

THE EYES and EARS

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



Editor: Paul 'Dicko' Dickson

email: three-zero@hotmail.com

Vol. 8 No. 9 – 30/09/2015

Official newsletter of the 131 Locators Association Inc ABN 92 663 816 97

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

Supported by the Department of Veterans Affairs

50 years ago

the first two National Service intakes had commenced and the graduates from the First Intake were at the beach at North Head, Holiday Camp –

First – 30th June 1965

Second – 29th September, 1965



This is what one of the huts at Puckapunyal ("Pucka") looked like, and the following is a pretty apt description of the area -

"Barracks were home to 16 men per hut, 4 each in 4 cubicles. Toilet and ablutions blocks were about 200 yards away. The Mess hall was 400 yards away. Washing and drying rooms were 200 yards away."

...and then to show how organised the lot we didn't vote for were when the "March out" came along (some 3 months later!!)...



The First Intake Battalion March out parade Sept 1965, "Pucka". It included 5 companies and a company had seven platoons but only 25 platoons could fit on the parade ground. The VIP (bottom Right) is the Hon. Dr. Forbes, Minister of the Army is the reviewing officer. The parade took place during September 1965. Because of the 5 companies two parade grounds had to be used. The establishment of Singleton in 1966 reduced the "Pucka" cramming and made it more "workable".

The old Holden and Falcon station wagons were going head to head (above) in those days!!

OK here is where some of the "fledgling" Locators were in "Pucka":

A Coy, 1 Platoon – **Gerald "Ged" Carroll** (1st Intake)
 B Coy, 17 Platoon – **Dave Crowther** – wow in 1963!! (1st Intake minus 29!)
 B Coy, ? Platoon – **Laurie Gallop**
 C Coy, 11 Platoon – **Kevin Thornton**
 C Coy, 12 Platoon – **Jim "Fitz" Fitzgerald** (2nd Intake) and **Bob Ness**
 C Coy, 15 Platoon – **David "Shortie" Gow**
 C Coy, 18 Platoon – **George "Hollywood" Lane** (1st Intake)
 C Coy, ? Platoon – **Merv "Baldie" Nairn** (1st Intake)
 E Coy, 22 Platoon – **Ray "Smithy" or aka "Fang" Smith** (2nd Intake)
 E Coy, ? Platoon – **Ron Mason** (2nd Intake)
Kapooka -
 A Coy, 4 Platoon – **Mike "Spike" Chase** (1st Intake)

A photo and note from **Ray Smith's Locator Profile** – "Marching Out Parade – "Pucka". Recruit Smith RJ. is in there somewhere.

Ed - Ray was in the 2nd Intake – the weather looks much better in September compared to the photo above!!



Hey, and just for the record and it might be a record – 4th Intake – B Coy 9 Platoon, 3RTB, Singleton produced 3 Queensland "state of origin" Locators: **Tony Goldsmith, Leigh Hemming and Paul Dickson**. The 24 months saw us go the whole 12 yards (well the whole 10.9728 metres in today's lingo) together.

So at this time (October 1965) the First intake blokes were gracing the 131 Divisional Locating Battery RAA, at the "up-market beachside" North Head –

George Lane puts it back into perspective – "Dicko, I won the LOTTERY and reported to the Grace Building for Medical. I entered a room and found **my own brother** as the Doctor to do the Medical. He couldn't do it - something about us being related and he transferred me on to a colleague who passed me fit for National Service. The CMF unit at Randwick was our next stop and then buses took us to Central Railway where we came across a movement called Save our Sons - I presume they weren't too keen on us going into the Army. The train trip to Albury was very cold and again we had to change trains to take us to Seymour then buses to Puckapunyal (1 RTB). "Pucka" consisted of rigorous training as well as uniforms, boots and shoes that all didn't seem to fit. Training complete we were sent to 131 Div Loc Bty at North Head. Manly as you can imagine was like a Holiday Camp. Training in the unit was with **Graham O'Toole, "Shotgun" Holliday and Freddie Lennon**.

The unit was then moved to the lines at 1 Field Regiment Holsworthy. The next part of our lives were shaken apart as we were then told we were going to Vietnam in May 1966. Some Pioneers went on the "Sydney" others like myself

went by QANTAS from Richmond Air Base. Dicko I will stop there as the story is well documented. If you want some photos of the original Pioneers they are in my Album in the Website, especially of the original 'B' Radar Unit. George Lane."

...and just as a reminder the following may now bring a cynical smile to your face...

"The National Service scheme was introduced by the Menzies Government in November 1964 and operated until December 1972, when the newly elected Whitlam Labor Government suspended it. The scheme was based on a birthday ballot of twenty-year-old men who had registered their names with the Department of Labour and National Service (DLNS). If balloted in, these men were called up to perform two years' continuous full-time service in the Regular Army Supplement, followed by three years' part-time service in the Regular Army Reserve. National servicemen on full-time duty were liable for what was called 'special overseas service', which included combat duties in Vietnam. When the scheme was introduced the Government planned to raise 4200 servicemen during the second half of 1965, then 6900 annually thereafter. This would create the desired Army strength of 37 500 full-time soldiers. In August 1965 Menzies announced that from 1966 the annual intake would be maintained at 8400 (two intakes of 4200), resulting in an Army strength of 40 000. He explained that the Government's decision had been made *'in the light of the successful introduction of the national service scheme and bearing in mind all the various commitments, at home and abroad, which our forces might be required to undertake.'*

. August 2016 in Canberra **– Vietnam Veteran's Day**



Not to be missed.

50th Anniversary Battle of Long Tan.

Function Great Hall Parliament House.

Vietnam Veteran's Day Service Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

Det 131 DLB Commemorative Dinner.

.This month we commence with the first section of a thorough series with the very kind permission of the Royal Australian Artillery Historical Company...

Journal of the Royal Australian Artillery Historical Company
SOUTH VIETNAM

No. 84 September 2012

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

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

Preface

The Real Story of the First Battle of Coral has been written in response to an incomplete, and in places, flawed account in The Official History of Australia's Involvement in Southeast Asian Conflicts, On the Offensive - The Australian Army in Vietnam 1967-1968.

This account is written from my perspective as the Gun Position Officer of 102nd Field Battery Royal Australian Artillery at Coral on the night of the 12th/13th May 1968. My recollections of that night have been augmented by some ten years of presenting the story to the cadets at the Royal Military College, Duntroon. The presentations at the College are given by a group of veterans who were involved in the full period of the operations from 12th May to 6th

June 1968 and their personal experiences have been reinforced by broad based research and interviews with other participants.

I would like to express my gratitude to Bob Lowry, Gordon Alexander, Stan Carbines and Tony Jensen for their contribution to the story and their more than helpful editorial comment. I would like to also thank John Mordike for his advice, his massive effort in improving the presentation of the story and for providing a 'fresh pair of eyes'.

Finally this story is dedicated to the men of 102nd Field Battery RAA, Headquarter Battery 12th Field Regiment RAA, Detachment 131st Divisional Locating Battery and the Mortar Platoon 1st Battalion Royal Australian Regiment who were so steadfast on a night that will live in their memories for the rest of their lives.

Ian Ahearn

Canberra, 2012

Background – Operation Toan Thang

Operation Toan Thang (Complete Victory) was launched on 8th April 1968. It was a combined operation deploying 70,000 US, Vietnamese, Australian, New Zealand and Thai troops with the initial aim of destroying enemy forces in the III Corps area.

Australian participation in the combined operation commenced on 21st April 1968 with the deployment of 1st Australian Task Force (1 ATF). The infantry component of the Australian Task Force was the 3rd Battalion and 2nd Battalion Royal Australian Regiment (RAR). The two infantry battalions were supported by their two affiliated gun batteries from 12th Field Regiment (12 Fd Regt) Royal Australian Artillery (RAA), a squadron of armoured personnel carriers from 3rd Cavalry Regiment (A Squadron), 1st Field Squadron Royal Australian Engineers and 161st Independent Reconnaissance Flight Army Aviation. While its normal area of operations was Phuoc Tuy Province, the Australian Task Force was deployed into Long Khanh Province, some 16 kilometres east of the large US base at Long Binh. Initially, the aim of 1 ATF was to delay and disrupt enemy infiltration into Long Khanh, thus destabilising and frustrating any enemy preparations to attack vital targets located within the province or its neighbouring provinces. This aim was to be more sharply focused as the operation developed and possible enemy movements became clearer.

On 3rd May 1968, nearly four weeks after the Australian deployment on the operation, 3rd Battalion (3 RAR) was relieved by 1st Battalion Royal Australian Regiment (1 RAR). On 5th May, the two Australian battalions – 1 RAR and 2 RAR – were redeployed further north into Bien Hoa Province. The redeployment enhanced the Australian force's ability to provide protection for the large allied military complex of Bien Hoa/Long Binh, but it also put the Australians into an area within the eastern approaches to Saigon.

The North Vietnamese Army struck Saigon on 5th May. It was a daring attack, but the enemy failed to achieve the success of its earlier Tet Offensive in February of the same year. By 7th May the enemy attack on Saigon had been successfully repulsed and the Americans believed that the enemy was withdrawing from the area.

The enemy withdrawal from Saigon was a significant development for the Australian force, which, to this stage, had seen little action in its area of operations to the north-east of the Bien Hoa/Long Binh complex. But, on 10th May, events began to unfold that would place the Australians in the thick of the most prolonged and intense fighting experienced by an Australian force in the Vietnam War.

This account of the battle at Fire Support Patrol Base Coral on 12th/13th May 1968 is written by a participant in the battle; not a commander located in a static headquarters at some distance from the events; not a staff officer involved in drafting plans and orders; not a logistics officer concerned about supply or repair issues; but a junior combat officer, who, with the other officers and men on the ground, was directly engaged with the enemy face-to-face from the start to the finish. The author's actual position is emphasised in this instance because it provides an understanding of his perspective of the battle and, consequently, his account of what transpired.

Individual perspectives can influence accounts of what happened. This presents a historian writing some decades after the event with some difficulties in producing a credible narrative. Indeed, some question the value of history at all. In this vein, it has been said that God cannot change the past, that historians alone can do that. Perhaps some readers will judge this to be a cynical observation, but it resonates with this author in relation to the subject of this paper.

The Australian official history of the nation's involvement in the Vietnam War: On the Offensive – The Australian Army in Vietnam 1967–1968 by Ian McNeil and Ashley Ekins presents an account of the battle on 12th/13th May 1968 at Coral. Unfortunately, it is a flawed account. As already noted, it could be expected that individual perspectives would have some influence on the work of McNeill and Ekins, but the flaws in their official history go much further. The official history is deeply distorted by misunderstanding and misinterpretation of source material. What is particularly frustrating for this author is that the advice of a number of people, who actually participated in the Battle at Coral, was ignored. The author is of the firm belief that these flaws were avoidable and should not have distorted the official history of Australia's involvement in what was for scale, intensity and duration the most significant battle of the war. It was a battle that demanded greater diligence from the official historians. This account of the first attack on Fire Support Patrol Base (FSPB) Coral has been written to record the experiences of the author and his colleagues in the ensuing battle and, importantly, to correct a number of the flaws existing in the official account by McNeil and Ekins. To begin at a basic level, the official historians chose to use the acronym FSB instead of FSPB. This is not a trivial issue of nomenclature. The term FSB was used by the American Army and was based on its established practice of using firepower alone to dominate the surrounding area. Yet, it is well known that the Australian Army, since World War II, operated differently at the tactical level by concentrating on vigorous and extensive patrolling to dominate and control an area in concert with the use of firepower; hence the use of the term FSPB. Significantly, the different

operational methods used by American and Australian forces were an enduring feature of the Vietnam War. Perhaps McNeil and Ekins were unaware of this fundamental, but important, operational reality of the Army that they were writing about. But ignorance is no excuse in this case. The acronym FSPB was used in all of the relevant primary source documents relating to the operation of Australian forces at the time of the battle at Coral. But, for some unknown reason, McNeil and Ekins used an American term instead.

The following account uses the same major headings as the Official History to enable easier reference to events.

Occupation of FSPB Coral

Operation Toan Thang had been underway for some four weeks when, according to the Official History, the 1 ATF Commander, Brigadier Hughes, attended an Orders Group at the American II Field Force Vietnam Headquarters at Long Dien on 10th May 1968. According to the Official History, at that Orders Group Hughes was told '... the [Australian] task force was to move again, further into Bien Hoa'.⁽¹⁾ The mission assigned to 1 ATF was to '... occupy blocking positions within AO Surfers to interdict enemy withdrawal routes from the South and SW'. Area of Operations (AO) Surfers, as the Australian area was called, was to be divided into subordinate areas of operations; AO Bondi allocated to 1 RAR and AO Manly allocated to 3 RAR which replaced 2 RAR on the same day as the orders group. 12 Fd Regt was to be centralised as a combined force in FSPB Coral with the Australian 102nd Field Battery (102 Fd Bty), the New Zealand 161st Field Battery (161 Fd Bty) Royal New Zealand Artillery (RNZA) and the US 'A' Battery, 2/35 Battalion. The centralisation of the three artillery batteries into a Regimental Gun Position allowed both Australian infantry battalions to be supported by all the fire units available, although the normal battery/battalion affiliations remained with 102 Fd Bty in Direct Support of 1 RAR and 161 Fd Bty in Direct Support of 3 RAR. This meant that the respective Battery Commanders and Forward Observers were embedded within the Headquarters (HQ) of their respective infantry battalions; the American 'A' Battery was placed in General Support of both battalions but all batteries could be used to provide fire for any of the deployed infantry.

The deployment to FSPB Coral was to commence with the fly-in of B Company 3 RAR at 0700 hours. B Company's role was to secure the Landing Zone (LZ), thus establishing a safe area for other elements of the force to be landed in. B Company would be followed into the LZ by the reconnaissance parties from 12 Fd Regt, 102 Fd Bty, 161 Fd Bty and 1 RAR at 0705 hours. The role of these reconnaissance parties was to select the battery areas and lay out each battery gun position. The remaining three companies of 3 RAR were to be inserted at 0745 hours. The four 1 RAR companies were to be landed in three elements; one at 0945 hours, one at 1155 hours and the last at 1246 hours. 161 Battery guns were to arrive at 1000 hours followed by 102 Fd Bty guns at 1230 hours and the 1 RAR Mortars at 1245 hours.

Altogether four LZs were specified in the written 1 ATF Fragmentary Order No 6 to Operation Order 19/68 but only one LZ, which was designated as K Pad, had a specified map grid reference location. This was the pad that B Company 3 RAR was to secure at the start of the landing operation. Five minutes after the B Company insertion, the Artillery and 1 RAR reconnaissance parties were to use the same LZ.

161 Fd Bty main body was to use Z Pad, 102 Fd Bty was to use X Pad and 1 RAR was to use H Pad. No map location was given for any of these LZs. This was a departure from established practice for a major operational deployment. Failure to designate grid references for Z, X and H LZs can hardly have been an oversight and it can only be surmised that separate instructions were given to somebody to identify the locations of the LZs and pass the information on to the units and sub units earmarked to use them. Whatever the reason for the failure to specify the exact locations of the LZs in the original 1 ATF Fragmentary Order, no subsequent co-ordinating instructions were issued.

There was another factor which had the potential to upset the smooth execution of the deployment of the force. The 1 ATF written orders for the operation were never sighted by the subordinate units. This meant that the operation was to proceed on the basis of verbal orders alone. As Commanding Officer 1 RAR, Lieutenant Colonel Phillip Bennett recalled: 'On 10 May Comd 1 ATF gave verbal orders for an air assault landing at FSPB Coral. Later that afternoon this was amended by HQ 1ATF to being an air landing.'⁽²⁾ According to Robert Lowry in his recently published biography of Bennett, both Shelton, the Commanding Officer of 3 RAR, and Bennett '... deny that that they received the written orders either at or after the orders group. They also denied that Brigadier Hughes' verbal orders, given late on the 10 May, at Bearcat, a US Base near the town of Long Thanh in Bien Hoa Province, conveyed anything other than that there would be elements of units withdrawing to base areas north of Saigon ...'.⁽³⁾ The assessment of the enemy's size and sense of well-being would later prove to be incorrect, but, in the meantime, it was misleading information that influenced the way in which the infantry forces, in particular, would be deployed.

The Artillery Fragmentary Order (FragO), transmitted by radio, was received on the night of the 11th May 1968. It emphasised the 1 ATF mission and summarised the enemy as withdrawing in small groups with low morale away from its unsuccessful fighting in the Saigon area. It contained one map reference, XT925284, and made no mention of K Pad let alone any other LZs. The FragO also contained the vital technical data for the artillery (such as centre of arc, ammunition holding, timings for movement of reconnaissance parties and guns, and time to be ready to provide fire). The order included instructions for the movement of regimental and battery reconnaissance parties and its whole tenor indicated a regimental deployment. The order also indicated that the Regimental Second-in-Command (2IC), Major Brian Murtagh, would be the FSPB local defence commander. The movement of the American 'A' Battery, which was equipped with 155 mm self-propelled howitzers too large for airlift, would be deployed by road on 13th May 1968. Therefore, it would be one day before FSPB Coral had a full regimental complement of firepower—18 guns in all. Significantly, the radio orders received by the artillery revealed the inconsistencies in the 1 ATF written FragO. The latter directed each infantry battalion 'to establish' its affiliated direct support battery in Coral. Such a direction would have been meaningless to the artillery if they had received it, but no such direction was received in the radio orders. In

accordance with orthodox military practice, 102 and 161 Bty expected a regimental deployment complete with the Regimental 2IC allocating the battery areas. Then battery Gun Position Officers (GPO) would lay out the sites for the battery's individual guns within the area that they had been allocated by the Regimental 2IC. This expectation was met when the 1 ATF orders included instructions for a Regimental Reconnaissance Party. The only intelligence provided in the written orders on the enemy echoed the original verbal orders received by Bennett and Shelton: 'the enemy was withdrawing from the Saigon area, in small groups, with low morale'.

The Official History makes much of the passage of the intelligence on the expected enemy threat. In simple terms it is 'much ado about nothing' since both CO 3 RAR and CO 1 RAR have strenuously denied that the intelligence about formed bodies of the enemy reinforcing Saigon was passed in the orders. Likewise, no sub unit commander or subordinate officers received any information that the enemy was present in strength and spoiling for a fight. The written 1 ATF orders confirm this. The mission given to the task force and the subsequent deployment of the companies in dispersed ambush positions – a dangerous move for an enemy operating in any strength – point to a breakdown in the passage of intelligence to the battalions and the Gunner regiment. According to the Official History, the 1ATF Intelligence Officer Major Cameron stated that:

'Once we arrived at Coral we realised that we had stirred up a hornets' nest, but that is exactly why HQ II FFV sent us there in the first place. (4)'

Perhaps the passage of time has dulled Cameron's memory, but his statement reproduced in the Official History is clearly inconsistent with the 1 ATF verbal orders, the 1 ATF written orders and the recollections of the senior infantry commanders as well as those of the artillery officers involved. If Cameron's statement in the Official History is correct then it suggests that HQ 1 ATF was in possession of vital intelligence on the enemy that was not passed on to the combat force that needed it. The critical information about the enemy would have prepared the combat troops for what they were about to receive. Failure to pass along the enemy capabilities in full would cost lives. The Official History failed to analyse the question of enemy intelligence in relation to the tactical stance adopted by the Australian force. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the authors simply did not understand the vital military implications of the intelligence issue. As a result, one of the key lessons to be learned from the deployment at FSPB Coral is not addressed in the Official History.

Next month we'll continue this intriguing article and proceed with - **Delays and Disruption**

. April 2016 in Enoggera, Brisbane **– shouldn't be missed!!!**



Ed – here's a memory that springs to mind – George Lane had this 1966 memory when asked way back when in 2009 -

'Dicko, Ralph Pearce served April 66 to April 67, and he was regular army. If you remember the shrine in Vung Tau with all the flags of the world on it used to have 2 huge urns in front of it. Well Ralph, (after night on the turps) decided one of the urns (which had cremated ashes in them) would look better in front of his tent at Nui Dat, suddenly there was shouting, whistle blowing all by the white mice just as Ralph is trying to put the urn in the back of a Landrover. Then the American M.P.'s turned up and asked Ralph to put the urn back as it was National Treasure, so as Ralph is returning back up the steps to the cheers of the huge crowd, he reaches the last step and drops the urn which smashes into hundreds of pieces. Total silence except for the M.P.'s telling us to go before the shooting starts. George also added 'If I remember correctly Mick (Spike) Chase was the driver.'



Here are some of the "culprits" (at left) based in Vung Tau in May 1966 before being relocated to Nui Dat – I to r – **Ian Board, Edward "Spike" Chase, George Lane, Mick McDonnell and Vic Moreau.**

Whatever happened to **Mick McDonnell??**

We'll look for more info to fill this spot as we progress towards May 2016 – so if you've got bits and pieces then send them/it in.

. **Graham Williams** sent the following with regards to a very dear to his heart project, and is hoping it may get some responses. Here is Graham's email contact details: **beastmaster@iprimus.com.au**

"Hi Paul,

Only me again sending on the photos I told you about to see if anyone in the Membership list can identify any of our nameless mates. The last time I sent photos over to you they were not the best quality and therefore did not print clearly. This time I have cropped them in the hope we can get them a little clearer. Of course, that is not guaranteed. Anyway let's see how we go with the first batch.

All of these photos would have been taken from November 69 onward so a limited membership to pick out the faces here.



Photo 1 - We have Bill Edward on the right. Who are the other 2 people in this picture?



Photo 2 - From the left -Grant Perrins, Adrian "Spanner" Spencer & Mal Musgrave in greens. Who is standing between Adrian Spencer and Mal Musgrave?



Photo 3 - Again Grant Perrins on the left. Who is having a laugh holding the beer on the right?



Photo 4 - Peter Bennett on left and I suspect it May be Paul Tys on the right. Can anyone confirm this or alternatively I.D. who is on the right in this photo?



Photo 5 - Can anyone confirm that the guy in left of picture is Leon "Tex" Djatschenko, then, if not, who is he?



Photo 6 - Trying to I.D. the 3 guys at the rear behind Geoff Price (centre)...it is possible that the man on the far right may be Barry Carvey (R.A.E.M.E. Tech.)

That's it for now Paul but there are more which I will send on another time. What is frustrating is that some of these blokes turn up in multiple photographs yet no one seems able to identify them. Hope things are going well for you Paul. Regards, Graham Williams."

. **Bill Taggart (1st / 83rd)** sent the following article hot off his press and **Ernie Newbold** sent in another interesting link when he scoured info on John Mordike...

"G'day Paul,

After receiving Bill Taggart's (1st/83rd) email with the attachment relating to insecticide use at Nui Dat I started searching for more info on its author, John Mordike. Among the various entries, I found one for the HQ Company 1ATF website which appears to be quite interesting.

Those of us who were posted to Arty Tac or our own Detachment HQ would have shared the lines, canteen, theatre and mess with these guys.

Use the following link to see their website and "news/noticeboard" - <http://www.hq1atf.org/newsns.htm>

On their "homepage" is this interesting comment,

We are also proud to advise that this site has also been considered suitable for inclusion in the National Library of Australia's "**Pandora**" Archives. Clicking the Pandora logo below will take you to the HQ1ATF Archived site. Pandora advise that they will update their archive on an annual basis.

Ernie".

Ed – I suggest clicking this link to - <http://www.hq1atf.org/newsns.htm> It's long winded (from a politician), but does enlighten us with more disclosures. This subject was the sole item of *Eyes & Ears* Vol 6 No 10, October 2013...now here's the item that **Ernie** sent in...

Misuse of Insecticides at Nui Dat Reports

These reports are alarming and worthy of wider dissemination.

To view the reports, simply click on the link and the report will open in a new window.

[Insecticide Deceit by John Mordike](#)

About the author; John Mordike is a Vietnam Veteran, having served in Vietnam as the Officer Commanding, 12 Field Regiment Light Aid Detachment from 24 February 1971 to 02 November 1971. He graduated from the Royal Military College in 1966. As a professional historian, he has a BA and LittB from the University of New England and a PhD from the University of New South Wales. He is also the author of 'An Army for a Nation : A history of Australian military developments 1880-1914' and "'We should do this thing quietly" : Japan and the great deception in Australian defence policy 1911-1914'.

[Vietnam Veterans' Leukaemia Study](#)

This Report covers University research that analysed the medical records of 2,783 of the 3,400 New Zealand military personnel who served in Vietnam between 1962 and 1971. The findings are alarming for Australian Vietnam Veterans also.

It is important that these reports are brought to the notice of the Committee people in your local Vietnam Veteran's Association; your local RSL and other local ESO's so that they can organise a concerted campaign to all your local Federal Members, with the insistence that these reports are tabled and acknowledged by the Federal Government in Parliament. This is your chance to make a noise. This is your chance to have the previous wrongs to Vietnam Veterans rectified and corrected.

The Reports on the use of herbicides, insecticides and other chemicals by the Australian Army in South Vietnam and on the use of herbicides, insecticides and other chemicals by the Royal Australian Air Force in South Vietnam were tabled in Parliament on Thursday, 09 December 1982.

We have also provided you with links to Hansard - Thursday, 9 December 1982, Pages: 3273 and Page 3278, which cover the Minister's Report Tabling Speech and the Opposition's Reply Speech

Minister for Defence - Mr Ian Sinclair's "Report Tabling Speech"

The following is just one excerpt taken from Hansard - Thursday, 9 December 1982, Page: 3273 spoken by Mr Sinclair (Minister for Defence)...

"Known herbicidal crop destruction operations took place on five occasions between July 1967 and July 1968. Two others may have occurred-one in September 1968 and one in August 1969."

And that of his Opposition counterpart,

Mr Clyde Holding's Reply Speech

During his reply speech, Mr Holding made the following comment:

'This report is a summary. I suppose that, given the great volume of files available, someone had to produce a summary. I think it is important to note that in reaching a set of conclusions one is very much in the hands of the person who prepares that summary. Neither the Government nor the Department of Veterans' Affairs has denied that the revision has been carried out by Mr Bruce Manning of the Department of Veterans' Affairs, as alleged by the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia last month. What is important about this is that those people who basically are the object of this study-the Vietnam veterans-have, in my view, to be satisfied that in the preparation of this material they have been treated objectively. It is perfectly clear that the Association does not believe that Mr Manning was the appropriate person to prepare this summary. In a Press release of 25 November 1982 the Association, having alleged that it was his responsibility to produce this summary, said of Mr Manning:

"Mr Manning and his boss Mr E. D. Letts have consistently attempted to disprove our claims and downgrade our evidence, under Parliamentary privilege before the Senate Committee. They have openly demonstrated their hostility to our claims".'

It is important that these reports are brought to the notice of people like your local Federal member with the insistence that these reports are tabled and acknowledged by the Federal Government in Parliament. This is your chance to make a noise.

. **George Lane** instigated the following article which was forwarded in by **Ernie Newbold** which concerns a recent find of **Ralph Pearce** photo.

George adds – "I believe the photo was taken in Freddie Lennon's tent at Bravo Radar. I don't know who was in the tent but the fellow next to Ralph was from the American Gun Battery. Maybe if you show to one of your contacts Dicko you might get a result. George."

Ed – any ideas anyone to add to or clear up **George's** note?



Ed added another one, this time taken from **Dave Doyle's** Profile. It's just so good to turn up new finds.

In the photo at left: Late Ralph Pearce, self, Des Bury, Jed Carroll, Robo Robinson

. **Some Good News...**Here's the latest on Veterans Pension Increases –



MINISTER FOR VETERANS' AFFAIRS

SENATOR THE HON. MICHAEL RONALDSON

MINISTER FOR VETERANS' AFFAIRS

MINISTER ASSISTING THE PRIME MINISTER FOR THE CENTENARY OF ANZAC

SPECIAL MINISTER OF STATE

18th September, 2015 VA102

PENSION INCREASE FOR VETERANS

Veterans, their partners, war widows and widowers across Australia will see an increase to their pensions from 20 September 2015 as part of the bi-annual indexation process.

As pension rates are calculated on a daily basis, the next pension paid after the 20 September increase (on payday 1 October 2015) will be paid partly at the old rate and partly at the new rate. The first full payment at the new pension rates will be 15 October 2015. The table below highlights the new fortnightly rates.

Pension	September 2013	March 2015	September 2015	Increase since September 2013
Service Pension—single	\$827.10	\$860.20	\$867.00	\$39.90
Service Pension—couples (each) (combined)	\$623.40 \$1246.80	\$648.40 \$1,296.80	\$653.50 \$1,307.00	\$30.10 \$60.20
War Widow(er)'s Pension	\$840.20	\$874.10	\$880.90	\$40.70
Income Support Supplement	\$247.60	\$257.80	\$259.90	\$12.30
Special Rate (TPI) of Disability Pension	\$1,269.00	\$1,320.50	\$1,330.90	\$61.90
Intermediate Rate of Disability Pension	\$861.30	\$896.40	\$903.50	\$42.20
Extreme Disablement Adjustment	\$700.70	\$729.30	\$735.10	\$34.40
100 per cent General Rate of Disability Pension	\$451.00	\$469.40	\$473.10	\$22.10

These are the maximum rates of payment and include any Energy Supplement payable.

Pensions are indexed twice a year in March and September. A full list of pension rates are available on www.dva.gov.au or by calling 133 254 or 1800 555 254 from regional Australia.

Media inquiries: Minister Ronaldson: Mark Lee 02 6277 7820 or 0408 547 381

Department of Veterans' Affairs Media: 02 6289 6203

Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service (VVCS) and Veterans Line

can be reached 24 hours a day across Australia for crisis support and free and confidential counselling.

Phone 1800 011 046 (international: +61 8 8241 4546).

. Gunner News – New Zealand. The following was received from **David Bahler** – read the article and see that we now have another contact group in New Zealand this time...

"Hello Paul,

I have recently been appointed Editor of the RNZA Assn Newsletter 'Gunner News' and I am seeking to make contact with other Gunner editors so that we can share info and other suitable stuff that may be publishable. I have already talked with Graham Hampton who does the 'Airburst' e-Newsletter and I am hoping that you will add me to your email list so that I can see your newsletter as it comes out.

And of course, if I find anything that may be of interest to Kiwi Gunners, I may, in the time honoured traditions of all Gunners, steal it (with due credit of course!). Would you be OK with that?

Cheers, Ubique, David Bähler. PS I met a couple of your rogue Locators at our Reunion last year in Wellington. !!"

Ed responded with – "David,

G'day - it's good to hear from you.

I have added you to our newsletter - *Eyes & Ears* - email database and you will get copies from now on at the end of every month (or thereabouts!).

I have also attached a copy of our last offering and here is the link to our Association website -

<http://www.131locators.org.au> which contains our accessible archived editions.

Could you please add me to your newsletter email database? Do you have a website that I can add a link in *Eyes & Ears* and get onto our website?

"Stealing" goes with the territory! I will possibly reciprocate!

Have you got names and possibly photos to add the two "rogue" Locators that were in Wellington last year? It'd be great to "out" them in E&Es!

I look forward to further contact. Paul"



...and here's David's response -

"Hi Paul,

Here is a photo of two of the three rogues who attended our Reunion in Wellington last November. For the life of me I can't remember their names, but what really hacked me off was that these blokes gave "Skin" Francis (who is the guy in the middle) a Locators polo shirt and I reckon the only reason they did that was because they wanted to curry favour with "Skin" who is organising this year's reunion in Christchurch, again in November. I reckon they should have given the damn shirt to me as I was heavily involved in organising the Wellington reunion. Cheers David Bähler"

...Ed – I then dropped **Keith Ayliffe** an email to see if he could enlighten me as to who the "rogue" Locators were and the following communications evolved -

"G'day Dicko,

Photo (above right) from left – **Bob Smith**, not sure think second name Frances, **James Bushel**.

Bob and James were long serving members of 133 Div Loc Bty, Belmore, Sydney. Frances is an ex-locator with the NZ army.

Hope that helps

Regards, Keith."



...then came the reply to the third bloke -

"Easy one Paul (photo at left),

Kim McGrath - Long tome locator Served with 131 Div loc Bty - Trg Wo at 133 Div loc Bty - Current President of Australian Artillery Association.

Regards Keith.

Further to last I think Frances use to have a nickname "Skin" if that's any help."

...then more from David Baher -

"Thanks for arranging that Paul, and thanks also to you Keith. At this stage I propose to use some of your article in our Nov/Dec newsletter and I will send you a copy then.

Paul – re 'Skin' Francis. His name is **Brian Francis** and he gained the nickname back in the early 70's when he was posted to 161 Bty RNZA as a Gunner straight out of Cadets. He would have been about 18 then and looked like he had just graduated from kindergarten!! Baby faced and skinny as, hence the nickname.

I lost track of Skin when I left the Army in '77 and only caught up with him again a couple of years ago. He stayed in the regular Army and did his 20 then transferred to the Territorial Force and was commissioned. He finally retired from the Army about two years ago. He would have served in all our Artillery units during his service, including 1 Loc Tp, which is part of 16 Fd Regt RNZA. I am fairly sure he was also an IG at the School of Arty.

Cheers

Ubique

David Bähler

Editor – **Gunner News** – the Official Journal of the Royal NZ Artillery Assn.

Padre to the Royal NZ Artillery Assn."

Ed – A great yarn all around.

. Allen Morley notifies us of another Located Locator – **Ray Hutchinson**...

"Hi Dicko,

Another locator has been located. Ray Hutchinson, who was Q-store bombardier at Nui Dat in 67-68 has been discovered in Dimboola, western Victoria. He is Secretary of the local RSL Branch.

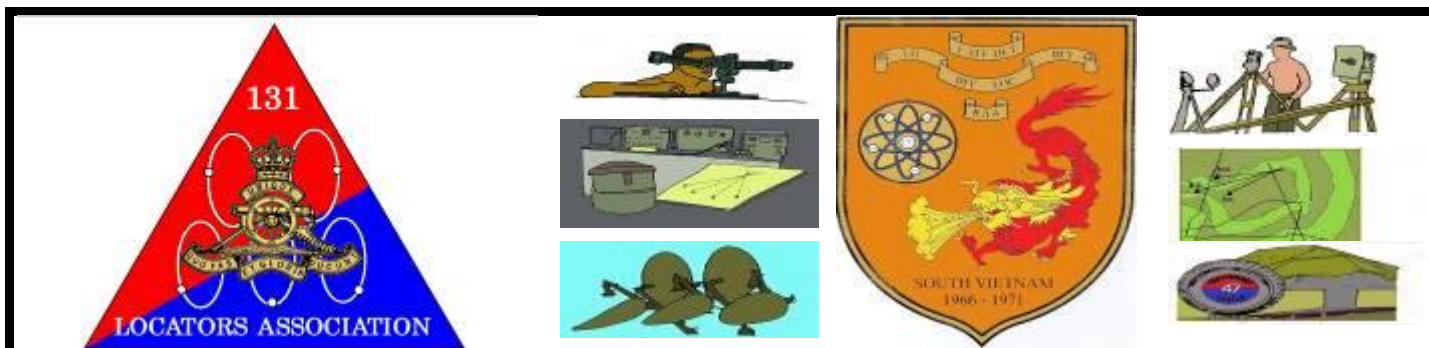
Enclosed are two pics one (at right) of which shows the **late Chalky Royal, Ray, John Vitkovsky, Allen Morley, Grahame Dignam (seated) and Ian "Scotty" McNicol** at Nui Dat in probably late 1967.

Those waist lines were trim!

Welcome back to the fold, Ray the Reg.

Allen"





Committee members:
President – Allen Morley, **Vice President** – Bert Blink, **Treasurer/Secretary** – Grahame Dignam,
Public Officer – Victor Danko, **Webmaster** – Bob Billiards, **Research Officer** – Ernie Newbold,
Designs and Development Officer – Nick Proskurin, **Eyes & Ears Editor** – Paul Dickson
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 new Members for this month and we're just waiting for some renewals to get back to us. **There are some members who are still yet to renew - get in before the "Treasurer" does his audit. Those who are still not financial after 3 months lose their website access.**

Presidential perambulations

Certainly a different month with so much going on. Cold weather for September, which is usually a delightful springy month.

A new Prime Minister and a neophyte Minister for Veterans Affairs – **Stuart Robert**.

Stuart is ex-ADFA and lives in Queensland. I have written to him and congratulated him on his appointment on behalf of 131 Locators Association. The Minister served in the Army between 1988 and 99.

Unfortunately for some of our members, the Defence Honours and awards Tribunal has decided that those Veterans who did not satisfy the time criterion will continue to miss out. Their conclusion was that Australia had no power to amend the eligibility criteria because South Vietnam's government no longer exists. Our Association submission, along with many others was, regretfully, unsuccessful.

Football finals brought an end to the season for both AFL and NRL teams. But now Dig won't have to go out into the cold on Friday nights to watch his beloved Rabbitohs.

This month sees two initiatives come to fruition. A 131 brick paver to be laid at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Park in Geelong Victoria is the first action. The second is a large paver at the Australian Memorial Walk, North Head, which honours those who have served and supported the defence of Australia in peace or in war.

And just to top off the craziness, the supermarkets and department stores are decorated up for Christmas already. Fortunately, the carol playing has yet to begin.

Cheers

Allen

. Upcoming Events Calender –

131 Locators Association Committee Meeting Date: Tuesday, 20th October, 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



Stuart Robert MP



. Pertinent Points – extracted from the **131 Locators Association Committee Meeting Date: Tuesday, 15th September, 2015 at 1105hrs...**

Presidents report.

. The DVA have opened the Grant Application process for Vietnam related events.

.Details of the design of the Paver for the Geelong Paver project have been settled and payment of the donation can proceed

.We are proceeding with ordering the paver designated for the North Head Walk (Nick to liaise with Allen.)

Webmaster Update.

Bob provided an email of website stats which showed a small but steady growth in activity. A notable figure is the number of hits from Mexico and downloads of archived editions of *Eyes & Ears*.

ANZAC DAY 2016. Enoggera QLD

The information provided by Terry (Erbs) is expansive and will be very useful when we get some idea of numbers. A message appeared in last Newsletter and will be followed up with a request for some firm commitments.

V V Day Canberra 2016 is progressing with discussions around pricing continuing before release of information by Bert and George.

Other Matters.

.Allen has commenced discussion about polo shirts with the Dragon emblem and "131" shown either vertically beside or horizontal beneath. Cost for a minimum of 50 has been requested.

.Allen has been gifted a mystery holiday which occurs when the AGM is due and so will be unavailable and has apologized.

. web Performance...

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

. Birthdays in the Battery...October –

October	Name	Regt No	YOB	SVN In	SVN out	Comments
1	IAN BRIGNELL	2789405	1946	20 01 1969	21 01 1970	
2	TERRY BRUCE	2783213	1945	05 05 1967	30 01 1968	
2	PETER TEATHER	3790242	1945	12 04 1968	06 08 1968	
2	LESLIE ROBINSON	217662	1949	09 12 1968	28 11 1969	
4	LEIGH HEMMING	1732039	1945	04 05 1967	11 12 1967	
4	MIKE LUFF	2783725	1945	02 01 1967	27 09 1967	
4	DAVID LAHORE	3791183	1945	02 09 1968	04 03 1969	
5	JAMES MERCHANT	2788817	1945	18 12 1968	28 11 1969	
7	GARY CHILLINGSWORTH	313477	1951	29 11 1970	05 08 1971	
8	JOHN O'NEILL	243505	1949	09 11 1970	11 11 1970	
	" "	"	"	11 03 1971	12 05 1971	RAEME
9	BRIAN SMYTHE	1201484	1946	02 09 1968	03 12 1969	
10	BRIAN KENNEDY Capt.	213488	1942	02 03 1965	11 03 1965	3 RAR
	" "	"	"	26 08 1969	27 08 1970	131
10	PAUL DICKSON	1732012	1945	04 05 1967	12 12 1967	
10	BARRY BONSER	37661	1941	03 01 1967	27 09 1967	† 03.09.98
11	PAUL JONES	216324	1946	22 04 1966	30 04 1967	† 09.09.68
11	JEFFREY EVANS Maj	3789164	1945	10 02 1971	02 06 1971	131 † 23.12.11
	" "			02 06 1971	02 11 1971	12 Fd Regt.
12	ALAN CLEASBY WO2	36053	1937	02 12 1968	10 12 1969	131
	" " "			11 06 1972	20 11 1972	AATTV
12	BARRY FOUNTAIN	3798485	1949	03 03 1971	20 08 1971	131
	" "			21 08 1971	30 10 1971	12 Fd Regt.
13	PETER SALI	1735560	1948	24 02 1970	18 02 1971	
13	DENNIS AVERY	4720906	1948	19 08 1970	09 06 1971	4 Fd Regt.
14	ANTHONY DODDS	16776	1944	04 05 1967	02 04 1968	
14	NORMAN LINDROOS	3410957	1939	20 05 1968	24 05 1969	
14	PETER McGANN	55672	1950	27 11 1969	19 11 1970	
16	WILLIAM THOMAS	16727	1944	{07 01 1967	19 03 1967	1ARU
	" "			{20 03 1967	26 09 1967	
17	TORIN WHITE	218372	1945	21 02 1969	25 02 1970	
18	HELMUT LEMPA	38120	1946	20 05 1966	06 12 1966	† Unknown
18	ARTHUR JUX "TED"	2792371	1948	29 04 1970	18 03 1971	
19	IAN FINLAY	2412363	1948	27 11 1967	19 11 1968	
20	ROBERT HARRIS Sgt.	213514	1942	10 02 1971	29 07 1971	
23	JOHN VITKOVSKY	4718271	1945	02 03 1967	12 03 1968	
23	NORMAN BULLEN	214545	1944	20 05 1966	11 12 1966	
22	IAN BOARD	213879	1943	22 04 1966	11 12 1966	
25	MICHAEL DELANEY	2789205	1947	17 02 1969	28 11 1969	† 17.02.13

28	MICHAEL BOHL	1411182	1948	08 02 1968	17 12 1968	† 15.06.93
28	DAVID DOYLE Sgt.	17760	1943	{22 04 1966	11 12 1966	
	" "			{24 09 1970	08 02 1971	
28	IAN MURLEY	38503	1946	12 04 1968	23 04 1969	
28	PAUL TYS Lt.	235362	1946	17 03 1969	18 03 1970	
29	JAMES "ZEKE" RITCHIE Sgt.	2411899	1940	21 05 1969	09 04 1970	
29	PETER LARKIN	3793067	1946	08 11 1968	19 11 1969	
30	GRAHAM O'TOOLE	61497	1943	20 05 1966	11 12 1966	

Ed – 11 blokes not highlighted – where the hell are they?

. **Locator Profiles** – we've received 128 and we've sent out 128. Ed – maybe we should start a lottery with a prize for the next one!!

. Located...

Have a look at the Association's web site - <http://www.131locators.org.au> – There has been an addition on the Merchandise page- "a special Nasho campaign ribbon" is available and you might also find some lost mates or get in touch with us and see if we can hook you up again?."



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 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



ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ARTILLERY HISTORICAL COMPANY

www.artilleryhistory.org



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



**Australian Government
Department of Veterans' Affairs**

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: www.1stbn83rdartyvietnam.com



The Royal New Zealand Artillery Association

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

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

All material that is included in *Eyes and Ears*, official Newsletter of the 131 Locators Association Inc remains the property of 131 Locators Association for its sole use. Prior written authorisation for the use of any material whatsoever contained in the Newsletter must be sought from 131 Locators Association Inc. Any material approved for use by third parties must acknowledge 131 Locators Association Inc as the source. No responsibility is accepted for unsolicited manuscripts, illustrations or photographs, or for the accuracy of information contained in the text of *Eyes and Ears*.