

ESTABLISHED 1934
**NEW ZEALAND PERMANENT FORCE OLD COMRADES
 ASSOCIATION (INC)**

Secretary. (John Rout)
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 WEB SITE - www.riv.co.nz/rnza/ Webmaster Catherine Rivers PhD.

NEWSLETTER No. 118

JUNE 2003

ROUTINE ORDERS

~~SUBSCRIPTIONS~~

LAST POST:

WOI W. L. Ruffell, Wally, (Life Member) On 22 April 03 in Auckland.
 Mr A. Pilcher, Tony, (Life Member) Not sure when, about three or four years ago.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS:

✓ John Murray to: 4133A Far North Road, RD4 Houhora, KAITAIA 0500
 ✓ Bill Hopkins to: Glenhaven Home, 428 Glenfield Road, Glenfield, NORTH SHORE
 ✓ Tony Pawlowski to: 116 Williambrittan Avenue, Halswell, CHRISTCHURCH.
 ✓ Joe Fallon to: 2/56 Hornibrook Esplanade, Clontarf, Queensland 4019, AUSTRALIA
 ✓ Don Allison to: 1A Chimera Crescent, Burwood, CHRISTCHURCH

NEW MEMBERS:

✓ B.A. Barry Hardy Gate 10 Hammerichs Road, R.D. 2, BLENHEIM
 ✓ D.A. (Boof) Richardson 60 Alison Street, ROTORUA
 ✓ M. Mark Hewson 23A Mudie Street, Alicetown, LOWER HUTT

RESIGNATIONS:

Mrs Joy Lundon

NEW LIFE MEMBERS (On reaching the age of eighty)

Len Roberts.

FROM THE EDITOR

SUBSCRIPTIONS

We have had a reasonable response for this years subscriptions. There are still about 60 of you out there that have not yet paid. Members who have arrears that have built up to \$40 or more will receive notices for pay up or be struck off the roll, with this News Letter. *The painting of the Moor Gun Picket that was offered as an incentive for prompt payment of subscriptions was won by Rod Baldwin.*

REUNION 2003

Remember this year the reunion and AGM is to be held in Taupo over the period 31 Oct – 2 Nov. Planning is now underway and we are hoping for a huge attendance. I often hear talk about the lack of gunner reunions and for individual units this may be true. We hold one every year that is open to all gunner units so come along. Here is a list of those that have so far indicated they will be attending this year. I have not shown partners names most will be attending with partners:

Roger Newth, Barry Cook, John Rout, Graeme Black, Graham Birch, Roger Wild, Barry Dreyer, Mike Pearce, Ron Cross, Teach Macown, Matt Crawley, John Blaker, Bill Giles, Bev Culhane, Ted Lile, Don Potter, Jeff Waters, Shay Bassett, Paul Galloway, Bob Kerslake, Bob Blankley, Graeme Henderson and Jim Horn.

I am sure there will be others who are regular attendees e.g. Dave Roberts, Des O'Connor, Bill Morley just to mention a few. Graeme Henderson and Jim Horn are both coming from the very Deep South. I am sure if they can come many who live closer can also come.

The Reunion Registration Form and advice on costs accommodation etc will be sent with the September News Letter.

LIFE MEMBERSHIP AWARD

At the March Committee Meeting we decided to issue our Life members with an award certificate. This has now been completed and has been very well received. Future Life Members will now be issued with the award when they turn 80. Remember, you must let me know when you reach that age. The certificate is similar in layout to the Outstanding Service Award presented to Wally Ruffell shown later in this News Letter.

MODERN ARTILLERY. (Some information from a recent Journal of the Royal Artillery)

The days of the Dial Sight are numbered. In the UK Automatic Pointing Systems have been issued for the Light Gun. I am not sure how it works and wonder can it be a modern version of matching pointers as with the long gone 3.7" Anti Aircraft Regiments. I understand that gunners are still required to perform some gun detachment duties!!!!

"Sarn't, why do we have to run around all over the place, carrying all this kit, when we have got two GPS (Global Positioning Systems) in the wagon?" This question was asked by a Royal Artillery Surveyor Gunner. His Sergeants answer, detailed in the RA Journal covers three pages. The short answer is that GPS systems are reliant on low power radio waves, the frequencies of which can be found on the Internet or in your local library. The system can be locally jammed with unsophisticated, easily distributed radio transmitters, at a very low cost, (around NZ\$4 or \$5). Atmospheric conditions can also upset GPS results. So if for some reason GPS is down conventional methods of producing fixation and orientation must be used. The Gunner Surveyor still needs his Theodolite and distance measuring equipment.

CAN YOU HELP? (If you can help, use the attached email addresses or inform the secretary.)
In most cases these enquiries from our website are directed onto NZ Defence Records. Here the enquirers may be looking for the personal touch.

Gone Address Unknown

Can anyone help with the present whereabouts of the following life members?

LT I.A. Doak last known address the Raglan area and R.G. (Robert) Forbes last known address in Blenheim.

Ian Uffindell (email ianuff@paradise.net.nz) is seeking information on the Artillery Positions in Westport that were established around 1902.

SSgt Tim Rowe (email TIM.ROWE@nzdf.mil.nz) is researching a paper on Maj Gen Steve Weir. He has arranged interviews with our Maj Gen Ron Hassett and Capt T. Nolan. He would like information from anyone who can comment on; Weirs personal leadership qualities, his performance 6th Field Regiment CO, CRA and Corp Artillery Commander in the Western Desert, and the impact his appointment to CRA had on the tactics, employment and effectiveness of the NZ Artillery.

GUNNERS DAY 2003

Once again the dinner in Papakura was a huge success. 131 attended. Jeff Waters and his small gang of helpers had again excelled themselves. The dinner was ably controlled by the Dining President John (Woody) Barrett. Willy Walker RNZAC, a member of Morrie Stanley's OP Party during the Battle of Long Tan in Vietnam, proposed the toast to the Regiment and the CO of 16 Field Regiment Lt Col Mike Baker replied.

Our Patron and the Colonel Commandant RNZA, Brig Ray Andrews wished the gathering a happy 287th Birthday and told the gathering that he would be standing down from his two appointments within the next 12 months. He also reminded us that the Queen was our Captain General and when we Toast her we gunners must recite "**The Queen, our Captain General**". This was unique and something we should be very proud of.

Brig Andrews mentioned that, after a short period away from the fold, the RNZA Band (the oldest unit in the RNZA) was back under RNZA control. During the evening another copy of The Moor Picket painting was raffled, this time Major Denis Dwane was the lucky recipient. Do you have to be a major to win a raffle?

Apologies were received from Maj Gen Ron Hassett, Eric Bickerton and Dave Roberts.

Roger Newth sent the following report from Wellington:

We had a successful commemoration service in the Lady Chapel at the Wellington Cathedral of St Paul, conducted by the Principal Defence Chaplain Fr. Julian Wagg. Afterwards we repaired to the Back-Bencher Pub for Chats, Drinks and food. Although the day was cool the service was very good and Brigadier Warren Whiting gave a short brief on the state of the RNZA, Ron Turner read a passage from scripture and I recited the Ode.

Those attending were: Old Comrades; Shirley Burns, John Bellamy, Chris Brown, Kerry Lee and wife, Wally Fraser, Rob Munro, Lindsay Skinner, Robbie Robinson, Ron Turner and Roger Newth. TF Gunners; Bob Burns, Fred Goodall, John Boot, Pat Helm and Warwick Wright.

Apologies were received from David Hughes, Maurie Urquhart, Con Flinkenberg, Roger & Jean Wylde and Brian Bethel.

Gunners Day activities in Tauranga were cancelled for some reason there were not enough interested. We hope you can all get together again next year.

FROM AND ABOUT MEMBERS

Eric Bickerton. Is in Middlemore Hospital with a broken hip. Get well soon Eric.

Kerry Lee has sent us the following: During my 2 years in the United Kingdom I visited many military history collections, sites and museums. All of the Services have a variety of collections ranging from local site memorabilia to Regimental and Battalion Histories. For Gunners, the Woolwich Arsenal is still the best place and although the Firepower, Royal Artillery Experience is getting better you still need to take in the Rotunda collection to see all of the guns. The Royal Armoury in Leeds has an outstanding historical set of weapons from spears to cannon. When you add in the D-Day Museum in Portsmouth and castles like Dover, Arundel, Warwick, the coastal forts and towers and restored ships, etc it is easy to see why history plays a big part in the way the English think.

If you wish to do research in the United Kingdom for someone or something specific a good starting place is the Army Museums Ogilby Trust web site at www.armymuseums.org.uk or www.national-army-museum.ac.uk The former also guides you through access to soldier service details [pre 1920 at Public Records Office, Kew or after 1920 at Army Records Centre Hayes] Another interesting one is the Aldershot Museum at www.hants.gov.uk/museum/aldershot At last count I have found 150 regimental or unit web sites in the United Kingdom so if you have a particular interest it is probably represented. The Ogilby Trust has links to most of them!

R.A. Harris has also reminded us that the Auckland War Memorial has an excellent collection of records which can be used for research purposes. Included in the collection are some manuscripts and poems gifted by himself, namely "In Pursuit of General Rommel. Africa Corp" and "Tales of War and Peace."

Wally Ruffell

Wally's funeral was a grand gunner occasion. Gunners and family from far and near gathered at the Romaleigh Funeral Home on Auckland's North Shore to bid him a fond farewell. Guns and Gunnery were a huge part of Wally's life and guns were with him to the end. Two of his excellent model guns rested on his casket during the service and he was carried away, to be cremated, on a 25pdr Gun Carriage. (One of the model guns a 9 Pdr ML Armstrong has been gifted to the Assn' by the Ruffell family). Gunners from 16 Field Regiment carried out the Military Duties and once again their drills and turnout were excellent. Wally was an ex member of the NZ Police Pipe Band as was his friend Vic Wyman. Vic Piped Wally out of the Funeral Home to the Gun Carriage and then lead the parade away from the service. Major General Ron Hassett is not in the best of health however, this was one occasion he was determined to attend. When he was the Chief Instructor at the School of Artillery in the early 1950s Wally was one of his Instructors. Wally's Ashes are to be scattered on the Waiouru Training Area, this likely to take place during this year's reunion. The following obituary, written by Catherine Rivers, is copied from our website:

Wally Ruffell**21 Dec 1917 - 22 Apr 2003**

Wally Ruffell made the world a more interesting place. He loved artillery – the ordnance, the people, and the procedures. His efforts to uncover its history and his generosity in sharing his findings with the world have made for a better educated gunner community. When he started out in the NZA, the world was a different place: Officers and Men did not associate; the gun crew were generally uneducated and had no idea of the origins of their craft; the pay was poor and the working conditions were miserable. Although Wally could not influence gunners' pay, he had a remarkable effect on the other aspects of their lives. As a stalwart of the New Zealand Permanent Force Old Comrades' Association, Wally helped create the environment for NZ artillerymen of all descriptions, from Gunner to Lieutenant General, to meet in fellowship and to celebrate their common love for the gun, eschewing differences of rank, position, age and accomplishment. He wrote prolifically about the equipments and procedures of artillery, and his work has been published internationally in written and electronic form.

Wally was a professional gunner. He once said that joining the NZ Artillery was no easy thing to do, there was such a long routine to getting in. At school he had been a Cadet and, on leaving, he became a Territorial with the 6th Hauraki Regiment. In 1937, he joined the Territorial Force Special Reserve and was given three months training in basic and coast artillery. Only after this could he apply for the NZ Regular Force which he did, of course, and after another four months at the Army Schools, Trentham, he became a Gunner On Probation in 1938. Some time after this he was involved in a serious accident, and by the time he got overseas the War was well under way. He was wounded in action with the 6th Field Regiment in Faenza but recovered and rejoined the Regiment in time to win the War.

Wally went to Japan in 1946 as part of the post-war occupation, and it was when he returned to NZ that his interest in the origins of artillery became a passion. Wally retired from the Army in 1964 having held a number of positions including AIG, WO1 (SMIG) and RSM 1 Field Regiment. He had been awarded the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal in 1956 and the Meritorious Service Medal in 1959. He spent many years working at the Naval Supply Depot in Devonport, where he worked alongside several other retired soldiers, and the image below shows Wally escorting Lt Gen Sir Leonard Thornton at the Depot in 1975 before the General retired.

Wally's interest in military history was rewarded by a Life Membership of the NZ Military Historical Society and a special Outstanding Service Award from the NZ Permanent Force Old Comrades Association. Wally is gone, but his works live on.

At the last AGM, in Taupo, it was recommended that the Assn' should recognise Wally's outstanding service to the Assn'. To this end, after a committee meeting in the Birkenhead RSA on the 7th of March, Wally was presented with an Outstanding Service Award Certificate. Including the committee a good number of Old Comrades attended the presentation. A Photo of our Patron, Brig Ray Andrews, presenting the award to Wally is shown below. Also shown below is a Black and White Copy of the Award. In Colour the border of the award is Red, Blue & Gold. The NZ Flag is its normal colour and the printing various colours. As mentioned before the Life Membership Award is similar in layout to this award.



THE GUN

By Wally Ruffell

Continued From NL 117

NOTE: The Gun will live on in the News Letters for about another four years.

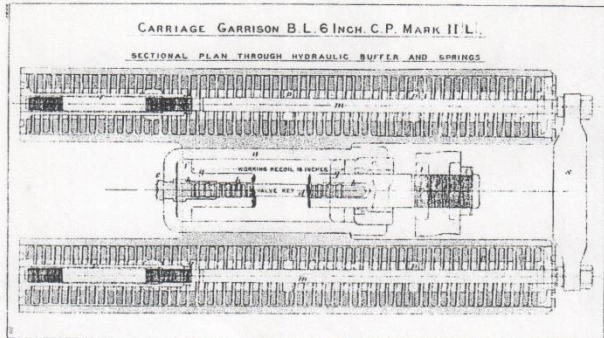


Fig. 140: Recoil system for BL 6-in Mk 7 gun of 1898. Working recoil was 18 inches (45.7 cm). As gun and mounting weighed a total of 16 tons and the whole was anchored to many tons of concrete, recoil was adequate.

QF GUNS ARRIVE:

The QF method of obturation is the prevention of escape of propellant gas over or through the breech mechanism, brought about by the gas itself expanding the metal cartridge case against the walls of the chamber. It was first utilised by the British Army in the Snider breech-loading rifle adopted in 1867, but the Royal Artillery were slow to take it up.

In 1881 the Royal Navy saw the need for a light QF gun to combat fast motor torpedo boats, and two years later adopted QF 6-pr Hotchkiss and Nordenfelt guns. Both makes were accepted because during the trials of ordnance on offer both performed equally well, and used the same ammunition. Their breech mechanisms were also similar, of the vertical sliding block type.

A number of QF 3-pr guns were also produced but were found to be insufficiently powerful so were used for practise purposes or as sub-calibre guns. In the latter role they survived until the 1950s.

The Royal Artillery adopted the 6-pr in 1885 for coast artillery in which it was employed in the anti-motor torpedo boat role.

In New Zealand the Nordenfelt seems to have been preferred with a 6-pr featuring one each flank of a heavy coast battery. The Royal Navy preferred the Hotchkiss. See Fig. 141.

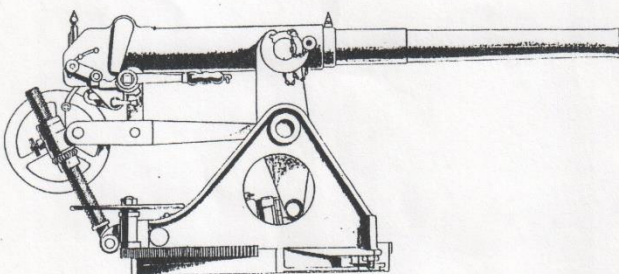


Fig. 141: Nordenfelt QF 6-pr

Calibre: 2.244 inches
(57 mm)
Range: 7500 yards
(6858 metres)
M.V. 1773 fs
(540 ms).

Below the mounting shown was a cylindrical iron pedestal the dimensions of which were approximately 30 x 15 inches (91 x 38 cm).

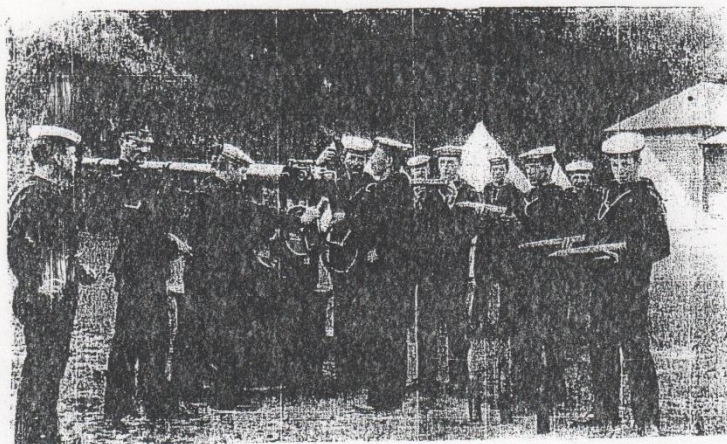


Fig. 142: Another view of the QF 6-pr Nordenfelt with Bombardier Tom Power instructing a party of Navals some time prior to World War 1.
NB: In those days a Bombardier wore one chevron; an Artilleryman wearing two was a Corporal.

Following representations by Volunteer Artillerymen 'who wanted a light field gun,' and who carried on like private armies, a number of QF 6-pr Nordenfelts were mounted upon field carriages, locally made in Addington Railway workshops. In his 1896 report on the Defence Forces of New Zealand, Lt Col FJ Fox RA described them as "... probably the worst field gun in the possession of civilised troops."

During World War 1 the 6-prs were employed as tank guns but in 1919 the Nordenfelt was declared obsolete. However, the Hotchkiss, which turned out to be the better design, lasted some years longer, mainly in the Navy.

On the outbreak of World War 2 a number of Nordenfelt 6-prs were still in store, but the barrels were cut up to provide metal rollers for the Engineers. None was kept as a museum piece, and even a breech mechanism which the writer 'rescued' and displayed at the School of Artillery, Waiouru, was eventually thrown on to the scrap heap.

QF 18-prs on beach platforms deployed in the anti-motor-torpedo-boat role at Devonport in 1940 were replaced by QF Hotchkiss 6-prs borrowed from the Navy the same year. After the war they were handed back to the RNZN who still have them. One may be seen in the RNZN Museum, Devonport. Although made in 1890 it is still serviceable!

Hotchkiss and Nordenfelt guns differed mainly in their breech mechanisms which are shown in Figs 143 and 144. Their mountings were similar, differing mainly in the distance between trunnion bearings. Both employed oil buffers and spring recuperators similar in principle to the one shown in Fig. 140.

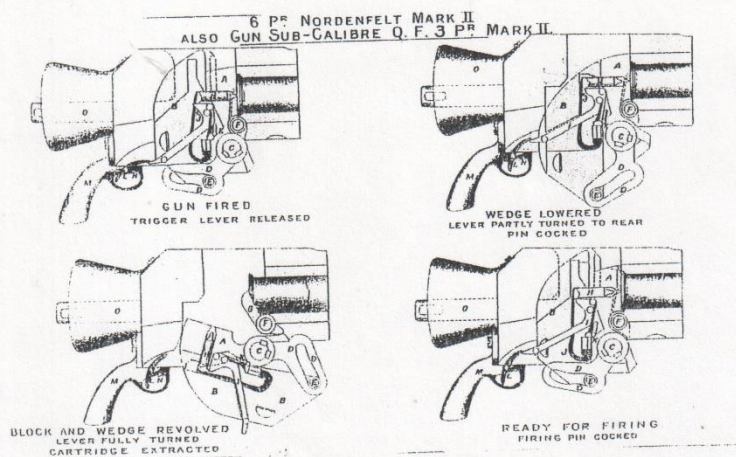


Fig. 143: 6-pr Nordenfelt breech mechanism.

HOTCHKISS 6 PR QUICK FIRING GUN MARK I.
BREECH MECHANISM
ALSO GUN SUB-CALIBRE Q. F. 6" AND 3" MARK I (EXCEPT SHOULDER PIECE L)

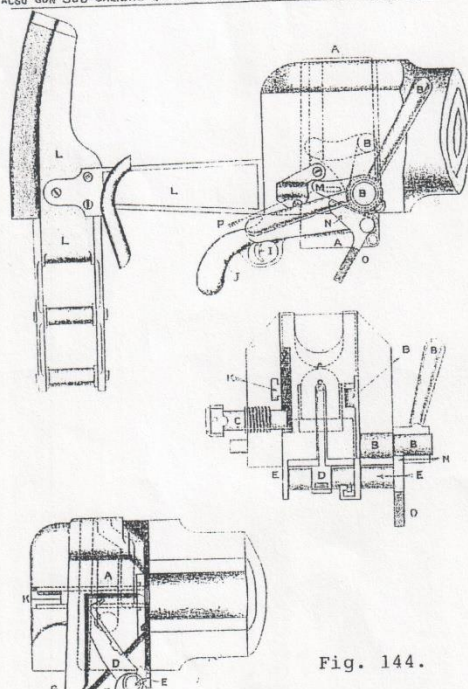
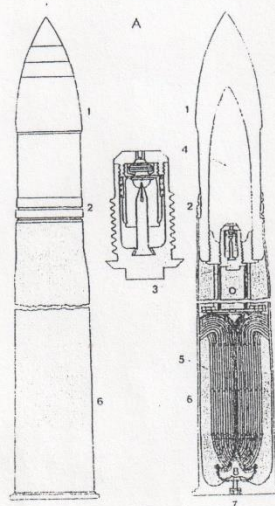


Fig. 144.



A The cartridge used in the six-pounder quick-firing Hotchkiss gun. (1) Steel shell. (2) Driving band. (3) Mark IV fuse, which was screwed into the base of the shell. (4) Lyddite bursting charge. (5) Cordite. (6) Brass case. (7) Percussion cap. (8) Primer.

Fig. 145: Nordenfelt guns used same ammo.

TO BE CONTINUED

