

THE EYES and EARS

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Editor: Paul 'Dicko' Dickson

email: 131eyesandears@gmail.com

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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



**Thousands gather for Anzac Day
services under full moon...**

In Canberra, a single didgeridoo pierced the silence at the Australian War Memorial where some 32,000 people were present as the temperature dropped to 2C.

Up to 10,000 servicemen and women including veterans who served in World War II, Korea, Malaya, Borneo, Vietnam, the Gulf War, East Timor and Afghanistan strode to the familiar beat of drums and bagpipes.

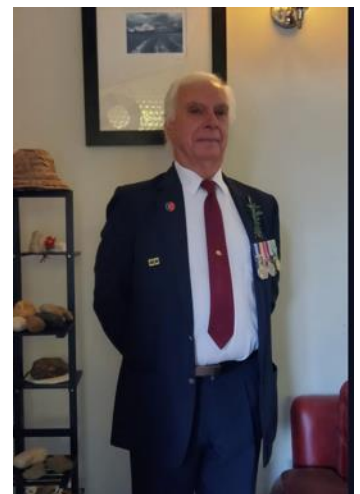
Grahame Dignam forwarded the following Channel 7 News clip
– you’ve got to watch it – you’ll recognise some Locators...



Just cut and paste the following -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8nBBOsIvlas&authuser=0>

Geoff Blackwell (SA) – Bob Billiards thought Geoff was looking pretty chipper for the Dawn Service (photo thanks to Facebook)
And the dawn service at Semaphore.



Shane Nairn (Sydney) – “Very privileged to share a birthday with such a special day for our country. A day of remembrance but also celebrating the ANZAC spirit of mateship and standing up for what is right. Very proud to watch my dad **Merv Nairn** March today and honour his service to our country. As always great day for the Dawn Service to the March, some Margaritas and of course some Two up.”



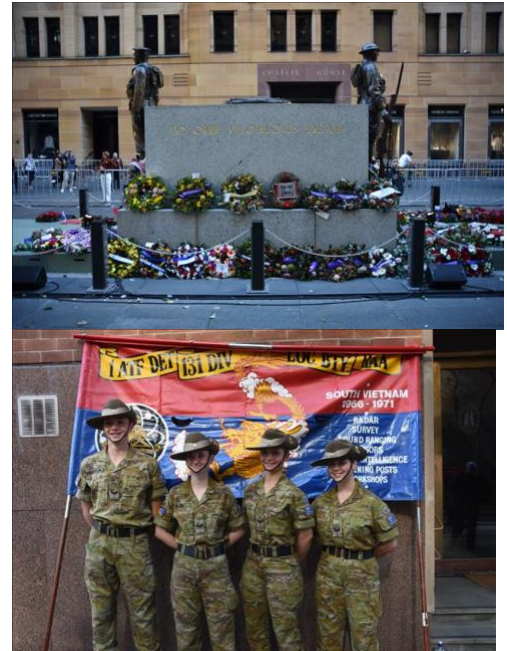
Sydney - Clear skies, warm at about 22c and with a F-35 Lightning 11 breaking the silence comprised the pre-march Anzac Day in Sydney.

The 131 Gunners turned out in the best numbers for several years. Our banner carriers four Corporals from Shore Cadet Unit were enthusiastic for that role. They coped with the absence of the leather holders which had taken up separate residence to the banner proper in a western Sydney garage.

Our most distant traveller was Barry Guzder from WA, whilst the remainder arriving from around Sydney, with Roger McDonnell joining from Newcastle. Channel 7 news must have thought we were film worthy and Gordon Malcolm film-starred in the group.

Lunch was at Barracks on Barrack. It had been booked for 8-10, and in the end we celebrated with 13. An enjoyable lunch was had and wild stories abounded.

Allen Morley.



Phil Endicott, Bob King , Barry Guzder, Ged Carroll, Jim Fitzgerald, Merv Nairn, Gordon Malcolm, Bob Billiards and Allan Morley



Allen and Diane Morley with family

Bob Billiards and Barry Guzder



Jim Fitzgerald and family



Barry Guzder, Ken Holden, Gordon Malcolm, Ken Woodbine, Roger McDonnell, Mike Holden Twin, and Bob Billiards

Mike Butler (Vic) – “Hi Paul

Thought I would pass on some info on ANZAC Day in my neck of the woods. Went to the Dawn service at Box Hill RSL at the local cenotaph with my son and daughter (photo attached). Then back to the RSL which is next door to have gunfire breakfast - it was a very good spread of the usual bacon and egg rolls etc etc. Didn't go into the city for the march but came back to the RSL for lunch with a couple of mates and their wives - it was a very enjoyable day. Hope you are well. Going OK here, can't complain.”



Brisbane's turnout – “What a large & impressive group of "Locators" in Brisbane for ANZAC Day 2024....hopefully in 2025, when we celebrate a 100years of Locating, there are even more marching!”



Ed – great they had a wide-angled camera lens!

Graham Williams – “No pictures from me this year as I was one off at all commemorations (as in the lone ranger.). However, thought you may be interested in a few pics taken at the Cross at Long Tan and the Aussie and Kiwi contingent at the service in the Downunder Bar in Vung Tau on the day.

Around 100 expats and visitors there on Anzac Day and a large group from Tamworth R.S.L. to arrive in Vung Tau I believe on Wednesday.

You can see from the pictures the Long Tan rubber plantation has all but disappeared and is now bananas after a typhoon wiped out most of the rubber trees some 10 years ago.

I am now 16 days and a wakey for my next tour of duty in country and will be travelling to all the usual haunts to keep myself occupied for 2 weeks or so.

Look forward to seeing what yourself and Helen got up to in the next edition of *Eyes and Ears*. Cheers, Graham Williams.





Nui Dat Formation and History – extracts from the AWM Archives



1st Australian Support Compound, Vung Tau, 3rd November 1966

Part 2 ...A continuation – Operations -

1 ATF was tasked with dominating its TAOR and conducting operations throughout Phuoc Tuy as required, as well as deploying anywhere in III Corps and neighbouring Bình Thủy in IV Corps on order. Its principal objective was to secure Route 15 for military movement to ensure allied control of the port at Vung Tau, while politically it sought to extend government authority in Phuoc Tuy.

The task force would be based in a rubber plantation at Nui Dat, 8 kilometres north of Ba Ria, while a logistics and support base would be established in Vũng Tàu with a direct link forward via road. Situated on Route 2, Wilton had selected Nui Dat because its central position offered short lines of communication, it was close but not adjacent to the main population centres, and would allow 1 ATF to disrupt VC activity in the area. Astride a major communist transit and resupply route, it was close to a VC base area yet near enough to Ba Ria to afford security to the provincial capital and facilitate liaison with the local authorities. Australian doctrine emphasised establishing a base and spreading influence outwards to separate the guerrillas from the population. By lodging at Nui Dat they aimed to form a permanent presence between the VC and the inhabitants. 1 ATF would then focus on destroying VC forces in the province, while security of the towns and villages remained a South Vietnamese responsibility.

Initially, 1 ATF consisted of two infantry battalions—the 5th and 6th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment. Other units included the 1st APC Squadron operating M113 armoured personnel carriers, 1st Field Regiment, Royal Australian Artillery which consisted of one New Zealand and two Australian batteries equipped with eighteen 105 mm L5 Pack Howitzers, 3rd SAS Squadron, engineers from the 1st Field Squadron and 21st Engineer Support Troop, 103rd Signals Squadron, 161st Reconnaissance Flight operating Cessna 180s and Bell H-13 Sioux light observation helicopters, and an intelligence detachment.

(For some reason Detachment 131 Divisional Locating Battery is NOT listed). Support arrangements were provided by the 1st Australian Logistic Support Group (1 ALSG) established amid the sand dunes at Vung Tau 30 kilometres (19 mi) south, while eight UH-1B Iroquois helicopters from No. 9 Squadron RAAF also supported 1 ATF from Vung Tau. Although 1 ATF was ostensibly independent, US forces provided considerable support including medium and heavy artillery, close air support, helicopter gunships, medium and heavy lift helicopters and additional utility helicopters. Six



155 mm M109 self-propelled howitzers from A Battery, US 2/35th Artillery Battalion were also permanently attached at Nui Dat. The largest Australian formation deployed since the Second World War, although many of 1 ATF's officers and non-commissioned officers had seen extensive operational service, the task force had been hastily assembled and included many untried National Servicemen. Few of its senior personnel had direct experience of counter-insurgency operations, and even less a first-hand understanding of the situation in Vietnam, while it had been unable to train together before departure. Despite these shortfalls 1 ATF had been required to rapidly deploy and commence operations in a complex environment.

Phouc Tuy Province, South Vietnam

Vietnam

The task force began arriving at Vung Tau between April and June 1966.¹ From 17 May to 15 June, US and Australian forces secured the area around Nui Dat during Operation Hardihood, deploying two battalions of the US 173rd Airborne Brigade and an element of 1 RAR. 5 RAR deployed from Vung Tau the same day and was tasked with clearing any VC found in an area 6,000 metres east and north-east of Nui Dat. 1 ATF occupied Nui Dat from 5 June, with Jackson flying-in with his tactical headquarters to take command. The plan to operate independently resulted in significant self-protection requirements and 1 ATF's initial priorities were to establish a base and ensure its own security. Meanwhile, Wilton's decision to occupy Nui Dat rather than co-locate 1 ATF with its logistic support at Vung Tau allowed the task force to have a greater impact, but resulted in additional manpower demands to secure the base.

Indeed, the security requirements of an understrength brigade in an area of strong VC activity utilised up to half the force, limiting its freedom of action. As part of the occupation all inhabitants within a 4,000-metre radius had been removed and resettled nearby. A protective security zone was then established, the limit of which was designated Line Alpha, and a free-fire zone declared. Although unusual for allied installations in Vietnam, many of which were located near populated areas, the Australians hoped to deny the VC observation of Nui Dat and afford greater security to patrols entering and exiting the area.

At the Battle of Long Tan on 18 August 1966, D Company 6 RAR with considerable artillery support held off and defeated a VC force of at least regimental strength. 18 Australians were killed and 24 wounded, while 245 VC dead were later recovered from the battlefield. A decisive Australian victory, Long Tan proved a major local setback for the VC, indefinitely forestalling an imminent movement against Nui Dat.

Although there were other large-scale encounters in later years, 1 ATF was not fundamentally challenged again. The battle established the task force's dominance over the province, and allowed it to pursue operations to restore government authority.

Regardless, during February 1967 the Australians suffered their heaviest casualties in the war to that point, losing 16 men killed and 55 wounded in a single week, the bulk during Operation Bribie.

5 RAR and 6 RAR completed their tours in mid-1967 and were replaced by 7 RAR and 2 RAR. The first New Zealand infantry, Victor Company RNZIR, arrived in May 1967 from Malaysia and served with the outgoing 6 RAR before and then with the newly arrived 2 RAR.

What would ultimately prove to be a tactical blunder by 1 ATF Command and account for the majority of Australian and New Zealand casualties throughout the war, was the laying of a minefield over a 10 km area from Dat Do to the coast. By June 1967, close to 23,000 "jumping jack" mines had been laid by the Australian engineers within a 100-metre-wide strip of cleared ground between a double row of fences. Security of the minefield proved to be ineffective and the VC thereafter simply uplifted the mines and re-used them against the Australians and New Zealanders.

Meanwhile, with the war continuing to escalate following further American troop increases, 1 ATF was heavily reinforced. A third infantry battalion, 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, arrived in December 1967. The New Zealand contribution also increased with a second infantry company added also in December 1967. Whisky Company RNZIR was initially attached to 3 RAR and then came under operational control of 2 RAR, as with Victor Company.

In February 1968 the Australian government sent two troops of Centurion tanks from its 1st Armoured Regiment to South Vietnam, each with four tanks, plus two tanks with the squadron headquarters. Two bulldozer tanks and two bridge layer tanks were also committed. A third troop was created out of the headquarters tanks, and by August the squadron was brought up to its full strength of 26 tanks. Australian and New Zealand infantry would work very closely with these tank troops for the remainder of their time in Vietnam.^[41] Additional Iroquois helicopters were also added. In all a further 1,200 men were deployed, taking the total Australian troop strength to 7,672 combat troops, its highest level during the war. This increase effectively doubled the combat power available to the task force commander.

On 1 March 1968 the Australian and New Zealand governments agreed to merge the New Zealand rifle companies into one Australian battalion which resulted in both New Zealand companies integrating with A, B, and C Companies of 2 RAR to become 2 RAR/NZ (ANZAC). With a total of five rifle companies it was stronger than the standard Australian battalion which only had four. New Victor and Whisky companies from RNZIR were again attached to subsequent 4 RAR and 6 RAR rotations during later tours.

The ANZAC battalions were commanded by an Australian officer, with a New Zealand officer appointed as deputy commander. **All of the New Zealanders were regular soldiers.** In late 1968 a New Zealand Special Air Service troop was also attached to the Australian SAS Squadron. New Zealand strength peaked at 552 troops in 1969. **At its height 1 ATF numbered over 8,000 men**, including three infantry battalions, armour, artillery, engineers, logistics and aviation units in support.

Although primarily operating out of Phuoc Tuy, the 1 ATF was also available for deployment elsewhere in III Corps and with the province progressively coming under control, 1968 saw the Australians spending a significant period of time conducting operations further afield. 1 ATF was subsequently deployed astride infiltration routes leading to Saigon in order to interdict communist movement against the capital as part of **Operation Coburg** during the **1968 Tet Offensive** and later during the **Battle of Coral-Balmoral in May and June 1968**. At Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral the Australians had clashed with regular People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) and VC main force units operating in battalion and regimental strength for the first time in near conventional warfare, ultimately fighting their largest, most hazardous and most sustained battle of the war. During 26 days of fighting Australian casualties included 25 killed and 99 wounded, while PAVN/VC casualties included 267 killed confirmed by body count, 60 possibly killed, seven wounded and 11 captured.

Later, from December 1968 to February 1969 two battalions from 1 ATF again deployed away from their base in Phuoc Tuy province, operating against suspected communist bases in the **Hat Dich area**, in western Phuoc Tuy, south-eastern Bien Hoa and south-western Long Khan provinces during **Operation Goodwood**. From May 1969 the main effort of the task force returned to Phuoc Tuy Province.

One operation which became infamous as it became known to the public was **Operation Mundingburra**, a mine-clearing action conducted in the Long Hai Hills from 15 July 1969 involving 6 RAR/NZ (ANZAC.) The operation had three objectives: disrupt enemy infiltration into the villages, maintain regular checkpoints on the main access routes between the villages, visit local hamlets and offer medical services to those villagers who might need it. All platoons conducted mine clearing and ambushing tasks. After 31 days the operation ended with casualties all from mine detonations. These were Australian mines which had been uplifted by the VC from the Australian minefield laid in 1967 and re-laid or booby trapped. 6 RAR/NZ's casualties were 11 killed (6 New Zealanders, 5 Australians) and 54 wounded (10 New Zealanders, 44 Australians). A particularly disastrous incident on 21 July was the major inspiration for the 1983 pop song **I Was Only 19** by the Australian band **Redgum**.

One of the most successful 1 ATF operations which severely weakened the PAVN/VC forces in 1 ATF's area of operations was **Operation Marsden** (3–28 December 1969) which was a search-and-destroy mission conducted in the **Mây Tào Mountains** where the VC **5th Division** was headquartered. The VC base in the mountains provided logistics and controlled the VC 274th and 275th Regiments as well as local VC guerrilla forces. The area was also the location of the K76A Hospital, which was the principal provider of medical services for the regional VC and PAVN forces. All five infantry companies from 6 RAR/NZ were deployed on 2 December. A Company scaled the mountains, having to make their way through a 200-metre-wide minefield of improvised mines made from unexploded U.S Air Force **cluster bombs**. On 8 December, D Company located the first major stores dump in a cave at the south of the mountains. It contained approximately 2,500 anti-personnel grenades, 22 anti-tank mines, 22 boxes of anti-watercraft mines and a large quantity of weapons, equipment and explosives. On the same day, B Company, on the north side of the mountain, found the first signs of the hospitals. The following day they discovered a bunker system of 12 bunkers identified as part of K76A Hospital. On 11 December V Company, operating in the south-east, located another hospital with 17 large bunkers large enough to take up to 100 patients and identified it as also part of K76A. By this time all companies were discovering enemy signs and having contacts.

On the same day W Company, which was patrolling north-east of the Song Rai River, located a large enemy camp with 25–28 VC and at first light on 12 December attacked the group with one VC killed while the remainder escaped. A Company successfully scaled the western side and were able to establish a fire support base on the summit.

On 16 and 17 December D Company located the K76A pharmacy, dental post and orderly room. There they recovered a huge supply of medical drugs.

On 19 December, V Company discovered the major part of the hospital, a 200-bed complex complete with underground pharmacy, operating pits and convalescing wards. An enormous cache of medical supplies, food, tools, and equipment were found at the hospital and a large weapons cache was discovered nearby.

Over the next week, all rifle companies conducted day and night search and destroy missions in their areas until 29 December 1969.

Four Australians were killed with none wounded during the operation. There were no New Zealand casualties. VC killed numbered 22 with 5 wounded and 21 prisoners, 14 of whom had been patients of the K76A Hospital. Between D Company's and V Company's finds, approximately 1.5 tonnes of pharmaceuticals had been captured, thought to be the largest amount ever seized in the war by allied forces.

Other significant Australian actions during this period included the **Binh Ba** in June 1969, and **Long Khanh** in June 1971.

Next month... Part 3 ...A continuation – Withdrawal

.....



Give me a Name?

The “Lost Locator Project”
This Project is being re-ignited for 2024.

Our current list contains the names of **95** Locators (as at 30.04.2024) 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 MAY's Birthday List, below, where there are 6 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.

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.

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

Date	Name	Regt No	YoB	SVN In	SVN Out	DVA Location
1	Dennis John Forster	39992	1949	30 04 1969	16 04 1970	Melbourne
4	Peter Kenneth Robertson Bdr	15543	1936	04 05 1966	29 04 1967	Brisbane
17	Kenneth Hennery Spence Sanderson	3794846	1948	23 09 1969	13 08 1970	Wonthaggi Vic
17	Laurence Paul Mion	3795762	1948	01 04 1970	03 12 1970	Melbourne
21	Michael James Coffey T/Sgt	36703	1937	20 05 1966	07 05 1967	Perth RAAOC
21	Simon Anthony Willis	3797687	1948	02 12 1970	29 07 1971	Coonabarabran NSW
22	Andrew Csivincsik	2790320	1947	02 12 1969	04 06 1970	Mannheim Baden, Germany
23	James Forbes Sellwood T/Bdr	1731045	1945	04 05 1966	30 04 1967	Brisbane
24	John Andrew Brewer T/Sgt (M.I.D.)	16220	1944	05 02 1968	07 02 1969	Brisbane 131
	" "			12 03 1970	25 02 1971	4 Fd Regt
28	Sytse Elzinga	3787318	1945	20 05 1966	11 12 1966	Netherlands
28	Frederick Brian Marwick L/Bdr	45285	1948	10 03 1971	28 06 1971	Adelaide 131
	" "			28 06 1971	20 12 1971	12 Fd Regt
29	Charles Edward O'Neill	1735063	1946	15 04 1970	17 12 1970	Gordonvale, Qld
31	Stuart Ralph Philipson	3799990	1950	27 04 1971	17 12 1971	Melbourne

Paul Dickson

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



131 Locators

"Lost Locator Division"

The Eyes & Ears of the Force

Derek Hinde joins the Force with his recent discovery – "Hi Alan (Morley), I have just found a "Lost Locator" this week 26th March 2024.

He is **Grahame A Lee**, 9th Intake, 131 Div Loc Bty. SVN 68-69.

He lives not far from me on the Mid North Coast, NSW. And has been totally AWOL since returning from SVN...!!

We together went from Marrickville recruitment, to Kapooka, then Holsworthy, then North Head. We became best mates.

He went to Nam just before me and was at FSB Coral.

He was very surprised how I found him, My brother was his family dentist in Sydney.

As a result, we found some details of where he might be. Alas no avail, he moved from NSW to QLD.

"Inspector Cousteau" got on the case last month...an old girlfriend...!! WOW.

I will be meeting up with Gunner G A LEE soon to discuss his whereabouts. Regards. Derek Hinde. #2787403."

Graeme Salter got the following to happen – read on...

"Dear Paul, I was advised by **Graeme Salter** that you run a newsletter re 131 Div Loc and he said I should contact you.

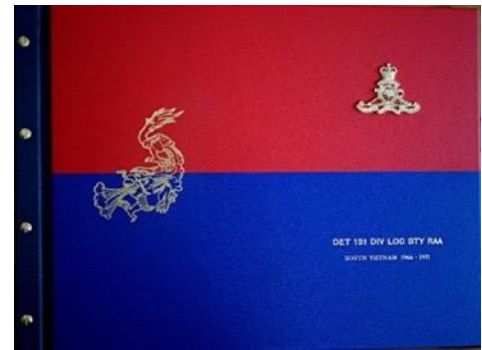
I was a nasho in 10th intake and served in Vietnam Sept 68 to Aug 69 on 32B radar.

My name is Robert Ramsay and I reside in Canberra. Cheers, Bob Ramsay."

Ed – Good to connect with Bob and he filled out a Locator Profile – another pice of history archived.

The list is shrinking – ever so slowly!

. **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.



. **Paul Dickson - Meandering...**...while I was having a bit of a search for something totally different, I stumbled over an article which included the Royal Australian Survey Corps and their first year in South Vietnam, and low and behold discovered the following photo and was amazed to see “131 Loc Bty svyr.” mentioned! It lists L/Bdr Sellwood and Gnr Moreau?

Now are these the two Survey Locators mentioned –

James Forbes Sellwood, 1731045, T/Bdr, SVN 04.05.1966 – 30.04.1967

Victor Alan Moreau, 1200577, Gnr, SVN 22.04.1966 – 21.01.1967

It also mentions a **Dennis Duquemin** followed by “131 Loc Bty svyr”, but on searching the DVA Nominal Roll I found that he served with the RASC – Detachment, 1st Topographical Survey Troop, so it may be a typo.

James remains as Not Located Locator and Vic passed on 09.02.2019.

Anyone got any ideas about his photo and if there was any connection to the Survey Corps?



Celebration on completion of our first tropical work hut.

Left to right –Snow Rollston, Dave Christie, HQ Q pers, Stan Johns, Ken Slater, Bob Skitch, L/Bdr Sellwood, Dennis Duquemin, 131 Loc Bty svyr, Pte Renzo US Bty svyr, S/Sgt Glasgow US Bty Svyr: Seated – Brian Ferns, Alan Carew, Boots Campbell, Gnr Moreau.

. Insights and Recollections...

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

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

Paul Dickson at - 131eyesandears@gmail.com

Allen Morley sent an email remembering the 20th April, 1966 when the 4th Intake of National Service commenced and it evoked some responses...

"58 years ago today a group of bright-eyed but generally nervous, 20ish young men turned up for Army service. This was the fourth intake of National Service.

My own experience was to arrive at Swan St barracks in Richmond, Victoria - no longer there - to run the Save Our Son's gauntlet. The rest is lost in the gloom of time.

am."

...the responses –

Ernie Newbold – "G'day Allen,

I believe that was a day we will never forget. We had no real idea of what lay before us, that would be revealed later.

Now some of us are still here 58 years later and still good mates with those who shared the experience with all those years ago.

We have a good bunch of mates who shared a win in the Nasho lottery, weren't we lucky to be chosen."

Grahame Dignam – "👍 to all..."

Paul Dickson – "The "journey" started at Enoggera, saying goodbye to Mum and Dad, and then meeting with Leigh Hemming (late) and Tony Goldsmith - this "g'day" saw the three of us board a bus to the Eagle Farm airport, board a Fokker Friendship and get off at Williamtown RAAF base, just out of Newcastle, then get on busses, even double-deckers, to journey on to Singleton where the "morphing" began. After Singleton we went to Holsworthy, Nui Dat and home again together - an amazing journey.

58 Years have transpired with 4th Intakers still communicating and what's more interesting with a broader group of Locaters.

No one could have imagined that turning 20 would have impacted on their lives forever.

Let this day let us remember the mates we have met, both still with us and those who have past.

Thanks for sharing this day.

Paul."

.....

. Unknown Dates of Deaths continues to be updated...as at 30.04.2023 -

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.

10 Year Detachment/131 Battery Death Periods

										<u>Total</u>
1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	
1	0	2	0	1	0	2	0	1	0	7
1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	
0	1	1	0	1	0	0	2	0	1	6
1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	
0	0	2	2	2	1	2	1	0	0	10
1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	
3	2	2	2	0	3	2	1	2	1	18
2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	

0	4	4	4	2	9	5	6	5	4	43
2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	
8	4	4	5	6	7	10	8	0	0	52
Unknowns*										2

Total 138

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 **30.04.2024**.

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

This following sections have now been updated as of 30.04.2024 and show a clear picture of Battery/Detachment Members that have incomplete Date of Death details.

Here are the names and details –

Name	Rank	Regt No	Section	SVN	DoB	DoD
Robinson, Marcus Lee	Gnr	2791229		1970	14.02.48	Unknown

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 Subject: Vale update

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

However, as a continuation, this has been extended to cover more Unknown details... such as Rank, Regt No (not an easy discovery), Section, DoB and then day.month for DoD’s.

Ok, detectives, here’s more homework – 7 gaps to go!

Name	Rank	Regt No	Section	SVN	DoB	DoD
O’Keefe, Michael Francis	Pvt	2787168	AACC	1968-69	26.11.46	00.00.80

Ed – Michael O’Keefe, sadly, remains as the last Locator to have his details updated. Our thanks go to those that have given more meaning to those “mates” who are no longer physically with us.



. Quiz Time.

This is not necessarily a typical (whatever that means) “Quiz Time” article but one with a question included, so let’s get started...

Here’s an interesting one – I wasn’t aware of this until I heard it on a quiz show –

When was the draft (conscription) lottery instigated in the USA for service in Vietnam?

Give up? Ok here’s somewhat of an answer...

On **December 1, 1969**, the first draft lottery since 1942 began, but college deferments were kept intact.

...the confusion continues -

Before the lottery was implemented in the latter part of the Vietnam conflict, there was **no system** in place to determine order of call besides the fact that men between the ages of 18 and 26 were vulnerable to being drafted. Local boards called men classified 1-A, 1B-1/2 through 25 years old, oldest first.

On Dec. 1, **1969**, the United States held its first draft lottery, which gave young men a random number corresponding to their birthdays. Men with lower numbers were called first and told to report to induction centers where they could be ordered into active duty and possibly sent to the Vietnam War.

Commonly known as the draft, conscription had been conducted in the U.S. through the Selective Service System (SSS) since 1917. Initially, the draft was conducted using a random ballot by the SSS. When a person was called up by the draft, they had to report to their local draft board to evaluate their draft status.

...I’m gobsmacked. 4 years after ours and a trifle confusing!



Vic Danko – a continuing yarn –

"Hi Fellas ,

I want to share a story about Singleton Recruit Training etc. Since Dicko mentioned it as being his 4 th intake base . I was 3rd intake. I grew up in Greta which is about 20 Km from Singleton.

The intake was about Jan 1966. A couple of mates drove me to the base. 15 or 20 of us stood around waiting for what next .

The base had just opened , all new including staff.

The barracks gave me an uncomfortable feeling, as Nick Proskurin may share. I'd spent my first 7 years in refugee and migrant camps.

Anyway the story here is, and Dicko might remember, one day during recruit training we were transported to the rifle range at Greta.

This had been the range since WW2 when Greta had an Army base, later converted to a Migrant camp.

As kids aged 9 and 10 we knew it well because we used to walk thru the bush on weekends (when it had been used or after heavy rain) and dig the 303 bullet heads out of the clay banks and sell as scrap. Lead and bronze.

Well, 1966 the 3 Companies are at the range and the we are told that the next day, starting 2 hrs before dawn, we would do a route march back to Singleton.

Who wins ?

My company marches out of the fenced in range and turns right onto the country road. It's dark of course. I am marching on the road side, where the Sgts and Cpls are scurrying up and down the lines.

After a while, as the Sgt is near me, I ask if we are going to march to Singleton along the New England H'way? NO. Well you will on this road.

How do I know? I live here.

We should have turned left out of the range, not right .

Officers , etc etc all stop. Can we recover? No. I could lead thru the bush but there are a few coal mining shafts and creeks etc .

So they send for trucks .

And if I had shut up, we could have still been marching!!

All the best."

...Vic adds another anecdote...

"When I was aged about 7, at Great Migrant camp, the RSL sub branch at Greta sent a bus to the migrant camp.

And invited all who wanted to go, to come over to Greta to see the ANZAC Day march .

I was in awe. I remember watching closely at the soldiers with their medals.

I couldn't speak English.

Today at the Greta War Memorial there are 12 names of Nasho's who served in Vietnam and one was killed by a mine . Regards."

Bob Wilson – "Hi Paul

Talk about coincidences... I was attending the Veterans brekky with a mate (He was a Grunt...please forgive me.) The Veterans breakfast is held on the last Friday of the month at The Lakes Entrance RSL . Can highly recommend it to any travellers heading that way.

Anyway, I digress...A chap came to our table to speak with my mate...the Grunt. As he leaned over the table I saw the Logo on his 131 top, after some brief moments Scotty (Ian McNicol) and I soon became reacquainted.

We both served with the Battery 1967/68 and since then have been living in reasonably close proximity for the past few years. I have lived in East Gippsland for the past 30 years and at one stage had a Onsite Van at Bemm River Caravan Park, Scotty had a place which adjoins the park and he would walk past on his way to the pub. Too bad he wasn't, nor for that matter was I, wearing any identifiable caps or tops....could have saved a great deal of time. Anyway, we will enjoy catching up."

...Ernie Newbold adds a few words in relation to Bob's – "Good to hear from Bob Wilson, he was with Nick Proskurin and I at 31A on top of Nui Dat and also at FSB Berriman during Operation Duntroon in January 1968."



Mail Out



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



Mail In - Here are the responses

Graham Williams – “Giddy Paul,

Glad to hear all is A OK with your eyes and they did not manage to turn you into a cyclops. The good news from the urologist is a bonus so things are looking good and you are on the way back to your usual “ramming speed.”
.....Anzac Day this year has been a bit of a head shaker for me. Had planned on going to Perth and hopefully catching up with a number of locaters there but of course Jenni's heart attack had me put the brakes on those plans. Had spoken with Graeme Owen at our November get together who informed me the Survey lads who in the past have had Anzac Days in different capital cities would be marching in Sydney this year so thought I may drive down there to catch up. Then the bad news from Victoria arrived so figured travel plans may be up in the air for some involved there.

Despite living on the Gold Coast and only a short trip to Brisbane along the M1 am no longer confident in finding my way around the place there with so much construction, road works and changes etc and am no longer up to date with bus and rail transport in the city. Add to that it would need to be a DRY Anzac Day...(not an option) in order for me to drive home to Tweed so passed on that. That leaves the Services here in Tweed Heads which seem to be getting bigger with the passing of years.

I go to gym still twice a week as part of a Veterans Group so we will be doing the Dawn Service together here in Tweed. I am one of only two Vietnam Veterans there but they are a good crew and everyone gets on well. Works out OK as I did not really wish to leave Jenni alone for any length of time so Tweed it will be.

Weather is presently a dirty word here Paul. We have had a bit of everything except snow really. Rule of thumb seems to be whatever the B.O.M. predict the night before expect the opposite next day.

Have attached an article from our local rag which may be of interest to those living in the Northern Rivers area or Gold Coast. Hoping this finds both yourself and Helen enjoying life during a not to hot summer. Stay safe.

Graham Williams.”

John Vitkovsky –

“G'day Dicko,

Eight millimetres of rain all February, two mills in March and two mills so far this month... we are close to running out of water and the property is dry as parchment. Just need to hang out till Anzac Day, when it traditionally starts raining. There has not been an Anzac Day march in Victor Harbor for some years. A march is scheduled for the 21st, so will have to polish up the old medals.

My submariner mate and his wife and Naomi and I took the caravans to the Lucindale Field Days, which are bigger than Ben Hur. Stayed down the South East for ten days and visited Naracoorte, Robe and Kingston and had a few cool drinks because it was hot. Next trip away is in August to the Mildura area.

Grandson, Felix, (13) flew down from Brisbane and we have been entertaining him playing 8-ball and plinking tin cans with my Diana air rifle. Got to say, he is dead accurate: also full of piss and vinegar and is wearing me out... Anyway, that's all from me. Hope all is improving with your health.

See pic of Warwick Hamilton (at right) I took when we were inspecting captured Cong weapons in 1967. JV.”

Tweed Valley Weekly Locals Supporting Locals

Funding for Tweed veterans' hub

By Jo Kennett

THE MINISTER for Veteran Affairs and Australian Defence Force personnel visited the Tweed Shire to announce a federal government grant for a \$5.4 million local Veterans' and Families' Hub, with a focus on mental health and wellbeing.

Minister Matt Keogh was joined by Assistant Minister for Social Services and Richmond MP Justine Elliot, veterans, servicemen and women and families at Jack Evans Boat Harbour on Wednesday, March 13, for the announcement.

Ms Elliot said the area has a large ex-service population, “including many older veterans and war widows.”

“Having tailored veteran support and services accessible locally is so important to improving the health, wellbeing, and economic outcomes of those who bravely served our nation,” she said.

Mr Keogh said the Albanese government is committed to providing the best services and supports possible for defence personnel, veterans and families.

“Today we've reached a new milestone,” he said. “More than 25,000 veterans and their families will be better off, with the Albanese government today announcing a \$5.445 million grant has

been awarded to RSL LifeCare, working with RSL NSW, to establish a Veterans' and Families' Hub in the Tweed/North Coast region of New South Wales.

“Veterans who live just over the border will also benefit as RSL LifeCare and RSL NSW have established a firm relationship with RSL Queensland to best support veterans no matter which side of the border they are on.

“Following significant community consultation and demographics analysis, the services at the Tweed/North Coast Hub will focus on providing access to physical and mental health services, home care assistance, access to fee-free training, housing assistance, transition, social and family support.”

Kingscliff RSL sub-branch called it a “great announcement from the Department of Veterans Affairs and will provide invaluable support to our local veteran community across the Northern Rivers and southern Gold Coast.”

The expansion of the Veterans' and Families' Hubs' network in the Tweed/North Coast region is part of the government's \$46.7 million commitment to deliver ten new Veterans' and Families' Hubs across the country.

For more information about Veterans' and Families' Hubs, visit www.dva.gov.au/vfhubs



Minister for Veteran Affairs Matt Keogh with Justine Elliot MP, veterans and defence personnel



Rieny Nieuwenhof – “Hello Paul,

Thanks for your letter. Glad to hear your op went well and that you have recovered from your trip. Things are fine here in Portarlington. The tourists/holiday makers have left and things are back to normal, I can actually get a car park again down at the shopping centre.

Health is OK, lots of little things that are addressed with medications and exercise. I attend the local gym 3-4 times a week and have a dietician supervising what I eat. (Like so many others I am now diabetic). Currently, I have bursitis in my right shoulder, it will be treated shortly with a cortisol injection.

The Department of Veteran Affairs (DVA) has announced it is reviewing the current government acts that cover veteran entitlements - Veteran Entitlement Act, Compensation Act and the Rehabilitation Act. This was a recommendation from the Royal Commission into Veteran Suicide. They call it 'harmonising' the different acts. There is a 'consultation' period to the end of April. The concern is that the review is being done by the DVA on the promise that it will benefit veterans, but many believe it will benefit DVA more. The devil will be in the detail!

We are approaching another ANZAC Day with ceremonies across our Geelong region and Melbourne. No doubt some 131 Locators (John Delacca, Michael Butler and others) will march under the banner in Melbourne. I will join the Geelong Vietnam veterans for their march and memorial service.

Regards, Rieny.”

. Nick Proskurin –

“Thank you, Paul,

Will catch up with you after we have settled into our new place.

Am glad to hear that your waterworks are well and no causing you too much trouble.

Love to Helen, all the best.

Have a great Anzac Day,

Cheers, Nick P.”



Committee Members:

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



<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 9 th April 2024

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

Attendees were: Allen Morley, Grahame Dignam, Gordon Malcolm, Ernest Newbold, Ian Amos. Ged Carroll, Merv Nairn

Zoomed members were: Ron Mason, Paul Dickson, Terry Erbs, Bert Blink, Brian Campbell, Iain Kennedy,



Apologies were received from Rieny Neuwenhof, Kevin Browning, Steve Wynn, Jim Fitzgerald, Warwick Brooker, Nick Proskurin and other State Reps

Financial Membership is currently... **126** plus Associates **2** plus Affiliates **16** Total **144**
Plus Lapsed as at 1/04/2024 **36** members

Presidents report.

Allen referenced.

. The DVA is canvassing Veterans and the general population on the changes to the various legislation (ACTS) the DVA uses to determine Health matters. More information and feedback options are available until 28 th April 2024 from the DVA website.

. The Australian War Memorial is seeking candidates for its council positions. People with Strategic Leadership experience and Corporate board experience are invited to apply.

. Anzac Day Sydney will have the Det 131 Banner to head their contingent and the lunch will be at Barracks restaurant on Barrack Street around 12.00 Noon.

. Another Locator has been found. Grahame Lee, a Victorian, was found by Derek Hinde and the story will make the *Eyes & Ears* shortly.

. John Singleton wrote a piece in the Sydney Telegraph in support of Ben Roberts-Smith and the treatment he has received. He did not hold back in his opinion.

Public Officer Report.

Gordon had no new issues to report, however he confirmed that the Riverboat Cruise would take place on 7 May 2024. An email to SYDNEY locators would be sent shortly. He also mentioned that he purchased a new Oz flag from Australian Flag Makers and was pleased with the item and commended their service.

. web Performance...

Grahame Dignm (in Bob Billiards absence) advised...

. Facebook members are now 431. We are still attracting some who want to market non sponsored merchandise to our members- these are barred.

. Activity is now more regular, and interest is increasing.

Health Report:

. No new issues were reported, i.e. what we now have we need to live with!

. Paul Dickson reported that our regular "ZOOMer" Steve Wynn has been severely affected recently. He is in our thoughts and we wish him strength and fortitude.

General Business and around the grounds:

Discussions ensued on the following:

. "Survey website availability" update – Bert deferred to Bob who was absent. We will reschedule for the next meeting.

. Photo album appeal has had an effect with responses from Tim Ford offering the information held by the Cutler Research Centre to use if required. Accepted with thanks - now we need to get there.

. Responses from Hilton Holloway, Terry Erbs, Kevin Browning, Warren Jaenke, Warwick Brooker and Graeme Owen are being pursued.

. Terry advised the builder contracted to construct the 133 Bty Building has gone bust. Terry will be joining his family in PNG for the Anzac Day ceremonies.

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, 14th May, 2023 at 1100hrs

Venue: to be advised

Also, available via Zoom link to be advised



. Birthdays in the Battery...May –

Date	Name	Service No.	SVN In	SVN Out	Comments
1	Dennis John Forster	39992	30 04 1969	16 04 1970	
2	Nicholas Andrew Holt Armstrong T/Bdr	43316	26 09 1967	17 09 1968	
2	Michael Murray Young	2786087	26 09 1967	17 09 1968	† 08.10.2023
2	Brett Geoffrey Rainsford	4719790	19 12 1968	28 11 1969	
4	Brian Ernest Killworth	2782129	04 05 1966	02 03 1967	
4	Peter Kenneth Robertson Bdr	15543	04 05 1966	29 04 1967	
5	David George Cornell	5713808	07 08 1966	30 04 1967	
8	John "Beau" Leslie Roberts	3787005	04 05 1966	29 04 1967	† 20.11.2018
8	Graeme Arthur Owen	39453	08 11 1968	19 11 1969	
10	Kenneth Oliver Woodbine	2786077	12 09 1967	17 09 1968	
10	Michael John Quinlan	2788865	08 11 1968	05 11 1969	
11	Robert Bruce King	2785420	10 06 1967	23 04 1968	
12	Mervyn Douglas Nairn	2781450	20 05 1966	01 05 1967	
12	Gordon Benton Williams 2Lt	2783891	13 05 1968	26 03 1969	
13	David Derek Keech	311588	04 06 1970	10 06 1970	131 † 08.12.1999
	" "		11 06 1970	26 05 1971	AATTV
15	Leslie Phillip Connell	6709098	23 09 1969	13 08 1970	† 04.04.2011
17	Paul Arthur Angel	2790740	23 09 1969	04 06 1970	
17	Kenneth Henry Spence Sanderson	3794846	23 09 1969	13 08 1970	
17	Laurence Paul Mion	3795762	01 04 1970	03 12 1970	
18	Peter William Colman	2791655	22 12 1969	17 12 1970	
19	Dennis James Dye	2412366	27 11 1967	26 11 1968	
19	Terrill "Terry" John Weekes	3787197	20 05 1966	03 03 1967	† 03.09.1996
19	John David Tickle T/Sgt.	214000	03 03 1971	13 08 1971	131
	" "		14 08 1971	09 09 1971	12 Fd Regt
20	Nicholas Proskurin	2785002	04 05 1967	20 02 1968	
21	Michael James Coffey T/Sgt	36703	20 05 1966	07 05 1967	RAAOC
21	Peter Ravelje	3794461	16 12 1969	04 06 1970	
21	Stuart John Telford	2791930	20 01 1970	03 12 1970	† 28.03.1972
21	Simon Anthony Willis	3797687	02 12 1970	29 07 1971	
22	Brian Eric Turner	2412230	20 05 1966	02 05 1967	
22	Andrew Csivincsik	2790320	02 12 1969	04 06 1970	
23	James Forbes Sellwood T/Bdr	1731045	04 05 1966	30 04 1967	
24	John Andrew Brewer T/Sgt (M.I.D.)	16220	05 02 1968	07 02 1969	131
	" "		12 03 1970	25 02 1971	4 Fd Regt
26	Kenneth Allen Whittle	2781996	20 05 1966	27 03 1967	
26	Bert Eppo Blink	3789692	10 06 1967	21 05 1968	
26	Raymond John Mitchell	218731	30 05 1970	10 12 1970	† 24.09.2011 - 131
	" "		10 12 1970	11 03 1971	4 Fd Regt
27	Peter Westcott	553640/8230876	26 10 2000	20 04 2001	EAST TIMOR
	" "		02 11 2005	10 06 2006	IRAQ
28	Sytse Elzinga	3787318	20 05 1966	11 12 1966	
28	Frederick Brian Marwick L/Bdr	45285	10 03 1971	28 06 1971	131
	" "		28 06 1971	20 12 1971	12 Fd Regt
29	Charles Edward O'Neill	1735063	15 04 1970	17 12 1970	
29	Roger Anthony Pryke	312827	30 05 1970	26 05 1971	
30	Roger Crellin Long	3788775	05 06 1967	12 12 1967	† 22.05.1990
30	Ronald Adrian Webb	1411172	04 05 1967	20 02 1968	† 29.03.1977
30	Anthony Sherwin Eaton Capt.	17090	14 01 1969	30 07 1969	
30	Warwick Stephen Brooker	1732289	04 05 1967	20 02 1968	
31	Stuart Ralph Philipson	3799990	27 04 1971	17 12 1971	

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

Ed – 13 blokes not highlighted is 13c too many! Ok, let's get into it and actively get out there locating a few more!

. Locator Profiles – we've received **176** and we've archived **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.



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

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

Hope we hear from you? Website: <http://www.131locators.org.au>

. Other related sites...

. Locating, Surveillance & Target Acquisition Association...



LOCATING, SURVEILLANCE & TARGET ACQUISITION ASSOCIATION
The Eyes and Ears of The Battlefield

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



Australian Artillery Association – www.australianartilleryassociation.com



ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ARTILLERY HISTORICAL COMPANY www.artilleryhistory.org



Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia
Honour the dead but fight like hell for the living

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

. 1st Battalion 83rd Artillery...



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

We also welcome our Australian and New Zealand Allies to whom we owe so much. It is also dedicated to those members of the 1/83rd who did not return. We will never forget their sacrifice. Website: <http://www.1stbn83rdartvnam.com>





The Royal New Zealand Artillery Association

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

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

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