

THE EYES and EARS

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

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Veterans Affairs

Supported by the Department of



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

**Detachment 131 Divisional
Locating Battery RAA
South Vietnam 1966 – 1971
2024
59 Years and the Detachment
Spirit Remains**



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



31Delta



Our "Neighbors"



Bravo Radar



Horseshoe 1967

Editorial – This edition of *Eyes and Ears* is the 200th published since we began this series back in February, 2009 – just over 16 years.

We have morphed from the beginning, which were some pretty simple editions to this date, and our reach out and responses are extremely gratifying.

We'd like to take this opportunity to thank ALL of you that have contributed in any way or another.

Let's stay together for as long as we can and let us not forget our co-Locators who are no longer with us.

May They Rest in Peace

**Paul "Dicko" Dickson
Editor**



Give me a Name?

The “Lost Locator Project”

This Project is being re-ignited for 2024.

Our current list contains the names of **87** Locators (as at 31.03,2025) that we have not had contact with since, basically, commencing communications in 2012, so, we are going to focus a little more on this programme to try and reduce this number.

Let’s have a look at April’s Birthday List, below, where there are 6 Detachment and Battery Members listed as Lost Locators – see the names below.

So, we’ve done some great discoveries with Members Dates Of Death, I’m hoping we might muster some enthusiasm for this difficult task. I’ve added some more details as to full DoB’s and places of birth according to the DVA Nominal Roll for, maybe, some help.

However, this doesn’t mean that we still have contact with the total number of Battery/Detachment members we have Located over time as continuing correspondence has lapsed in a lot of cases. **I have 252 recipients (Association).**

We regularly check bereavement/funeral notices and this does not locate members in the way we really want to.

So, we’re appealing for **YOUR** help in scouring all sorts of sources – local RSL’s may be a good starter.

Date	Name	Regt No	DoB	SVN In	SVN Out	DVA Location
4	William Francis Laughlin	2788465	1945	14 01 1969	27 08 1969	Deniliquin, NSW
7	David Christopher Martin	2781662	1945	22 04 1966	29 04 1967	Sydney, NSW
9	Terrence William Myers	217798	1950	09 05 1969	30 04 1970	Perth, WA
11	Michael Eris McDonnell	2781377	1945	04 05 1966	11 12 1966	Sydney, NSW
11	Terrence Daniel Fox L/Bd	1200934	1949	08 07 1968	02 07 1969	Unknown
19	Barry Kenneth Dyson	3795956	1947	04 06 1970	04 03 1971	Melbourne, Vic

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

Paul Dickson

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

. Unknown/Known Dates of Deaths continues to be updated...as at 28.02.2025 –

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

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

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

Sadly, we’ve added Ronald Frederick Mason to the list below as he recently passed. (See Vale below)

10 Year Detachment/131 Battery Death Periods

	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	Total
	1	0	2	0	1	0	2	0	1	0	7
	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	
	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	2	0	2	8
	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	

0	0	2	2	2	1	2	1	0	0	10
1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	
3	2	2	2	0	3	2	1	2	1	18
2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	
0	4	4	4	2	9	5	6	5	4	43
2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	
8	4	5	5	6	7	10	10	8	2	65
Unknowns*										1
Total										151

???
Please note that these figures represent data provided by Members, from what was, and is stated to be reliable sources (official notices/family/mates etc). Data as at **28.02.2025**.

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

This following sections have now been updated as of 31.01.2025 and show a clear picture of Battery/Detachment Members that have incomplete Date of Death details.

Here are the names and details –

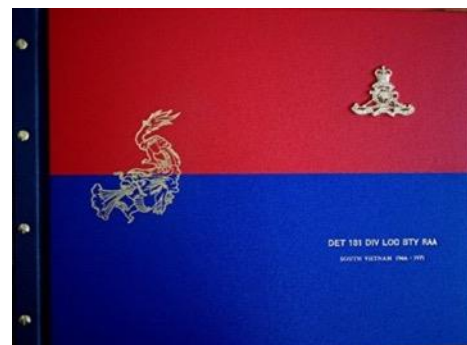
Name	Rank	Regt No	Section	SVN	DoB	DoD
Robinson, Marcus Lee	Gnr	2791229		1970	14.02.48	Unknown

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

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

Ok, detectives, here’s more homework – I more gap to go!

. **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.



Mail Call...

Paul Dickson – I couldn’t resist copying the following pieces from Bob Billiards Facebook page...It’s a classic!

Just found this photo of me at practice day Oran park for the 1969 Go kart Road Racing Championships. Home made kart with a McCulloch Mac 9 98cc single carby petrol engine with a top speed of 98MPH into the kart braking area. Came second in the championships but at Catalina raceway.

Bob, where did you get to after this?

Paul

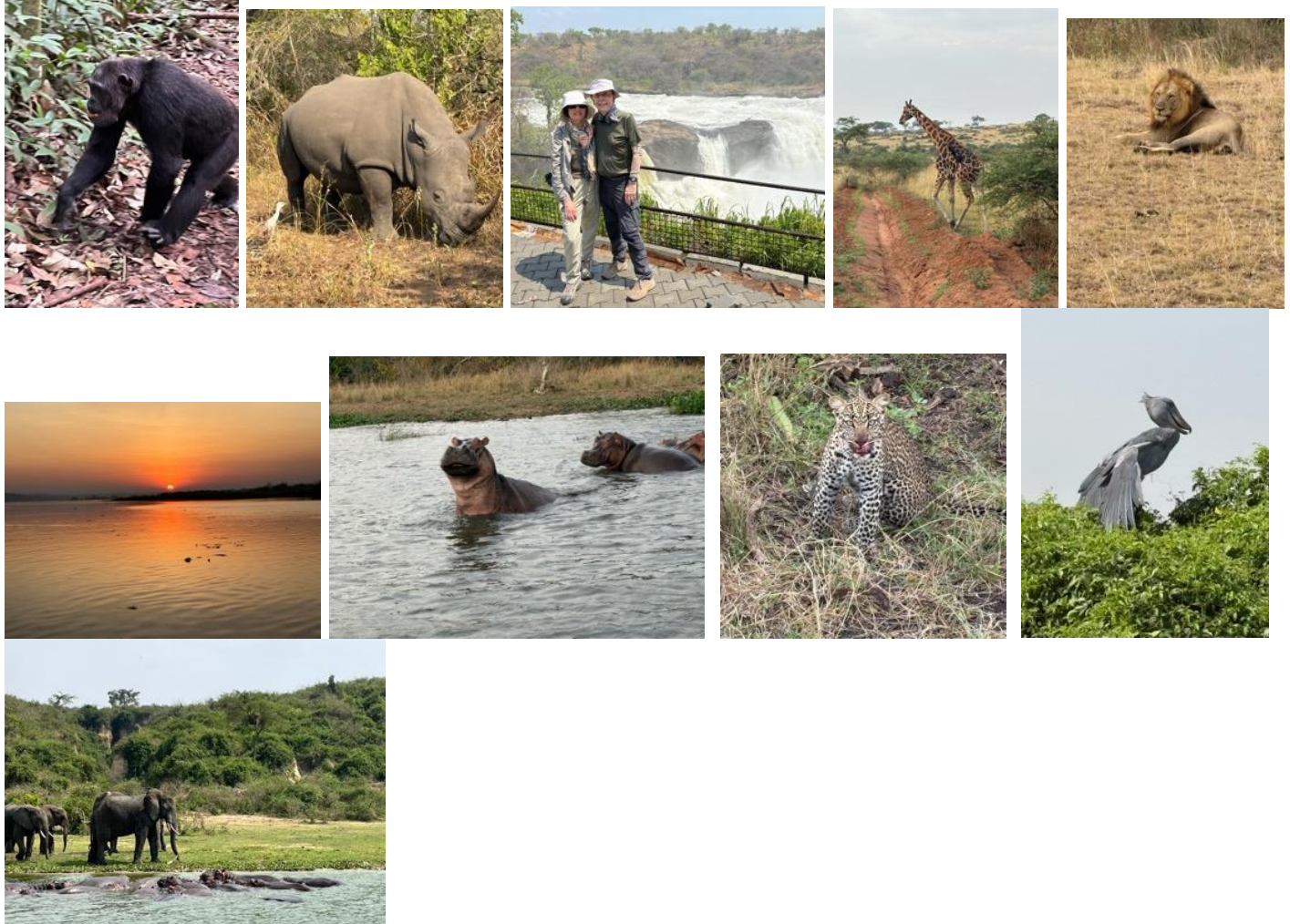


Paul Dickson – Here are some photos taken (we took a few thousand!) while I was MIA in March...

We started and ended the trip in Madrid (amazing architecture/Museums/Galleries)...



...then Uganda where we encountered endless wildlife (close up and personal), covered the Nile and Lake Victoria – it was totally eye-poppingly amazing...



...and then did a wander through Porto, Portugal.





Mail Out



Ed - I started this section in September, 2017 and have continued to write to Locators based on a year quarterly basis, by breaking down the names alphabetically into groups of one third of the then available list. The list has diminished over time, but, in general, there is a good core of blokes who communicate regularly to say g'day and just to generally keep in touch. A lot of the blokes I've never met, so it's just to keep some connection alive. Plus, it's good to keep in touch, even sporadically, it may help to avoid any unpleasant unforeseen surprises.

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

Mail In



- Here are the responses...

Iain Kennedy - G'day, first time for 2025

"Paul,

Good to hear from you as always, will hold my response until towards the end of March. As something exciting might happen in the period of time.

2024 has gone and a distant memory and 2025 already approaching the end of its first quarter. As I'm married now into an Asian family this time of year is super busy, big family Christmas quickly followed this year by Lunar New Year, so I still haven't lost the weight I put on in Malaysia last November. Though I did get some runners for Christmas, so that I can do some jogging as well as my current trainer and bike riding. Because obviously what I'm currently doing is not enough. This month is a big birthday month as I get my OBE (Over Bloody Eighty), want it to pass quietly with no one noticing. I don't feel that old, so I really like it to just be another number. Though I was out to lunch with some work colleges from a company we all worked at before the Vietnam war (65 yrs ago) and I was second youngest there, felt good. Though reaching such a milestone has caused me bite the bullet and resign from my main printing/packaging agency and head towards semi-retirement. Just cannot be bothered going city to city calling on pimple faced kids, being polite and putting up with all the woke rubbish. Getting too old for this.

Next exciting thing for us on the travel front is going to Cairns at end of May for a Line Dance event, April is already filled out with both Easter and Anzac Day, oh and wedding anniversary! Have booked a cruise from Singapore to Tokyo, but that is not until 2026. Next overseas trip will be family catch up in Thailand, or Malaysia, just when you have a big family it's harder to bring everyone together from different countries and age groups.

On Saturday my nephew and I went to the Melbourne F1 Grand Prix practice day, it was 37 Degrees and there was practically no shade and I nearly melted. Food was outrageously expensive and tasteless. There were people everywhere and every second person appears to be wearing McLaren Orange, either cap or T shirt.

Think I need/want a new bike for my birthday, though hard to justify for the few thousand kilometre I do a year now days. Then again it helps the economy and if I don't spend it, someone else will. Haha!

Well that's enough for now. Hope your Uganda trip was all you expected and more and you arrived back safe and sound. Cheers for now

Regards, Iain K."

Ed – "OBE" The Governor General is going to be busy this year handing these out!

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

58 Years
April 1966 – April 2024



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

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

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

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

ANZAC Day 2025 – Sydney Information...

Please see below the update for the 2025 Sydney ANZAC Day March.



ANZAC DAY Brisbane 2025 Information...

All Locators, families and friends of the Regiment are invited to 20th Regiment's traditional 5am Dawn Service to be held at the Regiment's memorial wall in front of HQ building, Gallipoli Barracks at Enoggera. If the base security status remains unchanged, entry will be via the main gate from 3.30am [see map].



After the dawn service, breakfast will be served beside the Menz Club, in the Checkley Annex, from about 5.30am. As usual on ANZAC Day, there is free public travel for veterans on QR trains or BCC council buses.

The LSTAA banner will be located in George St, near corner of Charlotte St, from about 9.00am and this will be the rallying point for Locators. The Brisbane march starts at 10am and we, as part of Group 4 Army Associations are requested to form up

at 10.25am in George St, corner of Charlotte St, in position 9, and to acknowledge the Centenary of Locating, will lead the Artillery Associations ahead of "A" Battery.

2025 ANZAC DAY PARADE BRISBANE MAP



KEY	
→ Participant Flow	→ Vehicle Flow
..... March Path	Jeep Loading Area
Saluting Dais	Jeep Holding Area
Vehicle Entry Point (For All Parade Vehicles)	Information Tent
Vehicle Exit point	Vehicle Path to Holding Area
ABC TV Tower	Buggy Shuttle Area
Road Closure	Equipment Truck
Band Start/Finish	Veterans Exit Route
Event Toilets	Veterans Tent
ORDER OF MARCH (see Parade Programme)	

- 1 Group 1 (FUP 9:45AM)
- 2 Group 2 (FUP 9:55AM)
- 3 Group 3 (FUP 10:10AM) - Army
- 4 Group 4 (FUP 10:25AM) - Army Assns
- 5 Group 5 (FUP 10:55AM) - RAN
- 6 Group 6 (FUP 11:10AM) - RAAF
- 7 Group 7 (FUP 11:25AM) - RAAF Assns
- 8 Group 8 (FUP 11:30AM) - Allied Assns
- 9 Group 9 (FUP 11:40AM) - Descendants
- 10 Group 10 (FUP 11:45AM) - Youth & Volunteer

The march route is similar to last year – starting in George St, right into Adelaide St past the saluting dais on the left at King George Square past ANZAC Square, then right into Creek St and down to Eagle St to fallout. Construction continues on the Brisbane Metro with works under/along Adelaide St and the road narrows approaching King George Square and the spectator areas in the vicinity are very limited. After fallout, there will be the usual group photo, then it's an easy short walk to the Stock Exchange Hotel, <https://www.stockexchangehotel.com.au/> at the corner of Edward & Charlotte St.

For early entry to the "Stockie", Locator's & family please get tickets from RSM Geoff Bruhn, Maj. Russ Hamsey or myself. So, catchup with mates at the "Stockie" for a few convivial drinks.

Terry Erbs
President LSTAA
terry.erbs@gmail.com
MOB 0403 500 642

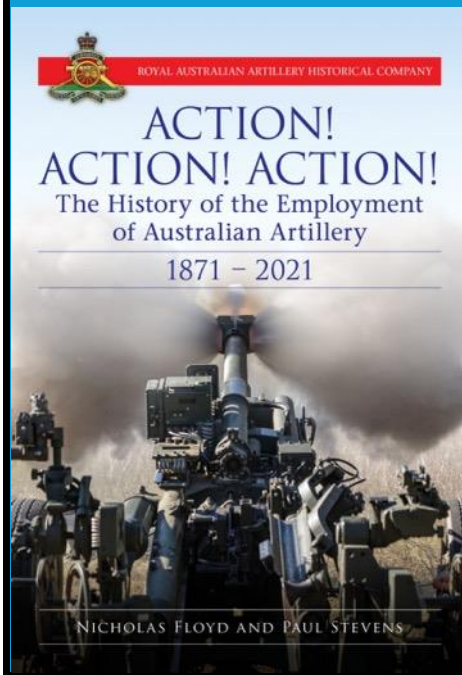


**DON'T FORGET!!!
ANZAC Day 2025**

**Whatever you're doing take and send in photos to
Eyes & Ears at Paul Dickson – 131eyesandears@gmail.com–**



A bit on the publication suitable for a gift to a Vets Local School around ANZAC DAY as a token of friendship.



"ACTION! ACTION! ACTION!"

Copies available for \$20.00 postage included

The History of the Employment of Australian Artillery 1871-2021

Authors: Lieutenant Colonel Nick Floyd

Release Date: 12/Aug/2024

Subject: Australian Gunners

Pages: 288

Book Type: Paperback

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



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

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



Committee Members:

President: *Allen Morley*

Vice President: *Bert Blink*

Treasurer/Secretary: *Grahame Dignam*

Public Officer: *Gordon Malcolm*

Webmaster: *Bob Billiard*

Research Officer: *Ernie Newbold*

Design Development Officer: *Nick Proskurin*

Eyes and Ears Editor: *Paul Dickson*



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

Regional Representatives: ACT- *Bert Blink*, Qld – *Terry Erbs*, SA – *Geoff Blackwell*, Vic – *Alan Adams*,
Vic Nth: *Ron Mason*, WA – *Barry Guzder*

<http://www.131locators.org.au>

Presidential perambulations

Covid has generally passed by, although remnants remain. Nevertheless, I have noticed what seem to be two outcomes of the treatment that State and Federal governments inflicted upon the community.

The first involves the use of a telephone, be it mobile or landline. A call is made, and you are advised that your call is important, and because the amount of calls is higher than normal, please leave your number and a detailed message. Do you receive a returned call? In my experience not very often.

The second relates to work from home entitlement. The WFH mob have had it easy now for several years. And, not surprisingly, they believe they are owed the right to continue to enjoy this work arrangement. Many classifications or employees and small business owners have to go to work away from home. However, the entitled workers continue to demand their working freedom.

Gunner Ron Mason. was a gentle, sincere farmer who enjoyed talking about his Victorian regional farm. Ron was involved with our association, other regional ex-service organisations and kept us informed of happenings with the national Vietnam Veterans Museum on Phillip Island. Ron will be missed. Requiescat in pace Ron.

58 Years
April 1966 – April 2024



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

Pertinent Points extracted from the Minutes for the General Meeting of the 131 Locators Association Inc. via Zoom internet on Tuesday 11 th March 2025

Zoomed members were: Grahame Dignam, Alan Morley, Terry Erbs, Bert Blink, Bob Billiards, Ernest Newbold and Merv Nairn

Apologies were received from Paul Dickson, Rieny Nieuwenhof, Barry Guzder, George Lane, Jim Fitzgerald, Ged Carroll, Nick Proskurin and other State Reps

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

Financial Membership is currently ...120 plus Associates 2 plus Affiliates 16 **Total 138**

Plus Lapsed on 1 March 2025 36 members.

Presidents report.

Allen referenced.

. NSW RSL have been advised of our unit information and preparations for Sydney Anzac Day are complete. Members meet under the Banner on Cnr Bent and O'Connell Sts. Sydney CBD.

. Reminder that the Reunion in Qld is scheduled for 13/14 June 2025.

. Prospects of continuing the Photo Album project. Grahame and Ernest felt that we should continue as a way forward has opened up, but time was the enemy. Efforts will continue. A number of unseen pictures were disclosed.

Public Officer Report.

Gordon has no issues relevant to our association to report. However, he reported he has been elected President of his local RSL Sub-branch.

Webmaster Update.

. Robert advised Facebook members are 509. We are still attracting some who want to join (but are rejected) with no connection to our page and are usually from the USA.

Health Report:

. Terry reported that **Steve Wynn** had ongoing issues with his eyes as the medics work their way through his issues.

. Bert reports **Geoff Jebb** had been in contact and is keeping well. He also spoke with **Peter Mackie**, an ACT local, who is also doing well.

General Business and around the grounds:

Discussions ensued on the following:

. A discussion on the available pictures covering significant/historic moments Survey, Radar, use of choppers and other equipment.

. A note was made to separate focus between Digital (online) and physical albums with Digital taking preference to increase exposure for the project and generate more interest via updates on Facebook. Further information is required from the Regiment and Battery re the Physical ALBUM

. Terry also mentioned our shared cost for the production of the plaque for Afghanistan veterans. Further discussions are needed and there is a chance that DVA may assist.

If you've got more photos that you want added, just send them to: - Paul Dickson – web Photos
131eyesandears@gmail.com – BUT DON'T FORGET TO ADD TITLES/NAMES ETC.

Upcoming Events Calendar –

131 Locators Association Committee Meeting

Date: Tuesday, 8th April, 2025 at 1100hrs

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



Birthdays in the Battery...April –

Date	Name	Regt No	SVN In	SVN Out	Comments
1	Desmond John Spencer Temp/Bdr	3787905	03 01 1967	13 12 1967	
1	Ian Morris Capt.	243062	10 03 1970	09 07 1970	RAEME
	" "		09 07 1970	11 03 1971	106 Fd Wkshp
2	Hilton George Holloway	1736606	17 12 1970	02 05 1971	131
	" "		03 05 1971	26 10 1971	12 Fd Regt.
4	Kevin Raymond "Soul" Maker	2251507	27 08 1969	13 08 1970	† 24.05.2020
4	William Francis Laughlin	2788465	14 01 1969	27 08 1969	Deniliquin, NSW
7	John Alexander "Kanga" McFadden	2783243	05 05 1967	27 09 1967	
7	David Christopher Martin	2781662	22 04 1966	29 04 1967	Sydney, NSW
8	Richard John Bristow	1733143	12 04 1968	16 04 1969	
8	Leon Djatschenko	312532	27 08 1969	13 08 1970	
9	Terrence William Myers	217798	09 05 1969	30 04 1970	Perth, WA
11	Michael Eris McDonnell	2781377	04 05 1966	11 12 1966	Sydney, NSW
11	Terrence Daniel Fox L/Bd	1200934	08 07 1968	02 07 1969	Unknown
12	Kevin Raymond Bevans	3798316	13 02 1971	06 06 1971	131
	" "		07 06 1971	02 11 1971	12 Fd Regt
15	Rieny Anthony Nieuwenhof T/Bdr	3798241	11 02 1971	05 08 1971	
19	Ronald "Chalky" Vincent Royal WO2	23552	02 03 1967	20 02 1968	† 01.05.2002
19	Peter Andrew Clarke	3792212	11 11 1968	27 08 1969	† 20.02.2001
19	Barry Kenneth Dyson	3795956	04 06 1970	04 03 1971	Melbourne, Vic
20	Anthony Charles Turner	1202849	27 01 1971	30 06 1971	131
	" "		01 07 1971	15 11 1971	12 Fd Regt.
21	Jeffrey Ronald Bassford L/Bdr	2792419	30 04 1970	14 04 1971	† 19.06.2022
21	Neville Peter Arthur Davis	5716997	11 02 1971	12 08 1971	
22	Barry Leonard Campton Capt.	61270	{14 07 1963	22 07 1963	
	" "		{12 08 1966	28 04 1967	

22	Mark Szypulski	313270	20 08 1970	07 03 1971	† 03.11.2016
	" "		08 03 1971	17 03 1971	131
23	Murray Lionel Smale	5411587	27 11 1967	20 08 1968	
24	Johannes Gerard Anthony Las	3792338	23 09 1968	18 06 1969	
25	Kevin William Banks T/Bdr	3794366	27 11 1969	04 06 1970	
25	Quenton James Knight	2412578	10 12 1968	24 09 1969	† 18.01.2020
26	Grahame Charles Dignam	2784745	05 05 1967	20 02 1968	
26	William David Crowther	215416	22 04 1966	31 10 1966	† 14.01.2020
27	Gerald Ian Young Maj.	311460	{06 03 1967	04 04 1967	RAEME
	" "		{25 05 1967	22 06 1967	RAEME
28	Gary Wayne Lovell	218160	08 05 1969	30 04 1970	
29	Ronald Frederck Mason	3787154	04 05 1966	03 03 1967	† 16.03.2025
29	Kevin Anthony Thornton	2781420	04 05 1966	31 01 1967	
29	Bernard Georhe Erica (Earwicker)	3787334	20 05 1966	03 03 1967	† 23.11.2016
29	Peter Robert Fuhrmann	3789807	21 06 1967	02 04 1968	
30	Ian Arthur McMillan	215117	16 07 1970	07 09 1970	

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

Ed – 6 blokes not highlighted is looking moderately ok, but still not acceptable! Ok, let's get into it and actively get out there locating a few more!

. **Locator Profiles** – we've received **181**. **Ed** – Maybe we need to draw in a deep one so as to hold our breathes for a while longer.

. **Located...**

Have a look at the Association's web site - <http://www.131locators.org.au> – you might find some lost mates or get in touch with us and see if we can for you.

Vale

Margaret Mason – “Hello Paul.

I Wanted to let you know Ron (Mason) died in the early hours of yesterday morning (Sunday,16/3).

I have talked on the phone to George Lane and Laurie Sawyer who also kept in touch with Ron.

The last few months were very hard for “Ronno” with his health failing. He died at home, on the farm, which is as he wanted and kids and I take much comfort from that.

Thanks, Paul for the work you do keeping in touch with the 131ers and keeping them in touch with each other. I know Ron's re-connecting with Vietnam Vets - members of the Detachment in particular - was very important to him.

All the best to you and our fellow members.

Margaret Mason.”



Grahame Dignam – “Ron was one of our SVN ‘Pioneer’ Locators

Ron was a longtime member of our Association, a great friend, a well-known member in his local community and a regular contributor to your association committee. He will be missed by all who knew him..

Our condolences to his wife, Margaret and family. Our thoughts and prayers are with you.

Grahame Dignam

Secretary / Treasurer, 131 Locators Assn Inc ABN 92 663 816 973



Supported by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Peter Dealy – “To all Vietnam Veterans and Families GVVVA

It is sincere regret that I report the passing of our esteemed Life Member, Treasurer and mate **Ron Mason**.

His wife, Margaret, said that he got his wish to pass in peace at home.

I have passed on to Margaret and Family, our sincere condolences on behalf of the GVVVA.

Rest in Peace Ron.

You have served your Country, Community and Family to the highest degree.

Regards

Peter Dealy
Secretary, GVVVA

... Peter sent a postscript to Ron's service...

"Hello Paul and Grahame

Just a small note to advise that Ron Mason was given a great send off.

A very large crowd (est 400) filled the Dookie Hall for the Service followed by a Vietnam Veteran / RSL burial at the Katandra Cemetery.

Approx 40 Vietnam Veterans / RSL members from a wide area attended to give him the honour he deserved for his outstanding contribution to the Veterans organisations.

He will be sorely missed.

Regards

Peter Dealy"



Name: Mason, Ronald Frederick

Service No: 3787154 Rank: Gunner

SVN In: 04.05.1966 SVN Out: 03.03.1967

"Pioneer"

Section : Bravo Radar

DoB: 29.04.1945

DoD: 16.03.2025

Lest We Forget



From left – Allen Campbell (late), George Lane, John McGregor, Helmut Lempa (late), Gary Luscombe, Laurie Sawyer, Ray Smith (late), Ron Mason and Laurie Gallop



Locator Profile

Surname: Mason **Given Name:** Ronald **DOB:** 29.04.45 **State of Origin:** Vic
What did you do before the army: Herd Tester (produced production figures for 20 or so dairy farmers' herds)
Service dates from: 29.09.65 to 28.09.67
Intake No.: 2nd **Regimental No:** 3787154
Dates in Vietnam: 04.05.66 to 03.03.67 (At Nui Dat: a couple of weeks after 04.05.66 when the others turned up on the ferry)
Rank: Gunner
What was your location/s in Nui Dat and who were you there with:
Travel to & from Vietnam, Qantas 707
Who were you there with: Spent most of my time on "B" radar. Others who spent some time on "B" were Sg Fred Lennon, Bdr Allan Campbell, Laurie Sawyer, Laurie Gallop, George Lane, Lofty Hayes, Helmut Lempa, Spike Chase, John McGregor, Damian McManus, Baldy Nairn, Ray Smith. Have no doubt missed a few as people were rotated through the various positions & after all it wasn't yesterday. (Yesterday may be an even greater problem).
What did you do after the army and anything else of interest:
Since Vietnam:-
Back to Herd testing for 2 years. Married 1970, still married to the same wonderful woman and we have 2 children & 4 granddaughters.
Went wandering (VE Valiant ute & caravan):- SA, WA, NT, Qld, NSW, & back to Vic after a few years.
Now farming & contract fencing in northern Victoria.
During the wandering :- picked oranges, built fiberglass washing machines, made PVC pipe, carted bags of cement to building sites, packed lead ingots in a ship, carted rice & wheat by the truck load & drove laser controlled land levelling graders & probably a few other things.
Joined RSL in '67, turned back on RSL till about 2000 when I re-joined. Have since served a term (or more) as president of a small local sub-branch & am involved with the Goulburn Valley Vietnam Vets, currently looking after Finance & Membership for the group.

Ron was a prolific writer/contributor to *Eyes & Ears* – "How Good is Outback Australia"

Ten years ago Ron was part of an all bloke group of travellers from the Dookie-Devenish area, who went to the Birdsville Races in a convoy of off-road vehicles. In September 2019 some of the originals plus wives/partners (yes, they are lucky blokes) set off in six vehicles to go for a drive.
Our first camp was behind the Royal Mail Hotel at Booroorban, on the Cobb Highway. It's an original Cobb and Co stop and the hosts put on a terrific smorgasbord dinner and supplied a stack of campfire wood.
After staying at Ivanhoe Caravan Park on the next night, we visited White Cliffs then headed north to Reola, a sheep station where one of our party had worked as a shearers and wool classer. Graham Brown, the fourth generation of his family on Reola, showed us around the sixteen-stand shearing shed, built on three levels. The Wool Room has an undercover drive-through area where the bales are loaded onto a road-train. (Masons have a two-stand shed with outdoor loading ramp.) Graham invited us to stay overnight at the shearers' quarters. In the morning as we ate our breakfast, Graham flew over, off to work in his helicopter. Heading to Tibooburra, we stopped at the disused Mount Wood shearing shed built in 1913 for £1,300. The Reola shed was built in 1990 for, they say, a million dollars. In early days the Mount Wood wool clip, which was scoured on site, was loaded from ground level down to camels or wagons in an excavated loading bay. (Drive-through loading, just like Reola!)

We had lunch at Tibooburra then looked around Milparinka, an historic semi-deserted former gold town. A young Mum behind the bar at the hotel was effortlessly taking her little girl through her Distance Education maths lesson at the same time as serving drinks. In the internal courtyard, amongst the historical memorabilia, there were samples of local rock for sale: a fundraiser by two enterprising local kids trying to buy their own pony to compete in the annual gymkhana. We stopped at Cameron Corner, where the borders of NSW, Queensland and South Australia meet and, at a glance, not a lot else happens. We camped fifty kilometres west in the Strzelecki desert where the soft pink sand glowed at sunrise the next morning.

Following the Strzelecki Track we came to Innamincka then travelled east to the Burke and Wills Dig Tree on Cooper's Creek. The Cooper can be a powerful torrent, swirling through the Channel Country or a handy stream with plentiful fish and birdlife, but was only a series of waterholes when we were there. That night we camped beside a dry creek bed south of Haddon Corner, nicknaming the site Snake Camp: you can guess why. That night one of the blokes played guitar and sang to us around our campfire, as he did on other occasions.

In the morning we headed to Windorah, meeting lots of traffic once we turned onto the narrow Birdsville Development Road. With the Windorah Yabby Races over, (whoops, we ran a day late) hundreds of vehicles were heading to Birdsville for the race meeting. None of us was injured on the trip nor any animals recklessly harmed, but we did cause a White Roadside Post Fatality when we met a Winnebago on a narrow culvert guarded on both sides by white posts. The post on our side was either mesmerised by the constant traffic or blinded by the dust: whichever, it stood its ground and was flattened by our Landcruiser. To commemorate the post's demise and the live broadcast of the incident over UHF radio to our fellow travellers, we were presented with an autographed 'rescued' white post during a solemn ceremony later in the trip. At Windorah we pretty much had the caravan park to ourselves and after a catch up on domestic chores, walked to the Western Star Hotel for the evening. The Irish backpacker working in the pub produced the yabby which had won the

Cup the previous day and it did an exhibition gallop along the bar. You didn't need binoculars to keep up with it but it may



have been exhausted from partying after its Cup win. We ate outdoors under a clear starry sky entertained by a Toowoomba woman playing guitar and singing terrific well known pub songs. She was accompanied by a gorgeous four year old local girl who played air guitar and as her confidence grew, danced as well. Birdsville, on the Diamantina River, was buzzing with a constant stream of vehicles and people everywhere. Like hundreds and hundreds of others, we camped on 'The Common' a scrubby area out of town on the river flats which is very basically set up to accommodate the influx of racegoers and associated party people. It was a shock to be closely surrounded by caravans and vehicles and every type of tent and camping option you could imagine, especially with the only toilet being a block of portables 400 metres away and for which you had to queue! The race course had good facilities of *all* kinds including a huge shade area (BYO chair) with food and drink available after queueing. In the evening some of us went into town to Fred Brophy's Boxing Tent. The boxing included a tag match between three women from the crowd and two from Brophy's team. Although they moved fast, some of the girls were rather light-hearted compared to the snarly

looking blokes who seemed ready to kill and eat their opponents. In case you wondered, there was a ring *boy* for the women's matches, with his bare chest, um, shall we say 'enhanced' with texta drawn circles.

Heading south down the Birdsville Track the next day, we lunched at Mungerannie Hotel then camped overnight at Clayton Bore, enjoying a soak in the hot springs tub late into the night. (Yep, 9:00 pm at least).

We had really good coffee in the morning at Maree's wonderful one-stop-shop before continuing to Farina. As with Marree, the re-routing of the Ghan railway line away from these remote towns has brought enormous change. Maree has survived at the junction of the Oodnadatta and Birdsville Tracks but Farina is deserted save for tourists staying in the nearby campground and members of a dedicated volunteer restoration group. The group brings the original underground wood-fired oven to life for some weeks between May and July each year. The oven is fuelled by old fence posts which volunteers gather up as they clear the line for new fences being built on the adjoining Farina sheep and cattle station. Customers used to be served in a marquee but a very flash tourist centre was close to being opened when we were there.

Passing by the enormous Leigh Creek open cut coal mine, we called in at the very quiet town of Copley then on to Leigh Creek, a modern purpose-built town with substantial facilities, now serving a very small population after the closure of most mining operations. It had an eerie, deserted atmosphere and we would not have been surprised to see a tumbleweed roll down the street. We travelled east through the Flinders Ranges where one of our vehicles bottomed on one of the many rocky crossings. While the damage was being assessed, a young woman named Anna, who had heard our conversation on her UHF radio, came from nearby Wertaloona Station, with her little son Roy, to see if she could help. The damaged vehicle was towed to the station workshop for repairs. When Anna's husband Justin, came home, we were invited to stay the night at the shearers' quarters where the young family joined us for the evening. Anna had written and published a book about Roy to give him for his second birthday which inspired us to write a story with photos, called "Roy and his Mum to the Rescue" which we sent them for Christmas.

After farewells in the morning we headed south, stopping to inspect the ruins of Waukaringa, a long abandoned gold mining town, before having lunch at the Yunta Hotel on the Barrier Highway. From there it was easy driving through Broken Hill to Menindee where we stayed at Copi Hollow Caravan Park, watching the birdlife on the lake and enjoying a colourful sunset.

The next day, travelling towards Wentworth where the Darling and Murray rivers meet, we drove through a large area of stunted green crops, some of which were cut for hay. It looked like it would be a long journey between bales.

Our final camp was at Euston on the Murray River opposite Robinvale. We travelled through Tooleybuc and Moulamein, had lunch at the Pretty Pine Hotel then continued through Deniliquin and Finley to our homes having driven about 4,300 kilometres all up. We had travelled with good friends, seen a tiny bit of the outback, met some wonderful people and have great memories to share.

Ron and Marg Mason.



...and there's more...

. We continue in the meanderings...Locators off the beaten track -



CLIFFS & TRACKS, WIRES & WHALES -

Four Wheel Driving and Bush Camping along the Great Australian Bight.

By Ron Mason (SVN '66-'67)

Our trip party of four fellas and four girls in four 4x4 vehicles, set off towards the end of winter before the weather got too hot and the grain farmers got too busy.

From the Goulburn Valley, our trip went as far as Esperance (WA) taking in magnificent views of the Bunda Cliffs along the way. These massive cliffs running for over 200 kms around the Bight, are several hundred feet high, with a sheer drop straight into the water.

In many areas, the ground leading up to them is completely flat, covered only by sparse low scrub. From vantage points along the cliffs we were lucky enough to look down on Southern Right whales, many with calves, playing in the waters below.

Near Baxter Cliffs and other points where we drove along the beach in wet sand (outgoing tide – we studied the tide chart) we had our closest whale encounters with up to eight about 30 to 40 meters out.

Four-wheel driving on the beach is an interesting experience but the challenge comes when it's time to leave the beach and get over steep sand dunes onto firmer ground. Not all could make it up some of the dunes without help. ie bring out the winch or Trax. Rubber tracking already laid on the steep climb up Wylie Scarp was much appreciated as was the marvellous wildflower display along the scarp.

We visited three of the early telegraph stations of the old Inter-Colonial Telegraph Line, which are all closely surrounded by pure white sand dunes. The one at Eucla, being easy to get to, has disappointingly, suffered the spray can attack where sand has not yet covered the walls.

South of Cocklebidy, one now houses the Eyre Bird Observatory. It has been restored and is staffed by live-in volunteers who study and record bird activity as well as taking weather observations. The Observatory has an interesting museum telling stories about the people who worked at the telegraph stations which relayed Morse code messages between Port Augusta (SA) and Albany (WA). The Observatory is accessible only by four-wheel drive vehicle with at least 10k of its track consisting of soft white sand, requiring tyre pressures to be reduced. We camped at the ruins of the Telegraph Station at Israelite Bay, after some rugged driving till late in the day. Most walls are in good condition but the roof, floor and windows are long gone. It has, in its day, been a grand, stone building in the middle of nowhere.

The first and replacement East-West telegraph lines loosely follow the track Edward John Eyre took in 1841 when he explored along the coast from Fowlers Bay (SA) to Albany (WA). In some areas, the wooden telegraph poles dating back to the 1870's are still standing although many have been covered by sand or burnt in bush fires over time. A little further inland many steel poles from the second line are still in place and in both cases a good bit of original wire is lying on the ground. It looks a bit like 8-gauge fence wire, maybe a tad heavier.

Most evenings on our two-and-a-half-week trip were spent around a camp fire where the evening meal had been cooked, having the odd glass or can and elaborating on the day's sights, sounds and travels. Then everyone retired to their swags or in our case, a comfy bed in the back of the ute, anticipating the next day's adventures.



Some of the tracks we explored along the Bight had not been used much recently and some had become overgrown with new plants after the serious bush fires in WA's south east last year. Some tracks found us chugging through sand or mud, some squeezing through ute-hugging vegetation, some whizzing along open plains. Any of them could peter out or unexpectedly fork, requiring a certain amount of "forward scouting" on foot or by single vehicle to (hopefully) find a way forward but sometimes the only way forward was to back track. Did we get lost? Well the water was always more or less to the south!

*Written expressly for the nationally acclaimed
newsletter "E&E" 30/9/2017*

Paul Dickson – I had the good fortune to meet Ron and Margaret in Warragul, Victoria on 1st December 2017 when I was visiting with Helen her family and Ron was catching up with his family for a few days. He is a soul I will never forget.



The photo is in a coffee shop in Warragul.

Barry Guzder – "My thoughts are with his family. Barry Guzder."

May He Rest in Peace, and Never be Forgotten.



Vales and Locator Profiles...

This is just a request to all and general, that we need to complete, and perhaps, update Locator Profiles, because as of times past and as time moves forward we have lost and will continue to lose mates.

Let's keep a memory alive.



The Vale section in *Eyes & Ears*, can at times be very scant of personal and service details, yes, there is the DVA Nominal Roll which contains tour dates, but supplies nothing for those who did not serve overseas, and contains no personal details.

Is it possible that we can have Locator Profiles completed with photos, where possible, and/or updates to make this section more honouring to those mates who pass and may be unknown to others to help make the Unit and Detachment archived history have more heart?

Take 10 minutes, please, to complete a Locator Profile as it is important to all of us.

For a blank Locator Profile contact Paul Dickson at 131eyesandears@gmail.com



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

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

Hope we hear from you?

Website: <http://www.131locators.org.au>

. Other related sites...

. Locating, Surveillance & Target Acquisition Association...



LOCATING, SURVEILLANCE & TARGET ACQUISITION ASSOCIATION

The Eyes and Ears of The Battlefield

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



Australian Artillery Association – www.australianartilleryassociation.com



www.artilleryhistory.org



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

. VETERAN'S AFFAIRS WEBSITE

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

. 1st Battalion 83rd Artillery...



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



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



The Royal New Zealand Artillery Association

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

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