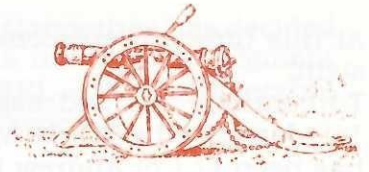


# CASCABEL

Newsletter of



The ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ARTILLERY  
ASSOCIATION (Victoria) INCORPORATED

Number 23

January 1990

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## **The President Writes:**

The Advent of the 50th anniversary of the start of WW2, coupled with the raising of the 2nd AIF caused many an old soldier to reflect on his military experiences over the past half century. For gunners, it meant the raising of three Field Regiments of 6th Aust Div - 2/1st, 2/2nd and 2/3rd, together with 2/1st Anti-tank Regt. 2/2nd Field Regt was our very own Victorian Regt, created from the Officers, NCO's and men of the Militia Field Brigades that existed in those days.

It was 49 years ago this month that 2/1st and 2/2nd were blooded at the battle of Bardia, where Captain Norm Vickery of 2/1st and Captain Ron McPherson of 2/2nd each earned a Military Cross - the first bravery awards to Gunners in WW2.

And now a leap of ten years to the CMF of 1951 when Brig Andy Arthur, CRA of 3 Div, decided that more Gunner Officers were needed. Soon after, Blamey Battery was formed and 160 potential Officers were parading at Batman Ave in four Troops - W, X, Y and Z - one for each of the Regiments then

in existence. Eighteen months later RAA in Victoria had 90 new Lieutenants.

The change since then was brought home to me savagely on 2nd December when I attended a Graduation Parade of the ARes OCTU. Of the 24 graduates only one was destined to be commissioned into the RAA. The sole Gunner graduate was Stephen Bright who is to be a 2Lt in 10 Mdm Regt. Welcome Stephen, you're a pretty important person to the RAA.

Another shock was in store, when at the St Barbara's Day parade the following day I saw from the rear a Major wearing a black Sam Browne belt taking over the parade from the RSM. When he turned about I recognized Peter Alkemade from the Armoured Corps! Enquiry revealed that Peter had qualified as a Gunner and had agreed to transfer to RAA to fill an essential posting, for which there was no RAA major available. Peter has been Administering Command of 10Mdm Regt since Lt Col Ron Lenard retired in October.

The same parade was the last for the CDA Lt Col John Henry, who has returned to the Inactive List.

At this time no replacement is in sight.

To continue the sad saga. From 1st. January the CO, 10 Mdm Regt has been Lt Col Andrew Rankine. Sad, because he is an ARA Officer, posted to fill a vacancy for which the ARes did not have a suitable candidate.

The lesson to be learned is that if the RAA cannot attract sufficient potential officers to fill the Lieutenant vacancies today, there will not be sufficient Majors to promote into command appointments in 10 years.

On a happier note, I was privileged to present the RAA Association prizes at the St Barbara's Day Parade to Chaplain Barry Brown (Officer prize) WO1 Graeme Browne (WO & SNCO prize) L/Bdr Peter Vicars (Junior NCO & Gunner prize) and Captain Wayne Goodman (ARA prize). Congratulations to the recipients, whose efforts on behalf of the Regiment have been suitably recognized.

Finally, having recovered from the hectic Xmas period, I invite all members to join Chaplain Barry Brown and his congregation at St Bartholomews on Sunday 4th February, for the Associations annual Church Service.

Warm thoughts

Keith Rossi

I would like to thank Ed Williams for the following article.

### **FORT QUEENSCLIFFE & SOME OF A YOUNG GUNNERS EXPERIENCES.**

I was one of the RAA Association members who visited the Fort at Queenscliffe on Sunday 10th April 88, and how the memories came flooding back. I was enlisted with the RAA 6th Heavy Brigade, 119 Heavy Battery in the 1930's at Fort Gellibrand Williamstown Victoria (now occupied by 2 CDO Coy (ARes)). Our Commanding Officer was LtCol T.C. Inches ED. When I enlisted as a very young recruit, it wasn't a matter of going to the Drill Hall of the RAA. You had to be recommended by one or two members who were already in the Battery. Each Drill night there would always be 4 - 6 young chaps hoping to join up.

As I have stated, ours was the 119th Battery, the 118th Battery was at Picnic Point Sandringham. The Drill Hall was down near the fore-shore and although I never saw it, I understand the building had sliding doors at the back and the Artillery piece which they used for practice and firing was actually inside the Hall.

The CO over there was Major A.J.McL. Wilson. I remember well the first time I went to the Fort at Queenscliffe by train and as I said I was a very raw "rookie" and when we got to Geelong, I was told by older members of our Battery, that the RSM always made an inspec-

tion of all the personnel as to dress etc. prior to the arrival at the 'Cliff and you had to have your white helmet on. I was sitting by an open window of the carriage, doing my best to be as upright as a ram-rod. I was so engrossed that I didn't notice that the other chaps in the compartment had disappeared and what I also didn't know that the *Steam Train*, after leaving Geelong station went through a tunnel. Well, in came the soot and grime through the window, hence a white helmet turned to grey in seconds. Of course I had been set up, so to speak. I was able to blow most of the grit and dust off my helmet and so enjoyed the joke with the others. Upon arriving at Queenscliffe, all the troops assembled outside the station - The Band, The Artillery Battery, then The Fortress Engineers. Where we had red on our uniforms and cap, they had a light blue, also they wore white gloves which we didn't. When the parade got under way it must have looked spectacular, because the people of Queenscliffe lined the main street and they even shut the shops to watch us march straight into the Fort. I often wished I had obtained a photo of it. The only photo I have of our Battery is from the "AGE" newspaper taken at the Shrine of Remembrance, during our annual Pilgrimage to the 6th Heavy Brigade service conducted by Maj Gen Wilcoxon. Dont think demonstrators are something new. After the service we marched, with arms reversed, through the Shrine. They had to close the doors

to keep the demonstrators out and that was in 1939, our last pilgrimage before WW2. Anyway back to Fort Queenscliffe. The CO was Colonel McBride, also known to the rank and file as "Brophy" after a well known Detective in Melbourne at that time. When I asked why he was called this, I was told "you'll find out" which I did. I have never met a man who could appear and dis-appear with the greatest of ease. He even caught me smoking on Gun Mound duty at 3 o'clock in the morning and to receive a good dressing down at that hour was something I never forgot. Furthermore he was in full dress as though he was going on parade. Why I was never put on a charge sheet I will never ever know. As to his disappearing etc. I have often wondered whether he had learnt the art of "beaming himself up and down " like they do in the TV space series. Anyway it was so uncanny. I have been to two top Army Training establishments in Australia and I would say Fort Queenscliffe was one of them. It really bristled with efficiency and this was all due to Col McBride and his staff. He was an excellent Artillery Officer. As our exercises were supposed to be under active conditions, we were billeted at Crows Nest (next door to the Staff college) under canvass and I remember lying in bed in the tent after "lights out" and suddenly something ran up one side of the tent and down the other. I thought I had imagined it, when back it came the other way. Being a good soldier and gunner I



decided to investigate, so I crept out into the dark and at the end of the line of tents I could see a shadowy form, so I watched. I could make out he had a dog with him. As it all turned out he was a WO and he had taught this dog (a spaniel) to chase a ball, so when the WO threw it, the dog, instead of running between the tents, went up and over each one, then back the same way - mystery solved.

Now the 3 Mark VII Guns on the 'Cliff side had the heavy shields and at Point Nepean they didn't. The gunners over on the other side were known as the "Rockies" and if anyone has been over there and seen that long line of concrete steps they ran up and down, I think they were well named.

When I think of the numerous buckets of hot water we tipped down those barrels after a shoot to clean them out and to bring everything back to pass the most critical eye, I understand now, after talking to the Gun crew of the M198's, that this is a thing of the past.

Some of the ammunition we fired was that old, that some times the driving band would go one way and the projectile the other and the drill, depress and elevate after each round, lifting those 100lb shells up on to the Gun Platform - by God how we worked! There were no such things as ear plugs, you were told to stand with your heels slightly off the ground with your mouth open. We must have looked like a lot of startled Ballet dancers, but that was the drill. Each round cost \$70 (34 pounds 10 shillings) - (sorry ED the computer doesn't

have the pound sign...ed) and as I was employed by the Defence Dept at 5 pounds (\$10) a week (don't laugh, that was a good salary in those days), every time they fired a Gun I used to think there goes 7 weeks wages up the spout!

When we fired at the targets, towed by the good Tug 'Mars' the general idea was not hit same, but to miss it by so many degrees, so that the projectile had to land just behind the target. The method of checking the shots and the accuracy was done by a simple device called the rake.



The centre pin was put on the target, so a near miss was so many degrees left or right, whichever way the target was being towed. I remember one of our first shots the degrees were allowed on the wrong side of the target, and we nearly cut one of the floats in half. These were used to keep the towing rope clear of the screw of the tug. Sometimes I think the Captain of the Tug had a great sense of humour, either that or he didn't care much about living.

One member of our section was detailed for duty on the Mars during an exercise, and just before things got under way, he went to the toilet on board, which happened to be a small steel cabin on the upper deck-aft. While he was in there somehow or other a rope got tangled around this toilet, and when the tug took up the slack he

RAA ASSOCIATION (VICTORIA) INCORPORATED

FUNDS STATEMENT

SOURCE OF FUNDS

Surplus for year - General Fund	2399.50
- RAA Social Fund	2438.56
- Museum Fund	9.40
Increase in - Subscriptions in Advance	496.00
Decrease in - Cash at Bank	1485.12
- Keycard Account	1181.36
- Sundry Debtors	193.50
	<u>\$ 8203.44</u>
	=====


APPLICATION OF FUNDS

Increase in - Stock of RAA Association Shop Items	206.58
Presentation Plaques	382.60
- Term Deposits	4500.00
- Prepayments - Back to the Regiment Night	28.25
- Artillery Ball	464.01
Decrease in - Sundry Creditors	280.00
- Payments Received in Advance	
- Gunner Dinner	1860.00
- Artillery Ball	442.00
- Back to the Regiment Night	40.00
	<u>\$ 8203.44</u>
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AUDIT REPORT

I have audited the accounts of the Association for the year ended 30 June 1989 in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards.

In my opinion, the accompanying Statements of Income and Expenditure and Funds Statement for the year ended 30 June 1989 and Balance Sheet as at that date represent a true and fair view of the result of the Association's activities for the year then ended and of the state of its affairs at the 30 June 1989.

  
.....  
A.S. Furze Comm FCA  
Lieutenant Colonel  
Chartered Accountant  
Honorary Auditor

10 August 1989

# RAA ASSOCIATION (VICTORIA) INCORPORATED

## STATEMENT OF INCOME & EXPENDITURE FOR YEAR ENDED 30TH JUNE, 1989

### GENERAL FUND

#### INCOME

Subscriptions	1800.00
Interest - Current Accounts	237.84
Interest - Term Deposits	615.70
Sale - Membership Badges	380.00
Profit RAA Assoc (Vic) Shop	1500.25
Donations	33.02
Surplus - Back to the Regt	94.66
Surplus - Military Tattoo	52.69
Surplus - Cerberus Visit	10.48

\$4724.64  
=====

#### EXPENDITURE

AGM - Supper & Entertainment	286.07
Supper - Happy Hours	232.67
Bar Snacks Anzac Day	200.00
Bar Snacks Vietnam Veterans	50.00
Young Officers Night	126.08
Associations Night	134.05
Postage	680.75
Stationery	39.60
Annual Awards	148.60
Insurance	117.70
Registration Fee "Cascabel"	42.50
Lodgment Annual Return	23.00
Stamp Duty - Property Trust	10.50
Gifts & Presentations	99.00
Master Pattern - Plaque	80.00
Bank Charges	54.62
Surplus for year	2399.50

\$4724.64  
=====

### RAA SOCIAL FUND

#### INCOME

Interest - Current Accounts	192.99
- Term Deposits	499.54
Surplus - Artillery	1333.53
Surplus - Arty Ball Raffle	662.76

\$2688.82  
=====

#### EXPENDITURE

Deficit - Gunner Dinner	95.15
Deficit - Retirement Dinner	136.61
Sundry Expenses	18.50
Surplus for year	2438.56

\$2688.82  
=====

### MUSEUM AND MEMORABILIA FUND

#### INCOME

Interest - Current Accounts	17.36
- Term Deposits	44.94

\$62.30  
=====

#### EXPENDITURE

Silver Cleaner	52.90
Surplus for year	9.40

\$62.30  
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RAA ASSOCIATION (VICTORIA) INCORPORATED

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 30TH JUNE, 1989

MEMBERS FUNDS

GENERAL FUND

Balance brought forward	4994.91	
Add Surplus for year	<u>2399.50</u>	
	7394.41	
Donation - Maj P Whitelaw	<u>1000.00</u>	8394.41

RAA SOCIAL FUND

Balance brought forward	4522.62	
Add Surplus for year	<u>2438.56</u>	6961.18

MUSEUM & MEMORABILIA FUND

Balance brought forward	711.48	
Add Surplus for year	<u>9.40</u>	720.88

\$16076.47  
=====

Represented by:

ASSETS

Stock on Hand - RAA Association Shop Items		1548.90
- Presentation Plaques		382.60
Cash at Bank - Commonwealth Savings Bank Ltd		3237.16
Term Deposits - Commonwealth Trading Bank Ltd		13000.00
Keycard - Commonwealth Savings Bank Ltd		2271.79
Sundry Debtors - RAA Assoc Shop		42.50
Prepayments - Back to the Regiment Night	104.52	
- Artillery Ball	<u>500.00</u>	604.52
		21087.47

LESS LIABILITIES

Subscriptions Received in Advance	4731.00	
Payments Received in Advance		
- Back to the Regiment Night	<u>280.00</u>	5011.00

NET ASSETS:

\$16076.47  
=====

was imprisoned for the whole of the exercise. He said he didn't see much of the shoot out of the Port-hole, but he considered he was an authority on shipboard toilets.

When our training exercise at Queenscliffe was over we returned to Melbourne via Port Phillip Bay on the paddle steamer Weeroona, and the Fort CO and some of the staff, including the Padre came down to see us off. Seeing we had no streamers, we raced down to get some toilet rolls, and if you have never seen a Padre hanging on to 4 or 5 streamers of toilet paper I can assure you it is quite a sight. But alas this was so long ago, these good and happy memories of a Gunner at Queenscliffe.

I was called up for active service at the Fort the day after WW2 started, but seeing I was also a member of the Defence Dept they would not release me, but after many requests they finally did in 1941. I then joined the A.I.F. but thats another story.

Two other members of our family have been at the Fort, my Uncle and my Father. It was my Uncles second enlistment, W.W.1 and W.W.2. My Father had three enlistments, Boer War, W.W.1 and W.W.2. (All infantry)

Our family's third and last active connection with the Fort of Queenscliffe was when my Nephew did the 12 months Australian Command and Staff course to become a Lieutenant Colonel.

Ed Williams

While we are on the subject of the Forts, Dave Osborne has submitted an article on the South Channel Fort.

### **Rediscover the Fort**

South Channel Fort, Victorias' only man made island was 100 years old in July 1988. Situated at the southern end of Port Philip Bay on the north side of the South Channel, it is 5.7 Km from the nearest bank, Point King at Sorrento. Up until late 1987 the Fort was off limits and illegal visitors were faced with an overgrown island laced with a disused tunnel system and rusting guns, whose purpose had long been lost in history.

The Fort was first proposed in 1877 as part of a complex scheme of defences to prevent raids on Melbourne by fast armed raiders, which it was believed would prey on ships using the sea routes or gathered in harbours. Other fortifications and heavy gun batteries at the heads on shore could have been rushed and breached by these armed raiders, so consideration was given to mining the entrance channels to Port Phillip Bay and building forts on the near-by shoals.

Work began on the fort in 1879 by laying 14,000 tons of bluestone rocks weighing more than 2 tons each in a ring on the shoals. Pope's Eye Annulus on the shoal of that name is the foundation ring for another fort which was not completed.



In the early 1880's work stopped as funds ran out, but was quickly resumed in April 1885 when the threat of war with Russian became very real.

At this time, two heavy muzzle-loading guns were mounted on temporary platforms above the annulus and about 80 mines were laid in South Channel.

The fort could illuminate the channel at night with two powerful search lights with electricity provided by a steam boiler coupled to an electric generator. Mines in the channel could be detonated electronically in groups of four as a hostile ship approached them.

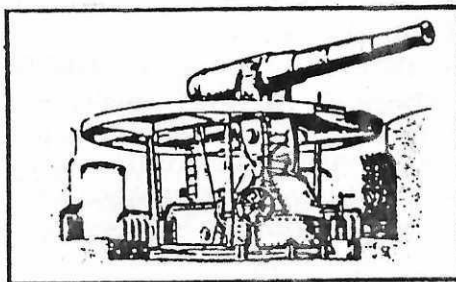
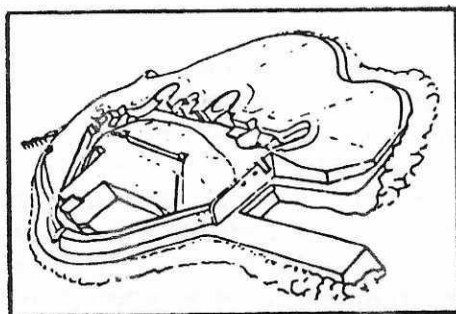
The armaments firm of William Armstrong of England developed a new type of gun mounting called the 'disappearing' gun in 1883, which allowed the heavy eight-inch guns ordered for South Channel Fort to be loaded in a gun-pit below a horizontal steel shield. These guns could hurl a 40 lb shell 9500 yards, almost as far as Portsea, and could penetrate the heavy 10 inch armor of capital ships at 2000 yards. Two hundred shells for the guns were held in the magazines of the fort below ground, as well as other ammunition for the several conventional field pieces and multi-barrelled machine guns mounted at the fort. Minefield defence also relied on support from the 13 ships of the Victorian Navy, in the days before Federation, which included the Monitor HMVS Cerberus which now forms a breakwater at Black Rock. The need for the fort diminished after the turn of the

century, when more powerful artillery came into service.

There is an on site caretaker from November to March, so visits can be made by the public for a small fee. Visitors can travel to the fort by Ferry Service from Sorrento or by your own boat to the jetty on the island.

The following illustrations are an outline of the Fort and a cut away drawing of the disappearing gun.

*(The gun seems reminiscent of the guns guarding High Street, Westgarth.....Ed.)*



The Friends of South Channel Fort are looking for people to join them to help restore the island and encourage others to visit. For enquiries, contact (059) 863 979 or write to "Friends of South Channel Fort" P.O. Box 228 Sorrento, 3943.

*A few points of interest from the recent issue of the Corps Liaison newsletter.*

The Hamel Gun was introduced into service in 4 Field Regiment earlier this year and the Regiment paraded its new Guns for the first time on the Regimental Birthday on 4 May 89. The parade was reviewed by Maj Gen P Falkland AO RL Representative Colonel Commandant of the RAA, which was his final official duty in that capacity before handing over to MajGen J D Stevenson AO CBE RL on 15 May 89. The occasion was marked by the unveiling of a silver replica of the Hamel Gun at a combined Officers/Sergeants Mess Dinner later that evening.

On behalf of all members of the Association I would like to congratulate MajGen John Stevenson on assuming the very important appointment as our Representative Colonel Commandant. One of General's Stevensons first tasks is to chair the Steering Group appointed to establish the RAA museum at North Fort. In a future issue of CASCABEL I will include an article about the Corps museum.

The Committee has decided to include a new regular segment in CASCABEL - the membership secretary's report.

Recent new members accepted are:

LtCol G R Allinson  
Capt J R Anderson  
Sgt J J Bardi  
Mr T L Biggs  
Maj G P Butcher  
Maj J P Cole  
Maj W H Cross  
Bdr S J Draper  
WOII G W Ford  
WOII I A Galloway  
WOII D F Gibson  
LBdr P M Gibson  
Mr W J Goodall  
Sgt G A Horton  
SSgt G Lemmo  
Maj R A Lukis  
Sgt F M MacDonald  
Gnr J D MacKiggan  
2Lt L A Marasco  
WOII P A Minns  
Gnr E Quilliam  
Capt J G Simmons  
Lt P Simmons  
Gnr G I Smith  
LBdr W T Strong  
Gnr B J Tidyman  
Lt R J Trott  
WOII B V Upton  
Sgt C R Walker  
Gnr D S Wells  
Sgt J C Wells  
Sgt I C Wingate  
Capt C R Wood  
LBdr R J Wood  
Lt G J Wraith

We welcome all of you to the Association and hope that we see

you at the forthcoming social functions. Our membership now stands at around 405 although there are a few that are in arrears with their Subs. I will follow these members up.

If anyone knowing the current address of the following members, would they please contact me to enable our records to be updated.

WO2 J C Bartolomai  
Gnr M J Cleeman  
Maj F H Jorgensen  
WO2 S Panting  
Bdr N P Brown  
Lbdr L D Coultish  
Capt J D Lambert  
Bdr A HB Quinlan  
WO2 E Bryson  
Sgt G A Dunn  
Sgt A F Millis  
Maj J C Shimmin  
Sgt J A Heggen  
SSgt W Burgess  
Lt Col K H Bunnett

Maj D J Osborne  
Membership Secretary  
Phone: 781 2633  
Address: P.O.Box 309  
Frankston 3199.

### **From the editors desk**

You will notice that we have included two inserts to CASCABEL this issue. The first is the audited Treasurers report. The report tabled at the AGM was unaudited

and as there has been a change to the report as a result of the Audit it has been included in CASCABEL.

The second insert is the reminder to attend the annual church Parade.

I would like to thank all of you who have responded with articles, but don't stop there. I would like more for the future. It would help if articles are printed if possible as handwriting can be difficult to decipher when dealing with some technical aspects of Gunnery (after all, I'm only a relative new boy to the Art of Gunnery). It is possible to include drawings and photo's in CASCABEL but these will take me some time to process. It will help if these are of good clarity and definition.

*Many thanks .....ed.*