

## AUSTRALIAN GUNNER OBITUARY RESOURCE

**Allan John Hutcheson**

**2 June 1945 – 19 November 2022**

**By Peter Bruce, OAM**

Allan John Hutcheson (Hutch) started and finished his life in Western Australia. Born in Kalgoorlie in June 1945, 'Hutch' joined the Army at the age of 17 and was allocated to the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery (RAA). He completed recruit training at Kapooka spending his first 'Army' Christmas at 1<sup>st</sup> Recruit Training Battalion (1RTB) in barracks. By March 1963 Hutch was at the School of Artillery, North Head in Sydney to complete his basic gun course. In June of that year, he was posted to 4<sup>th</sup> Field Regiment which was then barracked in the old 11<sup>th</sup> National Service Training Battalion Lines at Wacol in Brisbane. 4<sup>th</sup> Field Regiment was just getting established and by June 1943 had completed transferring from mortars and 25 Pounders to the newer 105mm L5 Pack Howitzer.

This posting for Hutch started a long relationship with 4<sup>th</sup> Field Regiment. In August 1964, Hutch was part of a composite troop of L5 guns from the regiment, flown to Port Moresby for the opening of the Papua New Guinea Parliament by Her Majesty the Queen. While there, this troop manhandled one of the L5 guns up the Kokoda Track to just beyond the position of a 25 Pounder during World War 2.

Hutch returned to the School of Artillery to complete the Artillery Signallers course and in late 1964 deployed to New Zealand with elements of the Regiment to participate in a joint exercise. By this time the Vietnam conflict had escalated, and 4<sup>th</sup> Field Regiment was warned out to deploy in 1967. Hutch deployed with other elements of the Regiment in May 1967 what was to be his first operational service in Vietnam. 4<sup>th</sup> Field Regiment had deployed with a Headquarters Battery and two Gun Batteries, the 106<sup>th</sup> and 108<sup>th</sup>. Also under command was 161 Field Battery, Royal New Zealand Artillery, and at times, heavy artillery units from the United States Army. Hutch was employed as a signaller in the Headquarters during this time. During this deployment, Hutch was wounded by fragments from an exploded claymore mine. The line of "show us your scars" took on a new meaning for Hutch.

The Regiment and Hutch returned to Australia in April 1968. After leave, Hutch returned to Wacol and in June 1968, a road party led by Major D J Gilroy and including Hutch drove from Brisbane to Townsville. This was the advance party for the establishment of 4<sup>th</sup> Field Regiment at their new home in Chau Pha Lines, Lavarack Barracks. During 1969 Hutch transferred within the Regiment to 106 Battery. By this time, Hutch had been promoted to Sergeant and the Regiment commenced training to replace 1<sup>st</sup> Field Regiment in Vietnam. During 1969, intense training was carried out by all members of 4<sup>th</sup> Field Regiment including full scale exercises at High Range, Shoalwater Bay and at the Jungle Warfare Training Centre at Canungra.

In February 1970, 106<sup>th</sup> Field Battery deployed to Vietnam and Hutch stated his second operational deployment. During his time in the Battery, he was Number One of a gun, acting Section Commander and for a time Battery Signals Sergeant. During this deployment of the Regiment, approximately 60 percent of Soldiers were National Servicemen. Hutch, who had learnt to play the Bagpipes, would occasionally assist the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion Pipers to play a lament following the death of a soldier.

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Hutch returned to Australia in February 1971 and was posted to 106<sup>th</sup> Field Battery which was then designated an independent unit. 106 had been warned out to replace 108<sup>th</sup> Field Battery in Singapore as part of 28<sup>th</sup> Australian New Zealand United Kingdom (ANZUK) Brigade. Intense battery training was held under the watchful eye of Battery Commander Major Jim Townley. Hutch was back on the Gun Line as a number one with the Battery training once again with the L5 Pack Howitzers. 106 Battery remained in Singapore until December 1973 working hard on various exercise throughout Malaya but also managed to play a lot of sport and socialise.

On returning to Australia in November 1973, Hutch found himself back in Brisbane on the unallotted list with 1<sup>st</sup> Military District. He remained there until May 1974 when he joined 1<sup>st</sup> Field Regiment, then barracked at Wacol in the old lines that 4<sup>th</sup> Regiment had vacated years before. Hutch remained with this Regiment until his discharge from the Regular Army in November 1977. He did manage to get one more trip overseas when a battery of 1<sup>st</sup> Field Regiment went on exercise to Hawaii in March/April 1976.

In June 1983, Hutch decided to spend some time with the Army Reserve and joined 16<sup>th</sup> Battalion, the Royal West Australia Regiment. He stayed with that unit for a couple of years before finally putting away his Army boots in June 1987.

Allan Hutcheson's Honours and Awards include:

- Australian Active Service Medal 1945-1975 with Clasp Vietnam
- Vietnam Medal
- Australian Service Medal 1945-75 with Clasps PNG and SE Asia
- Defence Force Service Medal
- National Medal
- Australian Defence Medal
- Vietnamese Campaign Medal
- Returned from Active Service Medal
- General Officer Commanding Commendation.

Hutch developed severe medical complications and had returned to live in Western Australia. He died at home on 19 November 2022. A private cremation service was held for him in Perth.

### **Acknowledgements:**

- Brian Rudduck
- David Drabble