

## AUSTRALIAN GUNNER OBITUARY RESOURCE

### Major Kevin Tucker, CSC (Retd)

5 February 1939 – 23 April 2020

By Peter Bruce, OAM



Kevin was a Marrickville boy, born on 5 February 1939. He was called up for National Service in 1958 and found himself at 13th National Service Training Battalion at Ingleburn. After two months of training Kevin was then posted to 23rd Field Regiment to complete his compulsory Citizens Military Force (CMF) obligation. After 16 months with the CMF, Kevin decided to join the Regular Army. Although he had completed National Service training and over 12 months with the CMF at 23rd Field Regiment, he was still required to undergo recruit training. He completed his recruit training at Kapooka around Christmas in 1959 and was allocated to Artillery. He completed a gun drill course at the School of Artillery in early 1960 and was then posted to 4th Field Regiment, then at Wacol in Brisbane. Kevin eventually found his way to 103rd Field Battery, which at that stage was a subunit of 4th Field

Regiment.

In August 1962, Kevin returned to Sydney to join 1st Field Regiment at Holsworthy. He was now closer to his old hometown. The following year, Kevin was posted to 102nd Field Battery which was in training to replace 103rd Field Battery in Malaya. Although the Emergency was over, there was a renewed threat by Indonesian forces along the borders of both Sabah and Sarawak, Malaysia's newest states. Kevin deployed to Malaya with the 102nd in November 1963 with then Major Brien Forward as the Battery Commander. The Battery came under command of a Royal Artillery (RA) unit, the 45th British Light Regiment and in early 1964 was conducting operations along the Malay-Thai border. Members of the Battery often acted as an additional infantry company supporting operations by 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (3RAR). In May of 1965, Kevin and other members of the Battery deployed to Borneo and were supporting three battalions at various stages. The Battery was then equipped with the 105 MM L5 Pack Howitzer and joined the 4th Light Regiment RA in support of operation by 3RAR, the 1st Scots Guards and the 2nd Battalion. The Battery including Kevin returned to Malaya in August 1965 and with their two year tour over, Kevin returned to Australia with the Battery in October 1965.

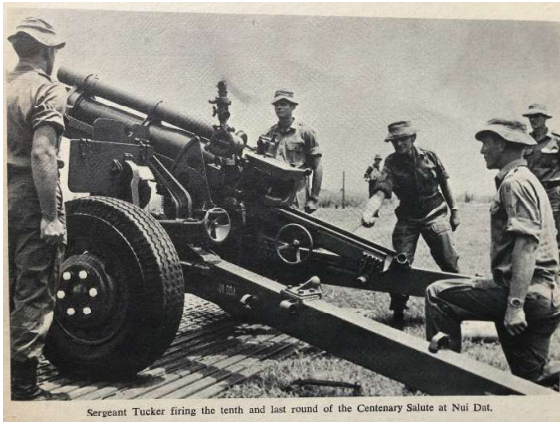


## AUSTRALIAN GUNNER OBITUARY RESOURCE



Kevin ended up at Holsworthy and was posted to 103rd Field Battery. This Battery was in training for duty in Vietnam and in May 1966 Kevin deployed to South Vietnam with the 103rd. Kevin was now a Bombardier on the guns and the 103rd joined the 161st Kiwi Battery and 105th Battery to form 1st Field Regiment. The Regiment joined other Australian units to establish the Task Force Base in the centre of Phuoc Tuy Province, at Nui Dat.

Kevin returned to Australia in May 1967 and was posted to 2nd Recruit Training Battalion (2RTB) at Puckapunyal in Victoria. 2RTB had been established to train National Servicemen after the scheme was introduced in November 1964. At the end of 1967, Kevin found himself back at the School of Artillery. The following year, in May, he was posted to 19th Composite Regiment which was a holding unit at Holsworthy providing support to the School of Artillery. In January 1969, the Australian component of 12th Field Regiment was raised at Holsworthy with the remainder of the Regiment due to return from Vietnam in May that year. Kevin was reunited with the Regiment in May 1969 and found himself in "A" Field Battery. 12th Field Regiment was due to replace 4th Field Regiment in Vietnam in 1971 and Kevin was keen to return with his new battery.



Sergeant Tucker firing the tenth and last round of the Centenary Salute at Nui Dat.

In February 1971, Kevin deployed back to Vietnam with "A" Field Battery as part of 12th Field Regiment. He had been promoted to Sergeant at this stage and was a gun sergeant on one of the Battery's M2A2s. On 1st August 1971, while in Vietnam, "A" Battery fired a ten round ceremonial salute to mark the Centenary of "A" Field Battery. Kevin had the honour of firing the ninth round to mark the occasion. Tex Bassan says of Kevin: "He was extremely popular with his detachment in particular with the National Servicemen, and one of the characters of the Battery". His quote of "You bloody Q wallahs do nothing, while the work is done on the guns", would come back to bite him in his later career. Kevin returned to Australia with the Regiment in November 1971 and stayed with "A" Battery at Holsworthy until November 1973.

Paddy Durnford, the Battery Guide at the time, recalls: "Each morning at the end of the 0900 hours conference he would make a quotation for the day. These were quotes that varied; if the theme was Middle East he would wrap a sweat rag around his head, that's the reason for the title 'Arab Affairs and Culture'. All other quotes tended to have a Shakespearian theme. This event got to a stage where the anticipation of the daily quote was more important the rest of the conference." Paddy later revealed the secret of the quotes. "It took me a long time to find out the he had in his kit the common daily desk diary with a 4-inch square day to day calendar, this included at the base the quote for the day. When his detachment saw him off by himself prior to the conference they

## AUSTRALIAN GUNNER OBITUARY RESOURCE

*thought he was practicing meditation, but no, the little bugger was memorizing the daily quote. Kev asked me keep his source a secret. I did and he took his secret to his grave with him. Now that he has gone, I am released from that promise of silence”.*



Kevin spent some time with Headquarters Battery (HP BTY) in Vietnam while his reengagement was processed. He was employed as a Liaison Officer at Baria working out of the Van Kiep ARVN base.

Kevin's next posting was to 131st Divisional Locating Battery (131 Bty) also located at Holsworthy. Kev arrived at 131 Bty in November 1973 and stayed with the Locators until a posting to 23rd Field Regiment, an Army Reserve unit based at Kogarah in Sydney in January 1975. He remained with the 23rd until November 1977 when he returned to 8th/12th at Holsworthy. He remained there until mid-1979 when he returned to 23rd Field Regiment. In February, the following year he was posted to 133rd Divisional Locating Battery which was based at Dee Why and in the process of closing down. In

January 1983, Kev moved to Woodside in South Australia to assume the posting of Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant (RQMS) of 16th Air Defence Regiment. Bob McEvoy was his Commanding Officer and said of Kevin: *“He was reliable and as honest as the day is long.”* Bob also recounted a story of Kevin: *“We were about to re-build the barracks at Woodside in 1982 but Kev couldn't wait and to demonstrate the need for a new quartermaster's store, on one of my inspections of the Store, Kev got me to stand in a certain spot on a hot day. It seemed an unusual position to be in when suddenly I broke out in a sweat. When I looked up, I found that in that part of the store there was no insulation and I was standing underneath a sheet of iron radiating the 40° heat of the day. Kev had made his point.”*

Kevin's next posting was to Geelong at the end of 1985 and another Army Reserve unit, 10th Medium Regiment. Bob McEvoy recalls: *In Geelong, Kev and Bev went away for three weeks holiday and I looked after their blue budgerigar. Inevitably the budgie died two days later so I bought a replacement. It was blue, but on his return, it took Kevin all of five seconds to say “where did you buy the new budgie?”*

After two years in Geelong, Kevin moved back to Sydney in January 1987 with a posting and commission to Captain as Quartermaster (QM) of the School of Artillery. As a Captain, Kev was a father-figure in the Officers' Mess, considerably older than the young officers on the staff or those attending courses. Kev would always have a story to tell them and they would hang on his every word. Those of us who knew Kev would be wondering when the young ones would realise that he was pulling their leg. But more often than not, they left none the wiser and full of admiration for Kev.

Kevin remained at the School of Artillery until January 1992 when he took a posting to District Support Unit (DSU) Sydney. His final posting and promotion to Major was in January 1993 when he moved to the Base Administrative Support Centre Randwick. Kevin discharged from the Army on 4th February 1994. He had completed 36 years of service including 44 months overseas on operational service. His Honours and Awards include: Australian Active Service Medal 1945-75 with Clasps Malaysia and Vietnam;

## AUSTRALIAN GUNNER OBITUARY RESOURCE

General Service Medal 1962 with Clasps Malay Peninsula and Borneo; Vietnam Medal; Defence Force Service Medal with First, Second and Third Clasps; National Medal; Australian Defence Medal; Anniversary of National Service 1951-72 Medal; Vietnamese Campaign Medal; Pingat Jasa Malaysia, and Returned from Active Service Badge.

Post Army, Kevin returned to Victoria and became actively involved with the RSL Sub-branch at Highett, eventually becoming President. He served as President of that club from 2002 until 2015 and then took on the Treasurers role for two years. Kev's health had deteriorated in the later years – perhaps from the Bex Powders? A small family funeral was held for him including an RSL Service. By all reports it could have been a very large funeral but restrictions due to Covid 19 were in place limiting numbers at funerals.

### **Acknowledgements:**

- With thanks to the following who provide some insights and stories about Kevin
  - Paddy Durnford
  - Bob McEvoy
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  - Tex Bassan
  - Jeff Walter from Highett RSL Sub Branch
- 'The Gunners' by David Horner
- 'Twelve in Focus'