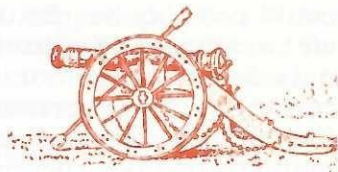


CASCABEL

Newsletter of



The ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ARTILLERY
ASSOCIATION (Victoria) INCORPORATED

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April 1991

The President Writes:

I have just returned from attending a rather sad event - the Parade held at Batman Avenue Depot to effect the amalgamation of 2/15 Field Regiment and 10 Medium Regiment. The Officers, NCO's, Men and Women of the two Regiments marched on to the parade ground as separate units and after due ceremony, marched off as one - 2nd 10th Medium Regiment.

The new Regiment will have two Batteries, 22 Fd Bty equipped with 105^{mm} guns and the other, 38 Mdm Bty equipped with 155^{mm} ordnance. We wish the new regiment a successful future, sure in the knowledge that it will continue to uphold the traditions of the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery.

In the 1950's there were 12 Artillery units in Victoria. In July 1957 the number was reduced to four. In July 1975 there was a reduction to three, when 2 and 15 Fd Regiments were amalgamated.

Ten Years later, 132 Divisional Locating Battery was disbanded and today we are reduced to one Gunner Unit.

The amalgamation parade happened to be held on the 50th anniversary of the German invasion of Greece on the 6th April 1941. Our infantry had just moved into position along the Yugoslav border, when 10 German Divisions launched their assault. Our own Victorian Artillery unit, 2/2 Fd Regt, was still moving forward when the Germans struck and didn't join the battle until it got into position at the Veria Pass on the 8th April. On ANZAC day the Regiment was evacuated from mainland Greece at Megara, having supported the infantry throughout the desperate battles fought during the withdrawal.

During this black period of World War II, it was common for both servicemen and the general public to criticise the Government for its failure to prepare for war in the years before 1939.

Today's parade is an example of history repeating itself. Australia is about as unready for war as a nation

could possibly be. So unready that we are virtually inviting other nations to attack our sovereignty. Indonesian fisherman loot our territorial waters well aware of our inability to take effective action to stop them.

On a happier note, I am able to report that there was standing room only at St. Bartholomews on the first Sunday in February, when we attended our Annual Church Service. Captain Chaplain Barry Brown conducted the service in his usual forthright manner and added the christening of Major and Mrs Mark Dalla Costa's children, Jamie and Simon to the proceedings. The singing was supported alternately by the Church organist and the RAA Band. The hospitality extended to the association members by the Reverend Brown and his parishioners was, as usual, warm, cooling and lavish.

One evening in March, representatives of Unit Associations gathered at Batman Avenue for the annual Unit Associations night, details of which appear elsewhere in this issue.

The importance of the work being done by the Museum committee is highlighted by the advice that RHQ of 2/10 Mdm Regt will move to Chapel Street Depot in 1991, when the preservation and display of memorabilia held by the Batman Avenue Messes will become a serious problem.

Warm Thoughts

Keith Rossi

ARTICLES SECTION

I am commencing this issue with an interesting article by Norman Whitelaw. Due to its length Norman produced it in two parts. Following is Part 1.

The Recollections of a Horse Gunner.

by Major P.S. (Norman) Whitelaw

I enlisted in 38 Field Battery, 10 Field Brigade, which unit was one of two Gunner Brigades located in the "new" Batman Avenue Drill Hall (now Training Depot) built in the early 1930's. The brigades consisted of 18 pdr MKII and 4.5" howitzers which were horse drawn and the buildings were designed to house such units. The main building was the parade area as it stands today, with four Battery HQ offices and QM store on each side. (15 Field Brigade on the East, 10 Field Brigade on the West. Outside on the boundary of the area were the Gun Parks for four Batteries each side, plus a like number of harness rooms. During the year the harness was in the care of the individual drivers, likewise the care of the guns and limbers was the gunners responsibility. At Annual Camp time, each unit took its own harness and occasionally, its own guns, or drew them from the mobilisation stores at Seymour.

Camps usually occurred at Site 17 Seymour, between February and Easter and great variety of weather had to be expected, from the hot and

dusty to the cold, wet and very muddy. Our CO who had been a young gunner during WWI in France, had a saying "HMS" which all his Officers and NCO's knew translated into "Horses, Men, Self" in that order and the saying was not allowed to be forgotten for a moment. The magnificent "remount" dominated the Gunner scene. They were the only means to our mobility and became the most important consideration of the gunners' life. Each man, whether driver or gunner, was rostered for horse-line piquet duty.

During annual camps the smell of horses permeated everywhere. Always on uniforms thus it was carried into living areas, messes, tents and certainly ablution huts. One became used to it and it was eventually carried home at camp's end. The days activity had to begin with watering, feeding and grooming of the horses and at times veterinary officers administered treatment during this before breakfast parade in the horse lines. All unit members attended parade straight from the blankets and there were no excuses accepted to avoid this duty.

While horses were being attended, the gun layer and his offside tested sights. Generally, hairs were taken from horses tails to create the crossed lines at the gun muzzles. The sights were adjusted to zero by laying the guns on a distant aiming point and sighting through the firing pin aperture by removing the firing mechanism and adjusting sights accordingly. The first artillery units in camp for the

year had the added duty of taking over from the Remount Depot personnel, the horse teams and "rides" allotted for the camp. Each horse was trained to its job within the battery. For identification purposes, a number was burned into the front near-side hoof.

The intake was accompanied by veterinary officers from the depot and with their assistance horses were identified to their jobs. A gun or limber team comprises six horses, three of them "rides" (near-side) and three off-side. The first pair were "lead horses" the second "the centre" and the third and last pair "the wheelers". The most experienced driver of a subsection team usually took the lead pair as it was he who had to follow the orders and direction of manoeuvre usually communicated by signs from either the BC or GPO.

The wheel driver had to know his role well as he had the task of holding his horses back to check the speed of the gun or limber when going down-hill. He kept his horses "back into the breeching", as it was said, to allow them to lean back to check the pace. The breeching was a heavy leather which was padded and passed around the "wheelers" hind quarters. When the going was down hill the wheel driver would seek assistance, if required to keep the pace down by signalling out to a gunner riding on the limber to apply the gun or limber brake. It meant the particular gunner dismounting while in motion, avoiding the steel tyred wheels in doing so and

ducking around the shield of the gun to apply the brake. When given thought, this action was a highly dangerous practice and I can truly state it would not be permitted today. But it had been the custom over many years to do so.

The wheel driver having a single shaft between his horses, protected his right leg by wearing a special legging fitted with a steel bar on the outside which gave him protection from the antics of the shaft when manoeuvring at speed and taking corners. The gun sergeant and his bombardier "coverer" were mounted on "rides", the sergeant always with the gun and the "coverer" with the limber.

Other horses were required as "rides", for the battery staff were mounted and comprised the BC and his assistant (BC Ack) the GPO with his like wise (GPO ack), the Battery Captain (BK today) plus two section commanders. There were "horse holders" as well, who, on deploying took care of horses at the rear of OP's and gun position.

The lead drivers usually attended to the gun sergeants and coverer's mounts having dropped the guns into action. The BC ack and GPO ack rode horses trained to carrying their particular equipment. The former, believe it or not, carried a "plain table" to the OP, the forerunner of the Artillery Board. The GPO ack likewise carried the director. Both instruments had folding tripod stands, sturdy and not light in weight. They were slung to one side of the horses attached to

the saddles and did not make for comfortable riding. This was especially so for the BC ack. He had the plain table in its webbing case on shoulder straps. I do not think a BC ack ever became used to carrying his gear plus all the normal a mounted gunner was required to take with him, plus a feedbag, for his mount. It was sufficiently comfortable when the battery was proceeding at a walk, which was usual, but at any faster rate, the bouncing and jerking of both plain table and stand made the going unpleasant and positively brutal at times.

Other vehicles besides guns and limbers were "GS (general service) wagons" which, with the exception of those allotted to the signal section, were under command of either Battery Captain or BQMS. Theirs was a most necessary part of a battery's retinue of vehicles. Pulled by a pair of horses, each was capable of a three quarter ton load. Between camps G.S. wagons were stored at the "Mob Siding" Seymour with wheels off and stacked upright on their tail boards to save space. The "siding" held mobilisation stores in those days and was connected by rail to the main Melbourne - Albury line.

(Part II will appear in the next issue - Editor)

.....ooOOoo.....

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

The Association is pleased to welcome, since the last report, 6 new members:-

Gnr A.R. Cadd
2LT D.C. Catchpool
Lt E.A. Meates
Gnr S.J. Monks
WOI F. Perry
Gnr M.W. Stokes

We regret to advise the deaths
of the following members:

Brig L.G. Parkinson MBE ED
Gnr E. Quilliam

Thank you to those members
who advised me of new addresses of
Gunnery missing in action. Please
advise me if anyone knows an
address for:

Bdr A.B. Quinlan

Please remember to advise me if
you change address on -

BH. 781 2633

AH. 787 7852 or write care of
P.O. Box 309 Frankston 3199.

Our current membership totals
379 - have you nominated a friend
who could be interested in the
activities of our association - the
qualification is a person who has
served in a gunner unit.

David Osborne
Membership Secretary

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ITEMS OF INTEREST

Ed Williams reports that
during a visit to the Melbourne
Steam Traction Engine Club about
12 months ago, he came into
contact with 2 students from

Swinburne College who were in
charge of one of the exhibits.

In the course of a conversation
about restoration, he mentioned the
Forts at the 'Heads', and they said
there was a searchlight at
Swinburne T.A.F.E in a corner
gathering dust. He asked how they
knew it came from the 'Heads' and
one said his Father had been in the
Army, and had seen it down there
(the Father had inspected it during
a visit to the College).

Ed notified Fort Queenscliffe as
to the whereabouts of the
searchlight and who to contact. He
later phoned Swinburne
Engineering Section and was
informed that it had been donated
back to Fort Queenscliffe and had
been collected. It is understood to
be in mint condition.

Ed says he would like the RAA
Association to share with him the
responsibility for this valuable piece
of equipment being returned to the
'Fort'.

*(Thanks Ed for initiating this
action which I'm sure the Fort and all
Coastal Gunners will appreciate -
editor)*

.....
The Secretary, Robin Smith
passed on an item that tickled his
fancy whilst reading about the
ground war in the Gulf; it came from
the Australian Newspaper of the
27th Feb.

An American reporter was
writing about the British Regt that
he was attached to. It's apparent
that either the Brits 'have had a lend

of him' or he really didn't understand how their Batteries are designated. He reports: The big Guns fired in Batteries, converging their shells into areas the size of a suburban garden, leaving the earth and everything in it a powdered, blackened blot.

"The men in Quebec Battery, *named after a battle honour awarded nearly 250 years ago*" had done this before"

.....
A request from a Captain Roy Lane "Ebernoe" 19 Coopers Close Mill Lane, Wareham Dorset BH20 4RB has been received. He is an historical stamp & memorabilia collector, and asks if anyone is interested in swapping stamps depicting Military interest.

.....
The following letter was received from Capt Perc Cooper, addressed to the President;

Dear Sir,

In my reading of "Guns of the Regiment" by N.S. Gower, I see that Australian Field Regiments located in the Middle East received their 25prs in 1941 which means that 1991 is the fiftieth anniversary of their acquisition.

I would like to celebrate the anniversary, by being able to offer accurate, quality scale models of that famous gun to gunners and collectors.

Production equipment is available to me but the barrier lies in the prohibitive cost of construction of a suitable scale model from which

to make the mould.

I would like to make an appeal, through CASCABEL, for the loan of a suitable scale model of a 25pr, somewhere between 20-25cm (8-10 inches) in length (or thereabouts) from muzzle to trail eye.

Great care will be taken with the model; collection and return are guaranteed.

Any one interested can contact Perc Cooper 11 Hamilton Street, BENTLEIGH 3204 or phone during business hours on 652 4414, FAX 652 4373 or after hours on 557 2385.

Amalgamation Port

A limited Edition is being bottled by "Mt Aitken" to mark the joining of 2/15Fd Regt and 10 Mdm Regt in April 1991.

It is to be in a 'crock' with multi coloured printing/embossing at a cost of \$25 to the buyer.

Delivery will be on the 26th Mar 91. A large demand for this unique port is expected so get your orders in. Bulk orders are permitted.

Orders may be directed to:
WO1 J.S. Hansen
RSM
Batman Ave Depot.

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ACTIVITIES REPORT

- 2/15 Fd Regt Visit -

The visit to 2/15 Fd Regt at Pucka as shown in the Parade Card had to be cancelled due to the

amalgamation activities. Another visit to the Regt in the field will be organized at a later date.

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- Unit Associations Night -

Another interesting evening to foster interchange of information and ideas between the RAA Association and the Unit Associations was held at Batman Ave depot on Thursday 14th March. Twenty two people attended, from both the committee and Gunner unit associations.

Our President, Keith Rossi, reported on changes to serving units in Victoria, with 2/15 Fd Regt and 10 Mdm Regt due to amalgamate from April as 2/10 Mdm Regt, with RHQ (Melbourne), 22 Fd Bty (Frankston and Dandenong), and 38 Mdm Bty (Geelong and Colac). RHQ is expected to move to Chapel Street, in December 1991.

Brian Jackson reported that the Museum Trust is now operating, with the initial aim to record the details and history of all property. Any material donated to the trust will be looked after and displayed in time, when facilities permit.

It was noted that the Trustee is the RAA Association, so is on-going, and is a legal entity, separate from the Army.

Our Colonel Commandant, John Stevenson, reported on the opening of the Corps Museum in Sydney on 2nd Dec 90. We are the last Corps to create one and it will be the cornerstone of Aust. Gunner Museums.

ANZAC day activities were discussed.

Suggestions for future Association activities were requested and these included Watsonia Signals, School of Catering, the RAAF Museum and the Werribee Park/Chirnside Bty.

The evening concluded with supper and a lot of informal discussion over a variety of beverages.

R.A.W.Smith

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FUTURE ACTIVITIES

- Anzac Day -

Dont Forget Breakfast after the Dawn service in the Officers Mess at Batman Avenue. This is NOT an Officers only activity, so please come, Reg Morrell and Brian Cleeman are again catering for it. Cost will be about \$5.

Oh yes, the RAA shop will be operating so, make sure you take your wallets.

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The annual Fire Power Demonstration "Ex El Alamein" will again be held this year. Details are sketchy at the time of writing but it is known that it will be on 28th April. Requests for the limited tickets and further details as they become known, can be obtained from the Secretary Robin Smith on Phone 435 6352.

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A reminder from Reg Morrell that the "Back to the Regiment" Sergeants night will be held in the Sergeants Mess 2/10 Medium Regiment RAA Batman Avenue on 31st May 1991, commencing at 1900hrs.

RSVP by 24.5.91

To: Reg Morrell

6 Melissa Street

Mt. Waverley 3149.

Phone 544 5868.

Cost \$13/head.

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The Officers amongst us can mark up their Diaries - the **Gunner Dinner** - 5th July. Further details will be advised by the Convening Officer.

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This delightful bit of humour was sent in by Craig Cook.

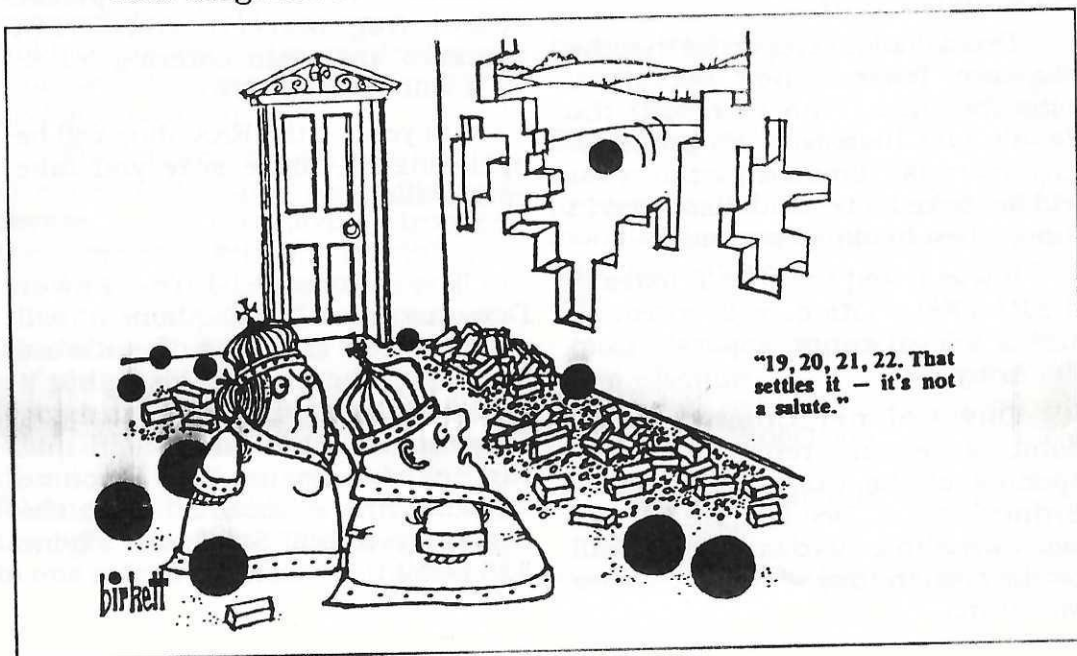
DID YOU KNOW?.....

The British recently obtained a century's supply of one of their most critically important strategic materials when they purchased from China, 20 kilograms of Yak hair, which will be dyed scarlet in order to provide the plumes for officers of Her Majesty's Foot Guards.

another piece of trivia;

A study conducted in the US Army in the early '80s concluded that there was no significant difference in the performance of 155^{mm} howitzer crews composed entirely of women, compared to the performance of all male crews. (There's one in the eye for the male chauvinists amongst us!)

and more;



The Swiss Army maintains some 20,000 carrier pigeons in case radio, telephone and telegraph communication systems become inoperable in a war. As one Swiss officer remarked, "They're cheap". Modern military radios can cost more than \$US20,000 apiece.

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THE RAA SHOP

The association shop has a limited supply of Artillery sweaters for sale. Also, orders are being taken for Artillery windcheaters. Contact Reg Morrell (H) 544 5868 or (B) 543 3888 or Brian Cleeman (H) 560 7116 or (B) 881 7346.

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FROM THE EDITORS DESK

As has been reported earlier, 22 Bty has been formed by the amalgamation of 2 and 23 Batteries of 2/15 Fd Regt. This has caused the loss of some members of both Batteries. Members farewelled from 2/15 Fd Regt were:

Maj R. Dalton BC 23 Bty

Capt P. Rowley BK 2 Bty

WO2 R. Armstrong BSM 2 Bty

WO2 F. Marschner BG 23 Bty

SGT D.Watts BQMS 2 Bty

It is with regret that we must lose to the Regiment, the combined talents and many, many years experience that these men have. We wish them well in their out-of-Corps postings. Unfortunately, I do not know the manpower effects on 10 Medium Regt but I expect that

similar has happened. It is a sad time for the Army in General and the Royal Regiment in particular, in Victoria at this time.

With this issue, you will have noticed that we are trying a new method of dispatch. It will allow us to remove ourselves from the mercy of an external agency in the supply of suitable envelopes and will save the time of myself and the membership secretary in having to fill, assemble and individually stamp the envelopes.

I am pleased that many of you have responded with articles for inclusion in this magazine, please keep it up. One correspondant, Craig Cook sent me his articles on disk using Wordstar word processing application. This makes it very easy for me, in that I do not have to retype. The desk top publisher that I use will accept most of the word processor applications.

R.Peterken
Editor.

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