsey 2IC 20STA. In conversation, he indicated that he was interested in preserving the 131 heritage and anything tangible would be valuable to show the “new “ locators where they evolved from. This flag is not only part of our heritage but now theirs.

**Our aim is to present the flag to the present Battery Commander at a Dedication Ceremony on 25<sup>th</sup> April, 2016 at Gallipoli Barracks, Enoggera . This marks the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of 131 Div Loc Bty embarkation to SVN in 1966.**

In our latest conversations, Keith volunteered the following which set me off again . He mentioned Tony Foley who mentioned 20 Locating Regiment active around 1958 -1964 era when 131 was a Battery.”

**...here’s the lowdown on the communications...**

**Kevin Browning** - “Graham, I cannot recall having seen that banner before (131 Div Loc Bty Flag). If you know where the photo was taken it might spark a memory.

I have attached three photos that you probably already have. They show the first banner we had made (best to ask Jeff Bassford or Peter Summers about who made it) and also the one we had for the Welcome Home Parade. The first banner was made for us to carry in the Welcome Home Parade, we were the only Gunner unit to have one made. Basically we had been given permission to hold our reunion at the School of Artillery. They also had the task of organising the gunner component of the parade and many of the units gathered at North Head the day(s) before and accommodated in whatever housing was available, mainly in the old gym. I do not recall whatever happened to that Banner. For the next Anzac Day we had the one now used produced. Regards, Kevin”

**...so Grahame contacted Keith Ayliffe and Keith responded with -**

"G'day Grahame,

I'm not certain but it could be the missing flag of the radar unit that was at North head. Because of the passing of time and people I have lost contact with this era.

By 1958 20 Loc Regt was raised . The regiment became an integrated ARA /CMF unit with 60% CMF and 40% ARA. It was located at two separate locations, the Survey (Believed to be 133 Bty) operated out of Pittwater Road, Manly NSW, while the Regimental Headquarters and Radar ( believed to be 131 Bty) and Transport operated from North Fort, (North Head, Manly NSW) In the early 1960's a Light Aid Detachment (LAD) from R.A.E.M.E was attached. Headquarters later moved to Randwick, NSW. Later 131 would move to Holsworthy NSW and become 131 Div Loc Bty. The Bty at the 133 Bty at Pittwater became 133 Div loc Bty later moving to Belmore NSW.

**I can't say with any certainty but it could be the first 131 flag. It would have been the only time 131 was a simple Bty and being located at the old School of Arty.** There are a couple of people I can possibly chase up if they still be with us. It may take a few weeks. Regards Keith"

**then on 20/10 Grahame got another email from Keith -**

"G'Day Grahame,

Been considering what you're doing and I've remembered a name of a man that may have a memory of that 131 Bty Sign.

I have lost contact with him BUT he may have joined your association. His Name is **Tony (Anthony) Foley** and he was around in those days. Tony was in 20 Locating Regiment when it was originally formed.

I know he was a member of the Loc Association so I will contact their Secretary to see if I can get an address.

Keith"

**...now very excited Grahame got back to Keith -**

"Keith,

**JACKPOT!** Tony Foley is our latest member and I will contact him after today's meeting and find out what he knows . He called on a couple of occasions and he is very easy to talk to and very helpful - he has a lot of stories that he may be coaxed to tell one day!

Thanks for the lead..."

**...now to Tony Foley...**Grahame wrote in an email that was never received due to computer problems..."Hello Tony, I am doing some research on our "131 heritage" and Keith Ayliffe has suggested you may be able to assist - we hope so!

I'm still doing homework from the May '15 Seymour event and after talking at Seymour I thought I would chase this one up.

I have asked Kev Browning about the 2 banners and got his recollections. He has told me what he knows about the blue banner from the Welcome Home parade shown on the Steps at the School of Arty North Head (see earlier in this story – above).

However he was not aware of the smaller faded 131 which is shown hanging (at left) at my place. It was originally red over blue with 131 sewn on top. The interesting thing is that the brass attachments are such as to have it flown as a flag not as a banner.



We are after the origins of the smaller one ("131 BTY") and the location of the larger "blue" one.

Do the pics spark any memories for any of you or can you point us to "someone who may know"?

We would like to fill in a couple of missing parts to "our" puzzle so any help or hint is appreciated - please let us know? Regards, Grahame"

**...there was some email problems, but Grahame, never daunted had a conversation which went something like this...**

"So Tony, We would like to pick your brain regarding the flag attached below. The aim of the project is to have the "131 flag" mounted under glass with a little history or as much as we can muster and present it to the Battery in Enoggera next April being the 50th Anniversary of our arriving in SVN in May 1966. If you feel more can be accomplished on the 'phone my No. is 02 9822 9218 and I can be reached most evenings after 7.00 PM bar Tuesdays.

We do appreciate any assistance you may be able to provide.

Regards, Grahame Dignam"

**...watch this space as the response is yet to come...**

. **Terry Erbs** sent in the following with regards to seeing a display by 20 STA Regiment - “Giddy Allen & Dig,  
I was at 20th STA’s display in 7th Brigade Park Chermside last Saturday, took some photos and hope this article  
might be included in the next “*Eyes & Ears*”, with the intention of generating members interest in coming to Brisbane  
for the plaque dedication/Anzac Day 2016.  
Cheers Terry”



Note: Images 1, 2, and 3 are self  
Explanatory.



Image 4 - Sergeant Rappard & Bombardier Plant beside  
Shadow 200 - 7th Brigade Park Chermside 12 Sept 2015



"Last Saturday (26<sup>th</sup> September) 20th STA Regiment, although part of 6th Brigade, was on display at 7th Brigade Park in Chermide along other units of 7th Brigade including 1st Regiment RAA .

This was to commemorate the 100th anniversary of 7th Brigade's landing at Gallipoli and to recognise this historical occasion a memorial plinth was unveiled within the park.

A bit of history - 7th Brigade was formed in early 1915, as part of the 2nd Division 1st AIF, with four infantry battalions, the 25th, 26th, 27th & 28th, raised in Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia.

As part of 2nd Division 1AIF, the 7th Brigade landed at Gallipoli in September 1915 as reinforcements, occupying positions north of Anzac Cove, around North Beach and inland.

Where they landed is tough country, steep with crumbling poor soil and little water. When Phil Sheedy, Johnny Bristow and I were there for Anzac Day 2002, John described it as "even bloody poor goat country!"

The only green areas are around the well maintained war graves, memorials and lawns, thanks to the Australian War Graves Commission - your tax dollars well spent!

A bit more history - after the Gallipoli campaign, 7th Brigade were retrained and reinforced in Egypt, before being deployed amongst the first Australian troops sent to the Western Front in March 1916.

For the next two-and-a-half years they took part in many major Australian battles including the Battle of Pozieres, Lagnicourt, Passchendaele and Broodseinde.

In 1918, they undertook a defensive role during the German Spring Offensive, fighting around Villers-Brentonneux, near where today's Anzac Day services are held in the quiet French rural countryside.

The 20th STA Regiment's display at Chermide was highlighted by the UAV Shadow 200, on its hydraulic rail launcher and support Ground Control Station [GGS] mounted on the back of a MOG.

During the day there were many visitors, particularly kids and their parents, who were shown over the Regiments' equipment by the friendly and informative gunners.

Hopefully as part of the plaque dedication and Anzac Day 2016, 20th STA Regiment will also show members their current equipment and for all you radar types, you can check out the restored AN/KQP-1 too! "

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## First Battle of Coral - 12th - 13th May 1968 - The Real Story

by Colonel I.F. Ahearn (Retd), Gun Position Officer, 102nd Field Battery, FSPB Coral 1968

### Delays and Disruption

The initial deployment did not go smoothly. It set the scene for a day where there was considerable confusion, with important decisions being made on the spot as events unfolded.

The first disruption reported in the deployment, according to the Official History, was made by Lieutenant Colonel Shelton CO 3 RAR when he discovered that the US Army was in contact with the enemy in the vicinity of Coral. According to the History, Shelton, after radio discussions with the Commander 1 ATF, began to make rapid changes to the plan. The History does not say what those rapid changes were and, at the time, no information was passed to the Gunner elements of the deploying force about any changes, rapid or otherwise.

According to the Official History, an 'American air commander' prevented B Company of 3 RAR from landing at K Pad at Coral. Yet, the reconnaissance parties of 12 Fd Regt and 1 RAR which were scheduled to land at K Pad (Map Reference XT9252840) just five minutes later did so without any problems. On arrival the reconnaissance parties (of which the author was a member) were met by US troops, not members of B Company 3 RAR. Contrary to this reality the Official History states that B Company 3 RAR on landing at an LZ some 1,000 metres to the South West 'hurried' to the original landing zone which could only have been K Pad. If so they were not sighted by the reconnaissance parties or 161 Fd Bty.

All was confusion on the LZ. The helicopters containing the Gunner and 1 RAR reconnaissance parties landed at 0720 hours into an area secured by a company from the US Army 1st Division (the Big Red 1) with airstrikes being conducted to the West. The 102 Fd Bty GPO, Lieutenant Ian Ahearn (the author), together with a Gun Section Commander, 2nd Lieutenant Bob Lowry and a Gunner Surveyor Gunner Geoff Dwyer, had travelled with the 161 Fd Bty party. Adding to the growing confusion, the Regimental Reconnaissance Party, which included the 2IC of 12 Fd Regt, on landing, disappeared from the LZ and, at first, could not be contacted by radio. The only clue to the whereabouts of the party was provided by an American infantryman when he advised that '... some guys had left the perimeter' and headed out into 'Indian country'.

The Gunners in the reconnaissance parties expected that the procedures for a Regimental deployment would be followed. That is the 2IC of the Regiment, Major Brian Murtagh, would indicate areas for each of the three gun batteries (including the US Battery that was to deploy the next day). Normally, the total area would be approximately 400 metres square. Each of the GPOs would then lay out their gun positions in their assigned areas. But the disappearance from the LZ of the Regimental Reconnaissance Party and the inability to establish radio communications prevented an orderly deployment of the artillery from the very outset.

Growing confusion was suddenly compounded by the unexpected arrival of the 161 Fd Bty guns. The sky above the LZ quickly filled with Chinook helicopters carrying the guns of 161 Fd Bty, but with the absence of the 2IC there was no designated area in which to land the guns. There were also no gun tractors on the ground, so once the guns were landed, an action that the helicopters wanted to complete immediately, the only way to move the guns was by manpower. Apart from the intense problem that now existed on the ground, the arrival of these guns was the first sign

that there was disruption to the planned air insertion. According to the plan, 161 Fd Bty guns were not due until 1000 hours. The New Zealanders had no choice but to accept their guns and Lieutenant Rod Baldwin, 161 Fd Bty GPO, sprinted away to lay out the gun markers.

Despite repeated efforts by both 161 Fd Bty and 102 Fd Bty, the 2IC could not be contacted by radio until the time when the helicopters began to land the 161 Fd Bty guns. With communications being finally established, the 2IC acknowledged the pressing situation and ordered that the 102 GPO Party move to his location '... just up the track'. Such an obscure order was not at all helpful. The 2IC, whose actual location was still unknown, provided no map reference. The area had formerly been a rubber plantation and, naturally, it was littered with tracks. It was impossible to know what track the 2IC was referring to. The author therefore requested the 2IC to throw a smoke grenade to provide a visual indication of his location. The author then took a compass bearing on the smoke and he and his two companions marched out of the LZ now in a state of frantic activity with the deployment of the New Zealand guns. In his book, *The Battle of Coral*, Lex McAulay described the actions of Murtagh's party once they had arrived at K Pad: 'The recce party checked the location and found that they were 1000 m away from the desired location, so they set off in that direction.'

This comment seems to explain why Murtagh's party had disappeared from the LZ and moved off into surrounding country. It is not clear which member of the '... recce party checked the location' but whoever it was could not map read. Apart from the confusion caused by the absence of the 2IC from the LZ at a critical time, this error in basic navigation was to have an impact on the subsequent operations around Coral.

The Official History failed to understand what transpired during the initial landing at the prescribed LZ when it declared that '... the guns (161 Fd Bty) were landed in an improvised landing zone, a clearing some 1,000 metres to the southwest of FSB Coral.' That statement is wrong; as explained above, 161 Fd Bty guns were landed at the only map location given in the orders. The location was subsequently verified by a report at 1045 hours that 161 Fd Bty, despite the frantic confusion, had expeditiously established the battery on the ground and was ready for action at map grid reference 927284. This grid reference specified a position just 200 metres from the LZ designated in the orders. On this basis alone, it is indisputable that 161 Bty was delivered to the right location and the Regimental Gun Position should have been grouped around that location.

Things did not turn out so well for the Australian battery. Murtagh selected a site for 102 Fd Bty that was simply too far from the initial LZ. The only explanation for Murtagh's decision to site 102 Fd Bty so far from the initial LZ was poor map reading and a mistaken appreciation of how much real estate was needed to accommodate the future tenants of Coral. When the author's party eventually found Murtagh, he was some 1500 metres from the LZ area. Deeply concerned, the author pointed out the enormous gap between the battery locations but Murtagh was unmoved and replied that as the Task Force was deploying, the space would be needed.

To determine an accurate location of the area, Ahearn, Lowry and the Battery Surveyor moved off into the rubber to a set of ruins that appeared on the map; this meant that the ruins could be given a grid reference. Using a theodolite the three moved back to the position, which Murtagh had indicated, to provide an accurate map location for the guns. As they moved through the rubber, they came upon an area with a hundred freshly dug circular weapons pits and picked up an AK-47 round and a lolly with a Ho Chi Min wrapping. These were obvious signs that an enemy force had rested in the area within the last day or so. This vital and disturbing information was reported to Murtagh, but it appears that he told no one.

At this stage of the initial deployment it was now apparent that 1 RAR was not to land as planned since the supporting US helicopters had been temporally withdrawn resulting in a delayed fly-in. The withdrawal of helicopter support did affect the orderly arrival of 102 Fd Bty guns which began to be flown in at 1230 hours before 1 RAR. Some of the battery sorties were delayed until later in the day. D Company 3 RAR, the company designated to defend the FSPB, indicated that it arrived at Coral (although timings are confused). According to Lex McAulay, the Officer Commanding (OC) discussed the situation with Murtagh '... came to some arrangement'. The OC of D Company explained that: 'There was a gap between the rubber trees; we'd move our company up and sit there where we could get good views over the open ground on either side of the rubber. Now whether that was where we were intended to go or not, I'm not sure, but that was agreed with Brian Murtagh on the ground and we duly went off and dug in there.'

The precise location of D Company 3 RAR was never advised to 102 Fd Bty or the 1 RAR Mortar Platoon when the latter finally arrived at Coral. D Company 3 RAR was to take no further part in the activities of the first night at Coral. The vagueness of the 'arrangements' arrived at by Murtagh and the OC indicated the beginnings of the muddled planning and preparation for the defence of Coral. The alarming feature of what was unfolding was that Murtagh had been told about the close proximity of freshly dug enemy weapon pits, had seen the nervous Americans at the landing zone and had seen the airstrikes to the west. Such information should have had a significant impact on the officer who had been charged with the responsibility of local defence commander of the FSPB.

The Official History obliquely comments on the poor planning for the defence of Coral: 'Major Brian Murtagh, second-in-command of 12 Fd Regt and commanding the artillery tactical headquarters, was the designated commander of the fire support base; he was faced with the difficult and complicated problem of coordinating the defence of FSB Coral with his two batteries of guns some 1500 metres apart instead of being located at Coral and two battalions in his general area'.

This comment needs to be considered in detail. Murtagh was not 'commanding the artillery tactical headquarters' he was commanding 12 Fd Regt Regimental Headquarters. The appointment of a FSPB defence commander was common standard practice and had been followed in all deployments previous to Coral. The procedures and practices of coordinating FSPB defence were therefore well known by infantry company commanders and gun batteries. Up to this point in time, Murtagh had no real experience of being an FSPB defence commander. In addition to his lack of

experience – and probably because of it – Murtagh had complicated the FSPB defence problem by his own poor decision to site the two batteries 1,500 metres apart. While the Official History portrays Murtagh as being 'faced with the difficult and complicated problem of coordinating the defence of FSB Coral', the history fails to say that it was Murtagh's own decisions that created the major problem of the dispersal of the two batteries. Furthermore, the presence of the two infantry battalions 'in his general area' was not a problem as the Official History suggests. The presence of two battalions was a temporary and common practice and each only transited through 'his general area' into their own operational areas. Indeed, the two infantry battalions were irrelevant to Murtagh's role as defence commander of the FSPB because those units were not integral elements of the FSPB itself. The battalions would have no affect on his duties as the defence commander.

The infantry company allocated to FSPB defence, D Company 3 RAR, was not given clear orders by Murtagh nor, subsequently, were the other tenants of Coral under his command. It would seem that Murtagh himself contributed a great deal to the 'difficult and complicated problem of coordinating the defence'. Bob Lowry accurately described the end result of the deployment with a concise comment on the defence problem:

'The fire support base was under command of Murtagh for local defence, but was actually two separate bases, one clustered around 102 Battery and the other around 161 Battery, with the reconnaissance party of Headquarters 1 ATF and its Defence and Employment Platoon stranded between them. To compound matters, except for 10 Platoon located with 161 Battery, the remainder of D Company, 3 RAR, was too far away to assist in the local defence of either base.'

From the tactical perspective, the layout of the military force was quite unsound. In view of indications of the presence of a disciplined military force the poor tactical stance was inviting trouble. With the return of the US helicopters at the end of their temporary withdrawal, the disjointed fly-in recommenced and the infantry companies of 1 RAR began to flow through the 102 Fd Bty area. It was obvious that they were confused and disoriented; most sent their affiliated artillery Forward Observers to 102 Fd Bty to check on the map location before moving out to their night ambush positions. Second Lieutenant Gordon Alexander was sent on such a task by his OC, Major Tony Hammett:

'At the gun position, Alexander spoke to Ian Ahearn, the Gun Position Officer (GPO), and one of the Section Commanders, Bob Lowry. They told him of the newly dug positions in the rubber trees just north of the guns, and that they thought there was 'something funny going on'.

The gunners of 102 Fd Bty were unable to carry out the normal defensive tasks such as the erection of barbed wire and the bunding of guns since neither the defence stores nor the battery bulldozer had arrived. They were set to work digging their personal weapon pits to Stage 1 (four feet deep), a task that none enjoyed but an effort that saved lives later on. The Official History states that: 'Most 102 Battery soldiers had no time to dig their individual "shell scrapes" deeper than fifteen centimetres before they had to stand to.'

The statement gives a false impression and appears to be based on the recollections of Lance Bombardier Forsdike who was a member of HQ Bty 12 Fd Regt, not 102 Fd Bty. As indicated above most of 102 Fd Bty had dug to Stage 1 (1.5 metres deep) although some individuals may have only constructed shell scrapes. Unfortunately for the CP staff they also had to dig and then set up the CP since the bulldozer had arrived. A trench about two meters deep was dug then 'shelves' levelled out on each side to provide space for the CP staff (duty officer, two operator command post field and a signaller). Sandbags were placed around the edges, wooden beams laid over them for protective cover and the peak of an 11x11 CP tent placed on top of the beams. Radios, connected to an R 292 mast aerial were set up outside the CP against the sandbags and the handsets passed through into the CP.

As the fly-in was coming to an end, a detachment of 131st Divisional Locating Battery comprising two listing posts (LP) and a mortar locating radar was airlifted in among the last sorties. LP 31C was deployed near the machine gun in front of Number 4 gun and the radar was positioned between 102 and the Regimental CP on the western side of the gun position. LP 31E moved on foot over the 1500 metres to the 161 Bty position.

The 102 Fd Bty helicopter sorties to Coral were complete by 1720 hours and they included additional ammunition, part of the battery defence stores and an O-Sized bulldozer. The latter was quickly put to work piling up protective earth bunds around individual guns. The 1 RAR Mortar Platoon was among the last to arrive on the ground with last light fast approaching. The Mortar platoon was located at the left (northern) flank of the gun line some 50 metres from the nearest guns and like the guns it had a centre of arc of 1600 mils (due east).

The Mortar Platoon was not isolated on the perimeter as claimed in different accounts of Coral; in a further display of the poor defensive layout the Mortar Platoon, 12 Fd Regt HQ and 102 Fd Bty actually formed the perimeter!

Misleadingly, the Official History incorrectly presents a picture of a totally isolated mortar platoon (15) when in fact the mortars formed what could be regarded as a seventh gun platform in 102 Fd Bty located on the left–northern-flank of the gun position (when viewing the gun position in relation to the easterly centre of arc).

It was at this stage that CO 1 RAR decided that his HQ would not move out to join one of his companies as planned but would remain in Coral protected by his battalion's Assault Pioneer and Anti-Tank Platoons. The battalion headquarters and the two platoons were the closest infantry to the mortars and 102 Fd Bty, being some 400 metres south-east of the former and about 300 metres from the latter.

The poor defensive layout was only one aspect of the defence problem. As Lieutenant Tony Jensen, the Mortar Line Officer at Coral observed: '1 RAR mortars did not arrive on the position until approximately 1700 hours and there was no FSPB defence coordinating conference.'

Remarkably, there were no orders issued to any elements on the ground for the defence of Coral on that first night, including 161 Fd Bty isolated some 1500 metres to the south-west. The New Zealanders were left out on their own, a situation that was also noted in the Official History.

As local defence commander, Murtagh was also responsible for coordinating 161 Fd Bty defence and tying it in to the overall defence plan; the problem was that no plan existed and that the positioning of the two batteries had made the defensive task impossible. The defence principle of mutual support had been ignored.

At the 102 Fd Bty position Jensen and Ahearn sited and coordinated the arcs of the two Battery machine guns placed in front of Number 4 Gun and Number 6 Gun with the Mortar Platoon machine gun. In addition Jensen tied in the arc of the Regimental CP machine gun with the latter. No coordination was carried out with any of the HQ elements of 1 RAR nor was any orders group held by the FSPB Local Defence Commander.

The Official History recorded that the 1 RAR Anti-Tank Platoon's two 90 mm Recoilless Rifles (RCL) were sited to fire across the front of Jensen's mortars. (17) This comment reinforces the impression that the mortars were in a totally isolated position. This was not the case, the Mortar Line was shielded from the RCLs by the Guns of 102 Fd Bty. The RCLs could only fire across the right flank of the 102 Fd Bty gun position. In any case, no one informed Ahearn or Jensen that such a significant action had been taken. A telephone line was run between the Mortar CP, 102 CP and the Regimental CP. The line was not extended to HQ 1 RAR. No defensive wire barriers were constructed since the wire had finally arrived on the position late in the day and erection of barriers could not be completed by last light. Furthermore, no claymore mines were deployed since the location of D Company 3 RAR was not known as darkness fell. The claymore mine was a powerful local defence weapon that, something like a large shotgun, simultaneously fired thousands of steel balls parallel to the ground. A command detonated weapon, the mine could have a devastating effect on enemy forces attacking a position. On a more positive note, the O-Size bulldozer completed the protective earth bunds around Number 4, 5 and 6 Guns before last light.

With the dark came 'stand to', the practice whereby work ceased and all were required to 'watch their front' and maintain quiet in anticipation of an enemy assault. 'Stand to' was also implemented each morning at first light. It was essentially an infantry practice that was, at times, inappropriate in a gun position. The first night at Coral was one of those times as, what would normally be a period of attentive quiet, the last light 'stand to' was shattered by 105 mm Howitzers adjusting Defensive Fire tasks for the companies from the two infantry battalions which were still deploying. Indeed, the need to stop defensive work for a full stand-to under these circumstances was highly questionable and resulted in only the northern guns (number 4, 5 and 6) being bunded before the bulldozer was obliged to stop. The bunding around the Number 4, 5 and 6 Guns was to prove another stroke of luck. The map on page 13 shows the locations of the elements in and around Coral at last light on 12th May 1968.

The photograph of the 102 Fd Bty position (see later) has been rendered from a photograph taken by then Gunner Ross Alexander on the 13th May 1968. It shows the gun and mortar position as it was at last light on 12th May 1968.

**Next month** we'll continue this intriguing article and proceed with – **The Enemy Responds.**

**. Mike Butler** sent us the following of a re-union with a few of his mates and wives – a great article - "On 27 September 2015, the Class of 70/71 (NOT Pioneers, symbolically referred as the "The Tail End Charlie's" - they were the one who Turned Out The Lights!!!) met for our fourth reunion, we have four permanent members (sounds like the United Nations, bearing in mind we have one pom, one Austrian, one from the Netherlands and the one with a pommy dad - interestingly the pom, who served his tour and later applied for a passport was refused because he wasn't an Aussie - go figure!!!)

Our previous reunions have been in Melbourne (Mick and Michelle), Canberra (Fran and Pete) and last year Echuca (neutral ground). This year we met at Strathalbyn SA, and our hosts were Les and Helen Falkai and we had a fantastic time, Sunday night dinner at Les and Helen's, Monday a tour of the Strath, Tuesday a BBQ (very extended lunch) and we were joined by John Jaggard (another Class of 70/71), Wednesday - wineries, lunch at the pub and again dinner at Les and Helen's.

The intrepid five (at right), top row left to right, Peter Saint and John Jaggard, bottom row, left to right, Mick Butler, Les Falkai and Joe Molenkamp (note that we all agreed that we haven't changed a bit in 44 years). Interestingly while we tend not to dwell on THE WAR, we all agreed that contrary to popular pioneering opinion, the war **WAS NOT OVER IN 70/71.**



We were lucky that our wives, with the exception of Joe's wife Teena who was not well, were able to join us (photo at left) left to right, we have Fran and Pete, Les and Helen and Mick and Michelle. We all had a fabulous time and there was a lot of laughter and carry-ons, next year will be at Joe's in Wauchope, mid north coast NSW."

. **Rob Retrot** got in touch (it's been a while too!) with one of his latest "great night outs" – it's a great yarn...

"Hi Paul,

In answer to your questions: the occasion was a "Remembrance Day" dinner held in the Premiers Hall of the Parliamentary Annexe on 2 October. National Police Remembrance Day is held annually on 29 September to honour police officers killed on duty as well as those killed on active (military) service. There is usually a Dawn Service and a march followed by a church service. The formal dinner was organised by the Queensland Police Commissioned Officers and Sergeants Mess to raise money for Police Legacy. The Honourable, General Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC and his wife, Lady Cosgrove were invited as guests of honour and they generously accepted.



General Sir Peter Cosgrove is well known for his roles as commander of INTERFET, Chief of Army and Chief of Defence Force. Less well known are his exploits as a young platoon commander in Vietnam. Here is a brief summary of his career, courtesy of Wikipedia:

"Lieutenant Peter Cosgrove was commissioned on 11 December 1968 and was allotted to the Royal Australian Infantry. He arrived in Vietnam on 3 August 1969 and was posted to 9th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment on 20 August 1969.

On 10 October 1969, Lieutenant Cosgrove was commanding 5 Platoon, B Company. The platoon located an occupied bunker system in an area where, because of the proximity of allied troops, indirect fire support was difficult to obtain. In spite of this, he led his platoon in an assault on the bunkers without indirect fire support, capturing the system and killing and wounding at least four enemy without sustaining any casualties.

On 16 October 1969, 5 Platoon located another bunker system occupied by about a platoon of enemy. Lieutenant Cosgrove silently deployed his own platoon for an attack. His assault completely surprised the enemy causing them to flee, abandoning large quantities of food, stores and documents.

The following day in the same bunker system a party of enemy approached his right forward section and was engaged by the sentry. Knowing that the remainder of the section was elsewhere on other tasks, Lieutenant Cosgrove ran to the contact area and personally conducted the fight against the enemy. As a result of his actions, two enemy were killed and three weapons and four packs containing rice were captured. He was awarded the Military Cross for these actions.

In 1980 he was awarded the National Medal. In the mid-1980s he commanded the 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment.

Cosgrove came to national fame in 1999 when, as a major general, he led the international forces (INTERFET) in a peacekeeping mission to East Timor. The mission's success made him one of Australia's most respected and popular military leaders. He was promoted in 2000 to lieutenant general as Chief of the Army and in 2002 to general as Chief of the Defence Force.

Judith and I were honoured to be invited to the dinner and found Sir Peter to be friendly, outgoing and down to earth.

A lovely, "garrulous man" as Judith said. It was a pleasure to meet this fellow Vietnam veteran.

And I was particularly pleased that my 25 year old mess kit still fitted me, more or less.

Best regards, Rob Retrot"

. **Ian "Fin" Finlay** sent the following interesting article – it's worth giving it the thrice over...

**ARTICLE FROM "PACIFIC STARS & STRIPES" 22 Sep 1970 ....45 years ago**



By BARNEY SEIBERT

**NUI DAT, Vietnam (UPI)**—It's a different kind of war at the Australian task force base at Nui Dat.

The 5,000-man Australian task force, including a battalion size element of New Zealanders, is the only Allied unit in the Indochina War with tactics markedly different from those used by Americans, South Vietnamese, South Koreans and Thais.

The South Vietnamese, Koreans and Thais all were trained and advised by Americans. So were the Laotians. Even the Cambodians are learning the American counter-insurgency tactics from the South Vietnamese.

But the Australians have needed no advice from Americans in scouring the jungles for the Viet Cong in Phuoc Tuy Province, a lightly populated area of jungled forests and mountains along the South China Sea 50 miles southeast of Saigon.

Japanese infantrymen, who were experts in the craft of jungle warfare, told American captors at the end of World War II that the Australians were the real jungle experts on the Allied side. "Americans are not jungle fighters," one prisoner of war remarked. "They simply remove the jungle."

The Australian expertise in jungle war was forged in expeditions to maintain order in New Guinea, polished in the Australian Army's jungle warfare school, and honed in 12 years of campaigning against the Communists in Malaysia.

The Aussies are the only U.S. allies in Vietnam who brought along most of their own equipment and who pay their own way.

In addition to the 5,000-man task force there are another 3,000 Australian fighting men in Vietnam—airmen, sailors and military advisors working with South Vietnamese units. About 50 per cent of the Australians are conscripts.

Because of their jungle warfare expertise, the Australians are less oriented toward air mobility in the Indochina conflict.

One of the first things Americans notice at Nui Dat is the absence of helicopters—the Aussies have only about half as many as

a conventional U.S. infantry unit of equivalent size and about one-fourth of the total assigned to an American air mobile division.

Another major difference in the Australian concept is the absence of Vietnamese civilian workers at the base. "We do not have a security problem," one officer said.

#### Other Differences:

The Australians live in tents rather than "hooches," call their infantrymen "crunchies" rather than "grunts," maintain their vehicles and equipment almost as well as the Koreans—the most spit and polish soldiers in Vietnam—leave the trees standing to provide shade when they build a base camp rather than removing the vegetation to minimize the infiltration danger.

The Australians buy their artillery pieces and ammunition from the United States—"in the quantities in which you make it we can buy it cheaper than we could make it ourselves." They also buy machine guns, grenade launchers, armored personnel carriers and some web equipment.

Their tanks are British Centurions. Their rifles are the Belgian NATO weapon, which uses the same cartridge as the M.S. M16; the Aussies say it has better range and is less susceptible to jamming than the M16. Their jeeps and weapons carriers are various modifications of Australian-built Land Rovers and their trucks are built by the Australian subsidiary of International Harvester Corp. The trucks do not have the familiar dual rear wheels of U.S. Army vehicles.

The elite Australian unit in Vietnam is the Special Air Service Squadron, highly trained volunteers who are paratrooper qualified.

In four years of operations in South Vietnam's Phuoc Tuy Province, the Australians have killed 2,840 Viet Cong and driven the only two main force Viet Cong battalions, D445 and D440, from the province.

Intelligence estimates show about 800 Viet Cong guerrillas remain in the province and the Communist infrastructure has been reduced 50 per cent to 1,500 persons. During the 1968 Tet offensive there were an estimated 5,000 Viet Cong soldiers in the province, supported by an infrastructure of 3,000 persons.

And the Australians in Vietnam know more than just how to fight.

"Take a look at the Aussies' pacification program," a civilian official of the U.S. Mission in Vietnam said. "It's one of the most effective in the country."

Lt. Col. Keith P. Outridge, 43, of Canberra, commander of the 1st Australian Civil Affairs Unit, said: "We only try to do things as the Vietnamese see it and wish it done, and try to do some-

thing to stimulate their development as we see it and hope they see it the same as we do."

The "Australian Province" — Phuoc Tuy — is a 400-square-mile area of mountains, jungle, forests and coastal swamps. It's 105,000 residents are poor and the province has never been self sufficient in food. Before war disrupted its economy, its people

made their livelihood by working on the large rubber plantations, lumber mills, salt drying ponds and in the resort hotels along the beaches.

The Australian pacification program is similar to but somewhat smaller in scope than American efforts in other provinces and there is some U.S. pacification activity by the American Civil Operations Rural Development Support (CORDS) program in the province. But most of the effort is Australian.

The principal difference is the administration. Pacification is a civilian responsibility among the Americans, a military responsibility among the Australians.

Col. Outridge sees both advantages and disadvantages in a militarily administered pacification program.

On the plus side, he said, is that fact that "most authority in a country at war is military and there is an empathy between military men; we have closer access to military resources to carry out the programs."

Disadvantages, he finds, are "a lack of expertise in specific fields and lack of continuity in projects" due to the one-year military rotation.

However, he feels that a military pacification program may get to the areas where it is needed most sooner than a civilian program because the soldier is less likely to be kept at a distance by absence of physical security.

"We try to work with the soft moccasin instead of the hob nail boot," Outridge said. "We try to get the Vietnamese into the program as soon as we can. We insist on their input. They must initiate the project, it must benefit the government, and they must help carry it out."

About 22 per cent of Phuoc Tuy Province's population are fishermen, 35 per cent farmers. To stimulate agriculture, the Australians have introduced breeding stock and model farm methods for chicken and hog raising operations.

"We go up and down the highway and persuade a farmer here and there to try it out. After that it spreads from neighbor to neighbor," Outridge said.

. **Peter Pioro** sent in the following of a very poignant trip he did with his wife in April this year...

**Re: Gallipoli 2015 ANZAC One Hundred Year Anniversary - Cruise  
20 STA Regiment Menz Club opening November 2007**

"My wife and I booked this cruise 5 years ago. The cruise was geared around the anniversary leaving Albany WA and retracing the route taken by the troop convoy ships heading to England however diverted to Egypt for training, then being deployed to Gallipoli.

**Basic Details:**

Cruise 16 March 2015 - 30 April 2015; Ship - MSC Orchestra; Depart Fremantle - 27 March for Albany;  
Depart Albany - 28 March; Stop over resting place of HMAS Sydney - 30 March; Continued cruise 30 March  
Arrived Gallipoli - 17 April; 17 & 18 April Ashore Gallipoli

- We proceeded to explore the main battle fields i.e. North Beach, ANZAC Cove, Beach Cemetery, Lone Pine, Quinn's Post, The Nek & Walker's Ridge, Chunuk Bair Ataturk Memorial & NZ Memorial.

- Very emotional 2 days even though neither of us had any direct family link.

- Turkish people were very accepting of us referring to us as ANZAC's

**ANZAC Day 25 April 2015**

- the ship sailed on with the cruise returning on 24 April taking up station with other cruise ships.

- As our ship was mostly x military and Veterans [ including myself and Normie Rowe among other Vietnam Vet's] our ship was allowed inside the exclusion zone set up by Turkish authorities. This allowed us to see the North Beach Dawn Service activity from the ship.

I kept a written diary of this trip and have a variety of books both Australian and Turkish publications with photos. [may make it to a meeting soon and will bring with me]

We took a variety of photos and I am attaching some for the newsletter with post script on each one.

**Some details which makes one think:**

**What was The Human Toll On Gallipoli**

| <b>Country</b> | <b>Dead</b> | <b>Wounded</b> |
|----------------|-------------|----------------|
| Australia      | 8,708       | 19,441         |
| New Zealand    | 2,721       | 4,752          |
| British        | 21,255      | 52,230         |
| France         | 9,829       | 17,175         |
| India          | 1,358       | 3,421          |
| Newfoundland   | 49          | 93             |
| Ceylon         | 4           | ?              |
| Others         | 29          |                |

Of 9 VC's awarded to Australians 7 were at Lone Pine.

The terrain once you see it in person scares the F .....S ..... out of you. How these guys managed what they did for so long is a wonder in itself.

I spoke to Normie Rowe at North Beach where only 100 meters and then a cliff 60% up as to the difference between this and Vietnam. And then with rifle fire raining down with no protection save the poor bugger who just got shot.

**A sobering bit of info,**

" ANZAC's saw for the first time that their own bullets caused exactly the same kinds of wounds, and they realised then that this was what happened when modern bullets hit a human body at close range".

There are NINE emails with attached photos coming your way.

Regards, Peter Pioro"

. **Peter Ravelje** got this story of a very special bloke – **Jim Bourke** – to us and is worthy of our attention for one bloke's intestinal fortitude to achieve a mammoth goal. We salute him.

**From the 1 RAR Association,**

Jim was a man's man and a soldier's soldier. He was instrumental in bringing home our 6 MIA's from Vietnam. Capt (later LtCol) Jim Bourke AM, MG. Jim served in SVN with the AATTV from Jun 68 to Aug 68 with 1/1 ARVN, 1<sup>st</sup> Division, Quang Tri, Sep to Dec 68 with 5<sup>th</sup> SFGA, company commander 212 Coy, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 2 MSF, Pleiku. Battalion CO two weeks in Nov 68. Jim then served with HQ 1 ALSG from Jan 69 to Jun 69. Jim also served with 1 RAR on his first tour of duty in South Vietnam from Jun 65 to Feb 66. He was wounded in action while serving with 1 RAR and his subsequent award for the Medal of Gallantry (MG) was for service during his tour with 1 RAR. It is indeed a sad day for Vietnam Veterans throughout Australia. Jim also worked tirelessly for the retrieval of Australian' MIAs with his team of helpers, additionally he was a stalwart for the welfare and benefits of our Veterans. I am sure he will continue his work from a place up high and look proudly upon those many members who he has mentored.



At left - Jim Bourke sitting between mates Gordon Peterson and Peter Aylett, has devoted his life to finding the remains of Australian soldiers; in unmarked graves from the Korean and Vietnam wars. Picture: Aaron Francis Source: News Corp Australia.

His heroism as a platoon commander with 1 RAR in the Vietnam War in 1966 should have killed him. He was shot while trying to save a wounded soldier, and won a medal for gallantry. But afterwards he lost himself in gin and what he reckons was survivor guilt. For a long while back in Australia, he says, he “wasn’t travelling too well”. Four decades later, he led his most important mission — to find and bring home the remains of six missing Australians: Richard Parker, Peter Gillson, David Fisher, Michael Herbert, Robert Carver and John Gillespie, left behind in Vietnam where they fell. It was Bourke who, in the early 2000s, used his initiative and resources, did thousands of hours of research, lobbied politicians and bureaucrats, and, when that failed, led a privately funded team to try to locate the missing six. Peterson and Aylett, Vietnam veterans, were vital to this mission. Darrouzet, who could not fathom why the government was not doing all in its power to bring back the men, stumped up cash. “Jim Bourke is a genuine hero, not just in the war but in finding those six Australians who fell in battle years later,” says Darrouzet, a wealthy former Queensland coal company owner. “You sometimes wonder, ‘Would I be good enough to go over the top?’, then you hear about six blokes who were good enough and who died in the fight in Vietnam, and their government said ‘too hard’, and left them there for almost 40 years.” Bourke’s refusal to go away — the single-minded determination that distinguished him in Vietnam — eventually would bring success, and embarrass the government and Defence chiefs into decisive and long-overdue action. As Bourke saw it, Australia had sent those six young men to war on a one-way ticket. In failing to bring home what was left of their bodies, the ultimate sacrifice they had made was not being honoured. He regarded it as a national disgrace. When Bourke and his team in 2007 found the remains of two of the missing six, Defence could no longer shirk its duty. Bourke and his like-minded mates had achieved results the experts predicted were impossible. They were making officialdom look bad. A new collaborative effort with Defence resulted in remains of the other four being found, carefully repatriated to Australia, and laid to rest with public and family ceremonies, political pomp and overwhelming community approval. In the ABC’s *Australian Story* in 2007, Carmel Hendrie, widow of lance corporal Gillespie, who had died in a helicopter crash in Vietnam in 1971, says of Bourke: “I just hope that he is at peace with himself because it’s not an easy job, what he’s doing. He must lay awake at night-time thinking, ‘Oh my god, have I got to find another body, have I got to face another family member?’ He’s the one who’s helping us to get to an end and an end is what we want, one way or the other.” With the missing six, he says, the men’s recovery “categorically confirmed their death, enabled the families to conduct funerals, afforded the rite of passage to the dead and enabled family members and others to re-engineer the social spaces in which they continued to connect with the dead”. It was positive, too, for comrades who had experienced guilt over abandoning the men in Vietnam. Bourke says the recovery of the remains “represented the ultimate act of reparation”. Bourke has one regret — he will die before the remains of any of the 42 Australians missing from the war in Korea are recovered. “They say: ‘It’s too hard, the North Koreans won’t talk to us about it,’” he says. “Well, they should get off their arses and use their diplomacy to engage the bastards.”

**LEST WE FORGET**

## **. August 2016 in Canberra** **– Vietnam Veteran’s Day**



**Not to be missed.**

**50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Battle of Long Tan.**

**Function Great Hall Parliament House.**

**Vietnam Veteran’s Day Service Vietnam Veterans Memorial.**

**Det 131 DLB Commemorative Dinner.**

**. A great discovery** – the following is a real bit of history in the form of a Monthly Operation Report -

**Det 131 Div Loc Bty (Fwd)**

**THAM THIEN**

**1 – 31 - Dec 68**

**MONTHLY OPERATION REPORT**

**1 ATF DET 131 LOC BTY RAA**

**1 DEC - 31 DEC 68**

**Outline**

1. Operation CAPITAL completed on 30 Nov 68.

2. Operation GOODWOOD commenced 3 Dec 68 with locations as

102 Fd Bty at FSB DYKE YS2780, 104 Fd Bty 2/35 at FSB CHESTNUT YS2280, C Bty 2/40 at F33 CHESTNUT YS2280, (6x105mm US), C Bty 7/8 Arty at FSB CHESTNUT YS2280 (2x8 in how US), Mors 3/11 ACR at FSB DAMPIER YS3686 (4x4.2 mors US), TF HQ at Base JULIA YS2281, AWCC at Base JULIA YS2281, 'B' Radar to FSB CHESTNUT

3. Subsequent moves;

C Bty 2/40 to BEARCAT Base, A Bty 2/35 to control of LONG BINH Special Zone, C Bty 7/8 Arty to LONG BINH, 102 Fd Bty to FSB DIGGERS REST YS 2787, 104 Fd Bty to FSB DIGGERS REST YS 2787, 161 Fd Bty to FSB AVENGER YS4583, 'B' Radar to Base JULIA, Mors 3/11 ACR to SUITCASE YS2678

Followed by: C Bty 7/8 Arty to Base JULIA, 161 Fd Bty to NUI DAT on 24 Dec 68, Fd Bty to FSB WATTLE YS3591 Artillery Intelligence

4. On 14 Dec a tank from C Sqn hit an explosive device, causing heavy damage. The explosive device is thought to have consisted of approx 40 lb of explosive. There was no evidence of an unexploded artillery round being part of the device. Earlier in the day an APC of 3/11 ACR struck a device which consisted of an unexploded 105mm shell; the explosion caused minimum damage. It has been found that artillery shells are being wired to act as both pressure and command detonated mines.

5. The introduction of rocket attack into PHUOC TUY Province came at 0330 hrs on 19 Dec 68 when the ARVN compound at DAT DO came under fire attack from an unknown size enemy force. On inspection the compound was found to have received 35 x 82mm mortar rounds from a base plate thought to be located within 1000 metres of the perimeter. With the exception of one lone crater, all craters had been dug up with crowbarss shovels etc despite a request to leave them untouched. The ARVN troops were quite pleased with their souvenirs.

6. An examination of the rockets used in the attack showed them to be of the 107mm variety, with the "trashcan" modification giving the over-calibre configuration of 200mm. A total of five (5) had landed within the compound, only one of which detonated. From occupants within the compound, approx five (5) more rockets overshot the target area and exploded in a timber line well clear of the area.

7. Both the mortars and the rockets were fired from a position SSE of the compound. The mortar base plate was found approx 300metres away as were nine (9) wooden 'A' frame rocket launchers. There were forty five (45) 82mmfuze caps and bomb plugs at the site, plus a piece of documentation listing names of persons within the compound.

8. This is only the second time in III CTZ that rockets have been used in the direct role. Possibly because of the fact of direct fire being employed can we assume that the angle of impact caused the over-calibre casing to break up on impact and render the rocket non functional. The 107mm rockets themselves were scattered about the base, whilst the shattered casings were near the initial point of impact.

9. The first reported incident of the enemy using this direct fire technique in III CTZ was at XS6562 on 14 Dec when an allied unit found 6x107mmrockets supported on bamboo poles and completely wired for firing. The rockets were aimed at an Arty position which was only 100metres away. Documentation has been found in the recent past making mention to the use of rockets in the direct role but this was the first known instance of its implementation.

**Radar Section**

10. The radar was deployed by air and road, with the platform complex forming the air load and the ancillary equipment and defence stores moving by road convoy.

11. Operational time of the radar deployed is in excess of 7000 hrs and this particular set had to be exchanged due to continued faults. Further investigation into the problem gave an indication that the radar mechanism was damaged by a faulty regulator on the generator. The replacement set is the newest in country and the first three days of functioning in the operational base were plagued with break-downs. The change over of sets was carried out by road and this could account for the faults detected; this was also the first time this set had been moved in an operational environment and the crop of minor faults could be due to expected "shake down". The set has since been functioning satisfactorily. Tracking of fire missions has given good results.

12. The radar at NUI DAT obtained a locrep during an attempt to mortar BINH BA and the area engaged with unknown results. A patrol was requested to sweep the area but did not eventuate. During the attack on DAT DO, the range was too great for the radar to achieve a track although it did "search" the area,

13. Neither FSB DIGGERS BEST nor FSB WATTLE were acceptable for radar deployment.

14. The 'B' radar CP is being reconstructed and the radar platform elevated in an attempt to avoid screening by planned buildings in that area.

**Survey/Sound Ranging**

15. Fixation to DYKE and DIGGERS REST was by mapspot with a synchronised sun shot being coordinated from the BP site at CHESTNUT. A survey party did go to NUI CHUA CHAN but visibility was negligible, and weather impaired attempts to pass data. Orientation for Base JULIA on arrival of the radar and 7/8 Arty PI was by sun shot.

16. Allied survey units have re-established a second order trig point on NUT THI VAI (YS297I) as part of a Republic wide survey scheme. This trig station should prove invaluable for any deployments within the TAOR except for a portion South West, being screened by NUI DINH/NUI THI.

17. During this period the officer from this section was required to work in Arty Tac and forgo his duties in the Svy CP and, during my absence, he was authorised to only operate the svy base from 2100-0300 hrs. Due to these strange operating hours the base unfortunately was not operative during the rocket/mortar attack on DAT DO. So the first enemy action to test the base in its primary function was inexcusably missed. The CO was approached on the matter and all operative instructions in future will be dealt with by the locating elements, passed to me for comment.

18. This problem would not arise if the Svy/Sfg officer did not have to be employed in Arty Tac, a point which has been discussed often; but due to operational commitments the manpower available to the Regt is limited and assistance in manning Arty Tac, when split into a forward and rear element, is required. I daresay the Regt will report on this problem.

19. Svy to FSB WATTLE was limited to orientation alone, as a separate operation would have been required in itself to attempt aerial svy, which was unlikely to be successful due to screening of the base; or to occupy the only feature visible from the base (YT3316).

20. At 2139 hrs on 27 Dec 68 the Svy CP sent in a locTep of a mor firing at YS481663 and the area was bombarded. A VR of this area the following day confirmed the base plate position with obvious signs of a secondary explosion. Initial bearings were sent in by the LPs.

#### LPs/APs

21. All posts are functioning satisfactorily. The tower to be erected in the 9 RAR area is still being studied by Engrs, and is proving a challenge to them. When this tower is erected it shall serve as an AP and flash spotting platform. At present the APs are part of the LPs sited on the NUI DAT feature and in the 9 RAR area. Although the HORSESHOE feature would be well sited as an AP, the running of the remote switch line between the TF bases is not feasible.

#### Conclusion

22. It is anticipated that shortly I will be leaving Arty Tac Fwd to prepare the necessary documentation for handover to my replacement. Looking back over the period of my tour in SVN I can say I have found the task of commanding the Det an experience and a challenge.

23. There are problems still confronting the Det, possibly the main point being the lack of experienced personnel and the authorised organisation of the Det, which in my opinion should allow for a senior NCO as Q, representative, and a senior NCO to carry out duties as DSM/Tpt NCO.

24. Another, problem is that "locating" has to be continually pushed and experience has shown that few officers are oriented in this field.

25. Although the Fd Regt is sympathetic to these problems and efforts are made to assist where possible, the Regt is not staffed nor geared to accept the Det as part of its own structure. It is in this field that I suggest the Det should be either completely independent and staffed accordingly, or become an integral part of the-Regt prior to their departure from AUSTRALIA. The ad hoc system is only a burden to both the Det and the Regt.

**This Monthly Operation Report provided 47 year late by then Capt P Perrin (original reports are not held by AWM) - we will ensure that a copy is placed in their archive. Grahame Dignam**

**. Graham Williams** is back still pursuing information on blokes he has in photos – let's see if we can lend a hand - "Hi Paul,

Attached please find the last of the photos looking for an I.D. I am not expecting too much as I have not had one reply from those pics you put in the last issue of *"Eyes and Ears."*

If I receive no replies from this lot then I can get to work on this slide show knowing I have done my best. Many thanks for your assistance with this.....it is a shame as we age the memory slips a gear or two.



1)Anyone have any idea who (at left)?

2)Who is the 2nd lieutenant centre of picture (at left)?



3) Any idea who this is at Baria orphanage?

**Graham Dignam** is his editing roll reckons it's **John Chilton**?

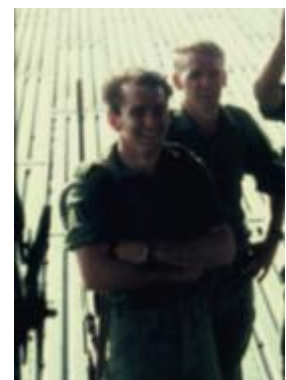


4) Who is standing on the right wearing full greens?



5) Who is standing centre between Adrian Spencer and Marcus Robinson.

6) Can anyone confirm this is Geoff Bassford on the left and Warren Jaenke on the right.



7) Whose head is it appearing bottom left in this photo.



As I said Paul this is the last of them so will wait and see what happens. I am presently on the final countdown for another trip back to Vietnam for a month or so where I will catch up with several mates( Cav, Small ships and Infantry) who moved over there permanently some years ago so am looking forward to it. Anyway Paul, miles to go and promises to keep tonight so will sign off now hoping all goes well for you. Regards, Graham Williams."

50 Years  
April 1966 - April 2016



The Memories Remain  
1966 - 1971

## . April 2016 in Enoggera, Brisbane

**Ed** – There's a heap of background activity taking place in preparation to get this Memorial Service in off the ground. The logistics are enormous just from sourcing accommodation choices, venues for gatherings and then there's the transport options to make attendance at the various events manageable.

The blokes at 20 STA Regt are being very helpful and are determined to get the activities workable and make us old blokes and families feel genuinely welcome. So don't leave all of this to chance, start planning now and get yourself, a group together and make it a memory that you won't forget.

. **Russ Hamsey**, 2I/C 20 STA Regt sent the following update on the Regiment and early Seasons Greetings –  
"Allan:

While I have a captive audience (or so the address list suggests) I would like to take a moment to bring everyone up to date on the regt

20 STA Regt is coming to the end of another successful year. 132 Bty is now the "Ready" Bty and 131 Bty has begun the "Reset" phase. 132 Bty will spend a good deal of next year in Cultana SA with 1 Bde and has already conducted their first couple of exercises with the Bde HQ. We have a solid reputation for being very good at integrating with other people such as the Combat Brigades. That is a legacy left over from guys like you. We learned that the game is really about how well you can support other folks and it is not really all about your own problems.

131 Bty heads to Wide Bay next week for their final exercise of the year. With luck, Mother Nature will be kind as the bty will be supporting the final Unmanned Aerial Surveillance Operator course of the year in their live flying component. We need the 13 new gunners on the course as well as the unit's new CO, LTCOL Peter Grant, who is working towards his flying qualification. The bty will use the night hours to continue their training while the school flies during the days.

The current CO, LTCOL Bede Galvin, is fast coming to the end of his command tour and we are busy preparing the handover / takeover to ensure that LTCOL Grant is well set-up for his tour.

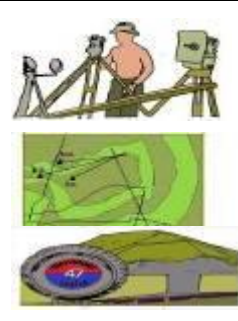
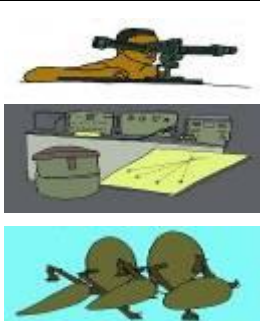
LTCOL Galvin has done yeoman service revising the unit's concept of operations. He has taken the time to document where we have come from in the past three years and where we can head in the next ten years. Our unmanned surveillance capabilities are in great demand and there is plenty of potential for the future. The CO's plan gives us a solid foundation path to follow.

Finally, if I do not get the chance beforehand, I wish to offer all of you greetings from 20 STA Regt for the coming Christmas and New Years. I hope that you enjoy only success and good health!

Russ Hamsey

RW HAMSEY, MAJ, 2I/C, 20 STA Regt, Gallipoli Barracks, Enoggera, QLD, 4051

**Ed** – The activity update is great and what's even more interesting is that we're going to have the chance of catching up, mixing with these blokes in **April 2016** at the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Memorial Day and ANZAC Day events. Start some planning!



### Committee members:

**President** – Allen Morley, **Vice President** – Bert Blink,  
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**General members** – Ian Amos, Ged Carroll George Lane.

**Regional Representatives:** **ACT** – Bert Blink, **Qld** – Terry Erbs, **SA** - Geoff Blackwell,

**Vic (Melb)** – Alan Adams, **WA** - Barry Guzder

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



**Welcome** – There are no new Members for this month so we need those guys who have had papers sent to them to pick up the pen and send them in. We're still waiting for about 12 renewals that are OVERDUE. If this is you get in before the "Treasurer" does his audit as those who are still not financial after 3 months lose their website access.

### **Presidential perambulations**

When I read the September edition of *Eyes and Ears* the pics and stories brought back memories, mostly negative. I also wondered why the first intake of Nashos was sent to Puckapunyal. I guess it was that Singleton/Kapooka were not ready at that time. It did seem to make sense that Tasmanian and Western Australian recruits came to Pucka. Such a long time ago.

My two sweet granddaughters love me telling them stories whenever I put them down for bed. War stories? Not Likely! The tales have to be about them, what they have done, their friends and what was exciting in their day. Books are OK to be read from, but their own story is much more fascinating.

"Booktopia" is a large Australian seller of discount books online. And I see its warehouse in the western suburbs of Sydney whenever I go to our 131 Locators Committee meetings at Canley Heights. What is their current biggest seller you may ask? It is in fact "Lost Ocean". Never heard of it? Neither had I. And to illustrate – no pun intended - the change in book styles it is an adult colouring book. Order yours for Christmas before they all run out.

The new James Bond film "Spectre", has just been released and just in time for Christmas the latest "Star Wars" movie will hit the screens. Exciting time if you are into that sort of thing.

Cheers Allen

### **. Upcoming Events Calender –**

**131 Locators Association -**

#### **Annual General Meeting (AGM)**

**followed by a General Committee Meeting**

**Date: Tuesday, 17<sup>th</sup> November, 2015 at 1100hrs**

**Venue:** Canley Heights RSL & Sporting Club, 26 Humphries Rd., Canley Heights Ph (02) 9604 9975 and for directions - <http://www.canleyheightsrsl.com.au/contact-us/> You're all welcome



### **. Pertinent Points – extracted from the 131 Locators Association Committee Meeting Date: Tuesday, 20<sup>th</sup> October, 2015 at 1105hrs...**

#### **Presidents report.**

.Identification of ANKPQ/1 radars is proceeding with the Enoggera example remaining in place. The Bandiana example is intended for the Museum leaving the example currently in storage at North Head as the example to be transported to the National Vietnam Veterans Museum at Phillip Island. Transportation will be at our cost.

.Payment of \$50 for the Geelong Walk paver has been made.

.Payment to RAAHC of \$1000 for the flagstone paver at North Head has been made.

.Confirmed the **AGM date as 17 November 2015** followed by a General meeting and has provided his apologies as a family event will prevent him from attending. He will stand again for all positions.

.We will proceed with the Polo and Tee shirt merchandise project. The polo design will be Dark blue with red piping on collars and sleeves with "our Dragon" and "131" on the left breast with nothing on the back. Our supplier cannot supply the polo without the red flashes. The tee shirt front will be same as the polo and will bear a version of the plaque dedication on the back.

#### **Webmaster Update.**

Bob provided website stats which showed a steady level of activity. Pleasing to see members are beginning to access the archive of Meeting minutes which were recently place on the website.

#### **April 2016 Enoggera event.**

.The detail for the DVA grant needs to be completed by 24<sup>th</sup> October for delivery to Granville VVA and submission by cutoff on 30 October.

.The meeting unanimously agreed to the programme provided by Terry Erbs for the Anzac Weekend next year.

Sat 23/4 Welcoming drinks and dinner at Kedron Wavell Services Club.

Sun 24/4 Plaque unveiling and ANQP/1 Radar Dedication at Enoggera around 11am followed by family barbeque at James Menz Club

Mon 25/4 Dawn service at Regimental Memorial at Enoggera & "gunfire breakfast" at Menz Club then ANZAC Day march in Brisbane CBD, followed by drinks & lunch at the Stock Exchange Hotel Brisbane CBD.

So start with an evening function, followed the next day by the lunchtime Dedication and barbecue because the final day, Anzac Day, starts with the Dawn service and will be the longest and most tiring - we have to pace ourselves these days!

Cheers Terry

.A comprehensive list of personnel who served in SVN prepared by Bert Blink and edited by Nick Proskurin will be mounted in a presentation panel and presented to 131 Bty in April 2016.

## Other Matters.

Ern Newbold has commenced a fitness programme with an exercise physiologist funded by DVA and has immediately felt the benefits and recommends it to all.

## Current Meeting Topics

Ongoing:

.Arrange 2016 Enoggera event including sourcing Plaque and Personnel list.

.131 Bty flag project

.North Head Flagstone paver

## Updates Completed on Prior Action Items

.OCs recollections project has 1 item outstanding.

. Meeting Minutes are now on the website in Members Only area requiring password access.

.Review website tabs to accommodate OCs recollections

## . web Performance...

If you've got more photos that you want added, just send them to: - Paul Dickson – web Photos [three-zero@hotmail.com](mailto:three-zero@hotmail.com) – **BUT DON'T FORGET TO ADD TITLES/NAMES ETC.**

**. Birthdays in the Battery...November** - Barry Uren is 75 this month and Brian Ruddock is 80! Happy birthday to the pair of you where ever you are!

| November | Name                      | Regt No | YOB  | SVN In      | SVN out    | Comments         |
|----------|---------------------------|---------|------|-------------|------------|------------------|
| 1        | DENIS SMITH               | 2789286 | 1946 | 15 04 1969  | 17 12 1969 |                  |
| 1        | VAUGHAN MILLAR            | 3411742 | 1948 | 27 11 1967  | 26 11 1968 |                  |
| 1        | WAYNE JEFFERY             | 2794772 | 1946 | 04 11 1970  | 29 07 1971 |                  |
| 2        | TREVOR PRIDEAUX (WAGHORN) | 52837   | 1936 | 05 05 1967  | 06 02 1968 |                  |
| 2        | KENNETH HALLIGAN          | 2788319 | 1946 | 16 09 1968  | 27 08 1969 |                  |
| 4        | JOHN HENSHAW              | 3793057 | 1945 | 20 01 1969  | 28 11 1969 |                  |
| 4        | HAROLD LITTLE             | 2789038 | 1945 | 21 02 1969  | 28 11 1969 |                  |
| 5        | DAVID DACRE               | 5716803 | 1948 | 20 08 1970  | 20 08 1970 | 131              |
| 6        | PETER WERTHEIMER          | 355747  | 1941 |             |            | Ares 132 '60-'88 |
|          | " "                       |         |      | 20 08 1970  | 05 05 1971 | 4 Fd REGT        |
| 10       | BARRY UREN                | 214715  | 1940 | 28 10 1966  | 02 05 1967 |                  |
| 11       | BILL TAGGART              |         | 1946 | 00.10.1966  | 00.11.1967 | US 1st / 83rd    |
| 12       | THOMAS LEMPRIERE          | 3412000 | 1949 | 02 12 1968  | 21 01 1969 |                  |
| 13       | MICHAEL CAMPBELL          | 6708462 | 1946 | 05 05 1967  | 13 12 1967 | † 1984           |
| 16       | KEN LONG                  | 2783232 | 1945 | 04 05 1967  | 28 10 1967 |                  |
| 16       | ALLEN MORLEY              | 3788972 | 1945 | 04 05 1967  | 30 01 1968 |                  |
| 17       | WARWICK HAMILTON Capt.    | 235190  | 1939 | 17 04 1967  | 12 02 1968 |                  |
| 17       | TERENCE (LOFTY) HAYES     | 214973  | 1939 | {04 05 1966 | 29 04 1967 | † 14.12.2011     |
|          | " " "                     |         |      | {10 12 1968 | 10 12 1969 |                  |
| 17       | JORG KIENE                | 3797963 | 1947 | 09 11 1970  | 05 08 1971 |                  |
| 17       | BARRY WILLIAMS            | 3796729 | 1947 | 16 12 1970  | 08 02 1971 |                  |
| 18       | DESMOND BURY              | 1411072 | 1946 | 20 05 1966  | 29 04 1967 |                  |
| 19       | JOHN PERRY WO2            | 36026   | 1932 | 22 04 1966  | 07 09 1966 |                  |
| 20       | MICHAEL FLETCHER          | 352778  | 1945 | 29 04 1969  | 16 04 1970 |                  |
| 20       | LESLIE BATES              | 218053  | 1950 | 27 11 1969  | 05 11 1970 |                  |
| 22       | MURRAY POUSTIE            | 3787941 | 1945 | 04 05 1967  | 14 08 1967 |                  |
| 22       | BRIAN RUDDOCK (M.I.D)     | 216134  | 1935 | {29 01 1968 | 21 01 1969 |                  |
|          | " " Sgt.                  |         |      | {03 02 1970 | 04 02 1971 | 4 Fd REGT        |
| 24       | DONALD SIMMONS Sgt.       | 212769  | 1937 | 22 04 1966  | 21 12 1966 | † 25.04.15       |
| 25       | STANLEY TODKILL           | 1201908 | 1946 | 04 11 1969  | 17 06 1970 |                  |
| 25       | JIM TOWNLEY               | 3793586 | 1946 | 20 01 1970  | 27 05 1970 | AACC             |
|          | " "                       |         |      | 28 05 1970  | 14 01 1971 | 1st Amoured Regt |
| 26       | MICHAEL O'KEEFE           | 2787168 | 1946 | 08 01 1968  | 14 01 1969 | AACC † 1980      |
| 26       | FRED WALTER Sgt.          | 342848  | 1943 | 11 05 1967  | 23 04 1968 | RAEME            |
| 26       | JEFFERY SCHAFER           | 2788886 | 1946 | 12 02 1969  | 17 12 1969 |                  |
| 28       | JOHN BAYFORD              | 3791019 | 1946 | 27 11 1967  | 19 11 1968 |                  |
| 30       | RON SAUNDERS              | 38516   | 1947 | 04 05 1967  | 30 01 1968 |                  |
| 30       | GARY STRATTON             | 2788161 | 1946 | 08 11 1968  | 27 08 1969 |                  |

**Ed – 22** blokes not highlighted is **4** better than this time last year – a 15% improvement! Let's go for another 20% this year.

**. Locator Profiles** – we've received **129** and we've sent out **129**. **Ed** – we can always do with a few more though!

### **. Located...**

**Have** a look at the Association's web site - <http://www.131locators.org.au> – you might find some lost mates or get in touch with us and see if we can for you.

**Barry Campton** Located **Paul Tys** for us after seeing that Paul was a white back ground Locator in October's Birthday List – thanks Barry

### **.Vale –**

| Name                         | Rank | Regt No | SVN In   | SVN Out  | DOB      | DOD      |
|------------------------------|------|---------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Thomson, Alan James "Big Al" | Bdr  | 42308   | 20.05.66 | 22.06.67 | 12.08.37 | 07.10.15 |
| Prosser, Phillip James       | Bdr  | 54832   | 22.05.66 | 03.05.67 | 19.06.39 | 26.09.15 |

**Rob Thomsett** sent **Grahame Dignam** the following email re: the passing of another Artillery Brother **Phillip James Prosser** –

"Hi Grahame

When I first entered North Head Barracks as a recruit in March, 1959, another recruit from Western Australia Phillip James Prosser (he was an indigenous soldier), I had met him in the canteen many times while at basic training camp in Wagga Wagga but did not know he was posted to the Artillery, until we arrived at North head. He was by himself so I mated up with him and we went through our Artillery basic training together. Camped out on A wing, under the watchful eye of WO William "Bull" Story, though Phil was on a field Artillery course, and I was in a heavy ACK ACK course.

Phil was recently residing in a nursing home in Western Australia but his daughter, who lives here in Canberra, arranged for him to move here in the ACT; however, sadly he passed away soon after his arrival. While many of you would have known Phil, for those who didn't his postings included 1st Field Regiment in South Vietnam over the period 1967-68. Phil was also the CO's driver in 19th Composite Regiment in the late 60's

**PHILLIP JAMES PROSSER** - 16 June 1939 - 26 September 2015 - Buried in Gungahlin cemetery Canberra October 2015

I know there are many locators who may have know Phil and it would be great if I could hear from them.

See you mate

Robert Tompsett"

**May they rest in peace**



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

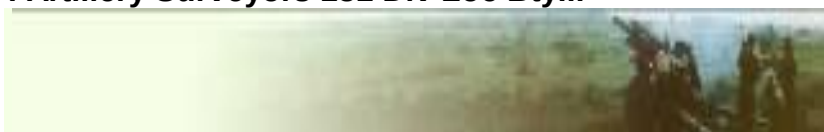
So, if you're a non-financial Associate receiving emails and the Eyes & Ears regularly you could bite the bullet and email **Grahame Dignam** [sectreas131locators@gmail.com](mailto:sectreas131locators@gmail.com) and he could forward you the relevant forms to join - Memberships are available for 1 year or longer deposit a DONATION direct ( add your name) to the associations account at "A/c Name: 131 Locators Association Inc. Bank: Westpac, Kingsgrove NSW BSB No: 032 166 A/c No: 264133"

Hope we hear from you?

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

### **. 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 , Surveillance & Target Acquisition Association...



**LOCATING, SURVEILLANCE & TARGET ACQUISITION ASSOCIATION**

*The Eyes And Ears Of The Battlefield*

...notes taken from the LS & TAA website – , *the last in the series of Coffs Harbour re-unions will take place next year on the October long weekend (30 Sep-1-2-3 Oct 2016). Please note this in your calendar and start planning travel and accommodation early.*



**Australian Artillery Association –** [www.australianartilleryassociation.com](http://www.australianartilleryassociation.com)



**www.artilleryhistory.org**



**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](http://www.at-ease.dva.gov.au)

## . 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 83<sup>rd</sup> 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: [www.1stbn83rdartyvietnam.com](http://www.1stbn83rdartyvietnam.com)

**Bill Taggart and Ed** exchanged some correspondence – Bill's info will be in the December/Christmas edition of *Eyes & Ears*, but he's Bill's response to NOT necessarily eating steaming hot roasted turkey at Christmas in a maybe sub-tropical part of Queensland –

"That sure would be strange for me, growing up (and still living) in the Northeast of the US. In 1966, Philadelphia had a mammoth snowfall on Christmas Eve. It was the largest Christmas Eve snowfall of my life and I missed it. It did, however, lead to a good story that got me lots of points with my now wife. Ronnie and I grew up together and by the time I went to Nam we were going steady. Well, I bought a tape recorder at the Aussie PX at Nui Dat and mailed it to her so we could "talk".

In the driving snowstorm the post office made a special delivery to her house so she received my Christmas gift on time. I suspect the good postal carrier saw where it was mailed from and made a special effort to deliver it for Christmas. I have never since complained about our postal service.

Unfortunately after all this nice story, she hardly ever used it, she preferred writing. Go figure!! Bill"



## The Royal New Zealand Artillery Association

<http://www.rnzaa.org.nz/>

Editor contact email: [three-zero@hotmail.com](mailto:three-zero@hotmail.com) Ed – Paul 'Dicko' Dickson

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