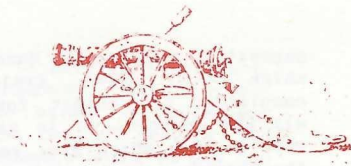


CASCABEL

Newsletter of the Royal Australian Artillery
Association (Victoria)



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NUMBER 14

OCTOBER 1987

THE PRESIDENT WRITES

Dear Member,

I have to thank our Vice President for standing in on my behalf during my absence in Western Australia. However, having had practically a holiday of a life-time I returned just in time to attend the "marching in" of 132 Div Loc Bty to 2/15 Fd Regt. In many respects this was a sad occasion which saw the disbandment of a gunner unit in Victoria. The Locaters have had a meritorious period of occupation of the Landcox Street Drill Hall and their transfer to the Field Gunners will do nothing but enhance the interest and the effectiveness of the Field Regiment. It certainly seemed to me that the "welcome mat" was very much in evidence, figuratively speaking, on that Tuesday evening.

The parade took place on the outside parade ground together with the Band who made their usual valued contribution to the nights events. Following the main part of the ceremony the parade was addressed by the CDA, Colonel Mike Vincent, who sketched the history of the Locating Battery and the reasons for its integration with 2/15 Fd Regt. He emphasised that the peculiar skills of the "Locaters" are to be maintained and utilised within the Fd Regt.

He had, only during the previous week, obtained from the Divisional Commander his concept of the future role of the Division, which was completely different from those in the past. This role encompasses the defence of vital assets in the Northern Territory. These few words conjure up thoughts of performing in a meaningful manner, tasks which have not been allotted to reserve units in the south previously. 4 Bde from Victoria will be responsible for an area radiating approximately 75km from the Tindal Air Base with 9 Bde from SA and Tasmania similarly tasked to take care of the area 100km in radius from Darwin.

What makes this concept so meaningful and exciting in its anticipation, is that actual reconnaissance will take place, by the units concerned, during June of 1988. The Artillery will be tasked to recce gun areas, routes and ammunition dumps which will be real and earnest work, with a view to what may be required during future years. Parties from 2/15 Fd Regt and 10 Mdm Regt will take part and will include all ranks. The CDA pointed out the fact that the abilities of the members of 132 Div Loc Bty would be called upon with their expertise in survey and arty int which will both be very necessary on this recon.

All in all the gunners of 3 Div have quite alot about which to think and to look forward. Most of the toing and froing, will of

necessity, have to be done by air which will give training a completely new aspect for nearly all RAA members. It is situations such as this which give service in the reserve a real meaning. It will put all ranks on their mettle to produce a good result. It will develop friendships further than they are now attained which immediately assists the morale of units. After all, the old equation can be quoted, "Developed skills plus friendships equal high morale and efficiency."

Although I was unable to attend, I have heard that this years Artillery Ball was its usual success. Numbers were slightly down on last year but this did not detract from the enjoyment of the evening. The Band proved their versatility once more and Donald Cant acted as Master of Ceremonies and kept the Ball rolling throughout the evening.

One further item of interest which I feel I should mention. As I write the Royal Agricultural Show is occurring in Melbourne. At the Show is an Army Recruiting Display which has been set up by the Regular Army Recruiting Unit in conjunction with that of the Reserve. It comprises one M198 155mm artillery piece, one Leopard Tank and the usual Recruiting Caravan which is brought out to attend such functions. The display has been manned by both regular and reserve personnel and it has won the award for the Best Display Stand at the Show for this year.

Before I end this, may I say that I look forward to seeing good attendance at what I consider to be the best occasions set down in our annual programme of events. The visit to the Proof and Experimental Establishment at Graytown (29 Oct) and to the Engineering Development Establishment at Maribyrnong (20 Nov). Many regretted their absence last year, so here is a chance to catch up.

With my best wishes to all,

Norman Whitelaw

REPORT ON THE TENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE RAA ASSOC (VIC) INC.

Our Tenth AGM was held on Thursday the 30th July 1987 in the Officers' Mess Artillery Depot Batman Avenue Melbourne. With our President and Secretary both enjoying well earned holidays, we fielded our second eleven by way of Major Peter Hemingway in the chair and Major David Osborne as Secretary, whilst Captain Judith Davis provided some stability in her usual role of Treasurer.

Attendance was down on expectations (Second Elevens usually only draw small crowds I guess!) but those attending were informed of another successful year for your Association. A President's Report was presented that spoke of all the successful activities undertaken, the establishment of the RAA Assoc Shop and a plea for more articles for Cascabel. Also the President sought ideas from our members for Association activities. Major Osborne was singled out for special thanks for his sterling efforts to have our Association incorporated which was achieved on the 21st July 1987. The report closed with the President thanking those responsible for his re nomination as President and saying how he looked forward to the coming year.

Following on from the Treasurer's Report and the Auditor's Report that showed our Association in good financial shape the Annual Subscription proposal of no change was well received. \$8 per annum or \$80 for life membership is an endorsement of a successful year.

Election of Officer Bearers and Committee was swiftly resolved with all nominations being accepted en masse. Your Committee for 1987/88 together with their home telephone numbers are:

President - Major Norman Whitelaw
589 3059

Vice President -
Major Peter Hemingway 233 2800
Secretary - Major Merv Taggart
598 8452

Treasurer - Captain Judith Davis
781 2445

RAA Assoc Shop -	
SSGT Reg Morrell	544 5868
MAJ David Osborne	787 7852
MAJ Warren Barnard	299 1352
MAJ Ross Peterken	720 1757
LT John Traill (056)	59 4237
SSGT Ernie Paddon	763 5995
CPL Linda Blake	583 1834

The Acting President thanked the retiring Committee members and then introduced the CDA who provided the group with an update on Artillery within the Reserve and their new role.

Then followed the highlight of the evening. A presentation by 3 Army Recruiting Unit of "Recruiting in Today's Army". Major Warren Barnard organised his team to present this most professional presentation.

Following closure of the meeting a superb supper was enjoyed and the RAA Assoc Shop rang up some more sales!

For those not present at the Annual General Meeting the financial statements for the year ended 30 June, 1987 are presented for your information.

Income and Expenditure Statement

For the Year Ended 30 June 1987

Income

Subscriptions	\$1117.00
Interest - Current Accounts	209.03
Interest - Term Deposits	489.35
Sale - Membership Badges	415.00
Profit RAA Assoc (Vic) Shop	508.63
Donations	107.10
Surplus - Church Parade Luncheon	56.84
Surplus - Anzac Day Breakfast	26.70
	<u>\$2929.65</u>
	=====

Expenditure

Supper AGM	\$ 92.56
Supper - Happy Hours	200.00
Bar Snacks Anzac Day	150.00
Deficit P&EE Graytown Visit	34.00
Prize "Gunner Puzzle"	10.75
Wreaths & donations in lieu	89.00
Incorporation Fees	64.00
Annual Awards	140.00
Printing	233.00

Stationery	66.71
Registration Fee "Cascabel"	40.00
Postage	570.13
Bank Charges	12.58
Surplus for Year	<u>1226.92</u>
	<u>\$2929.65</u>
	=====

Balance Sheet

As At 30 June 1987

Members' Funds

Balance brought forward	\$5304.60
Add Surplus for Year	<u>1226.92</u>
	<u>\$6531.52</u>
	=====

Represented by:

Assets

Stock on Hand	
RAA Assoc Shop Items	989.80
Cash at Bank	1284.01
Term Deposits	3500.00
Keycard Savings A/c	1796.56
Sundry Debtors	
RAA Assoc Shop	206.00
Postage	<u>3.15</u>
	<u>209.15</u>
	7779.52

Less Liabilities

Subscriptions received in advance	<u>1248.00</u>
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NET ASSETS	<u>\$6531.52</u>
=====	=====

132 DIVISIONAL LOCATING BATTERY

RAA

After 32 years of providing support to all artillery units of the 3rd Infantry Division the Locating Battery is being disbanded and removed from the Order of Battle.

The other ARES Locating unit, 133 Bty in 2 Div, Sydney, was also removed from the Orbat in early 1987 leaving only 131 Bty in Ennogerra (1 Div) to provide locating support to ARA and ARES units alike. It is anticipated that 131 Bty will raise a small establishment of ARES soldiers as part of the new integration policy recently announced.

132 Div Loc Bty was originally raised at Batman Avenue on 21 November 1955 and has over its 32 years provided support to a number of agencies both civil and military and the unit has sent various

detachments or held annual field exercises in every state of Australia except the ACT and the Northern Territory. How many other ARes units can claim such a widely travelled record of service or training? A number of interesting tasks have been done by the Survey Troop in providing an aerial orientation for the RA Sigs at Diggers Rest and also to the Science Museum of Victoria in providing a grid orientation for an archeological excavation along the coastline and also to provide a new surveyed firing range at Lancellin in WA and Buckland in TAS and for the newly acquired Leopard Tank barrels to be proof fired at Craytown Vic. The Radar Troop was also used in the early sixties to track a small radio controlled aircraft in an attempt to create a new high altitude record.

During all these years the unit has had the following sections within its organisational structure;

- Sound ranging section,
- Radar sections,
- Artillery Intelligence,
- Survey section,
- Meteorological section,
- Mortar detachment (both 3" and 4.2"),
- RAEME Workshop/TST detachment,
- and BHQ element.

Just prior to disbandment the unit received its EVA radar equipment with which it would have been able to provide gun calibration data from the CAL section.

Thus the 132nd Divisional Locating Battery has moved into history and will probably never be seen again within the Division, but it will be remembered by all those who served in it and by those who have had the opportunity to make use of the information that the battery has supplied to the guns.

As of 22 September 1987 all personnel will have transferred out of the unit onto the nominal role of 2/15 Fd Regt and it will then be left to the regular component staff to officially close the final pages on the 132nd Divisional Locating Battery RAA.

WO2 Craig Cook

RECOLLECTIONS THE BENGHAZI HANDICAP

"On the morning of 7th April, Lieutenant Chester Guest's "E" Troop was in dire trouble during the "Handicap". Sergeant Keith Butler pieced together the events from recollections by Gunners Alex Barnett, Darce and Mick Edwards and Jack Confait:-

For the purpose of providing anti-aircraft protection for the convoys the 20mm Breda of each gun crew was mounted on a tripod bolted on to the tray body of an Italian Fiat diesel, quite open and with no protection at all for gunners. What with ammunition, rations, water, their gear and crew, there was little room for comfort. The drivers were Scots, seconded to the Battery from the Royal Army Service Corps. Their convoy camped the first night (5th April), overlooking the Barce-Tocra Pass. Gunner Jack Confait remembers the occasion by remarking that he cannot recall any soldier previously jockeying for guard duty, but many volunteered that night as the sentries were issued with binoculars. The Germans manning their positions were quite discernible as they in turn studied our positions.

At this point our Battery split, the majority under Lieutenant Dick Harry continuing on towards Tobruk while "E" Troop under Lieutenant Guest was attached to Headquarters Company of the 2/15th Infantry Battalion to be part of the rearguard after giving protection to the demolition crews. This prospect was not received with unalloyed joy by the gunners who were of the opinion that "hiking full bore" towards Tobruk without delay would have been preferable, but nevertheless they cheerfully accepted the situation.

"Barbara is reborn" was the code name of the operation that was to keep "E" Troop at Barce for another day. Engineers and some Workshop men destroyed culverts and bridges - quite a task as they had been well constructed by the 6th Australian Division Engineers during the first forward thrust into Cyrenaica.

That evening a Khamsin blew up adding choking sand and dust to the discomfort of the troops. The convoy was reformed and set off in darkness, by the inland route towards Giovanni Berta. As the night was cold, the exposed gunners spent an uncomfortable journey.

Around midnight, reflectors were noticed and some movement on the track 100 yards or so ahead, and as the convoy closed the gap, red-capped military policemen materialized, directing traffic up a side road. Alec, our Scots driver, who had been running supplies from Tobruk to Benghazi for three months, exclaimed "That's nae the f..... road choom" and swung the truck around them, keeping on the road he knew to Martuba.

We later heard that this was how Generals Neame, O'Connor and Gambier-Parry were captured, when Germans disguised as provosts gave false directions into a German trap, a ruse previously employed in France. This rumour was very strong, and was never really disproved. About daybreak, the convoy came to a halt because of an overheating engine. The troops, having been told to keep close to the guns, took the opportunity to "brew up".

So commenced the saga of "The Breakfast Battalion" - really only a Company, with a few "odds and sods" including our few Bredas.

A sentry sounded the alarm! Movement was noticed to the south-west; quite an unexpected direction, as that terrain was supposed to be impassable owing to salt marshes and deep sand. The gunners mounted the trucks which had been deployed on slightly higher ground around the infantry positions and manned the Bredas. After a brief period of surveying the approaching vehicles through his binoculars, the nearest infantry officer remarked - "It's all right chaps. They're ours."

Everybody relaxed - but not for long! Our supposed friends had moved closer, and their vehicles began an encircling movement. Gunner Alex Barnett likened the manoeuvre to "Red Indians

encircling a wagon train in the American Wild West".

Our Bredas opened up, as did the infantry with their rifles and a few light automatics. Chester Guest was moving around, revolver in hand, encouraging his gunners. At this juncture, the Germans having sized us up, turned their tracked vehicles inwards presenting their cannon at us, and within seconds, we had been hit amidships. The Breda was unserviceable and the truck burned furiously. Amazingly, the only casualty was our Scots driver who was wounded in the side and also had a broken ankle.

A second gun and truck, that of Bombardier Syme's crew, joined that of Sergeant Hawke, on fire and out of action. All the gunners had escaped becoming casualties and scrambled off the burning vehicles to take cover behind some low rocks, having no small arms or rifles.

Several of the infantry transport vehicles received hits and became part of the conflagration. Gunner Jack Confait was busy assisting the wounded infantrymen to a sheltered depression where they were being collected behind a small escarpment. Here his knowledge of bandaging race horses stood him in good stead as he got busy with bandages and field dressings. He was good, and the men were grateful. Later on, in prisoner-of-war camps, his help on that day proved a good investment. The cooks in these camps would, to use Jack's words, "turn the ladle into the thicker part of the soup or stew".

The other two Bredas, that of Sergeant Adams and that commanded by Bombardier Neil Sloane were still in action, with Gunners Charlie Little, Ken Clements, Mick and Darcy Edwards, Lew Potter, Russ Morres and Norm Colson helping to keep the action going, until their ammunition was exhausted.

At this juncture, the Commanding Officer of 2/15th Battalion, Lieutenant Colonel "Spike" Marlan approached the gunners to observe their Bredas, with their relatively small 20mm calibre HE (High

Explosive) rounds were not even marking the enemy armour. He decided that owing to the vastly superior enemy fire power, and because no way of escape appeared apparent, he would surrender the force which by that time had over forty wounded.

Gunner Darcy Edwards recalls that after the capitulation, a German tank rolled up beside their truck, the commander emerged with a "tommy gun", and in fluent English said, "All off the truck or I'll blow you off!" The tank crew herded the gunners together, grabbed what water and rations they had, and burnt the truck. Gunner Les Wilkins, a despatch rider, decided to make a dash for it on his motor-cycle, but only got a short distance before he was cut down, being hit three times. Unfortunately, he died from his wounds some hours later.

Immediately after the surrender, as Gunner Barnett remembers, the German soldiers were upset, expressing their anger at the explosive H.E. rounds from the Bredas which had "opened up" several of their men when they were shot. They accused us of using "dum dum" bullets. The situation could have become really nasty, but fortunately an Africa Korps high ranking officer arrived and resolved the argument by explaining that this was just normal Italian anti-aircraft ammunition. It was noticed that the troops of the Africa Korps were well-dressed with shirts, shorts and high quality soft leather boots which rolled down. Many carried automatic pistols or sub-machine guns, and a large percentage spoke very good English. While guarding the Australian prisoners they were quite friendly. There were no Australian complaints about the treatment by German frontline soldiers.

The engagement had resulted in our casualties being one killed and forty wounded, out of about one hundred and fifty men. The German column had been held up for about two and a half hours, for which purpose we had been left.

(In retrospect, these makeshift

outfits of a 20mm Breda mounted on an open truck were most vulnerable to enemy fire, being far too high off the ground, and with no protection at all for crews. Their ammunition was of too small calibre, the high explosive rounds having no penetration against any armour, however light. As recorded, it was also liable to provoke a very nasty reaction from enemy troops. The gunners were "sitting ducks" on trucks. Use against low flying aircraft was their only logical role. Even with every third round being "armour piercing", they still lacked penetration and certainly did not inspire confidence against tanks, armoured cars or anti-tank guns.)

It was not until 1948 that Sergeant Arthur Adams was awarded the Military Medal following a recommendation by Lieutenant Colonel Marlan. The citation read:

"Sergeant Adams was No1 of a gun team operating Breda 20mm guns in an anti-tank role. He engaged the enemy after his Portee had been hit several times, and was on fire and continued to fire at close range until all his ammunition was expended. Throughout, he gave a fine example of calm courage under extremely trying conditions."

Article submitted by:

LTCOL Tony Furze
Reproduced with kind permission of
2/3rd Australian Light
Anti-Aircraft Regiment from their
unit history:

"ON TARGET"

Available from Mr C.J.E. Rae
"Tal Tal"
Tucks Road
SHOREHAM. 3916
Cost: \$29

MAJOR F.W. IND, RA 1858-1887

A member of our Association, Major Warren Perry, was instrumental in organising a commemoration service marking the centenary of the death of Major F.W. Ind. LTCOL Norman Wright was our representative at the ceremony.

The following report on the Service from the "R.H.S.V. Historical News" was submitted by Robert Miller:

Cenetenary Commemoration Ceremony

A graveside ceremony was held in the Queenscliff Cemetery on Sunday 21 June 1987 to commemorate the centenary of the death of Major Frederick William Ind, RA, who died at Queenscliff on 23 June 1887 "of a serious attack of congestion of the lungs".

LT F.W. Ind, Royal Artillery, was one of a group of British Army and Navy Officers sent in 1883 to assist the Victorian Colonial Government to reorganise its defence forces. He was a graduate of the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich and had received further training in gunnery before serving in the war in Egypt in 1882 where he was decorated for bravery. The young Lieutenant was appointed as Captain, Commander of the Victorian Artillery on 1 December 1883. He was promoted as Major in August 1886.

Captain Ind moved to Queenscliff with his headquarters in August 1885, by which time construction of Fort Queenscliff was well advanced; permanent batteries had been built and some new guns mounted, the wall and keep were complete, searchlights had been installed, and barracks erected. Captain Ind was thus the first Commander of the Victorian Artillery to have his headquarters in the fully operational fort manned by a permanent force.

At the commemorative ceremony, an Oration of the Life and Career of Major Ind was delivered by Major Warren Perry, MBE, ED, (RL), FRHSV, former President of the Military Historical Society of Australia.

Following the Oration, a wreath was laid by Cr I.R. Curtis, Mayor of Queenscliffe, and the Last Post and Reveille were sounded.

OFFICE, AND DUETIE OF A GUNNER

By Cyprian Lucas (Born 1544)

The present day artilleryman would no doubt find it tough going to observe this routine for a gunner which was laid down four centuries ago.

"A gunner ought to be sober, wakeful, lustie, hardie, patient, prudent and a quick spirited man.

He ought to have good eyesight, a good judgment and perfect knowledge to select a convenient place in the day of service, to plant his Ordnance where it may doe most hurt into the enemies, and be least annoyed by them, and where his Ordnance may not be surprised by the enemie.

A gunner ought to be skilfull in Arithmetics, and Geometrie to the end he may be able by his knowledge in those artes to measure heights, depthes, breadthes, and lengthes, and to draw the plat of any piece of ground, and to make mines, countermines, artificial fireworks, rampiars, gabbions or baskets of earth and such like things which are used in times of warre to be make for offensive and defensive service.

Also a Gunner in time of Service ought to be forbyd with meake and courteous speeches in all manner of persons other than his appoynted assistances, to come neere his peeces, to the ende that none of his peeces may be chocked, poysoned or hurt and he ought not for any prayers or rewards to lende any peece of his gunmatch to another person, because it may be hurtful to him in time of service to lacke the same....."

CONTRIBUTIONS!

Now that the bird-gunners have "set the ball rolling" in this edition, we would like to publish the recollections of other gunners and their units.

Contributions for the next edition of Cascabel are requested to reach the Editor not later than FRI 18DEC87.

Please forward your article to:

"CASCABEL"

P.O. Box 449 FRANKSTON. 3199

SCREW GUNS

In the last issue of Cascabel we printed Kiplings famous poem "Screw Guns" and asked if any of our members new the origin of the term.

We thank Chris Armstrong, Max Armstrong, Ted King and Alan Mason who all took time out to answer our query. A precis of their responses is reproduced below:

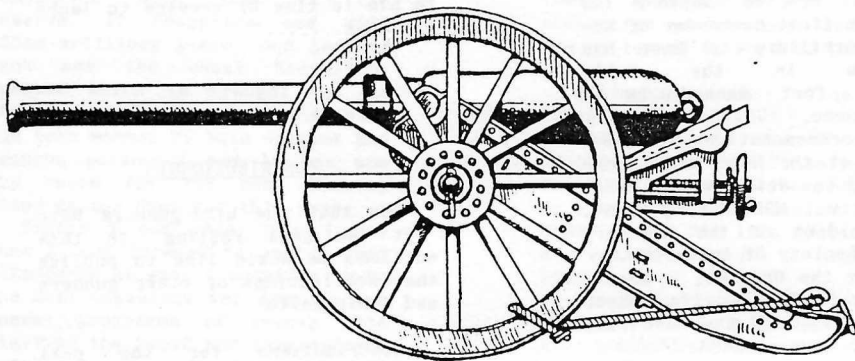
The 2.5 inch R.M.L. was the Screw Gun of the Mountain Artillery, the "gun that is made in two bits" commemorated by Kipling. Its long barrel was too heavy to be carried by one mule so it was made in two pieces - the muzzle and the breech section each of which weighed 200 pounds. The two separate barrel sections were joined together by the action of a barrel nut carried on a long sleeve at the mid point called the "trunnion hoop". The gun was rifled, muzzle-loaded, and composed of steel, and could be conveyed by

mountain paths and passes, where ordinary artillery would be useless.

The 2.5 inch R.M.L. had a highly distinguished career, beginning with Lord Roberts' march from Kabul to Kandahar in 1880, and not only fighting all over the frontiers of India but also arming the 176 (Abu Klea) Battery when the British square was broken at Abu Klea and Gunner Albert Smith won the Victoria Cross for saving the life of his officer armed only with the traversing handspike of his gun.

Chris Armstrong reported that the Indian Army had 7pr 2.5in R.M.L. as late as 1962 and saw them in operation in Kashmir in the form of a very updated, rubber tyred QF howitzer of around 4in calibre.

Only two of these guns found their way to Australia and they were used by the Launceston Volunteer Artillery. It is believed that one of these guns is outside the Officers' Mess at the barracks in Hobart.



MOUNTAIN R.M.L.

2.5in (JOINTED 7PR) -

Introduced:
Weight in Action:
Length (Bore):
Firing Mechanism:
Maximum Range:
Ammunition:
Fuses:

1884
4cwt 2qr
66.5in
Friction Tube
4000 yd
Common, Shrapnel, Case Shot, Star
Percussion, Time