



NZ GUNNER

Royal New Zealand Artillery Association Newsletter

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

BY TONY MCLEOD

Well things have changed drastically over the past month, and none more so than for 16th Field Regt. Three weeks ago I received a schedule of commemorative activities, which they were involved in, and for which we were looking for Association support. The activities included the Army 175th Commemorative gun salute and Colour Gun on 25 Mar, the Palmerston North Military Tattoo/1812 Overture and Fires Demo on 4 April, ANZAC Day, the RNZA Corps Dinner, and RNZAA members attendance at Ex Brimstone on 9 or 16 May. All of these have now been cancelled. We wish the Regiment all the best for their involvement in aid to the community during the next four weeks. Our thoughts also go out to those who are alone or in need of assistance during the COVID-19 lockdown. For this reason we have reached out with an email to all members advising contact phone numbers of committee members. If you are in need of help, or perhaps just a chat, please feel free to call one of the committee and we'll do our best to provide what assistance we can.

It is my very pleasant duty to offer our hearty congratulations to Brigadier Paul Southwell on his appointment as our

new Colonel Commandant. Brig Southwell had a very distinguished gunner career, culminating as Commanding Officer of 16th Field Regiment in 91/92, and he then went on to become Military Attache in Beijing, and then Defence Attache in London. Welcome back to the fold Paul.

It was a memorable occasion to see 161 Battery according full military honours to Lt Col (rtd) James Heard at his funeral in Pukekohe on 20 January. Jim suffered a heart attack following a strenuous walk along the beach whilst visiting family in South Africa. Sounds typical of Jim doesn't it? Pushing himself to the limit. The 60-man guard was led by Maj Richie Appleton, BC 161 Battery, and all ceremonial aspects were well coordinated by the RSM WO1 Heath Southcomb. Our sincere condolences to all his family.

I was delighted to see that the Wellington Artillery Officers Mess has had several informal gatherings. Thanks to Shae Bassett. I hope to see you all at the reunion to be held on your doorstep at Trentham in October. The Auckland Artillery Officers Mess still meet regularly for lunch on the first Friday of every month at the Remuera Club, albeit with a very small attendance at this stage.

The Veterans' Affairs Expo for post 1974 veterans was held in Manukau on 28 February. Thanks to Barry Dreyer, Greg Thwaite, and Chris Pearce for their participation. I believe the turnout by veterans was probably disappointing from a Veterans' Affairs viewpoint, but for the RNZAA it was great to touch base with Bob Kimi from Rarotonga and Teach Macowan's nephew (sorry I didn't catch your name) who reported that Teach is well. He has moved back to his home marae near Tokoroa where he is managing the marae. I think we're making progress towards an agreed RNZAA Veteran Support viewpoint/stance, but I would love to see more feedback from a wider range of vets; Con F? Rick W? Mike D? Pat Mckinerny? Anyone?

A group of Auckland boat owners had a memorable Coastal Artillery weekend on 21-23 March. The regatta was a tribute to weekends run in the 1980s hosted by then-Col Comdt John Valentine (CONNIE V), then-Col Comdt Graham Birch, and then-ex CO Peter Hanson (CONQUISTADOR). This year we were joined by Peter Hanson's son Richard (ALLEE) with Anthony Mitchelson and Scott McBeth, Brig Paul Southwell (LADY H) with Dick Salt, Max Carpenter (BAY ESCAPE) with Alistair Irving, Tony McLeod

(WRIGHT DECISION) with Greg Thwaite and Anthony McLeod. The regular force were ably represented by Lt Harry Fenwicke, a great ambassador for the Regiment. Most of the group got to the WW2 gun emplacement at Stoney Batter, and we all enjoyed the hospitality of Berridge Spencer at the Man-of-War Bay winery on the Saturday night. Thanks to all those who participated, we do remember them.

Congratulations to Artillery Bandsman Sgt Bill Rimmer for his award as top military bandsman of the year, and thank you to Bob Davis, who, at 80 years of age, still continues to give sterling service to not only the Artillery Band but also the whole international community of military bandmen.

Just a note that Auckland commemorative activities Gunner' Day and St Barbara's Day will, for the foreseeable future, be based on informal social gatherings at the Fantail and Turtle Bar in Smales Farm, Takapuna Auckland. The bar is owned by ex gunner Travis Field and he has a special 'Gunners Lager' on tap. So keep it in mind, Auckland gunners, if you're looking for a bit of camaraderie on those occasions. Reunion 20, 16-18 October 2020, Trentham Military Camp. Put it in your diaries now.

Can I wish everyone all the best during the lockdown period. A phone call to a mate might save someone's sanity.

Ubique

Tony McLeod

President, RNZAA



Tony McLeod, Greg Thwaite, Dick Salt, Paul Southwell, Max Carpenter

LAST POST

BY RNZAA

- MIDDLETON, Raymond Norman (Ray). 42743, Gunner, 161 Bty Vietnam. Passed away in Queensland Australia 20 March 2020 surrounded by his loved ones.
- ORMSBY, Clarence Pita, JP. 375648, Gunner, 161 Bty Vietnam (x2 Tours). Passed away 10 March 2020 in NSW Australia.
- WRIGHT, Warwick Barraud. Maj (Rtd), 3 Fd Regt RNZA. Passed away 6 March 2020 after a short illness in Wellington.
- BELLANEY, Samuel Rodger (Sam): 448334, Lance SGT, 5th Field Regt, NZ Artillery, 2 NZEF WW2. Passed away 14 January 2020 at Charles Upham retirement village, Rangiora.
- PALMER, Ellis Leslie. 638925, Gunner, 25 Bty, J Force. Passed away peacefully but suddenly 10 January 2020, at Westport.
- HEARD, James Sydney. 730272, Lt Col (Rtd), 161 Bty and 1NZATTV Vietnam. Passed away 15 December 2019 in Mosel Bay, South Africa.
- OLSON, Nathaniel Adrian. H1003382, SSgt (Rtd), 16th Fd Regt RNZA. Passed away 6 December 2019 as the result of a motor accident in Hawkes Bay, aged 40 years.
- KITE, Thomas Frederick John (Tom): 6287320, Gunner, Royal Artillery, and 4/5 Buffs, WW2. Passed away peacefully 29 November 2019 at Timaru Hospital.



VETERANS' AFFAIRS RESPONDING TO COVID-19

BY VETERANS' AFFAIRS

All of our staff are now working from home. However we're continuing to focus on ensuring that veterans and their whānau are safe, and our regular payments to our clients will continue. Information about what is changing in how we work is now on our website www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz, but we're also contacting you directly about this. You might like to pass this information on to your members.

You'll need to contact VA differently during this time

Our inbound phone lines are now closed but case managers can still do outbound calls, which means that we can call clients who need to speak to us. Email us at veterans@nzdf.mil.nz and we can call you back. If you, or someone you know, doesn't have access to email, then ask a family member or trusted friend to email us on your behalf. All we need to know is your phone number. It will take a bit longer than usual to get back to you, and we appreciate your patience during these unprecedented times.

We're continuing to make payments

We'll continue to make regular payments to clients. These include:

- War disablement pension
- Disablement pension
- Independence allowance
- Weekly compensation
- Weekly income compensation
- Surviving spouse or partner pension
- Children's pension
- Dependent's pension

CONTINUITY DISCREPANCY

BY RNZAA

The last newsletter was marked as issue #185, when it should have been issue #183. We'll be continuing this issue as #186, so please note no issues #182 to #184 will exist for official historical records.

REUNION & AGM 2020

BY RNZAA

The reunion will be held over the weekend of 16-18 October 2020 at Trentham Camp. Martin Coomber (Area Rep Wgtn) will head the organising committee supported by Paul Weldran and Bryan Moles.

Timetable

- Fri 16 Oct, 16.30 Happy Hour WOs and Sgts Mess
- Sat 17 Oct, 10.30-12.00 AGM, SNCOs Ante Room.
(Timing for the AGM can be moved to accommodate activities)
- Sat 17 Oct, 12.00-17.00 Activity Wellington, Pistol shoot, shopping tour, static display current eqpt, display historic eqpt, parliament tour.
- Sat 17 Oct 18.00 for 19.00 Semi formal dinner, Combined dining room
- Sun 18 Oct, 10.00 Commemorative Service Trentham Chapel.

Accommodation

Messines Barracks will be available for accommodation for up to 50 people at a cost of about \$20 per night (TBA). Will suit single attendees.

MEMORIES OF VIETNAM; PART TWO

BY WAYNE ROBSON

Tragedy strikes the Battery

The battery began its first major operation with the 173rd Airborne Brigade on 14 September. This was to be a 14-day search and destroy operation near Ben Cat in War Zone D. The move to Ben Cat was by road convoy. About 1500 metres short of our destination, one of the forward observation party vehicles, the one directly in front of mine, was blown up by a command-detonated mine. The mine was triggered by two guerrillas waiting beside the road. More than 150 vehicles had travelled over the mine before it was triggered. There were four persons in the vehicle that was destroyed by the mine; three battery members and an NZPA reporter. The rear of the Land Rover had been sandbagged as protection from just this event. The civilian and one of the soldiers were thrown off the vehicle by the explosion, and the two seated in the front, Al Don and Jock White were killed instantly.

When the mine went off, everybody deployed into ambush positions that we had rehearsed so many times before. I was sure that we were about to be attacked, so I made sure that I was in a good position. It was at that point that the full impact of where I was came home to me. Nothing further developed and we began to relax.

GUNNER WAYNE ROBSON, 161 BATTERY

They were the first battery members to die in Viet Nam. On the fourth night of the operation, the battery position was mortared, injuring one New Zealander. This operation truly tested the battery, and it came through with flying colours. During this operation, the battery fired 1170 rounds of ammunition. On 8 October the battery was deployed again in the Ben Cat area. The brigade was to penetrate the "Iron Triangle". This was recognised as an important VC base, and regarded by many as impregnable. The area was roughly triangular and was extremely dense jungle, and almost completely surrounded by minefields. No friendly forces and not even small intelligence groups had penetrated the area for years. During this operation, one of the members of a forward observation party was wounded when he set off a tripwire mine. Two other battery members were also injured. The battery returned to base until 21 November and a leave programme was started. On 21 November the battery deployed to a new area of operations on C131 aircraft. The C131 was a two-engine version of the C130. We travelled to Vo Dat, and the airfield was just long enough to accommodate the C131. On board, our flight was a very large tyre that was filled with diesel fuel. This was designed to be towed behind an armoured vehicle. The short runway required the aircraft's pilot to use full reverse thrust on touchdown. When the C131 touched down on the runway and reverse thrust was employed, the securing straps on the tyre came adrift, and the tyre began to roll down the inside of the aircraft hitting the bulkhead behind the cockpit. I have never seen anybody climb up the inside of an aircraft so quickly before or since. We remained in the area until 17 December, when we moved to Long Khan province, some 25-miles southwest of Bo Dat. This operation was designed to disrupt an expected VC attack in Long Khan. It lasted for five days, and then the battery returned to Bien Hoa.

To be continued...

OP UBIQUE

PAUL WELDRAND

It was a very disappointing day to hear that our very own Colin Jansen had plans to 'fly the coup' so to speak. His efforts have seen many of us meet new friends, whilst also putting a huge venture into refurbishing the Artillery colours. I have yet to have the pleasure of meeting many 'out of area' members of the Op UBIQUE team, however, I certainly look forward to doing so. My aim is to continue the good work that's already been done, whilst also looking forward to finding more opportunities for our efforts to be put into. If I may personally thank our very own 'wee man', Bryan Moles. Without his recommendation/shoulder, I would not have had the opportunity to assist the Op UBIQUE initiative. Cheers Molesy!

Op UBIQUE - Wellington Region

So after some very well-attended, and highly successful, TODs at the Trentham Military establishment, our focus was then turned to the four operational ceremonial 25 pounders located at Pt Jerningham. These are actively used and on frequent occasions. We have currently completed, albeit a few touch-ups, two of the four. We're now awaiting confirmation of further vacant weekends whereby we can rally our band of men, and crack the other two. This is a very physical weekend given the descent to the guns from the closest parking spaces! Please do let the co-ordinator know if you have some spare muscles and would be willing to assist! Bryan Moles and I have already started recruiting new additions from the local RSA! Funny what a free pint can do to someone's motivation. Watch this space men – I'm hoping to get authorisation for the next TOD before ANZAC Day. A huge thanks to all those who have previously assisted – your efforts are very much appreciated and valued!

Porirua RSA

How many times do we walk past a mounted Gun as we enter our local RSA? Molesy and I had done this on many occasions, however we had a cunning plan to

get 'stuck into' a very depleted example of a 20mm Naval Orlikon Gun that had been in situ since approx 1963-'64, adorned with multiple coats of paint to keep it warm! A plan was then concocted, and after speaking to the RSA president, Roger Kingsford, an approach made to the RSA committee, whilst also consulting with the manager of local company Sand and Blasting, the plan was made. Thanks go to Sand and Blasting for their amazing work and all at nil cost given their own loyalties to the RSA.

Phase 1: to remove and uplift the gun from outside the RSA to be sand blasted. A very generous offer to lift the gun using his companies HIAB cranes and trucks was made by Mark Poles of Wellington Water – thanks Mark! Thanks also to Barry Ryan of the Porirua RSA for his efforts throughout.

Phase 2: post completion of sand blasting. Wow, we were all stunned at the detail we then found throughout the gun. Serial numbers and logos looked like new – an amazing transformation indeed! Then the move was made into a conveniently found workshop courtesy of Molesy's 'contacts'. Several hours later, lots of spot welding, and removal of hidden rust. etc., then saw the gun presented as if it had just rolled off the production line! Bryan Moles takes the credit for a sterling effort that simply couldn't have been done without his skills. Well done Molesy! A huge thanks goes to Andrew Donnelly for going out of his way in sending the correct Navy grey that we needed! Thanks Donny, I owe you a beer for that.

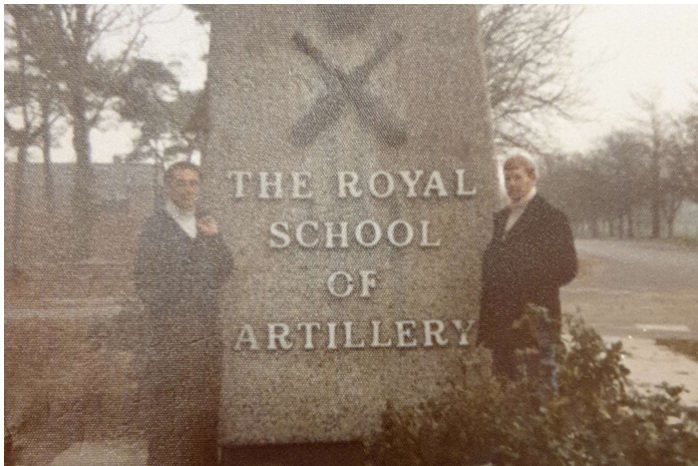
Phase 3: on Saturday 22 February, the gun was returned and rebolted to its resting place looking like new. This was an amazing effort by all involved and one that saw us actually doing rather than just talking about doing.

Please note: due to COVID-19 all planned activity is now on hold. Details of our next sessions will be posted once this passes.



REFLECTIONS OF LARKHILL ROYAL SCHOOL OF ARTILLERY

W02 TEACH MACOWN: 1 LOCATING TROOP
SGT SKIN FRANCIS: 161 BATTERY



Our arrival in the UK via Singapore, Bahrain, and finally Heathrow, mid PM. No one to meet us, just a massive terminal with no instructions or directions, and a million people, or so it seemed. Head for the taxi ranks and take a plunge. "Commonwealth Club London, please." M72 Highway, Hounslow, Waterloo Bridge, and River Thames. London, ancient, vast, sprawling, densely populated, old landmarks. We were there. Cost 7 pounds, today 170 pounds.

Booked into the Club with a score of other Commonwealth servicemen all going their own way to various training camps in the UK. Body clock kicked in, sleep, woke at 2am. Looked over London— St Pauls Cathedral bathed in moonlight. Secure, serene, ghostly. Heard in my mind the sirens, the throb of the Luftwaffe, the crash of bombs all those years ago.

Next day, off to Waterloo Station, train to Salisbury. The English countryside very similar to New Zealand. Damp, grey skies, rain and cool temperatures. Hours later, Salisbury station and on the platform to meet us, Bob Wirihana. What a relief to see a friendly face in an alien environment. Taxi to Royal School of Artillery, Larkhill.

A huge camp, all dedicated to Artillery and associated Corps. Regular Force Regiments, Field, Medium Batteries, field and self-propelled guns, training regiments, locating battery, air defence and missile regiments, drone units, and logistic units. I thought very humbly of the NZ School of Artillery. Core training in all aspects of gunnery for hundreds of gunners. The boom of shot and shell heard all night as each course demanding their share of range time.

Salisbury Plain range, weather beaten, rolling hills, copses of trees, creeks, racks of all vehicles, shelled and bombed for years, ringed by residential houses, roads, and historical relics of the past.

Safety is paramount. Courses are courses. Cymbelline Mortar Locating Radar. Tutorials, fieldwork, practice into and out of action six days a week through all weather conditions. UK employed civilian drivers for all school vehicles, rather strange but economics demanded it, jobs for civilians. They drove us out, sat in the rovers all day and brought us home at night. All day, every day.

The culture of the RSA British Instructors and Instruction was first class, with each instructor top of his field. My course students were very capable, Brits, an Aussie, and us two Kiwis, but Skin could match them. They appeared to operate on a level far higher than our plane of thinking, regiments, divisions, and corps.

Farewelled Bob Wirihana, (survey training staff) exchange staff. Completed the course by late December and headed home. London, Heathrow, LA, Fiji, New Zealand. Some 9-10 weeks in the old country. Nostalgia to think of the thousands of gunners who tread the same paths, roads, fields, and deployment areas as we, decades before us.

Cymbelline Mortar Locating Radar introduced into the NZ Artillery in 1979 into 1 Locating Troop Waiouru.

I think back and everything is a swirl of fast-moving events, too fast to take it all in and taste the time and age difference from the old world to the new world, 41 years ago.

16 FD REGT UPDATE

BY RNZAA

Things have changed drastically over the past month for everyone. This includes 16th Field Regt. Three weeks ago we received a schedule of commemorative activities, postings, training, and exercises. The activities included the Army 175th Commemorative gun salute and Colour Gun on 25 March, the Palmerston North Military Tattoo/1812 Overture and Fires Demo on 4 April, ANZAC Day, the RNZA Corps Dinner, and RNZAA members attendance at Ex Brimstone in May. All of these activities have now been cancelled. We wish the Regiment all the best for their involvement in aid to the community during the next four weeks.



ONWARD RECRUITMENT

BY ONWARD RECRUITMENT

We know what it's like to leave the forces to start a new career in civvy street. It's not an easy next-step and you're entitled to have the right support.

You have served and your families have been there for you along the way and made sacrifices themselves, so let us now be involved in helping you with the next chapter in your new career. Thank you for your service.

We provide the following for our service people:

- Permanent recruitment
- Search and executive placement
- Labour hire
- Mentoring and coaching
- Consulting and strategy
- Wellbeing and support services
- Program management
- CV development
- Strategic training platform
- Speaking engagements
- Advice for other useful additional services
- Ongoing networking and post-transitional support

Contact

- 0800 575 626
- info@onward.org.nz
- www.onward.org.nz

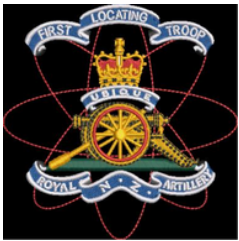
*NZ's dedicated
recruitment specialist
for all current and ex-
forces personnel*

CALLING ALL EX-RNZA LOCATORS.

BY NATHANIEL F. HALL

We are wanting to 'locate' and track down all of those who served in 1 Locating Battery RNZA and then 1 Locating Troop RNZA until its disbandment with the view of reconnecting with past members and the view of a reunion/gathering in the future.

We have established a Facebook group www.facebook.com/groups/316302939253878 or 1st Locating Troop - Royal New Zealand Artillery. Search for and then answer the questions to join if you're on Facebook, or email Craig Hewett at 1lloctroop@gmail.com to register for our database or call 027 4736004.



New logo thanks to Adam Gibson (Gibby). This will be soon be available as a sew on to a blazer or sleeve.

DO YOU HAVE ANY INFO?

Can you shed any light on this mug, post Vietnam? Email Chris at rnza.association@gmail.com.



Right in the front rank!

THE ALL-IN-ONE TONIC HAIR CREAM

Discipline your hair with JULYSIA HAIR CREAM—and you'll be sure, not only of day-long smartness, but also of life-long hair-health. The Cream of Hairdressings positions the hair firmly, yet without gumming or starching, while its unique tonic ingredients effect an immediate improvement in texture and glossiness. No more falling hair! No more soiled hatbands or pillows! Get your bottle of JULYSIA HAIR CREAM TO-DAY, from your Canteen, Hairdresser, Chemist, or Stores.

1/- & 1/6 per bottle.
Sample size 6d.

A Product of Jules Frères Ltd., London, S.E.17.

JULYSIA
The Cream of Hairdressings

In the Floodlight of Public Favour

W^M McEwan's & W^M Younger's CELEBRATED ARMY ALE & STOUT

McEwan-Younger Ltd EDINBURGH

1591

HOROWHENUA ARTILLERY ASSOCIATION – 60 YEARS

BY RNZAA

On Friday, 27 May 1960, six ex-gunners met for dinner at the Oxford Hotel – Levin to celebrate Gunners Day (26 May). From this initial meeting, the Horowhenua Gunners Association was formed and grew from strength to strength. The next year, Friday, 26 May 1961, there were more than 40 attendees at that dinner, and over the years this grew to well over 100 attendees during the late '80s and '90s. As the NZ Regiment downsized and members grew older, so did the numbers attending the dinner. During this time the name changed to the Horowhenua Artillery Association. They now hold two functions per year, Gunners Day in May and the El Alamein commemoration in October. Both functions are held at the Levin RSA where it all began. The Horowhenua Artillery Association will be celebrating the 60th Anniversary of their foundation. This was set for May, but will be postponed until October's El Alamein luncheon due to the current situation with COVID-19. All past members, current, and ex-gunners are invited to join them for this festivity in October to renew old friendships and to enhance existing membership.

Horowhenua Artillery Association

60th Jubilee: 1960-2020

Cost: \$28 per person

RSVP by post with a cheque to:

Adam Gibson (secretary)

34 Gordon Place

Levin 5510

or email a.gibson@extra.co.nz for bank transfer details.

Q STORE

BY RNZAA

Quartermaster: Andrew Donellan

For orders and enquiries, email

rnzaaqstore@gmail.com or visit the website:

rnzaa.org.nz

To support the RNZAA, the Q store offers an array of items for you to collect and buy. We are working on additional items. Postage is included for all New Zealand deliveries. Please enquire for the cost of posting overseas.

From top left, clockwise:

- RNZAA Coffee Mugs. Cobalt blue with gold print. \$25 each.
- Polo Shirt with Gunners logo on right breast with crest on the left. \$65 each.
- Beret Patch. \$5 each.
- Once A Gunner Always A Gunner Badge. \$20 each.
- RNZAA Baseball Cap. Black with red piping. Gun crest on the front. \$35 each.
- Lapel Pin. \$10 each.

Conditions apply in terms of waiting times and payments. Check the website for further info, or email Andrew at the email above.



VETERAN SUPPORT DIALOGUE 3

BY TONY MCLEOD, ROB MUNRO, GREG THWAITE,
BARRY DREYER, TERRY FARRELL

The dialogue pertaining to Veteran Support continues with a very useful grass-roots article from Terry Farrell and various forms of correspondence between Rob Munro, Barry Dreyer, and Tony McLeod. Our thanks to Terry and all those who have provided feedback. We look forward to ongoing dialogue in the next newsletter so that we can formulate an RNZAA Veteran Support Plan.

Tony McLeod: lessons from Australia

Once again I look to our Australian brothers in arms for their guidance, and once again I come away totally confused; on the one hand there is the media release by the Hon Darren Chester MP (Min for Vets Affairs) announcing a fresh package of initiatives for vets and their families to recognise their vital role and service to Australia, (PM media Release, 27 Oct 2018), while on the other hand the Adelaide paper (AEDT) headlines read "Life just went to crap: why army veterans are twice as likely to end up in prison" (AEDT Dec 4, 2019). In my opinion, the AEDT article has some interesting statistics such as, between 2001 and 2017, 419 serving and ex-serving ADF personnel died by suicide. But while the suicide rate for men still serving was 48% lower than in the equivalent general population, the rate is 18% higher for those who had left the military. I have not seen any similar statistics for NZDF personnel. The article reported that the spike in the suicide rates, plus a high rate of imprisonment, reflect the challenges some service people face transitioning from military service back to civilian life, and the critical lack of available transition planning and support. Taking a more in-depth look at the issue, the South Australian audit reported that veterans have poorer mental health than Australians overall. The combination of childhood trauma, military training, social exclusion and mental health issues on discharge created the perfect cocktail of risk factors leading to crime. For many, joining the service was a way to find respect, discipline, and camaraderie. In fact, most interviewees found military service effective at controlling the effects of childhood trauma.

However, all personnel complained that military discharge was a complete sudden cut. This sudden departure from the service can aggravate previous trauma. One soldier reflected that when he left the army, he lost the routine that kept his past traumas at bay. These results would be as true for NZ Defence personnel as our Australian mates. The concluding observation in the article states, "If ex-servicemen could maintain contact with the ADF [insert NZDF] through peer support and informal networks, their identity and sense of purpose could be maintained to reduce the risk factors for offending and re-offending." This should be the main aim of the RNZA Assn, but we do not, as yet, have the mechanism to achieve it; dare I say an active online social presence, much like 'No Duff' seem to be achieving. The static anachronistic institutions, such as the RSA and ourselves, just don't seem to be cutting it. Can we solve this within our current structure?

Definition of a veteran

Considering the amount of dialogue on this issue last year, most members will be pleased to learn that on 10 December 2019, the Min for Veterans Affairs, Mr Ron Mark, announced that the Veterans Advisory Board (VAB) has recommended that all who have served should be considered veterans, and should receive services and support, on the basis of need, if they have been injured or made ill by their service in the armed forces, irrespective of where that service took place. The costs of this are now being examined. The board also recommended a covenant, or kawenata, between service people and the government and the people of New Zealand. Prominent examples of a covenant in overseas jurisdictions are the Armed Forces Covenant in the UK, and the Australian Defence Veterans Covenant. I believe they have demonstrated significant benefit for veterans and their families. The VAB will be reporting back to the Minister by 31 July 2020.

Rob Munro: higher level advocacy

At legislative level, Rob Munro reflected that, to me, 'Independent' advocacy for vets nationwide is needed to produce betterment/improvement to the law itself. The 2014 Act and VANZ staff numbers continue to need an uplift particularly in areas shown in the Report by a former Ombudsman, Professor Paterson. Ten years ago, The Law Commission, (an Independent Law Reform Body) also suggested improvements to the previous government. Many were ignored. Delay continues. VANZ staff and appeals can only do what the law allows, but not beyond it. Real change for veterans will come from legislative improvements.

I have little doubt, too, that the Minister wants to help, but without individuals or an organisation pressing for improvements — sometimes in public — his progress is likely to be limited. Interest and discussion; yes, but explicit changes in the law? The 2020 election looms. His first three years may pass all too quickly. RSA HQ is, and has been, less than fully effective with governments of all stripes. The problem is decades old. Wellington is now ground zero for increasing numbers of lobbyists. Many full-time and highly paid. That's the way change is now both begun and followed up in many areas. The Veterans Advisory Board is selected by the Minister of the day and its advice can be followed or ignored as the elected government so chooses. Treasury opinions (frequently cost-saving) are considered, and can stymie many proposals. Some ministerial proposals will not even see the light of day if the PM declines to place the item on the agenda for Monday Cabinet. Many think NZDF should do the heavy lifting for veterans. Realistically, it cannot do so unaided. The NZDF and MOD must follow directives and procedures of the elected government. My discussions with those serving and recently retired confirm it. And it is unlikely to alter. External and independent change agents are needed to effectively press improvements for veterans. That's reality in 2020. Face to face regularly with Ministers, MPs of all parties, and government officials.

Greg Thwaite

Noted the intention to fund Advocates to ACC, personnel who will assist ACC claimants at a legal level. He has sought more information from ACC and will examine the implications or applicability to the veteran community.

Barry Dreyer: access to databases

Barry reports that the project combining VANZ and govt databases for veterans is almost finished — five databases combined. It will have all those on pensions and all returned personnel on it, and it will be searchable. The intention is to write to all on the database to initiate contact and at least leave contact detail with veteran or family. Barry discussed with the Project Manager the ability to, go out to all gunners and have for instance key RNZA/RNZAA personnel as the initial contact points or at least suggesting if they wanted to make contact here are a couple of names they will know who have served with the veteran. His view was good idea as part of the reach out process and quite easily done. We should follow up on this, and lead the way. The first bit of good news in this area for decades.

Terry Farrell: grass-roots issues

I have recently been concerned as to the channels of communication for veterans issues. Reading in your December newsletter highlights concerns raised over a number of years by myself and others. The recent VA newsletter highlighted a number of issues where activities and support for veterans are being held in some areas where RSAs are strong. However in areas such as South Canterbury and others there is a serious failing, no information being available until after the event. Some years ago, while working with Age Concern in Blenheim, I noted the failings of RSA to provide the ongoing information on activities, pension issues, and support. etc., to our veterans was failing, so I adopted with Age Concern's board of approval to act as an agent to ensure information was made available to our veterans in this area. This included help with pension applications, transport, and any other needs. However, at that time, the system put in place by the then-EVSA representatives, or area reps as we were called, was before the advent of Veterans Affairs NZ as we know it now. WINZ record of assistance was not highly regarded. However, since the formation of VANZ our roles decreased, but we were available, and still are, to assist in the community through RSAs. The EVSA area reps still stand today, but have become fragmented by the current situation. However with the demise of RSAs and the recent push to alienate service members out of our structure, constitutional changes enforced by RNZRSA and the ongoing closures, or those who are within not able to carry on this important task, we now have gaps emerging like we had 30 years ago. The formation of No Duff had good intentions, but why did we need them if RNZRSA through its associations were doing their job. The solution is to ask anyone of community organisations such as Age Concern, Alzheimer's Association, etc., to now be part of our communication hub. Every small town has some sort of organisation with committees, which could adopt our portfolio, and funding would come from Veteran Affairs NZ. After all, we fund trips overseas for VANZ staff, this would help alleviate this large expense of travel. Areas could have official groups officially acknowledged by VANZ monthly meetings with ex-service personal. After all, only an ex-service personal understands our needs, these old-fashioned ideas worked with little or no cost to anyone. The priority is to put the system in place by having the criteria for the group you must have served to be part of it. It's the non-uniform personnel with the support of RNZRSA that have killed our network, not us who have served.

Communication allows us to put us anywhere in the world without having to travel vast distances, and we are available 24/7. It worked in Blenheim for seven years while I lived there, and it still can, as long as you have dedicated people engaged in the process. The criticism of RNZRSA over the years is based on the continual failure to acknowledge my concerns raised over welfare and pension issues, not about bricks and mortar. This is what we stand for, the RSA motto is People Helping People.

SGT BILL RIMMER RECOGNISED AMONGST MILITARY MUSICIANS

BY TONY MCLEOD

In 2011, the International Military Music Society created an annual award for the NZ Military Musician of the Year, in memory of WO Terry Moloney, who formed the First NZ Infantry Regiment Band in 1957- and who was affectionately known as the 'grandfather' of the Army Band. The recipient for 2019 is Sgt Bill Rimmer, Band of Royal Regiment New Zealand Artillery. Bill has been a member of the RNZA Band for 31 years and is the only member to have received their Excellence Award twice, in 1999 and 2018. For many years he has been the bands go to bugler for the countless requests to sound the last post at funerals, commemorations and ceremonies. During the Centenary of the WW1 Armistice in 2018 he travelled from his home in Devonport to sound Last Post every morning and evening on 22 consecutive days at the field of 18,277 white crosses at the Auckland Domain. Bill spends much of his time tutoring younger players, and inmates of NZ Prisons.

The award was presented to Bill by Lt Col (rtd) Tony McLeod, while Mr Brian Miller, a member of Terry Moloney's original NZ Infantry band in 1957 travelled from his home in Whangarei to present Bill with a bottle of champagne.



In order to prevent the spread of coronavirus, Bill and Tony exchanged a congratulatory 'Bum Shake'

FROM THE PAST

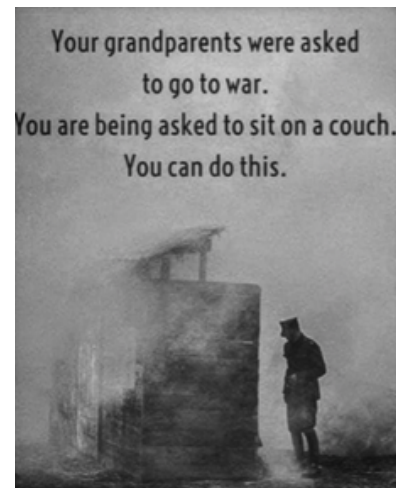
Field Artillery operating at the advance to the Marne in the second week of September 1914. And to Huia Ockwell — thanks to Huia Ockwell for the images.



FROM THE PAST



JUST FOR FUN



❌ Less clear	✅ More clear
<p>"Practice social distancing."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> X New term X Unclear X Not specific X Conceptual 	<p>"Stay at home. Get groceries once per week."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Use known words ✓ Be clear ✓ Be specific ✓ Be concrete

