

THE EYES and EARS

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Detachment 131 Divisional Locating Battery RAA

**Unit Citation for Gallantry (UCG) awarded to the Detachment and those who served at
The Battles of Coral/Balmoral in South Vietnam, 1968**

2022 – 56 Years and the Detachment 131 Spirit Lives On: 1966 – 1971



**The LAST Farewell Function of
the Detachment, 1971...**

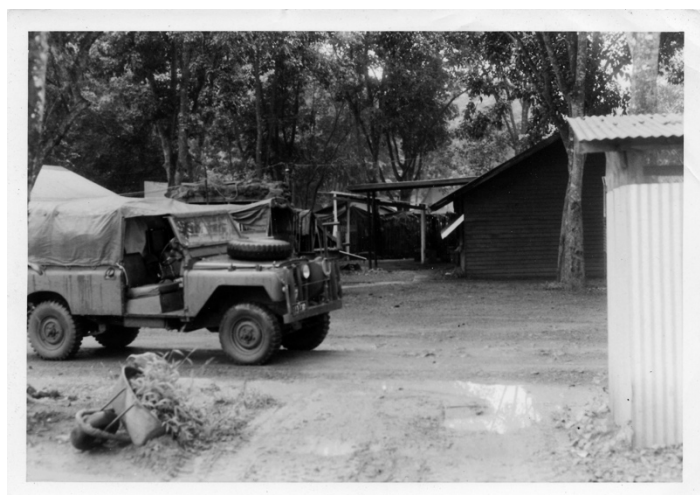
Kevin Browning, at the time of this function was the Detachments' Survey Sergeant and this is a very significant Recollection regarding the Detachments' closure in October, 1971 –

The 'Farewell Function' was taken as the title indicates at the 'Farewell Function' for the Detachment shortly before it was disbanded. It was held at the Menz Club and I apologise to those I cannot identify and any I got wrong.



No	Name/Comments	RTA
1	Mick Allwright (Survey Sergeant 12 Fd Regt (who was seconded to the Det as the Sensor Sgt	15.11.71
2	Terry (Tiny) Welsh was transferred to 12 Fd survey when Det left	30.10.71
3	LtCol Bruce Topfer CO 12Fd Regt	18.11.71
4	WO2 Tex Bassan RQMS 12 Fd Regt	11.11.71
5	John Tickle, Det Q	09.09.71
6	Sgt Bob Harris	19.07.71
7	Simon Willis	19.07.71
8	Les Falkai - was transferred to 12 Fd survey when Det left	18.11.71
9	Peter Saint	29.07.71
10	VB	
11	Fosters	
12	XXXX	

The other two photos titled '**Last Out**' show the surveyors leaving Nui Dat in October 1971 when the Task Force was withdrawn from Vietnam. The survey section had remained in the old 131 Survey accommodation huts and the Survey office, in other words, after the Det had returned to Australia nothing really changed for the survey section. Except, there were fewer and they shared the Survey hut with the Regt drivers who also moved into the Det Q Store for their accommodation, having been forced to move from their tented accommodation when the US Battery moved and the perimeter came in too close to them.





The vehicle at rear in photo 2 is the CO's land rover not one of ours.

...some additional information –

I would like to update some of **Hilton Holloway's** comments:
The two survey huts near the Det HQ were constructed by the Engineers when the Sound ranging CP was built. It allowed the surveyors to be moved from the tented accommodation they occupied in the Engineers area since 1966. The move occurred late October 1968. Each hut had two rooms which accommodated four surveyors each. They were made of unlined corrugated iron, concrete floor and had a flyscreen door. Sounds good but living in them in the tropics wasn't ideal.
Between each room was a gap which had to be filled with sand bags which we found did not allow for sandbags to the ceiling as the higher they got the wider the bottom rows became. This meant we had to take them all out and re-lay them again to the standard tent sandbag height. Sand bags of course surrounded the huts so that kept us busy for a while. I suspect it was in 1970 that someone obtained the timber from the boxes used to transport the rockets used on the helicopters. They lined the walls and made a ceiling with them. I suspect this would have lowered the temperature in the room dramatically.

When the Detachment came home the surveyors or some of them remained behind and were transferred to 12 Fd Regt to continue the same job, the Regt surveyors were used not as surveyors but rather in Arty Tac, this had been the situation since at least 1967. I have no idea what basis was used to select those that stayed and those that remained, I think some personality issues may have been involved. To make up the numbers some of the Regt surveyors were allocated to us, they needed some refresher training but did a great job.

About this time, the US Battery was also withdrawn and as a result the Regt transport drivers had to be re-housed. We were ordered to move the surveyors from their hut and move them into the old Det Q store. After some considerable discussion with the Regt 2 i/c it was agreed the surveyors could keep their accommodation, spare beds could be filled by drivers who also moved into the Q store.

As best I can work it, the Det survey sect at the time of the departure of the Det was in no set order and generally excusing ranks:

Name	RTA
Lt Jeff Evans	02.11.71
Sgt Kev Browning	18.11.71
Roger Whittaker	05.08.71
Len Walker	03.10.71
Hilton Holloway	26.10.71
Ron Ryan	09.06.71
Mike Butler	09.06.71
Terry Welsh	30.10.71
Joe Molenkamp	09.08.71
Les Falkai	18.11.71
Peter Saint	29.07.71
Tony Turner	15.11.71
Bruce Fowler	29.07.71

We were joined by surveyors from 12 Fd -
Bob Buzacott **RTA 28.10.71**
Wayne Judd **RTA 27.10.71**
Adrian Plunkett **RTA 28.10.71**

I think there were a couple more and would appreciate advice on that. **Joe Molenkamp** left early due to a vehicle accident.

Ed – Has anyone else got any recollections of this momentous era in the Detachments' history?

RTA Project for 2022

WE continue on with the project commenced in January this year.

Just off the top of my head – RTA'd in an October were –

1966 Chris Armshaw (Late), Keith Holloway

1967 Ken Long

1968 John Greenaway

1969 N/a

1970 Terrence McManus, Gregory Lewis

1971 Ian Campbell, Hilton Holloway, Geoffrey Sullivan, Terry Welsh, Leonard Walker (Late), Barry Fountain (Late)

That's Octobers' group complete, I think – let's see what November has in store.

. An Annual Memory -

The 3rd October continues to occur every year and so does the memory of the commencement of the reunification process for Veterans returning from Vietnam. This year marks **35 Years**.



Thanks Peter Summers, Jeff Bassford (Late) and Kevin Browning for your combined efforts.



Give me a Name?

The "Lost Locator Project"

This Project is being re-ignited for 2022.

Our current list contains the names of **117** Locators (as at 01.01.22) that we have not had contact with since basically commencing communications in 2012, so, we thought this year is as good as any to try and reduce this number.

However, this doesn't mean that we still have contact with the total number of Battery/Detachment members we have Located over time as continuing correspondence has lapsed in a lot of cases.

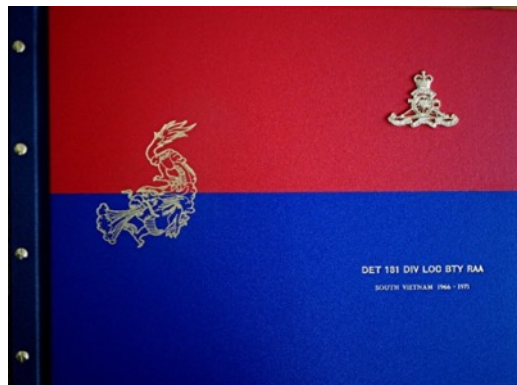
We regularly check bereavement/funeral notices and this does not locate members in the way we really want to. So, we're appealing for YOUR help in scouring all sorts of sources – local RSL's may not a good starter.

I can send you the total list of names or, if you prefer, by years in SVN to give you a starting point. I will keep an update and publish monthly results in *Eyes & Ears* and the Associations Facebook page on the web site.

Paul Dickson

Get in touch with me via 131eyesandears@gmail.com

. **The “Detachment Album Project”** – This project is sponsored by the 131 Locators Association and is in need of some photographic and by-line input from our members/Readers.



. **Insights and Recollections...**

This topic/s have raised so much interest – we’re still in the middle of some really great discoveries with some remarkable memories being brought to life.

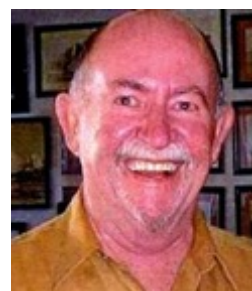
The series will continue on the receipt of more Insights and Recollections, so if you would care to contribute, please send your Insights and Recollections –

Paul Dickson at - 131eyesandears@gmail.com

Ed – The following is a continuation of a series, commenced in June’s *Eyes & Ears*, taken from an unfinished book by Jeff Evans. Jeff gave the contents to Kevin Browning and he has made it available for us to publish in *Eyes & Ears* and to be archived on the Association’s website.

NB – Please note that the contents are Jeff’s words and have not been edited/alterd. You will see his “notes” and markings (eg. xxxxxxxxxxxxxx etc) needing further attention by him and so on. Please accept the fact that Jeff was fastidious in his research and still had so much information to follow up on, which included research of documents and interviews with fellow Gunners.

"Gunners in Vietnam, 1965-1971" aka by Jeff initially as – “the book”



By Jeff Evans

Edited by Paul Dickson
in conjunction with Kevin Browning,

Chapter 11 Battle of Binh Ba

“When intelligence gave warning that the Viet Cong or NVA had moved into the province in strength the battalions would be deployed and often a fierce battle would ensue in which the artillery would again play a key role. One example was in June 1969 when troops from 5 and 6 RAR fought a heavy battle at the village of Binh Ba. The 105th Battery fired 2,000 rounds in support and the enemy lost at least 91 killed.

Long Tan

Attack on 1ATF Base

At 2.43am on 17 August, 1966, the silence at Nui Dat was shattered by a large number of explosions throughout the Task Force area. 1ATF was under attack by mortar and (what was thought to be) rockets. Det 131 Listening Posts reacted immediately with reports of ‘MORTREP’ (a report of enemy mortars). A search bearing was ordered to Brave Radar; Alpha Radar was out of action. At 2.45am, Brave radar reports ‘Searching’. At 2.50am, 1 Fd Regt commenced Counter Battery

(CB) Fire, aimed at stopping the barrage; any casualties that might be inflicted would be considered a bonus. The CB fire was controlled by the TF Arty Int Officer, CAPT Jim Townley. At 4.10am, 1 Fd Regt ceased firing on the CB mission.

No actual location was achieved by Bravo Radar as there were multiple targets in the air and the Radar was swamped with signals. The Radar, a first-generation mortar locating radar, could only track one projectile at a time. If there were multiple targets in the air along the search bearing, the radar became confused and could not produce a location. When 1 Fd Regt commenced CB Fire, this exacerbated the problem for Bravo Radar. Although the Radar was not designed for tracking gun projectiles, there were sufficient return signals from the gun projectiles to add to the confusion.

The enemy barrage lasted 22 minutes. The barrage succeeded in wounding 24 soldiers (two seriously) and **(TWO DIED – one a gunner – Name?)** destroying or damaging seven vehicles and 21 tents. Several rounds were reported impacting on the southern edge of 103 Fd Bty and 161 Fd Bty. No rockets were found.

The shelling was spread over four distinct areas; 103 Bty/161 Bty, 1 Field Squadron Engineers, 3 SAS Squadron and 1 Australian Reinforcement Unit, so it appeared the enemy mortar men had been given individual targets to engage. These units formed an “L” shape around the southern and eastern limits of the Task Force area, with concentration on the gun positions.

Piecing the information together after the event revealed that there was a minimum of 67 mortar bombs fired (crater count), but perhaps up to 100 mortar bombs (estimated by the infantry who found the firing site). These were 82mm mortar rounds and were fired from five mortar tubes in an area where 36 pits for personal shelter were found. Only five artillery shells were confirmed (crater count), and these were analysed to be 70mm artillery rounds from a Japanese WW2 gun. One of the shells failed to detonate providing a perfect example for analysis. Finally, there were some 23 fired cartridge cases found at the firing site for three 75mm Recoilless Rifles (RCL). Nothing was found from the impact of these projectiles to further aid analysis; it was believed they impacted outside the Task Force area.¹

CB fire was commenced only seven minutes after the commencement of the bombardment. Likely sites the enemy may use for bombardment etc, sites which were readily identifiable, had already been identified and were part of the CB Plan for the Task Force. B Coy 6 RAR examined the firing site for the mortars the following day discovering blood trails and discarded bandages indicating that the CB fire had achieved some effect.

*“At about 8.30am, 103 Battery was visited by Brigadier Jackson, Lieutenant-Colonel Cubis and Captain Jim Townley ... Cubis disbelieved Bindley’s estimation of 60 bombs falling into the Battery area; Bindley stood by it but could not prove it, since most of the bombs had exploded in the treetops. Only the shredded tents showed how lucky 103 had been. Brigadier Jackson ‘was clearly delighted by our efforts and said so’, but Cubis told Bindley that ‘the gun position was untidy and the grass needed cutting!’”*¹ There was a man who had his priorities right!

Damage/Analysis

The following day, during a tour of inspection of the Task Force area, BRIG Jackson and some senior officers encountered a mortar crater. CAPT Townley retrieved the tailfin of a mortar and identified it as an 82mm Chicom or Soviet mortar round; he was, after all, the Task Force Artillery Intelligence Officer, with training in the identification of foreign munitions and equipment. The Task Force Commander, for whatever reason, over-ruled Townley, saying it was only a 60mm mortar. Some of the accompanying staff were amazed by this claim – one tailfin is 22mm (35%) larger than the other. Townley tactfully declined to argue with the commander.

This was a vital piece of information discarded by BRIG Jackson; the 82mm mortar was not available to the local guerrillas (the local battalion of D445); it was only available to VC/NVA units, and this meant that elements of 5 VC Division were in the area. 6RAR Duty Officers Log and After Action Reports identified the mortars as 82mm.

Mortar craters were found within 100m of both Bravo Radar living area and Alpha Radar Command Post. Shrapnel from these mortars wounded LBDR Karl Doehrmann and GNR Terrence (Lofty) Hayes, both from Det 131 Div Loc Bty. Following reports received, Det 131 Arty Int personnel conducted a search of the Task Force area at first light, and located 67 mortar craters on which they conducted crater analysis. Crater analysis can provide crucial information regarding the calibre of enemy mortars (from shrapnel pieces), the direction from which the mortars came (from the shape of the crater), and provide a calculated guess at the range from which the mortars were fired (angle of descent determined from the crater).

It was apparent from later follow up by the infantry, finding the base plate positions, that the CB fire had been effective. The fire had been stopped and there was evidence of wounding from blood trails and discarded bandages. However, there remained the problem for the Mortar Locating Radars being swamped by return signals from artillery shells. The CB Plan was therefore rewritten to allow ‘research’ time for LPs, OPs and Radars to gather information, followed by a ‘retaliation’ phase, followed by another research phase etc. This new plan was in place by the end of August.

Many in the Task Force expected a ground attack to follow this preliminary bombardment; no attack came. It transpired that this was not just a random mortar and gun barrage on the Task Force; it was a prelude to what became known as The Battle of Long Tan.

Ambush or Chance Encounter?

There was other Intelligence information which was either downplayed or ignored. Some of this other intelligence included: an SAS drawing of a VC/NVA soldier (unlike the guerrilla, this soldier had a camouflage uniform); numerous reports from signals intelligence of a build-up involving both 274 VC Regiment and 275 VC Regiment (both elements of 5 VC Division); sightings by agents; an analysis by MAJ N. E. Ford, OC B Coy 6RAR, in his after-action report on finding the base plates

from the mortar attack. Some saw the inference to be drawn from the intelligence, and had the TF Comd been more receptive to the various sources of intelligence, things may have been different. All indications were of a large build-up of enemy forces which could well lead to an attack on the TF base.

The captured diary of Colonel Nguyen Nam Hung, deputy commander of 274 Regiment, contained information that the regiment planned to attack the TF base as early as June 1966. Forty years on, one can only interpret this as being 'an attack on the TF base', an event which did not eventuate. However, during the period 1986-1990, five VC/NVA officers from 5 VC Divisional Headquarters, 275 Regiment, and D445, stated (during interview), that there was never any plan to 'attack the base', but there were certainly plans to ambush a major formation (they hoped for a battalion) and destroy it. A brief resume of their recollections (contained in full in Terry Burstall's *A Soldier Returns*) follow.

Colonel Nguyen Thanh Hong, was the staff officer military operations of 5 VC Division. *"He was at Long Tan ... was responsible for the plan ... was located ... with the third battalion of 275 Regiment as reserve. The objectives were, "... to show support to the people of Long Phuoc and Long Tan who were forced from their villages." "The aim of this action (mortaring on night of 16th) was to draw out a force from the base into the area of Long Tan, which had been selected as the killing area.*

Ut Thoi, as the commander of 275 Regiment, said the reasons for the battle were: *"... to try to halt the Australian's policy of destruction in the province."* He went on to say, *"the plan was to mortar the base to draw out a unit into the area of Long Tan. They would then ambush this force close to the base and quickly withdraw..."* He was directly in charge of the forces for the battle and stated, *"... there were two battalions (east and north of the plantation) and one in reserve plus some of the forces of the D445 (to the south).*

Major Ba Du was the Executive Officer with 275 Regiment. His recollection of Long Tan was, *"... the Australians would have to be taught a lesson ... The destruction of Long Tan and Long Phuoc villages called for retaliation, as these villages had always been considered 'theirs'..."* and, *"... the purpose of mortaring the base at Nui Dat was to bring out a large group into the killing area (the Long Tan plantation).*

For his book, *To Long Tan*, Ian McNeill interviewed Lieutenant Colonel Nguyen Van Kiem, Commander of the Viet Cong D445 Battalion during the Battle of Long Tan. His reasons for the battle were: *"Because the ... Australian forces attacked and established their base at Nui Dat ... they evacuated the people of the two villages of Long Phuoc and Long Tan to resettle them in Dat Do, Long Dien and Hoa Long. We also wanted them (the Australians) to leave Nui Dat so that we could recover our two revolutionary villages of Long Tan and Long Phuoc."*

Ba Lien was with D445 Battalion as the Commissar in charge of Political Affairs. Ba Lien said, *"... as he understood it, the plan was to draw a large unit into the area of the Long Tan rubber plantation and then attempt to break up the Australian force into smaller units as the battle progressed."*

Finally, in an interview with Paul Ham, Nguyen Ham Hung the commander of 274 Regiment – not involved at Long Tan – stated that the aim was, *"... (1) to lure the Australian forces into the open and destroy them; then (2) to attack the weakened Task Force base."*

Conversely, Paul Ham, Lex McAulay and others, including the officers of D Coy, argue that it was not an ambush, but a chance encounter, with the most compelling argument against an 'ambush' being the 6-8 VC who were wandering around in the supposed 'killing ground', and were actually surprised by the forward elements of D Coy. If they were 'professional soldiers', well trained and well briefed, they would not have been in the killing ground if that is what it was.

If the 6-8 VC were a Listening Post, to provide early warning of D Coy arrival, they would have been static, and probably in shell scrapes; they were not, and no shellscrapes were found. If the entire area was an ambush site, then at least the forward elements of 275 Regiment and D445 Battalion would have been in shellscrapes, if not fighting pits, waiting for the Australians to walk into their killing ground; no shellscrapes or pits were found and the VC did not wait for D Coy to walk into the 'killing ground'.

It could also be argued that, in anticipation of the expected battle/ambush in the killing ground, the forward troops of 275 Regiment would have been in well-camouflaged bunkers, providing much greater protection than a shellscape. No bunkers were found. The VC/NVA propensity for constructing shellscrapes, for even short periods of occupation, was well established at FSB Coral, where the attacking force advanced under cover of darkness to within 50-100m of the FSB, and then constructed shellscrapes for protection, which they evacuated (to mount the attack) at about 2.30am.

Finally, the inconsistency in various statements from officers of 5 Division, 275 Regiment and CO D445 Battalion, regarding the numbers of companies of D445 involved at Long Tan gives rise to doubts. Despite the statements of the various VC/NVA commanders (20 years after Long Tan), their claims appear somewhat porous. As Paul Ham said, *"Much ink has been spent arguing this question ..."* There is now too much water under the bridge to settle this discussion conclusively.

All VC/NVA commanders stated it was policy for any confrontation to be terminated after two hours, because the chances of reinforcements (in particular US forces) arriving by air and surrounding the VC, was too great. Finally, the two senior commanders stated that the attack went for more than two hours because they thought they were close to victory. However, when Australian reinforcements arrived, they immediately withdrew.

Follow Up

At 4.50 am on 17 August, BRIG Jackson sent an understrength B Coy out to find the mortar base plate position. At 8.10am they found where five mortar base plates had been deployed. B Coy followed the enemy withdrawal route from

the base plate location, finding blood trails and discarded medical dressings. On the morning of 18 August, a full-strength D Coy was ordered to relieve B Coy.

MAJ Harry Smith was the Company Commander of D Coy. The Forward Observer, CAPT Morrie Stanley's role was to stay with Harry Smith, such that he could: agree the company (and platoon) locations at any time; provide artillery advice to Harry Smith; apply the fire of the guns as requested by Smith or the Platoons. Forward observers like Stanley were allotted to every company of infantry or supported arm sub unit being supported.

Stanley's job, with his two signallers, was to direct the fire of the guns via communications with both the guns and artillery regimental headquarters. If the fire unit was the Direct Support Battery (161 Bty), Stanley would order fire direct with the guns Command Post. If the fire unit was the regiment, his orders would be relayed through the regimental headquarters. In Vietnam, the Regimental Headquarters was replaced by the Fire Support Coordination Centre (FSCC).

Before 1 Field Regiment left Australia, there was no mention of an FSCC, so no personnel had been trained in what might happen there, who would answer to it, how many people were involved, and so on. CAPT Ian Darlington was, as the BC of HQ Bty, the person responsible for the FSCC. He laments that when Long Tan occurred and was in progress, the FSCC did next to nothing.

At this point in time, the artillery was allocated as follows:

161 Fd Bty RNZA, 105mm guns in Direct Support of 6RAR;

103 Fd Bty, 105mm guns In General Support of the Task Force;

105 Fd Bty, 105mm guns in Direct Support of 5 RAR; and

Battery A, 2/35 US Artillery, 155mm guns In General Support of the Task Force. In an unusual turn of events, the GPO of Bty A, 2/35 US Arty was LT Barry Dreyer, RNZA. Perhaps the only non-US person to be appointed GPO of a US Bty in Vietnam, Dreyer originally was sent to Bty A as the Liaison Officer and apparently was appointed Executive Officer (equivalent to our GPO) by a visiting US General. He served about three months in the position.

This meant that the Forward Observer of D Coy could **order** fire support from 161 Bty in Direct Support, and **request** fire from 103 Bty and the 155mm guns of Battery A in General Support. This would normally be provided, so long as the guns were not being used elsewhere, and 105 Bty could also join the throng providing 5 RAR released the Bty (from the Direct Support role) to assist D Coy.

D Company Battle – in Brief

Following lunch with B Coy, D Coy continued on, entering the rubber plantation at about 3.00pm. At about 3.40pm they encountered 6-8 VC, who fled. *"The Australians are surprised to see that, unlike the local Viet Cong, these men are dressed in camouflage clothing and carried AK47's, the Russian-made Kalashnikov."*¹ The platoons followed the fleeing VC, directed no doubt by Harry Smith. Fairly soon, they were subjected to heavy small arms fire and an enemy mortar attack. The FO engaged the mortars.

*"At 4.08pm the VC/NVA main force attacked (11 Platoon)."*¹ The battle from the D Coy's viewpoint has been well covered in other works (McAulay, Ham, et al). The following is a brief overview for those unfamiliar with the battle.

As soon as practical after contact was made, Morrie Stanley agreed the D Coy location with Harry Smith. Based on the volume of fire being directed toward the company, Smith would have requested fire support from 161 Bty immediately. Stanley would have warned 161 Bty gun position of an impending fire mission and then determined the location of the forward platoon. The warning would have included reference to D Coy being in contact with the enemy, intimating that a Danger Close Mission was probable. The initial rounds would have been directed to fall 1000m forward of that platoon; standard procedure for opening rounds in Vietnam. Adjustments to the fall of shot would have followed, to 'walk' the artillery back to 100m or so from the 11 Platoon.

At 4.25pm Smith made an urgent call to Nui Dat to send reinforcements, and requested B Coy be directed to move east to his location. At 4.30pm, B Coy turned around and moved cautiously toward D Coy, closing on their position at 7.00pm where they deployed to the west of D Coy.

At 4.50 Smith demanded the use of every gun at Nui Dat. His CO refused the request. Eventually, following some heated discussion, the guns were allocated to D Coy. With the Platoons of D Coy separated from Company Headquarters, radio communications were essential, as was the radio link between Morrie Stanley and the guns/FSCC. One platoon radio was shot up and replaced from company headquarters. Stanley's radios were kept operational by LBDR's Willie Walker and Murray Broomhall.

The torrential rain commenced some time before 5.00pm. Stanley recalls: *"Rain and the intense gunfire caused this area to be shrouded in smoke, steam and fog. This helped me because my judgement of distance was assisted by the observation (or lack of it) of flash against this screen and the enemy were silhouetted, as were our own troops."*¹ Indeed the rain was a godsend, disrupting the communications of the VC, and their assaults, to the benefit of D Coy.

At 5.00pm, Smith requested a helicopter resupply of ammunition. Following some serious discussions between the Task Force Commander and the RAAF contingent commander, two Huey crews eventually disobeyed their CO's orders and loaded the ammunition with assistance from 6 RAR Admin personnel. The ammunition resupply was delivered at about 6.00pm by the two Hueys. This was an extraordinarily gutsy move on the part of the two aircrews, given the lack of approval by their CO, the appalling weather conditions and the fact that it was almost dark. If the artillery support could

not be overstated, then neither could the RAAF resupply of ammunition. D Coy was desperate for ammunition, and with another hour of the battle still in front of them there was little chance of survival without the resupply.

At 5.02pm Smith requested an air strike. Approval given, the two aircraft arrived, but there was no way of identifying the target. Unfortunately, the aircraft had to drop their ordnance to the east on likely resupply/escape routes for the VC, which (at the time) was of no benefit to 6RAR.

The VC/NVA were now attacking in waves of 20 or more. The majority ran directly into the artillery fire being placed just in front of 12 Platoon, and were slaughtered. The shrapnel from hundreds of shells decimated the VC on numerous occasions, but they kept coming. *'We could not advance even a step to eliminate the remainder of the Australian force, as a result of the "artillery rain";'* states the D445 history.¹

Both 10 and 11 Platoons attempted to reach 12 Platoon to relieve the pressure, only to encounter the VC attempting to encircle 12 Platoon and complete their annihilation. Both 10 and 11 Platoons efforts were repelled. By this time 12 Platoon was down to 10 men, SGT Bob Buick (now commanding 12 Platoon after 2LT Gordon Sharp was killed), decided to make a run for Company Headquarters. This they did taking their wounded with them.

At 5.45pm Armoured Personnel Carriers of 1APC Squadron, with A Coy 6RAR on board, commenced the trip from Nui Dat to D Coy. The journey was hampered by the crossing of the Soui Da Bang Creek, swollen by the torrential rain which continued to fall and very poor communications, both between vehicles and between Cavalry personnel and A Coy.

The artillery continued to rain down on the enemy, severely disrupting their efforts. On a couple of occasions, Morrie Stanley lapsed into outdated fire orders terminology – who could blame him? Whilst the orders were outdated, they were not going to cause a mistake – 'Stop' and 'Go on' were ordered instead of 'Check Firing' and 'Cancel Check Firing', '10 Rounds Gunfire' instead of '10 Rounds Fire for Effect'. The pressure being experienced by all of D Coy was enormous, but one false move on Stanley's part could have considerably added to their woes. One of the Australian GPOs queried the '10 Rounds Gunfire', as all GPOs were taught to do, only to be severely censured by the 1 Fd Regt Co, LTCOL Cubis, who yelled into the radio, *"If he wants 10 rounds gunfire you give him bloody 10 rounds gunfire."* (find the source???) (After the battle, the Kiwis could not help laughing about this censure.) Technically speaking, the GPO was correct to query the 'odd' order which no longer appeared in the Artillery's Duties in Action handbook. In the circumstances, should he have queried the order? It matters not.

*"Re-armed, Smith's riflemen opened up, and Stanley guided the artillery to the target: the shells burst amid the enemy lines. The second lines dived for cover behind the bodies, then leaped over the dead to resume the rush."*¹ The surviving members of the company consolidated, and the enemy about to launch another attack, Smith ordered Stanley to 'Drop 50m'. With the rounds already falling only 100m to their front, a Drop 50m was likely to produce friendly casualties from the shrapnel. The FSCC reminded Stanley of the risk of casualties; Smith demanded the correction and the guns 'Dropped 50m'.

At about 6.05pm, the APCs of 3 Troop with A Coy on board encountered elements of D445 who were preparing to attack D Coy from the south. The APCs encountered about a company of D445 at a range of 50m and engaged them with .50 calibre MG. The enemy returned fire and fled west. Fighting their way through, the APC's and A Coy tied up with D Coy. Coincident with the arrival of these reinforcements, 5 VC Div ordered the withdrawal of all forces.

Summary of D Coy Battle. One of the most remarkable aspects of this battle, from an artillery perspective, was the very few friendly casualties caused by our artillery. 'Danger Close' missions are called that purely because there is significant 'danger' in the use of artillery so close to one's own position, and the danger is friendly casualties from our own guns. One of those few casualties was discovered when, *"Private Buddy Lea helped drag Todd back the last few metres; the medics removed his boots to find his ankles and legs peppered with shrapnel splinters."*¹

A near miss was PTE Neil Rankin, who *"... could hear firing from 11 Platoon, and see artillery and mortar rounds falling all around. I was calling to no one in particular to lift the [artillery] fire, when I saw a blue flash at my feet, felt the air suck me up into the rubber trees, and the panel-marker bag being torn from my shoulder, and I landed with a thud but unhurt. I believe it was either an artillery or a mortar shell."*¹ Perhaps it was our artillery; perhaps it was a VC mortar. Either way, Rankin had Lady Luck on his side at Long Tan.

The tribute contained in the 6RAR After Action Report is telling; *"The effect of the artillery support during this battle cannot be overstated. The members of D Coy readily attributed their victory to the ring of artillery fire brought down around them."*¹ *"One officer in D Coy 6 RAR was moved to remark that, 'The shells were psychic and seemed to distinguish between us and Charlie.'"*¹ Perhaps they were convinced of their invulnerability because of the very few casualties from our artillery. While the rounds obviously could not distinguish between friend and foe, there was 'something' there on that day. Perhaps Lady Luck was on the side of the entire D Coy that day, as well as the gunners generally.

The Gun End of the Battle

Located at Nui Dat, the guns of the Task Force were not all in the one location. Three gun areas, named Koala (105 Bty), Kiwi (161 Bty) (both 105mm batteries) and Husky (Bty A, 2/35 US Arty) (155mm guns) were positioned on the south western 'corner' of the Task Force base. Old Turtle (103 Bty,) was located roughly in the centre of the base, and it contained the third 105mm battery. Koala, Husky and Kiwi were in a rough line (approximately north west/south east) and some 300m separated each of the 105mm batteries from Husky battery. Old Turtle was about 1500m from all the other three batteries. Koala, Kiwi and Husky were all on the perimeter of the base, and therefore responsible for their own local defence which cut into their manpower, 24 hours a day.

The 105mm batteries had commenced operations in Phuoc Tuy with an allocation of 100 rounds per gun, divided as follows: High Explosive ..., Illuminating ..., Anti-Personnel ..., Smoke ... and White Phosphorous. Soon after the Task Forces arrival in Nui Dat, MAJ Frank Crane began pushing for an increase in the allocation. Crane, responsible for ammunition resupply, was a Korean Veteran who had experienced the gun line and ammunition holdings in Korea. His pressure to increase the numbers finally won through, and the three 105mm batteries eventually held some 6000 rounds between them. This gave each gun about 330 rounds, and a most fortuitous position because two months later (Long Tan) the guns expended 3198 rounds in three hours, an average of 177 rounds per gun. Resupply for the guns was not a problem; 1000 rounds were delivered by Chinook late in the evening, with an allocation being delivered by vehicle to each of the gun batteries.

Holding such an amount of ammunition allowed the gun batteries to set aside huge Lots of ammunition from the same Batch, and use them for Danger Close missions only.

It would have been made clear to the guns that Morrie Stanley and D Coy were in 'contact' with the enemy, and that any missions would be Danger Close. Danger Close Missions called for special procedures from the guns to facilitate the best accuracy: the elevation of the guns would be determined by Clinometer, a very accurate angle measuring device, and the guns would use ammunition **from the same Lot and Batch of propellant to negate Lot and Batch variations**. Even so, the 'zone' of each gun was ever-present, and was at its longest along the line of fire. The line of fire for the four batteries was overhead of the D Coy positions, so they were subject to the worst effects of the zone.

There was a plus side to having the line of fire overhead of D Coy. The shrapnel dispersal from a bursting artillery shell is, in the main, in an arc forward of where the round bursts. The 'lethal' shrapnel radius was about 30m from the shell burst of a 105mm shell and 50m for a 155mm shell. The troops were at the safest location (**under the line of fire**) in terms of injury from shrapnel splinters. Each bursting shell produces hundreds of splinters, from pieces the size of a hand to minute fragments, all of which are travelling at very high speed, and are lethal.

Close Support Fire Missions. Morrie Stanley fired the first mission at 3.55pm; the target was an enemy mortar base plate which was firing on D Coy. This was a regimental mission and included the 155mm guns of Battery A. The mortar ceased firing.

161 Bty commenced firing in support of D Coy at about 4.12pm. As would occur with every gun battery when given fire orders, the gun position would be tense; the Command Post personnel are conducting checks and balances with extraordinary care; the personnel on each gun are watching and listening intently to every word of the orders, and ensuring that all the checks are completed. Ammunition is being prepared and on this occasion the 'selection' of ammunition would have been from a pre-selected Lot of ammunition which the gunners would hold for Danger Close Missions. **(check 161 Records - Ammo dump???)**

105 Bty had returned to Nui Dat at 1.30pm from Operation Holsworthy which ran from 5-18 August 1966. At 3.55pm they were involved in the regimental mission onto the enemy mortar base plate location and then given End of Mission. Just after 4.00pm they heard 161 Bty commence firing again, and were told from the Command Post that D Coy was in contact with the enemy. They began to prepare ammunition in case they were called upon.

103 Bty had been mortared the previous night (early am 17 Aug). They also heard 161 Bty commence firing, and prepared for a call. *"The soldiers were already tired, before the mortaring, from preparation of the gun position; the mortaring and the loss of a comrade killed by shrapnel from the mortar barrage, added to their stress."*¹

Each battery held a set number of rounds on each gun with bulk storage of ammunition in a nearby dump. In 105 Bty, the dump was about 80m from the guns. SGT Jimmy King, Number 1 of Bravo gun of 105 Bty recalled having 30 rounds of Danger Close shells on the gun. The remaining 70 of the 100 shells held for his gun were in the ammunition dump.¹ No doubt all the other guns were in the same situation; they simply could not hold all the Danger Close ammunition on the gun position. Initially, the detachment members would have been able to collect some of those shells. But, as time wore on, the missions kept coming, the rounds had to be unboxed, have the fuses screwed in, prepared at the correct charge and the detachments would have been progressively swamped.

With waves of enemy soldiers attacking 11 Platoon, Harry Smith requested the fire of the entire regiment. LTCOL Townsend, Smith's CO, blocked the request; *"Incredulously, Smith got on the radio to Townsend: 'I want ALL the guns in support – the whole regiment. Give me all the guns they've got.'* Townsend again blocked Smith's demand, with an officious *'Let the artillery look after the guns.'*¹ With respect, it was not Townsend's call to block Smith's request; strictly speaking, this was an artillery matter, so Townsend was correct in saying 'Let the artillery look after the guns'.

The gunner network (ie the FSCC) was responsible for the allocation of guns to forward observers and targets. They would have required the approval of 5RAR to reallocate 105 Bty, their Direct Support battery, or the support of the Task Force Commander if the FSCC wished or needed to override a 5RAR negative response. Indeed, the FSCC should have immediately allocated 103 Bty and the medium guns, which were simply In **General** Support of the Task Force, and therefore 'free' for the FSCC to allocate, while permission to reallocate 105 Bty was sought from 5RAR. **(There is no way to verify if this actually occurred as the records for 1 Fd Regt (August to December) are missing from archives. (to be verified by interview perhaps)** The regiment and the medium guns were given to Stanley soon after this rather unnecessary and frustrating exchange.

It is something of a mystery that Harry Smith was directly involved in requesting the fire of the regiment. The normal procedure would have been for Morrie Stanley to request the allocation of the regiment, direct to the FSCC. The FSCC, acting on procedures and protocols previously agreed with the Task Force Commander, would have answered the call.

When the next regimental mission came, King recalls telling his gun numbers "... *to be particularly careful with everything – this is Danger Close*"¹ and he ordered the special Lot of ammunition which had been saved for Danger Close missions. George Bindley, the BK of 103 Bty, further explains:

*"With indirect artillery fire, a tremendous responsibility rests with the individual, particularly those in the gun detachment. Each round fired is potentially as lethal to our own troops as to the enemy. Even under the most favourable conditions, an inattentive or inexperienced layer can shoot on a moving bubble [ie before the gun is properly steadied], or a Section Commander can be distracted long enough to allow an incorrect charge of propellant to be fired."*¹

At the 'Dustbowl' adjacent to Luscombe Field, Col Joye and Little Patti were entertaining troops not on duty or involved in Long Tan. As the guns commenced firing, Col Joye was heard to comment, *"If they are going to keep that up, they will have to come in on the beat."* He further commented that he was the reason for the attack (by the enemy): *"The VC have said, 'If he sings Bye Bye Baby one more time, it's on'."* As long Tan escalated, the concert was terminated and the entertainers were flown back to Vung Tau – all except Col Joye. He was 'captured' by some soldiers, with GNR?? David Doyle among the kidnappers. Doyle's story ??? Other names??? etc

CAPT Alan Hutchinson, 105 Bty FO with D Coy 5 RAR, had earlier returned from Operation Holsworthy, cleaned up and was getting something to eat "... *when word came that D/6RAR was in heavy contact. He and others left the Mess, and went to listen to radios.*"¹

Monsoon Rains. With the commencement of the monsoon rains, problems began to develop for the gunners. The sights on the guns, essential for aiming, were prone to moisture ingress leading to fogging of the eyepieces on the internal surfaces. The problem was not new, so the batteries had a number of spare sights for each gun. Indeed, they had two sets of sights per gun – one set from Italy and one set from Canada giving six sights per gun. These two sets had different drills for their use, and this had to be catered for during changes of sights.

The 'normal' allocation of sights was three - One on the gun, one in the humidity box drying out and one spare, already dried out. During the Long Tan engagement, in the worst rainstorm for months, each gun used all six sights. The Gun Aiming Point (GAP) for each gun was a torch attached to a star picket. More distant GAP were not available due to the rain and cordite smoke.

In 161 Bty, lightning struck the Tannoy system. The Tannoy was a communication system whereby the CP could talk to each gun and the guns could converse with the CP. In the main, the system was for the passage of fire orders and information received from the FO as feedback to the gunners. The battery overcame the problem by having LBDR Paul O'Connor standing outside the CP verbally relaying the fire orders to the guns. Eventually, radios were supplied to each gun for the transmission of orders and reports.

In Battery A, 2/35th, LT Dreyer reported that lightning struck the beautiful toilet, only recently completed, blowing it to smithereens. Fortunately, no-one was using the toilet at the time of the strike.

In 105 Bty the rain caused some sort of induction which caused the Regimental Net to be broadcast over the Tannoy, relieving the GPO of the responsibility to update the gunners; they could all hear the orders and reports via the Tannoy.

Not only was the rain the heaviest in months, there was no wind. The wind was desperately needed to blow away the cordite fumes produced in large volumes by each shell fired. These fumes are toxic and, with no wind, the fumes were starting to affect the gun detachments. There was difficulty with breathing, exacerbated by the physical exertion required to load and unload the gun. Soldiers were becoming nauseous, vomiting to the side of the guns. George Bindley, "... *became aware that a lethal haze was developing around the positions*".¹

*"Outside, the rain streamed down, the guns roared relentlessly - to Bindley, 'The gun position seemed to slip into another dimension like some great engine of the Industrial Revolution, roaring and flaring in great billowing clouds of smoke and steam. The fierce downpour gave an eerie shine to the guns, reflecting the muzzle flashes against the gathering smog, which cloaked the movement of men toiling with ammunition, their shadows showing only in the glare, while the roar of the guns, with 'fire for effect' in force, created a bedlam. It was our El Alamein, but a little damper."*¹

As the pressure mounted on 12 Platoon, SGT Bob Buick asked FO Morrie Stanley to drop the artillery right on his position. Stanley refused, but he did order a further correction to correct the fall of shells from 100m away to 50m. Just as the corrected rounds arrived in front of Buick another echelon of VC was launching an attack. *"Forty Viet Cong troops disappeared, shredded within seconds."*¹ Some years later, at the School of Artillery in Manly, CAPT Morrie Stanley said he did not change the orders for the artillery, he simply ordered more rounds. SGT Buick simply thought that Stanley had honoured his request.

The gunfire was halted for 15 minutes from 6.00pm while the RAAF delivered the much-needed ammunition resupply, but recommenced immediately the helicopters were out of the line of fire.¹

Ammunition Volunteers. Ammunition for the 105mm guns was held both on the gun (about 100 rounds of mixed types) and in the ammunition dump some distance from the guns. Ammunition was delivered in wooden boxes, two rounds to a box weighing 55kg, with straps at either end to facilitate a two-man carry. At that time, ammunition was delivered

incomplete in that there was a metal plug screwed into the fuse hole, and the fuses were delivered separately. Prior to loading into the gun the ammunition required preparation. This entailed unboxing the ammunition from the wooden boxes where the box ends were secured by wire twisted through a butterfly nut. The wire was cut and the butterfly nut unscrewed. Inside each box were two strong cardboard cylinders, partitioned at the centre, with lids at either end; these housed the two shells and two cartridge cases. From the shells, the metal plugs were unscrewed and replaced with fuses. Once the appropriate number of charge bags had been removed from the casing, the shell and cartridge case could be married together. All this took considerable time – time which the gun detachments could not spare.

SGT Jimmy King's gun provides a good guide to the ammunition problem. He held 30 rounds of the 'special Lot' kept aside for Danger Close Missions, with 70 more rounds in the ammunition dump.¹ These 70 boxed rounds collectively weighed just less than two tonnes. However, on average the guns fired 177 rounds so perhaps four tonnes of ammunition (in boxes) was delivered from the dump to his gun, primarily by the volunteers. If all the guns were in a similar position with ammunition holdings, then about 70 tonnes of ammunition were delivered from dumps to guns.

Disregarding the time taken to carry the boxed ammunition from dump to gun, it takes about two minutes for one gunner to unbox and prepare two complete rounds. These same two rounds could be fired in as little as six seconds; hence the need for a large number of volunteers. In 1 Fd Regt Operational Report Number 3, the official number of rounds fired on that day was 3198 x 105mm and 242 x 155mm.¹ This translated into about 48 tonnes of 105mm shells, which comprised a little over 7 tonnes of high explosive, within the shells, which produced some 40 tonnes of shrapnel at the business end. Little wonder that the battle area was reduced to a denuded landscape.

The rates of fire simply did not allow time for the gun detachments to collect ammunition from the dump, and prepare it for firing. Once the battle had commenced, many personnel, including CP personnel from the off-duty crew, radar operators and surveyors, assisted the gun batteries in carrying ammunition to the guns from the ammo supply areas, thus enabling the gun detachments to continue their support of the infantry during this battle.

But they were not the only personnel to help out. LT John Griggs reported that *"The gun position was like an ant's nest, crawling with people many of whom I did not know."*¹ There were cooks, drivers, clerks, regimental police, officers and Section Commanders all helping out at the three gun positions. LTCOL Smith, the Commander of NZ Force Vietnam, had been visiting 161 Battery Commander MAJ Harry Honner when Long Tan started. Being an ex-gunner, and probably to get out of Honner's way, LTCOL Smith made his way to 161 Bty gun position and assisted with the preparation of ammunition.

Through the rain, mud and toxic haze from the cordite, the gun crews maintained a very high rate of fire in support of D Coy. With the problem of fogging in the sights due to the humidity and rainstorm, the gunners were striving to deliver that support without mistake. Poor laying, an incorrect charge, an incorrect order, incorrect information applied to the sights, a lack of concentration – any one of these could spell disaster for the diggers at Long Tan. As the Command Post received feedback from the FO, or through the Infantry net, this was passed to the gunners. *"At one stage during the battle, for about 8 minutes there appeared to be attempts (by the VC) to jam the Regimental Net. As a result, the net changed to the alternate frequency."* Nothing was easy that day.

In the FSCC, CAPT Ian Darlington was struggling with this new concept (the FSCC), which had not existed before the regiment's arrival in Vietnam. **Did the FSCC exist WITH the RCP? Talk to Darlo. He was asked by the RAAF about trajectories in the Long Tan area to ascertain if they could fly under the trajectories to deliver the ammunition. Having given his best estimate, the RAAF chose to ask for the guns to check firing while they were in the area. It was not going to be of benefit to anyone if the ammunition resupply helicopters were destroyed by friendly artillery fire. This meant that D Coy was without fire support for about 15 minutes.**

John Griggs in 103 Bty reported that, on completion of the Long Tan firing, his gun position looked like a bomb had gone off in the centre and thrown everything out to the perimeter – 'everything' included all the empty ammunition boxes, plugs from rounds, cylinders which held the shells and cartridge cases, empty cartridge cases which had been fired and discarded charge bags which were not required. Having fired approximately 170 shells, the remaining pile of discarded packaging was huge.

The following morning, Griggs surveyed the scene on the gun position; his comment was, *"My babies are all burned black."* Despite the rain, the continuous firing had made the guns so hot that all the paint above the trails and elevating gear had been burned off. LTCOL Cubis visited the position at about 8.30am. His comments were nothing in the way of congratulations, or job well done; his only comment was, *"This gun position is a mess; clean it up."*¹

(I think this needs more 'gun number' and Gun Numbers 1 type comments – later when I do some interviewing.)

The Aftermath

That Long Tan was a day of major triumph has been well chronicled. Against overwhelming odds, D Coy 6 RAR held out against two battalions of 275 Regt, supported by about a company of D445 Battalion, until they were relieved by A Coy 6 RAR and 3 Troop, 1 APC Squadron. The four gun batteries at Nui Dat and the volunteers who supported them were major players. The contribution of all involved on that day is the stuff of legends.

However, not everyone saw Long Tan in the same light. Radio Peking International Service (in English) announced on 28 August 1966:

*"More than 500 Australian Satellite Troops including two whole companies were wiped out by the South Vietnam Liberation Army in Baria Province on 17 and 18 August when it launched fierce attacks on an Australian battalion and an Armoured Car Column, reported the South Vietnam Liberation Press Agency ... another company was heavily battered. Three M113 Armoured Cars were destroyed."*¹

Morrie Stanley was asked in later years how he had been able to direct the artillery fire. His response was simple. It was essential that he knew his own location and the location of the three platoons by direction and distance from his location. He tried to keep his map oriented with the north point of the map actually pointing north. And he had to open fire at a safe distance (1000m) and then 'walk' the fire back toward the three platoons in 400m, 200m, 100m and 50m steps.

Being some distance from the forward platoons, on one occasion he brought the shells too close so that they were receiving shrapnel and he had to stop the guns firing and correct the fall of shot. In Vietnam, FO generally adjusted the fall of shot based on the sound of the exploding shells; in Stanley's case, the torrential downpour prevented this. His direction of fire was standard for FO firing missions in jungle/rubber plantations in Vietnam.

Stanley did have a very supportive back-up in his Battery Commander, MAJ Harry Honnor. In the words of the CO, LTCOL Cubis, "... Captain STANLEY (the OP officer) and Major HONNOR (the BC) provided an outstanding illustration of OP/BC relations ... The OP called for fire, placed it where it was needed, sent back sitreps and, in general, supported his Company Commander. The BC took the burden of passage of orders off the Ops' (sic) shoulders, interpreted, suggested and advised on CB aspects."¹ Further, there was good rapport between Honnor and LTCOL Colin Townsend; they had been classmate at RMC Duntroon.

But Honnor was more than that for Stanley. In his own words, Stanley said, *"I needed the comfort of knowing that my Battery Commander (Harry Honnor), an experienced gunner, was on the end of a radio, and could provide constant support for me. On one occasion, I actually reported on that net that the situation was too confused to use the guns and it was Harry who suggested I engage another grid reference and adjust the fire from that position. That stabilised me at the time."*¹ Following the withdrawal of the VC/NVA forces, Honnor suggested that harassing fire in depth continue throughout the night. In fact, 1 Fd Regt continued to fire until just after 11.30pm, while the Kiwis continued to fire throughout the night.

On the battlefield, the next morning there was a scene of utter devastation; a section of the rubber plantation had been almost totally destroyed, shredded branches and foliage littered the scene, and there were bodies everywhere. *"They crept upon a landscape denuded of life: the trees were leafless stumps and the earth a tangle of red mud, body parts, splinters, rubber sap and slime. 'I thought I was on another planet,' said (CPL Laurie) Drinkwater, as he surveyed the aftermath of the howitzers: 3,500 shells had burst in an area no larger than two football fields."*¹ On the cause of enemy casualties, the 6RAR After Action Report states that *"About 50% of the bodies recovered had been killed by small arms fire and the remainder by artillery."*¹

Stanley said he had wondered whether the fire called down at Long Tan was initially an over-reaction to the event. When he actually saw several groups of 20 to 50 VC moving between the rubber trees his doubt was reduced, but when later informed that D Coy had defeated perhaps 1500 VC, he felt completely justified.¹ The commander of D445 Battalion, cited in Paul Ham's book *Vietnam, The Australian War*, stated that *"In fact, so heavy were Vietnamese casualties from close-ranging Australian and New Zealand artillery that the Viet Cong were ordered never again to attempt a direct attack on Nui Dat ..."*

George Bindley of 103 Bty, cited in Lex McAulay's book, *The Battle of Long Tan* believed that *"the artillery can proudly claim success but success for a gunner is measured by ability to provide fire support to the supported arm – that is our role. In this case 6RAR was magnificently supported, and, because of it, survived and prevailed."*

*'There has always been a healthy professional disdain (and respect, though never acknowledged) between fighting arms and there was plenty before and after Long Tan. The 'grunts' always look askance at the 'drop shorts' and 'tankies', and that will always be the case. But after Long Tan there was respect for the guns and it was shown. Whenever we came in contact with the infantry of either battalion after Long Tan, we got the thumbs up, and that said it all.'*¹

In his After Action Report, the CO, LTCOL Cubis wrote: *"A source of parochial pride is that the battle clearly demonstrated the particular characteristic of not only providing close fire support but of our capacity to sustain fire for long, continuous periods and do so regardless of the weather."*¹ This is a true statement, but probably would not have been possible at such a sustained rate of fire, without the 100 or so volunteers who carried about 70 tonnes of ammunition from the dump, and prepared ammunition for firing. The volunteers greatly relieved the stress from the gun detachments who were left free to perform their individual tasks within the detachment.

*"The action started in the late afternoon, reached its peak at the darkest period of the month and in the middle of the heaviest rainstorm for months. Notwithstanding, continuous fire support was provided while the gun detachments fumbled in the darkness and rain, and layers laid while the sights were drenched with water and, such is the intervention of higher authority, that of the 3000 odd rounds fired, all hurt the enemy and none ourselves apart from one minor wound."*¹

"The 1st Field regiment had set a valuable precedent for future operations in South Vietnam, although for the Commanding Officer the year ended on a bitter note. He clashed with the Task Force Commander over what he perceived to be Brigadier Jackson's lack of understanding of artillery. Jackson thought that Cubis would not accept that artillery was a supporting arm and relieved him of command." **DH p479**

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX Cubis Reply to the sacking – in here to be fair.

Have not checked any details in the references which follow.

¹ AWM95-3-5-45, 105 Field Battery Operations Log, 1 Fd Regt R569-1-2, Operational Report Number 3, Annex B, dated 14 Sep 66. p2

¹ McAulay, L. *The Battle of Long Tan* 1986. Arrow Books limited. p33

¹ Ham, P. *Vietnam – The Australian War*. Harper Collins 2008. pp207-213

¹ Ham, P. *Vietnam – The Australian War*. Harper Collins 2008. p209

¹ Burstall, T. *A Soldier Returns*. 1990. University of Queensland Press. pp98-99

¹ Ibid pp118-121

¹ McNeill, I. Cited in <http://vietnam-war.commemoration.gov.au/artillery/index.php>, Artillery Overview, accessed 13 July 2011

¹ Ham, P. *Vietnam – The Australian War*. Harper Collins 2008. pp223-224

¹ Ham, P. *Vietnam – The Australian War*. Harper Collins 2008. Note 16 to Chapter 18

¹ Burstall, T. *A Soldier Returns*. 1990. University of Queensland Press. pp97-123

¹ <http://vietnam-war.commemoration.gov.au/artillery/index.php>, The Battle, accessed 13 July 2011

¹ Ham, P. *Vietnam – The Australian War*. Harper Collins 2008. pp217-225

¹ Maurie Stanley personal Notes.

¹ Ham, P. *Vietnam – The Australian War*. Harper Collins 2008. p238

¹ Ibid. p237

¹ Ibid. p231

¹ McAulay, L. *The Battle of Long Tan* 1986. Arrow Books limited. p66

¹ D Coy After Action Report, cited in Newman, S.D. *Vietnam Gunners*. 1988.

Moana Press, Tauranga. p55

¹ AWM95-3-5-45, 105 Field Battery Operations Log, 1 Fd Regt R569-1-2, Operational Report Number 3, Annex A, dated 14 Sep 66. p1

¹ Video, made at the School of Artillery on 26 May 1993

¹ Ibid

¹ Ham, P. *Vietnam – The Australian War*. Harper Collins 2008. p227

¹ Ibid

¹ McAulay, L. *The Battle of Long Tan* 1986. Arrow Books limited. p75

¹ Ibid. p65

¹ Ibid, p75

¹ Ibid, p111

¹ Ham, P. *Vietnam – The Australian War*. Harper Collins 2008. p229

¹ McAulay, L. *The Battle of Long Tan* 1986. Arrow Books limited. p86

¹ Video, made at the School of Artillery on 26 May 1993

¹ AWM95-3-5-45, 105 Field Battery Operations Log, 1 Fd Regt R569-1-2, Operational Report Number 3, Annex A, dated 14 Sep 66. p4

¹ Video, made at the School of Artillery on 26 May 1993

¹ Ibid.

¹ McNeill, I. Cited in <http://vietnam-war.commemoration.gov.au/artillery/index.php>, The Battle, accessed 13 July 2011

¹ AWM95-3-5-45, 105 Field Battery Operations Log, 1 Fd Regt R569-1-2, Operational Report Number 3, Annex A, dated 14 Sep 66. p1

¹ Video, made at the School of Artillery on 26 May 1993

¹ Ham, P. *Vietnam – The Australian War*. Harper Collins 2008. p243

¹ AWM95-7-6-5, 6 Battalion Royal Australian Regiment Duty Officers Log, Appendix N, After Action Report dated 7 Sep 66

¹ Ibid.

¹ McAulay, L. *The Battle of Long Tan* 1986. Arrow Books limited. p165

¹ AWM95-3-5-45, 105 Field Battery Operations Log, 1 Fd Regt R569-1-2, Operational Report Number 3, Annex A, dated 14 Sep 66. p2

¹ Ibid. p1

The book continues next month, November, with “Chapter 12 – “FSPB Coral”.

As the series continues, you are invited to submit your own recollections and as Kevin mentioned to me there is a bit of a lack of information as to activity in Artillery Tactical HQ (Arty Tac), so efforts of recollections there is more than welcome.

Also, please feel free to submit to me any factual errors you detect.

Paul Dickson: 131eyesandears@gmail.com

. Insights and Recollections #2...

This topic/s have raised so much interest – we're still in the middle of some really great discoveries with some remarkable memories being brought to life.

The series will continue on the receipt of more Insights and Recollections, so if you would care to contribute, please send your Insights and Recollections –

Paul Dickson at - 131eyesandears@gmail.com

. Burial Sites/MIA's - Ex SVN – an email from David Dougherty...

The following table contains information I (Ed) extracted from a report David sent in, and grabbed my attention as to the service members who were NOT buried on home soil in Australia during the Vietnam War.

The article proceeded with responses to David and then the inclusion of master sleuth, **Kevin Browning**, that have produced a very concise and interesting part of history, which I must admit I was not fully aware of...

Burial Sites/MIA's - Ex SV

Burial Site	Regular	National Service	RAAF
Terendak, Malaysia	19	5	
Kranji, Singapore	1		
UK	2		
Scotland	1		
Total	23	5	
MIA*	2	2	2

Note: The total number of deaths recorded on this report agrees with the total number of Australian Servicemen/women killed/died in SVN, which was 521.

. MIA's – between 2007-09 all MIA were successfully recovered and returned to Australia.

Part of the following goes on to explain some of the reasoning - Before January 1966*, Australia's policy was to bury soldiers killed in battle in foreign countries in the nearest Commonwealth war cemetery. Those soldiers buried in Malaysia, were not buried in a war grave, but were buried in a General Christian Cemetery on a Military base. Repatriation was offered, but the cost, at that time, was approximately 500 pounds.

*The Interment Act was scrapped by the Federal Government in 1966.



The Terendak Military Cemetery

A petition signed by more than 40,000 forced the Federal Government into a funding programme. Three bodies of Australian servicemen remain in Terendak as the offer to repatriate was not taken up. Their graves will continue to be maintained OAWG in perpetuity.

Two Royal Australian Air Force C-17A Globemaster aircraft touched down at RAAF Base Richmond on 3 June 2016 at 10.30am to return home to Australia the remains of 33* Australian service personnel and dependents, many of whom were casualties of the Vietnam War, from cemeteries in Malaysia and Singapore (one set of remains from Singapore).

*Of the 33 repatriated, 21 were Australian soldiers killed in Vietnam. Not all of the remains were repatriated.



NB: - This list comprises 25 names, I have added N/S, unit and date of death.

Private Norman George Allen	N/S	7 RAR	10/11/67
Private Gary Alex Archer	N/S	9 RAR	14/2/69
Lieutenant Robert Graham Birse		4 Fld Regt	10/12/67
Corporal Robert Walter Bowtell		3 Fld Tp	11/1/67
Lieutenant David John Brian	Not recorded on DVA Rolls		
Sergeant Ronald Thomas Carroll		3 RAR	14/8/68
Private* Thomas William Checkley		131 DLB	5/8/66
Private Christopher Clark		1 RAR	8/1/66
Warrant Officer Class Two Kevin George Conway		AATTV	6/7/64
Private Ronald Eric Field		1 RAR	9/10/65
Warrant Officer Class Two John Garrigan		AATTV	27/12/68
Warrant Officer Class Two Max Powell Hanley MM		AATTV	20/2/67
Corporal Reginald Hedley Hillier		1 RAR	29/11/65
Trooper Tony Holland	N/S	1 APC Squad	7/7/66
Private Neville Wayne Horne		1 RAR	8/1/66
Second Lieutenant Alan Douglas Jellie		161 Recce	3/12/69
Signalman Kenneth Charles Johnson		HQ AFV Not recorded as KIA	
Warrant Officer Class Two Ronald Victor Lees		AATTV	13/1/66
Corporal John Gregory Stinson Pearce	N/S	1 RAR	14/5/68
Warrant Officer Class Two Thomas Dudley Phillips		AATTV	20/3/66
Lance Corporal Thomas Ross		1 RAR	12/10/65
Lance Corporal Thomas Ruduss		HQ 1ATF	12/6/66
Corporal Francis John Smith		1 RAR	21/9/65
Signalman John Darrell Tassell	Not recorded DVA Rolls		
Private Mervyn Arthur Frederick Wilson		1 RAR	8/1/66

***Gunner**

...Kevin (Browning) contacted Paul Stevens— and here is his recollection response...

"Here is my recollection.

In WW1, British Empire nations decided that bodies of the dead would not be repatriated, but would be buried where they died in war graves in civil cemeteries or, preferably, in war cemeteries.

The same policy applied for WW2. It still applies for world war dead whose bodies are discovered today. Think of Fromelles a decade or so ago.

After WW2, the Australian Government applied the policy until January 1966. As a result, the Aust dead from the Korean War were (and still are) buried in a UN cemetery in Pusan/Busan. Those who died during service with the Far East Strategic Reserve incl Malayan Emergency and Confrontation, and those who died during Vietnam service up to January 1966 were buried in the nearest military/war cemetery, which was the British Garrison cemetery at Terendak. One was buried in the Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemetery at Kranji in Singapore. This was unusual as the CWGC cemeteries restricted to world war casualties IAW the CWGC Charter. Casualties from other conflicts can only be buried there with permission from the CWGC.

As an aside, some post 1966 Vietnam casualties are buried in CWGC cemeteries in Australia with the permission of the CWGC. It has a number of cemeteries in Australia containing World War 2 dead. You'll find them in the capital cities and at the sites of large military bases such as Townsville, and RAAF training bases such as Parkes, NSW. They are maintained on behalf of the CWGC by the Office Of Australian War Graves (OAWG).

The OAWG is responsible for providing and maintaining the war graves of Australian service personnel who die during war/conflict (for any reason) or those who die at any other time from a war-caused condition. There are no war cemeteries in Australia outside of the CWGC WW2 cemeteries, and so OAWG typically provides a war grave in a civil cemetery or, in the case of those who are cremated, a commemorative plaque in a Garden of Remembrance. It is up to the family to decide whether they want an official headstone on a grave. If they do, then OAWG will maintain the grave. If they don't, then OAWG will record the grave as a war grave, but not maintain it. That's because all official graves are of the same standard and design regardless of rank or position in society or family wealth.

Back to Terendak. After January 1966, the government changed its policy to allow repatriation if the family wished. Most did, although from memory something like ten casualties were buried at Terendak thereafter. OAWG looked after the graves (and the one in Singapore) during the time the Brits used the nearby camp and after it was handed over to the Malaysians in 1970.

In 2015, with access to Terendak cemetery, which is on an operational Malaysian base, becoming increasingly difficult, the government offered to repatriate the remains of those at Terendak and the one at Kranji if the families so desired. Most families took up the offer. The relatives of a 105 Bty Gunner, Tom Simpson, did not, along with a couple of others. Those graves remain at Terendak and are maintained by the OAWG.

Hope this helps. There is a little bit of info on the DVA website. More detail could be obtained from OAWG
Cheers,
Paul."

Paul Dickson (Ed) – In conclusion, well, maybe for the time being with this subject, I would like to extend my thanks to both David and Kevin for their contributions to another part of our history.



*Died of Wounds

**A Sad FACT – Russell James Copeman
– was the ONLY SAS Serviceman to *DOW Vietnam**



Unit: 3rd Special Air Service Squadron

Regimental No: 215989 **Rank:** Private

Service dates: 23.09.64 to 10.04.67

DoB: 24.01.46 **DoD:** 10.04.67

Passed away from wounds in the 2 Camp Hospital, Ingleburn NSW

May He Rest in Peace

. Terry Erbs has a real 'head scratcher' with the following email and photo he's sent in – he needs help...

"Hi Paul,

Neil Hodgson posted this photo on the *BOM ex members Facebook page.

We are now trying to complete the names of the course members, most of whom were 13th intake Nashos.

Brian Shields and I, both BOM members, when conscripted, were part of the 9th intake "Nashos" and were posted to the newly formed Met Section at North Head in mid '67. While the founding "Regs" members of the Met section were on a training course at BOM's school in Melbourne, the Army kept Brian and I busy completing survey and radar courses at North Head. Brian stayed with Met. Section, but I transferred to 131 Div Loc Bty at Holsworthy and subsequently served with the Detachment in Vietnam as a surveyor.

Postscript - Brian and I, like most of those in the photo, after discharge from the Army, had long careers with BOM.

Cheers, Terry Erbs."

*Bureau of Meteorology



"Army Met Unit formation in front of a 3 Mark 7 radar, North Head, 1968.

Standing - ?, ?, Bill from BOM, ?, Rick Houghton, Greg Sherriff, Keith(BOM from SA), ?, Bdr [Taffy] Davis.

Kneeling- Neil Hodgson, ?, ? Downey(maybe), Bob Ward."

Ed – Ok, anyone got any ideas for “?”’s and full names?

. **Rieny Nieuwenhof** – The following was copied from the 131 Locators Association Facebook page...

It was once again such an honour to host a morning tea, the 2nd in as many years, to acknowledge and recognise our Military Veterans, current serving Servicewomen and Servicemen, and all those special organisations that support them. It was a wonderful opportunity to bring people together to share mateship, stories and information, and make our existing networks even stronger.

As I have said on many occasions, if it was not for the courageous and selfless efforts of our veterans, and those that are currently serving, none of us, particularly us civilians, would have the freedoms we currently enjoy in this great country - Australia



On behalf of the City of Greater Geelong, and its residents, we sincerely thank them all #lestweforget #veterans #defenceforce #heroes #RSL #openarms #legacy #vietnamveteran #geelong



Rieny Nieuwenhof added -
With 5,500 veterans in the Geelong region, of whom 3,058 are DVA clients and 900 are reported to have mental health issues the work of ESOs and the support of Council, through the veterans' portfolio, remain very important for veterans and their families in the Region of Greater Geelong.

Ed – Rieny is 3rd from the left.

Ed – Well done Geelong Council – thanks for your support for ALL Veterans – you've set a benchmark which should be followed by other like organisations.

AN INVESTIGATION 181 Days

. The Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal (RVCM)

This is just a continuing update with regards to the progress being made with the submissions on behalf of Defense Force Members, who for no reasons of their own, were not awarded The Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal (RVCM) –

Richard Barry, AOM responded to an enquiry email –

'Paul

Very briefly my advocate met with the Minister's Advisor yesterday and handed over documents pertinent to the quest.

Hopefully the Minister will take time to read the essence of the case.

Richard."

Paul Dickson

"Nothing ventured, nothing gained."



Mail Call...

. **David Dougherty** – responds to the **Kevin Browning** article in September's *Eyes & Ears* -

"Hi Paul,

Following Kevin's comments and whether Lt Col Townsend was a Colonel or Lt Col, I would note that when commanding 6 RAR in Vietnam that he was a Lieutenant Colonel. The following link to a photo at the AWM is one reference but after Vietnam at some stage he did reach the rank of Colonel. <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C314174>

Description

Lieutenant Colonel Colin M. Townsend, Commanding Officer, the 6th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (6RAR), on a stage briefing an audience of foreign press representatives on the battle at Long Tan.

Further his recommendation for DSO HONOURS AND AWARDS

Colin Maurice Townsend

Service number: 17000 **Rank:** Lieutenant Colonel **Unit:** 6th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment **Service:** Australian Army

Conflict/Operation: Vietnam, 1962-1975

Award: Distinguished Service Order

Commonwealth of Australia Gazette 27 July 1967 on page 3977 at position 8

London Gazette 1 August 1967 on page 8432 at position 1

My understanding is that the rank of colonel was usually reserved for staff officers and not field officers, however, I may be corrected somewhere along the line.

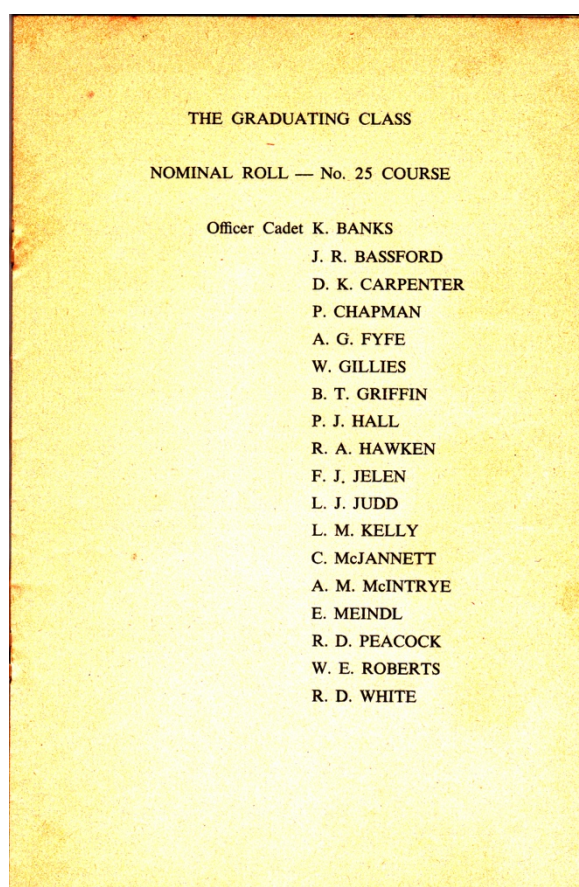
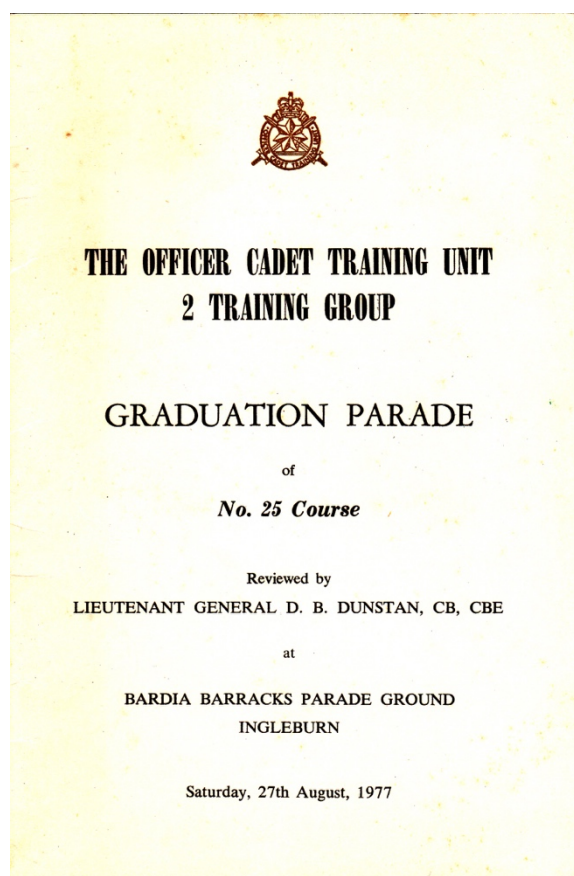
This raises another point, that during WW2 the 2/2nd Battalion had two Lt Col's, one as CO and the other as 2 i/c being **my father**. How this came about was that dad was CO of the 33rd New England Regiment, and as such a Lt Col. at the outbreak of war, he enlisted in the regular army, and retained his rank though initially nominally dropped to temporary Major. Shortly after his full rank was reinstated and therefore the 2/2 had 2 officers wearing a pip and crown.

Might move to Mexico where the weather is not quite so suitable for ducks.

Regards,

David Dougherty."

. **Jackie Bassford** – Jeff's (Late) wife sent in the following OCTU #25 Course, 27th August, 1977, results of the course Jeff completed.



Ed- It'd be interesting if any of the other Graduates are known by anyone?

. **Steve Wynn** – "more medicational adventures..."

"Hi Paul,

Good news, glad all is OK. I hope you enjoyed your birthday, I never want to be reminded of them these days.

I had my face operation, melanoma removed OK. Cut from corner of my right eye, near my nose, down towards just above the right end of my mouth. What a difference a good surgeon makes, the scar is hardly noticeable and the right side of my face is trim and taught, not all saggy like the left side ha, ha. It would have cost me a fortune for a plastic surgeon to do that, this bloke cost me \$550 for the face op, plus \$510 for all the other work earlier, well worth it.

Have you finished all your reno work yet?
Take care and stay safe,
Steve."

Ed – Steve makes my Dr's visits seem like going to a coffee shop!

. Paul Hobson dropped a line with regards to **Jeff Evans'** "Gunners in Vietnam..." continuing book extract -

"Hi Paul,

Loving Jeff Evans' work, "Gunners in Vietnam, 1965-1971". Out of interest, how many more chapters did Jeff manage to pen? Can't wait to read them.

Kind regards, Paul Hobson"

Ed replied –

"Paul,

Good to hear from you.

Yes, it is a good read.

As you're aware we've covered 10 and there are 15. Some of the ones to come are long, so, it may take us a few more months.

Paul."



Mail Out



I started this in September, 2017 and have decided to continue running down the alphabet of names and sending some emails to blokes in general to say g'day and just to generally keep in touch. A lot of the blokes I've never met, so it's just to keep some connection alive. Plus, it's good to keep in touch, even sporadically, it may help to avoid any unpleasant unforeseen surprises.



Mail In - Here are the responses...

. John Bayford – "Hi Paul

Glad to hear that you are well and looking forward to more travels.

We got back from Port Douglas last week where we stayed for 5 weeks to avoid the worst of the Cape Schanck winter. The temperature there ranged between 26 and 32 degrees Celsius so it was very pleasant. So, it's back to golf and good company at Cape Schanck.

John"

. Wade Cooper – "G'day Paul – good to hear from you.

All good here – sun started to pop out, then went away and the rain is back. Not to worry.

Thailand sounds a cracking idea!!!

Stay warm, well and healthy,

Wade."

. Phil Connor – "Giddy Paul and Helen. How are you both?

ATM generally all quiet on the Sunnie front.

Aside from the Specialists and Doctors we are good. Starting to improve following the 2 separate Spine operations back in the middle of this year. Practically off the 'heavy' drugs which I had taken for a considerable number of years. Hopefully off the lot by Chrissie.

Back at Bowls, tentatively at first, now well into it. I did ask my Neuro Specialist about the possibility of returning to golf and he said hit a small bucket at the range after Chrissie with fingers crossed.

Miriam is doing OK, aside from her regular medicals for her 2 separate cancers and other health issues, but as I have said a good country girl and as tough as old boots.

It's the beginning of the season/year for the annual pilgrimage of our NSW Mexicans (no pun) relatives to our place. In fact, we have some here ATM. As soon as they leave another group arrive.

Ahhhhh, Thailand, particularly Phuket, great people, great food. We have been there, over the years, 9 times, love it. Son and Daughter in law in USA went there for their honeymoon (ha ha, all those years ago).

Weather here has been up and down although supposed to have a lot of rain over next couple of months. Good to get your update, thanks mate, Cheers Phil."

. Mike Butler – "Hi Paul

Thanks for the note.

Things here are much the same here except that we have had some torrential rain last week and over the last few days. Took the caravan to Warrnambool last Monday and the rain started yesterday and only just stopped. However, we still enjoyed ourselves and saw three of the grandkids who live in Warrnambool.

Heading back to Melbourne next Monday, then getting ready for a get together with our regular 131 group (this time in Castlemaine) on 24 Oct for 3 days (Rieny Nieuwenhof, Pete Saint, Les Falkai, John Jaggard, Joe Molenkamp and John Beus). We haven't met for 3 years!! Castlemaine is currently under flood watch, so hope we are OK to stay there as we booked accommodation 6 months ago.

Michelle and I are travelling OK. Our VVAA group at the local Box Hill RSL are still meeting every month for lunch but numbers are down. Hopefully, things will get better when the weather improves.

Cheers for now,
Mike Butler."

...a later email from Mike –

"Hi Paul

Thought I'd let you know that the reunion with ex 131'rs that I mentioned in my last note has had to be unfortunately cancelled due to the flooding in Victoria. We are tentatively going to get together in Autumn next year.

Cheers
Mike"

. **Peter Creedon** – "Hello Paul.

Not a lot to report on at this end, just recently we took the van out for a run for about a month.

We headed out through Gunnedah on to Lightning Ridge then into Queensland to Brisbane to visit our daughter, then we visited our son in Lismore.

He was one of the ones that had to be rescued, he took us to the spot where he was finally dropped off at the high-water mark. Standing at that spot and looking across the town the level of water was hard to take in.

I might add that it rained the first and last weeks of our trip.

Over the last few months I have missed a lot of golf due to weather, I believe the golf will be cancelled this week due to the rain we have had these past few days. It looks like the weather will clear for today's Bathurst 1000.

The forecast is for clear for three days before possibly more rain.

Pauline and my health are OK so we really can't complain.

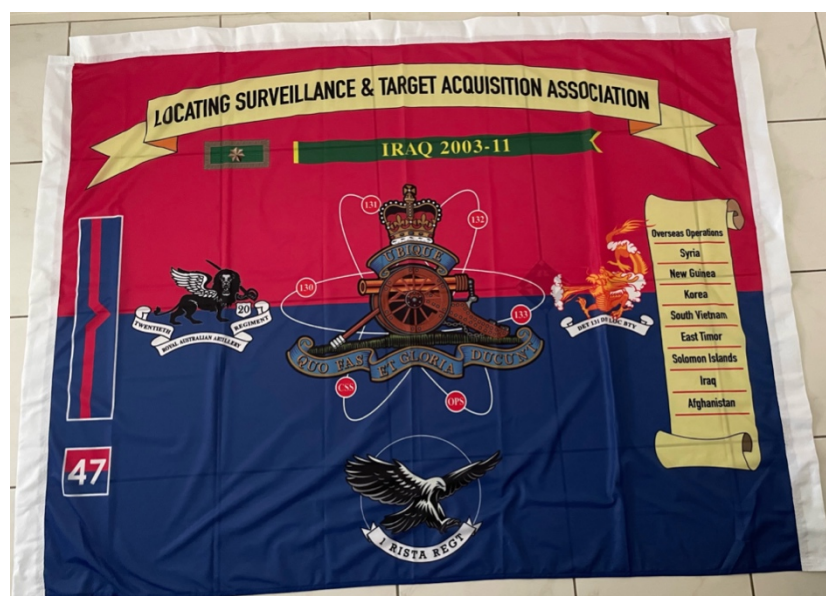
Regards Peter."

. **Keith Ayliffe** – "G'day Paul

Time has been flying this side to.

The weather has not been something you want to write home about but I still managed to get the odd game of golf.

However, I have been kept busy getting the new LSTAA banner off the drawing board and into a fully-fledged Banner. The actual Banner arrived into our keeping yesterday so I have attached a photo for you. Still a few things to do – Carry-roads etc.



I have also been assisting Terry E when needed to rework our website. We are trying to bring it up to date yet and keep it informative. That is where our link to *Eyes and Ears* will go. Terry's son Andrew is doing the hard Tech stuff for us and will become our carrier. This all takes time but you do what you can do.

I have been told I'm traveling well, saw my Heart specialist today. He's happy and says the Battery in my heart machine is good for another 8 Years, So, you may have to put up with me a while longer.

Best wishes to all Keith."

. **Nick Armstrong** – "Hello Paul

I am a little slow replying to your last email. Robin and I have been visiting my son and grandsons in Narrogin (WA). We were away for about three weeks, which included about five days of travelling. The trip went well, and it was good to catch up with them. Our previous visit was a little over a year ago, during the mid-year school holidays. The weather was more benign, but we were there when 'Daylight Saving' resumed in South Australia. Western Australia does not 'Do' Daylight saving. The 1 ½ hrs we 'lost' travelling west became 2 ½ hrs to pick up on the way home.

If there was a demonstration of the size of Australia, the floods in Qld, NSW, Vic, and Tas contrast with the 'normal' winter we have had in South Australia. Crops on Eyre Peninsula are looking good, with harvest beginning in the dryer, warmer parts of the State. I could probably get some harvest driving, with drivers scarce for this harvest. I am still school bus driving, although the bus route I have been mostly driving, has been awarded to a bus company from Yorke

Peninsula. While they sort out their drivers, I have been asked to do the run for them. Hopefully it will not take too long. I have been doing this run since the beginning of the year, while 'they' get a permanent driver. They did have a permanent driver for a week or two about the middle of the year, but an additional bus route had to be supplied, so I was asked to fill in until another driver was employed. My experience has been that if the bus is running, the priority to find another driver reduces substantially!

The drive to Narrogin was uneventful, although the local 'Landrover Man' is now tracking down the various fault codes thrown up by the computer. The problem with the fault codes is that they invariably prove to be triggered by faults that have nothing to do with what the computer believes! One fault gave a message 'Reduced Performance'. The car seemed to be performing well enough by my judgement. The message appeared for most of the journey, shortly after leaving home. Another 'fault' appeared on the return journey, about 200km west of Norseman, on the unsealed road between Hyden and Norseman. This message was for a transmission fault! Not what you want with 2000km to home. There was no obvious fault, and I checked no oil was running out, which is about all the drivers can do. I have learnt that with computer managed cars, '1st IA' is to turn off the key and restart the engine. This did seem to reset everything, and the car ran normally although the messages would eventually reappear. Two possible faults found, were a manifold pressure sensor blocked with carbon, and a light misting of engine oil near the hose from the intercooler to the turbocharger. There was no obvious split in the hose, but previous experience with computer managed engines in Landrover Defenders has shown they are sensitive to air pressure within the air supply to the engine. Thankfully the computer showed no problem with the transmission.

Today I was approached by a local Viet Vet asking if I was interested in joining an unofficial Viet Vets social group. He has a list of 50 names, mostly still alive, from the southern Eyre Peninsula. I guess we are all retired, and keeping upright, with varying degrees of success. Wives are also included, so the whole group would make an impressive assembly.

I have never tried golf. If I managed to hit the ball, I probably would not be able to find it. I suppose I could train a crow to find the ball. They seem to be experts at that.

Fire season is drawing closer, although everything is still green around here. I must do my 'Burn Over Drill' soon. It is a requirement to go on the fire truck. It is a procedure followed when the truck is in imminent danger of being overwhelmed by a fire. Something we try to avoid. Next Sunday I will be doing my Air Ops annual refresher, to load water bombers. That is about all for now. Keep well and Cheers.

Nick."

From the Advocate's Desk...

Our professional Advocate's contact details: -

Peter Pioro JP - email contact: piorowp@ozemail.com.au

Ken Foster OAM JP - email contact: khfoster1@bigpond.com

Ed – I sent Peter an email with a couple of broad based 'Widow' scenarios -

'Peter,

Just a bit of a question, as I get the odd question in regards to spouse/partner ongoing DVA pension and health assistance after the DVA beneficiary passed. I'm not the one to offer direct help.

The couple of scenarios -

Background: The member was receiving a pension and health assistance and he passes –

1. He was a DVA TPI recipient and shared the partner based pension.
2. He was a DVA general (possibly not the correct terminology) recipient and shared the partner based pension.

On his passing what can the spouse/partner expect to receive?

Does anything happen automatically, or, does the partner have to apply or, perhaps seek help, and from whom?

Paul.'

...Peter's responses –

'1. **Totally and Permanently Disabled** - Partner will receive the War Widow(r) Pension. Also 12 Weeks of the veterans **TPI Pension**.

- EDA (Extreme Disability Adjustment) - partner receives - War Widow(r) Pension

... This is the **only** Automatic provision of War Widow

2. Veteran on a **WHITE Health Card**.

- No assistance such as War Widow(r) Pension



- Veteran has a GOLD CARD - not embossed TPI or EDA ... No War Widow Pension
- In all other cases, there has to be a direct link to Service and the Veterans Passing.

To achieve a result an Advocate can assist in the investigation and preparation of a claim to DVA.

Regards,

Peter Pioro OAM

JP NSW, JP (Qual) QLD

Military Rehabilitation & Compensation Advocate Level 2

Military Welfare Advocate Level 2 Mentor

Disclaimer: Please note that all correspondence submitted will be treated with the total confidentiality between the sender and our Advocates. Printed submissions and responses that may be published in *Eyes & Ears* will be completely anonymous, just used as examples of help.

Notice Board – Hey, see what’s coming up?

There’s plenty of room for notices – has anyone got or getting any events planned?
Just send an email and I’ll post it. Ed

Peter Ravelje got this late NEWSFLSH to us -

Increasing the Totally and Permanently Incapacitated (TPI) Veterans Pension

Government will introduce a **\$1,000** permanent increase in the annual rate of the TPI Payment for Australia’s 27,000 TPI veterans from 1 January 2023.

Eligible veterans will receive an increase to their fortnightly payment of \$38.46 per fortnight.

From 1 January 2023 the Special Rate will be **\$1,617.16** (including the Energy Supplement) per fortnight.

So, the TPI Payment would increase from **\$39,488.80** per year to **\$40,488.80** per year, or from **\$1,518.80** to **\$1,557.26** per fortnight if introduced now (it will apply to the new payment rates following the next indexation adjustment in September). This will cost \$97.8 million.

. Grahame Dignam – forwarded the following couple of links from **CONTACT** giving updates on both –
20 Regiment RAA with regards to the new **Integrator TUAS**

<https://www.contactairlandandsea.com/2022/09/29/new-course-for-new-army-drone/>
and

1 Regiment RAA engaging targets in ‘danger close’ proximity -

<https://www.contactairlandandsea.com/2022/09/23/danger-too-close-for-error/>

Ed – both links are worth clicking on to get an update on Arty activity.

Grahame Dignam forwarded this email on from **Paul Hobson** –

National Servicemen Association of Australia to close its doors in 2026 as Nashos grow older...

“Interesting article in the ABC News!!

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-10-01/national-servicemen-association-of-australia-to-close-its-doors/101489350>

Sad times...

Thanks. Kind regards, Paul Hobson.” **Ed** – It’s worth clicking on the link to get an update on this activity.

Self Sufficiency in Practice...

Ed- I received an email for **Steve Wynn** who lives Wauchope, NSW (about 19km west of Port Macquarie), and thought I'd extract a portion of it dealing with the above subject line.

Now here's a bloke who has done some forward planning and action to cope with the natural disasters that are besetting most of eastern Aus, and continue as I keep breathing –

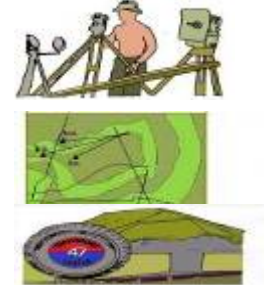
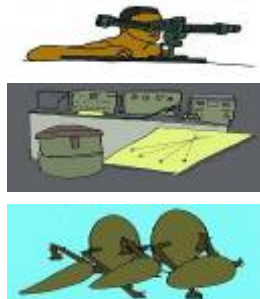
"It is constant rain here, and quite often very heavy too, our newest solar panels are still providing enough power to keep the house going and charge the batteries. Yippee that means we don't have power bills, the power company owes me money. The power price going up won't change the situation as long as the panels keep charging and the feed in tariff doesn't go below 5 cents, currently at 13 cents/kWh.

I am not a fan of the ridiculous energy policy of recent Govt's, so, got in early with my current setup to avoid any blackouts.

We grow everything we need, we have septic not sewer and have rain water tanks, well filtered, for our water supply. I also have a bore which will keep the food growing. We do have grid power and town water but for how long??

I started all this self-sufficiency (not prepper) stuff back in 1982 and just kept progressing from there. Something to do with being Libran."

There's got to be a lesson there somewhere – it seems pretty logical.



Committee members:

President – Allen Morley, Vice President – Bert Blink, Treasurer/Secretary – Grahame Dignam,
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 – Alan Adams, Vic Nth – Ron Mason, WA - Barry Guzder

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

Presidential perambulations

Back in 2009 a group of enthusiastic 131 Nashos got together over lunch at 'chez Dignam' in Sydney's Abbotsbury to begin some planning. There had been a previous 131 Association which had faded away, probably because of work and family commitments.

However, this Nasho group thought that it was time to establish a new association. Against some very vocal opposition and the previous group's lack of continuity it was decided to proceed with a new setup. Tasks were allocated and the structure for a new association begun. This required some funds which came from those involved. A constitution represented the next step and that document was written and submitted to the NSW Department of Fair Trading. The result was 131 Locators Association Inc. established as a new incorporated body. Communication then became the next important step, and with the assistance of a DVA grant we could talk to members and others near and far.

Subsequently, technology and Covid saw the necessity of encompassing ZOOM for our meetings and Facebook as a popular way to stay in contact with members. Things had changed since the 2009 lunch.

Allen.



<https://www.facebook.com/groups/131divlocbtyraa>

131 Locators Association Meeting: Date: Tuesday, 11th October, 2022 at 1105hrs...

. **Pertinent Points** – extracted from the 131 Locators Association Committee meeting...

Attendees were:

Zoom - Ron Mason, Ian Campbell, Terry Erbs

Zoom – Kevin Browning, then personal attendees (middle photo) were Allen Morley, Grahame Dignam, Merv Nairn, Nick Proskurin, Ged Carroll, Ernest Newbold, and Bob Billiards, then ZOOM – Bert Blink (last photo)

ZOOM - Steve Rowe, Gordon Malcolm



Apologies: Ian Amos, Laurie Sawyer, Warwick Brooker, Paul Dickson, George Lane, Rieny Nieuwenhof, State Reps and Jim Fitzgerald

President Allen Morley welcomed those present and those attending via ZOOM. It was great to meet face to face at the Canley Heights RSL and Sporting Club once again. Unfortunately, pizzas were not on the menu.

Financial Membership is currently ...**126**, plus Associates **2**, Affiliates **16**. Total **144**. Lapsed **37** members as at 1/10/2022

Presidents report.

Allen mentioned the following:

- . As we have adopted our own version of a constitution the changes by Dept of Fair Trading would only impact us if we come into conflict on an issue. No change is deemed necessary by us at this time.
- . AGMs can now have a “Zoom Attendance” In addition to the face to face version. Privacy of member’s information will prove to be an issue and will need to be addressed.
- . LSTAA Xmas do will be on 4th Dec, at 11.45AM at Panania Diggers Club. Please RSVP by 15 Nov to email: joekaplun@optusnet.com.au
- . NSW Veterans Affairs have declared **19/11/22 to be War Widows Day**
- . LSTAA Qld has advised that their new Banner has arrived.

Public Officer Report.

All required Notices regarding the AGM for November 2022 have been placed in the public domain.

Webmaster Update.

- . Face book now has 320 members. Some requesting membership [have been rejected due to no links or affiliation with 131DLB. These are suspected merchandisers seeking opportunities.
- . Bob is working with Paul Dickson regarding the distribution of our Newsletter via email (the bigpond.com issue that is causing problems)

Health.

- . We were advised and have confirmed that **Jeff Bassford** had passed and we are in contact with his widow.
- . Reports that another 131 Member has fallen to the “Prostrate pirate”. He is under care and receiving treatment and in good spirits.

General Business and around the grounds.

- . **Kevin Browning** advised there would be a ceremony for the **Consecration and Presentation of the Queens Banner of the Royal Regiment at Victoria Barracks on 5th November**. Full details and link for tickets are available at the link below:

Consecration and Presentation of the Queen's Banner of the Royal Regiment

The Gates will open at 12:00 PM with the Guards mounting at 1:00 PM on the 5 Nov 2022.

. **Ern Newbold** moved a silent moment in respect to the passing of the **Captain General of the Royal regiment of Australia Artillery the late Queen Elizabeth EIIR**. This was respectfully observed.

. NSW RSL provided a link to **Remembrance Day 11 November 2022**:
<https://www.rslnsw.org.au/commemoration/remembrance-day/>

. A review of **131 Association** merchandise was presented and after discussion a move to restock 50 Caps and 25 Hats to the value of approx \$1150 was approved.

A review of minimum order (26 each) Polos and Tee shirts will be done to check profitability and, if viable, proceed to order. The meeting approved and left the final decision to the Association executive.

. We have been presented with requests for expense reimbursement and the meeting approved payment of ISP Hosting costs of \$325.00 to the webmaster and Postage and stationary expenses of \$259.00 to the Sec/Treas. Both amounts were approved for payment by the meeting.

. **More scam emails are appearing and all are warned to be suspicious of any unsolicited emails and all links attached.**

If you've got more photos that you want added, just send them to: - Paul Dickson – web Photos
 131eyesandears@gmail.com– BUT DON'T FORGET TO ADD TITLES/NAMES ETC.

. Upcoming Events Calendar –

131 Locators Association Committee Meeting

Date: Tuesday, 8th November following the completion of the AGM

Commencing at 11.00 AM

Venue: Canley Heights RSL & Sporting Club

26 Humphries Rd Wakeley NSW

And available via Zoom link to be advised.



. Birthdays in the Battery...November –

Date	Name	Regt No	SVN In	SVN Out	Comments
1	DENIS SMITH	2789286	15 04 1969	17 12 1969	
1	VAUGHAN MILLAR	3411742	27 11 1967	26 11 1968	
1	WAYNE JEFFERY	2794772	04 11 1970	29 07 1971	† 26.10.17
	TREVOR PRIDEAUX (WAGHORN)	52837	05 05 1967	06 02 1968	
2	KENNETH HALLIGAN	2788319	16 09 1968	27 08 1969	
4	JOHN HENSHAW	3793057	20 01 1969	28 11 1969	
4	HAROLD LITTLE	2789038	21 02 1969	28 11 1969	† 02.04.18
5	DAVID DACRE	5716803	20 08 1970	20 08 1970	131
6	PETER WERTHEIMER	355747			† 23.11.19
	" "		20 08 1970	05 05 1971	4 Fd REGT
10	BARRY UREN	214715	28 10 1966	02 05 1967	
11	WILLIAM TAGGART		00.10.1966	00.11.1967	US 1st / 83rd
12	JOHN RICHMOND	2784289			
12	THOMAS LEMPRIERE	3412000	02 12 1968	21 01 1969	
13	MICHAEL CAMPBELL	6708462	05 05 1967	13 12 1967	† 1984
16	KENNETH LONG	2783232	04 05 1967	28 10 1967	
16	ALLEN MORLEY	3788972	04 05 1967	30 01 1968	
17	WARWICK HAMILTON Capt.	235190	17 04 1967	12 02 1968	† 26.08.2019
17	TERENCE (LOFTY) HAYES	214973	{04 05 1966	29 04 1967	† 14.12.2011
	" " "		{10 12 1968	10 12 1969	
17	JORG KIENE	3797963	09 11 1970	05 08 1971	
17	BARRY JOHN WILLIAMS	3796729	16 12 1970	08 02 1971	† 29.09.2004
18	DESMOND BURY	1411072	20 05 1966	29 04 1967	
19	FRANTZ JOHN PERRY WO2	36026	22 04 1966	07 09 1966	† 17.10.2016
20	MICHAEL FLETCHER	352778	29 04 1969	16 04 1970	
20	LESLIE BATES	218053	27 11 1969	05 11 1970	† 07.08.2013
22	MURRAY POUSTIE	3787941	04 05 1967	14 08 1967	
22	BRIAN RUDDUCK (M.I.D)	216134	{29 01 1968	21 01 1969	

	" " Sgt.		{03 02 1970	04 02 1971	4 Fd REGT
24	DONALD SIMMONS Sgt.	212769	22 04 1966	21 12 1966	† 25.04.2015
25	STANLEY TODKILL	1201908	04 11 1969	17 06 1970	
25	JIM TOWNLEY	3793586	20 01 1970	27 05 1970	AACC
	" "		28 05 1970	14 01 1971	1st Amoured Regt
26	MICHAEL O'KEEFE	2787168	08 01 1968	14 01 1969	AACC † 1980
26	FRED WALTER Sgt.	342848	11 05 1967	23 04 1968	RAEME
26	JEFFERY SCHAFFER	2788886	12 02 1969	17 12 1969	
27	PAUL HOBSON	2799714			
28	JOHN BAYFORD	3791019	27 11 1967	19 11 1968	
30	RONALD SAUNDERS	38516	04 05 1967	30 01 1968	
30	GARY STRATTON	2788161	08 11 1968	27 08 1969	
1	DAVID DOUGHERTY	2786594	17 01 1968	04 02 1969	

*Above colour background coding explanation – Red – financial Locator, Yellow – located Locator, Black – passed Locator, Blue – honorary Member, White – NOT Located Locator.

Ed – 9 blokes not highlighted is sort of ok, but still needs attention! Ok, let's get into it and actively get out there locating a few more!

. **Locator Profiles** – we've received 175 and we've sent out 175. Ed – Maybe we need to draw in a deep one so as to hold our breathes for a while longer.

. **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.

Vale



Name: McNamara, Kenneth Francis

Service No: 2783740 Rank: Gunner

SVN In: 04.05.67 SVN Out: 12.12.67

DoB: 26.09.45 DoD: 24.10.22

Lest We Forget



Locator Profile

Surname: McNamara **Given Names:** Kenneth Francis **Nickname:** Mac aka 'Major'

What did you do before the army: Cadet Draftsman at the Registrar Generals Department, Land Titles Office.

Service dates from: 20 April 1966 **to:** 19 April 1968 **Intake No:** 4 **State of Origin:** NSW

Recruit training centre: Singleton 3RTB **Regimental Number:** 2783740

Dates in Nui Dat from: 4 May 1967 **to:** 12 December 1967

Who were you there with: One operation with 131 then seconded to Australian Survey Corps. In 131 with Roger Long, Mick Campbell, Geoff Wood, Ernie Newbold, John Vitkovsky plus who knows?

What did you do after the army: Finalised drafting course and became pissed off with being in Australia. Shot through to Europe via South Africa. I went to Olympic Games in Munich, 1972 and also went to Soccer World Cup 1974. Drafted for various companies in London and also worked for travel companies as a courier for camping tours of Europe, then returned to Sydney 10 years later. I went to work for Australian Survey Office, then transferred to Darwin and moved into property development and management with Australian Property Group. In 1996 I was with Australian Estate Management in NSW. The then government decided that property work would be better done by private industry – 2000 sacked Australia wide. Then I received TPI 2 years later.

Anything else of interest: Now gratefully retired, swimming, lawn bowling and enjoying myself.

What town do you live in now: At Banora Point North, NSW, just south of the border.



Self, enjoying an entree at 131 Anzac at Lunch in Sydney, 2010.



Self not enjoying an entree + “131 unknowns” in the Locator’s Rec Hut, Nui Dat December, 1967.

Ken’s RTA group in December, 1967

L-R – Peter Hopper, Ken, Brian Hackett, Tony Goldsmith, Leigh Hemming (Late), Paul Dickson and Vic Danko



Some more memories with Ken as the years wandered along...

Ken



Ken

2008 ANZAC Day, Sydney



Ken

2012 Canberra Dedication

Ken (below) with his 'entrée'



Ken



2014 ANZAC Day, Sydney

Ken



Allen Morley shares a memory –

'Vale for self-titled 'Lance Brigadier' Ken McNamara. Ken is shown at right with Ed Paul Dickson at an Anzac Day lunch in Sydney.



Bob King has supplied the following collage of memories from ANZAC Days and Reunion...





... some more memories -

Pete 'Fletch' Fletcher – "Ken and I went to Hong Kong on R&R together. Had a great time hitting the bars etc. He liked a drink and he regularly informed me that he was the slackest soldier in the battery and quite proud of the fact. He was a real character, good fun. I always enjoyed his company. He used to give it to me quite often because of my connection with Warwick being his 'batman' etc.

RIP Ken.

Regards, Fletch."

Bruce Irvine – "G'day Paul,

Very sorry to learn of Ken's passing and yes, he was a bit of a character wasn't he. Stories for another time over a beer. He travelled over with us and shared lines in Nui Dat.

Ken and I were both survey draftsmen before we were called up and that's probably the reason we finished up where we did. Because of our background, I recall we were seconded to Survey Corps to work in mapping in our early days over there.

He will be sadly missed.

Lest We Forget

Kind regards, Bruce Irvine."

Ernie Newbold shares a reflection and a 'typical' Ken fun memory –

"Sad news regarding Ken McNamara, we were both 4th intake Nashos and ran into each other fairly often during our time in military service and it was always good to see his friendly, smiling face on ANZAC Day and to catch up in later years, may he rest in peace.

Now I am reminded of a Ken McNamara incident early one very cold morning at roll call parade at Holsworthy conducted by WO2 Percy Ovenden. I think that Ken may have been a little late to arrive at the parade and was admonished by WO2 Ovenden who told Gnr McNamara that he was the slackest man in the Australian Army to which Gnr McNamara replied, "Oh thank you Percy" ... WO2 Ovenden had leave the Parade momentarily in order to regain his composure, it may not have been commonplace for a National Serviceman to speak to a Sergeant Major in that way.

Regards, Ernie."

...additional thoughts expressed on 131 Battery Royal Australian Artillery Facebook (as at 29.10.2022) –

David Auld - RIP Ken Ubique

Warwick Brooker - Thank you for your service, Ken, and for your mateship over many years. You will be well remembered. RIP 'Major Mac'.

Ian Finlay - RIP Ken, Lest we Forget.

Greg Green - A great mate when I moved to Qld. Also, had good times at swimming Carnivals. Rest in peace Macca.

Sec Treas (Grahame Dignam) - Ken, now, that you are in the heavenly space, don't forget to look up your old sparring partner and mate WO "Percy". You are one of my most unforgettable characters and an honour to call you "mate". Don't rock the boat!!!



May He Rest in Peace and Never Forgotten



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...

. Locating, Surveillance & Target Acquisition Association...



LOCATING, SURVEILLANCE & TARGET ACQUISITION ASSOCIATION

The Eyes and Ears of The Battlefield



Australian Artillery Association – www.australianartilleryassociation.com



ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ARTILLERY HISTORICAL COMPANY

www.artilleryhistory.org



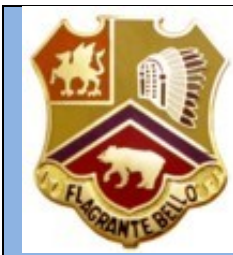
Website link - <http://www.vvaa.org.au/>

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

. 1st Battalion 83rd Artillery...



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

It is also dedicated to those members of the 1/83rd who did not return. We will never forget their sacrifice. Website: <http://www.1stbn83rdartyvietnam.com>



The Royal New Zealand Artillery Association

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

Editor contact email: 131eyesandears@gmail.com Ed – Paul 'Dicko' Dickson

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