

THE EYES and EARS

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The Battles of Coral/Balmoral in South Vietnam, 1968

2019 - 53 YEARS AND THE DETACHMENT 131 SPIRIT LIVES ON 1966 - 1971



**"Pioneers" – their initial "Home"
in Vung Tau**

Artillery Camp, Vung Tau - May, 1966

As mentioned in last month's *Eyes & Ears*, here is a follow-up taken from diary notes maintained by Jim Fitzgerald. It is an interesting, more like amazing, reflection of a time not just foreign to Jim, but all of those who were a part of it.

Let's begin with Jim's personal account...

VIETNAM – May 1966

May 4 was a day of preparation for departure to Vietnam. After we had packed our kit bags and trunks, we retired to the Mess to partake of a few Australian "cold ones" before we left. We went by army truck to Richmond Air Force Base to fly out by Qantas jet. As we would not be allowed to buy drink we packed cans in our packs, and even though they would not be cold, we felt a few on the plane trip would help deter the possibility of travel sickness.

We left at about 11pm and had a stop at Townsville to refuel at about 2.30am and then at 8.00pm (Manila time) we stopped at Clark Air Force Base in Manila. We had to leave the plane while it was refuelled.

They put us in a bar at the Base. At one point a plane landed, full of civilians, so we decided to venture out onto the tarmac when suddenly some rather officious soldiers with rather officious weapons suggested that we return to the cool of the bar.

We arrived at Ton Son Nhut airport (Saigon) at about 11.30am local time and we were disembarked on the tarmac to wait for transport to Vung Tau. While we waited, we watched as some American GI's were loading metal coffins to be flown back to the United States. I pulled out my camera to record the event but some American Military Police suggested that it was not a good idea! After a half hour, our Caribou transport arrived to take us to Vung Tau. When we first came off the plane from Sydney we were hit by a blast of hot air, a definite indication of what our future – weather wise – would be!

After arriving at Vung Tau airport we were transported to a paddock next to the Vietnamese Police Academy, the site of our camp. The rest of the Task Force was camped near the Beach, but being Artillery with 105mm guns, we had to have solid ground. We spent the first couple of days setting up our camp. The weather was both very steamy and hot or downpours of monsoonal rain which would last between one and two hours. The rain usually came about 2pm every day. We would use the rain to wash ourselves but this relief was soon short lived once the oppressive heat set in again. Our meals at this stage were C ration packs. The packs consisted of three tins of main course such as steak and eggs, chicken, stew and a sweet tin (some sort of cream biscuit). As well it had a pack of three cigarettes! After a while three of us would each contribute a tin and put them altogether and make a sort of stew.

We would do guard duty at the entrance and at the stockpile of artillery shells and other ammunition, etc. I remember the first time I was on duty guarding the shell stockpile, it was early on, and actually I think it was the first day we were there. I was given a ration pack and told to do guard duty. I remember looking through the fence and seeing kids going past on bikes, this brought back memories of articles in recent newspapers about kids on bikes with bombs. My feeling of being a hero soldier disappeared to be replaced by a cowardly wreck!

Went into Vung Tau on **May 9** for a haircut costing 30 piastas or 30 cents. They tried to charge us an extra 50 p for the lotion used on our heads. We refused of course and as with other vendors the Australian reputation as "Cheap Charlies" started. The Yanks would pay whatever was asked! Returned to camp and did the usual guard duty. Continued to use the monsoon rains as relief from the heat.

We spent the time getting acclimatized and starting to learn further about surveying. Also, were involved in other tasks such as helping unload a plane at Saigon, which was bringing troops from Australia. Blokes from 101 Battery, who were about to return to Australia, showed us around Vung Tau. They had been based at Ben Hoa with 1st Battalion.

On **May 11**, the Gunners beat the Officers and NCO's two games to one at volleyball. We went swimming at Back Beach on **May 13** and also played some more volleyball.

On May 16, we had a BBQ finally with some Australian beer and the whole thing cost us \$1. The American meat was not as good as ours! At this stage, we are either eating ration packs or else food from the Yanks. I did another stint on guard duty and it rained from 7pm to 6am non-stop.

Vung Tau was a smelly dive with bars everywhere and kids everywhere trying to rip you off. Went into Vung Tau on leave and experienced this so-called "resort" first hand. Everywhere you went people pestered you especially for cigarettes. As mentioned earlier we were living up to our name "No 10 Cheap Charlie Uc Da Loi" (Australian)!

On **May 19**, it was Ho Chi Minh's birthday and we all sang "Happy Birthday" at breakfast. Security was increased in case the "noggies" decided to celebrate as well. As extra security, we would now stand-to every evening in our weapon pits for about an hour. The pit I was in was a perimeter pit. We were looking forward to the rest of the Unit arriving on **May 22** to take on some of our workload.

We were finding the local culture very amusing! As well as seeing dogs hanging in shops for food we were fascinated by their toilet procedures – either in the open in their backyards, which I suppose is not too bad, but you saw them using the side of the road and it leaves nothing to the imagination! I have now learned why the black pyjama clothing is so loose, so that they can pull up one trouser leg to allow for easier use.

Learned that our mail was going via San Francisco, thus explaining the delays both ways. This certainly lifted morale! We still have no place to eat our meals other than our own tents.

The rest of the Unit arrived on **May 22** and looked as we must have looked three weeks prior!

Finally got a night's leave in Vung Tau. A group of us went to one of the bars and stared at these rather large Negroes who seemed to grab the attention of all in the bar with their antics. The night was spent wandering around

just looking and visiting bars for a drink. We have been told not to drink water or include it in any drinks and only to get beer or coke if the bottle had not been opened. The safest drink seemed to be scotch and coke, with no ice! The evening finished on a high. We decided to souvenir some large flowerpots from an area in the Centre of Vung Tau where there was a very large board with the flags of all the nations helping South Vietnam. Well it appeared that these pots were of very special significance and as we were sitting in the land rover with the pots aboard, waiting to return to camp, we heard two loud whistles and turned to see two "white mice" (local police in white uniforms) pointing pistols at us. Standing behind them were a couple of MPs with big smiles on their faces who explained that we would not hear the third whistle if we did not return the pots and to make sure we did not break them! We achieved the task without further drama, only breaking one. Back at camp the next day we were told that we would not be allowed out of the camp for at least three weeks. We had thought that the pots would lift the look of our camp. Every time we went to Vung Tau over the next twelve months the pots were never in evidence.

On **May 24**, I was selected in an Artillery team to play against the Yanks at volleyball and we beat them by two games to one (15-10, 10-15, 15-10). We then had a soccer game against the Vietnamese police academy and were beaten 5-2. I was given a shirt with No. 0 on it. The local crowd seemed to think that the number matched my talent. Anyway, it was my first international soccer match.

Kept hearing "good news" such as all our letters we had sent home had been lost. We certainly felt that as an advance party we were there so that we could experience all that could go wrong!

As the month drew to a close we moved out of the smaller tents into a marquee so that the camp could be packed up for our move to Nui Dat.

By the end of the month I had lost so much weight that my pants kept falling down without a belt. Although we did have one special meal on **May 17** – a cooked half chicken each – apparently some General or other paid us a visit. Initial guard duty had been patrolling the perimeter but by the end of the month we had constructed "pill boxes" out of sand bags. Up-market technology!

By the end of May, I had a very dark suntan as we were in the open all the time. If I remember correctly I never got sunburn pain.

When it became obvious that we would be moving up to Nui Dat and there would be no creature comforts, there was a rush to stock up on cigarettes. My luck being as it was, all that was left when I got to the sale were menthols – it was not the best choice but beggars cannot be choosers! We had no idea what lay ahead; as we were to find out that the Army was very reluctant to keep us up with what was happening. We had no idea when the move would happen.



Artillery Camp Vung Tau



Self in tent at Vung Tau



Underground Cooler



Vic Moreau



Bar in Vung Tau



Vung Tau Beach



Shoeshine Boy, Vung Tau

VIETNAM – June 1966

We started the month doing mess duty at the Vung Tau camp, as no telling when we were moving so all usual camp duties were being done. We were issued with ration packs to sustain us and finally we were ready to move by the **8 June 1966,**

We were originally told we were going to Moi Duc in Phuoc Tuy Province in the middle of a rubber plantation – Nui Dat is the hill in the middle of the rubber plantation. We were transported by chopper from our camp in Vung Tau to Nui Dat (I will call it that) in either gunships or Chinooks (larger choppers). The larger choppers transported the 105mm guns underneath. As we came into the new area all you could see was rubber trees – my photos will show this. Very little light initially came through the canopy. We were paired and made up two-man tents (hutchies). Each man had an all-weather cape which, when joined together with the studs on the cape, formed a two-man tent. Rope holes allowed these to be attached to trees. At this stage I shared the tent with Jim Sellwood, a Queenslander. We had to be careful of any water from the rubber trees as they were treated with arsenic.

One of the first facilities constructed was the latrine. As it was so dark at night a rope ran from the latrine to each tent. Everyone was so jumpy in the early days you could have been shot if you wandered off in the dark! At this time, the story floating around was that our side had killed eight of the first ten of those killed. The Army was paranoid about hygiene and each unit had a hygiene officer. You were not allowed to urinate anywhere other than the latrine! Later on, there were 'piss-o-phones' spread around our area, a piss-o-phone was a shell cylinder dug into the ground over a hole full of rocks and stones to dissipate the liquid. You must remember this was a strictly male only camp. I presume that any female visitors used Officer facilities. There were nurses in Vietnam but they were based for the most part at the hospital in Vung Tau.

We were the Task Force advance party, there to construct the Task Force camp. The workload had us working some days up to 20 hours. The weapon pits in front of each tent were four and a half feet deep. We would stand-to each evening at 7 pm and each morning at 5.30am for an hour. Stand-to means spending the hour in the weapon pit on alert. Each day we would do two shifts of two-hour piquet's. As well as helping to prepare the camp survey section we supplied personnel to radar section and I did two weeks helping out there. During this period, we did some standing patrols – going out overnight to hide and observe any activity in the area. We also started doing clearing patrols during stand-to period. Clearing patrols involved six or so going out and patrolling the immediate area in front of our area and obviously clearing any baddies that may have been in the vicinity. I was lucky that whilst on patrol I never met anyone other than farmers, who happened to be in the wrong place. During the month, we finally had a kitchen but no Mess Building, so that we had to eat in our tents. Whilst finally off rations it did mean mess duty – something that haunted me all my army life!

On **June 16**, we had a Monsoon storm that started at 5pm and in an hour, we had six inches of rain. The water came so quickly that it was knee deep before we knew it. We grabbed sandbags to divert the water from our rather flimsy tents but it came within inches of my bed and gear, with one boot/two thongs/and two boot polishing brushes floating away. I was able to rescue all but one brush before it disappeared. Half the blokes were not so lucky and had to spend the night sleeping upright in the kitchen!

On **June 20**, I tried to drive a land rover but nearly succeeded in writing both it and one radar set off in the process. As you can imagine, I was not asked again to drive anything but nails! However, life certainly brightened up when I received a beautiful fruitcake from home together with one of Di's poems (copy below). I had to beat everyone else off to make sure I at least had a taste of Di's Cake!

On **June 22**, we had our first Show from home and it was performed on the back of a truck. The Show featured Dig Richards, Dinah Lee and Margaret Wood (from Radio Australia) as well as an aged Hula dancer – it really went over well! Whilst it was not a theatre, the fact that we had this taste of home was just what we needed.

On **June 25**, I built a recess around the shower bag that hung from a tree, which included a wooden floor and a rack to hang your clothes as well as a rack for your towel and soap. It certainly improved the area and our daily afternoon showers.

On **June 26**, I was volunteered to go shotgun on a convoy to and back from Vung Tau. All this month, because Survey was not needed for our tasks, we were volunteered for extra piquet duty, mess duty, sand bag filling, helping out the Radar section, both standing and clearing patrols and of course the favourite task in the Army – "bobbing for

emus". For example, on **June 28** I did mess duty from 7am to 7pm and went on piquet at 7.15pm. I forgot to mention the digging of anything from weapon pits to latrines.

Apart from receiving the most welcome cake from home generally the mail had become a nightmare with letters up to at least eight days late and we had thought four days whilst at Vung Tau was bad enough! Some of our blokes had parcels arriving many days late. As you can imagine the effect of problems with the mail was a downer on morale as it was hard enough to feel good.

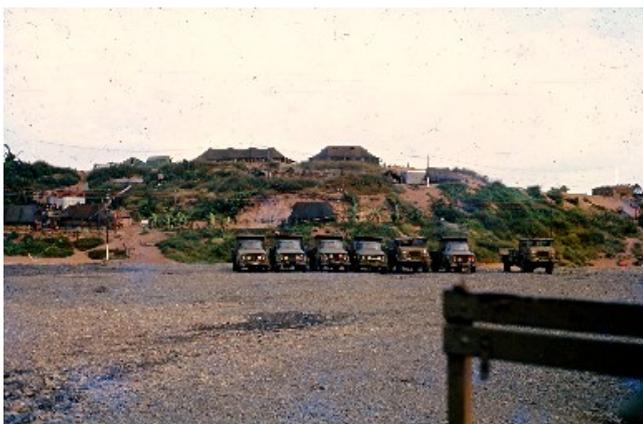
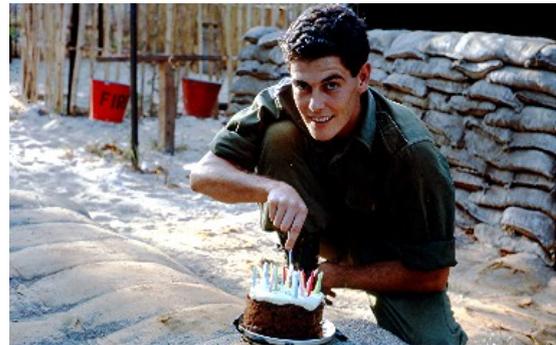
In June was also the first time that I was charged. Lt. Sadler, our marvellous leader, decided to have a rifle inspection. It was obvious he wanted to charge someone to impress us with his power. Well I was the last in the back row and the closer he got to me I knew I was the one. I received seven days CB (confinement to Barracks) that meant no leave and as there was not any at this time, I had to report to Sgt. Norm Bullen – our Section Sergeant at that stage. As the camp had not really been completed Sgt. Bullen had me report each day at 4.30pm and build a garden around his tent. I am afraid the garden did not prosper, but then it was the only job I could do that I was not already doing!

TRUE CONFESSIONS: - Di Colman

A couple of oldish men at work
thought my duty I should not shirk;
Said that soldiers in the last world war home-made fruit cake did adore.

So, on the Friday, 10th June
I bought the rum and fruit and prunes,
That night about midnight I soaked the fruit in rum with the aid of Mum. Nice and early the very next day
the other ingredients I gathered to the fray.

With my little wooden spoon
I mixed and Mixed while singing a tune.
Mum, Steve, Therese, Mare and Dad
all had a stir and said "Not Bad!".
The mixture was put in a soldier's tin
and banged on the floor to level it in,
but I got too gay
and the cake and tin nearly went astray.
My poor cake went into the oven to rest
while yours truly started to clean up the mess.
Three long hours and a half went by
and the smell of the rum was lovely and high.
The oven door was opened wide
and my cake was slipped from inside.
We sprinkled the top with rum
and the fruit inside began to sizzle and hum.
The finished product was proudly displayed
in the kitchen where the family were arrayed.
We wrapped it up in the 'Catholic Weekly'
and the cake subjected really quite meekly.
Then it was put away for the night
so, the flavour would keep just right.
Now it is sewn up ready to post
to my Jimmie, who I think is the most!!!
If it gets through the mail alright
hope you and your mates all get a bite.

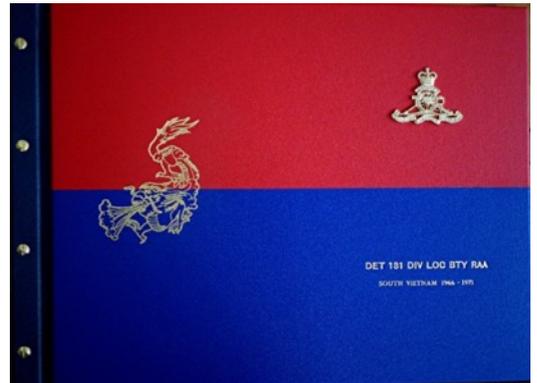


The rest of the 1ATF beachside Vung Tau

. The “Lost Locator Project”

Ed – The Project continues on relentlessly so, we need to be vigilant and keep our minds active as who knows who, where and how we might stumble on, discover someone etc be it by accident but even more so by design. Paul
Get in touch via 131eyesandears@gmail.com

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



. Insights and Recollections...

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

“How did the Detachment change its activities over time in SVN?” SENSOR PROGRAMME
Keep an eye out for next month’s instalment.

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



. Here’s a continuing story in the series with regards to Locators’ “passions” ...

...Now let’s proceed onto a “Grey Nomad” section of this “Passion” section with an article from Graham Williams and his wife Jenni -

Hi Paul,

Just home after a month’s jaunt around Europe to find your e mail among a rather large number of other emails, most unwanted. Life goes on here and am about to welcome an incoming guest this Saturday. One of the mates who has been living in Vung Tau for some years now. Decided he needed a break...go figure?

Europe was as Europe is Paul...hordes of tourists most places you go, expensive, bla, bla, bla. Jenni and I started in Budapest doing tours to several cities before joining a river cruise there. (14 days Budapest to Amsterdam). The plan was to then visit several more cities after that but by that time we were both over Europe so did not bother and would have much preferred to be laying on a beach in Greece; Ouzo in hand. While we both enjoyed the trip, it would be safe to say I am not a cruise person. I do not like to be confined in a place where I cannot get out into the real world and do whatever I like and having a choice of going somewhere else if it rains etc. And, when you do get off the ship

to tour of course it is only for a limited time, very regimented and therefore rushed so one never gets the chance to wander off into the back alleys which is where the real life is.

Then of course there is my pet hate. The herd. Everywhere you go herds of people and tourists from other river ships aimlessly wandering around following paddles and flags. Even on the ship the herd mentality was big time. I could not get over the line up prior to the dining room opening for lunch or dinner. I mean you could go there anytime within 2 hours for your meal but the queue was for no other reason than to spend that whole 2 hours not so much eating but drinking as much FREE wine and beer one could shovel in in that time.

It is said you make friends for life on cruises. Not me mate. I found it nothing short of disgusting to watch some of these people in action and Jenni had a full-time job...she seems to have this sixth sense on when I am about to unload on somebody and cuts the problem off at the pass. We did spend some fun time at the ships bar as paying customers. Went back to our seventies days with the cocktails... "Brandy Alexanders" and the good old "Grasshoppers".

Having said all that, for those who enjoy cruising I would highly recommend this trip. We cruised on TravelMarvel Jewel. The ship itself was great, cruise director very knowledgeable and the entire crew nothing short of fabulous. Actually, made a couple of friends there. They work extremely hard in every facet of shipboard life. I even went as far as to ask Jenni if we could bring one or two home as a maid/kennel maid. Request sadly denied, but got to have a good chat with many of them. Most on contract from Eastern European countries. There were 176 passengers and 42 crew all up, passengers all Australian with 6 Kiwis. Food was sensational. There was the early riser's pastries and coffee, then full buffet breakfast at 7am, when I say full, even included vegemite and peanut butter. Then of course morning tea followed by a 4-course lunch (choice of 2 appetizers, then soup or an entrée, choice of 3 mains and finally choice of 2 desserts.) That of course was followed by afternoon tea and munchies, then dinner 4 course as per lunch. Oh, better not forget late night snacks. For me personally a total overdose so by the end of week one had settled with what worked best. Hearty breakfast and then either a 2 or 3 course dinner. Dessert just happens to be one of my many weaknesses.

With cruising, it is the luck of the draw I think. You can have good weather or bad weather so it depends on which as to whether you can stick to the itinerary. We had a little bit of everything except snow. As it had been raining heavily in the Swiss Alps the Danube was flowing very quickly through Budapest. With the high river levels, we were forced to miss Durnstein in Austria but were luckier than the same cruise that went before us. They were forced to bus over half the trip in different places and got pouring rain every day. Travel insurance does not cover that unfortunately.

What amazed us both was the sheer number of similar cruise boats on the river with most companies adding more this year or next. Then of course in the larger cities the tourist ferries to add to the mix. Watched them from the balcony of our hotel in Budapest amazed there were no accidents with the current so strong. Learnt a day after starting the cruise there had indeed been a bad accident in Budapest involving a tourist ferry and river ship with resultant loss of lives and a day after that another accident further up river. The Captains bridge on many of the ships works on hydraulics as do any other structures on the top deck. This enables the ships to pass under many of the low bridges along the river but in this case the Captain did not get his bridge down in time and has collided with the bridge resulting in 2 crew deaths. Inquiries still pending on both so it is not without its dangers. As far as cruising goes also for those who think they can lay back and relax on the top deck and watch the world go by it won't happen. Where possible while the ship is in a port, for much of the trip the top deck is a no go zone due to the sheer number of low bridges along the river and locks to be negotiated. There is something like 70 locks between Budapest and Amsterdam and the bridges. Lost count of them so it is only in some parts of the river one can hobnob on the top deck.

Will send a few photos next E mail. As for the places, we visited both loved Budapest. So much to see and do and time to get into the back streets so it was great. For some of the tours from the boat Jenni and myself went our different ways. We had 2 days in Vienna and while Jenni loved it the love for me was over on day one. Just fail to see the hype on the place. So, took myself to Bratislava in Slovakia for the next day. It is trying to become a regular tourist destination and not as busy as most other cities. Probably a reason I enjoyed myself there before returning to Vienna. The other thing you notice about Europe is how far they are ahead of us when it comes to renewable energy. Many of the locks on the river produce hydroelectricity, then there's miles of wind farms in different places, lots of electric vehicles and chargers for those vehicles all over.

Anyway, were lucky enough to have good weather cruising through the Wachau Valley in Austria. Great scenery, lots of castles and grapevines in some places as far as the eye can see plus quaint little towns around every bend. Next stop was Melk...still in Austria - did a tour of the Abbey there. Unbelievable and that was just the library but as expected too little time to check out the town although we hit ramming speed and got a good start to that. By that time had come to the conclusion I was going to enjoy the smaller towns a lot more than the larger cities. Just seem to have that X factor.

And so on to Passau in Germany. Quite a nice city and ended up having a night on the town there visiting places of historical interest like old taverns and inns. With an extra day to kill there we split up again with Jenni going to Salzburg in Austria and myself to Cesky Krumlow in the Czech Republic joining up later that night to compare notes. While Jenni totally enjoyed her time in Salzburg for me Cesky Krumlow was probably the place I enjoyed most on the entire trip. One very quaint and different town. Ha, could live there if it had a beach. Just totally laid back and relaxing unlike most of Europe.

Now into Bavaria were joined on the ship by the "Bavarian Devils" a song, dance and spoon playing troupe complete in lederhosen for the night's entertainment. A good night. Moving further into Germany came the town of Regensburg. Lots to see and do here but again time constraints applied and so onto Nuremberg. Not overly impressed here. On the

tour, they took us to the large area there where Adolph Hitler held his major rallies and Parades. It is occasionally used as a car racing track but on this occasion, being converted into a music festival site for an expected crowd of 100,000. Was like a tent city and Woodstock reincarnated so impossible to get the feeling of what the place used to be like.

So, mate we are into Bavaria. I shall pull the plug on this now and maybe send part 2 another time. It is happy hour and as Joe Losiak always says "time to take my medicine." Hope this finds all well at your end. Cheers for now, G.W."

We're going to continue with Graham's European wanderings with photos in August – stay tuned!

. Here's the next in the "Unknown" series...

Peter Binns sent in a series of photos from his time in Nui Dat (see later in **Mail Call**) – 1967 and this one has a "mysterious" member of the trio.



Peter put it this way - L/R ??unknown, Alan McDonald, and Peter Binns

Ok who's the "Unknown"?



. Man Stepping on the Moon – 50 years – 20th July, 1969...

Men Stepping on Landmines in South Vietnam – 50 years – 20th July, 1969...

We were doing something else that attracted our attention more.

Ian Finlay sent on the following items and pictures, which were sent to him from **Gordon Malcolm**, with regards to a tragedy that occurred on 20th July, 1969...

Wangi Wangi remembers a fallen soldier son.

JUST as millions of others were doing around the globe, **Norma Hines** was sitting before her television on July 21, 1969, watching history being created.

In her home in the Lake Macquarie village of Wangi Wangi, she waited to see a man walk on the moon. Only she was more than watching. The young wife was scribbling down everything she was seeing, every word broadcast, because that's what her husband, Peter, had asked her to do.

Lieutenant Peter Hines was half a world away, in South Vietnam, and in a war, leading a platoon of soldiers.

"I think it was amazing, man landing on the moon, but it was overshadowed for me," Norma Hines says.

About the same time astronaut Neil Armstrong was uttering those immortal words, "That's one small step for man ...", her husband took one fateful step.

On the moon, humankind took one giant leap. In the jungles of Vietnam, a husband, a father, a son, a brother, a friend was lost.

Lieutenant Peter Hines, the commander of 3 Platoon, "A" Company, 6th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, was mortally wounded when he stood on a landmine.

As Norma was later told, her husband had just been informed on the radio that man had walked on the moon. So, Lieutenant Hines was standing to share the news with his men.

"That's when he stepped on the mine," Mrs Hines recounts.

The explosion wounded 19 men. Among the casualties was a radio operator, Private Frank Hunt. In song, it would be "Frankie" who "kicked a mine the day that mankind kicked the moon". That's how the famous line from the Redgum anthem, I Was Only 19 (A Walk In the Light Green), records the moment. But it was Peter.

The official history noted that even as Lieutenant Hines was dying, he continued to calmly give instructions and encouraged his wounded men.

Peter Hines was only 27.

Norma Hines was informed the following morning that her husband had been killed. They had been high school sweethearts. They had married when she was 16, and he was 18. They had a son, Shane, who was eight when his Dad left for Vietnam. Peter's father was a local school teacher. Everyone in town loved Peter. And Peter loved Wangi. Even when he was in officer training in Victoria, he and his young family would drive home for long weekends, just to spend time by the lake.

So, on July 22, 1969, word spread quickly through the community that Wangi had lost a beloved son. When his body was returned home for the funeral service, every shop in town closed.

"Wangi was so supportive, they just rallied around," Norma Hines recalls. "Most didn't believe we should be in Vietnam - this was a Labor town - but that didn't make any difference."

What's more, there was a little boy to be cared for.

Shane Hines still has the photo of him with his parents, taken on the night, in May 1969, Peter Hines was flying out to Vietnam. And he has some of the letters his father wrote to him. In one, dated July 12 and what Shane believes to be the last from his father, Peter wrote, "Daddy goes bush again the day after tomorrow for another month" . He concluded the letter with, "Keep on looking after Mummy and give her a hug and kiss for Dad. Be good. All my love, Dad." The soldier also drew dozens of kisses, next to the words, "To Dad's little man" .

Dad's little man is now a 58-year-old grandfather.

"To me, he was always a hero," says Shane Hines.

"He believed in what he was doing."

To honour his father, Shane Hines and the Wangi Wangi RSL Sub-Branch have organised an anniversary service for Sunday at 11am. It will be held at the memorial outside the RSL Club, where a commemorative plaque for Peter glints in the sun. About 10 of Lieutenant Hines' men from his platoon are expected to attend, travelling from as far away as Adelaide and North Queensland. The service will begin with that Redgum song.

"I always go to my own place when I hear that song," says Norma Hines.

So, while the world gazes at the sky on Sunday, Wangi will look within. The gathering will honour a soldier, remember a much-loved local figure, and reflect on who - and what - a family and a community lost on July 21, 1969.

"He's part of the culture of Wangi," says Scott Munro, the president of the local RSL sub-branch. "When you lose someone like that, you lose that potential. All the knowledge he had, the respect, he could have contributed that to the community."

As Norma Hines says, "We lost a really good man."



Returning to Vietnam, five decades after landmine horror

OVER the thump of the helicopter, **Bill Wilcox** listened to the crackling radio as man took his first steps on the moon. It was July 21, 1969, a day that changed the world - and Bill's life

- forever.

Bill Wilcox was raised in the small town of Oberon in the Central Tablelands of NSW, a fitter and turner by trade, and a bit of a larrikin.

But his world changed the day his birth date turned up in the 'lottery', as they used to call it, for young men to be conscripted to Vietnam.

The year was 1968 and Mr Wilcox was 20 years old.

"I had mixed feelings about it," he said. "Poor old Mum didn't want me to go, but Dad was pretty good about it all. He had served in World War II, so I figured if it was good enough for Dad, it was good enough for me."

Mr Wilcox was to be an engineer in a reinforcement crew, which filled the spots of men who had been injured or killed. In April 1969, he boarded a plane at Mascot bound for Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City).

"That was a pretty hard day," he said. "It's just, you didn't know if you were coming back. Even poor old Dad was pretty upset then. All the other guys had family there too. You could see them all standing there together as we boarded the plane."

Mr Wilcox arrived in Nui Dat by Caribou plane, set to begin his job as a field engineer, in charge of checking villages, tunnels and bridges for mines. He would enter tunnels only large enough to fit a small adult, and crawl in, feeling his way along.

"All you had was a torch, a pistol and a bayonet. You had to be pretty careful," he said.

JULY 21, 1969

"We got word that the Third Platoon, A Company, 6th Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment had walked into a minefield and we had to go and rescue the soldiers and replace the engineers," he said.

Six in all, the men were winched in to the jungle.

"We found out that **Lieutenant Peter Hines** had accidentally stepped on a hidden mine," Mr Wilcox said.

Lieutenant Hines had used his dying breaths to instruct his men to do their mine drill. Mr Wilcox and his team then had the terrifying task of picking their way towards the wounded, while clearing a place for the helicopter to land.

"We found a marker on a tree with three prongs, which meant there were three mines," he said.

The men had already found one and safely destroyed it before the second hit them, leaving only one mine to find.

It was here that Mr Wilcox met **Frank Hunt** - or '**Frankie**' as he is called in **Redgum's** famous song, "**I Was Only 19**".

Frank Hunt had lost half of his blood and had two broken legs, but Mr Wilcox helped load him onto a stretcher and he was lifted out. It was this moment where a medical officer stepped onto the third mine.

"All I can remember was landing on the ground," Mr Wilcox said. "I don't even remember the sound. But it made one hell of a hole."

Mr Wilcox was flung 20 feet away and lay bleeding with 60 wounds to his left side. His hand and his knee were smashed.

"The funny part was I wasn't in any pain. I don't know if it was adrenaline," he said.

The helicopter was full, so Mr Wilcox was strapped to the skid, and he remembers seeing the trees as he was flown over the jungle. "I was thinking 'If I'm not dead now, I will be soon.'"

And it was a close call - he was read his Last Rites on the way and again in hospital.

When the news of the mine incident got out, it shared the front page of newspapers back home with the moon landing.

Mr Wilcox was in surgery for 18 hours.

"The first thing I remember hearing when I came to was 'One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind'. They were replaying the moon landing in the hospital," he said.

He spent six days in intensive care in a hospital at Vung Tau, before being sent to an Australian hospital. He couldn't walk for three months. But he still had six months of his deployment left and, despite his injuries, he insisted on finishing his service.



UNITED: Bill Wilcox and Frank 'Frankie' Hunt were reunited years after the deadly mine blasts they survived in Vietnam. This weekend marks 50 years since the explosions.

"United: Bill Wilcox and Frank "Frankie" Hunt were reunited years after the deadly mine blasts they survived in Vietnam. This weekend marks 50 years since the explosions"

DEDICATION

Today, as president of the Oberon RSL Sub Branch and the Blue Mountains RSL, **Mr Wilcox** has helped build a museum to honour those who have served in war. Among the collection is his most prized possession - the watch he was wearing the day he was hit. And that watch is about to make a very special journey.

In 2010 Mr Wilcox returned to Vietnam with his wife Sue to find the spot where he was injured.

"I always planned to come back for the 50th anniversary," he said.

Mr Wilcox is heading back to Vietnam with his great niece and great-great niece to honour the anniversary.

"I have mixed feelings about going back, but I'm glad I'll have the girls with me," he said.



On July 21, at 2.20pm local time, the exact anniversary of when he was hit, Mr Wilcox will be in the spot he was injured. While the rest of the world looks to the sky to celebrate the moon landing half a century ago, he'll be looking

down, kneeling in the Vietnamese dirt, looking at the face of his watch, which is peppered with shrapnel holes. Remembering.

Ed did a bit of investigating – the following was extracted from The Guardian newspaper and expands on the previous article...

“For some of the Australian soldiers fighting in Vietnam, it was the worst day of their lives. It was also the inspiration for Redgum’s classic I Was Only 19 - Andrew Stafford@staffo_sez.

Bill Wilcox’s watch stopped dead at 2.20pm on 21 July 1969 and never restarted. A field engineer in 1 Squadron in the Royal Australian Engineers (RAE) in the Australian army, he’d been up in the Long Hai hills in south-eastern Vietnam for about 10 days. He and his mates were due for a break.

It had been dirty work, even by wartime standards: dropping into active tunnel systems used by the Viet Cong, at risk of underground combat or possible asphyxiation and mine demolitions.

The irony was the engineers were mostly destroying their own mines, laid two years earlier. Nearly 23,000 US M16 “jumping jacks” mines had been buried in a barrier aimed at isolating their enemy combatants in the jungle.

But the field hadn’t been properly secured. At enormous risk to themselves, with many soldiers lost, the North Vietnamese army learned to excavate and redeploy the mines against Australian forces.

Wilcox and the rest of 1 Squadron were heading back to base in a helicopter when they received the news that members of the 6th Battalion, of the Royal Australian Regiment, had strayed into a minefield in the “light green”, with one killed and many more wounded.

The “light green” was an area on the map that had been partially cleared – where defoliants including Agent Orange were used to strip the forest canopy of cover and where mines were likely to have been buried.



Bill Wilcox’s watch stopped dead at 2.20pm on 21 July 1969
and never restarted.
Its hands have since fallen off.

With nowhere for the helicopter to land amid the rubber trees, Wilcox and five others, including medical officer Capt Robert Anderson, were winched down. Another was Sapper Dave Sturmer, who spotted a three-pronged stick in a tree indicating that three mines were in the area.

But only one had gone off.

After they landed, the first person that Wilcox came to was **Frank Hunt**, later immortalised in Australian folk group Redgum’s song “I Was Only 19”: “Frankie kicked a mine the day that mankind kicked the moon.”

Along with other members of his battalion, Hunt had been listening to a broadcast of the moon landing the previous evening.

But Hunt had survived. In the song, written by John Schumann, his name had replaced that of **Lt Peter Hines**. Hines’ body lay several metres away, though he too had survived the initial blast and had been giving directions until his death.

Hunt was in a bad way and was one of the first to be “dusted off” – slang for medically evacuated. “He copped it in the lower body and legs and he was smashed up real bad,” says Wilcox, now the president of the Oberon and Blue Mountains RSL sub-branches.

In the meantime, one unexploded device was located nearby. One more remained. Wilcox and company taped off safe areas, trying to clear enough space for a helipad so the remaining injured could be airlifted out.

Then the medical officer, **Capt Robert Trevor Anderson**, took a step outside the tape.

Jumping jacks, when disturbed, would spring from the earth into the air before detonating around waist height, but this one blew up beneath the soil, directly under Anderson. Somehow, he remained standing, still conscious, his clothes torn off.

“I was thrown probably 10 metres away, after the explosion, and I didn’t black out, I was still conscious,” Wilcox says. “I looked back and all I could see was red – like a stump – and it was Anderson.”

Ed – We may have achieved one of the greatest science/space moments ever, on the 20th July 1969, but the “achievement” couldn’t be matched in South Vietnam – and it never was.

. Oddities – Ed –

Here’s something, maybe not “Odd”, but more “oh, so that’s another couple of reason why you live where you do!”. I guess we all live where we do for some reason or other, which has got me to bring up the following subject – food and

what do you have to do to get it? Well, we wouldn't have hung out for as long as we have if we couldn't get access to food; good food and variety –

Home cooking – (luckily, Helen, my wife, is a great cook) so we can source fresh food from a couple of large markets as well as an organic one. We have access to 3 very large, modern supermarkets, plus within an hour's drive there are a couple of Costcos.

Eating out – this place has an abundance of restaurants, cafes, coffee shops, bakeries etc. From the up-themselves restaurants where you can pay up to \$40+ for a steak (haven't tried one for obvious reasons and that's not because I don't eat meat either) to some really good French, Italian, Indian, Thai - and the list goes on. So, we're not starved of getting starved!

Add to this, that we create our own drama by being vegan – our invitations to go to someone's for a meal are dwindling! Hey, but we do eat free range organic eggs – we know the source where there's no torture.

Bars/music: heaps of them from Irish Pubs, roof top bars to some really seedy Cantinas.

Sport: Well, I crap on about golf (at the Nick Faldo (sorry "Sir") designed course), but Hel and I play pool once a week as well as badminton.

Maybe next month I'll ramble on some more just to drive you nuts!

Mail Call...

Kevin Thornton – "Paul.

I have just read the latest copy of *Eyes and Ears*, June 2019 and marked after my name Thornton K A (Late). What I am late for, because I am still much alive. I have not attend much of 131 activities lately because of volunteering with Rural Fire Service and the Lions Club. I love reading the *Eyes and Ears*. Thank you for keeping me up to date
Kind Regards, Kevin Thornton"

Ed – I couldn't, and still can't think of a reasonable response. Here's how I responded very sheepishly –

"Kevin, Where the hell did your being "Late" come from - you're not even listed on the Honour Roll below (in *E&Es*)???"

I'll include your email in the next *E&Es* with a "mind-confusion" explanation.

How's it all going with the Rural Fire Services - how was summer? Have you had much rain of late? I could imagine that the Lions Club would keep you fairly active too. Any major projects happening?

Sorry about the slip up. Paul"

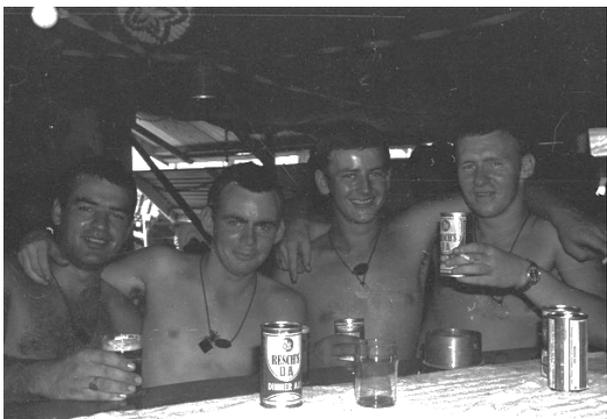
...Kevin responded with –

"Paul. We had a quiet season as far as fires went, no major fires. We have had rain on the coast but not inland which is very dry. If this continues, the next summer could be volatile. In July 2020, I will become District Governor to 201n1 (Yamba to Forster out to Wee Waa and down to Murrurundi – 62 clubs to visit). Whilst still being Captain of the Taree Communications Brigade. Thanks. Kind Regards, Kevin"

Ed – footnote: - *Eyes & Ears on the web has been corrected.*

Peter Binns – "1967 Xmas Pics" - 'Hi Paul

Just a couple pics IN boozer Xmas 67 and of course I'm in it too"



Above - L to r Peter Binns, Alan McDonald, Bob Wilson and Brian Black



Me in front of LP 31C at engineers Nui Dat, Dec 1967

Cheers Peter"

Allen Morley – a note from Oshkosh, Wisconsin attending the world's largest Airshow (see more down in Presidential Perambulations in the Association section)

“Hi Fellas. I don't know where to start. Problems at immigration over. Delayed times meaning I arrived a day late. And now it seems like old army times. Line up for meals, communal bathroom, average accommodation. However, it is warm and no one is yelling at me.

However, a day here makes up for it. I learnt to pace myself yesterday. So many new and old aircraft. And you can wander among them at ease. Surprisingly it is not as crowded as I imagined.

I'm now off to day 2 on the bus. Lots of oldies like me and only an occasional female. Diane was right not to come.

A couple of pics to whet your appetites. I am having probs with their wifi - need you here Bob - so phone it is for now.

Highlights for me on day 1 were twin Mustang, B29 "Doc", F22 Raptor, Ford GT 40 and B25 taxiing.

Cheers am”



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...

Ken Foster – ‘Paul, good to hear from you again, you may be interested to know I spoke to Sue Lock, widow of Geoff, and pointed out the article that mentions him in the June 2019 edition of *“The Eyes and Ears”* I have printed a copy for her as she has difficulties with technicalities in computers, she is well however has recently lost a 14-year-old grandson to a heart attack, she has good support but you never know what to expect next.

As for me all's well, keeping busy but that keeps me out of trouble at least in some areas, advocacy work seems to concentrating on the younger veteran community who have not yet got their own support structure in place.

Mid-winter here and this morning a fog is so thick I can just see the other side of the street, will be good when the fog clears but cold, I don't complain much as long as it's dry and not windy.

Stay well and in touch, you are doing a good job with your magazine, by the way do you see the V.V.A.A. magazine I edit? Debrief on our web site www.vvaa.org.au if you are interested.

Regards, Ken.’

Ed – do yourselves a favour and got to the www.vvaa.org.au website, mentioned by Ken (above) and have a good read.

Wade Cooper – “Good update, Paul,

I take it you are based in the northern hemisphere?

I spent two weeks in April visiting all the WWI Australian battle sites on the Western Front with my dad, was a great trip. I then came back to Canberra, 48h later turned around for States and spent 6 weeks there working with the US on some future concepts - I was glad to be home in June and eat properly again!

July is the main exercise period for Army, so we will head up to Shoalwater Bay soon to check it all out. I then head to Pucka and Bris from mid-August to commence my UAS conversion course.

Hope all is well your end, Wade.”

Phil Connor – “Giddy, Paul. How are you mate? Latest ‘*Eyes and Ears*’ was a brilliant read, well done.

All quiet on the ‘Sunshine Coast’ front at this time of year. Have had a lot of rain, however this week bright sunshine – T shirt time.

My ‘winter’ crop of tomatoes are doing exceptionally well and harvesting now. After 50 odd years of golf have given up the Callaways and replaced with the Helsenites. Enjoy bowls and at a good club, Buderim bowls.

Didn’t get any winter woollies out this year. Up here they stay in the cupboards all year round.

Recently, friends from Syydderknee did a coastal cruise up the East coast, and the cruise liners (if the weather is right) stop and moor off Alex Head and/or Mooloolaba beaches and then use tenders to transport passengers into the Mooloolaba Spit wharf. If the weather is rough, etc the passengers stay on ship. On the day crystal clear blue sky, bright sunny day and the ocean a millpond. We had a great day and catch up.

Being originally from NSW and playing bowls this morning (Thursday morning) and the day after the NRL Origin decider everything and everyone were as quiet as a church mouse...you could hear a pin drop. And then a couple of us ‘stirred the pot.’

Been down to see my specialists last month for my cancers checks and Orthopod check and got the ‘Housewives Seal of Approval.’ So, Happy Sausage, until next visit.

My youngest brother, this week, is in Belgium and visited our Great Grandfather’s grave at Polygon Wood. ‘Sandy’ Auld, 40 years old, was KIA on 9 September 1917 at the second battle of Passendahle. He left behind my Great Grandmother and his only child, our grandmother.

Good to catch up and have you become the major shareholder in the Coffee company over there.

Cheers Phil.”

John Bayford – “Hi Paul. Nice to hear from you.

I’m not too good today. I am just coming down with a virus of some sort so I’m sitting at home trolling through utube. I did have the flu shot but it hasn’t helped.

The weather here has been mixed and so has the golf. Hot one day and cold the next. Looking forward to heading up to Port Douglas at the end of the month where we will stay for August.

Best wishes, John Bayford”

Brian Campbell – “Nothing out of the usual happening! Not golfing due to back probs, council donated a small park to Viet Vets to look after (under their rules) which is a pain but gives us an interest and it’s starting to look good.

Thanks for checking hope to catch up again one day

Regards, Cambo.”

David Auld – “G’day Paul enjoying winter here in Woolgoolga averaging around 18 degrees so far, touch wood, and Rosemary is still managing the motel, take care.”

Mike Butler – “Hi Paul.

Thanks for the note - apologies for late reply.

Not a lot of news - winter here is particularly wet - or so it seems. We are (the wife and I) still attending a monthly lunch at the local Box Hill RSL with other VVAA members but the numbers are significantly down on recent years.

Seems a lot of folk are either too busy, away or just couldn’t be bothered. Have volunteered to sell badges on the week before VV Day, but again it’s usually the same people who volunteer every year - a bit more enthusiasm is required!!

We went to an opening of an exhibition at the Viet Vets National Museum at Phillip Island a couple of weeks ago - it was based on the Qantas flights to and from SVN. It was initiated by my mate who was a Provo and whose father was a pilot and flew Qantas jets. He actually flew his own son over to SVN!!

Like I said not much news but on the positive side we are both well.

Cheers, Mike Butler.”

Ron “Mook” Evans – “Glad to hear that you are still active Paul, still swinging, so to speak.

The weather here is as it always is. The press like to make much out of nothing.

I continue to be well and much amused by life. Never had the urge to waste time and effort bashing a completely innocent golf ball. Someone called golf the waste of a perfectly good walk. Sounds about right to me.

Our time in Vietnam remains a very strong memory for me but I wish we had been together doing something creative and beneficial for the world. I hate war more with every passing year.

And speaking of war, I have just discovered that I have an ancestor who fought in the American Revolution - but on the side of the damned Yankee rebels! The scoundrel.
Take care mate. Let's hope our good luck holds out for a few more years. Mook."

John Dellaca – "Hi Paul. Great to hear from you, currently freezing cold here in Ballarat. Have been digging in my slide collection and as a result of your newsletter, your feature about **Derek Hinde**, prompted memories of my time with him. I thought these photos may be of interest to you? Derek was a keen photographer having purchased a Minolta SRT 101?"

Hope all's well with you, love your work
Regards, John Dellaca"



Ever alert and watchful at 31 Bravo (Horseshoe).



With kids from Dat Do



Locators Lounge: L - R Wally Franklin, Derek Hinde and Self
(late 1968)

Terry Bruce – "Paul.

Thanks for your communication. Apologies for the delayed response but a few things have been happening, all good things, so I thought I'd delay my reply until we returned from our holiday (one of the good things).

Firstly, we have a new granddaughter, Lily, born early AM 26/04/19. She and all the other members of the family are doing well.

I've recently been elected as a 'life member' of my Bush Fire Brigade (The Oaks Rural Fire Brigade). Something of an unexpected honour but I'm very happy, and delighted to have my contribution recognised in this way.

I wasn't able to participate in the Camden ANZAC Day march with my Jeep this year as both of my designated drivers were unavailable – Craig was on duty with the AFP and Scott was on standby as his wife was expecting their baby on that day, or the next (see above).

However, Scott was able to accompany me to the dawn service and breakfast at the Camden RSL earlier but we didn't want to push it in case the baby arrived during the march.

Nevertheless, I did attend the mid-morning march and the following service as a spectator, along with Judith, Leigh, (daughter in law) and several of the grandchildren.

We've almost completed construction of the 'Jeep shed', being built to house my Jeep collection (currently three, in various stages of restoration) along with spare parts and Jeep related paraphernalia. I'll be glad to have everything in one place instead of in various sheds, carports, etc. around the property.

Now to the holiday. It was train related, of course, and involved travelling from Sydney to Melbourne on the daylight XPT service, travelling from Melbourne to Adelaide on the daylight Overland service and travelling from Adelaide to Sydney on the overnight Indian Pacific service. Ten days all up.

Whilst in Melbourne for three days we took the opportunity to do some touring which included a bus trip to the Dandenong Ranges including a trip on the Puffing Billy narrow gauge railway, visits to several wineries with tastings, lunch, etc., sightseeing cruise on the Yarra River and a visit to the Queen Victoria Markets along with several tram trips around Melbourne.

Similarly, in Adelaide we took a steam hauled train trip (broad gauge) from Mount Barker to Victor Harbour and return and did some general touring over two days.

The trip on the Indian Pacific back to Sydney was fantastic and included a stop at, and bus tour of, Broken Hill (we travelled Platinum class on the I.P. so everything was 'laid-on').

Suffice to say it was a great trip all up with everything falling into place in relation to connecting with trains, buses, boats, hotels, etc. In accordance with the philosophy of 'spending the kids' inheritance' we travelled first class on the XPT and the Overland legs, too.

Currently we're recovering from the trip and catching up on the local happenings.

Again, keep up the great work you are doing with the Eyes and Ears production and thanks for putting in the work to ensure that it is compiled and distributed so regularly.

Kindest regards, to you and to Helen, Terry"

From the Advocate's Desk...



Our professional Advocate's contact details: -

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

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

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

Notice Board...hey! See what's coming up?

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



Australian Artillery Association – www.australianartilleryassociation.com

Kim Hewitt – gives us a heads-up on an upcoming event –

"Hi Paul,

In case you are unaware, **The Australian Artillery Association is conducting its 3rd National Gunner Dinner on the 23/24 Aug 19 at Caloundra, Queensland.**

Full details and Registration is available on our Website (see link above).

Locators have always provided a good number of members in attendance.

It's great to catch up with the 'old' guys each time.

Ubique, Kim"

Vietnam Veterans Day – 18th August, 2018

It was all over for the Det in 1971 – some 48 years ago – amazing!

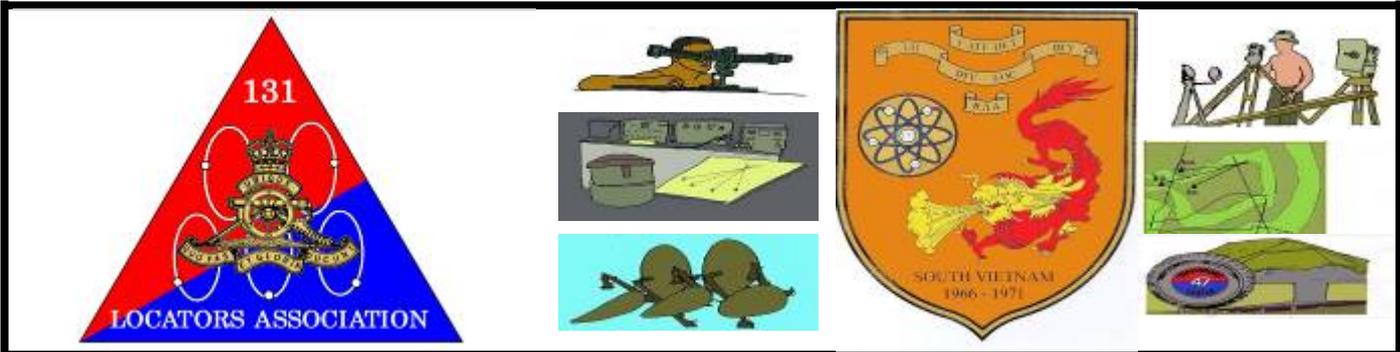
Maybe it's time to catch up with "good 'ol what's is name" again!

Maybe even get a few of us together for a Sunday lunch?

Maybe, maybe!!! No let's just do it!

Let us know what you got up to with a couple of photos?

There's always plenty of space on the notice board – so, if anyone's got or getting any events planned? Send us your notice.



Committee members:
President – Allen Morley, Vice President – Bert Blink, Treasurer/Secretary – Grahame Dignam,
Webmaster – Bob Billiards, Research Officer – Ernie Newbold, Designs and Development Officer – Nick Proskurin,
Eyes & Ears Editor – Paul Dickson
General members – Ian Amos, Ged Carroll, George Lane.
Regional Representatives: ACT – Bert Blink, Qld – Terry Erbs, SA - Geoff Blackwell,
Vic – Alan Adams, WA - Barry Guzder
<http://www.131locators.org.au>

A few well chosen words of wisdom from the Sec/Treas - "Sec/Treas reports that renewal notices have been emailed to all eligible Locators who need to renew as at 1 July 2019. I have included those who previously may have forgotten to renew (see the "37" mentioned in the minute extract.). If you need to know where you stand just send an email to the sectreas131locators@gmail.com to sort it out. Grahame"

Presidential Perambulations

In the mid-1970s we were living in Bristol, England. On the radio (we were too cash strapped to afford TV) every Sunday was a presentation by Alistair Cooke. It was called *Letter from America* and Cooke spoke about things American that could be of interest to the British. Therefore, please regard this missive as my letter from America. I am currently in Oshkosh, Wisconsin attending the world's largest Airshow. Diane told me that one day of aircraft is enough for her, so she stayed at home. Grahame Dignam said he could not come with me and Bob Billiards said maybe next year. Hence, I am flying solo.

This trip did not start well in the US. I was in a queue of about 500 people for US immigration. My time between arriving on the flight from Sydney and then connecting with one to Chicago was about 90 minutes. But, for processing the 500 there were only two bods dealing with those wanting to visit the US. So, I missed my connection to Chicago and consequently also to Oshkosh. That meant an unplanned overnight in Chicago, but I was too tired from my travails to explore the Windy City.

The Airshow here is spectacular. The US Airforce, Navy and Marines are strong supporters of the event which means there are lots of newer and some older military aircraft. Perhaps the highlight of the event has been the appearance of the XP-82 twin mustang. The manufacturers bolted two mustang fighters together for this unique aircraft. This particular aircraft is the sole survivor from the thousands built.

The Airshow features the biggest and best of aircraft. My interest is in watching the performance of the F-35 Lightning 11, because Australia is in the process of buying 75 of these. I really enjoy watching the various aircraft flying and performing, especially those that I have not seen in the air before.

By the time this appears in *Eyes and Ears* I will be home again. But the smile on my dial will still be there after this exciting and interesting week.

Regards, Allen

50 Years
April 1966 - April 2016



The Memories Remain
1966 - 1971

. Upcoming Events Calendar –

131 Locators Association Committee Meeting Date: Tuesday, 13th August, 2019 at 1100hrs
Venue: Canley Heights RSL & Sporting Club, 26 Humphries Rd., Wakeley.

Ph (02) 9604 9975 and for directions - <http://www.canleyheightsrsl.com.au/contact-us/> You're all welcome

. **Pertinent Points** – extracted from the 131 Locators Association Committee Meeting Date: Tuesday, 11th June, 2019 at 1105hrs...

Attendees were: Allen Morley, Grahame Dignam, Ernest Newbold, Ian Amos, Gordon Malcolm, Nick Proskurin,

Ged Carroll and George Lane – see them in the photo below –



They did lash out for the occasion – ah, don't you just love Tim Tams!

Ed – There were two photos of the group – one taken by Nick Proskurin and the other, obviously by Grahame Dignam, so to get them both in the one photo I superimposed Nick!

Financial Membership is currently ... **121** plus Associates **2** plus Affiliates **9** **Total 132**
 Plus Lapsed as at 1/7/2019 **37** members

Presidents report.

Allen advised that -

. The AGM for the LSTAA will be held on Sunday at Panania RSL and Russell Hamsey has nominated as President of the LSTAA SEQ branch prior to amalgamation.

. Bill Taggart has advised that the reunion for the 1/83 rd UA artillery association will be held at Colorado Springs over the 11/13 October 2020. **Email... artillery_83rd@yahoo.com**

1/83rd Website link... <http://www.1stbn83rdartyvietnam.com/>

. He will be OS from the 16/7 to the 30/7 to inspect the Oshkosh Air pageant.

Public Officer Report.

The only relevant item is a reminder that any special resolution for inclusion at our AGM on 12th November 2019 needs to be received 21 days prior to the AGM. Therefore to be received by the Secretary by 22 October 2019.

Webmaster Update.

Mention was made of a Face book page that was established to leverage our footprint in the digital world. The page when fully developed will be included on the links that we are supplying to the Australian Artillery Association (see below).

The link to the page is :

https://www.facebook.com/groups/538656036660419/?notif_id=155841600281509¬if_t=group_r2j_approved

From minutes of May 2019 meeting:

“Bob also discussed the possibility of establishing a Face book presence which would generate more traffic among the younger Locator audience and serving soldiers. This also would allow us to post more newsy items direct to that space. A number of Moderators would also be required to maintain the integrity of the site.”

Aims and Rules are still be developed but the page is available to view and request memberships.

The progress of the App development by the RAA Historical Company is being sought and will be advised as soon as confirmed.

Health.

No new advices to hand of any health incidents. Committee members commented as to the different approaches being applied by various health/fitness organizations as not all are strictly following DVA guidelines which require an ongoing condition requiring treatment.

Refer to the article in the July 2019 edition of the Vietnam Veterans newsletter for more complete analysis.

Photo Album Project.

Progress is slow but it is sure and is happening. More to come very shortly.

General Business.

Discussions ensued on the following:

. Following a mention by a fellow Locator the matter of 131 Heavy AA Battery being established on Horn Island during WW2 came to our attention. While no direct link can be found this appears to be the first time the Australian Military issue the nomenclature “131Battery RAA” in our history.

Web site info: 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.

. Birthdays in the Battery...August –

Date	Name	Regt No	YOB	SVN In	SVN Out	Comments
1	PHILLIP ROSS	3794468	1947	06 05 1969	30 04 1970	
1	JOSEPH LOSIAK	218302	1950	04 11 1969	05 11 1970	
1	JOHN LUCAS	3796256	1948	20 02 1970	11 02 1971	

2	JOHN GREENAWAY	3790617	1946	24 10 1967	22 10 1968	
3	LES SMITHLESTER	1201202	1949	23 09 1968	24 09 1969	
3	MICHAEL BUTLER	3796958	1948	04 06 1970	09 06 1971	
3	GRAHAM GREENLAND	2792441	1948	15 04 1970	29 07 1970	† 17.11.14
4	ANDREW OVERALL Lt.	235330	1946	22 02 1969	21 02 1970	
7	MARTY VAN DRIEL	38954	1944	27 11 1967	13 03 1968	† 08.08.98
7	RANDALL JONES	2788775	1947	29 01 1969	28 11 1969	
8	ARTHUR LUXFORD Sgt.	212803	1939	20 01 1969	28 01 1970	† 01.01.08
8	EDWIN LEWIS Sgt.	53909	1935	18 03 1970	11 03 1971	† 26.08.92
9	TERRY WELSH	4721779	1949	03 03 1971	29 06 1971	131
	" "			30 06 1971	30 10 1971	12 Fd REGT
9	GARRY GRIMWOOD	2795771	1949	24 03 1971	01 07 1971	131
	" "			01 07 1971	18 11 1971	12 Fd Regt.
12	ALAN THOMSON	42308	1937	20 05 1966	22 06 1967	† 07.10.15
13	BRIAN HACKETT	2783449	1945	03 01 1967	12 12 1967	
13	STAN BRIGGS	1731999	1945	27 11 1967	17 09 1968	
13	BOB BRUCE	4718049	1945	11 06 1967	13 12 1967	
15	JOHN POLLOCK	53860	1939	{17 04 1967	24 05 1967	131
	" "			{05 02 1971	07 04 1971	12 Fd REGT
15	KEVIN TAYLOR	2791357	1945	29 07 1969	23 07 1970	
15	NORMAN McMANUS WO2	26202	1924	09 11 1970	19 08 1971	† 04.10.2016
17	PIERRE GOSS	213990	1936	24 03 1969	25 03 1970	† 06.08.2011
20	PETER BINNS	356367	1947	27 11 1967	19 11 1968	
21	NORMAN JONES	5717611	1950	04 05 1971	01 12 1971	12 Fd Regt / AACC
22	JOHN VICKARY	1732218	1945	04 05 1967	30 01 1968	
22	STUART SPORN	4718471	1945	04 05 1967	30 01 1968	
22	ANTHONY COUTTS	1733291	1946	29 01 1968	21 01 1969	† 1988
23	ROBERT ETHERINGTON	66962	1946	04 11 1969	19 11 1970	
24	JOHAN MOLENCAMP	2795074	1948	03 03 1971	30 06 1971	131
	" "			02 07 1971	09 08 1971	12 Fd REGT
25	LES FROST	215230	1945	22 04 1966	28 04 1967	† 26.03.14
25	KENNETH JONES	2786931	1946	27 11 1967	26 11 1968	
25	COLIN WEST		1947	20 01 1969	21 01 1970	
26	MAX TROYNAR	3790244	1945	05 05 1967	30 01 1968	
26	STANLEY PATTERSON	38451	1947	29 01 1969	28 11 1969	
27	LAWRENCE FARR	1734257	1947	27 08 1969	25 02 1970	† 2009
27	KEN PIESLEY	2787174	1946	27 11 1967	19 11 1968	† 26.03.14
27	GORDON MALCOLM	2785906	1946	26 09 1967	17 09 1968	
27	PETER WHITAKER	2786848	1946	27 11 1967	19 11 1968	
27	PETER CREEDON	2790207	1947	31 01 1969	28 01 1970	
27	GRANT PERRINS	1734509	1947	27 11 1969	04 06 1970	
28	DAVID PIMM	215746	1946	17 04 1967	23 04 1968	RAEME
29	TIM FORD Capt.	235300	1945	19 08 1970	05 08 1971	
31	STEPHEN PALMER	18820	1946	12 04 1968	30 04 1969	RAEME † 03.12.72

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

Ed – 10 blokes not highlighted is looking decidedly better, but still not acceptable! Ok, let's get into it and actively get out there locating a few more!

. **Locator Profiles** – we've received 131 and we've sent out 131. Ed – how long is it going to take to get to 135?

. **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...

Artillery Surveyors 131 Div Loc Bty...



ARTILLERY SURVEYORS 131 DIV LOC BTY

"Elements of 131 came wandering in from the bush" (A quote whose origins are lost, yet the sentiments expressed will not be lost on many who served with 131 Div Loc Bty SVN.)

. Locating, Surveillance & Target Acquisition Association...



LOCATING, SURVEILLANCE & TARGET ACQUISITION ASSOCIATION

The Eyes and Ears of The Battlefield



Australian Artillery Association – www.australianartilleryassociation.com



www.artilleryhistory.org



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



Website link - <http://www.dva.gov.au/Pages/home.aspx>

. VETERAN'S AFFAIRS WEBSITE

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

. 1st Battalion 83rd Artillery...



Dedicated to the men of the 1st Battalion 83rd Artillery who served in Vietnam from 1966-1971. We left Fort Sill in October 1966 for Vietnam. We originally were at Bear Cat, Nui Dat and Xuan Loc. We later were in many other locations in Vietnam. We also welcome our Australian and New Zealand Allies to whom we owe so much. It is also dedicated to those members of the 1/83rd who did not return. We will never forget their sacrifice. Website: <http://www.1stbn83rdartyvietnam.com>



The Royal New Zealand Artillery Association

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

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

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