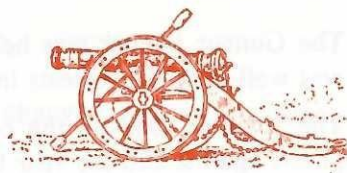


CASCABEL

Newsletter of



The ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ARTILLERY
ASSOCIATION (Victoria) INCORPORATED

Number 34

October 1992

The President Writes:

Well - Where did that year go? My first year was up at the Annual General Meeting on the 27 August. I believe we have had a good year. There have been two visits, two Happy hours, eleven committee meetings, Church parade, an Associations night, the Gunner Dinner, the Artillery Ball and a Farewell to Batman Avenue function. A busy year.

33 members attended the AGM. This about our normal number but I would like to see more. Perhaps the idea of a daytime meeting needs more consideration. The business of the AGM proceeded without any undue hold up. The election of office bearers is as you see on the back of your Programme card and the resolution regarding membership was passed without discussion. This allows us to accept as members, persons who have an interest in artillery matters but have not been a member of a unit (for instance an historian).

Despite the best plans and intentions of the regiment to move to Chapel Street for the meeting, the contractors were not sufficiently close to completion to allow this. For the second time we have had the last meeting at Batman Avenue and I have promised that there will not be a third.

We have since had our first committee meeting at Chapel Street. On 17 September we met in the CO's new office. The last time I was in that room a BC by the name of Col Stirling ripped a stripe of me in 1952. I last served in that Depot with OCTU in 1966 and it was interesting to reminisce with Brian Cleeman who had not been back since 4 Mdm Regt left there in 1957. Please no letters to the editor about the fact that in 1957 it was 4 Med Regt.

The recent renovations that have held up the occupation of the depot are well worth while. It looks better than it did in 1957. The brown and stone original colour scheme is most impressive. The only problem I can see is the lack of yard space but I am sure the Regiment will cope.

The Gunner Dinner was held at Victoria Barracks Officers Mess on 3 July and was well attended. Guests included the D Arty.

The Artillery Ball on the other hand was not so well attended there being 147 guests against 220 the year before.

My suggestion in the last issue regarding a weekend trip to the southwest coast fortifications only drew one response but it was the whole thing reconnoitred and planned in fine detail. Thank you Ed Williams. I am afraid we will have to hold off until there are a few more starters however.

Twenty six members went to ADI Bendigo on show day and had an interesting tour. I was not able to go at the last minute and I look forward to a report from them.

My best wishes

Merv Taggart

.....ooOOoo.....

We start off this issue with an article on the restoration of a coastal gun in the USA.

In January of 1988 a Captain Lawrence Lentz, an Artillery Officer posted to the US Army Ordnance Centre and School, heard rumours of a "great gun". The gun was in fact, a 16inch Navy Gun, Mark III mounted on a modified M1919 carriage last fired about 40 years prior to him locating it. It was badly rusted and deteriorating. Realising that it was probably the last existing specimen of a series of coast guns, Lentz obtained permission to begin a restoration project. He advertised in a local paper for anyone with knowledge of the gun's design and construction. The following is an account by somebody who responded to that advertisement.

"We began in late March, spending Sundays working on the gun with a crew of volunteers. Debris was cleaned up, the gun and carriage were water blasted and lubricated and all fasteners and moving parts were treated with penetrating oil. Even as we worked on the gun, its new home was being prepared at the Ordnance Museum. For its annual training, an Air National Guard Engineer Unit

undertook construction of the gun site and placed 72 yards of concrete and 800 feet of rebar to form a 43 foot, square pad.

The next step was to fill in the 35 foot diameter, 15 foot deep pit beneath the carriage. CSTA¹ environmental personnel allowed the accumulated rainwater to be pumped out and we proceeded to place the earth fill. The side offered easy access but the front and back required exhausting hand work in 95^o heat. After removing the breechblock, recuperator cylinders and other small parts, we were finally ready to take on the 144 ton, 68 foot long barrel with the recoil band attached - a total weight in excess of 150 tons.

On the first attempt, two M88 tank recovery vehicles were unable to budge the tube. A second attempt with a 35 ton wrecker was equally unsuccessful. That evening we drilled and tapped a hole in the top of the cradle and forced in penetrating oil with a pump able to deliver a pressure in excess of 2000 PSI. For the third attempt we used two M88's with their 50 ton winches rigged with 3 part lines yielding a total pull of almost 300 tons. The barrel still resisted and the heavy retrievers slid towards the gun until we coupled two M60 tanks to them as anchors.

Early next morning on what amounted to the fourth attempt, we "jiggled" the barrel in its cradle with two 65 ton cranes while the retrievers and the tanks again exerted their massive tractive force. Suddenly, the barrel moved a fraction of an inch, then a few inches and then it slid out onto the ground with the muzzle still resting in the cradle. There were not enough or large enough cranes available to lift it safely at that time.

After a hiatus of several months the project received new life from Congresswoman Helen Bentley and Major General James W. Ball, the new Commandant of the Ordnance School. Work now progressed rapidly. The tube was removed by three cranes (2 - 65 ton and 1 - 75 ton) and the 50 ton cradle was set up next to it for sandblasting. Disassembly of the carriage presented special problems. Some of the nuts and cap screws were 5 inches across the flats and there were no tools to handle them. At this time a new member joined the team, Michael D'Antonio, whose expertise in mechanics and metalworking proved invaluable to making some more tools and the overall completion of the project. Together we cut some wrenches from one inch steel plate and designed and built a 5 inch socket.

¹ The reference to CSTA is unknown by the editor. The author did not expand the acronym.

It is important to realise that we had to devise our own procedures from start to finish. Nowhere could we find manuals or instructions detailing assembly or disassembly. I worked with Lentz and D'Antonio to develop and build everything from ramps to elevate our loader up onto the gun platform with full dirt, through to making 90 pound wrenches to fit the giant bolts.

Now the carriage came apart quickly and, piece by piece, the side frames, transom, racer and distance ring sections and rollers were transported to CSTA facilities for sandblasting and prime painting. The base ring was a terrible trial to our team. Removal of the 36 nuts holding the base ring to 3.5 inch diameter foundation bolts extending about 10 feet into the concrete did little to free it. The keyed and bolted interface plates between the four sections were buried almost 12 inches deep in concrete and the whole ring was grouted to the foundation. Weeks of jack hammering the concrete around the base ring were followed by the use of many jacks and five cranes but to no avail. This base ring was finally freed from the grasp of the concrete by the detonation of 15 pounds of C4 explosive placed in many bore holes below it. Its 15 ton mass jumped up about two inches and then fell to the ground free and undamaged.

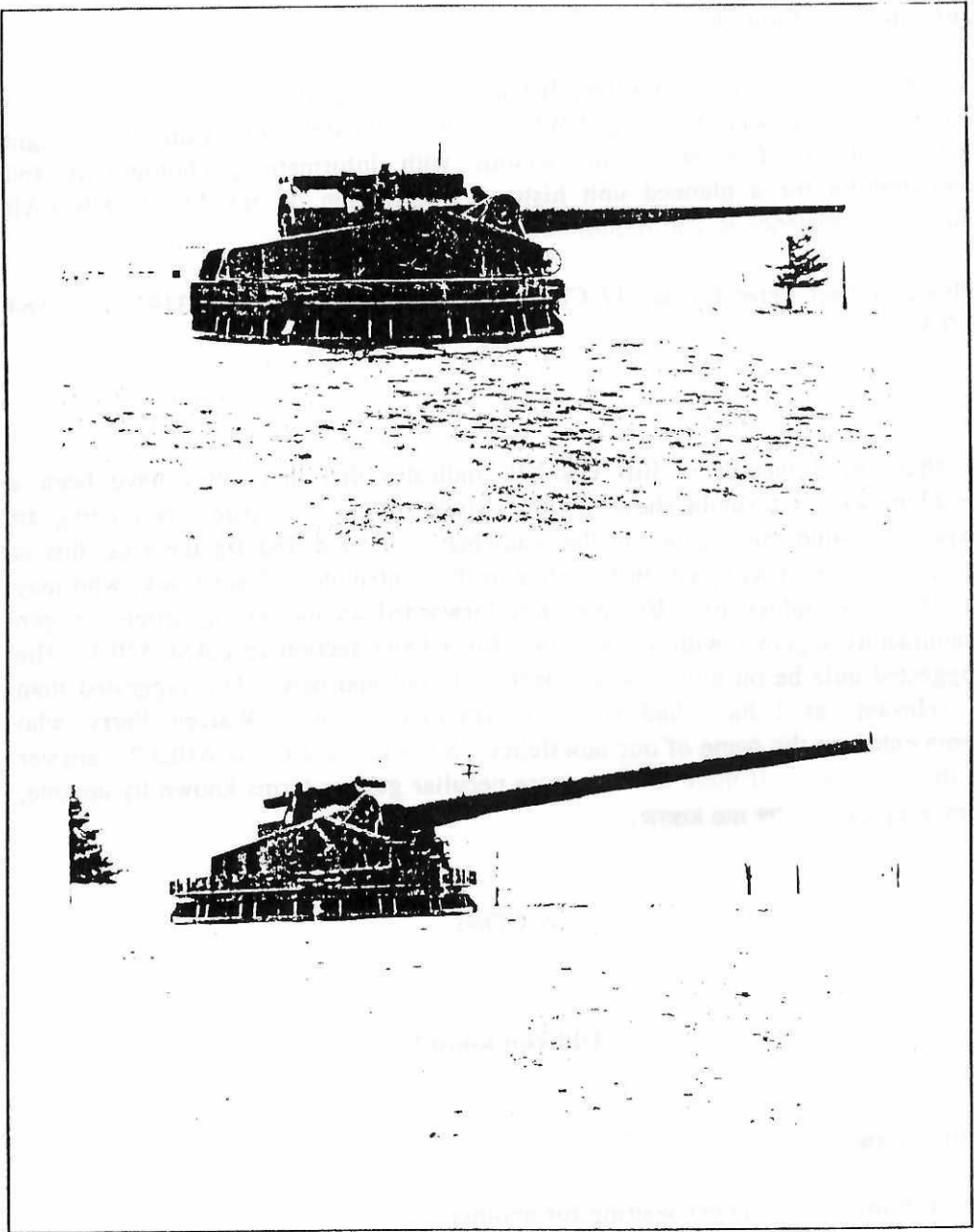
Reassembly of the carriage proved much simpler than disassembly. The cleaned, primed parts were transported to the site in the proper order and bolted into place. The cradle was installed on Super bowl Sunday in January 1989.

Moving the sandblasted and painted tube from the firing range to the Museum site was the projects greatest challenge. A giant transporter truck was rented from the Hake Company of Philadelphia and the Army brought in two 250 ton cranes. After several false starts the barrel was moved on March 30, 1989. Starting just after first light it required 16 hours of non-stop work using cranes, the transporter, M88's, other machines and a lot of people until the barrel was slid fully into Battery in the cradle just after 10pm.

Over the next two months the remaining hardware was reassembled and I brought over a farm tractor and York rake to smooth out ruts almost 2 feet deep made by the vehicles while installing the barrel. Lime, fertiliser and grass seed were spread and as the new grass began to sprout, we applied the final coats of paint. The gun was a wonderful sight to behold.

On 15th June 1989, Representative Helen Bentley and Major General Ball presided over a dedication ceremony for the gun attended by local dignitaries. Larry Lentz was awarded the Army Commendation Medal, Mike D'Antonio was awarded a Certificate of Achievement and I was given a Plaque in recognition of my participation and contribution. My real reward was the 18 months I spent working on this great, historic project."

(Unfortunately I have mislaid the name of the contributor of this article and for that I am sorry. It is an interesting article and once again shows that with dedication and enthusiasm very little is impossible for man to accomplish. Ed)



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ITEMS OF INTEREST

Information Wanted:

The 8th Australian Field Artillery Brigade, consisting of the 29th, 30th, 31st and 108th Batteries, served during WWI in France and Belgium. Contact is sought with relatives of veterans, or persons with information, photographs and memorabilia for a planned unit history. Information on the Militia 8th FAB during its existence is also requested.

Please contact Peter Evans, 37 Charles Street, Cheltenham Vic 3192, (03) 584 2765.

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A sharp eyed member - Bill Goodall, indicates that there may have been a problem with a formula shown in the article of the last issue. Not being an expert in sound ranging nor in the mathematics of said Snd Rg theories, this is quite probable. I will pass on his letter to the contributor, Craig Cook, who may be able to enlighten us. Bill also has forwarded an interesting article on gun manufacture together with a suggestion for a Quiz section in CASCABEL. The suggested quiz be on gunner equipment, both old and new. The suggested item is relevant, as I have had recent correspondence with Warren Perry who commented on the name of our newsletter. So, what is a CASCABEL? - answer in the next issue. If there are any more peculiar gunner terms known by anyone, they may care to let me know.

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Did you know?

Gibb's Law:

Infinity is one lawyer waiting for another.

ACTIVITIES REPORT

FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Don't forget the Happy Hour at the Dandenong Depot, Lonsdale Street, on 27th November commencing at 1800 hrs.

The St Barbara's Day Gunner Gathering will be held in the Chapel Street Depot on 4th December commencing at 1800 hrs.

Please come along and make both an enjoyable evening.

The Annual Church Parade will be held on Sunday 7th February at St. Bartholomews in Burnley. Details will be in the January edition of CASCABEL.

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PAST ACTIVITIES

Visit to ADI Bendigo

On Melbourne Show day (24th Sept) last, a good turn up of 28 members registered to attend a visit to the Bendigo facility of the Australian Defence Industries. This facility has been known to most as the Ordnance Factory Bendigo but was privatised some years ago and now derives a large proportion of its income from non-military projects.

We arranged transport to Bendigo by car sharing and met after lunch at ADI at 1.00pm. My thanks to those members for allowing others to share with them.

We had arranged a guided tour of the plant and divided into two groups led by Glenn. Their explanations as we moved about the five major buildings indicated a detailed knowledge of the various production methods and processes.

The plant opened in 1942 and employs some 450 people. It manufactures a wide range of products including components for the Collins Class Submarine fleet, propulsion systems for RAN ships, heavy equipment for the mining industry, tunnel borers, grinding mills for mineral processing and bases and enclosures for gas turbine engines. Of course they also manufacture the Hamel 105mm gun for the Australian Army, and that's the main reason for our attendance. We saw several guns in various stages of construction and components such as barrels being rifled. We were very lucky to see this as the contract is due to be completed this month.

Everyone present was impressed by the outstanding technology (like the Laser cutting tools) and the extreme precision of the fabrication processes. Everyone at Bendigo should be proud of the quality design and manufacture undertaken there. It's nice to know that we have the ability to do the best.

Our thanks go to the General Manager at Bendigo for allowing us the opportunity to inspect the facility.

Reporter - David Osborne.

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Did you know revisited

Never attribute to malice, that which is adequately explained by stupidity.

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MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Another year has commenced and the call to annual members to pay their subscription has had a good response. Those members who have not yet paid will find a second notice with this issue of CASCABEL. Could I ask that you respond quickly. Since the last issue we have accepted the following new members and I issue them a warm welcome:

LTCOL J.D. Christie
SGT W.K. Glendenning

Mr P.G. Evans
CAPT J.B. Ries

Unfortunately, I have to advise members of the passing of SSGT E.L. Lewis of Noble Park (in August) and SGT N. McDonald of Springvale South (in September) and our sympathy goes to their families at this time.

Thank you to those members who have taken the time to let me know of the new addresses of "lost" members in the past. At this time we know the whereabouts of all members but if you're about to move, you can drop me a line at the phone number or address below.

David Osborne Membership Secretary and Vice President.
PO Box 309 FRANKSTON 3199 or phone me at work on 781 2633 or at home
on 787 7852

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=From the Editor's Desk=

My Business Hours phone number and FAX have changed again, this time they're permanent. (I hope)!

Editor:

Major Ross Peterken RFD

2 Milan St.

WANTIRNA 3152

Phone:

720 1757 AH

632 4055 BH

632 4079 FAX

Et Ad Ultimus:

The horse and mule live thirty years
and nothing know of wines and beers.

The goat and sheep at twenty die
With never a taste of scotch or rye.

The cow drinks water by the ton
and at 18 is mostly done.

The dog at 16 cashes in
Without the aid of rum or gin
the cat in milk and water soaks
and then in 12 short years it croaks.

The modest, sober, bone dry hen
lays eggs for nogs and dies at 10.

All animals are strictly dry
they sinless live and swiftly die.

But sinful, ginful, rum-soaked men
and some of us, the mighty few,
stay pickled til we're 92.

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RAA ASSOCIATION (VICTORIA) INCORPORATED

FUNDS STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30TH JUNE 1992

SOURCE OF FUNDS

Surplus for year - General Fund	722.19
- RAA Social Fund	1740.31
- Museum & Memorabilia Fund	140.31
Increase in - Subscriptions in Advance	947.00
- Payments Received in Advance 1992 Gnr Dinner	600.00
Decrease in - Stock on Hand	129.54
	<u>\$4279.35</u>

APPLICATION OF FUNDS

Increase in - Cash at Bank	1617.60
- Term Deposits	2000.00
- Prepayments - 1992 Gnr Dinner	661.75
	<u>\$4279.35</u>

AUDIT REPORT

I have audited the accounts of the Association for the year ended 30th June 1992 in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards.

In my opinion, the accompanying Statements of Income and Expenditure and Funds Statement for the year ended 30th June 1992 and the Balance Sheet as at that date represent a true and fair view of the results of the Association's activities for the year then ended and of the state of affairs at the 30th June 1992.

.....
T. D. Hopkins WO2
B.Bus. C.P.A.
Honorary Auditor
25th August 1992