

CASCABEL

Newsletter of



The ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ARTILLERY
ASSOCIATION (Victoria) INCORPORATED

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The President Writes

As the 7th Division Units marched past on Anzac Day, it occurred to me that it was the 50th anniversary of the greatest expansion of artillery in the Australian Army since 1916.

In February 1916 it was decided to increase the AIF from two to five infantry divisions. Simultaneously, a fourth battery was to be added to each Field Brigade, while a Howitzer Brigade of 3 batteries was to be raised for each Division.

By the end of March 1916, the 14 additional Brigades had been formed and the artillery power of the AIF increased from 72 x 18 pdr guns to 240 x 18 pdrs plus 60 x 4.5" howitzers. A truly remarkable achievement.

A similar situation occurred when, in February 1940, it was decided to increase the second AIF to two divisions, grouped as a Corps. At that time, the artillery of

the 2nd AIF consisted of 2/1, 2/2 (Vic) and 2/3 Field Regiments plus 2/1 Anti-tank Regt. Artillery regiments for the new 7th Division and Corps artillery began forming on 26th April.

For 7 Division, 2/4 (Vic), 2/5 and 2/6 Fd Regts and 2/2 ATk were raised and as Corps artillery, 2/7 and 2/8 (Vic & Tas) Fd Regts, 2/1 and 2/2 (Vic) Medium Regts plus 2/1 and 2/2 (Vic) Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regts.

But it didn't stop there. In May, with the German Army sweeping through Holland & Belgium, it was decided to raise a third division (the 8th). So, by July 1940, 2/9, 2/10 and 2/11 (Vic) Fd Regts, 2/3 Anti-Tk Regt and 2/3 (Vic) Light Anti-aircraft Regts were forming. These were soon to be followed by 2/14 (Vic & SA) and 2/15 Fd Regt and 2/4 Anti-Tk Regt when 9 Division was raised.

In the absence of the standard equipment, the 25pdr gun howitzer, Australian Fd Regts were supposedly equipped with 16 x 18 pdr guns and 8 x 4.5" howitzers.

But all available field and medium ordnance was on issue to the 17 field and 2 medium Militia Brigades. There were no anti-tank of light anti-tank guns in Australia and only 30 heavy anti-tank guns of an obsolete type (3", 20 cwt).

In the circumstances, units did a commendable job of training gun detachments with simulated ordnance eg. blocks of fire-wood from the cook house, tree branches, marks on the ground and other novelties.

But that was a long time ago and the Regiment, as it had done before and no doubt will do again, overcame all difficulties to deliver effective fire where and when required.

A recent example of this occurred at Puckapunyal when 25 members of the Association watched "A" Bty, using 105^{mm} howitzers, borrowed from 2/15 Fd Regt and a Bty of 8/12 Mdm Regt who had brought their own 155^{mm} guns from Sydney, demonstrate considerable skill in laying down concentrations of fire in support of Armoured and Infantry attacks.

Our Colonel Commandant has launched an appeal for funds to enable the Regimental Museum at North Head, Manly to develop into a top class, commercially viable project. I hope all member associations and individuals will see their way clear to support the development of this, our main Museum. I am able to report that the tunnels

at the North Fort have been cleared and cleaned, electric light installed and that a building has been made available to display memorabilia. Visitors to Sydney are welcome to visit the North Fort Museum. Locally, our Museum Trust Committee is being raised with some degree of haste to ensure that the considerable stock of relics and memorabilia are safe-guarded when Batman Ave depot is vacated. The committee is complete except for members to be nominated from 2/15 Fd Regt.

Your committee has a number of interesting activities planned for the 1990/91 year. I'll tell you about them at the Annual General Meeting on Thursday 23 August 1990.

See you there !

Keith Rossi

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Articles in this issue are about the Queen's Banner, Padres who have won the VC and the restoration of an historic gun.

The Banner of Queen Elizabeth II

During the early years of the Royal Artillery, the equivalent of today's Queen's Colours were carried on one of the guns of the artillery train. Normally the Colours

were carried on the largest gun of the train which became known as the Flag Gun. The practice of carrying the Colours on this gun ceased towards the end of the eighteenth century, when the guns themselves came to be regarded as the Colours of the Royal Artillery.

In 1970, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Captain-General of the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery, graciously approved the presentation of a Banner to the Regiment in honour of its centenary on 1st. August 1971 by His Excellency, the Governor General Sir Paul Hasluck. This Banner is designated the Queen's Banner. The Queen's Banner replaced the King's Banner presented by His Majesty King Edward VII in recognition of the service of the Royal Australian Artillery in the South African War 1899-1902. The King's Banner was laid up at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra on Anzac Day 1972.

The Banner is known as the Banner of Queen Elizabeth II.

A silver plaque on the pike bears the inscription:

"Presented by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Captain-General of The Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery, to replace the Banner presented by His Majesty King Edward VII and in honour of the Centenary of the Regiment, 1971."

It is customary for spectators

to stand and military members in uniform to salute when the Banner is taken on or off parade or passes near them.

Editor's note:
This article was submitted by Arch Paige, Secretary of 2/4th Field Regiment Association who asked where the Banner is located.

The Queen's Banner is kept at The School of Artillery, North Head when not being used by Units of the Royal Regiment. If memory serves me right it was last paraded in Victoria during 2/15 Field Regiments exercising of its right of entry to the City of Dandenong on 2 July 1988.

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PADRES

Despite many acts of valour and heroism attributed to men of the cloth, only five have been awarded the Victoria Cross.

Rev John William ADAMS

Of the Bengal Ecclesiastical Department, during the Afghan War on December 11th 1879. Padre Adams risked his life rescuing troopers of the 9th Lancers who were trapped under their horses and were pinned down under heavy fire. His recommendation for the VC was at first refused as it was only for members of the Navy and Army. Two years later, the Royal

Warrant was altered and he was decorated by Queen Victoria.

Rev Edward Noel MELLISH

Attached to the Royal Fusiliers. Awarded at St.Eloi France on 27-29 March 1916. Padre Mellish over a period of three days, repeatedly went out under heavy artillery fire to tend and rescue the wounded.

Rev William ADDISON

At Sanniyat, Mesopotamia on 9th April 1916. Padre Addison tended and rescued wounded men, under heavy machine gun fire, in open ground.

Rev Theodore Bayly HARDY

Attached to the 8th Battalion Lincolnshire Regiment, for gallantry near Bucquoy, France during 25-27 April 1918. Padre Hardy was the most highly decorated of all Army Chaplains. Previously awarded the DSO and MC he went out 400 metres beyond the front line to bring in a wounded officer. Later when an enemy shell exploded burying men, he went forward again and managed to dig out two of them. He was later killed in action on 18th October 1918.

Rev John Weir FOOTE

Of the Canadian Army, at Dieppe on 19th August 1942. Padre Foote was the Regimental Chaplain to the Hamilton Light Infantry. He established an RAP on the beach while under heavy fire. He assisted the Medical Officer for 8 hours -

urged to leave with the wounded on a landing craft - refused only to be later taken prisoner.

Acts of conspicuous gallantry, by these men of the cloth have often gone un-noticed. However, all were serving in their chosen field and to be recognised was an additional reward for their devotion and bravery.

Article by ED Williams.

Editor's note:
Our members may be interested to know that the Chaplain to 2/15 Field Regiment Captain Father Barry Brown was at the 1989 St Barbara's Day parade, awarded the Association prize for the Officer who contributed most to the Royal Regiment in Victoria during the preceeding year.

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Restoration Of Historic Gun

The Army Apprentices School have completed the restoration of a 12 pounder Armstrong RBL gun owned by the Deniliquin RSL. Six of these were purchased by the colony of Victoria in 1864 to equip the Victorian Field Artillery (VFA). Another two guns were aquired by the colony of Western Australia.

The VFA was part of a volunteer force formed to supplement and then replace the British Garrison which finally withdrew from the Australian colonies in 1870.

The volunteers were disbanded in 1884 and replaced by the militia force (paid part timers)

In 1885 the 12 pounder was withdrawn from the VFA and put in store. In 1889 this already obsolete gun was re-issued to the newly formed Victorian Horse Artillery (VHA).

The VHA consisted of two half batteries formed, and largely financed, by two of colonial Victoria's leading families; The Clarkes of Rupertswood (Sunbury) and the Chirnsides of Werribee Park. The VHA was the first horse artillery unit formed in Australia. Horse artillery was supposed to support the cavalry but, ironically, the guns of the VHA were more decrepit than those of the VFA.

The Werribee Park half battery was disbanded in 1893 and the 12 pounder was finally retired from service when the VHA was disbanded in 1897 after the death of the benefactor of the Rupertswood half battery, the Honourable William J. Clarke, Bart., MLC.

The fate of the Werribee Park guns is unknown but the Rupertswood guns are now distributed as follows. One is located outside the Sunbury Council Chambers, having been restored by 3 Base Workshops, another is located outside the Deniliquin RSL and the other is at the Australian War Memorial.

The two guns purchased by the

Colony of Western Australia were used to equip the "Union Troop of Western Australilan Volunteers" and a succession of horse and field artillery troops. This troop was formed in 1870 and the 12 pounder was retired from service in 1894. Both these guns are now located in Kings Park, Perth.

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Late last year Bill Goodall forwarded an article, however it is only now that I can publish it, so Bill, better late than never.....ed.

Within the recreational park at Noosaville on the Noosa River, are mounted two WWII guns complete with their mountings - obviously somewhat removed from a fully serviceable condition. The least innocent of the two has stamped on the barrel -

QF 40mm MK1

Barrel No L/30740

(also bearing the Royal Cypher for GEORGE VI). There is no caption to show the donor or any of its involvement in WWII.

The second gun provided some historical interest -

The attached caption reads: This 4.5" coastal defence gun was used to defend the Port of Brisbane in the 1939-45 Pacific War.

It was one of ten such guns mounted along the coast somewhere between Noosa Heads and

the southern end of Bribie Island. Aided by some minimal removal of paint on the breech the following stampings were visible:

DA
Gun 155mm M1A1 No 553
ORS DEPT U.S.A.
M.E.S.T.A 1943
?? LBS INSP RCD

It is well known that 4.7" QF guns were installed for coastal defence prior to and during WWII, but not so the 4.5" guns.

During 1943 a considerable number of 155mm gun batteries were employed along the northern coastline. No doubt some of our members served with one of these 155mm batteries

At the June committee meeting, 3 members were deleted from membership for being unfinancial.

We regret the passing of one member, Major E J "Scotty" Calcraft in March 1990.

Renewals for the 1990/91 year for annual members will not be sent until after the Annual General Meeting in August. In the meantime, should you need to contact me or advise a change of address, please ring on 781 2633 or write to PO Box 309 Frankston 3199.

The present analysis of members as at 30th June 1990 is as follows:

Annual Members	180
Life Members	143
Affiliate members	47
total	<u>370</u>

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

The Association is pleased to welcome 8 new members. They are;

- Maj P D Alkemade
- Gnr G A G Armstrong
- SGT J W Belfield
- Maj M G Dalla Costa
- SSGT F G Moulin
- Gnr L Owen
- Gnr I W Robertson
- Bdr T Skee

David Osborne
Membership Secretary

ITEMS OF INTEREST

MajGen John Whitelaw has asked if anyone can help him by obtaining donations of groups or

single medals for the RAA Historical Society. He indicates that any medals would be welcome but particularly those awarded to gunners. The construction of cabinets etc. is being funded by the RAA Association (ACT) as a contribution to the RAA museum. He would be happy to hear from anyone considering a donation of medals and can be contacted on (06) 295 9680 or 91 Mugga Way RED HILL ACT 2603.

On the local front, the RAA Association members of the Museum Committee have been nominated. They are:

- Maj C. Armstrong
- SSGT R. Morrell
- SSGT B. Cleeman
- WO2 C. Cook.

We would like to thank them for their interest in joining that committee and we wish them well during what will be a difficult time.

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ACTIVITIES REPORT

PAST ACTIVITIES

Unit Associations Night.

The RAA Association held its annual Associations night on the

5th April. This functions aim is to foster ties between the RAA Association and the Unit Associations which is becoming more urgent as the years pass.

Eighteen were present, with apologies from five Associations.

The Colonel Commandant MajGen Stevenson welcomed those present on then spoke on:

Whats happening in the Corps. Of particular interst was the future of the Batman Ave Depot and the move to Chapel Street.

The need to aquire space for the local RAA Museum.

Plans to proceed with developing the Corps Museum at North Head.

The President Brig Rossi, spoke on the proposed RAA Association activities and solicited further ideas. ANZAC day arrangements where also raised.

A donation of \$50 from the 106 Tank Attack Regimental (AIF) Association (Vic) was noted with thanks and this will be added to our museum funds.

The opportunity was taken to present 2Lt Stuart Pigdon and WO2 Gary Rolfe of 2/15 Fd Regt with the customery Gunner tie in recognition of their recent promotions.

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FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Please put these functions in your diaries:

27 July - Back to the Regiment
Sergeant's Night

3 August - Artillery Ball

23 August - AGM

3 October - ADI Visit

(see inserts for details)

18 Nov - Point Nepean Visit

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FROM THE EDITORS DESK

Once again I thank all who have responded with comments, suggestions and articles - please keep them coming. To those correspondants asking historical questions I have had to pass on your letters to our resident oracle on matters of military history - our president, who I am sure will reply as soon as he can.

In the last issue of Cascabel I unfortunately made two errors; one being the date of the Happy Hour at Dandenong to which we issued a supplement (for those who did not attend - shame, shame) but more importantly I wish to make clear

that our Colonel Commandant's father was not LtCol George Ingram but was in fact, LtCol George Ingram Stevenson (known to his troops as "the Iron Duke"). I do apologise to General Stevenson for any embarrassment that error may have caused him.

It seems that a full membership list is the will of quite a few members. We are in the process of evaluating and acquiring software to assist us in maintaining our membership records. When this is operational, the task of compiling such a list will be so much easier, so standby.

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