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**NEW ZEALAND PERMANENT FORCE
OLD COMRADES' ASSOCIATION (INC)**

P.O. BOX 79-371, ROYAL HEIGHTS, AUCKLAND 1230

NEWSLETTER No. 97

MARCH 1998

ROUTINE ORDERS

SUBSCRIPTIONS:

for 1998 are now due. Honorary, Life and Members Over 80 pay no subs. Lady Associates pay \$2.50, all others \$5. By Rule 4F any member over three years in arrears may be struck off unless there are extenuating circumstances, in which case inform the Secretary or District Rep.

To be financial to 31 December 98 you owe us \$..... If no amount is shown you are financial.

NOTE THE NEW POSTAL ADDRESS

LAST POST:

1565 A.H. (Sandy) Bissett

12 Nov 97, at Balclutha (Life Member)

36129 J.E. Dunn

5 Mar 98, at Brisbane (Life Member)

Amendment to Newsletter 96:

1859 G.J. (Gordon) Thomas

3 Oct 97, not Sep 97

CHANGES OF ADDRESS:

H.G.C. Salt MBE to

90 Davey Rd, Gatton, Queensland, Australia.

Capt. M.F. Dakin to

10 Buckingham Place, Bethlehem, Tauranga.

T.P. Shirley to

20 Heretaunga Cres. Mangonui, Northland.

Mrs C.R. Hall to

4/146 Kolmar Rd., Papatoetoe, Auckland 1701.

A.J. Pawlowski to

345 Wigram Rd., Christchurch.

R.J. McRae to

32A John Rhymer Pl., Kohimarama, Auckland.

R.J. Gunn to

66A Paraonui Rd., Tokoroa.

Capt. S.L. Bassett

Lt Col J.L. Castell

WO1 K.C. Solomon

Lt Col G.R. Williams

Maj. F.F. Whiting to

Lt. L.A. Forrester to

Maj. M.R. Nowill

Maj. D.S.J. Dwane

Maj. J. Wasson

Lt Col. M.J.R. Pearce

R.A. Harris to

All to: Army General Staff
HQ NZ Defence Force
Private Bag, Wellington

3/12 Eban Ave, Northcote, Auckland 9

13 Sunbrae Drive, Silverstream, Wellington.

All to: Land Command
P.O. Box 900
Upper Hutt

Unit 17, Glebe Rd., RSL Village YASS, NSW 2583, Australia

LIFE MEMBERS:

1240 W. (Bill) McKenzie	w.e.f. 19 Mar 1997
Maj. F.F. (Frank) Whiting	w.e.f. 13 Sep 1995

NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING:

This will be held on 4 April 98 at 1000hrs at the Birkenhead RSA. Any member who is interested may attend. The following one will be at the same time and place on 13 Jun 98.

AMENDMENT TO CONSTITUTION AND RULES:

On page 1, sub para 2(c)
Delete "33710, Takapuna, Auckland 9". Insert "79-371 Royal Heights, Auckland 1230".

EDITORIAL

'TWO REMARKABLE GENTLEMEN'

This phrase was used by our Patron, Maj. Gen. Hassett, at the Reunion Dinner at the Taupo Yacht Club on 1 Nov 97. He referred to the retirement of Wally Ruffell and Des O'Connor from the offices of Secretary and Treasurer respectively of this Association, after they had served in those capacities and that of President for approximately a quarter of a century. Assisted by a small hard core, which was grievously depleted last year, these two have kept the organisation going and in good heart. We are all greatly indebted to Wally and Des for their years of dedicated service. The new guard have the consolation that those two gentlemen are continuing as members of the Executive Committee. The new Secretary is Jim Ross, and Barney Harrop the Treasurer.

REGIMENTAL MATTERS

At a ceremonial parade at Linton Camp, Lt Col Matt Beattie handed over command of 16 Fd Regt RNZA to Lt Col Rob Hitchings. As the new CO is the son of Brig Geoff Hitchings, Colonel Commandant RNZA, this presented a situation probably unique in the annals of the Royal Regiments anywhere in the Commonwealth.

We had pleasure in sending congratulations and best wishes of the Old Comrades to Lt Col Hitchings on his appointment and hope for a long and fruitful period of co-operation with the Regiment. Brig Hitchings and his wife Barbara are well known to members, having attended two Reunion Dinners in recent years.

A full account of the handover parade can be read in the Army News of 16 Dec 97, available in most RSA's. Alert readers of that publication will have noticed that the Regiment now has its HQ at Linton Camp. Lt Col Hitchings writes that only RHQ, the Air Defence Troop, and 161 Battery are now in Linton, but the rest of the Headquarters Battery and 163 Battery are planned to move there from Waiouru over the next two years.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Your views on Gunner topics in general and Association matters in particular, are welcome for this department.

NEWS FROM & ABOUT MEMBERS

Jim Gilberd: reports from Napier that his Hawkes Bay / Taupo detachment of four are all well "apart from the usual problems associated with age". He has spoken to Bill Dillon in Christchurch, had a visit from Clyde Stewart and a letter from Blackie Burns, who had been visiting Italy where he had been on the 'loose' during the War. Bill Beveridge, who fell ill at Taupo last year, must have made a good recovery, as he was in Australia at the time of writing. Jim is also to visit Oz in March and is to have a look around the Academy at Duntroon. We wonder if it is much different from the 'Clink' of the good old days? As they now have female cadets, it can be no longer termed 'Military Monastery' as some journalist once called it.

The Reverend Bill McLeay: writes that his collar bone seems to be mending, but Tui, with broken ribs and an injured foot, is making slow progress. Members who were at Taupo last year will remember that Bill and Tui were badly injured in a motor accident and could not attend the dinner but Bill did not allow that to deter him from conducting an impressive Church Parade service on the following Sunday.

Capt Mike Dakin: (See Changes of Address) says "Welcome to any passer by" - Thanks for the kind remarks, Mike.

Henry & Thelma Salt: sent the new Secretary a devilishly appropriate Christmas card - Santa Claus behind a pile of paper, scratching head, headache medicine on desk, by light of guttering candle.

Any members passing from Brisbane to Toowoomba would pass through their new location at Gatton (see Changes of Address) and would always be made welcome. They are close to son Robert and his wife with "grandchildren and great-grandchildren scattered round the area". Don't let the old man get addicted to the pineapples, Thelma.

Jock Gunn: sends a plug for his new location, Tokoroa (see Changes of Address). In Perth recently, he phoned Bob and Dot Anderson, who are well and wish to be remembered to all Old Comrades.

Capt Shay Bassett: now with the Army General Staff at Defence Force HQ, writes with details of no less than TEN other Gunner members of the General Staff. Roll on once more the days when the "Artillery Tail wags the Infantry Dog", as F.M. Wavell complained! (only joking)

Spencer Morrison: our Southland Rep., is pictured in the February RSA Review at the hand wheels of a 40mm AA gun, presented by the Navy to the Bluff RSA of which he is President. As a dedicated field gunner, Spencer no doubt appreciated the greater comfort afforded by Bofors layer's seat.

SOCIAL EVENTS AND REUNIONS

ST BARBARA'S DAY

Was celebrated at Birkenhead RSA on 13 Dec 97 at an 1100hrs gathering attended by: Eric and Patty Autridge, Iris Boyter, Bert Dyson, Joe and Grace Hanvey, Des and Bunty O'Connor, Bill and Joyce Powrie, Jim and Ruby (*not* Hilda) Ross, Wally Ruffell, Joan Transom, Jeff Waters, and Les and Joan Wilson.

When the raffle was drawn, Lady Luck gave way to the blind goddess, Justice - a well-earned bottle of whisky was won by Wally Ruffell.

GUNNERS DAY 1998

Celebration of the 282nd anniversary of the formation of the Royal Regiment of Artillery will be twofold. The usual 1100hrs meeting for lunch at Birkenhead RSA will be held on 21 May. If you intend coming, tell Jim Ross on 416 8662. There will also be a

LADIES FORMAL DINING-IN DINNER

organised by a committee chaired by our South Auckland Rep., Jeff Waters. Its purpose is to renew old acquaintances and foster camaraderie amongst gunners and those who served the guns.

Venue: Papakura RSA

Date: Tuesday 26 May 1998

Time: 1800 for 1900hrs

Cost: \$37 per head (same as last year)

Dress: Formal with medals (Minimum Jacket and Tie)

Comprises: Pre-dinner sherry, dinner, table wine & port, RNZA Band, after dinner dancing. Attendance is limited to the first 200 applicants. The previous two functions of this kind have been resoundingly successful and fully subscribed. Enquiries to Jeff Waters, 14A Dittmer Place, Papakura. Phone 296 2457.

A reply slip is provided with this Newsletter (look for Jeff's distinctive calligraphy) after "The Gun".

ANNUAL AGM AND REUNION

This rendezvous will be held on the weekend 13-14-15 November 98 at Taupo. Details later, but mark calendars NOW.

VIETNAM VETERANS PARADE '98

There will be four days of events in Wellington on Queen's Birthday Weekend, 29th May to 1st June, centred on the parade on Saturday morning.

Jeff Waters: notifies two major points of interest:

- (a) The Gunners' Watering Hole will be the Plaza International.
- (b) He is laying on trains from Auckland to Wellington on Friday morning 29 May, and returning to Auckland on the evening of Monday 1st June.
Those interested should phone him on 296 2457.

THE GUN

Continued from Newsletter 96

By Wally Ruffell

In the original 12-pr 8-cwt gun, later known as the 'old pattern' (OP) the length of the piece was 84 inches (2.14m), but as the Navy wanted a shorter gun a 'new pattern' was introduced by cutting 12.125 inches (30.8 cm) off the muzzle ends of OP guns, thus eliminating the 'grip.' As might be expected this modification markedly reduced the efficiency of the 12-pr.

Breech closure was effected by a vertical sliding block of rectangular section called a 'vent piece' as shown in Fig. 84. Obturation was achieved by a conical copper-ringed plug on the face of the vent piece being forced into a copper bush at the mouth of the chamber shaped to receive it, rather like a cork into a bottle. Plug and ring were held tightly together by a hollow breech screw through which the gun was loaded. Both the rear end of the breech screw and its handle were fitted with tappets to assist in tightening the assembly. See Fig. 84A.

To load, the vent piece was lifted clear. The projectile was then rammed through the breech screw until stopped by the shot seating, followed by the cartridge. The vent piece was then replaced and the breech screw tightened, after which a friction tube (Fig. 77) was inserted in the vent. Lastly, a lanyard was hooked to the ring on the tube.

SIGHTS: Until the 20th century sights on British field guns were attached directly to the piece. On Armstrong guns simple battle sights were provided on breech and trunnion ring, while for normal laying on the 12-pr a tangent sight was fitted to a removable carrier clamped to the rear of the breech piece. See Fig. 85. The socket was inclined $2^{\circ}16'$ to the left to provide a mean correction for drift. Although the sight was graduated to 3400 yards (3109m) only, the gun was capable of much more. However, the pole-type trail limited elevation to about 12° thus limiting the range. Nevertheless, the equipment more than satisfied the tacticians of the day whose thinking had advanced little since Waterloo. The only range table now available ends at $8^{\circ}20'$ with a range of 3000 (2743m).

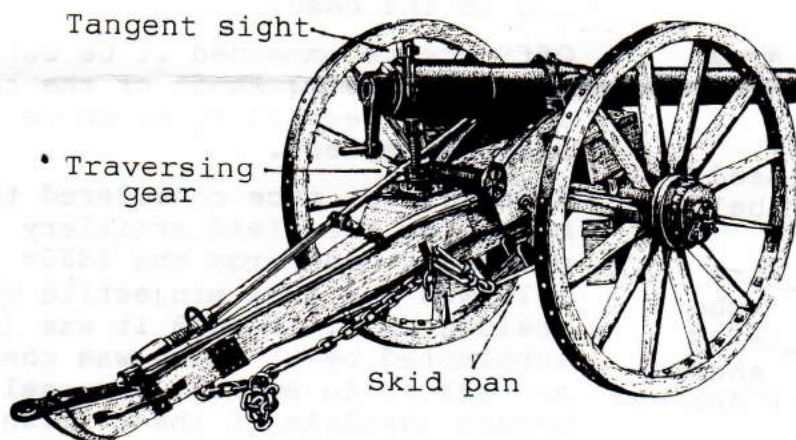


Fig. 85: Armstrong RBL12-pr 8-cwt on carriage SBML 9-pr 13.5 cwt.

NB: 'CWT' is an abbreviation for 'hundredweight' i.e. 112 pounds, or 51 kg approximately.

The 'skid pan' was placed under one wheel when negotiating a steep incline, not to check recoil, as some believe.

CARRIAGE: Armstrong's prototype 12-pr field carriage incorporated a central pivot type saddle with screw and nut traversing gear similar to those on more modern field guns but was rejected as too heavy and too expensive.

It was also fitted with a simple recoil mechanism in which the gun

recoiled up a sloping ramp and ran ^{out} under gravity, but this was turned down for the same reasons.

To save money the authorities ordered old wooden SBML 9-pr carriages to be used for the Armstrong 12-prs, a step which proved to be false economy because the greater power of the new gun broke many trails near the elevating gear bed-plate. Replacement was both expensive and time-consuming. See Fig. 85.

The 12-pr was the first British field gun to be fitted with a traversing gear. Unfortunately, adapting it to the old 9-pr carriages made it rather complicated - and expensive - and limited top traverse to only $1\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ right and left. Still, it proved a boon to the old-time layers

AMMUNITION: Until 1860 projectiles were of one type only, i.e. segment, intended to act as shot, common shell, or shrapnel, but separate types were introduced later. They were first galvanised, i.e. coated with zinc, then sheathed with lead up to the ogive. The lead effectively performed the same function as the modern driving band, i.e. forced the projectile to rotate with the rifling, and prevented the loss of propellant gas to the front.

SEGMENT SHELL: This consisted of a thin cast iron case shaped to leave a central hole for the bursting charge. Segments of cast iron weakened internally by grooves to assist fragmentation were inserted from the rear of the shell which was closed by a cast iron disc. During the application of the lead sheathing the molten lead was permitted to flow between the segments thus binding them together, while at the same time securing the base disc to the body of the shell. Thus the shell was made strong against external pressure but opened readily when the bursting charge was exploded. Mainly used as an anti-personnel weapon, it was fuzed with either a time or 'concussion' (later termed 'percussion') fuze. Segment was superseded by common shell and shrapnel.

SHRAPNEL: Fig. 86 shows Armstrong's shrapnel; it closely resembled the shrapnel of later guns.

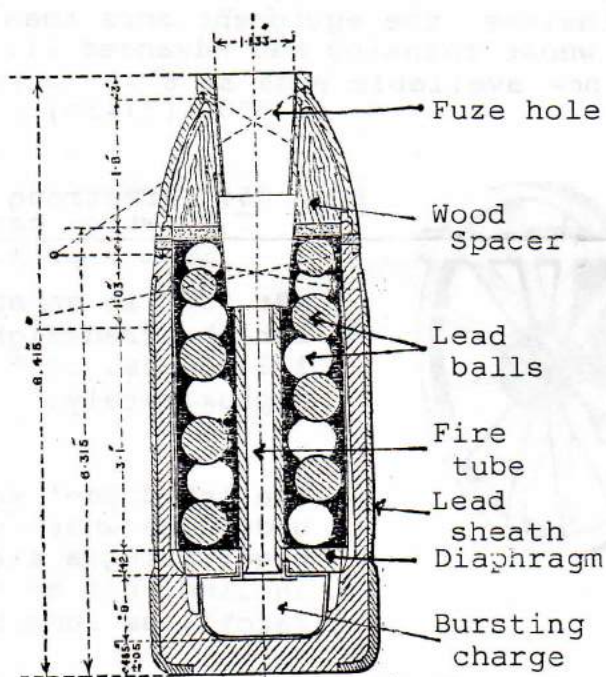


Fig. 86: Armstrong Shrapnel.

The shell consisted of a thin iron casing filled with lead balls set in rosin with space for a central fire tube running from fuze to bursting charge contained in a tin cup in the base.

Officers recommended it be burst 50 yards (46 m) short of the target, and 10-15 feet (3-4½ m) above it for best effect.

Shrapnel was once considered the best mankiller the field artillery possessed, and from the 1880s until 1915 was the sole projectile carried besides case. In 1915 it was largely supplanted by HE which was cheaper and easier to employ. Shrapnel became obsolete in the British service in 1935 - although it was still being used in New Zealand in the 1940s.

Gunners soon realised that shrapnel fired with fuze set to zero acted as effectively as case so the latter ceased to be carried by field artillery.

CASE: Case shot were provided for Armstrong guns. They differed little from those designed for ML and RML equipments except that they were fitted with a lead ring at the base to prevent their going too far on being rammed. See Fig. 67B.

CARTRIDGES: Propellant charges of gunpowder were fixed at one eighth the projectile weight (except for the 7-inch which were slightly less), and were enclosed in serge bags. A 'lubricator' consisting of a cup of tallow and linseed oil was enclosed in each cartridge or attached to the outside of 40 and 110-prs (7-inch). Its purpose was to prevent the gun 'leading up,' i.e. to stop the lead sheathing on the projectiles fouling the rifling.

TIN CUPS: These were inserted in the chamber after loading to assist obturation. Each had a hole in the centre to allow flash from the vent to fire the cartridge. They were used for practice only.

IGNITION was by 'T' friction tube as shown in Fig. 77.

TO BE CONTINUED.

In the next installment - how Britain reverted to muzzle-loading equipment, now seen to have been a retrograde step. This led to intricate improvisation, modifying smooth-bore equipment and ammunition (beaut technical detail) to RML.

Reply Slip.

GUNNERS DAY DINNER 1998.

Name _____

Address _____

PH. _____

Will be attending _____

Will not be attending _____

(Delete one).

No Attending _____

RETURN WITH PAYMENT TO JEFF WATERS

14 A DITMER PL

PAPAKURA

PH 296-2457

Admin. _____

Date Received _____

Payment Recd. _____

Ticket No _____

update Register. _____

BY 25 APRIL 98.

Look forward to your Attendance
Unique. Jeff Waters.