

NEW ZEALAND PERMANENT FORCE OLD COMRADES ASSN INC

PO BOX 33 710, TAKAPUNA, AUCKLAND 9

NEWSLETTER No 54

June 1987

A Registered Publication

SUBSCRIPTION: To be financial to 31 December 1987 you owe us S.....
Please forward to Secretary at address shown above as soon as possible.

LAST POST: 1416 Captain R.J. (Dick) Healey MBE, 6 Jun 87, at Dunedin.

CHANGES OF ADDRESS: Brig G.P. Cade DSO to Unit 102, Hillsborough Heights Village, cnr Hillsborough Rd and Dominion Rd, Auckland 4.

B.P. Banks to 44 Rangoon St, Khandallah, Wellington.

Lt J.H. Barrett to 30 Sharland Ave, Manurewa.

R.J. Bennett to 29 Denby Cres, Tikipunga, Whangarei.

W.J. Breen to 3 Korimako St, Selwyn Heights, Rotorua.

J.E. Dunn to 12 Analese St, Sunnybank Hills, Brisbane, Australia 4109.

Mrs C (Catherine) Haerewa to 10 Ballance Rd, Waiouru.

Capt G.C. Lough to 115 Ruskin Rd, Newlands, Wellington.

S.E. Morrison to 3 Dunbreath Cres, Invercargill.

Lt Col E.L. Taverner to 100 Millcrest St, Double View, Perth, W.A.

Lt M.T. Withers to c/o Officers Mess, Burnham Camp.

GONE NO ADDRESS:

D. Morgan

Capt E.G. Willbond

Major M.I. Pope

Major T. O'Reilly

LAST KNOWN ADDRESS OR LOCATION

RNZA Directorate.

19 Vernon Ave, Palmerston North,

c/o CPO, Auckland.

c/o Dept of Maori Affairs, Wgton.

NEW MEMBERS: 38417 F. (Fred) Bigg-Wither, 24 Bunnythorpe Rd, Papakura.

Lt Col C. Flinkenberg, 29A Grass St, Oriental Bay, Wellington.

1917 J. (Jack) Graham, 28 Karewa Parade, Papamoa, Bay of Plenty.

34843 E.A. (Allan) Kempthorne, 183B MacAndrew Rd, Dunedin (Associate).

RESIGNATIONS: 1559 J.I.G. Galloway, 64 Springvale Rd, Wanganui.

Lt Col E.L. Taverner MBE (address as above).

161 BATTERY REUNION of personnel who served in the Bty from 1950 to 1987 is to be held over the week-end 15-16 August 1987. For further details those interested should contact the BSM, 161 Bty, Papakura Camp.

NEWS FROM AROUND AND ABOUT: The President, Executive and Members extend their deepest sympathy to WO2 Les Jackson, our Papakura Rep, on the recent sad loss of his good lady, Emma.

Major Grant Box has retired from the Regular Force (he was 2IC 16 Fd Regt), and has been appointed BC 4 Medium Bty RNZA.

Lt John (Woody) Barrett has retired from the Rf and is now Administration Supervisor at the Wiri Oil Terminal, where he is enjoying the transition to civilian life.

H.G. (Lofty) Bigg-Wither is now located at Paua on the Parengarenga Harbour 50 kilometres beyond Houhora, the last pub north, where beer is now S3-10 a jug. He is therefore switching to home brew at 30c a bottle!

After ten years' service Mrs C. (Catherine) Haerewa, one of our few lady members, has obtained her release from the Army to take up the new challenge of motherhood. We wish her every happiness.

Eric Collett wishes to pass on his regards to any who know him. He works three days a week at Waiwera Hot Pools on the Hibiscus Coast. Both he and his wife enjoy good health.

Ernie Hight reports from New Plymouth that a 50-year reunion of his Police Wing was a huge success.

Members who served in Waiouru during the 1950s will recall Father Tom Duffy, the popular RC Padre then stationed there. Darkie McWhinnie writes from New Plymouth that he is now Monsignor Duffy, and looking after his flock in that city.

Ian Rowntree, our Thames/Coromandel Rep, reports all well in his area.

Bill and June Breen are busy getting settled into their new place in Rotorua; Bill is building a house for June's orchids, and is planning an all-out attack upon the local trout population.

Gordon Thomas from Palmerston North writes in praise of the excellent Artillery Association which meets twice a year in Levin.

Major Frank Gibbison is 'back on deck' after having been indisposed by a minor back injury - which he insists was not caused by the sort of activity said to cause bad backs when we were younger!

Recently I had referred to me a letter from a gentleman in Sydney charged with restoring a BL 9.2-in gun emplacement there, who was seeking component parts. Regretfully I had to inform him that our 'system' thoughtlessly squandered such priceless tourist attractions 30 years ago when they sold all coast artillery equipments for scrap. However, if any member 'rescued' any part from the scrap merchants, and is prepared to donate it please let me know.

Congratulations and best wishes for the future to George and Lillian Stuart who on 28 May celebrated their Golden Wedding; and to Lillian a very special hope that your health continues to improve.

As our Otago Rep George writes his usual interesting letter with news of doings in the deep south. He reports the 5 Fd Regt reunion (attended by President Allan Boyd), was a very good show. George has been active in promoting the restoration of an 1886 BL 6-in disappearing gun at Taiaaroa Head on which good progress is being made. He is appealing for assistance on behalf of the Otago Peninsula Trust which aims to present the old coast artillery installation as a tourist attraction. Donations of any militaria either contemporary or modern are welcome, and should be addressed to The Secretary, Otago Peninsula Trust, Box 620, Dunedin.

6 Fd Regt NZA REUNION: is to be held at Masterton over the week-end 9-10-11 October 1987. Convener is C.P. Carew, Box 579, Masterton, and the last day for registration is 1 Aug 87.

NOTICE FOR CANTERBURY/WESTLAND/NELSON MEMBERS: Your District Rep, Colin Young, is doing his best '... to keep alive the old spirit of comradeship...' according to the rules, but is deeply disappointed at your poor response to his requests to get together for that purpose. We know it is winter and some of you old blokes don't like the prospect of sallying forth on these cold days - but we know also that once the effort has been made, the end result is always rewarding. And so do you. Colin now asks you to attend a meeting in the Christchurch RSA at 2.30 pm Tuesday, 20 October 1987, to discuss certain important matters, one being a reunion dinner. Don't let him down.

Members visiting from other Districts are welcome to take part.

14 WING REUNION. On 12 Jan 1988 50 years will have elapsed since 14 Wing marched in to Army Schools, Trentham. Naturally we have given some thought to a reunion but of the 34 men who completed the course we have the locations of 14 only. Of the remaining 20 we know at least 11 have 'gone west', and believe two or three others have also. So the prospects of a successful function are not bright. Johnny Meikle suggests that instead of meeting on the 12th January 88 members of the Wing come to Taupo on 13-14-15 Nov 87 for a reunion within a reunion as it were. We consider his suggestion has great merit, and unless someone else has a better idea intend to adopt it. In the meantime we would appreciate information on the following, i.e. their addresses if still living or dates of death if known: WTR BURNS, FPC COATES, JDB DALY, W.G. HOPKINS, TC HYNES (recently 'gone no address'), AC KILMORE, C McM LAING, EG STOKES, TH TROTMAN.

DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN, ARMED CONSTABULARY PARK: Knowing our interest in the Park and its association with the history of the N.Z. Armed Constabulary, the Taupo Borough Council have invited us to make a submission on the Draft Management Plan. Having carefully perused the Plan we find in it nothing incompatible with our previously expressed desire to see the historical association preserved and the public kept aware of it. We shall therefore inform the Council accordingly.

BAYONETS IN THE ARTILLERY

By W.L. Ruffell

It is well-known that as a general rule Gunners do not carry bayonets, a situation which has from time to time given rise to the questions: did Artillerymen ever carry bayonets? Were bayonets ever traditional weapons of Artillerymen? Were they once issued to dismounted Gunners but not mounted - or vice versa? Did Gunners ever fix bayonets on ceremonial parades or guard duty? Do they so fix them now? Some claim to know the answers, some have even burst into print on the subject, but few of the statements I have heard or read are supported by evidence which would stand up in court. My story is based on officially acknowledged reference works; I hope you find it interesting.

Members of 14 Wing, of which I was a member, marched in to Army Schools, Trentham, on 12 Jan 1938 to be trained as Gunners in the RNZA (RF). During our Spartan existence there we became experts at fixing and unfixing the Pattern 1907 bayonet, blades and scabbards of which we were obliged to keep highly polished in our 'spare' time. At the end of the course which lasted about five months we returned rifles and bayonets to store.

Early in June the same year seventeen of us were posted to Fort Dorset where in due course we were paraded at the Master Gunner's store to be once again issued with rifles - but not bayonets. When one of our number innocently asked why, the Master Gunner snapped, 'The Artillery don't carry bayonets and never have,' (or words to that effect).

None of us was 'game' to make the obvious retort; besides, we had not yet grown old and cynical. Nevertheless, after finding that just about everyone else on the station agreed with the MG, we marvelled not a little at the apparent inconsistency in regular force training policy. We muttered, 'If Gunners don't carry bayonets why the hell have we been brandishing them umpteen times a day for the last five months?' We never did get an answer to that one.

Now while in Trentham I purchased from Ordnance the original piece of what was to become a modest collection of antique British military small arms, a .450-in calibre Martini-Henry carbine made in 1874 and

converted to .303-in calibre in 1895. At the outbreak of World War 2 the Government commandeered this and other privately-owned relics in a desperate attempt to remedy 20 years' neglect of the country's defence forces, but that is another story.

Later, while reading a history of small arms, I made a surprising discovery: in addition to the various muskets and rifles Britain had issued to her Infantry up to the beginning of the 20th century she had produced a corresponding series of carbines for other arms. And those designated 'carbines artillery' were specifically designed to take bayonets!

My reaction to this revelation was to obtain books on the history of the Regiment and find out exactly what went on in those bygone days. The task was not too difficult; Defence Library held most of the reference works necessary.

Under the circumstances the logical starting point seemed to be 1672, the year the first British regiment was officially issued with bayonets. In those days a 'train' of artillery on the move in the field was a long, slow-moving convoy of heavy horse-drawn limbers, guns, waggons and carts. It normally travelled at a walking pace because the people who manned the equipment, including the Drivers, plodded along beside their respective vehicles on foot. Owing to the atrocious nature of the roads, where these existed, ditchings and breakdowns were frequent, often bringing everything to a standstill. As Artillery under these conditions was extremely vulnerable to hit and run attack by enemy cavalry, guerillas, or light Infantry, the Fusilier Regiments provided escorts to guard the guns, assist in repairing breakdowns - and prevent the Drivers (who were civilians) from running away when the shooting started! Around 1700 the Matrosses took over these duties, for which purpose they exchanged the half-pikes and swords with which they had been formerly armed for muskets and bayonets.

In action, owing principally to primitive communications and the inefficiency of ordnance and small arms, encounters with an enemy usually culminated in short-range slaughtering matches with the guns often alongside the Infantry they supported. Field or siege guns could thus be overrun by a numerous and determined foe, and not infrequently were. One of the earliest VCs was won by a Royal Artillery Sergeant defending his gun against enemy Infantry attacking with the bayonet. Not even coast artillery fortresses were immune; they could be attacked by landing parties from invading ships, instances of which are recorded. Consequently every Artilleryman needed weapons with which to defend himself and his gun when the occasion arose. Furthermore, with his musket empty and no time to reload, a Gunner of the smooth-bore era suddenly confronted by an armed adversary found a sword or a bayonet a dire necessity.

Mobility of field artillery began to improve late in the 18th century with the progressive introduction of lighter and handier carriages with better methods of draught. Drivers, who became soldiers in 1794, were now mounted, and Gunners rode on limbers and waggons. But throughout the 19th century an artillery column continued to be a comparatively slow-moving body of horses, men and vehicles, always vulnerable to attack if it got too close to the enemy. Gunners therefore retained personal weapons until the end of the century, and some until 1914. Drivers were not armed until mid-19th century at which time they are depicted carrying short swords attached to their saddles or sword-bayonets on their belts. In the latter half of the century revolvers began to supplant other side arms.

When the Royal Artillery formed in 1716 went into action in the field all ranks except Matrosses carried swords. In addition Officers carried fusils, Sergeants, Corporals and Bombardiers carried halberts, while Gunners carried field staves (linstocks, which doubled as spears). Matrosses still had infantry muskets and bayonets.

In 1748 Gunners and Matrosses, and in 1754 Corporals and Bombardiers were all re-armed with flintlock carbines and bayonets. Officers gave up their fusils in 1770, Sergeants their halberts in 1845, but both kept their swords. In 1841 the carbines issued in 1748 and 1754 were replaced by new Victoria Pattern 1841 artillery percussion carbines which took the standard infantry-type bayonet. However, men attached to field guns were issued with swords again instead of bayonets. No official explanation can be found for this move, but from what happened a few years later we can deduce the RA considered the sword a more useful weapon than the infantry bayonet, especially when the latter was not fixed to a carbine.

Just prior to the Crimean War Britain introduced the Pattern 1853 .577-in calibre Enfield muzzle-loading percussion rifle, the first rifle to be made a general issue to British troops. At the same time the RA received the corresponding Pattern 1853 artillery carbine with sword-bayonet. This time the bayonets were satisfactory because at 28 inches (711 mm) in length overall they were long enough and heavy enough to be formidable either as swords or as bayonets. Junior NCOs and Gunners therefore returned swords to store. Sergeants in some cases reverted to bayonets but in others retained their swords.

'Battalion artillery', i.e. personnel not directly attached to guns but stationed in camps and garrisons were armed with infantry muskets and bayonets until 1845 when they too were issued with Victoria carbines and bayonets. Garrison artillery continued to be armed with carbines and bayonets until they were re-armed with the Short Magazine Lee Enfield (Rifle No 1) in 1903, first with the Pattern 1903 bayonet, then with the Pattern 1907 which they retained until 1914. Mountain artillerymen carried the same personal weapons as Garrison artillerymen.

With the advent of rifled ordnance in 1860 the range and accuracy of field and siege guns increased enormously but the British Army failed to take full advantage of their new power, e.g. made no attempt to develop optical sighting systems but clung to the now hopelessly inadequate open sights of the smooth-bore era, nor to change their tactics from those they had favoured at Waterloo. Hence battles continued to be short-range contests - and the need for Gunners to carry personal weapons remained.

In 1866 approval was given for conversion of the Pattern 1853 rifles and carbines to the Snider breech-loading system. The same bayonets were retained in each case.

In 1889 the Regiment was again re-armed with a variety of weapons including the new .450-in calibre Martini-Henry artillery carbine with a similar sword bayonet to that of the P53. For example, a 6-gun battery was issued with 12 carbines, 63 pistols (revolvers), 36 swords, and 80 sword bayonets, i.e. for a total strength of 179 each person carried either a sword, a sword-bayonet, or a pistol. The carbines, two to a gun, were carried on the limbers. All Officers and NCOs carried swords.

Then came the South African War (1899-1902), and with it some rather nasty surprises. For the previous forty years the Royal Artillery had become used to fighting enemies most of whom were simple tribesmen

armed with clubs, spears, and/or antiquated muskets. They now found Boer marksmen armed with high-powered magazine rifles a vastly different proposition. As guns were still equipped solely with open sights the effective application of fire by indirect means against a mobile enemy was well-nigh impossible. On coming into action a BC was obliged to site his guns in the open where his layers could see the target area with the naked eye, which meant the enemy could also see the guns - and make excellent practice picking off first the horses then the detachments. More than one gun position became a shambles before the Gunners got a shot away. Tales of gallant gentlemen '.... galloping their guns to within half-musket-shot of the foe, dropping their trails and opening with case' were heard no more. How the RA went about updating their tactics and methods of fire is another story, but in the process they made sure they never again knowingly put guns within sight and range of enemy riflemen. As the need for Gunners to carry personal weapons virtually disappeared, field artillerymen were not issued with bayonets after 1901.

As mentioned above, Garrison artillerymen kept their bayonets until 1914.

So much for the arming of Gunners in action. For parade and ceremonial work remember that up to the end of the Crimean War they were organised into Battalions and Companies as were the Infantry, and drilled accordingly. The Manual of Artillery Exercises 1860 refers instructors to the current Infantry Platoon Manual for drill, but details certain movements not included in the latter, e.g. artillery carbine drill, including the fixing and unfixing of bayonets for guard duties and other ceremonial purposes. Another interesting drill is 'Prepare to Receive Cavalry' with carbine and fixed bayonet. At our next reunion I shall demonstrate with contemporary weapons.

Up to the present the story has been confined to conditions in the Royal Artillery, but New Zealand has always followed Britain in training and equipping her Gunners - parsimonious administrations permitting. Photographs of Volunteer Artillery units taken in the 1860s (when they were first formed) until the end of the century depict Officers and NCOs armed with swords, Gunners with carbines and bayonets, and all being so armed while at gun drill. In 1875 a shipment of 600 sword bayonets intended for the Armed Constabulary were handed over to the Volunteer Artillery because the A.C. complained they were too long for use in the bush. On the whole the New Zealand Artillery Volunteers of last century were very poorly equipped; if records or photographs indicate some batteries had no bayonets it is because the Government had failed to supply them.

The New Zealand Permanent Artillery (which became Royal N.Z. Artillery in 1902), were in the main employed on coast defence so were armed with the same types of weapons as the Royal Garrison Artillery - but of earlier vintage.

Between the two World Wars Gunners did not carry bayonets except where necessary for special tasks. For example, RNZA called out in support of the Civil Power during the 1913 maritime strike were armed with rifles and bayonets; so were the RNZA sent to Fiji to deal with the troubles there after World War 1. Why the RNZA Guard of Honour at the opening of Parliament in 1937 paraded with rifles and fixed bayonets but the same guard in 1938 paraded with rifles only, I'll let someone else explain!

During World War 2 jungle warfare brought with it the likelihood of gun positions being infiltrated by the enemy so once again the need arose for Gunners to be armed with suitable personal weapons. Thus the

bayonet 'came back into fashion', and has been used with effect by Gunners in action as recently as Vietnam. On parade in New Zealand now Gunners carry bayonets but do not fix them because they do not consider them a 'traditional weapon' of Artillerymen.

No mention has been made in the foregoing of Horse Artillery because none has ever appeared on a New Zealand establishment. The Royal Horse Artillery when formed in 1793 was intended solely for the support of Cavalry, so was armed with the same weapons. The sword was the sidearm for all ranks, including Drivers; no RHA man has ever carried a bayonet.

REUNION REMINDER: The 1987 Reunion will be held at Taupo over the week-end Fri-Sat-Sun 13-14-15 Nov 87. Details of arrangements, which will be very similar to those of last year, plus registration forms will be issued with the September newsletter. However, we will accept early Spa Hotel bookings at any time from now.

The dinner will cost \$13, i.e. \$1 more than last year.

Tariff for Spa Hotel rooms will be \$31 a head bed and breakfast and for their new motel units \$35 a head B & B. Both include GST.

On 9 June Allan Boyd, Jim Gilberd and I inspected the motel units of which there are four blocks each of three units each of which will sleep four comfortably, i.e. they provide a total accommodation for 48 persons. Each contains a double bed on the ground floor and two single beds on a mezzanine floor, and includes the usual cooking facilities, TV set, telephone, shower/toilet, and a mini-spa pool under cover, i.e. part of the unit. We were most impressed, and thought the tariff very reasonable.

Please make bookings for Spa accommodation through Secretary at the address shown on this newsletter. Forward money for dinner only; pay Spa for accommodation at end of stay.

All six Army Motel units at Acacia Bay have been pencilled in for us, but you will have to book these through your local Army Office, or alternately you may obtain application forms from Secretary and post to Waiouru.

If you are getting on in years and view the prospects of a long, tiring drive to Taupo with some trepidation, feel free to bring a co-driver or partner who will be welcome to take part in all reunion activities except the Annual General Meeting on the Saturday morning. We especially extend this invitation to our widows.

UNOFFICIAL HISTORY

FORT DORSET'S MAIN ARMAMENT

By W.L. Ruffell

Shortly after joining the Old Comrades Association in 1946 I took on the job of assisting 'Okey' Thomson, our Secretary, by collecting subscriptions from serving members stationed at Fort Dorset.

No 775 Alex Thomson joined the N.Z. Permanent Force in 1897 and retired as a warrant Officer Class 1 in 1931 aged 55. He became Secretary Treasurer of the Wellington Branch of the Association formed in 1936, then of the national body in which capacity he served until just before his death in 1950. Okey possessed a wealth of knowledge of the Regiment and a fund of anecdotes with which he often regaled me when I delivered my 'takings' to him at his home in Rongotai. One concerned the installation of the two BL 6-in Mk 7 guns

which formed the main armament at Fort Dorset for almost half a century.

In 1900 a Joint Defence Committee recommended the harbour defences at the four main ports be upgraded by the addition of guns which could fire more quickly than the RML and BL disappearing equipments then installed. As it took a trained detachment 1½ minutes to get a shot away from any one of the latter the committee's decision was not before time. To cut a long story short, after some years 'consideration' the Government could find only enough money to upgrade Auckland and Wellington, two guns for each of which arrived in the country in 1905. But somewhere along the line had occurred a SNAFU for neither pair was accompanied by its mountings!

It seemed someone had 'gone off half-cocked' and ordered the guns before all the 'consideration' had ended - for reports to Parliament in 1906 showed the proposed scheme still 'under consideration', and in 1907 still awaiting estimates for the work to be done. However, as every soldier knows, if you leave a SNAFU long enough it will develop into a SABU. By 1908 a start had actually been made on excavating the emplacements, and in 1910 the mountings arrived.

The necessary holes having been dug, the large amounts of concrete poured and allowed to settle, the mountings were finally set in place ready to receive the guns. As each piece weighed 16,375 pounds (7.67 tonnes), to drag them up the steep rough track to the gun position posed a problem. No doubt greatly restricted in what he could spend, the C.C. decided to use the horses and equipment of the Field Artillery Detachment (re-named 'Cadre' in 1926) for the purpose. Both proved far too light for the job, and after ruining harness valued at £100 (worth about \$6,000 to-day), he was obliged to hire a local carrier with his team of Clydesdales to complete it. This they did quite easily. How he explained away the harness 'write-off' is not recorded!

Old 'coasties' will remember the BL 6-in Mk 7 with nostalgia. First introduced in 1895 it was an excellent piece which served the British Commonwealth in both Army and Navy roles for some sixty years. Mounted either as ships' or fortress armament it performed very well for its class. What is perhaps not generally known is that mounted on mobile carriages towed by traction engines a number manned by Royal Garrison Artillery Gunners performed equally well in France during World War 1. The gun remained current equipment until the abolition of coast artillery by Britain in 1956 and by New Zealand three years later. It seems a pity such a record should have ended ignominiously on the scrap heap without the preservation of even one example.

THE 25-POUNDER: Did you know that the calibre of the famous field gun was decided by an exercise in penny-pinching?

After World War 1 the standard British field gun was the 3.3-in (83.8-mm) 18-pounder Mk 4 with a range of 11,000m (never seen in NZ). In the early 1930s, seeing the need for a gun/howitzer firing a heavier shell, the RA requested a piece of about 3.7-in (94-mm) with a range of at least 14,000 metres. But the British Government said, "No, we can't afford it; if you want to fire heavier shell you will have to bore out the guns you already have."

Now the most the 3.3-in guns could be bored out and still retain an acceptable safety factor was to 3.45-ins (87.6mm). So 3.45-in the 'new' gun became, and the shell weight 25 lbs (11.34 kg).

Best regards

Wally Ruffell Hon. Sec.