

# THE EYES and EARS

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Unit Citation for Gallantry  
awarded to the Detachment and  
those who served at the Battles  
of Coral/Balmoral,  
South Vietnam, 1968

**Detachment 131 Divisional  
Locating Battery RAA  
South Vietnam 1966 – 1971  
2024**

**58 Years and the Detachment  
Spirit Remains**



Republic of Vietnam Cross of  
Gallantry with Palm Unit Citation  
Awarded to those who served  
with the Detachment  
from 01.04.66 – 19.08.71



DET.131 DIV LOC BTY NOTICE BOARD

*Best Wishes  
to everyone for a  
Happy New Year*

# 2025

Art work: Ernie Newbold

Ernie Newbold had a request for submissions regarding Christmas' at Nui Dat... What a collage!



### Kevin Browning –

“Hi Paul,

In response to the request in the last *Eyes and Ears* please see photos (left and right) of Christmas 1968. I think Santa on the vehicle is the Q Vehicle and the one in the Survey Lines shows our attempt at adding Christmas decoration to the

building, at least we got one Santa up, it also shows Mick Quinlan following an accident with shaving cream. We did our best to do up the place for the festive season.

### Kevin continues with another Christmas happening -

There is also a photo of HMAS Perth and my brother and myself on the ship, this is a photo from the AWM Collection.

I wasn't with the boys on Christmas Day as I was on board the Perth. The Perth was in Vung Tau and relatives and friends were invited on board for Christmas Dinner. It was my brother's second tour on the Perth. Lunch was great and we had one large can of Resches beer that would have been at room temperature had my brother and his friends not chilled it with fire extinguisher.



A friend of mine was serving with 9 RAR and his brother was also on the Perth but he wasn't made aware of the invitation. I think this shows how lucky we were with those in charge of the Detachment to make my visit possible.



One thing that Christmas did cause problems for us, especially in the Survey Lines, were the gifts sent to us by our parents. Most of us received a six pack of beer in the post. But alcohol in the Lines was forbidden, so we hid them in our lockers. Then come New Year's Eve and a gathering in my room saw quite a lot of noise around 7 pm. Of course we were located near the RHA Q store Lines and the Task Force Officers Lines. The QM came over to investigate the noise and the rest is history best forgotten.

Have a great Christmas Paul and may 2025 bring with it a number of holes in one for you. Thanks for the great you do Regards, Kevin."

### Bill Taggart (1<sup>st</sup>/83<sup>rd</sup> US Artillery) -



"Paul, these 2 pics are Christmas 1966 at Nui Dat. Santa is our Sgt (Rock) Bennet and on his lap is our HQ 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt Roy Laudette, a wonderful man and someone I admired greatly. Sadly he passed several years ago. Bill."



## The National Service Scheme... How "Nashos" were invented for Vietnam...



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

### Appendix: The national service scheme, 1964-72

By Sue Langford

Appendix from Peter Edwards, A nation at war : Australian politics, society and diplomacy during the Vietnam War 1965–1975: the official history of Australia's involvement in Southeast Asian conflicts 1948-1975, volume VI, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, NSW, 1997.

### The Series continues...

#### Men not required to register

Men not required to register for national service were: Aborigines as defined by the National Service Act; members of the Permanent Armed Forces (which included the Regular Army) and former members who had served at least two years; United Nations staff; official personnel from foreign governments living in Australia; and, until January 1967, non-British subjects.

'Full-blooded aboriginal natives, half-caste aboriginal natives and persons who have an admixture of aboriginal blood and live as aboriginal natives or amongst aborigines' were exempted from registration, but even such precise language occasionally permitted problems in determining liability." Throughout the duration of the national service scheme the DLNS was criticised by other government departments for exempting Aborigines and repeatedly urged to remove the exemption. The department held that it would be impossible to trace and oblige young Aboriginal men to register, as many of them did not know their birthdate. Not all States kept birth records of Aborigines, and each defined Aboriginality differently. Aboriginal Australians could, however, volunteer for national service. The National Service Act did not refer to

Torres Strait Islanders. As their dates of birth were usually recorded, the DLNS considered them liable to register but was lenient towards those who did not, for it considered that the scheme was insufficiently publicised in the Torres Strait Islands." No action was taken against non-registering Torres Strait Islanders before September 1967.

Non-naturalised immigrants living in Australia who were not from the United Kingdom were not required to register when the national service scheme was introduced, in keeping with Regular Army regulations which did not allow non-British immigrants to enlist unless they intended to be naturalised. Thus the only immigrant twenty-year-olds or 21-year-old sons of immigrants required to register were British subjects living in Australia and immigrants who were under sixteen years and living in Australia at the time of their parents' naturalisation. The waiving of non-British immigrants' obligation for national service came under criticism from the public, the press and Parliament on the grounds that immigrants living in Australia should have the same responsibilities as Australian nationals. After considerable debate and close examination, particularly over whether the call-up of immigrants was consistent with international law, Cabinet endorsed the proposal that non-British subjects 'ordinarily resident' in Australia were liable for national service. The decision, made on 4 April 1966, was not publicly announced until 10 August that year, giving the Government four months to consult with relevant foreign governments. The decision came into force in January 1967 and was in keeping with the Government's aim to treat all immigrants, whether British subjects or not, along the same lines; yet immigrants were treated differently from naturalised Australians in that they were not called up until they had been in Australia for at least two years. Non-British subjects were not called up for service until they had reached the age of 21, to enable the individual as an adult to make the decision whether to remain in Australia and, if so, to apply for naturalisation and be liable for national service. Non-British subjects were permitted to leave Australia rather than be called up. Immigrants who were found physically fit but rejected on the grounds of deficient English were classed as temporarily unfit and granted a twelve-month deferment. If the immigrant's standard of English remained deficient after twelve months, he could be classified as unfit.

New regulations commencing in January 1967 during the fifth registration period exempted nationals of Denmark, Switzerland, Morocco, Peru, Venezuela and Argentina from national service under treaties providing for mutual exemption from military service. In February that year the Nationality and Citizenship Bill was passed in Parliament, giving non-British immigrants liable for national service the right of citizenship after three months of national service on the condition they were efficient soldiers. Non-British subjects who volunteered to serve in the armed forces were granted the same right of citizenship. The Bill ensured that no national serviceman would serve overseas before having the opportunity of becoming an Australian citizen.

Other conditions applying to immigrants were as follows:

Men with dual or plural nationality who were both British nationals and Australian citizens were required to register. Non-British subjects who had completed or undertaken some military training overseas were required to register in the normal way from January 1967. However, men who had completed fifteen months' continuous full-time service in a recognised navy, military or air force of a country other than Australia were granted indefinite deferment of call-up on 'submission of satisfactory documentary evidence of such service'. Those who completed less than fifteen months' service were required to undertake a reduced period of national service of two years less the period of their service overseas. Those with less than fifteen months' overseas service could nominate to serve in the Citizen Military Forces for a period varying in length according to the period served overseas.

If a male visitor to Australia were twenty years of age and in Australia for more than eleven months after 1 January 1967, he had to prove that he was not 'ordinarily resident' in Australia and establish temporary visitor status before being exempted from national service.

Until legislative amendments in 1967, immigrants whose parents were naturalised Australians could renounce their citizenship and avoid call-up.

The option of part-time service in the Citizen Military Forces was open to non-British subjects. They were, however, required to meet conditions of entry and one of these conditions was that they had resided in Australia for a year. Non-British subjects were permitted to volunteer for national service if they were twenty years of age or if they had reached the age of eighteen years and nine months and had a good reason for wishing to volunteer for service ahead of the normal call-up for their age group.

### **Non-compliance**

Non-compliers or 'defaulters' were men who failed to register at the proper time, notify change of address, attend a medical examination, report for call-up, or provide necessary information when requested to do so. Men who obstructed or resisted a Medical Board or who made false and misleading statements were also classed as defaulters. The Government employed a number of methods for tracing these men. Checks were made on Commonwealth electoral records, the records of the Commonwealth Employment Service, the Department of Social Services' child endowment records, and the Department of Immigration's records, mainly incoming passenger cards. In addition the DLNS obtained information on defaulters from employers, newspapers, periodicals and anonymous individuals. In some regions DLNS officers had access to motor registration records. The DLNS established a master record of known defaulters from July 1965 which was circulated and periodically revised by its regional offices.

The 1968 amendments to the National Service Act were principally designed to increase penalties for breaches of the Act and to increase the powers of the Government to trace defaulters. The amendments, which led to six weeks of intense debate in both Houses of Parliament, were eventually assented to on 24 June. They also gave the Government the power to require any individual or organisation to disclose information about twenty-year-old men liable for call-up. Parents, solicitors, doctors and ministers of religion were exempted from giving this information. In addition, most penalties for offences under the Act were doubled. These included fines for burning registration cards, filling in false registration cards and making false statements. In its effort to trace student defaulters the Government sought powers for college and university educational records to be viewed and checked by DLNS officers. During the six weeks' debate the Government

backed down on sections of the original Bill, yet the power of the DLNS to demand details of a specific student remained. After protests by the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee the Government eventually abandoned all attempts to gain such powers.

Men who failed without 'good reason' to register for national service were considered for prosecution. The fact that a man's birthday was not drawn, or that he was in a class of persons not called up, was disregarded. Once the DLNS decided to prosecute, the case was referred to the Deputy Crown Prosecutor and heard in a Magistrate's Court. If convicted, defaulters could be sentenced to imprisonment for a period equal to the period of national service they were liable to render: up to two years. In total, fourteen men were imprisoned for failing to obey a call-up notice. Before June 1968 men convicted under the National Service Act were taken into military custody. Following legislative amendments made that month and initiated by a diverse range of pressure groups—the Returned Services League, the Australian Council of Churches, the Australian Quaker Peace Committee and the Federal Pacifist Council of Australia—men prosecuted under the Act came under civil powers and were henceforth sent to a civil prison. Once they had registered, late registrants not defined as defaulters proceeded as though they had registered on time, a policy employed to handle their cases quickly. In September 1970 the law was changed and late registrants were denied the ballot unless the registrant was able to prove that his late registration was due to circumstances beyond his control.

...this process lead to the last date in Conscription -

**The Last Conscription Date** began 27<sup>th</sup> September, 1972 and ended 72 days later on 7<sup>th</sup> December 1972.

Conscription ended on 5<sup>th</sup> December, 1972 during which there were a total of 30 intakes.

The first National Service intake commenced on 30<sup>th</sup> June, 1965.

## **Appendix: The national service scheme, 1964-72**

By Sue Langford

### **Statistics:**

Between 1964 and 1972, **804,286** twenty-year-olds registered for national service and **63,735** national servicemen served in the Army.

**Balloted out:** 567, 238

**Granted indefinite deferment:** 566,513

**Awaiting 'next' ballot:** 725

**Balloted in, not eligible for ballot, elected to serve in the Citizen Military Forces, and volunteers:** 237,048

**Exemptions:** 3,563

**Theological students, ministers of religion and members of religious orders:** 553

**Physical or mental disabilities:** 1,768

**Conscientious objection determined by a court:** 1,242

**Indefinite deferments:** 35,548

**Married before the date of call-up:** 20,502

**Members of the Citizen Forces:** 7,197

**Citizen Forces whose obligations completed:** 7,849

**No longer liable to be called up:** 102,134

**Death subsequent to registration:** 916

**Served or serving in Permanent Forces:** 2,194

**Rejected as not meeting the medical, psychological and educational standards required by the Army:** 99,010

**Imprisoned for refusal to obey a call-up notice:** 14

**Unavailable for call-up as at 31 December 1972:** 21,876

**Granted or being considered for deferment:** 15,526

**Granted or seeking deferment on grounds of exceptional hardship:** 470

**Under investigation for suspected breaches of National Service Act:** 3,890

**Granted permission to leave Australia:** 610

**Migrants not included elsewhere, not yet due for call-up:** 1,380

**Called up and enlisted in the Army:** 63,740

**Available for call-up subject to meeting the standards required for Army service and the outcome of applications for exemption or deferment:** 10,187

**Servicemen conscripted under the scheme became known as 'Nashos'.**

### **A final footnote...**

The National Service Act 1951 and its subsequent amendments were repealed by the Defence Legislation Amendment Act of 1992. Following this legislation, the Government retained the power to introduce conscription under the Defence Act, but only in a time of war and only with prior parliamentary approval. The Act also revised provisions concerning conscientious objection, providing for special tribunals to determine claims and making it possible for an individual to be recognised as a conscientious objector to a particular war. In introducing the legislation the Parliamentary Secretary to the Attorney-General, Peter Duncan, said that the Keating Government's aim was 'to preserve the capacity to introduce conscription for the protection of Australia, but to ensure that those claiming exemption would receive a rapid and fair hearing'. The Government clearly wished to remove many of the anomalies in the operation of compulsory military service

that had become evident during the Vietnam War. Duncan expressed the hope that repeal of the National Service Act would 'remove this last vestige of an unhappy and divisive episode in our history'.<sup>3</sup>

Birthdates drawn in National Service ballots 1965-72

Birthdates drawn in the first National Service ballot: 10 March 1965

**This ends this series which I hope you found an interesting journey of the reason for, how it was organised and how it played out.**

**The 10,000+ plus words in the series possibly put some light on the journey we took!**

**Paul Dickson**

## A tribute to a true Gunner...

Eddie Tricker discovered the following 'diary'/memoir compiled by Joe. Kevin Browning added detail along with the photo with regards to the USG implant operation.

Sadly, like a lot of stories, for unknown reasons, it has no continuation, however it is truly amazing account of a Gunner's experiences and life altering effects reflected as at 27th August, 2003 -

### DVA Nominal Roll information -

Name: **KOCKA, Joseph Robert**  
Service No: 1202703  
Service: Army  
Date Of Birth: 18/07/1951  
Rank: Gunner  
Place Of Birth: Sarajevo YUGOSLAVIA  
Corps: Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery  
National Service: No



| Summary of Unit Name(s)                     | Start Date | End Date   |
|---------------------------------------------|------------|------------|
| 4th Field Regiment                          | 20/08/1970 | 09/12/1970 |
| Detachment, 131 Divisional Locating Battery | 10/12/1970 | 29/07/1971 |

Story Source: [http://members.optushome.com.au/joekocka/My\\_Story.htm](http://members.optushome.com.au/joekocka/My_Story.htm) (Downloaded on: 27 August 2015.)

## Gunner Joe KOCKA – “My Story”:



L to R) ??, Sgt Brewster?, ??, self and Peter Fielden

Read on ... but be aware that what I have penned here is the best I can muster. My memory is not as it used to be and I make no apology for any inaccuracy, if you can detect it! If you can, then better still email me and I'll update my story after considering your opinions. Perhaps in this way we may be able to get the account straight for that small period in our lives.

I served in South Vietnam during the period 20 August 1970 till 29 July 1971. And although I have managed to pen the following, I am a little vague on exact dates simply because they are impossible to bring to mind. For that reason I am

using this page to maintain and update my memory as dates, times and events come back to me. The 'as at' date will give you some indication just how well I am travelling, as I attempt to include everything on a frequent basis.

### **Introduction – (as at 27 August 2003)**

I know that my time in South Vietnam was not as stressful or hectic as it was for the many other diggers who served. An adventure, yes. Important, certainly. Hard times, there were many. Good times, also many. Stressful times, there were many of those too. And to cap it all off, bewildering and confusing when you think back and suddenly realise that someone could easily have shot you or bombed you. In hindsight I must have believed in what we were doing. I often thank God that my training was sufficiently basic and my knowledge sufficiently limited that I had no time to sit and contemplate each new day or the results of my efforts the day before. If I was smarter then I believe I would have also been very cynical and possibly unmotivated. Using our training and simple common "dog-f\$@k" kept us from too much harm.

As I said I served as best I could, and in that time had many great moments, many stressful episodes, and just as many undefinable periods which I still try and make sense of to this day. If I were to be asked to sum up my war experience I could not go much better than to say 'Unforgettable'!

The following pages - and photographs - are but a glimpse into what I experienced in those twelve months as a nineteen (19) year old digger. I was proud to be an Aussie digger, but ignorant of what it all really meant. In the thirty years since then I have gained enough of an insight to believe I must have lived under some rock; what choice did we have in the matter.

Too many factors/variables would need to have been altered to have prevented our involvement in that war. That was impossible, regardless of the demonstrations and desires of so many to end the conflict. Like the French before us, the war ran its own course. Unfortunately, we should have learnt from the French (lessons learnt!!) but in the end failed as they had failed.

I have arranged this story in a fashion which will provide me with the achievement of three (3) objectives:

1. To tell it like I experienced it
2. To show it as I saw it,  
and
3. To provide support through this page to those many missing mates who took our shameful homecoming to heart, and left to live a life of regret ... alone.

For the many uninitiated, the following is a description of what "My Vietnam" was all about, and what we the members of 131 were expected to do.

### **Setting foot in Vietnam**

On arrival in South Vietnam on 20 August 1970 my feet felt the burning tarmac at Ton So Nhut airport while my eyes and ears registered the sensation of war. To this day, I can honestly say that what I saw and heard there in those first few minutes will stay with me forever. The din was unbelievable, and the military aircraft, vehicles and soldiers moving around so urgently only contributed to my overall impression of "So this is what a war is like!". Before 30 minutes had passed we were all hustled into a caribou for our short trip down to Nui Dat. Here the loadmaster excelled himself by saying "Listen up. If the alarm bell should go off, brace yourselves and prepare for an emergency landing". End of speech. Twenty-five minutes into our flight the alarm bells started clanging. My bowels started gurgling. The loadmaster made himself urgent and began moving up and down the walkway as though he was readying everything for anything. The Caribou wheeled to the left and started falling quickly, and continued its decent until a bump and bounce told us that we were on a runway and not ten feet nose first into the deck. I could only stare at the loadmaster as he laughed and hurried everyone off the plane. 'Fuck him' was my final thought on the whole episode.



#### **Luscombe Field**

Luscombe Field, Nui Dat was where we now were ... and this was different to Ton So Nhut. Here all seemed slow and purposeful. And greenery everywhere. No one rushed about, and the aircrafts and vehicles moving about seemed to have someplace to go. Excellent! This was the Australian Army I knew. We trucked our way to our destination and during the drive I could do little but marvel at all things around me. This really was a war! I thought of the many talks we had back at Holsworthy. How the old Vets described the place, and what they did here for twelve months. It was exactly how they described it - less their personal adventures. It really was tropical. It was bloody hot too! We were all still in our dress polies and the laughter and hoots that we

received from other troops along our route was interesting. Later we would be told that this was normal. That those with so much time left in country were always given sneers and jeers. So, what!



### Nui Dat Hill

We rounded Nui Dat Hill (SAS Hill) and drove past Kanga Pad and the front gate. We also drove past a battery of guns (possibly 107) and 131! Hell, what's this! I was not aware that the obligatory month of acclimatisation and induction was with a different unit. Later I would discover that this was normal.

### 4 Fd Regt RAA

The Regiment doubled as a Reo induction unit for all artillery personnel. Our reception at 4 Fd was no different to anyone else, except that we were not in 131. We were met by the HQ Bty BSM and led off to individual tents. I ended up sharing a four-man tent with guys like Peter Dobbs. The tents were generally dark, smelly, dingy and dank! All adjectives which clearly describe my new home. But it was to turn out OK. A quick tour of the area gave me some idea where everything was. I was fascinated by the toilets, in particular the urinals - four PVC pipes in a tight square buried in the ground and sticking out about three feet. You stood over these and dangled your Willey into them. Simple.



### My tent

HQ Bty was the administrative unit for the Regiment, so no guns. No problem. But personal weapons (SLR) were immediately issued to all arrivals. And ammo! Well ... this was indeed the war! Not blanks but real killing stuff. That night I taped two magazines together so I could do a quick change when needed. Next night I took them apart after being ridiculed by all and sundry. OK I thought, we aren't grunts. My tent mate came in and started enquiring if I would like some hand-grenades and a Claymore 'just in case'. I think my look convinced him I had had enough from everyone else and didn't need his jibes.

My first thoughts on arriving were "Christ all mighty ... look at this place". Here I spent time working in a number of areas such as the OR's Mess (plenty of good chocolate milk and Soya beans), Enterprise (switchboard) and many 'shotgun' duties (armed protection on convoys). Here I also met other diggers like Dave Larter, Karl Kuhn, Peter Dobbs. Dave Larter is still in the system to this day and is only marginally older looking (well done mate).

The OR's mess was great work. No I wasn't twisted. After the first week - fighting everyone else in line at breakfast for the small amount of white milk instead of the dreaded chocolate milk (doesn't do the Rice Bubbles much good) the 'freedom of the mess' as a dixie basher was great. Like they gave me an open ticket to all our rations. Yes, there was heaps. All supplied by the US. Except for white milk. For some reason this was always in short supply; but chocolate milk was plentiful as was the Soya beans. Tons of both of them. And I ended up hating both of them.



### Jack Avery (back), Ted, and Self (smoking)

With a few days of arriving I had my first visit from my mates in 131 - Bazza Collins and Jack Avery, both Nasho's. It was terrific to see them. The next day I paid a visit to 131 and fell in with the many others I knew. They were aware that I would be with 4 Fd for the next few weeks but that didn't stop me going over at every opportunity.

Most members of 131 were National Servicemen - in fact 70-80% of the battery. The few Regs (like me) were hassled mercilessly, but it wasn't too bad. Us Regs were still the backbone of the Army. Ha! My first month in country was exciting to say the least. It was different, and guess that's what made it very different. There was always something happening every day. A few days after arriving I had to go and see the dentist. My three broken teeth

had produced a massive abyss on my gums, and this was poisoning my system. Just before leaving Australia for Vietnam I had the unfortunate luck of being king hit by a junior NCO (no names no pack drill). We disagreed over

something and he settled it the best way he could. Anyway, when the dentist saw the state of my mouth he near passed out. His horror was not so much to do with the abscess and the busted teeth, but with the fact that I got to Vietnam in such a state - that the Army let me come. I told him the story and he seemed to understand. A week later I had my first set of military false teeth. They lasted 22 years.

After the OR's Mess, I got a chance to become a telephone operator. The Regimental switchboard was called 'Enterprise' and it provided the Regiment with connections to other units in Nui Dat. The work was easy but living in a dingy bunker for eight hours at a time was taxing to say the least. Night duty was even worse. But the many calls kept you busy and made life bearable and interesting. Not that we listened in to conversations. Never happen!!

The other interesting side to the Regiment was the 'shotgun' tasks. Each morning on parade the BSM would read out the activities of the day, and the trips various convoys were doing. The convoy drivers always required an armed escort (shotgun) to accompany them, and our Regiment provided many. My first 'shotgun' was to a small village north of Nui Dat. I can honestly tell you my hair was standing on end as we drove out of the front gates of Nui Dat. Some of you die hards may scoff at this, but 'I was just 19' and sitting in a vehicle with a loaded SLR or GPMG was very different to running a radar set or manning Arty Tac. Soon after we ended up on a convoy working with the Civil Aid unit and stayed overnight in a small village an hour drive from Nui dat. This was interesting!

When I say overnight I don't mean staying in a motel. Along with staying in this village was guard duty most of the night. Yeh. Here I was lying in this ditch all night making sure we were protected. Can you see it! If my life depended on it, I honestly couldn't tell you where we were or what we were doing there. No briefing before we left Nui Dat, no conversations with senior NCO's or Officers during our time there, and no debrief when we eventually got back. I knew nothing!! But then again, I was just a 'shotgun' and maybe that had something to do with the lack of communication. Anyway, I remember lying there in the dugout when my turn came to staying awake. I was wearing a flak jacket and helmet and I guess keeping an eye out ... for whatever. I lit up a cigarette (starting smoking in country) and sat there with my back against the dugout wall when I saw the Officer in Charge (a Lieutenant) slowly making his way towards me. I remained still, shielding the cigarette in the palm of my hand. He very quietly moved toward me, probably thinking I was a sleep. When he got to within three feet of me I straightened up with some urgency and said "Evening Sir". You would have thought I'd hit him with a four-b-two considering how high he jumped. He got back up off the ground and grunted something before leaving.

### **Finally back to 131 Div Loc Bty**

My first recollection of returning to 131 was when I got the message that the BSM of 131 wanted to see me. I hurried over hoping like hell it was news of my returning to 131. WO2 McManus was our BSM, a nice old guy (even then) with thinning and greying hair. I stood there in front of him and he said the BC - Major Tim Ford - was needing another soldier in the Artillery Intelligence stream (that was me) and along with the position came a stripe. I just stood there and looked at him. He then asked me how long I had left to do in the Army. I said "Four and a half years Sir". He seemed annoyed and again asked the question, but this time added " ... with your National Service". I was dumbfounded. I informed him that I was a Regular soldier, not a Nasho. Well ... I think he thought his Christmases had all come at once. He got up and came around his table and smiled at me. "You're a Regular soldier?" he said with some surprise. Hell, I thought. Don't these guys know whose who here! "Yes Sir, and proud of it" I said. It was nearly like a meeting of Father and Son after a separation of twenty years. I found out later they shipped my predecessor home early. Not sure why, but this left the Battery high and dry for junior NCO's. So, Gunner Kocka became Lance Bombardier Kocka. I began to love this place.



### **131 Tent Lines and Wire**

Sergeant Brewster was assigned to show me my tent. He led me across the main road to where the remainder of the Battery members were housed. This place was like tent city, but right on the wire and right next to the US 8" Battery 'Husky Chuck'. It all looked great. I was back where I belonged. But a great surprise was about to reveal itself for as I followed the Sergeant into my future home, who should be lying there on one of the cots but my dear friend 'punch my teeth out' junior NCO. I won't name him as he'll hunt me down and kill me for sure. As it was we nearly came to blows over a very stupid incident which would occur a month or two later. More about that in a later chapter.

So, there he lay, and here I stood. We looked at each other and he sneered just ever so lightly. Stuff you I thought. I couldn't believe how unlucky I was. Anyway, I stowed my gear and followed Sergeant Brewster back to the Orderly Room for instructions. Basically, my job was the same as all the others - shift work in a word but with the added responsibility of watching over others, and coping the flack for their mistakes.

The various sections in 131 were responsible for a number of different tasks:

Artillery Intelligence - provided by Listening Posts (LP) in the field located at locations such as Nui Dat Hill (SAS Hill) and the Horseshoe, and providing information to Arty Tac on the results of any enemy activity in Phuoc Tuy province;

Survey - requiring detachments to conduct field operations etc;

SENSOR placement and monitoring - requiring detachments to conduct field operations and be located in and around Nui Dat;

Thermal Imaging operations - providing detachments to operate equipment in and around Nui Dat and the Horseshoe;

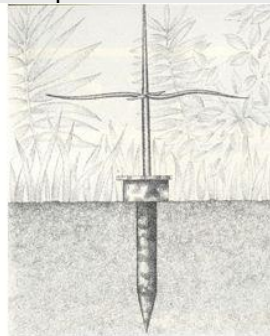
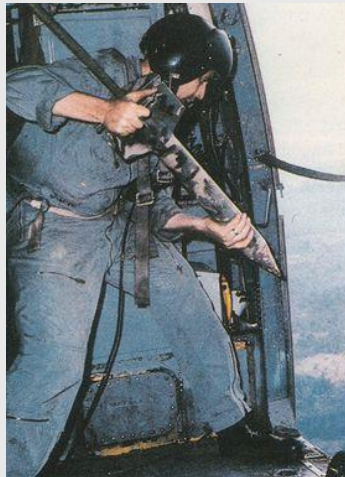
Civil Affairs operations - members being detached on various occasions to operations in support of the local communities;

and

Various other activities such as providing manpower as protection for resupply operations to Fire Support bases, local community activities, 1ATF operations in the field, etc.

### Duties and Responsibilities

Like many of the others my major responsibility was firstly as an Artillery Intelligence Operator. This role required all Arty Int operators to man the Arty Tac HQ, the LP's and to deploy to various locations where a battle had taken place to assess the location of mortar base-plates if mortars had been used.



ADSID  
(Air Delivered Systemic Intrusion Detector)

### SENSOR (Air delivered)

I was also trained by the US as a SENSOR Operator, training in the deployment of field sensors, and their subsequent monitoring. This role required us to go into the field both around Nui Dat, the Horseshoe, and other locations which were believed to be used by the enemy. We were responsible for planting the SENSOR equipment in these areas (both from the air and ground) and to monitor the movement of the enemy, day and night. These field deployments were nearly always completed with the protection of the D&E Platoon, or with the rifle companies of the battalions. On many occasions, we deployed into the field with the APC's for protection. On two occasions, I can recall our progress barred by suspected mines and booby-traps. On one occasion a mine or booby-trap was either set off or purposely detonated. The field operations were very stressful and physically debilitating as we were not trained infantrymen and were never involved in collective training with D&E Platoon or the rifle companies.

When we were rostered for machine gun piquet we always manned a bunker on the wire. This involved sleeping and operating in the bunker and being proficient in the use of the .50 calibre machine gun, detonation of claymore mines, night vision devices and hand-operated flares. On a few occasions, there were suspected enemy intrusion into the wire, and firing was authorised, both of the machine gun and the flares. Next to us was the US Artillery Battery called 'Husky Chuck'. On numerous occasions, they fired their machine guns and detonated their claymores. We suspected they were a little 'touchier' than we were as nothing was ever found in the wire the next day.



### NUI DAT HILL Listening Post

I ended up doing my first month on Nui Dat Hill in the LP. This wasn't so bad as we seemed to have everything provided. We had a vehicle to use to ferry us up and down the Hill, a good size ten and stretchers for use during our shifts, and a well-built but very exposed LP complete with a GPMG and spiffy binos. All we had to do was observe, take readings with the built-in compass board, and report to Arty Tac anything of tactical interest. Close to the LP was the SENSOR CP - soon to double as the Thermal Image radar shack.

My lightest moments were filled with watching and feeding the monkeys - monkeys everywhere! They entertained us day and night, some coming right down to our position, while others did acrobatic stunts high up in the trees and on the electric wires which supplied our little domain. They were Rhesus monkeys from what I could tell. I named most of them but I wasn't too sure which was which from day to day. What the hell.

Our LP overlooked everything. We could see for 30 kilometres in any direction. The Horseshoe feature was soon pointed out to me - where our brother LP was located, and where we also did duty for a month straight. I was looking forward to that.

Over the Hill from us was the SAS. In fact, many called this Hill 'SAS Hill'. We saw little of them except when we managed to sneak in and watch their movies at night, or when they went out or returned from patrols. The few I

did see impressed me. Many years later I was to learn their reason for being in Vietnam. It had little to do with their true role, and more to do with patrolling and ambushing. They really were little more than up-gunned grunts. But they were good, and did their jobs very well.

Other duties which may be worth noting including our stint at placing of new wire and repairing the existing wire surrounding Nui Dat. Most of the Battery members were involved in this. This task saw us labouring in no-man's land for about a week. The work was very hard, and very, very hot. A couple of the lads passed out from lack of water and the heat. I considered the work on the wire to be fairly dangerous as we not only had to be mindful of the existing claymore mines, trip flares and poisonous snakes, but also of any enemy device which may have been planted the night before. I considered also that we were fairly exposed to any possible enemy fire should they decide to fire upon us. We were very much in the open and out in the perimeter wire which - admittedly - was quite wide, but still within small arms range from concealed areas.

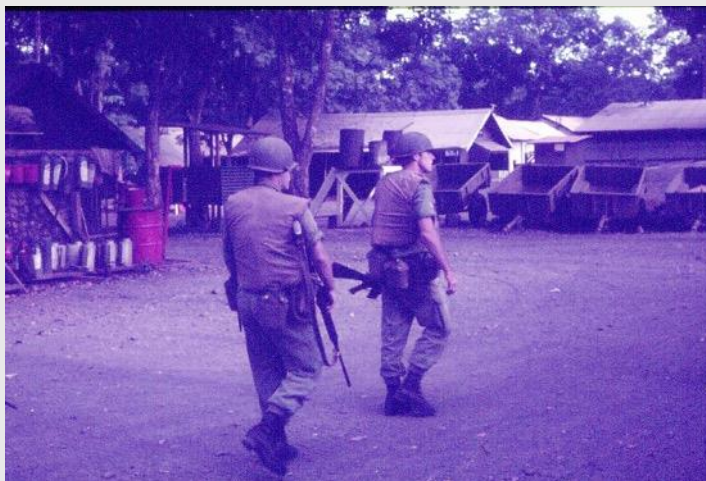
On one occasion while on the Hill a number of us heard some unknown activity down on the wire to our immediate front. The sound was coming from the rubbish dump which happened to be on the wire, and therefore clearly within reach of anyone wanting to rat through it. I recall we reacted to incident by informing both Arty Tac (who we were in contact with by radio) and the US machine gun crew who manned a machine gun bunker not 10 metres from our LP. The Arty Tac Duty Officer informed us that they would send a patrol to investigate the suspected activity, while the US machine gun crew decided to force the issue by firing their .50 calibre machine gun down into the dump. We had no control over the US machine gun crew, but it seemed that they were told to halt there firing sometime after they started. We heard nothing about the outcome of the suspected activity. No weapons fire was directed at us from the suspected activity.

### **Change of Tents**

My tent accommodation was soon changed and I was relocated in the main Battery area due to one of the other guys returned to Australia. This was good, very good, for now I could sleep peacefully without fear of that psychotic maniac cutting my throat. My new tent was directly across the hard standing from the Orderly Room. This was to become significant later. But for now, I found myself alone in a tent built for four. This changed within the week.

The replacement arrived at the Battery with a chip on his shoulder, or so it seemed. He was another 'Nasho' who really didn't want to be here. He was allocated to my tent and a long furious friendship began. I put it this way because he was not your normal Nasho. In fact, he was not normal. He was the consummate loner. He didn't need anyone, did not depend on anyone, and certainly did not follow anyone - he was his own man and made no bones about letting everyone know he was 'in town'. But we got on great regardless. I certainly was no competition for him, and that alone saved me. He did his own thing and I stayed out of his way. In turn he looked after our little hovel and we became good friends. But he was not happy. I got to know him, or as well as he would let me.

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### **Boys in full gear**

I can also recall two occasions when there was a general stand-to in Nui Dat. Not really sure of the dates. On the first occasion the stand-to signalled an enormous artillery firefight (from us). I am not positive just how much the enemy were involved in firing into Nui Dat, but it seemed that every artillery piece in Nui Dat was firing simultaneously. This stand-to lasted a couple of hours. On the second occasion, we were required to stand-to on the wire. There did not seem to be any incoming but that meant little at the time. I recall running with Peter to our bunker on the wire while at the same time dressing in our field webbing, flak jackets and helmet. The moment seemed intense as no one seemed to be telling us

anything. We manned the bunker, ensured the .50 cal machine gun was ready to go, and waited. Nothing!

Around a few months after arriving in country I was tasked to go to the village of Dat Do with a number of other members, which included some high-ranking staff from HQ 1 ATF. I know that there was a battle in Dat Do the night before, and that I would be required to carry out some duties in relation to locating enemy mortar base plates. I didn't think this would be too hard as the processes involved were generally fairly simple. What I didn't expect - and which has stayed with me to this day, was the number of battle dead lying about when we arrived. To me it was a fateful moment. This was my first time at seeing the results of battle. The dead were Viet Cong, as reported by the local ARVN unit, and as indicated by the clothes they wore. Rags really. But the causes of their deaths were what really opened my eyes. Sure, we had all been introduced to the effects of small arms fire during training back in Australia, but seeing the results on a human body was an eye opener. Altogether I believe there were about ten dead.

## Dat Do Incident

The results of their deaths ranged from half missing heads, to massive holes in their chests, to limbs blown off, and in one case to being shot in half. They were all dragged from where they fell to the Dat Do main street. Here they were laid next to each other and next to each other and photographed before being 'powdered' with what I believe was lime dust. I took a number of photographs of which only one ever developed correctly, and that was double-exposed due to my stress at the time. Funny that!!

What really disturbed me at the time was what the kids did with these dead. Not only did they not seem worried about the event and bodies lying about, but one young boy even placed a lighted cigarette between the lips of one of the bodies. I can still see the lifeless head staring up at the sky while this cigarette burned away listlessly. When I think back today, I believe my mind was a little befuddled at the time. Whatever!!!

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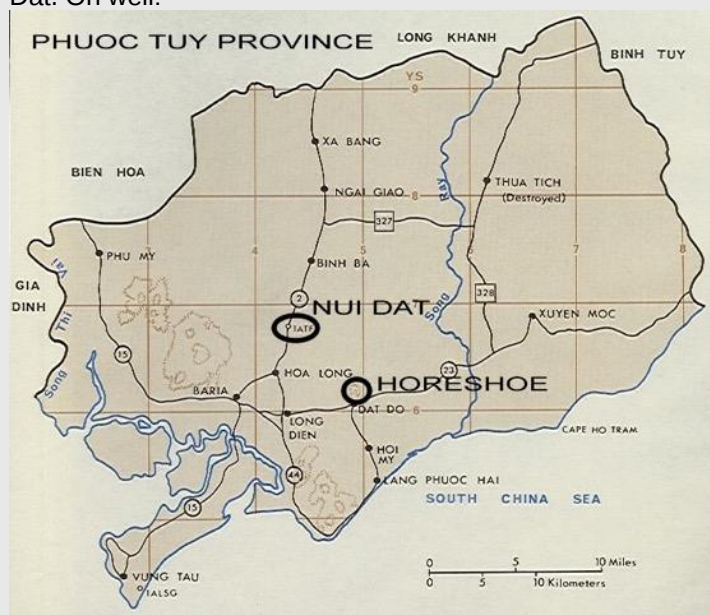
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## Horseshoe

Although our unit was small in comparison to others, our duties and responsibilities were very broad and took us to many locations. For this reason, it is difficult to be precise as to who was involved in what. As such there were many instances when I was rotated through the Horseshoe. Suffice it to say that none of us were employed in doing nothing. The Horseshoe was very interesting. It was in fact an extinct volcano with one end open to the flat plains around us. It lay some 20 km SE of Nui Dat and could be reached either via the road through Dat Do or by the more direct Red Route. Along with the grunts who manned a couple of bunkers high on the ridge, we manned an LP and the Thermal Image/SENSOR command post. Our living quarters were deep underground with the LP on top as our post and entrance. The CP was only partially dug in. It was here at the Horseshoe that we were really alone - in a sense! The grunts had a rifle company down below us, but really, we did our own thing, and in some cases to our own detriment. We rotated through the Horseshoe on a monthly basis, so it was a good break from the routine of Nui Dat. I can recall that only on one occasion did we receive anything like incoming fire, and that was from someone down on the flats who decided - for whatever reason - to put a round over our heads. It was more of a joke at the time, but on reflection could have been much more serious.

On one rotation, I was in charge of the detachment and my fall from grace came from a combination of two incidents - from swimming in the water tank which fed all at the Horseshoe, and from burning a huge 'peace sign' in our helipad. Both these incidents combined to have our BC fly to our location and reduce me in rank before taking me back to the Dat. Oh well!



Map of the Province

## R&R and R&C

The twelve months with 1ATF was extremely busy, which - apart from the odd R&C in Vung Tau and the one R&R period - gave us no real time to relax and 'sit back'. We worked with everyone - artillery units, infantry, transport, Civil

Affairs, helicopters, APC's, engineers, US Army, ARVN, etc. One of our members was detached to the AATTV for a short period, while other members worked in a Joint Operation with the US and ARVN at a place called 'Bear Cat'. NUI DAT (1ATF).

However, R&R did come around and I flew to Australia while many of the other guys took trips to Hong Kong, Bangkok and other exotic places. My trip back home was great! Not only did I get to spend time with Mom and Dad (I was not married at this time) but also got to see and tell tales to mates and old girlfriends. I still remember my mate Ron crying in his beer because he didn't join up with me. I can only reflect now that maybe he was the lucky one.



### Vung Tau street scene

R&C's in country were different. They consisted of a few days in Vung Tau every few months. Our usual haunt was the "Bar of Flags" and its girls. I am happy to say I abstained from the usual "routine" and glad for it. My mate Jack came back from his first R&C with the clap. That however did not stop him on other R&C's. Strange guy. Or was I the strange one?? Anyway, I couldn't see myself always attending the RAP simply because I couldn't keep my snake in my pants. It was no secret that the RP was really busy with ailments picked up in Vung Tau.

### My sister Julia

The highlight for me was when my older sister decided to take a trip to Saigon to see me. She caused quite a furore in HQ when the request for my leave came through. My BC found himself right in the middle of it, but had little choice but to release me. Thanks Sir!

Those five days in Saigon were very different. My sister had been here before (world traveller) and showed me some really interesting sights. She threatened to send me back after my fourth drunken binge. However, the French restaurants were just too good, and too comfortable to just sit back and take in the culture.



### Death of a Vietnamese (VC??)



#### Blown bridge between Vung Tau and Baria

One event which will always remain with me was the killing of a Vietnamese at the destroyed bridge between Vung Tau and Baria. My mate Bazza was with me along with Peter Fielden and others I have difficulty in remembering. We were just coming up to the ARVN checkpoint near the bridge when a lone motorcyclist suddenly gunned his motor and flew through the checkpoint at a great rate of knots. We all watched in amazement as the roadblock suddenly came alive with cars and people dashing everywhere as the ARVN opened fire with their small arms. The cyclist was about 50 metres passed the checkpoint when he got hit and

crashed to the roadside, in time for oncoming vehicles to run over him and finish the job. By the time the firing had died down we were already moving slowly passed the mangled cyclist. Not pretty by a long shot! Anyway, all the way back to Nui Dat my mate Bazza kept saying "Did you see that! ... Did you see that!" Strange how the death of someone can be carried out so simply and without recourse to any form of 'Rules of Engagement'. But that was Vietnam after all. Today I can still see the episode very clearly. Hard to forget actually.

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### Rank Responsibilities

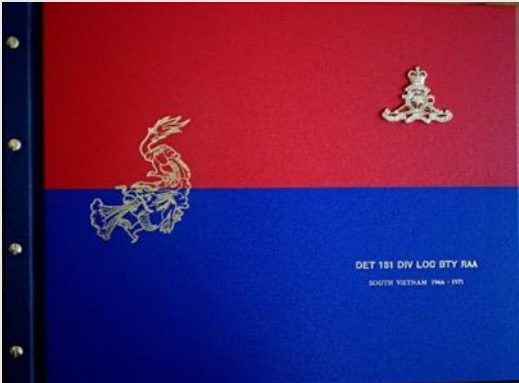
From recollection, our small unit had an Officer Commanding, one or two Lieutenants, a Battery Sergeant Major, and one or two Sergeants. It is difficult to remember at times. What I do remember clearly is that at no time - either on Nui Dat Hill, or the Horseshoe - was there a Lieutenant or Senior NCO in charge. At both places the number of members at any one time would have been about ten all up. The control of the detachment was always left to a LBdr or Bdr. On Nui

Dat Hill where we manned an LP and SENSOR/Thermal Image Radar twenty-four hours a day, I can very rarely recall seeing an Officer or Senior NCO in attendance. Visits, perhaps, but never a prolonged period or complete shift. In those months on the Horseshoe I can recall only one visit from my Battery Commander, and maybe one visit from a Lieutenant or Sergeant. We were not infantry trained - in the sense that we could operate as a fighting section - but we found ourselves alone with only the reassurance of the rifle company and other elements located at the bottom of the Hill, some 300 metres away. I do not believe we could have survived an attack from a determined enemy section. Help would have been too far away to make a difference to our survival. But we survived regardless, and did our job. Survival on Nui Dat Hill was different. Some called it SAS Hill, simply because the SAS Regiment was located just a short distance away. This was always reassuring, as the Hill was in fact part of the perimeter defences, and our LP doubled as a machine gun bunker - only until the US placed another dedicated machine gun bunker next to ours. Never-the-less, the thought that the US soldiers were nearly always drunk, high or asleep was not a great reassurance. The morning always seemed brighter when you saw daylight.

**“To Be Continued”...Paul Dickson – this is the complete package (with no continuation) as we have not been able to recover more. It was a fascinating and enlightening project to be able to reconstruct this piece of archived Locator history.**

**RIP Joe – see his Vale below.**

**. 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.



## The “Lost Locator Project”

This Project is being re-ignited for 2024.

Our current list contains the names of **95** Locators (as at 31.12.2024) that we have not had contact with since, basically, commencing communications in 2012, so, we are going to focus a little more on this programme to try and reduce this number.

**Let’s have a look at January’s Birthday List, below, where there are 7 Detachment and Battery Members listed as Lost Locators – see the names below.**  
**So, we’ve done some great discoveries with Members Dates Of Death, I’m hoping we might muster some enthusiasm for this difficult task. I’ve added some more details as to full DoB’s and places of birth according to the DVA Nominal Roll for, maybe, some help.**

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. **I have 252 recipients (Association).** 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 be a good starter.

| Date | Name                      | Regt No | DoB  | SVN In     | SVN Out    | DVA Location   |
|------|---------------------------|---------|------|------------|------------|----------------|
| 1    | Raymond Leslie Bailey Cpl | 1734305 | 1948 | 17 09 1969 | 27 08 1970 | Brisbane RAAOC |
| 6    | Robotham, Allan Desmond   | 6709864 | 1950 | 25 05 1971 | 18 11 1971 | Burnie Tas     |
| 9    | Ness, Robert John         | 4717755 | 1945 | 20 05 1966 | 30 04 1967 | Strathalbyn SA |
| 16   | Cooper, Edward Bruce      | 44231   | 1950 | 26 08 1969 | 21 01 1970 | Adelaide 131   |

|    |                          |         |      |            |            |         |
|----|--------------------------|---------|------|------------|------------|---------|
| 16 | Saurine, Leslie Edward   | 2791863 | 1947 | 24 03 1970 | 17 12 1970 | Sydney  |
| 19 | Fielden, Peter John      | 3797872 | 1945 | 25 11 1970 | 12 08 1971 | England |
| 25 | Brian James McDowell Bdr | 29303   | 1938 | 19 05 1971 | 29 07 1071 | Sydney  |

I will keep an update and publish monthly results in *Eyes & Ears*.

Paul Dickson

Get in touch with me via [131eyesandears@gmail.com](mailto:131eyesandears@gmail.com)

## . Unknown/Known Dates of Deaths continues to be updated...as at 31.12.2024 –

**A continuing Reflective Thought with regards to Vales as we progress on in years.**

The following table reflects Members passings over the years since our 'journeys' into South Vietnam which began back in May 1966.

It reflects on 10 year periods since, and including, 1966. The figures speak for themselves, and if you exclude deaths in SVN, of which there were two, the initial period does show a dark period considering the ages of our mates.

**Sadly, we've added, Peter John Bennett, Robert Joseph Kocka and Kevin Lewis Heenan to the list below as they have recently passed. (See Vale below)**

| <b>10 Year Detachment/131 Battery Death Periods</b> |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             | <b>Total</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| <b>1966</b>                                         | <b>1967</b> | <b>1968</b> | <b>1969</b> | <b>1970</b> | <b>1971</b> | <b>1972</b> | <b>1973</b> | <b>1974</b> | <b>1975</b> |              |
| 1                                                   | 0           | 2           | 0           | 1           | 0           | 2           | 0           | 1           | 0           | 7            |
| <b>1976</b>                                         | <b>1977</b> | <b>1978</b> | <b>1979</b> | <b>1980</b> | <b>1981</b> | <b>1982</b> | <b>1983</b> | <b>1984</b> | <b>1985</b> |              |
| 0                                                   | 1           | 1           | 0           | 1           | 0           | 1           | 2           | 0           | 2           | 8            |
| <b>1986</b>                                         | <b>1987</b> | <b>1988</b> | <b>1989</b> | <b>1990</b> | <b>1991</b> | <b>1992</b> | <b>1993</b> | <b>1994</b> | <b>1995</b> |              |
| 0                                                   | 0           | 2           | 2           | 2           | 1           | 2           | 1           | 0           | 0           | 10           |
| <b>1996</b>                                         | <b>1997</b> | <b>1998</b> | <b>1999</b> | <b>2000</b> | <b>2001</b> | <b>2002</b> | <b>2003</b> | <b>2004</b> | <b>2005</b> |              |
| 3                                                   | 2           | 2           | 2           | 0           | 3           | 2           | 1           | 2           | 1           | 18           |
| <b>2006</b>                                         | <b>2007</b> | <b>2008</b> | <b>2009</b> | <b>2010</b> | <b>2011</b> | <b>2012</b> | <b>2013</b> | <b>2014</b> | <b>2015</b> |              |
| 0                                                   | 4           | 4           | 4           | 2           | 9           | 5           | 6           | 5           | 4           | 43           |
| <b>2016</b>                                         | <b>2017</b> | <b>2018</b> | <b>2019</b> | <b>2020</b> | <b>2021</b> | <b>2022</b> | <b>2023</b> | <b>2024</b> | <b>2025</b> |              |
| 8                                                   | 4           | 5           | 5           | 6           | 7           | 10          | 10          | 7           | 0           | 62           |
| <b>Unknowns*</b>                                    |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             | 1            |
| <b>Total</b>                                        |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             | 149          |

Please note that these figures represent data provided by Members, from what was, and is stated to be reliable sources (official notices/family/mates etc). Data as at **31.12.2024**.

**\*Unknowns** – Sadly, we have only been advised of the Members' passings only.

**This following sections have now been updated as of 30.09.2024 and show a clear picture of Battery/Detachment Members that have incomplete Date of Death details.**

Here are the names and details –

| <b>Name</b>              | <b>Rank</b> | <b>Regt No</b> | <b>Section</b> | <b>SVN</b> | <b>DoB</b> | <b>DoD</b> |
|--------------------------|-------------|----------------|----------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Robinson, Marcus Lee     | Gnr         | 2791229        |                | 1970       | 14.02.48   | Unknown    |
| O'Keefe, Michael Francis | Gnr         | 2787168        |                | 1968-69    | 26.11.46   | 27.02.82   |

If you can help in any way to update this data it would be greatly appreciated – You can send information to Paul Dickson at email [131eyesandears@gmail.com](mailto:131eyesandears@gmail.com) Subject: Vale update

**Ed** - As a closing thought, can YOU give some thought to completing YOUR Locator Profile, which do add a personal background and also keeping in touch as it keeps us up to date with you and mates.

**Ok, detectives, here's more homework – 2 gaps to go!**

. Unknown/Known Dates of Deaths continues to be updated...as at 31.12.24 –  
...a continuing investigation –



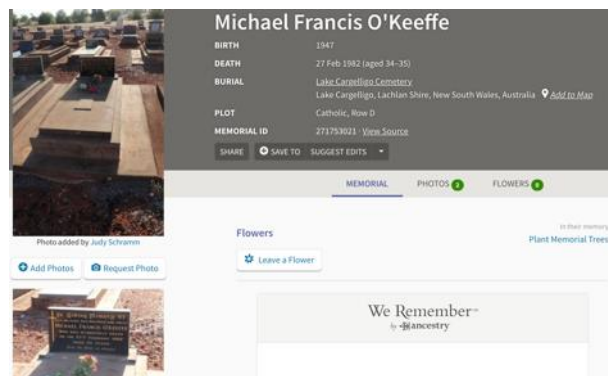
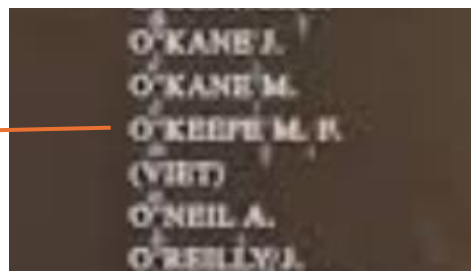
## 131 Locators “Cold Case Division” The Eyes & Ears of the Force

**Peter Meaney** – “Hi Paul,

I think we can safely say we’ve found our man.

The plaque below shows **O’KEEFE MF** (Viet), Lake Cargelligo War Memorial, and the spelling on headstone which is located in Lake Cargelligo Cemetery surname is spelt O’Keeffe, so there is some discrepancy in the spelling of the surname, but I think it has to be one in the same person.

Regards, Peter Meaney.”



**Response to Peter** – “His age at his death concur with the DVA Nominal Roll records – DoB 26.11.1946. The spelling discrepancies are of interest, but the location and the name on the plaque at the Lake Cargelligo War Memorial do ring true.

Based on your findings I have updated our records, as above, our Honour Roll and placed a Vale in his honour below.

Thank you Peter.

Paul”

**May He Rest in Peace.**



## Saint Barbara’s Day – 4<sup>th</sup> December, 2024

**Geoff Blackwell got into the memory –**  
“Today is St Barbara's Day... patron saint  
of Artillery Men.”

It's only a little wooden cannon, but we  
salute you Saint Barbara's.

Shearwater which is in the  
north of Tasmania.

Photo taken from Geoff’s Facebook.



## Mail Call...

### Geoff Blackwell a continuation from his Sant Barbara's Day article above -

"Hi Paul,

Yes St Barbara's Day in Shearwater which is in the north of Tasmania.

I'm here at the resort, for a bit of R&C actually, having spent most of the last 8 months working on a refit of my boat.....hard work for an old fella, but I did purchase it as a retirement project. It goes back in the water next Wednesday, December 11, ready for the summer season.

If any members are in Adelaide and are interested in a bit of boating, fishing, crabbing, let me know, it's a comfortable little boat, with an interior not unlike the standard grey nomad caravan. So, compliments of the season to you and Helen and Happy New Year to all.



Couple of shots of the 'GYPSY Æ'.

Regards Geoff B."



### Mail Out



**Ed** - I started this section in September, 2017 and have continued to write to Locators based on a year quarterly basis, by breaking down the names alphabetically into groups of one third of the then available list. The list has diminished over time, but, in general, there is a good core of blokes who communicate regularly 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.

**Total Mail Out Members = 222 & Total Quarterly "Catch Up" Member Responders = 55**

### Mail In



- Here are the responses...

### John "Kanga" McFadden - "Hello Dicko,

Thank you for your contact and your interesting travels. Quite amazing.

I was taken by the "Obligations of Service" excerpt by Sue Langford in last Eyes & Ears. It's all water under the bridge, but it's fascinating to read how realities are subtly changed for posterity. I just remember Conscript kinda evolving rather than being a strict set standard. The initial intakes' protocols were adjusted for the later intakes.

Anyhow I thought the Appendix glossed over the real crux of Conscript! Adequately describing the crappy position the Govt placed both Conscript and Army in, when it came to Unit deployment.

As it says "For most of the war the Govt denied this existed." And that was and still is the truth!

However I did get a huge laugh at your pre Call Up Physical! I can well imagine it! What letters, where?? Is this thing working I can't hear anything?? Struth why would anyone want to pass a Call Up Physical???

I went in with a heap of "sleeper cutters". I had the flu, was 11 stone and was struggling in a stiff westerly! I knew who the Army wanted!!! I was gobsmacked when I passed and the "cutters" failed! Yes passing Call Up Physicals really did bell the cat about Lotteries & Medicals.

Despite the wrongs, much decency did arise from our service.

I commend your Eyes & Ears for the inclusion it brings and the encouragement it offers.

Merry Christmas, Kanga."

### Bruce Irvine - "Hi Paul,

My apologies, I do have good intentions, but it always seems to go through to the keeper, so please allow me to rectify that now.

Life rolls on here with enough to keep me busy on our ten acres and still doing a bit of local volunteer stuff around the place.

My health and DoB have seen me not so "physical" these days and I enjoy a few exercise group classes now each week. Elizabeth and I have stepped back from active RFS duties also, time for the next generation to take over (the trucks are getting bigger and we're not!!!).

RSL sub-branch work still keeps me busy as a Trustee but after 25 years or so, that's losing its appeal a bit, maybe time for a break.

Apart from that, grandkids and a few short trips here and there keep life interesting. Enjoy reading of your escapades around the world, certainly plenty to experience.

Regards to you and Helen and hope this finds you both well.

Bruce."

**Iain Kennedy** – "Paul,

Nice to hear from you and that Helen and yourself are going well.

I have trouble picturing a Vegan Hotel being amazing in a positive sense, But then I'm just a carnivore at heart. (ha ha).

Have the vegetarian once a week and fish twice a week, but as I'm married now to a Malaysian/Thai, a traditional Malaysian dish contains meal, or fish of some kind. Though I did suggest to one of the hotels we stayed at in Penang last month. Even Vegan bacon would be better than chicken ham as a (real)Bacon replacement.

So, as I just mentioned Janet and I went to Malaysia, or more specifically Penang to catch up with relatives (as we try and do every year). It was just a quick family visit before we head into Christmas, so was only 10 days away. Next year we will do our cousins in Thailand as well, but then you need minimum 2 weeks.

With the economy here on life support, business has been extremely slow, seriously thinking of retiring next year, as i will turn 80 in March. Still conflicted about that, unless I could be sure of getting TPI.

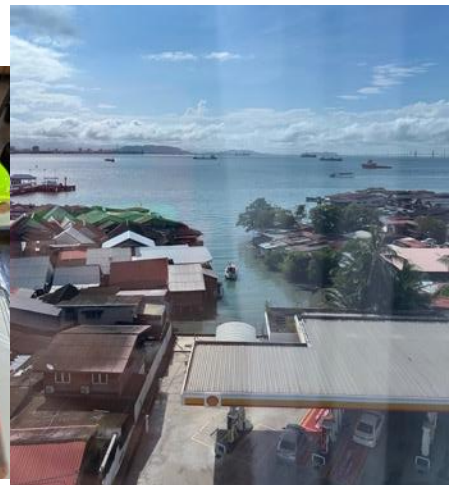
The Tesla is nearly 2 years old, long time since I kept a car so long. There is nothing out there to replace it as yet, Tesla Y is too big, other electric cars don't have the intellectual properties, or software of the Tesla group. So just have to wait for Tesla 2.5 supposed to be coming next year in both a Sedan and SUV, but a little more compact than the 3, or Y.

Next year we have a few travel plans, cruise in March for my birthday, then Cairns for Line Dance event in May, then back to Malaysia middle of the year to avoid winter, and Japan cruise in October for Janet's birthday. All depends on my business decisions and in some cases the extended family.

When is our next big 131 reunion?

We have Christmas at our place this year, it's our first time and we have done the planning, now the logistics and final preparation are underway. We were chosen as our house is dog friendly and two of our Nieces have dogs. Wish us luck. Thrown in a couple of photos from our Penang trip.

Merry Christmas and great 2025. Cheers."



**Ron Mason** – "Hi Paul, I started a reply a day or 3 ago, don't know what happened to that!

The Kevin Heenan send-off was very well attended with quite a number of Goulburn Valley VVA members & members of Shepparton RSL, I was amongst those attending & with medals as Kevin's wife Dawn had requested.

We have not been doing much in the way of travelling these days, too many appointments with Dr's + a day in hospital every 4 weeks seems to take up too much time, but I'm still going!

Once again all for the moment

Have a very happy festive season

Ron Mason."

**Steve Wynn** – "G'day mate,

Thank you for the 'contact', I have been very busy trying to get help before our property turns to jungle. Plus I have not been the best of late. I was accosted by the govn 'agents' the time before last in hospital with one of my heart attacks, and promised govn assistance, that was early November, I am still waiting.

I hope you and Helen are having a great Christmas, and can have an even better New Year my friend. Don't believe the doctors when they tell you things like "I could be good for 5 more years", I notice they said "could", they always find ways to make one poorer ha, ha.

I wish we could get your cold nights, the nights have been too warm lately, although it is Summer so it is supposed to be hot. We have had heat relief for the past few years with mild Summers compared to usual, which makes a hot spell seem like the place is on fire.

My daughter is bringing my grandsons up here to one of their farms for Christmas, so we can spend time with them all. I can't drive anymore so we can't go to visit them at their Hunter Valley property, bugger. I miss playing soccer with my grandsons too.

The heart pill dose I was on was causing me to be unsteady and fall a lot, as well as weird dreams, nauseous etc etc. So I asked my Cardiologist if I could take anything else, he said nothing else does what I need, so he reduced dose to half a pill (100mg) instead of the whole 200mg pill. It has helped a great deal as I am not as woozy in the head anymore (I heard that comment) and the weird dreams have stopped but still have nausea, just not as often. Only other option is a pacemaker, hell no.

I had been dodging my GP with my melanomas because they were busy with my heart problems, but the GP remembered, and wanted me to have another op, I said NO, is there anything else to try first, so I got a prescription for some cream that eats into the flesh and attempts to destroy cancers, only cost \$60 a very, very small tube, and I ended up buying 3 tubes of it to get the main melanoma to reduce in size by about 70%. It hasn't gone away and has gotten worse lately so I might have to have an op after all, I am trying some old fashioned remedies first, sick of being carved up. The first eye operation is now re-scheduled for February 2025, at \$6K cost and only \$800 back on Medicare. There is a 2 year wait for eye op's in the public hospital so spending our last money on one eye, so I won't be totally 'in the dark'. The govn has given me a Commonwealth Home Support Package (CHSP), which means they will subsidise my garden/lawn maintenance and transport costs to doctors, specialists and hospital. It would be a great help if there was ANYONE who had the staff to do any work for me, but the service providers either can't get workers or don't bother with CHSP work as there is not enough money in it for them. We still have to pay something but not the normal full price. It is left up to the individual to sort out everything with no help at all from govn to get any services, hence I have spent a lot of every day chasing providers unsuccessfully. On top of that I am still doing the needed jobs around the place, but now it takes me 3 days to cut the grass instead of 2 hours, and that's on my ride-on.

We had the worst storm ever last month, it knocked over 13 huge trees on either side of my place and took the grid out for 2 days, even our street was blocked for 2 days with trees down, while the council tried to clean up the mess. A neighbour had a tree land through their roof and onto the bed in their spare room, close call. We had a waterfall running down the inside of the house walls from the extreme wind driven rain. I have been in cyclones before, but never seen anything like this storm. It filled our gutters up very quickly with storm debris and so they couldn't carry the water away so it overflowed in both directions.

My poor wife is doing most of the work inside and outside now, on top of looking after me, I worry for her health now. I've spent a fortune on specialists, operations and dental work the past year, well and truly over it all. Other than that everything is OK ha, ha.

Merry Christmas to you both, stay safe.

Steve Wynn."

## 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

Ernie Newbold forwarded in the following link – copy paste and read December's edition -

# SALUTE

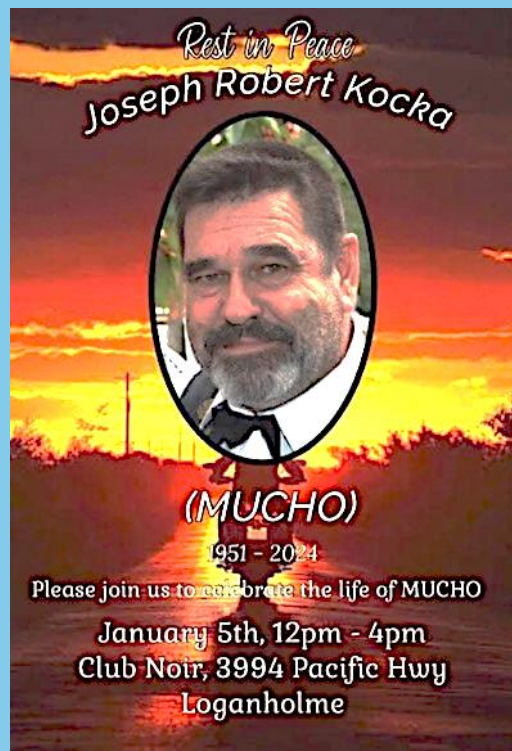
Official Journal of the Totally and Permanently  
Incapacitated Veterans' Association of New South Wales Limited  
Winter 2024

The link below will take you to the TPI NSW's latest Newsletter – It's a worthwhile read as it contains information from DVA and some great stories...

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0?ui=2&ik=55f192afee&attid=0.1&permmsgid=msg-f:1802742395713089188&th=1904a0a85603eea4&view=att&disp=safe>

**Richard Mann** posted this Invitation on Facebook – if you're handy why not drop in?  
It'll be a great way to honour a Locator.

**Venue: Club Noir,  
3994 Pacific Highway, Loganholme  
Date: 5<sup>th</sup> January, 2025  
between 12,00pm – 4.00pm**



## **National Vietnam Veterans Museum update...**

**Ron Mason** has forwarded the following as a current update **on the progress** – The entrance roadway to the new museum site from the new roundabout on the main road - work should start early next year.

A fighter jet as used in Vietnam is being obtained (I don't recall the model) some of the plane buffs will no doubt know.

A DC 3 that is currently at the War Memorial in Canberra has been promised to the Phillip Island museum once the building is up, with that plane comes some radio detection equipment as used in Vietnam.

The President of VVAA Vic & the Chairman of NVVM have been in Canberra meeting with polities & Canberra War Memorial folk & have come away with some promises of action - time will tell.

**Continue watching this space for more as information comes to light.**



**58 Years  
April 1966 – April 2024**



**Have you tried to source us or your mates via Facebook?**

**Why not give it a go, if you haven't already, just click onto the Association's Facebook via the link below, then let us know what you think...**

**Hey, you don't have to have a Facebook page of your own...**

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

Kevin Browning sends the results of the Gunners Race Finals – ok, 5<sup>th</sup> place isn't that bad. We send our thanks for those who contributed.



"Hi Paul,

For your info attached is the result of the Fund raising. The School of Artillery had a late run in the last week.

Regards  
Kevin"

| Gunners Race Final Result on St. Barbara's Day 2024                                                |                |               |            |          |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|---------------|------------|----------|
| Regiment                                                                                           | Previous total | New donations | Total      | Position |
| <br>1 Regt RAA    | \$575.00       | \$50.00       | \$625.00   | 6        |
| <br>4 Regt RAA    | \$1,756.00     | \$60.00       | \$1,816.00 | 3        |
| <br>8/12 Regt RAA | \$1,950.00     | \$200.00      | \$2,150.00 | 2        |
| <br>9 Regt RAA    | \$1,269.00     | \$0.00        | \$1,269.00 | 4        |
| <br>16 Regt RAA   | \$200.00       | \$0.00        | \$200.00   | 7        |
| <br>20 Regt RAA   | \$735.00       | \$0.00        | \$735.00   | 5        |
| <br>SOArty        | \$350.00       | \$5,000.00    | \$5,350.00 | 1        |



### Committee Members:

|                                    |                       |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>President:</b>                  | <i>Allen Morley</i>   |
| <b>Vice President:</b>             | <i>Bert Blink</i>     |
| <b>Treasurer/Secretary:</b>        | <i>Grahame Dignam</i> |
| <b>Public Officer:</b>             | <i>Gordon Malcolm</i> |
| <b>Webmaster:</b>                  | <i>Bob Billiard</i>   |
| <b>Research Officer:</b>           | <i>Ernie Newbold</i>  |
| <b>Design Development Officer:</b> | <i>Nick Proskurin</i> |
| <b>Eyes and Ears Editor:</b>       | <i>Paul Dickson</i>   |

**General Members:** *Ian Amos, Ged Carroll, George Lane, Merv Nairn*

**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>



58 Years  
April 1966 – April 2024



find us on  
**Facebook**

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

### Minutes for the General Meeting of the 131 Locators Association Inc.

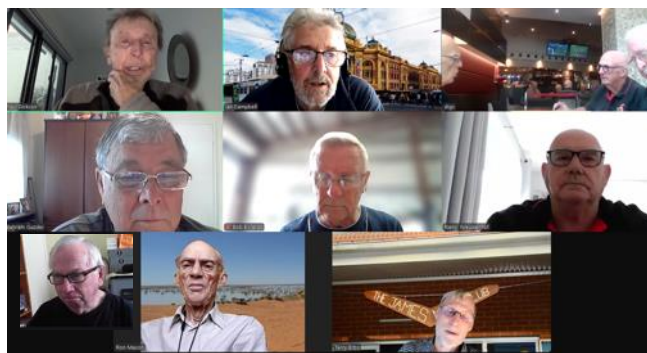
Canley Heights RSL & Sporting Club, 26 Humphries Rd, Wakeley NSW 2176  
and via Zoom internet

on Tuesday 10 th December 2024

**Attendees were:** Allen Morley, Grahame Dignam, Gordon Malcolm and Nick Proskurin

**Zoomed members were:** Ron Mason, Paul Dickson, Terry Erbs, Bert Blink, Ian Campbell, Bob Billiards, Rieny Nieuwenhof and Barry Guzder

**Apologies were received from:** Ernest Newbold, Kevin Browning, Warwick Brooker, Ged Carroll, Ian Amos Steve Wynn, George Lane, Jim Fitzgerald Ged Carroll, Merv Nairn, and other State Reps



**Financial Membership** Financial Membership is currently...**121**, plus Associates **2**, plus Affiliates **16** Total **139**  
Plus Lapsed as at 1/12/2024 **38**

#### **Presidents report.**

Allen referenced.

- . Allen thanked the committee for their efforts over the past year.
- . Allen also advised he had been notified of the passing of Peter Bennett, Joe Kocka and Ken Clements in the past couple of days.
- . LSTAA Sydney Xmas gathering attracted 8 at the Panania Diggers RSL on 1<sup>st</sup> December maybe a sign of passing time.
- . RSL has requested responses if you have had issues with obtaining gold card assistance. Allen submitted his response.
- . A company "Medilinks" are advertising fast access to Psych assistance for Vets that otherwise take much longer through DVA
- . LSTAA would not support the Sydney event- "Centenary of Locating" due to lack of numbers.

#### **Public Officer Report.**

- . Gordon has dealt with the AGM report to Fair Trading as well as a change to the Associations address to The Secretary/ Treasurer 8 Barlett Street Oran Park NSW 2570.
- . Fair Trading has advised Annual Returns are now on-line.

#### **Webmaster Update.**

- . Robert /Grahame advised Facebook members are 398. Access to *Eyes & Ears* are down on normal levels.
- . We are attracting some who want to market non sponsored merchandise to our members- these are barred.

#### **Health Report:**

- . Steve Boutlis reported he has 2 melanomas and is treating them with a cream which reduced their size by 70%.
- . Keith Ayliffe has finally tested negative to Covid19.

#### **General Business and around the grounds:**

Discussions ensued on the following:

- . Terry Erbs advised 14 Regiment is being formed in WA.
- . Request from Gnr Alexander Cunnell, to connect with 133 Bty and share personal and professional experiences on a personal basis.
- . Terry Erbs is aware and contact has been made and will be ongoing. The Battery will be formally established over the June 2025 weekend.
- . The 133 Battery will use the "integrator" drone which is new and very versatile.

**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, 11<sup>th</sup> February, 2025 at 1100hrs**

**Venue: Canley Heights RSL & Sporting Club**

**26 Humphries Rd, Wakeley NSW 2176**

**and via Zoom internet to be advised**



### **. Birthdays in the Battery...January –**

| DAY | NAME          | Regt. No. | IN SVN     | OUT SVN    | COMMENTS |
|-----|---------------|-----------|------------|------------|----------|
| 1   | Danko, Victor | 2783210   | 04 05 1967 | 12 12 1967 |          |
| 1   | Librizzi, Joe | 5716081   | 23 09 1969 | 04 06 1970 |          |

|    |                                     |                 |                              |            |                        |
|----|-------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------|------------|------------------------|
| 1  | Chapple, Christopher                | 5716208         | 20 01 1970                   | 13 08 1970 |                        |
| 1  | Chaplin, Richard                    | 2791166         | 20 01 1970                   | 13 08 1970 |                        |
| 1  | Raymond Leslie Bailey Cpl           | 1734305         | 17 09 1969                   | 27 08 1970 | RAAOC                  |
| 2  | Browne, John                        | 218367          | 27 08 1969                   | 13 08 1970 |                        |
| 2  | Salter, Kevin "KJ" Capt             | 51470           | N/A                          | 02 01 1938 | † 25.03.2020           |
| 3  | Navas, Gaery Gordon                 | 2793162         | 30 05 1970                   | 26 05 1971 | † 10.07.2022           |
| 4  | Pettiford, Peter                    | 3792038         | 08 11 1968                   | 04 06 1969 |                        |
| 5  | Smith, Graeme                       | 6708707         | 12 04 1968                   | 20 08 1968 |                        |
| 6  | Dove, Arthur                        | 217348          | 13 01 1969                   | 28 11 1969 |                        |
| 6  | Broadbent, William Sgt              | 224024          | N/A                          | N/A        | † 24.11.2008           |
| 6  | Robotham, Allan Desmond             | 6709864         | 25 05 1971                   | 18 11 1971 |                        |
| 9  | Sadler, Peter Scott Lt.             | 15138           | 20 05 1966                   | 28 04 1967 | † 2008                 |
| 9  | Ness, Robert John                   | 4717755         | 20 05 1966                   | 30 04 1967 |                        |
| 9  | Pires, (Gerard) David               | 5717069         | 03 03 1971                   | 12 08 1971 |                        |
| 11 | Travers, Brendan Paul Maj.          | 47027           | {09 09 1965                  | 19 09 1965 | † 18.02.1990           |
|    | " "                                 |                 | {25 02 1967                  | 04 04 1967 | RAEME                  |
| 11 | Leslie, Graeme Benjamin John S/Sgt. | 18614           | 1969                         | 1970       | RAEME † 26.08.1992     |
| 11 | Pioro, Peter                        | 2790931         | 27 11 1969                   | 04 05 1970 |                        |
| 12 | Hopper, Peter Sgt                   | 3787938         | 04 05 1967                   | 12 12 1967 |                        |
| 12 | Reilly, David                       | 3794901         | 24 03 1970                   | 13 08 1970 |                        |
| 12 | Johnson, Brian                      | 4720991         | 29 05 1970                   | 05 05 1971 | † 31.01.2012           |
|    | " "                                 |                 | 14 05 1970                   | 27 05 1970 | AACC/1 Arm Reg/Det 131 |
| 12 | Falkai, Laszlo                      | 4721836         | 03 03 1971                   | 30 06 1971 | 131                    |
|    | " "                                 |                 | 30 06 1971                   | 18 11 1971 | 12 Fd REGT.            |
| 13 | Remy (Holmes), Rogermy              | 3795910         | 22 07 1970                   | 25 02 1971 |                        |
| 15 | Endicott, Phillip Francis           | 2783419         | 06 01 1967                   | 27 09 1967 |                        |
| 16 | Osborne, Kenneth Cpt.               | 48543           | 18 04 1967                   | 02 04 1968 | RAEME                  |
| 16 | Cooper, Edward Bruce                | 44231           | 26 08 1969                   | 21 01 1970 | 131                    |
| 16 | Saurine, Leslie Edward              | 2791863         | 24 03 1970                   | 17 12 1970 |                        |
| 18 | Szabo, Peter                        | 38752           | 26 03 1969                   | 25 03 1970 | † 07.12.2007           |
| 19 | Heard, Barry                        | 3788324         | 02 04 1967                   | 25 10 1967 | Honorary 131           |
| 19 | Fielden, Peter John                 | 3797872         | 25 11 1970                   | 12 08 1971 |                        |
| 21 | Suckling, Peter Sgt                 | 55141           | 05.02.1971                   | 15 11 1971 |                        |
| 22 | Kevin Browning WO1                  | 217743          | 16 09 1968                   | 24 09 1969 | 131                    |
|    | " "                                 |                 | 05 04 1971                   | 29 06 1971 | 131                    |
|    | " "                                 |                 | 30 06 1971                   | 18 11 1971 | 12 Fd REGT.            |
| 23 | Chalmers, Donald                    | 3793171         | 01 07 1969                   | 03 12 1969 |                        |
|    | McNicoll, Ian "Scotty"              | 216327          | {12 09 1967                  | 17 09 1968 | 131                    |
|    | " "                                 |                 | {09 04 1970                  | 02 05 1970 | VISIT                  |
| 24 | Erbs, Terrence                      | 3791713         | 28 10 1968                   | 04 06 1969 |                        |
| 24 | Negus, David                        | 3794728         | 24 02 1970                   | 13 08 1970 |                        |
| 25 | Brian James McDowell Bdr            | 29303           | 19 05 1971                   | 29 07 1071 |                        |
| 25 | Franklin, Walter "Wally" George     | 1411285         | 29 01 1968                   | 28 01 1969 |                        |
| 26 | Hutchinson, Raymond William         | 37669           | 17 04 1967                   | 02 04 1968 | † 01.12..2023          |
| 26 | Todd, Geoffrey Thomas               | 54254           | 18 12 1967                   | 10 12 1968 | † 23.04.2016           |
| 27 | Cooper, Wade                        | 5805611/8216682 | IRAQ/E.TIMOR/<br>AFGHANISTAN |            | 20STA                  |
| 27 | Adams, Allan Melville               | 3788792         | 04 05 1967                   | 27 09 1967 |                        |
| 28 | Torrisi, Robin                      | 1735572         | 20 08 1970                   | 12 03 1971 |                        |
| 29 | Mackie, Peter                       | 2184557         | 20 08 1970                   | 08 02 1971 |                        |
| 30 | McDonald, Alan                      | 511355          | 05 12 1967                   | 03 12 1968 |                        |

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

**Ed** – ???8 blokes not highlighted is looking decidedly better, but still not acceptable! Ok, let's get into it and actively get out there locating a few more!

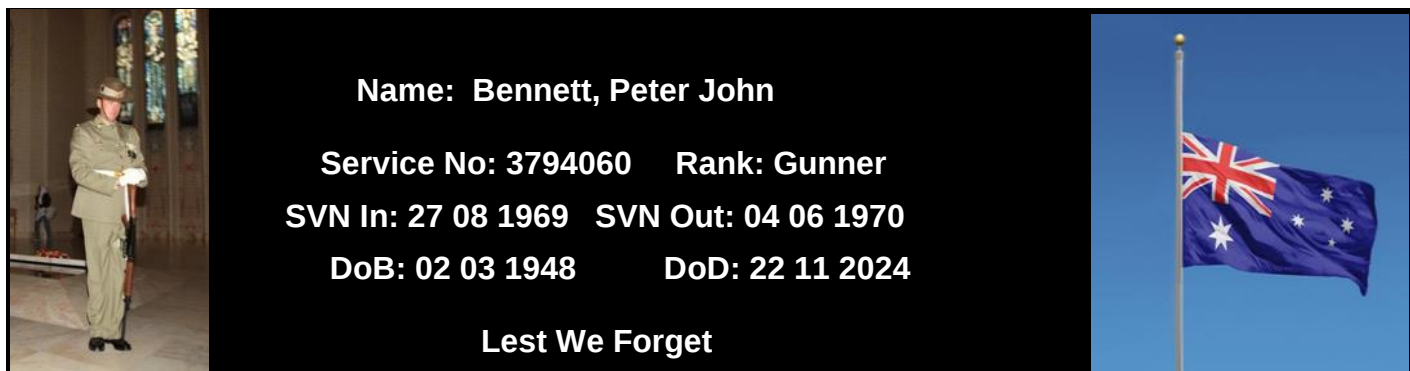
. **Locator Profiles** – we've received **176. Ed** – Maybe we need to draw in a deep one so as to hold our breaths for a while longer.

. **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**

. **Peter Ravelje and Graham Williams** advised us via a funeral notice related to **Peter John Bennett's** passing...



**Wade Cooper** – “May He Rest in Peace”.

**David Auld** – “My condolences to Peter's family.”

**Bill Taggart (1<sup>st</sup>/83<sup>rd</sup> US Artillery)** – “Paul, please pass along the condolences of the 1/83<sup>rd</sup> to Peter's family. Lest We Forget.”

**Janice Angell** –

1st Photo, 131 reunion ,2023 Coolangatta  
Peter & Paul



2nd Photo ,1970 Going Home, David Dodd, Peter Ravelje, Robbie Hargreaves, Grant Perkins, Paul Angell,& Peter Bennett.

3rd Photo, 1969, Spencer,  
Bennett & Angell

RIP Pete

**Graham Williams** - "Remembering one of natures born gentlemen. Thanks for the memories Benny. Never forgotten, R.I.P. buddy      Graham Williams (Willy)"

Canberra ACT 18 Aug 2023    Nui Dat SVN 4 June 1970



**Graham continues with more memories...**

"Giddy Paul,  
Thought I would get these to you when I got the  
opportunity....."

The first photo is taken at the  
Dinh Co monastery...



Picture 3 is his RTA on 4/6/70 Left to right Mal  
Musgrave, David Dodds, Peter Ravelje, Robbie  
Hargreaves, Grant Perrins, Paul Angell and Peter



Picture 2 is Peter with Grant Perrins





Picture 4 was taken around Xmas time 69....Standing L to R Peter Meany, Bert Jacka, Grant Perrins, The late Les Connell, Stan Patterson, Peter Bremner, Billy Edward and Peter Bennett. Sitting....."Never call me Norbert" Kroll, Ian Brignall, Herb Andrews, and the late Max McPherson.....this was almost both Alpha and Bravo Radar crews. Colin West took the photo. Also absent David Dodds, John Stanford, Phil Ross (probably brown nosing) and myself R&R.



Last photo taken at our reunion get together Nov 2023. Standing...Herb Andrews, Graeme Owen, Terry Erbs, Derek Hinde, Gary Lovell, T.C. White, Myself, Ian Brignell, Peter Bremner and Joe Losiak Seated...Paul Angell, Peter Ravelje, Bryan Smyth, Peter Creedon, Peter and John Stanford.

Cheers, G.W.”

-----

## Vale

. **Peter Bruce** informed us of the passing of **Robert Joseph Kocka** via the following email –

“Good evening.

We have received advice of the recent death of Joseph Robert Kocka. He was 73. Joe served in the Army Reserve and the Regular Army and in later years, was involved with the Federal Police. Joe served in Vietnam with 4th Field Regiment from August to December 1970 and then with the Detachment, 131 Divisional Locating Battery until July 1971. During his Reserve service he was Battery Commander of 41 Field Battery on the Gold Coast.

RIP Joseph Robert Kocka and Peter John Bennett.

Peter Bruce, OAM

Obituary Resource Officer

RAAHC”



**Name: Kocka, Robert Joseph**

**Service No: 1202703 Rank: Battery Commander**

| SVN                     | In         | Out        |
|-------------------------|------------|------------|
| 4 <sup>th</sup> Fd Regt | 20 08 1970 | 08 12 1970 |
| Det 131 DLB             | 10 12 1970 | 29 07 1971 |

**DoB: 18 07 1951 DoD: 02 12 2024**

**Lest We Forget**



**Peter Ravelje** passed on the following heart touching, loving email from Joe's wife Jeanette...



**Jeanette**  
12h · 2 people

I am totally speechless and in shock, despite having foreseen this moment. The father of my children, my husband of 51 years, **JOE KOCKA** aka **Mucho**, has passed away on Monday, 2/12/24, at 2:30 pm, leaving our family and friends to mourn his passing. His absence will be deeply felt, leaving a significant void in our lives. He will be profoundly missed. His legacy will live on.



Joe and Peter Fielden

#### Military Brotherhood Motorcycle Club members prepare to recall mates on Anzac Day 2016



Military Brotherhood Motorcycle Club members Les Anson, Gary Crosby, Joe Kocka, Kirk Stiffel, Ricky Mann. Pictured: Chris McCormack.

APRIL 25 – it is a national day of remembrance, solemnity and mateship.  
For one Vietnam veteran, Anzac Day is also the one day of the year that military personnel can stand up and say “I served”.  
A founding member of the Military Brotherhood Motorcycle Club (MMC), Joe Kocka, 64, said there was not one day gone by that he was not reminded of his time in Vietnam. A regular soldier, Mr Kocka was sent to Nui Dat in Vietnam, 18 days after his 19th birthday.

He said the hit song, I was only 19 written by Redgum about the Vietnam War could easily be written about him.  
“For 364 days of the year I help young veterans and the homeless, I don’t talk about my service,” said Mr Kocka who is from the suburb of Tanah Merah.  
“But on one day of the year (Anzac Day) you have the absolute right with every other veteran to say, ‘I served’.  
“You poke out your chest and say ‘this is what I did’.”  
For Logan Village’s Rickky Mann, another MMC member who served with the Army in East Timor, Anzac Day is a day of reflection.  
“It’s also about honouring our forefathers who sacrificed everything and catching up with mates,” Mr Mann said.  
Mr Mann said he had a sense of pride when he marched on Anzac Day, and he admitted it can be an emotional occasion.  
For a full list of service see page 3 of this week’s Albert & Logan News.’

-----

**. Peter Dealy** – Informed us of **Kevin Lewis Heenan's** passing via the following email –  
“It is with extreme regret that I advise you of the passing of member Kevin Heenan.  
Long serving servant and Life member of the GVVVA, Kevin will be sorely missed by us all.  
I pass this message to you with the permission of the family.  
I am sure you will all wish wife Dawn and the extended Heenan Family our sincere condolences on this sad occasion.  
Funeral arrangements will be given when known.  
Lest we forget  
Regards  
Peter Dealy  
Secretary  
Goulburn Valley Vietnam Veterans Assoc”



**Peter Dealy** - Kevin served in Vietnam  
????/69/70.

**I actually took over his locker when I arrived in Vietnam Feb 68.**

You might have more precise details from your records, that I don't feel inclined to ask of his family at this time.



Photo L-R Ron Mason, Kevin Heenan and myself

**Bill Taggart (1<sup>st</sup> /83<sup>rd</sup> US Artillery)** – “Paul, please pass along the condolences of the 1/83<sup>rd</sup> to Kevin's family.  
Lest We Forget.”

**Peter Dealy has sent the following deep feeling eulogy he wrote and read at Kevin's funeral –**

Before I start this eulogy, I would like to pass on this message.

Kevin, Ron Mason and myself served in the same Unit in Vietnam at different stages. On behalf of all those who served in 131 Divisional Locating Battery, Royal Australian Artillery, Ron and I express our deep condolences to Dawn and the extended Heenan family on the passing of a fellow unit member.

Kevin was a National Serviceman conscripted into the Army and served in Vietnam from the 28/11/1969 to 13/8/1970.

After joining the GVVVA in the late 1990s he immediately became a willing worker, serving on the Committee and assisting at Ceremonial and Social events. He was elected Secretary in 2003 serving to 2010. A period of exemplary service of 7 years.

Not satisfied with that, he then took over the position of President for 3 years being from 2012 – 2014. Through both of these terms of Office, he was one of the GVVVA Delegates to the Victorian State Vietnam Veteran Council, attending State meetings on a regular basis.

Kevin was the GVVVA Liaison person with the Shepparton RSL for many years. In this capacity he arranged School Education Visits for Anzac Day and Vietnam Veterans Day as well as being the GVVVA Anzac Day and Remembrance Day representative on many occasions at the Shepparton Cenotaph Remembrance Services.

Kevin instigated the GVVVA Honour Board at Shepparton RSL, so that a history of the GVVVA Executive from inception, was there for perpetuity. He was the Vietnam War Display Coordinator at the Shepparton RSL and Shepparton Library. For several years he arranged the Communications setup for Vietnam Veterans Day Services run by the GVVVA, Co-ordinating with City of Greater Shepparton access to the Shepparton Memorial Park and acquiring the necessary ceremonial flags.

Also, at that time of the year, Kevin helped man the GVVVA stand selling Badges etc to raise funds for Vietnam Veterans Welfare. Another hat that Kevin wore was being the Bus driver for social outings by the Vietnam Veterans and families.

In his spare time Kevin enjoyed propagating plants in his home plant Nursery. He supported the GVVVA stand at the Numurkah Bush Market for many years donating many of these plants for sale to the public.

Kevin served the GVVVA with distinction and this was recognised when in December 2021, Kevin became the very first GVVVA member to be awarded a Life Membership. In his emotional reply to his presentation, Kevin indicated it was the fellowship within the GVVVA that he appreciated most. Kevin also acknowledged the great support he had from his wife Dawn. Dawn, this morning we acknowledge your tremendous support also. You have been Kevins "rock of Gibraltar" backing up his efforts, assisting and guiding him, particularly through these latter years, which enabled us to continue to enjoy his company. Thank you, Dawn.

The GVVVA will be eternally grateful for Kevin Heenans great service.

We will remember his layback style, though if he thought it necessary, Kevin would strongly make his position known about a particular subject..

We will miss his laconic sense of humour.

We will miss his friendship.

We will remember his willingness to help his mates.

We will miss very much and always remember Kevin Heenan

3794777

Kevin Lewis Heenan

YOU HAVE DONE YOUR BEST.

YOU HAVE SERVED YOUR FAMILY,

YOU HAVE SERVED YOUR COMMUNITY

AND YOU HAVE SERVED YOUR COUNTRY.

REST IN PEACE MATE.

LEST WE FORGET

**Vale**



**Name: O'Keefe, Michael Francis**

**Service No: 2787188    Rank: Private  
Catering Corps**

**SVN In : 08 01 1968    Out: 114 011969**

**DoB: 26 11 946    DoD: 27 02 1982**

**Lest We Forget**



**May They ALL Rest in Peace, and Never be 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](mailto: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*

Website: <https://www.locatingartillery.org>

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

 [www.artilleryhistory.org](http://www.artilleryhistory.org)



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

#### . VETERAN'S AFFAIRS WEBSITE

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

#### . 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 83<sup>rd</sup> Artillery...



Dedicated to the men of the 1st Battalion 83rd Artillery who served in Vietnam from 1966-1971. We left Fort Sill in October 1966 for Vietnam. We originally were at Bear Cat, Nui Dat and Xuan Loc. We later were in many other locations in Vietnam.

We also welcome our Australian and New Zealand Allies to whom we owe so much.

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





**The Royal New Zealand Artillery Association**  
<http://www.rnzaa.org.nz/>

Editor contact email: [131eyesandears@gmail.com](mailto:131eyesandears@gmail.com) Ed – Paul 'Dicko' Dickson

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