



Incorporated

NEW ZEALAND PERMANENT FORCE OLD COMRADES ASSOCIATION INC

PO Box 33-710, TAKAPUNA, AUCKLAND 9

NEWSLETTER No 70

June 1991

A Registered Publication

LAST POST:

- 345303 T. (Tawhiwhi) Brown, late 1990, at Auckland. \*
- 32238 G. (George) Robinson, 9 Mar 91, at Auckland.
- 35226 A.R. (Alec) Johnson, 10 Apr 91, at Auckland.
- 1856 W.N. (Bill) Sewell, 14 Apr 91, at Auckland.
- 1613 B.P. (Bernie) Banks, 5 Jun 91, at Wellington.

CHANGES OF ADDRESS:

- Major G.M. Connor to 14 Luke Place, Rotorua.
- C.J. McIsaac to 57 Beachlands Rd, Beachlands.
- S.E. Morrison to Omaui Rd, Greenhills, No 11 RD, Invercargill.
- C.A.S. Smith to War Veterans Home, Private Bag, Levin.
- J.J. Sprangers to 22 Price Crescent, Te Awamutu.
- Lt Col A.R. Vail to 1175 Cameron Rd, Tauranga.
- Major R.S. Wait to 20F Field Tce, Upper Riccarton, Christchurch 4.
- Major M.T. Withers to c/o Officers Mess, Papakura Military Camp.

AMENDMENTS TO NEWSLETTER No 69:

- Page 3: Farriers: After "belonging" in last line insert "to."
- Page 5 Para 6 line 1: Before "Gunners" insert "18-pr."
- Page 7 at bottom of page: For "Feld Kan" substitute "Feld Kanone."

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING:

The next meeting will be held on Saturday 10 August 1991 in the main lounge, Birkenhead RSA, commencing 1000 hrs. Non-committee members are welcome to attend

ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP FOR WIDOWS OF MEMBERS:

At the last committee meeting held on 15 Jun 91 it was resolved to invite those widows who were interested to become Associate Members of the Association at half the normal subscription rate. Letters to this effect have been sent to those widows whose addresses are known.

REUNIONS:

3 NZ Div: 19-20 Oct 91 at Ellerslie Racecourse, Auckland. Contact Trevor Whaley, 300 Sunset Rd, Mairangi Bay, Auckland 10. Last day for registration: 20 July 91.

NEW MEMBER:

49101 A.D. (Doug.) Adams, 71 Hector St, Seatoun, Wellington 3 (Associate)

OLD PHOTOGRAPHS:

Jim Gilbert requires for copying any pre-war (1930-40) photos of RNZA stables (particularly Auckland, Christchurch and Dunedin), horse-lines, and other relevant material of the horse-drawn era. Photos will be returned after copying. His address is: J.G. Gilbert, 54 Tom Parker Ave NAPIER.

\* Can someone please supply the actual date of death so our 'In Memoriam' book can be completed?



ARTILLERY JERSEYS: Secretary has a small stock in sizes M, L, and XL. Price \$55 plus post and packing \$2-50.

MORE NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBERS:

Mrs W.L. (Win) Black, 4A Claude Rd, Epsom, Auckland 3.  
Mrs M.R. (Mollie) Crichton, 53 Edinburgh Terrace, Foxton Beach.  
Mrs J.M.S. (Jackie) Harvey, 15/10 Gerard Way, Meadowbank, Auckland 5.  
Mrs C.S. (Cora) Woods, 15 Monro St, Seatoun, Wellington 3.

UNIFORMS OF THE ROYAL ARTILLERY 1716-1966:

I refer to Newsletter No 66: The donor was Major J. McL. (Jim) Ross, and I had the pleasure of thanking him personally at our last Gunners Day social on 22 May. The book has already been put to good use.

ARTICLES FOR NEWSLETTERS:

Any contributions of Gunner interest are welcome. These cold winter nights are ideal for putting pencil to paper. Tear your eyes away from the square-eyed monster and jog your memories.

VISIT TO 16 Field Regiment at WAIOURU:

The Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Paul Southwell RNZA, very kindly invited a small party from the Association to visit the Regiment in camp at Waiouru on Sunday 19 May 91.

There we were treated to a very interesting 'Cooks' tour during which we were given the opportunity of inspecting guns, fire control, survey and meteorological equipment, as well as the EME (LAD) set-up, all of which were explained to us by the Officers concerned in a very capable manner. We were particularly impressed by the command post computer equipment which performs the same function as the British FACE (field artillery computer equipment), but is lighter, more compact - and is New Zealand-made!

Finally, we had 'box' seats for a demonstration of fire-power by all three 'teeth' arms, artillery, armour, and infantry, employing the latest in ordnance and weaponry, a most impressive performance.

Indeed we received VIP treatment, having a near-new mini-bus with a first-class driver all to ourselves. Our driver had to be first-class because in the course of conversation one of our number mentioned our late member Dave Crichton, whereupon he announced he was Dave's grandson!

The visitors, Jack Baigent, Jim Gilberd, Bill Giles, Alf Smith, and Wally Ruffell would like to take this opportunity of thanking Colonel Southwell for his kind consideration.

St BARBARAS DAY SOCIAL:

For the Aucklanders (and any other member who may be in the area), this will be held in the Birkenhead RSA main lounge on Wednesday 18 December 91. Further details in the September newsletter. Mark the date on your calendar/diary NOW.

GUNNERS DAY SOCIAL 22 MAY 91:

All who attended enjoyed themselves. The following were present: Harry ANDERSON, Eric and Patti AUTRIDGE, Bill and Val BAKER, Eric and Joyce BICKERTON, Guy BLACKWELL, Win BLACK, Allan and Elsie BOYD, Slim and Mollie CUMMING, Laurie CLARK, Ron CROSS, Bevan CULHANE, Dan FOLEY, Nev FISHER, Cyril HAYDEN, Dutch HOLLAND, Roy JAKES, Jock McMEIKEN, Mike McMAHON, Vic and Audrey MEYLE, Dick MITCHELL, Harold NICHOLSON, Bill POWRIE, Les and Diana PYE, Ian and Iris ROWNTREE, Wally RUFFELL, Alf SMITH, Henry and Thelma SALT, Arthur and Kitty SIMEON, Sham and Joyce SHAW, Vic SVENDSEN, Terry and Joan TRANSOM, Tan and Joyce VINE, Gordon and Nora WEAVER, Graham WILLIAMS, Margaret STITT, Les and Joyce WILSON, Yogi YOUNG, and last but not far from least Jack (Scotty) FRAME.



Winners of the raffles were as follows: Model gun: Alf Smith; vase: Bevan Culhane; meat: Joan Transom; meat Audrey Meyle. Alf has kindly donated the gun back to the Association for raffling at the November reunion.

If I have omitted anyone from the list of those attending, please let me know. Sec.

#### NEWS FROM AROUND AND ABOUT:

Brian Frances retired from the Army on 7 June after 20½ years' service, and is now working for the Police as a civilian computer instructor. His address is: B.S. Frances, 4 Utah Pl, Westhaven, Christchurch

Sandy Bissett writes that he is on his second pace-maker, has had two strokes, and his good lady Joan has Parkinsons disease, but apart from that they are 'as fit as trouts.'

Captain Tom Ellen RA, a member of this Association, writes that while attending a Gunnery Staff Course at Larkhill he was detached to the Gulf War from January to March 1991 as an FOO in a 'Warrior' with the First Battalion the Queen's Own Highlanders. 'Interesting times,' he says!

Kerry Lee completed his BA in International Politics at Victoria University in 1990. While there he made the VUW and NZU small-bore rifle teams. At the tournament he says he was 'the oldest competitor by a long chalk.'

On Gunners Day he and a group of Gunners carried out a tour of the restorations at the Wrights Hill battery position and had lunch there

Pete Dixon writes that he is fit and well and enjoying his retirement. He has not missed an Anzac Day dawn parade since the end of the war, and is justifiably proud of his record. Can anyone equal it?

Russell de la Cour has recently returned from a two-month sojourn in the United Kingdom.

Although Frank Rennie still maintains his Auckland address he spends most of his time in the Bay of Islands where he has also established himself, and as he says, has the 'best of both worlds.'

Anzac Day at Birkenhead saw six members only of the Old Comrades Association turn out on parade - and there was free beer at the end of it. We must be getting old! In support was the band of the Royal N.Z. Artillery which put on a good show.

Bill Weatherhead from Christchurch writes that he is keeping well, and has resumed playing golf. He sees a lot of Brian O'Connor who plays at the same club.

Denis Dwane has re-enlisted and is now serving as Battery Captain, 161 Battery.

Des O'Connor, our Treasurer, who is President of the Auckland Operatic Society, is at present touring Europe with opera of course his main interest. He will be back late in August.

You have probably heard that the public bar at the Spa Hotel burned to the ground. Fortunately none of the historic buildings caught, nor any of the accommodation. The house bar is temporarily operating as the public bar in conjunction with the lounge (meeting-house), and the dining room. No meals were available in the latter late in May, but management hoped to have a bistro in action early in June.

Our thanks go to Jim Kirk of Tauranga for the excellent 40 x 25 cm photograph taken late in 1934 at Trentham of some 112 Regular Force recruits and 14 staff. The recruits are of 3, 4, and 5 Wings, and possibly 6 Wing.



## THE STORY OF THE TWENTY-FIVE POUNDER

Continued from Newsletter 69

By Wally Ruffell

As is customary, first to be considered was the projectile, the weapon of the Artillery. Both German 88-mm and our 25-pr (87.6-mm) HE shell had proved extremely effective. The latter upon detonation breaks up into about 500 splinters each one of which can kill or maim a man, plus a number of smaller fragments each capable of inflicting a nasty wound. It was considered rather more lethal than the 88, ideal for the purpose for which it was intended, i.e. the close support of Infantry. Consequently many experienced Gunners thought the 25-pr shell should be retained, but a more versatile gun designed to handle it, for, good as it was the 25-pr had its shortcomings.

However, the Americans as well as other NATO countries already possessed 105-mm (4.13-in) field artillery equipments. In support of their preference for the 105 the Americans claimed that one round gunfire from their six-gun battery would put the same weight of metal upon a target as one round from our eight-gun battery. From a simple arithmetic point of view their answer is near enough, but every Infantryman knows- or ought to know - that eight bursting shell will keep more enemy heads down than six, even if the former are a few pounds lighter. Moreover, the 25-pr shell is more lethal than the American 105-mm M1 shell still currently in use. Some say it is 1.5 times as lethal.

But to insist on retaining the 25-pr would have led to unacceptable supply problems in the event of a major conflict, so Britain was obliged to fall into line. The gun to replace the 25-pr would be a 105-mm.

History now repeated itself; when the RA Gunners requested a new 105-mm gun they received the same answer as they did in 1933: the War Department had no money for new equipment. In this case the Gunners had no guns suitable for conversion - so they would have to wait.

As an interim measure in 1960 (after a two-year trial period), the British Army adopted the Italian-made Model 56 105-mm pack howitzer firing the American 105-mm M1 shell. By adopting a foreign equipment Britain avoided research and development costs.

With a range of only 10,000 metres (10,936 yards), its performance fell far short of Royal Artillery requirements, nor was its carriage sufficiently robust for the field role. For example, stub axles proved so weak the equipment would not stand long-distance towing at high speed, but had to be carried on the back of a truck. In Vietnam elevating gear boxes cracked. Gunners saw the howitzer as a possible replacement for the 4.2-in mortar, but not for the 25-pr.

The New Zealand adopted the Italian howitzer in 1964.

In Britain development of a new 105-mm gun at last commenced in 1966. By 1975 most RA units had been issued with the 'light gun' as it was called, but New Zealand Gunners did not receive their first until late in 1987. It has a range of 17,000 metres (20,000 with 'base bleed' round), has been tried and proved in every climate from Pole to Equator, and performed faultlessly in the Falklands. It should be a worthy successor to the 25-pr.

More than one author writing on war or war equipment has described the 25-pr as a 'legendary' piece of ordnance. Not always has due credit been given to the men who created the 'legend,' i.e. the men who manned it in action.

Tragically many of the 'legends' surrounding the gun arose from



its use in a role for which it was neither specifically designed nor intended, i.e. the anti-tank role. The gun's anti-tank capability was intended purely for emergencies; it was never intended to be deliberately employed in the anti-tank role as it was on several occasions during the Middle East campaigns of World War 2. To make matters worse, while creating some of those legends the 25-pr was not providing the Infantry with the artillery support they were entitled to expect.

Let me hasten to add the fault lay not with the Gunners but with the authorities who had failed to provide anti-tank equipments either sufficient in number or effective in performance on the one hand, or whose conservatism neglected to make the best use of other ordnance available on the other. In the latter respect a valuable lesson taught by the enemy was ignored.

For defence against tanks the Germans frequently made use of their 'famous' (some say dreaded) '88' (8.8-cm FLAK), an equipment designed primarily for the anti-aircraft role but modified for use in both the field and anti-tank roles. It was indeed dreaded by men who had endured its shells - especially the air-burst variety!

But the British had a better gun than the 88; it was the QF 3.7-in anti-aircraft gun. This equipment could have been as easily modified as its German counterpart (a few were later modified for the field role), but the British would not divert any 3.7s from the AA defence of vital points or areas, e.g. North African ports, despite the fact that they had twice as many 3.7s as the Germans had 88s. The Germans had exactly the same problems as the British, but dealt with them more realistically - to the everlasting sorrow of the 'tankies.'

War histories, unit diaries, and other accounts of the Middle East campaigns make frequent mention of the number of tanks lost by one side or the other in this or that battle, but rarely do they include the number of guns lost in action. It is not generally known that over 600 25-pr guns were destroyed or overrun and captured in these campaigns, many as a direct result of their being employed in the anti-tank role. For the German tanks soon learned to back off when confronted by 25-prs, call up their own artillery to deal with them, whittle the detachments down with long-range machine-gun fire, then move in and overrun the gun positions.

This concludes the story of the 25-pr as far as we in New Zealand are concerned, but not elsewhere. As recently as 1980 some 26 other countries were still employing the 25-pr, and many probably still are.

The last major campaign in which the gun fought was the Indo-Pakistan war of 1971.

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#### MORE NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBERS:

Mrs I.H. (Ivy) Henry, 19 Talbot St, Wanganui.

Mrs J.B. (Jean) Lovell, 680 Remuera Rd, Remuera, Auckland 5.

Mrs J. (Joan) Sherson, 153 Cobham Drive, Hamilton,

Mrs E.R. (Enid) Standen, 5A Clifton Ave, Carterton.

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## GUNNERS AND HORSES

By Jim Gilberd.

"Somewhere - somewhere in time's own place

There must be some wonder place

Where rivers run and tall trees grow

Some Paradise where horses go

For by the love that guides my pen

I know good horses live again."

Quote Shirley Harrison, "Gentlemen - The Horse."

### Introduction:

Following the publication of "Boot and Saddle" I was prevailed upon to tell more of the men, horses, and places, that were part of our Army of long ago. So "Gunners and Horses" (and mules too) is all about horse-drawn artillery.

The story begins with its origins, then as the tale unfolds we learn of the drivers - who were they, and of the draught horses, then the 'dreaded' riding school, where soldiers were taught to ride and drive. Then we see the evolution of military harness and its development over the years.

As an Appendix we have extracts of Driver Arthur Stratton's experiences, and his service with the Ammunition Column during the Great War. On we travel to accounts of Artillery Camps and of course the exciting Musical Drive, which gives the reader an idea of the training, skill and daring of the Artillery Driver.

A full set of illustrations completes this account of the Horse Gunners wherever they may be.

### Horse-drawn Artillery - Its Origins:

The first recorded instance of the mobility of horse-drawn artillery was during the Battle of Blenheim in 1704. At this time the Army hired civilian drivers (called 'Waggoners') and their horses from farmers and coaching companies to move their guns and supplies. Civilian drivers not being subject to Army discipline, often 'fled' the battlefield. Also the horses were untrained for the tasks required of them.

The Army was anxious to develop its own mobile artillery. Many tests were carried out, one being on the light 3-pr Galloper gun in 1705. The 3-pr was pulled by one horse and led by a mounted gunner. The shafts were used as a trail before the advent of the gun limber. Before the use of horses the 3-prs were drawn into action by soldiers using drag-ropes.

Then in 1800 a troop of 6-prs was raised and for the first time we see the gun limber in use, a six-horse team with three drivers providing mobility. This arrangement turned out to be a highly mobile fighting unit capable of keeping up with the Cavalry. Its establishment was 45 drivers and 186 horses. So horse-drawn guns became an integral branch of the RA and continued as such for 140 years.

### ARTILLERY DRIVERS:

The first four troops of RHA drivers was formed in 1793, one year before the formation of the 'Corps of Drivers.'

By Royal Warrant dated 10 September 1794 the "Corps of Captain



Commissionaires and Drivers" attached to the Park of Artillery was raised. Then on 3 January 1806 the name of the Driver Corps was changed for the last time, to be known as the "Corps of Royal Artillery Drivers." Drivers were to be enlisted into the Royal Artillery establishment. Driver as a rank continued in the RA and RHA until 1925, when it was changed to Gunner. In New Zealand the rank of Driver was changed in 1926 (General Order 1 May 1926 refers).

In a HD battery there were three drivers in each team, depending on their position in the team. They were termed lead, centre and wheel drivers. The lead driver was the senior, usually a Bdr or L Bdr. He is responsible for pace, direction and distance, and is also required to read the Battery Leader's signals. The Centre driver must keep his traces tight and maintain an even line of draught. The wheel driver and his wheelers (horses) are the hardest worked in the team. They pull like the others but are the only ones who 'breech' to stop the gun and carriage. The wheelers have extra harness fittings to assist them 'breeching' plus a pole bar. Even and steady draught is important, weights behind teams are calculated on the assumption that every horse does his fair share of work, but this is impossible unless the driving is of a high order. When draught is even and steady every trace is tight and the horses' heads are to the front.

Besides their driving duties, horses and harness have to be cared for and maintained. On active service the tasks of bringing the guns into and out of action was arduous work, particularly in mud, lack of roads and during darkness. All drivers ride what is called the 'near' horse (left one of the pair), and control the 'off' horse with a single bearing rein. Drivers wear a leg-iron to prevent the right leg being injured by horse or pole.

Driver Stratton of the Divisional Ammunition Column (DAC) during the Great War, recalls how he became a driver. It was in France in 1916:

"Next morning I met the Sergeant-Major who said "Hey you," which was me, "see that bundle of harness in the mud behind those two horses" I did. "Well they are yours." I was now a Driver in the DAC - at least in theory. I was glad I did not have to handle mules until I had acquired some experience with the quieter horse."

Arthur Stratton concluded his memoirs by saying that he was proud to have been one of those artillery drivers who stuck it out in those appalling conditions.

In between the Wars (1918-39) soldiers continued to be trained as drivers. The RNZA had some notable characters, good drivers, loved their horses and took a pride in their turnout. Some names from the past come to mind, firstly Andy Christenson, who went away with the Main Body and was a driver throughout the Great War, others were Tommy Mahony, George Salt, Phil George, Alex Tierney, Tommy Arthur Mick Heaphy, Glen Ensor, 'Ginger' Bambridge, Colin Boyd, Fred Briscoe, George Martin, Fred Eastgate, and the writer. There were many others, particularly in the Territorials - their names have now eluded me.

#### ARTILLERY HORSES:

The type of horses used varied over the years and it was not until after the Boer War in South Africa, that the RNZA (Regulars) were to get at long last some horses of their own. Before this horses and harness were hired from farmers and livery stables. History records that the Gunners received a pretty 'raw' deal as regards the type of horses and harness supplied. Extra horses (but not harness) continued to be hired for Territorial Camps. Then in 1912 Government bought a number of draught horses who joined the RNZA stables. These extra



horses brought the number of Government-owned horses to 325. The type of horse purchased was a quarter-draught weighing in at 1100/1200 lbs, and aged between 4/6 years; size and height were important. Lead horses to be 16 hands, the centres 15.3 H/H and the wheelers (smallest and strongest) at 15.2 H/H. Colours most favoured were light and dark bays, browns and blacks. Grey horses were also seen as complete teams on some stations. Horse-drawn medium artillery (60-pr and 6-in howitzers) needed heavier and stronger animals. They were half-draughts and there were eight horses in a team, namely lead, centre lead, centre and wheelers.



Six-horse team with gun, limber, and detachment.  
'A' Battery BL 15-pr 1902.

On receiving their own horses the RNZA were quick to put these into training. Stage one of their training was the fitting of harness and getting them used to the 'feel' of it. Next traces were extended and weight applied, then they were 'teamed up' in pairs to make a six-horse team, and finally they were 'hooked in' to a limber. They were then practiced moving at all paces. Finally the gun was attached and they then had a two-ton load behind them.

The RNZA stables in the Central Command (Napier, Palmerston North and Wellington) had some notable gun teams which I became familiar with, firstly as a Territorial driver with 6th Battery, Napier, and later as a driver in the RNZA.

These teams were:

Dark Bays	Lipsol	-	White Sox	Leaders
	Tommy	-	Tim	Centres
	Punch	-	Judy	Wheelers
Light Bays	Mary	-	Tiny	Leaders
	Laddie	-	Topsy	Centres
	Maxim	-	Cordite	Wheelers
	Prince	-	Caesar	Leaders
	Brother	-	Sister	Centres
	Nugget	-	Trooper	Wheelers
Greys	Rajah	-	Daphne	Leaders
	Canteen	-	Slug	Centres
	Susie	-	Sal	Wheelers

To be continued.