

CASCABEL

Newsletter of



The ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ARTILLERY
ASSOCIATION (Victoria) INCORPORATED

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The President Writes:

As the new year begins, let me wish you all a happy and prosperous 1993. Before talking of our plans for the new year I should review some of the activities of the past few months.

A Happy Hour was held at Baxter Depot on 27 Nov. I was unable to attend but I am led to believe that it was a most successful evening even though the numbers were down. I hope that future Happy Hours are better attended by both serving and retired members.

On Sat 28 Nov the Officers dined out the Commanding Officer, and other Officers leaving the unit, at the Geelong Depot. We must say goodbye to LTCOL Forster and welcome LTCOL Alkemade.

The Regiment conducted two functions at Chapel Street. The first was the Gunner Gathering on Fri 4 Dec, St Barbaras Day. It was a jolly function but I really expected more to attend. I thought that more of the older members would have come along to see the new home after saying farewell to Batman Avenue last year. 2/4 Fd Regt were well represented with 3/4 of the 2nd AIF members present. The ARA Component (Cadre Staff to the oldies) were there in full strength and had everything well organised.

Secondly the unit held an OR's Dinner on Sat 5 Dec in the Chapel Street Depot. I understand that the soldiers were served by the Officers and Sergeants in the traditional Christmas manner. This function was also used to present annual prizes to deserving members and these included the Whitelaw prizes provided by the Association. Unfortunately none of the committee were able to be present but we were ably represented by General's Barry and Vickery.

I have had a busy time since last I wrote. My wife Mina and I have been to the UK and Hong Kong on holiday. We made a mad dash around England and Scotland racing from one historic spot to another and then spent some time in London. I did fit in many places of military interest of which I shall write of in more detail later. The two highlights were a half day at the, Kings Troop RHA, at St Johns Wood and a full day guided tour of the Artillery Barracks at Woolich. Each was a great experience which I will share with you in future editions.

Things happening in the new year are the Church Parade on the 6 Feb and the excursion to Queenscliff for the Beating the Retreat, ceremony on 27 Feb. I hope you will be able to join us on these two occasions.

My best wishes

Merv Taggart

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I start by thanking Ed Williams for the following. Ed attended the Beating the Retreat Ceremony early this year at Queenscliff to mark the 90th Birthday of the Australian Army.

History - Beating the Retreat

Beating the Retreat is a traditional ceremony handed down to us, as most of our military traditions are, from the British Army. The modern Retreat ceremony is thought to have its origins in the 16th century when it was also known as 'watch setting'.

At every castle and fortress at sunset each day, drummers and fife players would gather on the ramparts and play their instruments to warn soldiers that the evening guard duties would soon begin. Also it signalled those in the fields that the gates would be shut and locked for the night, and for them to return.

It was also a signal for soldiers to cease firing on the battlefields for in those days there was no combat between the hours of sunset and sunrise. To let the troops know that the fighting had ended for the day, 3 musket volleys would be fired into the air. A hymn was also played in honour of those who had fallen during the day.

The above aspects were symbolically enacted at the Queenscliff ceremony. The 1812 overture was played by the Third Military District band and was accompanied by the 105mm howitzers of the 2/10 Mdm Regt. The Australian re-enactment Society also took part.

During the evenings proceedings, a group of Officer Cadets were commissioned. Among them were:

Lt C.A.R Laidlaw RAA 2/10 Mdm Regt

2Lt S.C. Smith RAA 2/10 Mdm Regt

2Lt J.S. Wright RAA 2/10 Mdm Regt

The Band was accompanied by the superb voice of the Soloist, Musician S. Drew. Her voice did justice to the parade ground, and the surrounding areas of the Fort. 'I'm sure it was enjoyed by all' says Ed who finishes the note by saying 'It was a trip down memory-lane for me, I remember being involved in a public function at the Fort prior to WW2 and the highlight then, was the firing of a salvo of 6" Mark V11 guns, which rattled every window in Queenscliff.'

(For those interested, a glance at the Programme of Events will reveal that on the 27th February 93 we are planning a trip to Queenscliff to another Beating the Retreat ceremony. See Future Activities - Ed).

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DID YOU KNOW

At the beginning of 1989, the smallest proper army in the world was that of Gambia, which consisted of just 49 officers and men. Organised into a single company, the army is equipped with eight ferret scout cars, recoil-

less rifles and small arms, and is supplemented by 400 para-military police troops, with whom they form a battalion.

The distinction of having the second smallest army in the world is shared by Dominica and Grenada. Both West Indian countries have armies of about 80 men each.

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ITEMS OF INTEREST

The Committee has been approached by, and had discussions with, the RAE History and Heritage Committee (a similar group as ourselves) regarding the desirability of joining together for activities such as visits to fortifications and other places of military interest such as we do.

They see mutual advantage in us helping them understand the gunnery aspects of such installations and they pointing out the engineering problems associated with the earthworks and bunker systems.

I am inclined to agree that the idea adds another dimension to the visits that we are inclined to put on our program.

I would like to get a feeling for the interest that there would be for such a link and particularly if there is a member (perhaps a garrison gunner) who may like to be our representative on their committee.

Their first function is intended to be a visit to the Beating the Retreat ceremony on 27 Feb 93 and to include a visit to an as yet undecided point of interest on the way. They will hire a bus if there are enough starters and have invited us to take advantage of it. It is suggested that the bus would leave Oakleigh at about 1.00pm and return at 11.00pm. Any member who is interested in the bus should let me know before 20 Jan 93.

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So - what is a CASCABEL? Thanks to those who responded. Bill Goodall was first cab of the rank and I thank him for supplying me with the following details, together with copies of plans and descriptions of some muzzle loaders in which the Cascabel is prominent. I have included a

photo-reduction of an 8" gun of 1872 showing the construction. The text comes from an early edition of 'Treatise of SERVICE ORDNANCE' published by His Majesty's Stationary Office.

The Cascable

"When the whole gun had been built up, a cascable was screwed into the breech to support the end of the barrel. This was forged solid, turned down into shape and provided with a strong bevel thread; a hole was also drilled in the rough end, for the purpose of screwing it into the gun, which was afterwards enlarged into the cascable loop.

In fitting a cascable it was necessary to exercise care so that the front should bear evenly against the end of the barrel; to ascertain that this was the case the end of the tube was smeared with red-lead while the cascable was screwed in for trial. When unscrewed and taken out for inspection the red-lead should be equally diffused on the face of the block; if discovered in patches these spots indicate the prominent parts, which had to be filed and the operation of fitting was repeated until a satisfactory result was obtained.

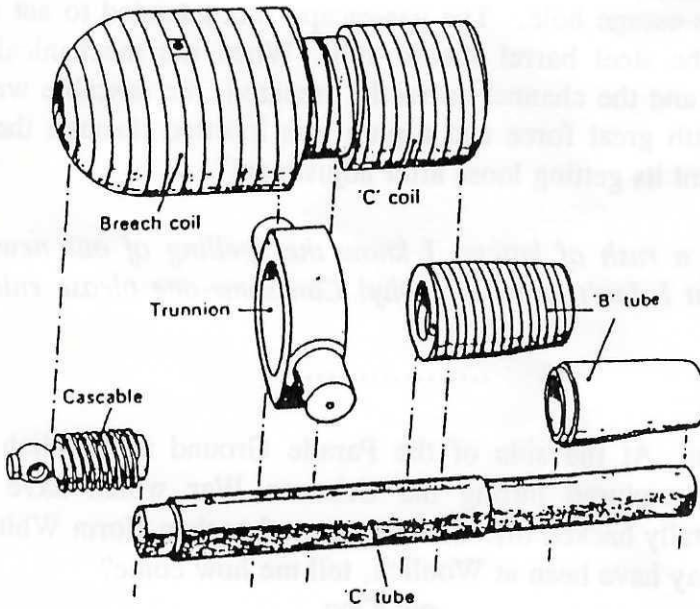
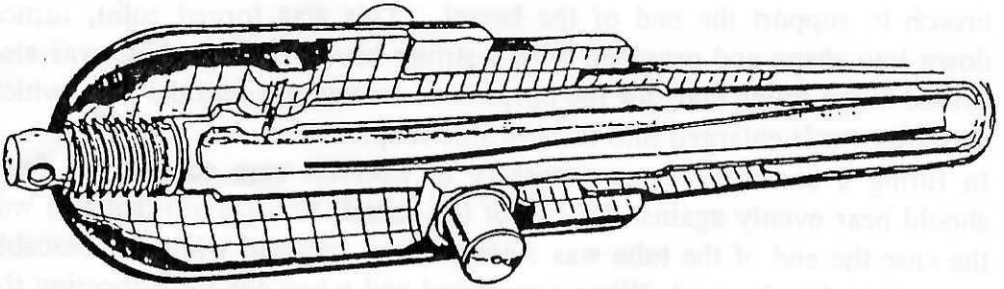
A longitudinal cross channel was cut deeper than the depth of the threads to act as a gas-escape hole. The gas-escape was intended to act as a tell-tale in case the steel barrel should split. When the mechanical fit was accomplished and the channel correctly prepared, the cascable was finally screwed in with great force and a plug was inserted through the breech-piece to prevent its getting loose after adjustment"

(Before I get a rush of letters, I know the spelling of our newsletter is different, what I don't know is - why! Can some-one please enlighten us all. Ed)

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For next issue, At the side of the Parade Ground at Woolich are two Russian guns captured during the Crimean War which have had the *cascables* brutally hacked off. Can anyone, other than Norm Whitelaw and others who may have been at Woolich, tell me how come?

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THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS

When yet still a young nipper
I was told of a long ago war but yet,
It always comes back to mind when reciting "Lest We Forget".

It was Christmas Day
and the sounds of the battle died,
As within friend and foe alike
Something stirred, deep down inside.

Allied soldiers Christmas carols began to sing
for none had the will to fight,
When from the German trenches
Came the sound of voices loudly singing, all about a 'silent night'.

Cautiously at first, the Allies met their adversaries
in the middle of 'No Man's Land'
Then exchanged cigarettes and Christmas greetings
and shook each others hand.

Let no man deny, Christ, The Prince of Peace,
was on the battlefield that day
for only HE could halt the world's bloodiest war
Just because it was Christmas Day.

Penned by our own member, Ronald G. Clark

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DID YOU KNOW - Revisited

Perkin's Postulate

The bigger they are the harder they hit!

ACTIVITIES REPORT

FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Don't Forget the Annual Church Parade at St Bartholomews in Burnley.
See insert for details.

As mentioned earlier, don't forget the Beating the Retreat ceremony at Queenscliff on 27th February 93. Details are:

- Where: Fort Queenscliff
When: Saturday 27th February
What: Beating the Retreat Ceremony followed by a Musical Recital
(with Guns) commencing at 6.00pm til 9.00pm.
Detail: Open to the public, no tickets or bookings. Donation for Programme.
Other: Tours of the Fort SAT and SUN from the main gate. Start at 1.00pm and 3.00pm for approx. 1 hour.
Tickets: \$4 Adult, \$2 Children and Pensioners, \$8 family
Queries: Robin Smith 03-435 6352

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MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Unfortunately David has been interstate for the last couple of weeks, therefore we do not have a membership report this issue. However, if you still have not forwarded your subscription for this year, then now is the time. Renewals can be forwarded to:

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