

THE EYES and EARS

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

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Detachment 131 Divisional Locating Battery RAA

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

2020 – 54 Years and the Detachment 131 Spirit Lives On: 1966 – 1971



Happy New Year
2020 ~ 2021
best wishes to
everyone

*Let's make it a memorable
one for the right reasons...*

A reflection on the year that was and remains...Paul Dickson

This year marked a time of changes. Who would have ever thought for one thing that ANZAC Day would be observed from your front driveway with no parade?

The Pandemic, COVID 19, which struck and has remained with us has changed our world and has affected certain parts of society forever.

I guess our vulnerability (age and health) was, and remains a concern, but we may be in a far better place not having to rely on work to support a young family and pay monumental debts etc.

We need to keep in touch with family and friends follow the pre-set protocols, even though the lowering of certain rules may occur.

The safe/tested "vaccine" when available, will still take time to be universally administered before "normality" returns.

Let's keep our bond of mateship alive and well, and be able to reflect on 2021 hopefully in a better light when the time comes. I extend our thoughts to you and your families.

May we remain strong.

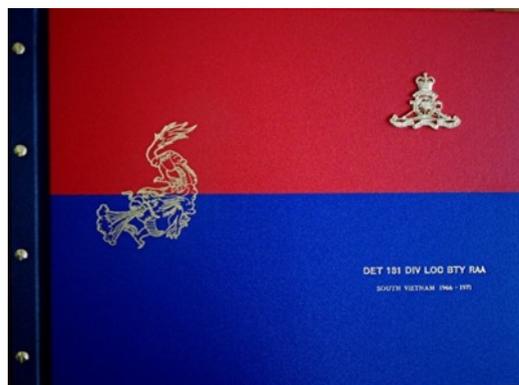
. The "Lost Locator Project"



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

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

Paul Dickson at - 131eyesandears@gmail.com

. Grahame Dignam forwarded this item extracted from the newsletter **Contact – Air Land & Sea** - <https://www.contactairlandandsea.com>

OPINION: Andrew Hastie MP/ex-SAS – on Brereton Inquiry

24/11/2020 Brian Hartigan 1094 Views 0 Comments IGADF Afghanistan Inquiry



Feel free to share this post

Red rocky earth cut into our flesh, numbing our hands. It was well after midnight, perhaps 3am. Floodlights lit up the group. Cadence push-ups on bleeding knuckles in the dead of night is the sort of misery that either consumes you, or clarifies your sense of mission.

Corporal Ben Roberts-Smith, fresh back from the Battle of Tizak, towered over us, the 25 officer candidates on the 2010 SASR selection course. His displeasure writ large in his menacing body language. He switched out our hand position from palms down to knuckles.



'You f—ing officers. You always take the easy option. Lower. Hold.'

An eternity passed as our fatigued muscles trembled close to the ground.

'Raise!'

The irony might have been lost on him, but not on me. Humbling myself before Ben Roberts-Smith was not easy. Nor would be serving in the Special Air Service Regiment in the weeks, months and years ahead. SASR selection is an exacting experience. For an officer, your command, leadership and character is closely scrutinised for 21 days. They break down your body to see who you really are—what you are like when you're tired, hungry and dejected.

Moments like this over the following fortnight thinned the ranks of officers. Men, gifted in command and planning, departed on their own terms—withdrawing quietly. Others were removed by the Directing Staff.

The rest of us pressed on, reaching a point of insanity in the final week. No food for days, almost no sleep, impossible physical tasks. What was the point of it all? The last week posed this question for those candidates remaining: when there is nothing left to give—who can go beyond and finish the mission? For the first time I understood Clausewitz's dictum that war is a contest of wills. Finish the job, or fail.

We finished Selection on Friday 13 August 2010. When I called my wife to tell her, I wept. I was cold, shivering and spent. I'd lost 12 kilograms in three weeks and I had no emotional reserves. That day **SASR Trooper Jason Brown** died bravely—under fire—in Afghanistan serving with the Special Operations Task Group. It was a subdued mood back at Swanbourne. There were no high fives.

Starved, physically exhausted and emotionally shattered, we sat around a radio cleaning our rifles the next morning. We quietly listened to the voices of our Prime Minister Julia Gillard, and Leader of the Opposition Tony Abbott express their condolences at the death of another digger in Australia's longest war.

That day set a course for me. I served in the SAS for the next five years, deploying to Afghanistan as a Troop Commander in 2013 as part of the Special Operations Task Group. I did not anticipate that ten years later I would be a Member of Parliament, explaining how we found ourselves in a dark place.

Like all of us, I am grieved by the findings of the Brereton Report, handed down by the Chief of the Defence Force. There is much to be troubled by: the report details credible information regarding allegations of unlawful killings by Australian soldiers. Specifically, 23 incidents of alleged unlawful killings of 39 people, perpetrated by 25 Australian Special Forces soldiers, mainly from the Special Air Service Regiment.

The report is hard reading. It is comprehensive, detailed and unsparing in its judgement on those alleged to have committed war crimes. As a former officer of the SASR and someone who believes in Regimental honour, I feel great shame in what has occurred. We were sent to Afghanistan in a double trust—to defend Australia's values and interests by force, but also to uphold those values in our battlefield conduct. Many good soldiers honoured that trust; a small number of soldiers did not.

Many people want to know: how did this happen? Here are some personal observations on the Brereton Inquiry that are shaped by five years of service in SASR and five years as a Member of the Federal Parliament.

First, we have forgotten basic truths about human nature that previous generations of Australians better understood. We live in a bent world. We all carry man's smudge: people do bad things. Christians, call it sin in a fallen world.

Enlightenment thinkers like Immanuel Kant called it the 'crooked timber' of humanity. Whatever name we give our condition, we should always guard against the reality of people doing bad things when they are left unaccountable.

The Australian constitution aligned our system of government to this realist view of human nature. The drafters understood the importance of the rule of law, the separation of powers and the need for accountability amongst those who serve in government. Our soldiers and officers are no different: they need accountability and firm leadership in the degrading cockpit of war. It appears this did not happen from the very top to the bottom of the command chain.

Second, we ignored the true nature of war and sanitised it. We pretended it was no different to any other form of unilateral government policy. But the reality is that war is inherently violent, escalatory and degrading. It is a modern conceit to pretend that war can be managed with a set of safe technocratic hands. The brutal reality is that no plan ever survives the first shot. People lose their way and become hard of heart, especially after multiple deployments.

During the Second World War, the Churchill government commissioned Laurence Olivier to make a technicolor film version of Shakespeare's *Henry V* to boost wartime morale. Olivier edited out one third of the play, excising Henry's violent speech demanding surrender of the Governor of Harfleur. King Henry, understanding the nature of 'impious war' once unleashed, posed the question:

What rein can hold licentious wickedness

When down the hill he holds his fierce career?

Shakespeare paints violent imagery of the 'blind and bloody soldier with foul hand' committing all sorts of atrocities. He saw that war has its own dark energy. He knew it consumes people in ways that modern society cannot comprehend, largely because we have packaged it up nicely for the evening news.

The Australian Defence Force was very effective at sanitising our longest war with its legions of Public Affairs Officers. The United Kingdom and the USA took a liberal approach, allowing reporters to see their soldiers at war. However, we stage-managed Australia's contribution to Afghanistan through a carefully crafted information operation. This approach stifled public interest reporting. Perhaps with greater access for the Australian media, some of the events alleged by the Brereton Report might never have happened.

Third, parliamentary scrutiny of Defence is broken and needs fixing. Politicians routinely visited Aussie troops in Tarin Kot. I first met Malcolm Turnbull and Julie Bishop in 2009, on my first deployment with the 2nd Mentoring and Reconstruction Task Force. I harangued a Labor MP in 2013 about Defence budget cuts when he visited the Special Operations Task Group. Each of them were interested and supportive, but it seemed they didn't know what questions to ask. I now realise this is partly a function of a deficient Parliamentary Committee system.

There is no independent Joint Defence Committee where tough questions can be asked in a classified, protected space. Parliamentary scrutiny these days is surface level. It amounts to senior Defence leadership presenting a few PowerPoint slides and giving parliamentarians a pat on the head. This is an area of urgent reform. If we are serious about increased accountability and transparency, then we need proper parliamentary scrutiny of the Department of Defence and the Australian Defence Force. Without it, our parliament can't exercise proper civilian oversight of our military.

Fourth, the Brereton Report rightly condemns a warrior culture that fused 'military excellence with ego, entitlement and exceptionalism'. Sometimes SASR operators carried themselves like modern incarnations of Achilles, Thor or Mars. I reject that culture, too. But I believe a warrior culture is an important part of an elite combat unit. It all depends on the beliefs and values you build that culture on.

When I posted to SASR as a non-qualified Captain in January 2010, I was befriended by the Unit Chaplain, a bloke by the initials of SB. He had an Irish temperament and liked to box, often with the operators. He was refreshingly confrontational, not a social worker in uniform. SB confronted what he called a 'pagan warrior ethos', shorn of any connection to the Just War tradition that has shaped our approach to warfare. As Saint Augustine wrote near the end of the Roman Empire, we must:

"In waging war, cherish the spirit of a peacemaker, that by conquering those whom you attack, you may lead them back to the advantages of peace."

Our boxing chaplain was right. The warrior ethos I sometimes saw was about power, ego and self-adulation. It worshipped war itself. It was the opposite of the humility that I expected to find at SASR.

But there was a competing, more positive warrior culture at SASR, it just wasn't the prevailing one at the time. If you looked closely, you'd find humble, quiet operators. Tough as nails. Fiercely competitive. Supremely competent at arms. The sort of bloke that you'd want next to you in a gunfight. They never thought themselves bigger than the team or the mission. They were humble. They were committed to truth. They were the ones who blew the whistle and repudiated the dark toxic personalities that have shamed the SASR in Afghanistan. Many are still serving quietly in the shadows. So, before people cry for a repudiation of all warrior culture, they should first understand what you need in an elite special operations unit. You need people who run to the sound of the guns. Who are prepared to fight and destroy Australia's enemies? Who will die doing so, if necessary? Those men exist. They are serving at present. They have done nothing wrong. We need to uphold them and their vital mission. They will not be helped by soulless modern cultural theory, derived from the academic ivory tower. It may well diminish our effectiveness if shoe-horned and institutionalised.

Fifth, in the hierarchy of virtues, moral courage remains paramount to physical courage. The public record doesn't reflect this as our military honours and awards system preferences the recognition of physical courage. Acts of conscience are hard to write up in vigorous prose and people rarely thank leaders who make unpopular decisions.

Yet there were acts of command moral courage during the period investigated by the Brereton Inquiry. History won't record these good deeds the way it will the battlefield criminality of a few, but there were junior leaders at SASR who made hard decisions to uphold the sacred trust reposed in them by the Australian people. Leaders who took responsibility for their command. They know who they are and we honour them.

Finally, despite the Brereton Report, I still believe the profession of arms is a noble one. In any case, a survey of history shows us that war is part of the human experience. Australia has fought wars in the past; we will fight them in the future. We must be ready. And we cannot afford to lose. As Ernest Hemingway wrote, "I have seen much war in my lifetime and I hate it profoundly. But there are worse things than war, and all of them come with defeat."

In July, the Prime Minister spoke of the post-pandemic world being poorer, more dangerous and more disorderly. We cannot afford to draw the wrong lessons from the Brereton Report. The mission of the ADF remains unchanged: to win our wars. We must prepare ourselves for the challenges ahead. But we must always hold ourselves to high moral standards. When wrong is done, we must hold ourselves to account.

That's why I have supported the Brereton Inquiry: I love my country and want to protect it from those who would harm us from both without and within.

. **Bob Billiards** responds to **Bob Wilson's article on FSB Coral** which was in November's edition of *Eyes & Ears* – "Paul,

The article on Coral and the list of people there has at least 2 omissions that I know of. Bdr Nick Armstrong and me who were with 31E. I replaced "Bluey" Piesley who went on R&R and I presume Nick replaced Bdr Wortlehook. When I was at Coogee (about May 16th) there was "Pablo", John Bayford and Nick Armstrong but maybe Bdr Wortlehook. My memory isn't clear much about Coogee as it was pretty quiet there.



Only two things stand in my memory, the APC that was accidentally burned,



and the Kiwi doctor berating me for taking my boots off (I didn't wear socks because of tinea that I picked up from recruit training). I know Nick was the Bdr when we moved to FSB Coral. The other memorable thing about the Coogee stint was the helicopter ride there. I got off the Chinook from maybe Nui Dat via Bien Hoa which was traumatic as the only seat available was adjacent to the big hole in the floor where the winch is and I am terrified of heights even though I eventually ended up a glider pilot. My hands sweated and my feet tingled all the way in the flight. On arrival at Coral I had to organise a flight to Coogee. It was an RAAF Huey taking a load of 20 litre water containers. The pilot stopped me from getting on and then he lifted the chopper off the ground and set it down again and waved me on board. There was very little room and I had to stand in the doorway and hang onto the vertical bar. We took off did a right-hand steep bank with me looking at the ground 50 feet below with a tonne or more of water behind me – thank goodness for centrifugal force 😊. We then flew at treetop height for the kilometre or so flight. The only plus was that if we crashed, there wouldn't be a fire.

When FSB Coral was disbanded, we moved to a position in the rubber trees with the Infantry HQ company. I presume we went by helicopter again but really have no recollection of that trip. Maybe "Pablo" will remember that stuff as he has reminded me of things we were involved in that I had no recollection of. He has a good memory for a lot of stuff that we got into over there as we spent a few months together at 31D with the 1/83rd heavy battery.

I was trying to send some photos but my new office software is not set up correctly as yet so I will attach them when I sort it out.

Regards, Bob



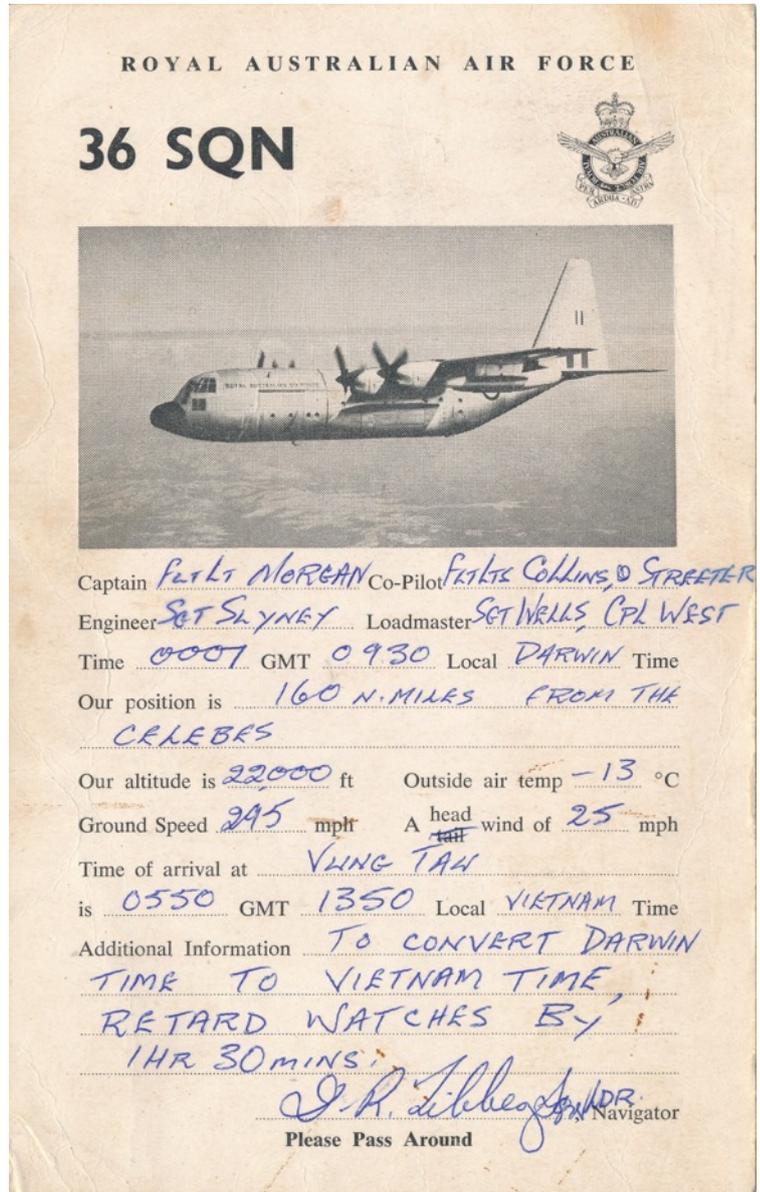
**. A little bit of memorabilia –
“Keepsakes” ...**

Ken Osborne sent in the following email which has another one of those “most amazing” memory items, that he calls “keepsakes”.

“Dear Paul,
Just going through my pile of “keepsakes” at home and came across the card the crew of the Hercules handed out on our flight from Darwin to Vung Tau in April 1967. Unfortunately, it does not have the date on it but it was when most on the flight were the Div Loc Bty replacements so it was around the 16th or 17th of April, my recollection as to actual date is a bit vague, too much excitement and I did not start my official diary until the 17th once I settled in. So, keep well, regards Ken Osborne.”

Ken’s SVN tour service dates: Ken was a Warrant Office Class 1 in the Royal Corps of Australian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (RAEME) and was a South Aussie from Rose Park He served with Det 131 Div Loc Bty Workshop from 18.04.67 to 02.04.68 (all courtesy of the DVA Nominal Rolls)

Ed – This is an absolute heirloom – I’ve never seen one. Obviously the “Please Pass Around” got as far as Ken – luckily, he was last on!



The following was originally submitted by Bob Billiards and then Bert Blink which in turn got Terry Erbs into the communications...

The article was this which appeared in the DVA’s Anzac Portal, errors an all -



Anzac Portal

AWM BUL/68/1100/VN

A member of the 31st Divisional Locating Battery decorates his bunker with Christmas telegrams and a plastic Santa Claus at Fire Support Base Julia, South Vietnam, in December 1968. AWM BUL/68/1100/VN



This got the blokes into “Detective” mode and here’s the results -

Bob Billiards' interpretation -

"Phuoc Tuy Province, South Vietnam. 1968-12. **Gunner Peter Clarke** of Queenscliff, Vic, decorates his bunker with Christmas greeting telegrams and a plastic Santa Claus. A member of the 131st Divisional Locating Battery, Gunner Clarke spent his Christmas day at Fire Support Base (FSB) Julia on operations on Phuoc Tuy Province."

A bit more info re Peter -

Peter Andrew Clarke, 3792212, born in Warracknabeal on 14th April, 1947. SVN In 12.11.68 SVN Out 27.08.69.

Peter is also one of our Not Located Locators, maybe this may spur more action to Locate him?

From all of this the following emails flowed –

Bert Blink – “A typo to be sure to be sure”

Allen Morley – “Like (RER) instead of (RAR) above the 31st article. Doesn't AWM proof read?”

Barry Guzder – “Is it possible to correct this idiotic mistake!? Barry G. 5714500”

Bob Billiards – “Yep I sent them an email.” ***See response below**

Grahame Dignam – “From "Tracks" Gnr P Clarke Nov 68 -Aug '69 and on our website.”

Ernie Newbold – “I remember Christmas 1967 when I was at LP 31A, it was completely different to any other Christmas before or since but memorable none the less, especially for the memory of good friends who also shared the experience with me. Most of those good friends are still around today. Regards, Ernie.”

Bert Blink – “Hi Ernie, My first and only Xmas lunch server by Officers. Bert.”

Geoff Blackwell – “Christmas '67 with the Yanks for Bobby Billiards, Pablo and the Gus. It was a flash turnout.”

***Here is the response from above...**

“Dear Mr **Billards** ← **note the incorrect spelling**

Thanks for spotting the two typos in the Vietnam Christmas page – we'll fix them up straight away.

I'm glad you found the page interesting, and that it brought back memories of your service. We have had some very positive responses, and hopefully have encouraged Australian students to reflect on the challenges of life on the front line.

Kind regards and best wishes for the Christmas season,

Daniel Rastoka

Community Engagement Team

Commemorations, Communications & Parliamentary

Department of Veterans' Affairs

e:education@dva.gov.au

...late additional news...

Ron Mason sent this email, just to add to the “stew” -

“According to the information attached to the photo Malcolm Bull sent the photo to the Aust War Memorial, when you read his Corps you will see that the person photographed could have belonged to any unit! Have a safe Christmas, Ron”

Name	BULL, Malcolm Norman
Service	Australian Army
Service Number	217655
Date of Birth	18 Jun 1942
Place of Birth	SHIPSTON ON STOUR UNITED KINGDOM
Rank	(Temporary) Sergeant
National Service	No
Corps	Royal Australian Army Educational Corps (Public Relations)
Honours	None for display

Ed could help himself and had to reply to Ron (here's an extract) –

“Ron, Unbelievable - the Education Corps had a PR section? Really! Paul.”

Anyone else got anything to add? Maybe an indication of where the photo was taken?



Christmas in Nui Dat



Photo supplied by Ernie Newbold, December, 1967

Here's a new section bought about by the preceding Anzac Portal with the photo of Peter Clarke doing a bit of bunker Christmas decoration in 1868.

Ernie Newbold writes – "Christmas in Vietnam" the detachment was at Nui Dat for five Christmases from 1966 up to 1970 inclusive so there may well be more people with stories about spending Christmas away from home in a war zone. Something in the next *Eyes & Ears* could provoke some stories and memories."

Here's the first ones out of the rank –

Ernie Newbold – "I remember Christmas 1967 when I was at LP 31A, it was completely different to any other Christmas before or since but memorable none the less, especially for the memory of good friends who also shared the experience with me. Most of those good friends are still around today.

The people I shared this memory with were, thinking back to that time I was with Nick Proskurin, Jeff Reid, Bob Wilson & Mick King. We had lunch in the SAS Mess at the bottom of "The Hill" and were served by the SAS officers. A very different Christmas to what I had experienced previously or since.

The LP was still manned 24/7 but it was all quiet for that Christmas Day, just the regular network radio checks. Ernie"

Bert Blink – "Hi Ernie. My first and only Xmas lunch server by Officers. Bert."

Geoff Blackwell – "Christmas '67 with the Yanks for Bobby Billiards, Pablo and the Gus. It was a flash turnout."

We'll keep this section going if any more of you have Christmas memories in Nui Dat.

Peter Suckling –

I may be able to add a couple of names to the photo so that the old **Bill Finlay** can sleep more peacefully.

I THINK the **coach** is **Russ Parker**, Ex 111 Bty and a Rugby coach at the time, the fellow next to **Barry Bonser** I think is **Tilley Devine**, and the player 3rd from left could be **Russell Kopp** RAEME. Devine and Kopp were in Woomera around that time and we played League. Parker was my Sig Sgt in 111 at Holsworthy in 61.

Cheers Peter

Here in the West and especially in rural WA the effects of Covid have been negligible. And now even Vics and NSW are allowed in."

. Don Handley – "Hi Paul,

My name is Don Handley and I served with 131 in the 70's and 80's until the move to Queensland.

I have been reading the latest *Eyes and Ears* and looking at the photo of the Rugby team, the person you have as **Barry Bonser** looks to me more like **Dave Bonser**.

I first met Barry Bonser in Malaya in 1965 when A Field Bty went over and part of 102 Fd Bty stayed until the first Nashos joined us.



Barry and I became best mates and remained so until his death in 1998. I have just been going through my old photos and found a small album of photos of his time in Vietnam, it was given to me by his partner after his death. And I would like to forward them to the Bty Album.
Regards, Don”

. Time for “cuppa”! – a fond memory –
Salvation Army – “Salvos” as they were and are still are colloquially known.
Who remembers this?



I first encountered the “Salvos” during recruit training in Singleton on the way back from imbibing a couple. Mind you, I did contribute to them with their collectors on the streets of Brisbane earlier on, especially before Christmas etc. Anyway, the photo here is in Nui Dat. You have to admire them - their strength of dedication is to be applauded.

Got any other memories – how about sharing them?

From the Advocate’s Desk...

Our professional Advocate’s contact details: -



DECEMBER - 2020

Current Serving:

Those current serving do yourself a favour and do not lodge any claim direct to DVA.

It is important to get a claim in as soon as possible.

It the medical diagnosis that determines your claim as it confirms a disability or disease exists.

If you have had an incident and submitted a Sentinel Report then seek out a qualified Advocate (Level 1 or 2) through an Ex-Service Organisation such as RSL to help you.

NEED TO KNOW

. One of the falsehoods is I am not a Veteran (Have not been deployed to operation/active duty) therefore not entitled.

Anyone who has served FULLTIME or CMF/RESERVES is entitled to be heard

. *If your accepted disabilities/diseases are getting worse see your advocate to review your case. With your medical provider’s assistance, your advocate will submit documents to DVA for review.*

INFORMATION / MESSAGES TO CONSIDER

1. *The Australian Government introduced into Parliament "AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE VETERANS' COVENANT"*

Which is a means of letting the public know we have people who have served their country.

What does it provide?

- a) If you have accepted disabilities accepted with DVA the New Health Card.
 - b) Oath - Which is part of the kit.
 - c) Letter of thanks from the Prime Minister & The Minister of Veterans' Affairs & Defence Personnel
 - d) Veteran or Reservist Pin
- Currently approximately 100,000 members have obtained this acknowledgement.

2. NON-LIABILITY HELTH CARE CARD (ADF Personnel)

. White Card is issued to cover Treatment Only.

. The key to this is that the condition "does not" have to be service related.

a) Mental Health

b) Cancer

Since this was introduced many have benefited from this program.

As with all benefits there are "eligibility" criteria to be met.

- Cancer has specific criteria and you need to check with an advocate your eligibility.

- Mental Health Introduced mainly to address the number of suicides among defence personnel both serving and not.

It is a means of providing medical treatment for GP Consultations, Clinical Psychologists, Psychiatrists and any hospital needs.

This takes away the huge cost of seeking medical help that most people cannot afford.

a) On discharge from permanent defence force (ADF) a White Card is issued even if the individual had only served ONE (1) day in the ADF.

WE have many who are;

- Reservists current serving who have:

a) Been deployed on operational duty.

b) Been involved in Disaster Relief Service

c) Been on Border Protection Service

d) Involvement in a serious service related training incident

Can apply for Non-Liability Mental Health Treatment

HOWEVER!!!

There are many both CMF and Reservists that do not meet the above criteria are therefore excluded from Mental Health Non-Liability Treatment.

- The issue is Continuous Fulltime Service where the one day (24hrs) come from.

- A Reservist completing 14 days training camp can be forgiven to wonder why their 336 hours does not count.

MOTION:

In 2018, a motion (from my RSL Sub-Branch) was presented to the NSW RSL Congress in May 2018 at which members voted 93.6% in favour to present this disparity to the Government for review.

Now 2020 no action had been taken and another sub-Branch is presenting to the 2020 Congress in December citing the above motion as supporting argument to take this matter to the government for review, and to include all who serve or served.

I guess it is watch this space.

PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION:

The commission presented 69 recommendations of which the government has taken up in the 2020-2021 Budget period

Many things are engrained in our countries treatment of our service personnel which began after WW1 and continue today.

The GOLD CARD (HEALTH CARD)

- is issued to those whose disabilities have been shown via medical reviews to be serious. This gives the recipient some peace when dealing with ongoing medical issues.

The commission recommended this be scrapped ...However, this was NOT accepted by the Government.

- there have been many things said about reviewing the 3 Legislations and melding them into one. Sounds good and it may get somewhere around 2025.

VETAFFAIRS - Newsletter Vol.36 No.3 November 2020

- Has presented the Budget as it affects Veterans' > Just some items from this publication:

The underlying dialogue for some considerable years has been to stop the rate of suicide by current and ex-serving members.

The 2020-20201 Budget includes the following:

a) Allocation of \$11.7 Billion to DVA to deliver a range of services.

b) \$101.7 million for Mental Health

c) \$64.1 Million in supplementary funding to support DVA's claims processing, accessing treatment and support services, as well as sharing data.

Not sure how many times they need to be funded yet it is still taking 3 months before they even hand the case to a Delegate to begin working on the claim.

d) \$25.9 Million for additional support for Totally & Permanently Incapacitated (TPI) Veterans' particularly those paying rent.

e) \$6.0 Million to broaden the Prime Minister's Veterans' Employment Program.

f) \$1.1 Million to commemorate the Anniversary of the End of the Second World War.

A CALL TO ARMS:

As members of the Defence Force the Mateship ethos starts in recruits. As we move through life we all focus on our family. The other family in our lives are the members of the defence Force who have suffered a disability.

If you are able at some point consider becoming a COMPENSATION ADVOCATE please talk to your association or the RSL.

You are needed.

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE:

I would like to wish you and your family a holy and safe Christmas and a joyful New Year.

KEEP WELL & KEEP SAFE

- All I can say keep in touch with your mates.

- Take care, look after yourself and be safe.

Peter Pioro

JP NSW JP (Qual) QLD

Military Rehabilitation & Compensation Advocate Level 2

Military Welfare Advocate Level 2

Mentor

0419638121

130 Divisional Locating Battery - Padstow

131 Divisional Locating Batter - National Service

South Vietnam Deployment - 1969-1970

Peter Pioro 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.

. **Ian Amos** responded to an email with regards to this photo as to who/where/why – I'd ferreted it out of the archives somewhere –

"Dicko,
This is Bravo radar crew September 1967, not
long after I arrived.

Standing L-R - next to me is Mick Luff, Lionel
Outen, Frank Halliday, Chris Bouilly, John Vickary

Seated L-R -Tony Dodds, Tom King, Frank Ipsa,
Graeme Richardson(RAEME)
Missing are Stuart Sporn and Roger Long.

Apologies for any misspelt names.
Ian"



Any comments anyone?



. **Bill Taggart** – sent in the following email with regards to “**The Saga of the Hat**” in last month’s *Eyes & Ears* – “Mighty oaks from little acorns grow”. That was one thought that came to mind as I read the story in the November edition of *Eyes and Ears*, “The Saga of the Hat.” What a great outcome. Grahame, you and your "acorns" certainly made this a very happy ending to a wonderful event. Congratulations to all who helped the hat get home. Bill.”

. **Karl Rembe** – Karl’s military service - USMC, 1958-1960, airframe mechanic, Naval Air Support (NAS) Jacksonville, NAS Memphis, NAS Seattle. I worked with Phantom’s and R4Q2’s (*flying box car).



*The Fairchild C-119 Flying Boxcar was an American military transport aircraft developed from the World War II-era Fairchild C-82 Packet, designed to carry cargo, personnel, litter patients, and mechanized equipment, and to drop cargo and troops by parachute.

Karl was present, as he has been for the past seven years at the Remembrance Day service we hold here at St Pauls in town (featured in last month’s *Eyes and Ears*), and sent in the following email which contains an email from his brother-in-law. It is another amazing article from the Vietnam era which is an interesting read...

“Paul,
I shared your newsletter with my brother in-law, now a retired diplomat, because of his two years in Nam. This is his response. Karl”

...**Dell**, Karl’s brother-in-law’s email –

“Hola Carlos,

Thank you for sharing the newsletter which stirred memories of my own 1970-1971 years in Vietnam (not in the military but as a Foreign Service Officer). I recall at some point meeting a few Aussies, who were highly respected as much better experts on counter-insurgency warfare than were the Americans. I’m attaching a short piece – for a writer’s class I am taking – based on one experience I had in Vietnam. You and your friends in SMA might be interested.

Tula and I talk regularly that once this pandemic is behind us that we’d really like to visit SMA again but when exactly remains a big mystery. You and Juanita stay healthy! Dell

“**MELODY IN THE DARK VIETNAMESE NIGHT**” By **Dell Pendergrast**

The distinctive tonal melody of a Vietnamese language song drifted across the rural village square in Tay Ninh province 60 miles north of Saigon. The petite young woman in the graceful Vietnamese ao dai attire delivered a plaintive theme of loss and despair common across the war-ravaged country in 1971. Lan was a member of a Vietnamese Government Cultural Team seeking with skits and songs to connect with a rural population also courted by the communist Viet Cong. As a civilian advisor to the provincial government, I regularly accompanied the Cultural Team on its trips that merged propaganda and entertainment.

The Team's performance ended with modest applause from the 200 village residents. They were predictably wary of demonstrating too much enthusiasm before the likely watchful eyes of Viet Cong supporters. Vinh, my Vietnamese assistant, and I proceeded to park our pickup truck for the night at the edge of the village. While only 10 miles from the provincial capital, risking the dark roads at midnight was a choice we hesitated to make. In the absence of a Motel 6 equivalent in the rural village, we settled for the night into the pickup's open storage bay relying on folded military flak jackets for pillows and smothered in insect repellent.

After falling immediately into deep slumber, I was jolted awake by Vinh pulling frantically on my arm. "Ong (Mr.) Pendergrast, wake up, wake up. We have to leave!" His muffled voice projected alarm bordering on panic.

"Vinh, what is it?"

"VC, VC, sir. They are entering the far side of village. We must leave! Now!" Suddenly in the distance I heard the recognizable, staccato signal of a semi-automatic Russian-made AK-47. Then a response from the old-fashioned US-provided carbines which armed the village self-defence militia. Flashes of gunfire pierced the sky above the village. Vinh was right. We had to leave.

Braving the dark roads back to Tay Ninh City was now less intimidating than waiting for the Viet Cong in the village to find us. I jumped behind the steering wheel and with adrenalin rushing through my veins roared into the night. At high speed, indifferent to both possible VC and livestock on the road, we navigated our way to the safety of the provincial government compound. The next day I learned that a Viet Cong force had penetrated the village killing four local militia soldiers while suffering three casualties themselves. Intelligence officers told us the VC knew our Team was in the village and were particularly interested in capturing the American who accompanied them. Our midnight escape foiled them. The Cultural Team itself also fled into the night and escaped with one exception. Lan, the pretty young Vietnamese singer, was led away by the Viet Cong into the jungle. She – and her haunting, melancholy voice – were never heard from again."

Ed –This is another small part of an unforgettable experience which we are so privileged to share.

. **Steve Wynn** – sent in the following. This is worth a read, as Steve underwent an experience which almost reads like something out of a comedy show – though he wasn't impressed as he was involved! Really NOT funny.

"Hi Paul,

If I miss the next meeting, my apologies, I have a GP appointment around the same time, it is an actual visit for an injection, not a 'phone' visit.

Not sure if Christmas is the right time for the following story, but.

A story that might be of interest, about our health system, ruined by unionism and the inability to action any problems without causing a strike.

I was supposed to have an operation (gall bladder removal) on 1 December 2020 at the Port Macquarie Base Hospital. They told me on 30 Nov when I rang to check on progress, I would be on 'stand by' and to ring the hospital at 1200 on 1 Dec. I rang the hospital a little early as it is usually impossible to get through to the hospital when they say, as everyone else is doing the same because everyone gets told the same thing, ring at 1200. Anyway, I rang at 1145 and was told to ring back at 1300. My phone rang around 1210 with the hospital telling me to come in for surgery. I raced in immediately, not wanting to miss out since it takes a half hour fast drive to get there.

I went through all the usual pre-surgery checks and was in a bed waiting for theatre by 1315. There are about 9 beds in the area where everyone is waiting to be wheeled into theatre, the second last person went into theatre at 1600 but I was still there waiting. There must have been a shift change as the nurses I eventually saw were different to those that got me ready and into bed. At 1710, I got out of bed and stood up, one of the 4-6 nurses chatting amongst themselves, saw me and was surprised, maybe even shocked, because she said, hey there is someone still in (whatever they call the area) and then a male nurse who I had not seen before and did not see again, came and told me it was too late for my operation and I would have to go home without surgery. I was not happy about no one knowing I was still waiting in a bed but not much could be done, so I asked for my clothes, which had been taken away to the Ward where I was to end up after surgery. I eventually got my clothes, dressed, and my wife picked me up and we went home. The 3 days without my blood thinner, and other pills plus 24 hours with no food or drink was a bonus, but I probably (definitely) made up for the weight loss when I got back home.

I do believe we have the best health care in the world as long as you live near a major centre with a big hospital.

This was annoying, frustrating and time wasting, not to mention the tension and worry for myself and family, WAITING.

The wasted trips from where I live, to the next town where the hospital is, and return without a result. Whether it was because I was forgotten about, or earlier surgeries running over time is debateable but I now have to start all the tension and worry all over again waiting for the next appointment to meet the knife, hopefully on 15 Dec 2020.

In hindsight, I was glad I did not go to theatre at 1710 as I might have ended up like the last car on the production line at knock off time on a Friday, missing parts and incomplete re-assembly.

Cheers mate, Steve Wynn."

...Ed couldn't help responding to Steve with a couple of inane comments and Steve responded –

"G'day Paul,

If you think the membership would be interested, then go ahead and run the story in *E&Es*.

Mate it seems every time one has a blood test they find something new to explore or investigate, keeps all the pathology and specialists in work. All the GP visit is for, is to get a B12 injection, apparently, I am very short of it. I hope they read my blood test and not someone else's when they discovered this issue.

Good point, now that you mention it, I was dozing off towards the end, I think my snoring would 'hopefully' have alerted someone that I was there. Otherwise I would have been first up the next day, that would have buggered their schedule eh, I would have been really hungry and thirsty by then too.

The earlier shift nurses went around the large room and pulled all the curtains back to the wall which opened up the whole area, after the second last guy was wheeled into theatre at 1600, unfortunately my bed was in a location that was not easily visible from the nurse's station. Another problem was the nurses were rarely in the 'station' they were all chatting with another lot at the end of the 'ward' area where there were 3 people who were waiting, in lounge chairs, for their rides home after cataract surgery (day surgery), they had all had one eye operated on.

I must admit that the Ward nurses, where you go after major surgery, have always been fantastic when I have been in a recovery ward and generally the nurses are caring and helpful, this was just one of occasions when the system fell down. I could tell you a story about my 4 days in ICU at the same hospital after a heart attack when I learnt very quickly how to use all the equipment I was wired up to, including how to switch my alarm off that no one took any notice of.

Seems at my age, 78 now, things don't always work as they should, but I am still walking and thinking OK, although a little slower. I still drive a car OK - again a little slower I now stay within the speed limit. I am blessed to be able to function almost as well as when I was 50. I still use a chainsaw, split the firewood, do the fencing, clean the fire flu and solar panels etc so I cannot complain.

Most importantly, I have the most caring, loving and close family one could ask for.

Take care mate, Steve."

Ed – it's always good to get conversations going!

. **Ken Osborne** – "Dear Paul, to start with all the best for the festive season and the coming New Year, hoping you are keeping Covid safe and at least having a few sherbets to celebrate this time of year. With all the various restrictions imposed upon us here, we sort of lost track of time, as our usual routines were all put out of kilter. As a consequence, when I said last Saturday to my wife that Christmas Day was on Friday she "no it is not". She always does the Christmas cards and she really thought that Christmas was still a fortnight away, so instead of cards I have been emailing everyone that has a email and I will have to write quite a few letters in the new year to apologise for our lack of communication. Apart from that everything is going along fine, my daughter and son in law should be arriving later today and my granddaughter and her fiancée rung up to say they will be down just after New Year's Day, so it will be a case of musical beds for the next couple of weeks. My son has not indicated what he intends doing, but he will probably come down mid-January if I guess it right. I have a birthday mid-January so that is the likely time for him to visit and to see how the old "Bugger" is getting on.

I am wondering how you are getting over there? We hear all the reports on the news but we feel that most of the time we only get told the sensational stuff and everything else is skipped over. Some of the reports about Donald Trump's behaviour seem to be exaggerated, so what is really going on in the world is sometimes far different to what is really happening. The same applies here, Scott Morrison is doing a wonderful job as far as some reporters are concerned but the opposition and others condemn him for not doing enough. One matter of concern that I feel is a bit over the top is the reaction to the report of atrocities in Afghanistan. Some may have been committed, but even before they have had their day in court they have been found guilty and citations and awards are being threatened to be removed or rescinded. Not the appropriate reaction as far as I am concerned and it is those at the bottom of the chain getting all the blame with little regard to the brass that controlled them, and similarly here in Victoria, Dan the Man, with our Covid disaster puts the blame on his offsidiers and staff but denies any fault on his own part. (my Views Only).

On other matters, did you get my little essay on why I built model boats? It is something I have not done for a couple of years, though I have lots of plans for others, just do not seem to have the same enthusiasm anymore, so it must be old age.

I have been doing some reminiscing on my days at Woomera with the Face-Book Group there and it was surprising how many photos I had taken during my six years At the Rocket Range with the AGWTU. Most were around the village and local scenic spots but not on the Range itself as cameras were verboten. However, when I was about to leave I was able to purchase official photos of most of the missiles that I had witnessed being launched and again it surprised me that so few others ever bothered to get them, so what I had were well received and other photos got other people recalling their times at Woomera, I got labelled a visual storyteller and I also got to get in touch with others I had met or served with who I had not seen for forty years or so. Still catching up with old friends, from those days, so it is great.

Now, I will close for the moment, probably have other things to tell you, but cannot recall just at the moment. So, all the best for the moment, I will get back to you soon, regards Ken Osborne."



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...

. **Terry Westerway** – “Hi Paul,

We’re slowly coming out of the COVID restrictions, the last I read, NSW and Victoria had managed 28 straight days without any new infections. But I sometimes wonder if the advent of summer has as much to do with the fall in infections as does the lockdowns. There is so much hype about the coronavirus, comparisons with the “Black Death” of the Middle Ages and the “Spanish Flu” pandemic of the early 20th century, suggesting that the COVID-19 pandemic is on a similar scale. I don’t think it is anywhere near those examples. One thing they will never tell you is the correct interpretations of the statistics, nor the true comparison rate.

For instance, the US gets bashed over its death rate – which is based upon the “per capita” of the total population. BUT, the death rate SHOULD be on the “per capita” of total infections (and on that basis, the US does much better than the alarmist media would have you believe. And then the media are almost totally silent on infection rates and death rates in Asian, South American and African countries – creating the impression that the countries that do have reasonably accurate records (the western world) are far worse than anyone else. And places like China (Grrr, snarl) don’t publish records very often and then any records they do have are extremely doubtful anyway.

My wife (who is Chinese) went back to China in November to see her family. Wow, the rigmarole to get her there – 2 COVID tests (nucleic acid and serum antibody) no more than 48 hours before departure, had to be submitted to Chinese consulate for approval to board the plane. She went wrapped up like a mummy (face mask, face shield, protective suit) – when she arrived in China had another COVID test immediately after getting off plane, was sent into hotel quarantine for 14 days (confined to her hotel room), had yet another COVID test before she was allowed out of quarantine. She is now staying with her daughter, but is required to wear a face mask (even at home) for 5 days and has to have another COVID test at the end of the 5 days. Can’t tell me that the situation in China is not worse than they are letting on.

I am getting right “pissed off” with China, I would like to tell them to stick their trade up their bum and do what Donald Trump was talking about – “decouple” from China. And as for Angus Campbell handing the Chinese a “loaded gun” to shoot us with – amongst vets (and a lot of other people) Angus Campbell is about as “popular as a pork chop in a synagogue”.

On a personal note, I had a laminectomy (5 levels – L2 to S1) last year, taken me damn near 12 months to be able to get around properly – but I still have residual pain that they can do nothing about (as Ned Kelly said “such is life”) I told the doctor that cursing and swearing seemed to help a little – he said that they had actually done experiments on that very thing and found that cursing and swearing does help handle the pain/discomfort. So, there you have it – I can now curse and swear to my heart’s content, it is therapeutic!!! Terry.’

. **Rieny Nieuwenhof** – “G'day Paul,

Thanks for your note. Hope is all well. It seems from your message you are travelling OK and preparing for Winter. Life in Portarlington continues much the same as before, however many COVID restrictions are being lifted. Masks need only be worn in confined spaces, no masks outside! The number of visitors to your home has increased to 30 (I don't know anyone who would want that many visitors) and cafes, pubs and clubs are opening with limits on the number inside and outside. As we approach Christmas the number of people in our coastal village is increasing as they occupy their holiday houses and parking spaces. The local supermarket is a hive of activity (there is only one). The pub and golf club are gearing up for a big season. Unfortunately, our local RSL has decided not to open until next year, they are a very conservative lot.

The Vietnam Veterans Centre in Geelong is open again and members will be attending the Christmas luncheon this week. It is also time for membership renewals, currently we have 275 members and look forward to a similar number next year. Geelong is the second largest Sub Branch in VVAA Victoria. In fact, Victoria represents about 49% of the total membership in Australia, so we have a bit of influence. We also have a very active State President (Bob Elworthy) and Committee. Due to COVID our reunion group (Mick Butler, John Jaggard, Les Falkai, Peter Saint, Joe Molenkamp) had to cancel our reunion this year, but we have planned for another in 2021. I also keep in touch via FB with Rod Beasley and Ian Campbell, and of course the *Eyes and Ears* is an important vehicle for keeping in touch with other Locators. So that brings you up-to-date with what is happening with me and my wife (Gaye) here in beautiful Portarlington.

Catch you,
Regards, Rieny”

. **Rob Retrot** – “Hi Paul,

It has been awhile since I wrote to you. Sorry about that.

There always seems to be something to do around here. As someone once said, " you never get a day off from retirement." We have been almost two years in our new house. From concept in 2014 to moving in 2019 - it has been a long road. A number of things have been done after we moved in such as driveway, back patio, plunge pool and solar panels. The latter have proven to be extremely worthwhile - our latest "bill" was a credit of \$187.

So, most of this year we were free to do things. Like taking the Prado on a road trip in March - Brisbane to Uluru stopping overnight at various places like Broken Hill and Coober Pedy. There had been some talk about a virus, but it didn't seem like anything we should be worried about. So, Uluru was still open, except there was hardly anyone there. We had a Segway tour of the Rock booked and we were the only ones on it, plus our guide. Same with the Field of Lights and dinner under the stars. We were the only ones. No restaurants were open - no bars. Room service only.

Then the cancellations started; first Kings Canyon closed then Kakadu. We had no choice but to ask for our money back and head home.

We stayed in an almost deserted Alice Springs for a couple of days then headed north towards Tennant Creek before turning East toward Camooweal and home via Mt. Isa, Longreach, Barcaldine, Augathella and Roma. We had to get in touch with the various motels and bring our bookings forward by two weeks.

We negotiated two road blocks staffed by Police and Army personnel in the Northern Territory and another before being allowed to cross the Qld border West of Camooweal. No problems though they were happy to wave us through as Queenslanders returning home.

Albeit early. So, Jude still has not seen Kings Canyon or Kakadu.

Next opportunity we might fly to Darwin and rent a car and go to Cooina Resort in Kakadu for a few days. I don't think I will be up for another 5000km road trip anytime soon.

Other than that, Jude and I are both well and trying to ward off birthdays. We play table tennis two or three times a week and enjoy both the exercise and the social contact. Not to mention the fruit mince pies served at morning tea time.

Paul, all the best for the Xmas season to you and Helen. Stay safe and healthy; the alternatives suck.

Best wishes, Rob and Jude”

. Graham Williams – “Hi There Paul,

Thanks for the heads up and latest news from your neck of the woods.

We are long past lockdown here and pretty much back to what used to be normal except for International travel. Has not affected me personally with whatever restrictions went down. If there was a problem it was getting into Qld for doc and specialist appointments. Although as the crow flies we live less than half a mile from the border still had to go online and get the required border pass. As the passes changed 17 times over the border closures more time spent online than getting through the traffic line at the check points. No worries mate and all open now.

Like yourself I recently got the chop for a basal carcinoma. Shock/horror at last check up the doc told me he suspected there were three. Did biopsies and got lucky...just the one. Watched him cut it out and amazed the cut seemed so long...finished up with 12 stitches. Healing O.K. but 3 people have already asked me if I have attempted suicide. How one gets a malignant carcinoma under the watchband on the underside of their wrist will remain a mystery to me. Good to see you still golfing even if you do need to rug up somewhat. Unlike you my golfing days are way behind me these days. After multiple shoulder re constructions when the specialist tells you....” Now, I do not want to see you in here again because if you need to come back there is nothing I can do for you” it is time for one to re prioritize. There endeth my golfing days.

Jenni is still working (nursing) and got through Covid O.K. in her work place. As she has worked both Xmas day and New Year's Day for the past 5 years it will be nice to have her home for a change as this year she has been rostered off.

We have no plans as such for that time and expecting no visitors so a quiet time to recharge the batteries and do a bit around the house.

A vet mate might drop round for a time Xmas day between other appointments. He served with 32 small ships and moved to Vietnam about 6 years ago. Bought a house in Vung Tau coming back here every 6 months or so for any required medical appointments. Came over in Feb this year, got caught up with Covid before he was due to go back and has not been able to get back since. Offhand I think 7 flights cancelled thus far. He went online last week and did find another flight. Would have set him back almost \$12,000 in fares for himself and the Vietnamese flower and on arrival 2 weeks' isolation for both in a Vietnamese army camp. Passed forthwith on that so his saga here will continue.

Jenni is happy the dog shows will start again in the New Year although due to the heat nearly all the dogs have dropped coat. It was like Xmas in early November here I can tell you but despite restrictions we have kept active. I go to gym twice a week...mainly Pilates to strengthen and stretch out muscles and tendons that seem to have had no use in years. I have found it very beneficial actually and can also work out here as have all the gear at home. The social life has been good also. The past 3 weekends have dropped into Greenmount surf club in Coolangatta on Sunday afternoons. They have had 60's and 70's cover bands each afternoon...my kind of music, so, fun over a few beers catching up with locals we have not seen for some time. We go out for dinner one night a week (different restaurants) and also do different cafes for breakfast regularly so don't seem to be missing out on life in the grand scheme of things. As it is said Paul “Life be in it.” Shall take this opportunity to wish yourself, Helen and your extended families every best wish of the season, a Happy Xmas and every best wish for the coming year. That's about it from here Paul. Keep up the exceptional work with *Eyes and Ears* and most importantly stay safe.

Cheers, G.W.”

. John Richmond – ‘Hi Paul

Am a bit slow on the uptake lately

The current prostate cancer treatment is not the greatest. It gives me hot flushes (a hormone treatment). The idea is to lower my psa readings. Seems to have worked on the first jab. See the specialist middle of January am hoping the results are great.

Will be glad to see the end of 2020. Although I must admit now Sydney is in the phase 2, doesn't seem like the start of 2021 will be all that hot. With Canberra being in the middle of NSW we could be in trouble if the Covid19 disease goes wild we could also be in middle of it.

We are staying put over Xmas and the New Year.

All the best to u and yours for the festive season. John”

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

Locator’s Reunion Program 23/24/25th April 2021 15th Birthday of 20th Regiment RAA



Despite the uncertainty caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, the LSTAA committee have continued to plan the Locator’s biennial reunion, so please put the dates in your planner and join us in Brisbane.

Friday 23rd April 2021:

Daytime - free to tour Brisbane and environs.

LSTAA Annual General Meeting in the Sky Lounge at 5pm, Kedron Wavell RSL.

Locator’s Reunion Cocktail Party at 6pm, to celebrate 20th Regiment’s 15th birthday. Drinks & nibbles in the Sky Lounge [cost yet to be determined].

Dress for men, jacket & tie with miniatures, ladies after 6pm.

Saturday 24th April 2021:

10am until 3pm, 20th Regiment’s family day at Fort Lytton Historic Military Precinct, 30min drive from the CBD.

<https://fortlytton.org.au/>

*20th Regiment’s equipment display & guided tours of historical Fort Lytton.

* Family barbeque, a gold coin donation per adult.

Free transport available for visitors, leaving Brisbane’s ANZAC Square at 9.30am and returning approx. 3.30pm.

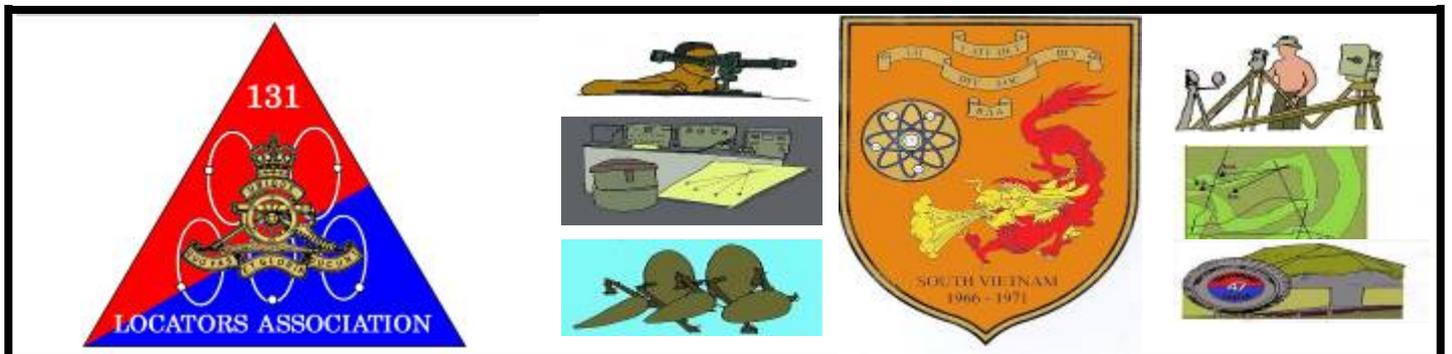
There is ample car parking at the Fort, which will be closed to the general public.

Sunday 25th April 2021:

At 5am 20th Regiment RAA will conduct the Traditional Dawn Service at our memorial wall at Gallipoli Barracks, Enoggera.

{Because of Covid-19 restrictions, the Brisbane ANZAC Day March committee plan to have the march at the Royal Exhibition Grounds, parading association banners in front of select representatives. At their next meeting in mid Feb, hopefully with further easing of restrictions, they may decide to have the traditional march again in the CBD}.

Please watch for future updates, hope you & your family have a Merry Christmas, a safe & brighter 2021 and that we’ll all catch up in Brisbane.



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>

Presidential perambulations

The National Broadband Network (NBN) has made it into our part of Australia. There have been footpaths dug up, new bitumen on some parts of the road and a general resistance to connection. However, connection is compulsory. An NBN letter said we had three months to connect or our internet would be disconnected. So, I signed up. The modem turned up in the mail, but no router. Then a little Indian technician (was he cricketer Virat Kohli perhaps?) arrived on the stated day and within the four-hour window for time.

His first question related to the location of a telephone line. I explained that we did not possess such a connection because plumbing work many years ago saw the line severed and never replaced because our provider Optus was going to take too long to reconnect. "I cannot do anything because it needs a cherry picker to access your private power/telephone pole". Some weeks later a team of three arrived to put the phone line in. Then another technician appointment was agreed and this time a tall Asian technician appeared to make the connection. The process was fairly painless and everything worked.

And a strange event took place. Twelve months ago, I bought a new HP i7, 2 terra-bite laptop – sort of a twin turbo V12 with a huge boot - because my ASUS stalwart had died. I transferred everything to the new device and found it to be unacceptably slow and prone to just stopping in mid-stream. As a backup, I had a new hard drive installed in the old ASUS. One consistency between the old and new laptops was, despite paying for updated software, my Outlook just didn't work. So, I transferred to G-mail to access my emails. And voila with the installation of NBN, suddenly Outlook was alive and well. Just like that!

Consequently, this note will go via Outlook to Ed Dicko in Mexico. As a self-taught computer operator I have no idea why that should have happened so unexpectedly. But it did, and I'm not complaining.

On behalf of the 131 Locators Association Committee, I extend greetings to all our members and readers for a better 2021 year than 2020. Stay clear of the bug and enjoy being a little bit older in the new year.

Best wishes

Allen

50 Years
 April 1966 - April 2016



The Memories Remain
 1966 - 1971



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

. Upcoming Events Calendar –

131 Locators Association Committee Meeting Date: **Tuesday, 9th February, 2021 at 1100hrs**
 Venue: **Venue and Zoom link will be advised.** You're all welcome

. Pertinent Points – extracted from the 131 Locators Association Committee **ZOOM** Meeting Date: Tuesday, ??th ??, 2020 at 1105hrs...

Attendees were:

Allen Morley, Ian Amos, Merv Nairn, ??, Grahame Dignam, Ernie Newbold, Paul Dickson, Terry Erbs

Ron Mason, Bert Blink, Barry Guzder

Steve Wynn



Financial Membership is currently ...**120**, plus Associates **2**, Affiliates **12**. Total **134**. Lapsed **39** members

Presidents report.

Allen advised that:

- . The new LSTAA banner was unveiled at the Xmas do. The rollup was lower than normal due to the unusual heat on the day, approx. 44D Celsius with strong westerly winds. Covid19 restrictions and creeping old age.
- . Following discussions with the NSW Government, RSL NSW has made the decision to cancel all public ANZAC Day commemoration services across the state. Given the significant concerns around the spread of COVID-19, it would be irresponsible to allow such large gatherings.
- . An executive meeting of the Qld LSTAA will be held on 10/12/20 to resolve Reunion and Anzac Day activities in that state.
- . The SAS issue and the Brereton Report were discussed at this point and a letter of support was offered to 20 Regt RAA but was declined as the issue is being dealt with internally.
- . Also, serving and ex- service soldiers generally were supported individually via the “Voice of a Veteran” link provided by Heston Russell.

Public Officer Report.

Gordon provided the original receipted copy of the Fair Trading report following the AGM and donated the \$47.00 cost to the Association. Received with thanks.

Webmaster Update.

The Face book page membership is now 186 and activity is building with regular updates being posted.

Health.

- . Keith Ayliffe continues to convalesce from a recent operation but now requires further intervention. Watch this space.
- . Terry advised Stan Briggs visited him recently and reported he was in Brisbane for treatment of skin cancers.
- . Merv Nairn advised he had visited Des McGuiggan who appeared to be in bad shape having lost a lot of body weight. He will revisit again in the short term to check on his progress.
- . We have not had any notification of any members having contracted the COVID19 so well done all for your vigilance and diligence.

General Business and around the grounds.

Discussions ensued on the following:

- . Barry Advised of a gathering in WA of local Locators. Further details to be provided in due course.

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...January –

Day	NAME	Regt. No.	YOB	IN SVN	OUT SVN	COMMENTS
1	VICTOR DANKO	2783210	1945	04 05 1967	12 12 1967	
1	JOE LIBRIZZI	5716081	1947	23 09 1969	04 06 1970	
1	CHRIS CHAPPLE	5716208	1948	20 01 1970	13 08 1970	
1	RICHARD CHAPLIN	2791166	1948	20 01 1970	13 08 1970	
2	JOHN BROWNE	218367	1949	27 08 1969	13 08 1970	
2	KEVIN "KJ" SALTER Cpt	51470	1939	N/A	02 01 1938	† 25.03.2020
3	GARY NAVAS	2793162	1949	30 05 1970	26 05 1971	
4	PETER PETTIFORD	3792038	1947	08 11 1968	04 06 1969	
5	GRAEME SMITH	6708707	1946	12 04 1968	20 08 1968	
6	ARTHUR DOVE	217348	1950	13 01 1969	28 11 1969	
6	ALLAN ROBOTHAM	6709864	1950	25 05 1971	18 11 1971	

9	PETER SADLER	15138	1941	20 05 1966	28 04 1967	† 2008
9	ROBERT NESS	4717755	1945	20 05 1966	30 04 1967	
9	(GERARD) DAVID PIRES	5717069	1949	03 03 1971	12 08 1971	
11	PAUL TRAVERS Maj.	47027	1940	{09 09 1965	19 09 1965	VISIT
	" "			{25 02 1967	04 04 1967	RAEME
11	GRAEME LESLIE	1861 4	1942	1969	1970	† Unknown
11	PETER PIORO	2790931	1948	27 11 1969	04 05 1970	
12	PETER HOPPER Sgt	3787938	1945	04 05 1967	12 12 1967	
12	DAVID REILLY	3794901	1948	24 03 1970	13 08 1970	
12	BRIAN JOHNSON	4720991	1949	29 05 1970	05 05 1971	AACC
	" "			14 05 1970	27 05 1970	1st Armour.Regt.
12	LASZLO FALKAI	4721836	1949	03 03 1971	30 06 1971	131
	" "			30 06 1971	18 11 1971	12 Fd REGT.
13	ROGER HOLMES	3795910	1948	22 07 1970	25 02 1971	
15	GEORGE STAZIKER Lt Col	2108436	1938	14 04 71	01 05 71	† 29.12.12
15	PHIL. ENDICOTT	2783419	1945	06 01 1967	27 09 1967	
16	KEN OSBORNE WO1	48543	1937	18 04 67	02 04 68	RAEME
16	EDWARD COOPER	44231	1950	26 08 1969	21 01 1970	
16	LESLIE SAURINE	2791863	1947	24 03 1970	17 12 1970	
18	PETER SZABO	38752	1947	26 03 1969	25 03 1970	† 07.12.07
19	BARRY HEARD	3788324	1945	02 04 1967	25 10 1967	Honorary 131
19	PETER FIELDEN	3797872	1949	25 11 1970	12 08 1971	
21	PETER SUCKLING SGT	55141	1943	05.02.1971	15.11.1971	
22	KEVIN BROWNING Sgt	217743	1948	16 09 1968	24 09 1969	131
	" "			05 04 1971	29 06 1971	131
	" "			30 06 1971	18 11 1971	12 Fd REGT.
22	MICHAEL BARLOW	2792252	1949	19 08 1970	11 03 1971	4 Fd Regt.
23	DONALD CHALMERS	3793171	1945	01 07 1969	03 12 1969	
	IAN "Scotty" McNICOL	216327	1945	{12 09 1967	17 09 1968	131
	" "			{09 04 1970	02 05 1970	VISIT
24	TERENCE ERBS	3791713	1947	28 10 1968	04 06 1969	
24	DAVID NEGUS	3794728	1947	24 02 1970	13 08 1970	
25	WALLY FRANKLIN	1411285	1949	29 01 1968	28 01 1969	
26	RAY HUTCHINSON	37669	1940	17 04 1967	02 04 1968	
26	GEOFFREY TODD	54254	1943	18 12 1967	10 12 1968	† 2012
27	WADE COOPER	5805611/821668 2	1984	IRAQ/E.TIMOR/AFGHANI STAN		20STA
27	ALLAN ADAMS	3788792	1945	04 05 1967	27 09 1967	
28	ROBIN TORRISI	1735572	1948	20 08 1970	12 03 1971	
29	PETER MACKIE	2184557	1949	20 08 1970	08 02 1971	
30	ALAN McDONALD	511355	1947	05 12 1967	03 12 1968	
31	COLIN GORDON	16975	1945	15 03 1968	26 03 1969	† 28.03.10

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

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

Peter Fielden – does anyone know anything about Peter!

. **Locator Profiles** – we've received 163 and we've sent out 163. Ed – Gee it's a long time since e we received any incoming? **Maybe 2021 might see a change.**

. **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.

Ian Campbell, Official Association Detective - has come up with another amazing and heart-filling result because of his investigations.

Re: Jim Lawler –

Lawler, James Frederick, Sgt, 28523, SVN 1967-68 Born 18.09.36 Passing 14.08.20

This follows up on the update with regards to Jim's DoD being corrected in last month's *Eyes & Ears*.

"In confirming the date of our departed comrade's death, I spoke to **Jim's daughter-in-law Cynthia**. Jim only passed on 14th Aug 2020 at the Maitland Private Hospital and Cynthia was obviously missing him greatly and was interested to hear about the 131 group. She also commented that Jim spoke so little about his time in SVN that the whole thing was a mystery to her.

Cynthia is keen to chat with any of his close mates who could relate an anecdote or two from the time spent in SVN. If anyone is interested in calling her please email your phone number to **Paul Dickson - 131eyesandears@gmail.com** and it will be passed on to Cynthia. Ian"



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...this is not accessible.



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 Det 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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