

# CASCABEL

Newsletter of the Royal Australian Artillery  
Association (Victoria) Incorporated



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## THE PRESIDENT WRITES

In his regular column, our President usually gives us a summary of recent and future events with which our members have been involved. However, our Chief is currently enjoying an overseas holiday and has managed to include some moments of military interest and has filed the following report.

### WOOLWICH AND THE KINGS TROOP

I experienced two visits to RA establishments which - as a gunner, gave me a lot on which to think. Firstly, The Woolwich Mess, which could be described as HQ Mess for The Royal Regiment, and The Kings Troop RA at St Johns Wood. In both places I was very warmly greeted with the words used "We appreciate seeing members of the RAA with us".

The mess must be an example to all gunner messes and the care with which they keep their silverware, furniture and general memorabilia is in itself a wonderful example. Concerning the large collection of silver which has been presented, donated or actually purchased if of gunner interest, over many years, one could write so much. It seems that each piece has a place in the history of the RA. So very extensive is the collection, that a very fine booklet has been produced well illustrated, setting out how

it became part of the mess assets or whatever story can be told of special pieces. I would say that, as a whole, the silver would be beyond value and it is encased but on display for all to see. Also, it is not always in the mess. Individual items are in use, either in the Woolwich Mess or out with unit messes of the RA for special functions. A copy of the booklet which lists the Woolwich silver, will be placed on the bookshelves at the Batman Depot for those interested to peruse.

On my visit to St John's Wood Barracks I was also given a very heart warming welcome. Arriving at the guard house, I was met by an immaculately turned out RA Captain to whom I did not have to introduce myself. I was asked to accompany him to the mess, which is quite small and, it being a hot day I was handed a silver goblet with the remark, "It's Fosters, we keep it for Aussies". Then followed a most interesting visit to all parts of the Troop.

A few details first. The Troop consists of six 9 pdr guns and is commanded by a major, who is known as the Commanding Officer. All the personnel are from regular units who generally spend three years with the Troop. Some may spend two terms, which is not usual. The unit, being a ceremonial troop, is literally on duty for 24 hours a day. The Troop is put on its own private parade twice weekly and spends the remainder of its time

rehearsing for events to come, or actually taking part in displays such as the annual Tattoo in London and The Royal Tournament. The Troop is also called upon to provide funeral parties and has a specially prepared 18 pdr MII for this use. During rehearsals around the streets of London, the starting time is 0200HR and all troops are back in barracks by 0700HR, owing to the traffic problems after that hour. Of course, salutes have to be undertaken when appropriate, for not only the British Royal Family, but for visiting heads of state etc.

On my tour of the barracks my first visit was to the stables and they were immaculate as anyone would appreciate. The horses were chosen for temperament and size. The team horses, of necessity for appearance and working together, are fairly evenly matched. The rides are called "charges" and generally stand a little taller. Ages are between four years - and if they are performing well - are kept up to eighteen years of age. I was told that after quite a short time in the troop, the horses know and react to all trumpet or bugle calls.

Next, the riding school. A grand old building, which at the time of its building in 1824, had the biggest unsupported timber span - one hundred feet. Some of the timbers will require renewal and birch was purchased for seasoning and for use in replacing those old timbers. The birch will require a further ten years seasoning before the work begins. It is in this building and on a good depth of tan bark, that all personnel are put through their paces to make them the horsemen that they need to be.

Next the harness rooms. Each driver has two sets, a working set and a ceremonial set. Really, it was difficult to tell the difference, but there were quite a few drivers busy maintaining their particular sets of harness - all of the steel, particularly, was prone to immediate rusting upon days of rain and it has been found that any substitute metal is unsatisfactory. Each piece of harness and saddlery

had its place on the wall of the sub-section harness room.

The Gun Park - Magnificent! Each sub section has a "limber gunner" in whose charge the responsibility for every aspect of the gun rests. There were several limber gunners at work while I was there, especially so because it had rained the evening before. The guns are modified in only one respect. The height of the shield has been lowered so as to be one inch under the height of the wheels. These guns, during fast moving "musical rides" at tattoos etc are prone to turn over. The damage done to the shields was too great, so now the guns can turn upside down - literally - without damage. Spare parts are a problem and where there is a military museum with a few guns, arrangements are made to swap worn out pieces for "new" so that the guns are beautifully maintained in working order.

The last two places of interest were the hospital for the horses and the smithy. There were no horses in the sick lines but there were three or four being re-shod under wonderful conditions.

When I returned to the mess it was explained to me how the unit became "The Kings Troop". It was during a visit by King George VI to the Riding Troop that he, personally, crossed out the word "Riding" and substituted "Kings" and said that he would like to consider the unit "his". After his death, the present Queen decreed that it should remain The Kings Troop in honour of her father - and so it is.

I met the CO who said that he would welcome any members of the RAA, by arrangement, and told me that he was regarded as a bit of a grizzler. He had a fine unit who performed very well indeed, but nobody was perfect, so he had to spend his time bawling people out, so that no slackness would occur. He also made it quite clear that his was the senior of all British units and always paraded as such.

A truly fascinating two days and an experience any gunner will not forget.

Norman Whiteleaw

#### HAPPY HOUR AT DANDENONG

A Happy Hour was held on Friday 20th May 1988 at 2 Fd Bty, Dandenong. Proceedings kicked off at approximately 5.30pm and concluded in the early hours of the next morning when I bid farewell to the traditional tailenders.

It was pleasing to see so many new faces amongst all of the regular attenders. There was a good turnout from the British Gunners Association and 23 Fd Bty in particular. I am also glad to report that the ARA Staff, and 10 Mdm Regt were represented amongst the hundred or so who attended.

The RAA Shop with Reg at the helm did a good trade as did the bar (as usual). My thanks go to SGT George Beale who once again gave his time to help prepare the food, and also to WO2 Bob Armstrong who assisted during the afternoon (should you have been at work Bob?).

A most enjoyable evening - see you all at the next one!

SSGT Ernie Paddon  
We also wish to thank Ernie for his marathon effort in preparing and serving a first rate supper.

Editor

#### RECOLLECTIONS "A LETTER HOME"

RAWAL PINDI,  
North-Western Frontier,  
1/7/1916.

My Dear Father,

I have had lots of experiences since writing you, but most of them will have to keep until after the War is over; at present I have been ordered back to this place, which is the great Depot for the North West. I am completing the personal of a Company for the Sappers and as soon as this is complete I will leave for Mesopotamia, via Karachi, in command of it. As this place is quite safe - Nancy has come up for the few weeks that I will be here, and is now learning what hot weather means - I have never experienced anything like it, and as you know I have been in some very warm spots, and yet this time

last week, only 70 miles from here I was sleeping with three blankets over me, but the elevation was 9500 feet, well up in the Himalayas - crawling along goat-tracks, with some times a sheer drop of a couple of thousand feet on one side and a sheer wall on the other. The mountain battery with us lost a gun and six mules over the side in one spot.

I can't stop to describe the scenery to you, but it will be a joy to me for the rest of my life. From Rawal Pindi, in spite of its heat, we can see the snow-caps of the Himalayas. An English Territorial Regiment, coming up here from the coast about three weeks ago, had 136 casualties and 15 deaths from heat stroke in one day; so you will realise it can be hot, we have a punkah going over our beds even.

I have got a tremendous lot of work to do, you have no idea what it means to get a Company ready to take to the Field, and these Indian people are so helpless, and the OC really has to be a mother and father to them, and one has to look out for so many things that one would not need to with white troops - impersonation for instance is very common. The Company was a bit out of hand when I took it over but they will feed out of my hand now.

I am getting a good insight into military life here for we have something of pretty well every corp in the Army - from the Camel Cavalry to the last thing from the Flying Corp.

In the streets of Rawal Pindi there are some fine Australian natives to be seen, in the shape of Blue Gum trees planted for shade purposes. Some of them are quite five feet in diameter; rather a blow this to the old "gag" about our Australian trees giving no shade, as these have been chosen by the finest Forestry Department in the World for town shading. It is rather curious that these trees should do so well here as for six months in the year this district is absolutely rainless.

About 20 miles from here is where General Gough fought his great battle against the Sikhs.

We are both very fit, except that I have a cold and a sore throat, both of which - whilst not serious - are very uncomfortable.

With best love to you all at "Hilderne"

Your affectionate son,  
Cecil Rae.

Still address to Kirkee  
That is always our base depot and they will always reach me from there.

Article submitted by:

C.J.E. Rae

#### AROUND THE REGIMENTS

It has been some time since we have updated the postings of our serving members for your information. So here is the status of our Regiments as at 1st July, 1988

#### HQ RAA

CDA	COL	Mike Vincent
BMRA (ARA)	MAJ	Peter Veretennikoff
SO3 PERS	CAPT	Judith Davis
DASM	WO1	Darby O'Toole

#### 2/15 FIELD REGIMENT

<u>RHQ</u>	(Batman Avenue)	
CO	LTCOL	Mike Buckridge
2IC	MAJ	Neil Hamer
ADJT (ARA)	CAPT	Wayne Goodman
IO	LT	Rory Cain
ASST ADJT	LT	Ken Black

#### HQ BTY (Batman Avenue)

BC	MAJ	Ross Peterken
BK	CAPT	Ron Harris
QM (ARA)	CAPT	Dick King
SIG OFFR	LT	Laurie Smith

#### 2 FD BTY (Dandenong)

BC	MAJ	Jeff Cole
BK	CAPT	Dave Allen
FO	LT	John Auchettl
FO	LT	Jack Wegman
GPO	LT	Jim Pearson
ASST GPO	LT	Mike Barba Yannis
BTY LDR	LT	Gary Hunter
	LT	Rohan Burdett

#### 23 FD BTY (Frankston)

BC	MAJ	Bill Cross
BK	CAPT	Steve Venn
FO	CAPT	John Traill
FO	CAPT	Peter Rowley
GPO	LT	Dave Edwards
ASST GPO	LT	Keith Scott
BTY LDR	2LT	Jason Cooke

2LT	Peter Fennell
2LT	Lorenzo Marasco

REC OFFR	CAPT	Peter Wertheimer
OC TST	CAPT	Mike Newbond
CHAP	CAPT	Barry Brown

#### 10 MEDIUM REGIMENT

<u>RHQ</u>	(Geelong)	
CO	LTCOL	Ron Lenard
ADJT (ARA)	CAPT	Craig Taggart
REC OFFR	LT	Liz Eadie

#### HQ BTY (Geelong)

BC	MAJ	Brian Jackson
QM	CAPT	Rod Winchester
RMO	CAPT	Sue Homolka

#### 37 MDM BTY (Geelong)

BC	MAJ	Roger Dalton
BK	CAPT	John Lambert
FO	CAPT	Evan Belfrage
GPO	LT	Don Shields

#### 39 MDM BTY (Colac)

BC	MAJ	Mark Dalla Costa
BK	CAPT	Rob Charles
FO	LT	Rob Mellar
GPO	LT	Kevin Bennett

#### TRG TP

OC	MAJ	John Sheard
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#### NON CORPS POSTINGS

COMD 3 TRG GP	BRIG	Graeme Standish
COMD 4 BDE	BRIG	Doug Perry
CO MUR	LTCOL	Bernie Pearson
HQ 3 DIV	LTCOL	Don Reid
MONUR	CAPT	Alan Sandbach
DUC	CAPT	Mike Womack

#### RCSC Staff

LTCOL	Ian George
LTCOL	Bob Collins
MAJ	Roger Smith
MAJ	Norm White

#### RCSC Students

CAPT	Denzil Stevenson (JNR Cse)
LT	Rob Moorby
LT	Don Taylor

#### CONTRIBUTIONS

Please forward your article for the next issue to reach the Editor not later than FRI 23 SEP 88 to:

"CASCABEL"

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