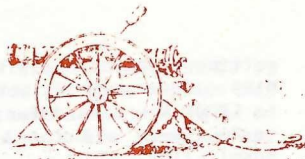


CASCABEL

Newsletter of the Royal Australian Artillery
Association (Victoria) Incorporated



Registered by Australia Post Publication No.: VBH7517

NUMBER 20

APRIL 1989

THE PRESIDENT WRITES

Dear Member,

Later this month I am to address a group of Regular Army soldiers on the topic "What Anzac Day means to me". The soldiers are all too young to have served in wartime and their Commanding Officer believes that a returned serviceman of World War II vintage may assist them to understand the powerful emotions that are evoked by that most commonly used acronym in the Australian vocabulary "ANZAC".

What thoughts pass through the minds of the old soldiers as they stand at the Shrine of Remembrance in the cold, pre-dawn darkness of Anzac Day when the quiet talk is suddenly stilled by the order "Stand To". What are their thoughts as, later in the day, they march across the Forecourt of the Shrine, treading on the words "We will remember them" engraved in the pavement. Or later again, during the Commemoration Ceremony when, over the PA system come the warning words "Lest We Forget" followed by the haunting notes of Last Post.

Probably the reaction varies widely over the war veteran community; certainly my thoughts have changed considerably over the 42 Anzac Days I have experienced since returning from World War II. In the next couple of weeks I face the task of crystallising my views

before presenting them to an audience that is probably both critical and cynical.

Our Annual Church Service, was scheduled to take place at St Bartholomews, Burnley on 12th February. This date proved to be unsuitable to the Minister and was altered to 5th February. Unfortunately, only one of the Committee was available on that day and, regrettably the Association's attendance at the service had to be cancelled. A number of people were disappointed by the decision and I thank those stalwarts who upheld tradition by attending St Barts on the day.

We are discussing the possibility of having the Association Church Service on the first Sunday in February every year and hope that our Minister, The Reverend Barry Brown is able to accommodate the plan.

The trip to HMAS Cerberus was enjoyed by 42 members, which is probably a record attendance at one of our functions of this type. The Gunnery School looked after us very well, even allowing some members to get into flash protection clothing and enter the 4.7 inch gun turret during firing practice. Thank you Linda, John and Judith for laying on the chicken and champagne luncheon. It was delicious.

The second activity during March was the visit to 10 Mdm Regt live firing exercise at Puckapunyal. Merv Taggart led the party of 12 which enjoyed an interesting day

getting sunburnt while watching the M198, 155mm guns in action. Thanks to LTCOL Ron Lenard for allowing us to be there and for his generous hospitality.

All messes will be open on Anzac Day and, with no game at the MCG this year, congestion should be minimal. Do drop in for a snack, a drink, and an hour or two of comradeship. Perhaps the comradeship that develops from shared service is the true basis of the Anzac spirit.

Warm thoughts,

Keith Rossi

REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE

Help is sought for assistance in the permanent documentation of the history of artillery units in Victoria since Federation and any other matters that are directly linked to these units. As this has never been done before (as far as I can gather) I have been keen to do so before the passing of time causes all real knowledge of these units to fade into that portion of our minds known as memories and to be modified by that all too powerful factor known as time. Due to the size of this project (it will be suitable for me in retirement) I propose to first document that part of time from 1948 to the present and would really like to hear from anyone who has a good memory or perhaps has documentary details that will assist. At this stage I have lists and approximate dates of various units and their locations, but some locs of the sub sections have now faded from fact to speculation and I would like to sort out these problems.

To loosen some of the cobwebs, pre WW II units that I wish to find out more about are 2,4,7,8,9,10,11,15 Fd Arty Brigades (Regiments) which formed the Artillery of 3 & 4 Division and also 22 Fd Regt as part of 2 Cav Division. Although AIF units may have been raised with the above numerals I am only interested in the organisations as they were before 1914, post 1918, pre 1939 and post 1948 but the linking of units may also be of interest.

Also 23 Fd Bty is trying to complete its history and would like to hear from any person who may have some interesting stories, photos etc and would be prepared to be interviewed to help put this together. The battery is also about to seek permission to strike its own battery plaque and any input on this matter along with alternative designs would be most welcome. Hope to see some offers soon,

Craig Cook

Craig can be contacted as follows:

Home Telephone: (03) 890 2117

23 Fd Bty Tue N1: (059) 713 3852

Mailing address: 33 Haig Street BOX HILL SOUTH. 3128

"THANKS FOR THE MEMORY!"

Dear President Keith, thank you for your comments on my Gun Team mentioned by you on page 1 of Cascabel No 19. Yes Keith I witnessed the Gunners race at the Tattoo just recently in Melbourne and I agree with your sentiments. Our 15 Field Regiment Gun Demonstration Team would have killed them. Under the watchful eye of our ARA adjutant, Captain Graham Taylor, we could dismantle the L5 howitzer for porta pack sling carry by chopper in 1 minute and 20 seconds and reassemble to firing order in 1 minute and 30 seconds flat.

They were a tremendous team to work with and one that can have the privilege of boasting to be the first CMF Gun Detachment in Australia to be airlifted by helicopter with their gun and equipment, travelling to demonstrations at Laverton RAAF Air Display, Bendigo, Shepparton, Healesville Golf Course (3 DIV Officers TEWT) and many other towns.

I wonder how many members of our Association remember the first Tattoo held after the war in the 50's at the Royal Showgrounds, when they had the Gunners race and we were all dressed up in nightshirts and on the alarm bell had to dress in our working gear and webbing and manhandle the good old 25 pounder with dragropes and then fire a practice round to declare the

winner. The things that will stick in my mind are the fight between sergeants Phil Minns and Eric Sangwell whose clothing got mixed up and they couldn't sort it out in the dark. And a certain Regiment who pre loaded their gun to take out first place just pipping 15 Fd Regt. They were good times and certainly turned out some wonderful leaders.

Finally, it was a pleasure to see in the "Annual Awards" SGT W.G. (Cooke) Beale rewarded for his efforts. There were many times at Dandenong Depot where George carried the full catering needs of the Regiment on his own allowing many weekend exercises to proceed. My congratulations George, well deserved and well done.

WO2 Mal Bugg

12 FIELD BRIGADE AFA
HAS A LUCKY ESCAPE
FRANCE 12TH APRIL 1918

Australian Gunners have on several occasions fought the enemy at the gun muzzles, indeed, our guns have sometimes been overrun and lost. The most recent occasion when the enemy have got into our batteries was at Firebase Coral, South Vietnam, in 1968 when 12 Field Regiment RAA, under the leadership of Lieutenant Colonel Jack Kelly DSO (one time Adjutant of 2 Fd Regt and 15 Light Regiment) successfully defended their guns against the NVA and Viet Cong.

But this story is about the first 12th Regiment, formed in Egypt in March 1916. The incident related below took place when the Allies were desperately trying to stem the German offensive in March-April 1918.

The historian of V British Corps reported the incident in the following terms:

"The Regiment possesses a fighting record of which any regiment would be proud. They played a great part in helping to hold up the German advance North of Bethune; their efficiency, smartness and discipline at work or on parade makes them, as a British Artillery General recently said, equal to any gunners he had ever

seen.

They are the pride of the Australian Colonel commanding them, who trained and led them. At the time the German assault broke through the lines held by the Portugese South of Armentieres, this Brigade was in action a considerable distance away beyond the scene of the German attack. They were ordered at midday instantly out of action and to march to support the famous 51st Division North of Bethune. They arrived at the end of the second day of battle to find the gallant Scottish Division extended over a very long front, and those men were footsore from walking from flank to flank, keeping in touch with one another. How they kept the Germans at bay, the Australians say, was a miracle.

When the Australian gunners arrived on the scene the position they meant to take up was in the hands of the Germans. They were ordered a little further north and clattered through the streets of Robecq under enemy fire at a steady trot up to the road to the North, in perfect order, dropped trails and settled into action as if at a drill.

Some of their officers took command of the British Infantry whose officers were all casualties, one Australian Artillery Officer temporarily commanded a Battalion of Black Watch.

Brigade Headquarters forward of the batteries escaped capture by a hair's breadth early on the morning of the fourth day. The Colonel and others finally rode out of the farm yard as the Germans entered it the other side.

Meanwhile, back at the batteries the gunners kept firing with magnificent coolness. The infantry in front of them did not retreat, they simply fought to a finish and the only captured were wounded men. Some gunners were sent out with rifles and joining with seven men of the Warwickshires formed a little infantry line of their own immediately in front of the battery while the guns limbered up. The Artillery drivers in the gunlimber lines, a few hundred yards back,

brought up their teams in splendid order under machine gun and shell fire.

The time from the starting away of the teams and the moving away of the guns was six minutes. There was a critical little moment at the outgoing. It was necessary in order to remove the guns from their position, to advance 150 yards towards the enemy. Swamps lay behind the position and the road lay out in front. The batteries made for the road at a gallop under the protection of rifle and Lewis gun fire.

The few gunners and seven British infantry-men then escaped down the road with the rearguard following. The fire in the road was severe and a few horses were lost from the teams as they galloped out, but every gun was saved and came into action farther in the rear. The Corps Artillery Commander, when thanking the Artillery Brigade for their splendid success wrote, "I do not say this because you are Australians, but because you are one of the finest Brigades I have ever had the honour to command".

To flesh out the story it is necessary to research the Official History of the AIF in France.

12 Field Brigade was raised as one of the three Field Artillery Brigades of the 4th Division. Initially it had only three 18 pounder batteries (45,46,47). Later a 4.5 inch howitzer battery (112) was added. The number of artillery brigades in each Division was reduced to two and 12 FAB became an Army FAB available for deployment in support of any Division.

The CO, LTCOL H.W. Lloyd was an officer of the Permanent Army and, on appointment to command 12 FAB embarked on a rigorous training programme. It soon became one of the best FABs in the line.

The AIF divisions were moving to the Somme battlefield when the Portuguese defences in the Lys area began to give way before the German onslaught. The 1st Division was rushed to Hazebrouck to strengthen the Allied Line while the 12 FAB also moved North to Robecq, where they found the soldiers of the 50th and 51st (Highland) Divisions

utterly exhausted.

Immediately on arrival, CAPT A.L. Rickard (45 Bty) and LT L.C. Seaton (112 Bty) were attached to a battalion of the Black Watch which had lost its officers. Rickard commanded the battalion temporarily.

The batteries came into action off a road which ran parallel to, and a few yards in rear of, a small stream known as the Clarence River. Unbeknown to the Gunners the Germans closed up to the stream, concealed by the willows growing along its banks.

But SGT George (45 Bty) back in the wagon lines, saw the German infantry and immediately assembled the horse teams forward to the batteries.

Gunners Medcalf (47 Bty), Parkinson (45), Kelly (45) and White (112) went forward with rifles, gathered seven soldiers from the Warwickshires to form a defensive line behind which the guns were limbered up.

Then the batteries advanced to the road along the Clarence, wheeled right and galloped to safety under a hail of rifle and machine gun fire.

No guns were lost but LTs Teuty (45) Doddemeade (47) and Gunner Stewart had their horses shot from under them. Gunner Stewart was run over by a gun but, because the soil was very soft, suffered only minor injuries.

Soon 12 FAB was in action again in a new position slightly to the rear.

The stern resistance put up by the 50th and 51st Divisions gave the 1st AIF time to get into positions at Hazebrouck, behind Nieppe Wood and there the German advance came to a halt.

Keith Rossi

GENERAL SIR SAMUEL BROWNE V.C.
AND THE ORIGIN OF THE
SAM BROWNE BELT

One of the most familiar pieces of military equipment is the Sam Browne belt, yet little is known about the inventor of this belt, General Sir Samuel Browne V.C. More is recorded of his military service

than of his development of the belt which bears his name.

Lieutenant S.J. Browne began his service in India in April 1849 as OIC of the newly raised 2nd Regiment of Punjab Cavalry, the unit which later bore his name (22nd Sam Browne's Cavalry). His career followed the normal course within his unit, until the Indian Mutiny. Lord Roberts has recorded a story of Browne at this time.

During the Mutiny, an officer of the Punjab Cavalry had told Sam Browne that he had taken to wearing a chain on his shoulders as a means of warding off sword cuts, and had strongly urged Sam Browne to do the same. He gave Browne two curb chains, which he insisted on being sewn on his coat. Some time after, the officer was killed, and a day or two after his death, when Sam Browne and his friends were talking together, one man said that at the sale of the officer's effects he had bought some saddlery which had belonged to him, and had thought it curious that neither of the bridles he had bought had curb chains on them. "I know where they are", said Sam Browne, and, going to his tent, took off the curb chains and gave them to the purchaser of the bridles.

A short time afterwards, on August 31 1853 at Seerporah, Browne single-handedly silenced a field gun which blocked the advance; during the fighting, however, he received two sword cuts, one on the knee (from which he nearly bled to death), and the other on the left shoulder (now unprotected by chain) which cut off his arm. For this action Browne was awarded the V.C., and his citation at this time gives his rank as Lieutenant Colonel, and his unit as the 46 Punjabis. Browne had been previously been made a CB.

The dress regulations for British officers of the 2nd Punjabis after the Mutiny required them to wear their waist belts under their tunics. Browne found this ungainly with his left arm missing, and devised an external belt, supported on the left hand (sword) side by a shoulder strap. The belt had two shoulder pieces

when a pistol was added.

The Sam Browne belt was not worn universally in the British Army until the time of the Boer War, when units began adopting more practical field uniforms to replace the traditional dress uniforms previously worn in battle. The belt was later adopted by other countries, and is now an almost universal piece of equipment. Slight variations on the original pattern exist and, in the British Commonwealth Forces, it is usually worn by officers (examples of the Sam Browne belt with the two shoulder braces can be seen in the gallery of the Australian War Memorial).

Sam Browne, as a Lieutenant General, commanded the Peshawar Field Force during the Afghan War. He was knighted, and was promoted to General in 1884.

THE ANCIENT AND HONORABLE
ARTILLERY COMPANY OF MASSACHUSETTS
Boston, Massachusetts
Chartered 1638

Because many of the early settlers in Massachusetts had been members in England, of the Honorable Artillery Company at London (organized and chartered in 1537), it was natural that a similar organization should be formed here when the lack of military protection against the Indians became a matter of serious concern. In 1637 a company was formed at Boston for instruction in discipline and tactics.

Governor Winthrop denied the unit's petition for a charter, fearing the establishment of a military force which might overthrow the civil power, but finally he granted a charter on March 16, 1638. On the first Monday in June an election was held on Boston Common, then an open field leading down to the Charles River, and the most convenient place to cast the ballots was on the head of a drum. A similar ceremony has taken place each year since, except for the years 1687 to 1689 (when the meetings were suppressed by Governor Andros) and the Revolutionary War years.

The first captain commanding the Company was Robert Keayne, who left in his will land for a town house (with a room set aside as an Armory for the "Military Company of Massachusetts") on State Street, where the old State House now stands.

In its Armory the Company maintains a Military Museum and Library, open daily to the public, which is without equal in the United States. Here are relics of every war in which this Country has engaged since its settlement, many having been on display previously in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

The members of the Company were leaders in organizing and supporting churches, framing and administering laws, introducing manufacturing, extending trade, and defending the Colony. Nine-tenths of the Company were loyal to the Colonies in the Revolution, and by their own experience in the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company they served on every battlefield where the banner of Massachusetts waved, from Bunker Hill and Bennington, through Valley Forge to Yorktown.

This is the Company that Washington knew, that Franklin saw march through the streets of Boston, that John Adams and John Quincy Adams visited; the same Company which has always stood for, the best in citizenship.

AN INCIDENT
DURING THE CAMPAIGN IN GREECE
APRIL, 1941

"On the morning of 22nd April, the German vehicles came within range of the 2/2 Field Regiment, now armed with 25 pounders, and a fierce artillery battle commenced forward of Brallos. The enemy had medium guns to out range and out blast the field guns, but the 2nd/2nd waged an incredible gun battle all that day".

From - "There Goes a Man"
the biography of
Lieutenant General
Sir Stanley Savage

During the final stages of the campaign in Greece, 2/2 Field Regiment was deployed on the heights of the Thermopylae Line in support of Australian and New Zealand infantry. A section of 2 guns under Lt Jack Anderson, was located forward of the rest of the Regiment on the lower slopes of Brallos Pass to enable fire to be brought to bear on and beyond a bridge over the Sperkhios River. This is Anderson's after-battle report to his CO, Lt Col Cremor:-

The two guns were dug in on the forward slopes of Brallos Pass overlooking the plains of Lamia with the Sperkhios River in the foreground at a range of about 7000 yards. The main road back to Lamia cut straight through the centre of the plain like a white ribbon, and the main task of the section was to delay as long as possible enemy movement along this road.

The Engineers had assisted greatly by destroying the bridge across the Sperkhios River, and it was anticipated that if this crossing was covered by fire from the field guns it would make the task of repairing the bridge difficult, and perhaps force the enemy to spread along the river in search of a safer crossing.

I took over the position late in the afternoon of 20th April, with instructions to register the zone and fire at any target that came within range.

As no officer or assistant could be spared, I had to observe and control the guns, so took up a position some 15 yards to the left flank.

The zone was registered next morning and we then sat back and waited for targets.

During the afternoon a British Breda AA unit alongside us forced a Heinkel bomber to crash land just short of the river, and later an infantry patrol was sent out to destroy the plane.

Brig Herring (CRA, 6 Div) and Brig Vasey (Comd 19 Inf Bde) visited the position about 1700 hours to give further instructions, and while they were there, the first enemy vehicles moved out of

Lamia and down the road towards us. The road had been registered of course, and three rounds at 10900 yards put the first vehicle out of action. The remainder withdrew and there was no further movement before dark.

We were using 18 pounders converted to 25 pounders and their maximum range was 11675 yards.

At dusk we commenced a fire plan of 12 rounds per hour at irregular intervals, straddling the blown bridge, and continued it until daylight.

Unfortunately, our picket light had a hole in it, and after the first hour went out for good. We then used the luminous line of my prismatic compass, hung in the back of the gun pit, as a substitute, and as it proved effective we continued the fire plan from one gun.

Soon after sunrise the next morning a convoy moved out from Lamia at about 30 yard intervals, and we opened fire as soon as they came in range. They immediately dispersed and withdrew. Shortly after they appeared again, this time at 100 yard intervals, and we let them come a little closer before firing again. This happened several times, and each time the vehicles re-appeared at longer intervals.

However, we were now in trouble as some enemy medium guns had commenced ranging on us, and being on the forward slopes of the Pass we were a sitting shot but, though their shells fell as close as three or four yards to the pits, no one was hurt in the early stages, although our equipment was suffering.

First our wireless was hit and the operator buried to his tin hat, but the lad Barnett was only shaken. Then a tractor was set on fire in a gully behind us and, as it contained about 40 Smoke shells, provided us with a screen for a while. Next, a trailer full of H.E. caught alight and the shells began exploding and, indeed, caused us more worry than the enemy fire.

We could see the enemy battery in a wood S.E. of Lamia, but they were well out of our range,

although we tried to stretch it by using two blue charges and one red one. We estimated that we got an additional 500 yards range, but needed 2000.

We continued firing through the morning whenever a target appeared, and each time got a pasting in return from the 5.9in guns, which we later found them to be.

At about midday the tell tale rod in one gun went right forward, and, although we had an artificer with us he had no pump to repair the damage.

Early in the afternoon we were surprised to see an enemy convoy pull up right at the foot of the Pass though about half a mile to the left flank. We moved the remaining gun around and had to lift the trail up on to the edge of the gun pit to obtain enough traverse. The gun had not been manned when we sighted this convoy and I was first in the layer's seat. As about a Company of infantry were dismounting we fired about 60 rounds, Charge 1, over open sights amongst them as fast as the gun could be loaded. It was a dream of a target and we estimated a good number of casualties.

Just after this we had a few airbursts fired at us from some guns that had moved up nearer the river, and we were able to reply and stop them firing. During the quota we received in reply from the 5.9's the cradle of the remaining gun must have been pierced by several pieces of H.E. When we fired at a Heinkel that had just landed on the Lamia side of the river, the gun would not run out, and was definitely out of action.

I then sent one gun crew back to the Battery Command Post with Bdr Tulloch who had just come down with a message, and they took with them the sights and firing mechanism of their gun.

Just as they moved off, a couple of rounds from the 5.9s fell amongst them. Bdr Tulloch was killed instantly, and Gnr Lennie had one arm blown off. We patched him up as best we could with a field dressing and the tail of my shirt, and Gnr Brown, my batman, and I carried him up a goat track

to where an ambulance could pick him up. It was solid going, and harassing fire was falling uncomfortably close. I rang the BC from another OP and reported...my line having been broken beyond repair... and then returned to the gun position to find several more casualties.

Sgt Len Ingram, Bdr Caldwell the artificer, Gnr Fred Kerr, and Gnr Frank O'Brien had all been killed instantly, L/Bdr Jack Drake had both legs blown off above the knee and died half an hour later. Gnr Harry Matthews was missing and we found his remains later. Sgt Lees had a couple of small pieces in one leg but was still able to walk, but Bdr Grogan had a ten inch slash in his bottom, and 2/4th Bn stretcher bearers helped us get him up to an ambulance.

I reported again from Captain Mair's OP and Brown stayed behind and collected personal effects of the lads who were knocked, and brought back their personal weapons.

All personnel had been evacuated by now, and I returned just on dusk to collect the sights and firing mechanism from the second gun.

ANZAC DAY REUNION POST WORLD WAR II GUNNERS

Gunners who have served in Borneo, Malaya and/or South Vietnam are invited to participate in the 1989 ANZAC Day March. Assembly point is outside the Athenaeum Theatre in Collins Street from 0900HRS onwards and after the march in the JARKS Club, Artillery Depot, Batman Avenue, Melbourne.

Any further enquiries please ring: John Mottershead (03) 233 7760

CHANGES AFFECTING OFFICERS

Young Officers

We welcome the following graduates from Melbourne University Regiment and Deakin University Company who joined the RAA wef 18 MAR 89.

T/LT	S.C. Bates	10 Mdm Regt
2LT	R.J. Darby	"
T/LT	K.P. Diviny	"
2LT	A. Kostadinovic	"

Corps Transfers

MAJ	P.D. Alkemade - to RAA
2LT	S.J. Bowen - to RAINF

Promotions

CAPT	D.W. Allen	FO 10 Mdm Regt
CAPT	R.V. Harris	BK 2/15 Fd Regt

Postings

LTCOL	D.A. Reid	C&SC
LTCOL	B.A. Pearson	RSL 3MD
CAPT	R.G. Charles	Deakin Uni Coy

CONTRIBUTIONS

Contributions for the next issue of Cascabel are requested to reach the Editor not later than:

FRI 30 JUN 89

Please forward your article to:
"CASCABEL"

PO BOX 449 FRANKSTON. 3199