



# 101 Field Battery RAA

Malaya 1959-1961

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## May 2019 NEWSLETTER

Ken and Jeanette Murphy and Pat and myself spent Anzac Day on the Sunshine Coast With Kevin and Marjorie Salter.

The Kawana Waters RSL Sub Branch operates out of Kawana Waters Surf Lifesaving and Supporters Club. It is an active RSL Sub Branch of some 120 members and a strong Women's Auxiliary.

The Dawn Service was at the Memorial not far from the water.





An excellent Memorial Service commenced at 1000 hrs after a short march.



We then adjourned to the Sub-Branch rooms where we were very well looked after.



Jim King once again led 101 Battery in the Brisbane march but he was the only member of 101 Battery Malaya that turned up.

**National Gunner Dinner 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> August 2019 is fast approaching.**

*101 BATTERY'S LAST STAND FOR THOSE WHO HAVE "SURVIVED" AND WANT TO GATHER TOGETHER ONE MORE TIME! THIS IS THE FINAL OPPORTUNITY TO BE WITH THOSE MATES WHO MADE 101 FIELD BATTERY THE PREMIER BATTERY IN THE CORPS.*

Location: The convention Centre, 20 Minchinton Street, Caloundra, Queensland.

You can go into the Australian Artillery Association Website for all the information. (australianartilleryassociation.com)

Or call Graham Hampton (Secretary) on 0401 400 403 or contact me and I can help you with your booking.

We would like to get as many members and partners, family members together to mark 60 years since we sailed for Malaya.



A photo from the 2017 Gunner Dinner.

I have just about completed the Record of Service for all the 226 members that served with 101 Field Battery in Malaya from 4<sup>th</sup> October 1959 to 27<sup>th</sup> October 1961.

Also recorded is all the other information I have collected over the years, including the Formation of 101 Battery in 1957, Battery History, War Dairies, Summary of Operations, Routine Orders Part 2, Battery Manning, Photo Disk containing 1440 photos, Information on the Malayan Emergency, information on 101 Howtizer Battery in the Newcastle area between World War 1 and World War 2 and other bits and pieces.

At the Gunner Dinner I will pass on the information to Graham Hampton, Secretary of the Royal Australian Artillery Association and Peter Bruce from the Royal Australian Historical Company to add to their web sites so that our history will not be lost when we all finally pass on.

I will also send a copy to 101 Battery in Darwin so they know who went before them.

The following is the amended obituary from the Royal Australian Artillery Historical Company Web Site.

## AUSTRALIAN GUNNER OBITUARY RESOURCE

Lavanda Gordon (Ben) Blakeney, OAM  
9 March 1937 – 28 December 2003

Lavanda Gordon Blakeney was born at Dulwich Hill, Sydney on 9 March 1937, the son of aborigines John and Ethel and one of twelve children. He was originally known as Van from the abbreviated Lavanda. During introductions Van was introduced as Ven which was heard as Ben. "From then on I became Ben Blakeney and I never looked back".

Ben completed his National Service obligation from April 24 to July 30 1956 and with a stint in the CMF from July 1956 until April 1958. Ben then signed on with the Australian Regular Army at the age of 21 and after completing his recruit training at 1RTB, he was allocated to the Royal Australian Artillery. He was posted to the School of Artillery, in August 1958 and after initial employment training, was subsequently posted to 101 Field Battery in November 1958. The battery was in training for overseas deployment and in October 1959 Ben and the battery deployed to Malaya. Ben spent time at Butterworth and was involved in many deployments with the Battery.

When the Emergency finished in July 1960, Ben moved to Terendak with the battery to join 26 Field Regiment, Royal Artillery.

On Return to Australia on 27 October 1961, Ben was posted to the fledgling 4 Regiment at Wacol. Ben stayed with the Regiment until discharge on 10 April 1964.

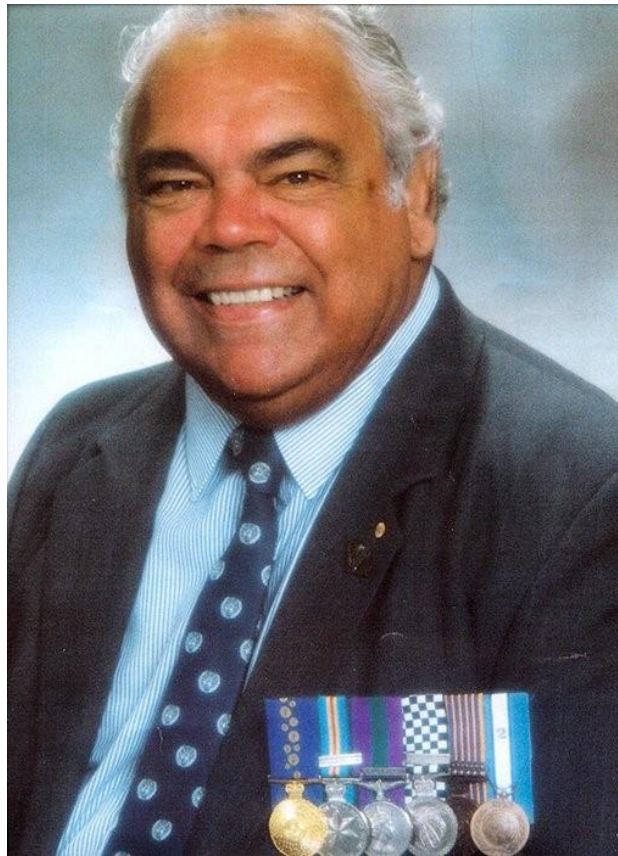
Ben's acting career began in 1966 as an extra at the bar in the film 'They're a Weird Mob'. Ben's brother Eddie also recalls his appearing in the television series 'Homicide' and 'Skippy' and as a tracker in the 1970 film 'Ned Kelly' with Mick Jagger. But the climax of his acting career was undoubtedly the portrayal of the spirit of the famous Bennelong, atop the Sydney Opera House at its opening in 1973.

On his web [www.wollondilly.com/bennelong.htm](http://www.wollondilly.com/bennelong.htm) Ben wrote of "the day the nation looked up to me when I said I am Bennelong". Eddie reports that Ben said afterwards he met the Queen in head-dress and was invited for cups of tea and cucumber sandwiches or whatever.

Ben was the first Aborigine to join the Commonwealth Police in 1977 and was selected for the Cyprus Peacekeeping Force in 1979, the year in which the Australian Federal Police was formed. Ben was promoted to Sergeant while serving in Cyprus. Ben would visit the local school and take his didgeridoo along for the children to try. He wrote of receiving a 'medal of honour for bravery in the line of duty' and served with this force until 1984. On 29 March 1985, First Constable Blakeney was awarded the National Medal and on 8 July 1992, Constable Blakeney was awarded the Police Overseas Service Medal with Clasp 'Cyprus'.



Ben then made boomerangs from his home in Queanbeyan and was much in demand from schools to demonstrate the art of boomerang throwing. He was also reportedly quite active in supporting Aboriginal causes and affairs. Ben's webmaster writes, 'Ben is a modest man. The first he knew of his nomination (for the OAM) was, when making boomerangs, a neighbour said "Have you seen the paper? You've been awarded the Order of Australia Medal" '. Ben replied "Gosh" and kept making his boomerangs but was eventually drawn into speculation and acknowledged it was probably because of his service to the community. Ben was awarded his OAM "for services community in June 1994. Ben Blakeney never forgot his Gunner beginnings and was a regular attendee at Australian Artillery Association functions in the ACT. His rough diamond appeal demanded attention and his rather dry sense of humour was always there to illustrate a point with a good yarn. Ben passed away on Sunday 28 December 2003 in Queanbeyan, NSW. So many attended the funeral that people were standing outside to listen to the service. Ben was remembered for his community service, his ability to quickly form good friendships and his 'big golden' smile. His brother Eddie had arranged the funeral in Canberra because 'Ben loved Canberra and called it his city'. The funeral was attended by AFP Commissioner Mick Keelty and ACT Chief Minister Jon Stanhope. Former Prime Minister Bob Hawke sent a representative. There were among the wreaths of native flowers lay three hats representing his service to the Australian Community.



Ben's honours and awards included-

Medal of the Order of Australia  
AASM (Malaya & Thai GSM (Malaya)  
ASM (SE Asia)  
Police Overseas  
National Medal  
Anniversary of National Service Medal  
UNFICYP Medal  
Pinjat Masa Malaysia  
Army Combat Badge

#### Acknowledgements

Original obituary composed by Arthur Burke. Current obituary composed with additional information.

David Troedel, who served with Ben in Malaya and Wacol for his information on Ben.

Colonel Alan Hutchinson

Major General Paul Stevens, AO

Canberra Times article of 1 January 2004

Jim Ponting Platypus (Australian Federal Police Publication) dated 31 Aug

Peter McDonald Association of Australia (UNOPAA)