

From Lieutenant General Sir Andrew Gregory KBE CB



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Master Gunner St James's Park

To All Ranks Serving and Retired:

The Royal Australian Artillery
The Royal Canadian Artillery
The Royal New Zealand Artillery

26 May 2020

As the Master Gunner St James's Park, it is a privilege to send best wishes to all ranks, serving and retired, across the Royal Artilleries of the Commonwealth on the occasion today of the 304th anniversary of the founding of our parent Regiment.

I am acutely conscious that the world has changed much since I last wrote to you on St Barbara's Day in December 2019. Then, I declared our intentions to celebrate the 75th anniversary of VE Day on the 8th May; our plans to commemorate in Borneo, on the 75th anniversary of VJ Day, particularly those prisoners of war who were murdered around and indeed after 15th August 1945; and we were looking forward to greeting a detachment from The Royal Canadian Artillery in Edinburgh in June as they fired a Royal Salute on the anniversary of the Coronation of Her Majesty The Queen, our Captain General. Covid-19 has unfortunately put paid to all of the above and more.

Since December, we have all had to adjust very rapidly to meet this new, invisible enemy and one that, '10 rounds fire for effect' simply does not recognise. All of our Nations have suffered significant restrictions, hardships and a number have lost loved ones, including amongst retired Gunners and their families. Particularly for the older generations, it has certainly caused isolation, confusion and concern.

For the Royal Artillery family here in the United Kingdom, today's date has another significance; one hundred years ago today, on the 26th May 1920, the Royal Artillery Association was formed. Its objectives then remain the foundation of its activities today, namely to embrace and support anybody who is or has been part of our Regimental family; that includes those who are currently serving, veterans, families, widows and widowers, dependants and more. Amongst its services, the Association is proud to provide comradeship and welfare support and advice. It is a fundamental aspect of what makes the Royal Regiment of Artillery a proper 'family' and gives substance to the cry, 'Once a Gunner, Always a Gunner'.

You all have similar Associations that look after the Regimental families around the world; their importance today is as great as ever, for they can reduce isolation and loneliness and also ensure welfare reaches those in need. I commend all who give their time so generously within them to look after fellow Gunners, keeping in touch with them and making sure they are not unduly in need. Our collective strength, unity and sense of being a family will be critical for the remainder of this year and the years ahead.

I wish you all well in these unusual times and I look forward to the day when we can get together again in person.

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