

# THE EYES and EARS

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

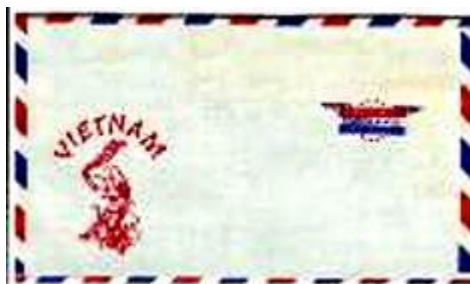
Editor: Paul 'Dicko' Dickson

email: [three-zero@hotmail.com](mailto:three-zero@hotmail.com)

Vol. 3 No. 24 – 31/10/2010

## Heard and seen...

. The "tail" of the Dragon continues...



**Ernie Newbold follows** up on a very popular topic..."Paul and Nick,  
I have been searching for some time for U.S. Armed Forces airmail envelopes that were available to us from the P.X. in Vietnam.

I'm sure that I still have some unused envelopes somewhere but am yet to find them. I asked "Google" to see if they could find any for me and after several searches they have come up with what I was looking for. The dragon on the envelope was certainly the one that inspired the design by Ron Webb on the Detachment Shield. As mentioned previously the outline shape of the dragon closely resembles the outline of the map of Vietnam. Regards, Ernie."

...then our intrepid researcher, Ernie, follows up with this...

"G'day Nick,

Following our thought provoking discussion regarding the Artillery Colours see the attached link for details of the Royal Australian Artillery Customs and Traditions. You may find it interesting.

Regards, Ernie.

<http://www.defence.gov.au/army/RRAA/docs/RAACUSTOMTRADITIONS.pdf>

The following is a copy and paste from page No. 81 of the publication regarding our plaque.

## Unit and Sub-Unit Plaques



### **Detachment 131st Divisional Locating Battery**

The plaque was designed in 1967 and consists of an upper scroll inscribed '1 ATF (Australian Task Force) DET 131 DIV LOC BTY RAA' and an atom and oriental dragon. The atom represented the elements of the detachment and how they were spread around the area but relying on the HQ element for support. Electrons represent each troop R (Radar), SVY (Survey), INT (Artillery Intelligence) and LP (Listening Posts) with the centre showing 131 on red and blue. The black background represented the continuous day and night operation of the detachment. The dragon is a lung dragon second, only to the imperial dragon. Its shape is similar to the shape of Vietnam where the detachment was serving."



### **131st Divisional Locating Battery**

The design of this plaque was submitted for formal approval in 1982 and is based upon the design of the plaque used by a detachment of the unit which served continuously in South Vietnam from 1966 to 1971. The plaque contains an atom and oriental dragon. Inscribed above is '131st DIVISIONAL LOCATING BATTERY' and below is inscribed 'ROYAL REGIMENT OF AUSTRALIAN ARTILLERY'. The atom consists of a central Regimental badge and outer electrons representing the sub-units of the battery. The atom represents the independence of sub-units of the battery and their being constantly in motion supporting other units. The oriental dragon is symbolic of the first operational theatres (South Vietnam) to which elements of the battery were deployed.

. Graham Dignam had his attention distracted by this article in the Sydney Daily Tele...

DailyTelegraph.com.au  
Monday, August 2, 2010

news | 15

# \$10m toy jets a troop life-saver



**exclusive**  
Ian McPhedran  
Defence Writer

A FLEET of mini spy planes will be deployed in Afghanistan to protect Australian troops under a new \$175 million deal. The Government has approved buying 18 RQ-7B

Shadow 200 unmanned aerial vehicles and support systems. Defence Minister John Faulkner will announce the deal today, part of a \$1.1 billion Budget plan to boost force protection for Diggers serving in Afghanistan. It comes on top of a \$32 million lease deal for a C-RAM early warning radar to counter Taliban rocket and mortar attacks.

The unarmed "eyes in the sky" will carry hi-tech sensors, high resolution video and still cameras, ultraviolet sensors and laser direction finders above troop patrols to provide detailed intelligence about enemy activity. Ground troops will be able to view footage and data from the aircraft "live" in real time on the ground. The information will almost certainly

save lives as it will help detect insurgents planting roadside bombs, which have claimed most of the 17 Australians to die in Afghanistan. They have been using smaller Scan Eagle planes under a lease deal with US firm Boeing, but the Shadows will allow the troops to have an autonomous capability. In addition to the 18 "birds", two support systems

will be supplied along with ground vehicles, training packages and support. The US-built Shadows are being sourced from the US military under a foreign military sales deal and will be used for battlefield surveillance, reconnaissance and target acquisition. The high-tech sensor suite is built in Israel, but will not be fitted with any weapons.



. **Scotty Nicol sent** this in –



“Hi Paul this is just a note to accompany the photo of “The James Menz Club” taken in 1968.

I was given the task of making the sign from a sheet of ply procured by our senior storeman Ray

Hutchinson. I've often wondered if anyone kept the sign after our withdrawal from Nui Dat, or was it left there. I assume the latter was the case.

I have quite a few photos that I'm willing to share, that might kindle a few memories - which I'll send to you in due course.

Regards, Scotty.”

**Ed** – The more photos and stories the merrier. However, what's also interesting – **What did happen to Scotty's sign? Anyone got any ideas??**

...more of **Scotty McNicol's** corker photos...



“Here are a couple of shots taken on Xmas day 1967 in the survey lines at Nui Dat.

Left - L-R an Engineer (I think), Terry “Spider” Bruce, Roger McDonnell, Geoff Holden, Ken Woodbine, Bruce Irvine.

On the right ,  
L-R - Dutchy  
Van Driel,  
Roger  
McDonnell,  
Scotty  
McNicol, Ken  
Woodbine,



Bruce Irvine. The dirty foot belongs to Geoff Holden. Hopefully someone can replace the Question marks with names. Jimmy Menz was also present. But unfortunately I didn't get a shot of him.

I hope the military statute of limitations has expired re the offence of drinking alcohol in the lines. I remember someone mentioning they missed having licorice allsorts, so a few of us wrote home for some. Within a week there were so many packets of licorice allsorts we got sick of them & the guys were giving them to me to hand out to the local children in Baria when I did a laundry run. Also someone handed around a tape recorder & we all said a few words. I wonder if that tape still exists. It would be great to hear the voices again after all these years....Regards Scotty.”

**Ed** enquired as to what type of disease Geoff Holden had - “Geoff was covered in baby powder. We were all a bit out of control. But we had a good time anyway” – was the explanation tendered by Scotty.

**Ed's also** curious to know to why Bruce Irvine is holding his Reschs DA can upside down in the picture on the left?

. **An Ed typo in September!** “Hi Paul...Just finished reading the latest E&E. Well done that man.

I just wanted to correct a small error re the article on exercise Barrawinga. It was me that sent it to you, Ian (Scotty) McNicol. Not McNeil. (I've never heard of him). I think most of the guys would have realised it was just a typo....Regards Scotty.”

.**Damian McManus responded** to an email from **Ed** after he'd received one from **Paul Butcher** – it was good to get the connection, **BUT** what stuck out for me were Damo's Doctor's comments re **prostate cancer**. Maybe it's something we should be a little more diligent about and ask our doctor some questions. – “Hi Paul &Paul - Thanks for the interest. I am in recovery and doing well.

Had the Full open radical prostatectomy (nerve sparing hopefully) on 3<sup>rd</sup> Sept.

Good news is the cancer was contained in the prostate capsule, no ruptures or lesions. The Fn Catheter was the worst of it, and that's been gone 4 days now.

Interesting, something we all know, but my surgeon mentioned at our first interview that **Viet Vets have a much higher incidence of prostate cancer than the general population.** So Bend over once a year!  
Best Regards Damian McManus. DVA looked after me.”

**. Can we identify someone?**



This photo was taken by Ernie Newbold at the 2010 ANZAC Day parade in Sydney. It has come to our attention and made us curious as to the identity of the young bloke in the front row with medals on the right side of his chest.

Can we get any help in this direction, please?

**. More confusion** has occurred when we noted that we’ve got another “moonlighter” in our midst which was reported in the following...



“Dear Ed  
I saw ex-Federal MP Fred Chaney on ABC TV today and thought that he reminded me of someone 131-ish. Lo and behold, a comparison with our own Bob Billiards reveals yet another doppelganger in the ranks.

Concerned, Sydney”

Ed – I know Bob went to SVN, but who is who?



**. Look who’s doing the “1-3-1”...**

There is a disturbing trend starting with not only our deposed polities, or is it you know who, and then Allen Morley in the guise of someone important is spotted doing the same...



First up we think its Brookey, but we’re not sure!

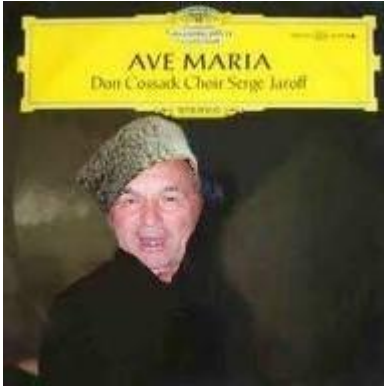


Then, we know its Allen Morley but where is he and what’s “Jools” doing looking so pensive?

Ed – I suppose we can be pleased that we didn’t belong to a “No 2” Bty – the two finger salute would have been charming!



...then the Don Cossack Choir featuring Vic Danko doing Ave Maria...



The CD he's trying to flog was recorded at the Mosman Rowers with a group vodka drinking lot with dubious backgrounds.

Ed - This whole Russian Cossack thing with Vic is just getting out of hand – immigration needs to review his passport status!

. **Now this** photo was sent to us by some unsolicited source and features some unknown person adjusting, repairing, hopefully not vandalising something that could have belonged to 31 Alpha or Bravo.

Can anyone give us a lead to who it might be and where the photo was taken?



. **Kevin Browning** throws a curly one with the following and photo... "Paul, I wonder if you could include this photo in the next newsletter and ask the boys if anyone could provide information on the use of the tower at FSB Thrust occupied around June '69. Also do any of the pioneers boys of 66/67 have any photos of the L5 in action or otherwise. Engineer Museum has an artist who is looking for some shots.

Regards Kevin"



. **Jeff Evans** has a couple of questions...

"Hi Paul,

As promised, three questions for the first bunch of surveyors in Vietnam. This is what I have written, with extracts from, or based on, the Det 131 Commander's Diary Reports.

1. "CAPT Townley with 18 soldiers, accompanied with the equipment on HMAS Sydney, while the remainder of the detachment flew Qantas with 1 Fd Regt main body."

**First question - were surveyors included in the 18 in the Advance party? If so, any idea how many?**

2. "While the first six months were quite haphazard for the surveyors, the New Year brought plenty of work. Seven Fire Support Bases (FSB) were surveyed in the month of January, with five reaching theatre grid, while two were supplied with theatre orientation."

**Second Question - does anyone have any idea what the names of the 7 Fire Support Bases were? They were before 102 deployed first to FSB Arrow and FSB Herring in February 67. It was also before the big deployment to the south of Horseshoe, as part of Operation Portsea, by 6 batteries, as follows:**

*"supplied control to a further six battery centres for:*

- . A Bty 11 Armoured Cavalry Regt US Army,
- . 161 Fd Bty RNZA,
- . A Bty, 2<sup>nd</sup> 35<sup>th</sup> Bn US Army
- . A Bty 1<sup>st</sup> 83<sup>rd</sup> Bn US Army, and
- . 101 Fd Bty RAA".

(Yeah, I know there is only 5, but I am quoting the Op Report.)

3. "members provided assistance to Topo Survey section in an experimental scheme to show the feasibility of a Helicopter borne satellite station for long distance survey. Due to faulty equipment, the scheme was not completed".

**Third Question** - This is all that is said in the Op Report; I am guessing that it was a chopper hovering over battery centre, and being observed by Theodolites from at least three Trigs, to conduct an 'Intersection' onto the chopper. Can anyone enlighten me please???

Something in the back of my mind tells me that this 'type' of idea was trialled with a hydrogen balloon, tethered to battery centre??? Again, any clues???

The other possibility is that it was the commencement of what became known as a Airborne Intersection/Resection Scheme; three known points, four hover points, and the unknown point at battery centre???

Looking for answers to all three questions for the book I am writing called "Gunners in Vietnam 1965-1971"

Any help would be greatly appreciated. I don't mind if you wish to reply direct. No hurry; take your time.

Regards, Jeff Evans"

## . Extracts From "Cracker's" Blotter in September 1967...

**Firstly some** comments from Ernie Newbold as to the quality of the reproductions - "G'day Paul, have cleaned the reports as best I can, page 1 is still the most difficult to read but all seem a little clearer now.

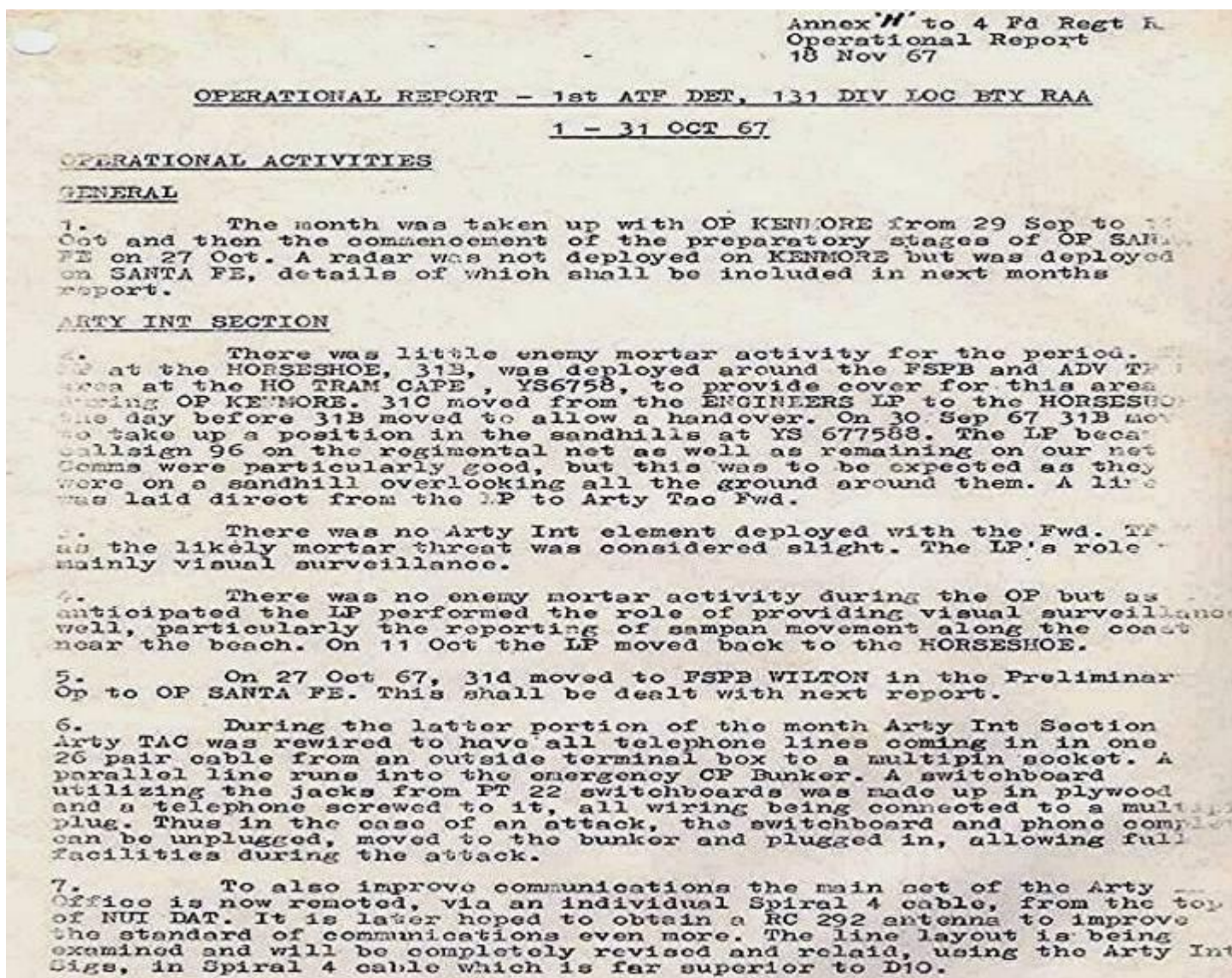
The original copies of copies of copies from Grahame Dignam are worse than the ones available over the internet.

It would appear that the long awaited re-supply of fresh carbon paper in 1967 was delayed further than expected. The old carbon paper was therefore re-used far longer than its manufacturer had intended. War is hell! I bet that they always had new carbon paper at Victoria Barracks.

You do remember carbon paper and typewriters don't you? Regards, Ernie."

**Ed** - supply of "ill-fitting pre-worn" underwear and now out of date re-used carbon paper - I even had problems with roneo-ing the E&E's in '67 - the Q Store had a lot to answer for!! Don't give me that "war is hell" bit - we had newsletters and reports to complete!

Arty Int kicks it off...





...Radar comes into focus...

### RADAR SECTION

3. Neither radar was deployed outside the base area during the period. The major items of interest were the trial lifting of "B" radar with a CH47 CHINOOK, and the impact point location of 155mm shells for a trial.

### RADAR SECTION

9. The movement of the set was accomplished in two lifts.

Lift One. External:

a 18 x 10 ft Air Despatch pallet with 3 platform mounted complete and one disassembled lashed on board.

Internal:

The complete radar det with personal equipment.

Lift Two. External:

The FFR landrover and trailer complete. One generator and 1x44 gal fuel drum in each with other smaller equipment lashed in vehicle.

Internal: NIL

10. Complete details on the suggested movement of the Radar AN/KFQ 1 by CH47 will be given in next months report after a number of other lifts have been made and the lessons learnt from these have been evaluated.

11. On 9 Oct, after being approached by A Bty 2/35 Arty (US), a test was carried out tracking the 155mm guns to determine the impact point. There was some doubt as to the survey of one of their registration points approx 8700m away.

12. A total of 11 rounds were tracked at high angle, along the line GT using "A" Radar and the results plotted. High angle was used as we have found previously this gives the best results. "A" Radar was used as it was closest to the line GT. The fall of shot was adjusted onto target by an air OP and with his direction we deleted two rounds as being target rounds. The radar results were good.

13. The MPI of the radar results plotted to within 70m of the given coords of the registration point. As it was thought that the registration point might have in fact been at another creek junction some 400 m away, the results were sufficient to prove the validity of the given coordinates.

14. The air conditioning units for both sets have arrived and are being installed. Problems are foreseen with respect to power supplies for these and steps are in hand to obtain 240V generators to be used until the new electrical reticulation is installed (a date of completion is not known) and then one emergency 240V generator per radar will be kept on site.

..."air conditioning, air bloody conditioning...let's hope it kept the canapés fresh and cool!"

...here comes the Survey crew...

### SURVEY SECTION

15. The survey section was employed on two operations during the period, Operation KENNORE (20 Sep - 8 Oct) and Operation SANTA FE which is still continuing.

16. A regimental Fire Support Base was established on the HOERAN CAPE at YS 677583. Initially it was not possible to provide theatre grid for the guns as there was no control in the area. Regimental grid was established by sunshot for bearing and compass resection for fixation.

17. The survey was upgraded to theatre grid after Topo Survey had established third order control in the area.

18. After a week in the Fire Support Base, 106 Bty were deployed to another Fire Support Base at YS 7662. The guns were established on regimental grid by sunshot and compass resection.

19. Upon completion of the survey in the first FSB the Svy Sect Comd worked as a Duty Officer in Arty Tac Fwd, which had been dep with the forward TF HQ.



20. When the surveyors returned to NUI DAT after Operation KENMORE a comprehensive training programme was undertaken aimed at raising the standards of the new surveyors. This training was successfully completed but Operation SANTA FE showed that still more training is required, particularly on computations.

21. On 26 Oct theatre grid was provided for A Bty 2/35 Arty (US) who deployed on LUSCOMBE FIELD (YS436683) on 27 Oct.

22. On 27 Oct a regimental Fire Support Base was established at YS 5476 as part of the preliminary operation to OP SANTA FE. Theatre grid was provided by a traverse from a Topo Svy point at YS 507774 to 538778 and thence into the gun area.

#### OTHER ACTIVITIES

24. REPLACEMENTS. Lbdr MENZ and Cnr GREENAWAY arrived during the month and have settled in. Cnr K C LONG was RTA on compassionate grounds as his mother was very seriously ill.

25. WELFARE. a. The Rec Room now has a TV set obtained from Amenities and is anxiously awaiting the arrival of the darkroom equipment.

b. 10 persons went on R & R or R & C during the period, including Bdr ARCH to Australia.

c. Health was good throughout the month.

#### CONCLUSION.

26. Advantage was taken of the relatively quiet portion of the month to improve training and communications facilities around the area. Where possible this will continue, to allow a good standard to be reached by the arrival of the large batch of replacements in Nov/Dec.

...well, so October was quiet with the Radar blokes in air conditioning, a TV set in the Rec Room, the reporting of "theatre grids" – were we into positioning drive-in movies - and Warwick was getting excited about a "dark room" – how did he keep Bob King under control? Thankfully the lack of VD cases mentioned in September didn't get another guernsey!

## . Going Home / Getting Out...

This is a new segment originated by Ed as to your final days either in SVN, Holsworthy or whatever...

.**Browning, Kevin** – "Paul, it wasn't only the coming home that reeks of unpopularity but also going over. My first trip saw us leaving mascot airport later in the evening, too late for the protestors. I went over on my first trip with 8 other blokes from 131 and came home with one who had arrived a week later than me. I stayed in Sydney and he caught a connecting flight to Brisbane. Of course it was late at night as well.

Second tour I left with the US R&R Troops around midday. I was an emergency replacement so obviously not enough Aussies to fill a plane by themselves.

My first return home was by Qantas. No female hosties and once on board and airborne we each received a can of beer, the worst beer one can imagine. Do not think anyone drank it all. It was given to us by the male steward who walked up the aisle and asked who wanted a beer. He was as 'bent' as one can imagine so it was a real welcome back to the real world. My main recollection upon arriving at Mascot and clearing customs was to walk through the doors to the welcoming crowd and the smell of perfume was overpowering. Oh of course it was late at night.

Went to the beach and can remember the tan legs with very white boot high white feet, white stomach and dark arms and face.

Second tour return was on HMAS Sydney and we marched through Sydney then dispersed with our families. The crowd all seemed to be friendly.

Regards Kevin"

## . 131 Locators Association Inc...





. **25<sup>th</sup> Oct** – A design for the Association's lapel badge was sent out to the Members (financial as at 25/10) for their comment. The design and comments will be published in the November edition of the Eyes & Ears.

**Ed** - We've had some positive feedback on the design – thanks.

...the **Locators Association** welcomes more new members as at 25<sup>th</sup> October –

**Members** – Allan Adams; Nick Armstrong; Geoff Blackwell; Warwick Brooker; Terry Erbs; Kevin Farrar; Tim Ford; Wayne Jeffery; Iain Kennedy; Peter Meaney; Lionel Outen; Peter Pioro; Graham Williams; Robert Wilson and Ken Woodbine.

**Affiliates** – Craig Cook; Ian Finlay and Peter Ravelje

And again we thank the members that contributed extra in the way of donations.

It keeps making an old Locator very proud to be a part of this continuing exercise.

. **Birthdays in the Battery**...October was a trifecta month – 5 sets of triplets – was the battery interested in some sort of genetic modifying programme??

At least **Ian Brignell** had the crib to himself on the 1<sup>st</sup>, and then the mayhem started with Terry Bruce, **Peter Teather** and **Leslie Robinson** craming in on 2<sup>nd</sup> though Les came 4 years later in '49, Leigh Hemming started another rush of blood along with Mike Luff and David Lahore on the 4<sup>th</sup>, James Merchant made the 5<sup>th</sup> his, then Charles Brewer appeared on the 8<sup>th</sup> and **Brian Smythe** grabbed the 9<sup>th</sup>, then Paul Dickson became an official retiree on the 10<sup>th</sup> (this year) and the third lot of triplets sharing the day with **Brian Kennedy** and the late and much liked Barry Bonser (10.10.41-03.09.98), the late Paul Jones has the 11<sup>th</sup> (11.10.46-09.09.68), **Alan Cleasby** on 12<sup>th</sup> made his SVN debut in '68-'69, then went back to clean up for 5 months in '72, the next trifecta on 14<sup>th</sup> comprised of **Tony Dodds**, **Norman Lindroos** and **Peter McGann**, **Bill Thomas** holds the 16<sup>th</sup>, **Torin White** made his entry on 17<sup>th</sup>, the late Helmut Lempa was the sole entry on the 18<sup>th</sup>, Ian Finlay claims the 19<sup>th</sup>, Ian Board thought Monday was as good as any and made it on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, **John Vitkovsky** (pay book decorator fame) and **Norman Bullen** got their act together on 23<sup>rd</sup> though John was a year late in '45, Michael Delaney crept in on 25<sup>th</sup> before the one off quadrella of the late Michael Bohl, the larger than life David Doyle, **Ian Murley** and **Paul Tys**, the 29<sup>th</sup> had the pairing of **James Ritchie** and Peter Larkin and rounding off the month was **Graham O'Toole** on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

**Ed** - We're still looking for the 17 blokes highlighted.

. **Locator Profiles** – we've received **47** and we've sent out **42** – receiving pictures to attach to the Profiles is the stumbling block!

**Peter Pioro**, from Townsville, sent a memory after reading **John Browne's** Locator Profile – “Paul, I served with Browne also in Holsworthy and SVN 69/70 *Regards, Peter Pioro*”

. **Found...**

. **Bill Edward responded** to an email with – “Hi Paul sorry to take so long. I would like to receive your emails (newsletters) I was with radar Feb 69 to Feb 70 with Zek and Lofty. Cheers Bill.”

. **Peter Meaney sent** the following in – “Paul, recently I received an e-mail from Nev Smith (12th Intake Det 131 div loc-SVN 69/70) with EYES&EARS newsletter as an attachment. I noted with interest a photo of Peter Ravelje (13th intake Det 131 div loc-SVN 69/70) taken with Gen Peter Cosgrove.

Had not seen or heard from Ravelje (Rumbleguts) since 1979 when my wife & I were returning home from a trip to Fiji on a Qantas Flight & Rumbleguts was our drinks steward. Anyway looked him up in white pages & spoke with him last night. The reason for this e-mail is to ask if you would include us on your list of newsletter recipients.

My name is Peter Meaney (12th intake Det 131 div loc-SVN 69/70)-thanks and hope to meet you one day”

**Jim Fitzgerald put** us in touch with **Keith Holloway** (one of the Pioneers) – “Paul, as promised here is the email address for Keith Holloway – Jim FitzGerald”

. **Vale -**

. **A Memorial to Chris Armshaw...**



**Armshaw, Christopher**  
Gnr 2781291 Survey  
131 Divisional Locating Battery RAA  
SVN 1966 – 1967  
09.02.45 – 10.02.70

**May he rest in peace**



**Ed** – the following was compiled by some of Chris's mates who knew him well...

**Dave Crowther starts** the story with a hunch email to Jenny Davidson, Secretary of Coober Pedy Historical Society "Jenny.

Thank you very, very much. It would be greatly appreciated if you could send a copy of his grave. I will forward on to the unit historian (to circulate in our newsletter) and we can put another veteran to rest from his mates in Vietnam. Yours thankfully Dave Crowther"

**...who very kindly replied with the following...**

**"From:** Jenny Davison **Sent:** Monday, August 30, 2010 9:14 PM

**Subject:** Re: Chris Armshaw

Dear William,

I must apologize for my slow response to your letter. Not clearing the Historical Society mail box on a regular basis, I only received your letter on Sunday.

On reading your letter, the name Armshaw meant nothing to me, but then I recalled the death of a young man named Chris in 1970 when he was actually drilling on the adjoining claim to that which my husband and I were working at the time. I also recalled seeing his grave in the Old Coober Pedy Cemetery.

So this afternoon, I visited the Cemetery and sure enough, it is the grave of your Chris Armshaw.

The headstone reads as follows:

In Loving Memory of Chris Armshaw

9/2/1945 -10/2/1970

Loved Husband of Vicki

Son of Marie and Bill

My husband recalled that a friend of ours, John Dunstan, mentioned at some time that he had dug Chris' grave, so I spoke to him this afternoon to see what he remembered.

John said that Chris was working with a drilling crew, drilling shafts at night because it was a very hot summer. Apparently Chris had to go to the toilet, walked away into the darkness and fell down a shaft that they had recently drilled. It being a bigger than normal shaft, there was no hope of survival - a tragic death.

John was a friend of the drilling crew and remembered Chris as a well liked person, in Coober Pedy to try his luck with opal. Apparently at the time of Chris' death, either his wife or parents were overseas, so there was quite a delay before the funeral could take place. John had indeed dug the grave.

Ironically, my husband and I were also working that night on an adjoining claim. We were both down below at the time when one of the partners called down our shaft asking whether Chris was with us. Sadly, he wasn't. When we left to go home the partners thought or hoped that he had walked back to town. He was only found later that morning.

If you would like a photo of the headstone, I can email it to you. Otherwise I think that is all the information that I can give.

Yours sincerely,

Jenny Davison Secretary Coober Pedy Historical Society"



**Ed** – after the emails from Dave Crowther above I followed up with a general email out to the **"Pioneer"** group...

"Dave Crowther has managed to find some really interesting things about Chris and Coober Pedy which I'm going to run with in this month's E&E's - has anyone got any photos or yarns about/with Chris in that I can add to it?

I look forward to hearing from you."

**...which got this from Brian Killworth...**"Hi Dicko, John Roberts (Robbo) is the man to talk to about this. He was, I believe in the process of setting up a partner relationship with Chris for the sale of the Coober Pedy gems, when Chris fell to his death down a mining shaft.

I was living in London at the time and Ken Whittle (surveyor) sent me a newspaper feature article about Chris; how after Vietnam he headed to Coober Pedy looking to make his fortune, made a major find, and celebrated that night with a few too many drinks and "accidentally" fell down a mine shaft. I understand, (not flagged in the article) that the thoughts around Coober Pedy at the time were that there was some suspicion surrounding Chris's fall! Who would know?

Chris, like me, John Roberts, Ken Whittle, Jim Selwood and Asha Price (he stayed in Oz) were first intake nashos who upon completing the Survey course at North Head went immediately on disembarkation leave then to Vietnam. I flew out



of Richmond on 4th May 1966, my 21st birthday and hooked up with the advance party from the Sydney who arrived 2 days before. Crazy times!! Cheers, Brian (Killa)”

...so Ed again sent this off to John Roberts – “Beau, Had to forward this on from Killa. Can you enlighten us with anymore? Paul”

...it prompted this response from John Roberts...and it just adds to the intrigue and so well written by Beau in his usual fashion...

“Dicko,

I can fill you in with info on Chris Armshaw. As Killa said in his note, I had a lot of involvement with him. As you may be aware, Chris was injured by a Land Rover backing into him in Vietnam damaging a knee for which he was sent back to Oz after only a couple of months. As all of 131 was away there was little for him to do and he hung around North Head, I think he was made a sort of "acting Sergeant" because they didn't know what else to do with him. During that time he married his girlfriend but was obviously restless and became very interested in opal mining at Coober Pedy. When discharged he set off to find fame and fortune there. In 1968 I entered into a junior partnership in an Esso service station in North Balwyn in Melbourne and as I had stayed in touch with Chris he used to visit and stay with me regularly because Melbourne was the place to get the best prices for opal. On one of his trips back to Coober Pedy he came upon an older fellow who had been trapped under his Ute after trying to replace a flat tyre. The guy was most grateful to Chris for rescuing him and stayed in touch with him as he was wandering around that area. He turned out to be the original Mr. Siddons the owner and founder of Sydchrome Tools.

Their friendship culminated in Siddons becoming very interested in mining opal at Coober Pedy and noted that digging or using explosives to make shafts was very difficult and time consuming. He offered to have a drilling rig built which could do it in just hours. The deal was that Chris would operate the rig and drill holes for people on the basis of sharing the profits. During the couple of months it took to construct the rig, Chris stayed with me and we regularly discussed how this would work.

When the rig was completed Chris took it to Coober Pedy to see how successful it would be. To assist in running the rig he had 2 other guys from the area assisting him and when they had some experience he came back to Melbourne to convince me that the two of us could run it and make plenty, so I dissolved my partnership and prepared to go there. In the meantime Chris went back and continued running it.

Just when I had everything in place and was about to head off I got the call from his parents that he had been killed. The official story is that he had been celebrating and fell down one of the shafts. I know him better than that and can assure you that it couldn't have happened that way. It became very messy. His wife and her father and Chris's parents went out there and were told there was nothing of his anywhere. I know that he had plenty of opal there at the time. I tried in vain to contact Siddons but his company wouldn't respond. I was left high and dry and my mate was dead. The coroner eventually returned a "death by misadventure" verdict.

So that was that, however whilst doing business in Adelaide many years later I was taken to an Italian restaurant and introduced to the owners who were very proud of the fact that they had spent many years in Coober Pedy. Without giving any details I brought up the subject in a roundabout way of Chris's death and without batting an eyelid, one of them just said "Oh yeah, that was the ....'s they did all that sort of thing up there." Not very comforting but reinforcing my feeling that he would never have fallen down one of his own shafts.

I visited his parents in Sydney shortly after his death and they were devastated. They were English migrants who came here for a better life for their son. I haven't had further contact. I hope this fills in some details for you.

Regards, Beau (Robbo) Roberts”

Ed – thanks fellas- that story is just so fascinating.

### In October we remember...

Name	Rank	Regt No	Sect	SVN	DoB	DoD
Prenter, William Douglas	L/Col	64258	HQ	1966-67	23.06.33	01.10.97

May he rest in peace

. **Not before time Ed!** – finally we've gotten around to getting connected to the Artillery Surveyors 131 Div Loc Bty and ask that members take the time to have a look at their website via the link below...it's fantastic and very enlightening...

## ARTILLERY SURVEYORS 131 DIV LOC BTY



*“Elements of 131 came wandering in from the bush”*

(A quote whose origins are lost, yet the sentiments expressed will not be lost on many who served with 131 Div Loc Bty SVN.)

We were part of a unique, multi-faceted, multi-tasked detachment of the Royal Australian Artillery. It comprised an LP Artillery Intelligence section, a Radar section and a section of Artillery Surveyors. The Battery was both diverse in skills and widespread in locale. This very nature is perhaps reason for its limited acknowledgement. Nevertheless within its wide parameters, each trade entity contributed to the conduct of operations and intelligence, vital to the defence of the Australian Taskforce based at Nui Dat, South Vietnam.

Very little has been documented about the Survey Section and hence the ordinary surveyor. This account is taken from the yet untold, rich and varied contributions made by surveyors of 131 Div Loc Bty, in an unbroken sequence of service in SVN from 1966 to 1971.

The pages herein originally chronicled the experiences of those who were the 2nd replacement surveyors who arrived in early May 1967. There were 3 "old hands" who linked with the '66 "originals". They were: Gnr B Follington Dec 66, Gnr S Boutlis Jan '67 and Gnr P Endicott Jan '67. The '67 May contingent comprised: Lt I Yerbury, Bdr P Hopper, Bdr M Poustie, L/Bdr B Irvine, Gnr K Long, Gnr J McFadden, Gnr K McNamara, Gnr W Brooker, Gnr R Evans, Gnr R Webb, Gnr T Bruce and Gnr G Green. Gnr P Fuhrmann joined us on the 20th June. In September Gnr G Holden, Gnr K Woodbine, Gnr N Armstrong joined us and in October/November Gnr J Greenway, L/Bdr J Menz and L/Bdr M Van Driel were new replacements to the surveyor's ranks.



## NEW SITE OBJECTIVE

This website seeks to make contact with the Artillery Surveyors of 131 Div Loc Bty. We welcome your relevant contributions of photos, insights and observances so we might endeavour to expand 131 Artillery Surveying Vietnam record, beyond this window.

Please use the [contacts page](#) for details: <http://www.artillerysurveyors131.com.au/>

## . Locating Artillery Assoc...notes taken from their website –

. The next Committee Meeting will be at Paddington RSL on Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2010 commencing at 12.00 noon. Members are cordially invited to attend. More details of scheduled Committee meetings will be available in the next issue of the *Associations* Newsletter LOCREP.

. Work parties at the RAA National Museum are normally held on the last Sunday of each month. Work parties commence at 1000 hrs sharp in the Locating Hangar and conclude with an *Association*-funded BBQ at 1400 hrs at the North Fort Mess.

Scheduled work party dates 31 October 2010.

.The Annual Reunion and BBQ be held at the North Fort Artillery Museum on 5 December 2010 at 12.00noon. Further details will be available in the next issue of the *Associations* Newsletter LOCREP.

## . 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 1/8rd who did not return. We will never forget their sacrifice. Website: [http://83rd\\_artillery.home.comcast.net/~83rd\\_artillery/](http://83rd_artillery.home.comcast.net/~83rd_artillery/)

. **The following is** a response from **Bill Taggart** to the 1/83<sup>rd</sup> being offered an Associate membership to our Association – "Grahame,

I am attaching the completed Membership Application Form for the 131 Locators Association at the invitation of Paul Dickson. If I have left out anything else you need, please let me know.

I wanted to mention a couple of points on the 1/83rd. While my group consists of the men of the 1/83rd who served in Vietnam from 1966-1971, the history of the unit goes back to at least 1920. The unit over that time apparently was deactivated and reactivated perhaps several times. We really do not have a definitive history and time-line.

Regarding the 1/83 in Vietnam, while our HQ, Service and "A" Batteries were at Nui Dat in 1966-1968, our "B" Battery was at Bear Cat, and "C" Battery was at Xuan Loc in that time period. In early 1968 after TET, the entire Battalion moved up north to the I Corp area of Operations where it remained until the unit was again deactivated in May of 1971. I do know that the 1/83 reappeared in Germany later in the 70's but have no knowledge of any activity since then.

Finally, I want to thank Paul and your organization for inviting the 1/83rd to be an Associate member with me as Proxy. The debt that we owe to our Aussie mates will never be forgotten by myself and the other members of the 1/83rd who were privileged to know you and your mates.

Regards,  
Bill Taggart"

**Ed** – As I said to Bill in my response to the above was that his last sentence "bought a lump to my throat", but we totally reciprocated his sentiments.



Bill sent this in...



"This email is directed to our Aussie members. One of our guys from 66-67 is trying to locate an Aussie named "Biff" that he knew. He was at Nui Dat but that is all that was supplied to me other than the picture at left - "Biff" is on the left and I was wondering if any of you recognize him. The guy on the right is our Mike Ragone and the request



was made by Winfred Langley (who also is a friend of Mike's). Both of these guys were in our Radio/Commo group and are part of our email group.

If I get any more info I will pass it along. "Biff" is in the middle in the photo on the right too.

Thanks,  
Bill"

...and Bill continues...- "Hi Paul, well I just read the latest E&E Newsletter. First of all, thanks for the material on the 1/83<sup>rd</sup> - that was very nice of you. It is great that you are able to put together so much material each month. I wish we could get something like that going for the 1/83<sup>rd</sup>.

Also, I really enjoyed the account that Peter Summers wrote about the origins of the Banner and the Association. I found it very interesting and enjoyable. A lot of effort was put into getting your group organized.

One thing reading this brought to mind. I had the opportunity on a few occasions to fly into Luscombe Field at Nui Dat in 1966-67, usually aboard a C123 or C130 transport plane. I still remember the first time. The pilot was cruising along and then at the very last minute dropped down into a dive and landed. It scared the heck (and more!!) out of me and the other rookies. The plane crews of course thought this was pretty funny. It seemed from above that Luscombe was carved out of a relatively small area that did not allow for a long, slow approach. It probably would not have been a very safe or smart thing to do even if you could. On my future flights, as a now experienced passenger, I got a kick out of watching the faces of the first timers. It was exactly how my face must have appeared on my maiden voyage. They were some of the most exciting landings I have ever had, before or since.

Maybe some of your mates had a similar experience, so I thought I would share it with you. Bill"

...Ed sent Bill a copy of the Long Tan Special...

"I recently received and added a new "Special" edition of the Eyes & Ears Newsletter. It is devoted to events surrounding the major battle that the Aussies fought (and won) against the North Vietnamese army at Long Tan in August 1966. This battle has particular significance to the 1/83<sup>rd</sup>, especially those of us at Nui Dat in 66-68, as this battle helped secure our area for our arrival in Nov 1966 at Nui Dat.

This is another debt we owe to our Aussie mates.

[http://home.comcast.net/~83rd\\_artillery/Websites\\_of\\_Interest/Eyes\\_and\\_Ears.htm](http://home.comcast.net/~83rd_artillery/Websites_of_Interest/Eyes_and_Ears.htm)

Bill"

...then bill forwarded a query from one of his mates, Dan O'Brien...

"Paul, one of our guys from 69-70, Dan O'Brien (and someone who in all seriousness really helps out our Veterans) sent me the email below and I thought you would get a kick out of it. Maybe something for E&E?

Dan was not at Nui Dat but like many of us, appreciates what the Aussie's did (and do). Bill...Dan wrote...

"The only time I saw Aussies in Vietnam, I was driving to Danang from Camp Eagle in a three quarter and there was a waterfall right there on Route One with about 8 naked men and women taking a natural shower. We pulled over to say Hi and get a better look and it was an Aussie Band that may have been with the USO.

He added the following footnote...

And find where the chicks are today. It was November 1969.

Ed replied..."Bill,

We'll give that a run in October's E&E's and see if there is a response?

It's a shame Dan didn't get any photos. I wonder if he remembers what they may have been singing as that might help to identify them?? Thanks Paul"

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

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