



# NZ GUNNER

## *Royal New Zealand Artillery Association Newsletter*

### PRESIDENT'S REPORT

BY TONY MCLEOD

Well COVID-19 has certainly had a dramatic effect on our normal commemorative activities. We experienced the cancellation of ANZAC Day and Gunners Day activities, as well as the cancellation of our visit to the 16th Field Regt Gun Line in Waiouru. But it has not been an idle period with significant work going on behind the scenes on veterans' advisory matters. In March 2020, the Minister for Veterans Affairs, Mr Ron Mark, tabled the Veterans' Support Amdt Bill (No 2) in parliament. The bill was in response to the Paterson Review of the Veteran Support Act 2014 (to which the RNZAA gave formal and informal submissions), and it purported to address 48 of the 64 recommendations of the Paterson Review. The Bill certainly addressed the position of the family in the provision of support (to the veteran's families) and for the urgent treatment of mental injury or illness, and these moves we applauded. However, there were some aspects of the bill we felt should be improved upon, and these were:

- The retention of the 30-day time frame for VANZ to accept or decline a claim
- The continuation of payment/supply of benefits to a veteran until any disputes over these had been resolved
- The establishment of a five-yearly review cycle of the legislation because of the unknown nature of theatres of possible future deployments
- The establishment of a formalised Veteran Advocacy Support Office to assist veterans when disputes did arise.

In a very short space of time (three weeks) an informal RNZAA Vet Advisory Support Group (Greg Thwaite, Rob Munro, Barry

Dreyer, Mike Dakin, and myself) fired ideas around under the direction of Greg Thwaite who then compiled the points into a very comprehensive document, which was submitted to the Select Committee before the deadline of 15 June 2020. At that stage we all thought we could relax for a little while, but within 48 hours we were advised of our oral submission hearing time: 15 minutes at 4pm on 23 June 2020. The urgency was due to the attempt to get the bill through before parliament rose for the final time (two weeks later) before the elections. No one thought it was going to happen. So the team of Greg Thwaite, Barry Dreyer, and myself set to preparing an oral submission. At this stage we drafted the services of Mrs Bernie McCort as a fellow presenter because of her hands-on experience with Veterans Affairs. It was when we were waiting at Auckland airport to catch the 9am flight to Wellington on 23 June that Murphy's law decided to intervene. Wellington airport was closed due to fog. My flight was cancelled and Greg just managed to sneak in on a flight that had been delayed some three hours. Gone was the preparation time we had relied on to coordinate our presentation. The revised team of Greg, Barry, and Bernie then delivered our oral submission, based on our four major points, to the Select Committee. From then on the fate of our submissions was in others' hands. Word was that there was no way the bill would get through its third reading in time to be passed and everyone would be starting from scratch with amendments to the VSA 14 in the next government's term. The next thing we hear is the report by the Select Committee on the Amdt Bill (No 2), and it appears they have

not accepted any of the points we raised in our submissions (written and oral). However, it was always our view that it was better for the bill to go through rather than be held up, or even possibly rejected completely, by any lesser amendments including our own. Time is running out to formalise the bill into legislation. Then quite unexpectedly on 2 August 2020, just days before parliament is due to rise, Mr Ron Mark stands up in parliament and presents his VSA14 Amdt Bill (No 2). It is supported by all parties except for National who would like the 30-day time frame for VANZ to accept or decline a case, to be retained (our point #1). Mr Chris Peck, the National spokesman for defence, speaks to the proposed amendment to the bill (i.e. retention of the 30-day time frame), which many (as well as us) raised in the written and oral submissions. Mr Mark then responded with the rationale for removing the time frame being the inability of VANZ to be able to collect all the relevant information to make an informed decision. He indicated that one of the main issues is getting other departments to share info, but he was confident this issue has been addressed in the last budget. He was adamant this did not preclude VANZ from delivering veterans' services in a timely and effective manner. He stated he would be "watching eagerly for feedback if this is not the case." So the bill was passed into legislation and is due to come into effect from 1 October 2020. I feel we should congratulate and thank Minister Mark for his efforts in seeing this Amendment Bill (No 2) through. But where does that leave us now? Well I believe we have an excellent basis for identifying what other measures need to be

taken to improve the lot of the veteran, and at what level they should be addressed. For example, are they legislative issues such as our three remaining points? Or are they procedural issues with VANZ/NZ Defence/RNZRSA such as the many items we identified in the schedules to our written submission? We can now determine where to target these matters. We should also maintain a register of complaints from our members about any lack of satisfaction with VANZ, which we can then feed back to the minister who is watching eagerly for such cases. I can not stress enough our gratitude and appreciation to Greg Thwaite for the amount of time and professional expertise he has put into this submission process. I would urge all members to read our written submission, which is attached, to get an understanding of the complexity of the issues and the intellectual gymnastics it has taken to compile this into one succinct yet comprehensive document. I would also like to re-thank Rob Munro, Mike Dakin, Barry Dreyer, and Bernie McCort for their invaluable input. Although our planning for the reunion/AGM has been rather disrupted due to uncertainty with the COVID-19 situation, we are still planning on holding the event in Trentham on 16-18 October 2020. I urge a good attendance at this reunion, especially from all those residents in Wellington and the lower North Island. I think it is natural for the leadership (committee) of the association to gravitate to Wellington at this stage, much as it did from 1939 to (circa) 1959, so please feel free to let me know if you are interested in stepping up to help out. I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible in Trentham.

Ubique

Tony McLeod  
President

# LAST POST

BY RNZAA

- HUNT, Albert. 40879, 161 Bty RNZA, and RNZIR Malaya/Borneo. Passed away on 20 August 2020 in Iluka NSW Australia.
- BRADY, The Reverend Graeme Alan. Former Padre 3 Fd Regt. Passed away on 20 August 2020 in his 80th year.
- FORBES, Bruce Douglas. 454322, RNZA. Passed away on 6 June 2020 at Christchurch Hospital, aged 96.
- COOPER, William John Henry (Bill). J37199 WO1 (Ret'd) RNZA. 161 Bty, Vietnam x 2 tours. Passed away in June 2020, aged 81.
- HALL, Sydney Edward (Syd). 896905, Gnr. Passed away on 21 June 2020 in Te Awamutu in his 99th year.
- BERGH, Ian Peter Turnbull. 724762, Gnr, 22(D) Bty, RNZA. Formerly of Wellington and Paraparaumu. Passed away unexpectedly on 28 July 2020, at Tauranga Hospital.
- HURFORD, Kelvin Thomas. 206078, Sgt, RNZA, Korea. Passed away peacefully at Phoenix House, Coromandel on 25 July 2020, aged 93.
- COLSON, Victor Doughty (Vic). 592041, Sgt, RNZA, 22(D) Bty, and 161 Bty Vietnam. Passed away peacefully at the Kumeu Village Aged Care facility on 9 July 2020.
- WHITEHOUSE, William Bernard (Bill). 19165576, 33rd Parachute Field Regt RA, 6th Airborne Div, Palestine. Passed away peacefully at North Shore Hospital, Auckland on 9 July 2020, aged 91 years.



# COLONEL COMMANDANT'S CORNER

BRIGADIER (RTD) PAUL SOUTHWELL

Did you know the Royal Regiment of New Zealand Artillery turned 73 on 1 September 2020? I have just received a letter from the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery sending their best wishes to all members of the Royal Regiment of New Zealand Artillery, their families, affiliated associations and friends.

## Our Band

The highlight of my artillery visits (in fact the only one) since our last newsletter was to attend a stirring performance by the Royal New Zealand Artillery Band. Bob Davis was a magnificent host and introduced each item with an explanation and the occasional joke as he introduced various members of the band. They played a variety of music from *Voice of the Guns* to *Bohemian Rhapsody* keeping the Birkenhead RSA guests enthralled. The level of talent and dedication was commendable and so ably lead by their director, WO 1 Steven Booth.



As gunners, we are fortunate to have such a superb band we can call our own. The band is the oldest military band in New Zealand and has had an unbroken service of 156 years. They have had to fight some difficult battles (defence band reviews) to survive as a military band. Through their own efforts and support from people like Barry Dreyer and retired SAS officers, they have managed to keep their rank and defence provision of uniforms, but unfortunately not their TF pay. COVID-19 has meant many of their performances have been cancelled but when they are back in swing, I strongly recommend you get along and enjoy their performances. Hope to see you there. You can find their events at [www.rnzartilleryband.co.nz](http://www.rnzartilleryband.co.nz).

## 16 Fd Regiment

Auckland COVID-19 lockdown put an end to a visit to exercise Brimstone to see the Regiment firing the light gun. I am sure many association members were disappointed at the cancellation of their visit to the exercise (nothing like reliving the good old days). There may be little opportunity for the Regiment to live fire for a while as they take up COVID-19 duties in Hamilton and Auckland for the foreseeable future. I am sure the Regiment will get us back to visit the gunline as soon as they can.

## Time for some history: Gunners remember the Somme



"Thus ended one of the hardest periods of prolonged fighting in which the Divisional Artillery were ever engaged in the whole course of the war." Quoted from *New Zealand Artillery in the Field 1914-18*. The NZ Division, less the artillery, were in constant battle from 15 Sep 16 until 3 Oct 16 (18 days), considerably longer than the WW1 average of 10 days for a division on the offensive. Their performance and ground gained beyond their objectives were significant, earning their place among the best of the western front divisions. The Division's gunners remained in the battle for 52 days, continuously in the firing line. The infantry attack was preceded with three days of preparatory fire, and, after the initial attack on 15 Sep, guns were moved forward into "ground riven by shell-fire and then waterlogged by rains." Gunners salvaged material from German trenches and dugouts to stabilise platforms and provide some protection from incessant counter battery fire, not to mention the prematures from btys in the rear. "Hostile shelling was responsible for a tremendous number of casualties in all ranks." One bty alone suffered 80 killed and wounded. The number of men manning guns in a bty was 40, meaning the entire gun strength was killed twice over. Today's Gunners remembered the Somme at a ceremony 90 years after. In 2006 I had the privilege of organizing the 90th commemoration of the NZ Division's battle of the Somme. Our own Chris Pugsley (professor of



history at Sandhurst at the time) joined the NZDSL (Defence Staff London) team taking us on a walk through the battle, so we could prepare our own presentations for the big day. This walk/lecture and the ceremony naturally focused on the incredible efforts of the Division's infantry. But the ceremony was a gunner affair. The NZ LOT (Liaison and Observation Team), made up of gunners stationed in Bosnia, arrived to man the catafalque party and assist in the rather complicated ceremony involving French military, local dignitaries, school children, representatives from all nations involved in WW1 — including the Germans — and a multitude of New Zealanders. WW1 weapons and uniforms were borrowed from the British Army Museum along with a very enthusiastic historian whom you often see on the history channel. He insisted on joining us to ensure that the lads were dressed as authentic New Zealand soldiers of WW1. Thankfully WO1 Solomon was in charge of the party and could recall .303 rifle drill from his school cadet days.



The gunners taking up positions on the corners of the monument marking the first objective of the NZ division on 15 Sep 16.



A memorial run (at H hr on 15 Sep, starting at Caterpillar Valley — from where the unknown warrior was taken) took in the monument where the team were surprised to meet an NZ historian and his wife waiting for them. Andrew Mc Donald (in jeans) was about to publish his book *On my way to the Somme*, and gave the team an impromptu brief on the battle. WO 1 Solomon and I arrived rather puffed and a bit late and to hear the first part.



The monument at Longueval. South African, British, and German Attaches lay wreaths to NZ fallen 2006.

I have often considered the significance of this battle to be overlooked in the wake of Gallipoli and Passchendale. Up until the battle of the Somme, the NZ Division had been largely untested in fighting as a division — at least in the minds of British Commanders on the Western front, many of who viewed Gallipoli as a sideshow. On arriving at the Western front, the Division was given time to train and benefit from taking on lessons from the experiences of other divisions — especially the Canadian Divisions, who were considered some of the best. They arrived on the Somme well prepared and rehearsed for the battle and in the aftermath received considerable praise from the Commander of Fourth Army, General Rawlinson, who made special mention of the effectiveness of the divisional artillery in establishing barrages and defeating counter attacks.

I strongly recommend a read of the book *New Zealand Artillery in the Field*. Never again will I complain about fixing farm fences in the rain after reading about what these poor fellows went through.

Looking forward to seeing many of you at the reunion.

# MEMORIES OF VIETNAM; PART FOUR

BY WAYNE ROBSON

## Battle of Long Tan

On the night of 16–17 August, the task force base at Nui Dat was subjected to a heavy mortar and recoilless rifle attack. B Company (less two platoons who were on leave), was sent out in the early morning to find out where the enemy positions were and to destroy the attacking force. We located the mortar positions the next day but were relieved by D Company as we were only on light order and had taken one day's rations with us, and a helicopter resupply would have revealed our position. D Company was prepared for a three-day patrol. When D Company arrived at our position we moved off toward the base area. We started to make our way back to the base area, and about 1540 hrs we heard a burst of fire from D Company's area. We called them up on the radio and were told that there had been contact with six VC and that they in pursuit of them. After a short spell, another firefight was heard, and we learned that 10, 11, and 12 platoons had been engaged by a very large force. We were making our way to their position as quickly as we could to help them out. D Company was re-supplied with ammunition by helicopters. A heavy monsoon rain had begun to fall by this time, which made our jungle green uniform seem black in the fading light of the rubber tree plantation. Armoured personnel carriers were despatched from the base with A Company on board to help us. They came into contact with three companies of Viet Cong forming up to attack the rear of D Company. A Company routed the enemy and arrived at D Company's position at about the same time we did. It was now about 1910 hrs. D Company deployed behind the screen provided by A Company to attend to the wounded and extract them by

helicopter. The following morning the Battalion moved forward into the battle area. We found two survivors of 11 Platoon. Three enemy soldiers were captured, including two North Vietnamese regulars. The enemy lost 245 killed in action, and an estimated 500 wounded in action. Our losses were 18 killed in action and 21 wounded. There was no doubt in my mind that it was accurate artillery fire that saved the day. This is an evening which is indelibly etched in my memory; even after 46 years I still feel the emotions I felt then when recalling the event [Battle of Long Tan]. After this action, I remained with B Company for another operation in the Nui Dinh hills. We spent about two weeks there and we suffered one wounded in action. The enemy losses were eight killed and four wounded. I returned to New Zealand in December 1966.

Note: I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Major C.R. Flinkenberg and Mr Robert Eaddy of the Defence Department for their assistance to me in researching the details of my service in Vietnam.

The end.

"This is an evening which is indelibly etched in my memory; even after 46 years I still feel the emotions I felt then."

Wayne  
Robson

# RNZAA PORT: TORLESSE RESERVE OLD TAWNY

The Royal NZ Artillery Association have arranged a special label and a price exclusive to members of \$26 per bottle.

## Winemakers comments:

The wine style is operated on a solera system started in 1992 where the barrels are never emptied. Each bottling is taken from the original five barrels, which are half emptied, then topped with the next oldest wine. This wine has been matured in barrels for an average of 10 years. The base wine is a blend of red grapes fortified with high-strength alcohol. As the wine matures the colour gradually takes on a tawny colour and develops a sweet nutty character. Much of the wine's development has already occurred in the barrel, so this wine is ready to drink but can be cellared for many more years. The wine is complex and shows the typical rancio character of a good tawny port, and is an excellent way to end any good meal, or entertainment. To be enjoyed in moderation. This wine can be stored after opening in a decanter for months with no adverse effects.

To order: Christchurch delivery to a specific address is freight free. Orders to other areas will incur a freight charge. The wine can be ordered by contacting Torlesse Wines by email [winery@torlesse.co.nz](mailto:winery@torlesse.co.nz), or phone 03 3146929 or 021758441. Easiest method of payment is by credit card but we can do direct debit as well with an invoice.



# A JOURNALIST'S PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF NZ'S OPERATIONS IN VIETNAM, PART 2

CHRIS TURVER MNZM JP

While the Americans were grateful for the non-combatant engineers, they wanted fighting troops to be seen alongside their own growing forces as the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese pressure increased. I had been aware through my sources that the government, to relieve the growing push from the United States, was actively considering sending a small combat unit to bolster its presence in Vietnam and I broke the story later that month that it would be a small artillery battery. This sort of rear-echelon unit was seen by the National government of Keith Holyoake as less likely to get into trouble than sending our infantry who would inevitably be right in the front line and suffer casualties. The reality in Vietnam was that there were no front lines. In any case, most of our infantry troops were already deeply committed in Malaysia and Borneo preventing incursions by Indonesian troops during "confrontation" and there were no infantry to spare. The government was also conscious of the growing anti-Vietnam war sentiment in New Zealand and wanted to minimise loss of life and the high cost that would flow from an expanded role in Vietnam. One way or another our small country was pretty stretched. In May 1965 the government announced in Parliament its intention to send an artillery battery of four 105mm pack howitzers — but did not disclose that it was so short of trained gunners that the unit would have to draw on men from other units to make up the necessary 120

personnel. Late in May, and with my growing knowledge of what was going on, the NZPA's managing editor Les Verry called me in to ask whether I would be willing to go with the artillery battery as the NZPA's first accredited war correspondent with our New Zealand troops for an unspecified duration. An invitation to send a correspondent had come from the Defence Ministry which undertook necessary support. It was no contest. I was 24, looking for adventure outside the cloistered walls of the Press Gallery and, while only recently married, the assignment was the opportunity of a lifetime. Besides, like all young men going to war, I was bulletproof wasn't I? As a first step I was put through a series of Foreign Affairs and Defence briefings, designed to get me used to what I would find and stressing the need for care in reporting "to avoid giving away strategic information to the enemy." Coincidentally, one of those briefings came from Natalie England, recently returned from Saigon, who gave me a grounding in Vietnam politics for beginners and a great deal of practical advice, including a warning to "take lots of toilet rolls" because, as she put it, the food and water hygiene was variable. After her briefing, the pragmatic military got me to sign an indemnity that I would not sue them if I was killed or injured — and then arranged a series of powerful injections including typhus, typhoid, cholera, the black plague, smallpox, and yellow fever. On 12 July I flew from Wellington to Auckland on a turbo-prop Viscount, my first flight, to be met by an army driver and driven to Papakura Military Camp and my first taste of military discipline. There was a complete shutdown from outside contact as the government worked to avoid alerting 'the enemy' in Vietnam and anti-Vietnam war protestors at home that New Zealand's military contribution was about to leave. I was billeted in officers accommodation and the next day the late Capt Bruce Murphy, who was to win a Military Cross, took me on one side to stress that in Vietnam there were no front lines, few guaranteed safe areas, that fighting could flare up anywhere at any time, and that ambushes and booby traps were common. Part three next time ...





# UPDATE FROM 16 FD REGT

## KOREAN WAR ARMISTICE COMMEMORATIONS - OTAKI

The Wellington Region Korean Veterans Group (WRKVG), in conjunction with Otaki Primary School (OPS), annually conduct a wreath laying ceremony at OPS to commemorate the armistice of the Korean War (KW) ceasefire - this year marked the 67th anniversary of that ceasefire. This commemoration was attended by the new Ambassador of the Republic of Korea, His Excellency Mr Sangjin Lee, KW Veterans, members of the South Korean community, and representatives from VANZ and NZDF HQ. 16 Field Regiment (16 Fd Regt) continues to support this significant occasion, further cementing the historical ties we have with the South Korean government and its people, the KW Veterans and OPS. This year 16 Fd Regt began the day with a static Light Gun, Mortar and Joint Fires Team (JFT) display - a highlight for the students and veterans. The wreath laying ceremony followed where the KW Veterans and fallen were acknowledged for their service during this era. 16 Fd Regt mounted a Catafalque Guard around the Korean War Monument where the CO, RSM and Regimental WO, WO1 Evan Kareko, lay poppies on behalf of 16 Fd Regt and the RNZA. At the conclusion of the service students from OPS conducted a Pōwhiri and cultural activity in the school hall. At the conclusion of the entertainment a number of persons involved in the commemoration proceeded to the Otaki RSA where the South Korean Ambassador hosted a lunch. This enabled both young and old to interact and share stories. This was a good day and 16 Fd Regt would like to thank all persons that continue to make this significant and historical possible. We look forward to supporting this commemoration on an annual basis.

## 161 BATTERY (BTY) AND 163 BTY

161 Bty and 163 Bty have both completed their own separate 81mm mortar exercises in Waiouru recently. 161 Bty, on Exercise Long Tan, operated out of a FOB with daily patrols while 163 Bty, on Exercise Miriyang, were dismounted and dug in. The Commanding Officer (CO) 16 Field Regiment (16 Fd Regt) hosted a visit by the RNZA Colonel Comdt (Col Comdt), Brigadier (Brig) Paul Southwell, who took the opportunity to interact with 16 Fd Regt personnel, on a sunny Waiouru day.





# THE ROYAL NZ ARTILLERY ASSN 86TH ANNUAL GATHERING & AGM

16–18 OCTOBER 2020; TRENTHAM CAMP.

REGISTRATIONS CLOSE 1 OCTOBER 2020

Fellow Gunners...

## Programme outline

### Friday, 16 October: Meet and Greet

1630hrs: registration, relax, mix and mingle at WO/SNCO Mess, Trentham Camp. Includes finger food. Cash bar to buy own drinks.

### Saturday, 17 October: AGM

0930hrs: morning tea/coffee in the WO/SNCO Mess, Trentham Camp

1000hrs: Association AGM in the WO/SNCO Mess, Trentham Camp

1200hrs: light lunch in the WO/SNCO Mess, Trentham Camp

#### Afternoon activity options:

**Option 1:** 1230hrs to 1630hrs, pistol shoot at Wellington Pistol Club range, Newtown, Wellington (transport provided). \$60 per shooter, payable in cash at the venue. Return transport will be provided. Departs from WO/SNCO Mess, Trentham Camp. This activity is limited to the first 20 shooters that sign up for the event on the registration page.

**Option 2:** 1300hrs to 1500hrs, visit to the SAS EOD (Explosive Ordnance Disposal) Squadron Museum based in Trentham Camp. Nil cost.

#### Evening dinner

1800hrs for 1900hrs: dinner, meet at Officers Mess for a semi-formal dinner. Dress: gents; tie, jacket with medals/miniatures or Mess Kit. Ladies; semi-formal.

### Sunday, 18 October

1000hrs: a brief service at the Trentham Chapel.

## Accommodation options

Forty single-room accommodation has been secured in camp at the Messines Centre for either Friday and/or Saturday night. Linen is provided and this comes as a single bed with breakfast booking at a total cost of \$30 per night per room/person. Breakfast included in camp in 800-pers mess. First in, first served basis. One single bed/person per room, so a couple would need two rooms. Alternative accommodation options for couples are available within Wellington or the Hutt Valley — Google search or [booking.com](http://booking.com) or [hotels.com](http://hotels.com) or [tripadvisor.co.nz](http://tripadvisor.co.nz).

See the attached form to register for the AGM and see full cost schedule.

# Q STORE

BY RNZAA

Quartermaster: Andrew Donellan

**For orders and enquiries, email [rnzaaqstore@gmail.com](mailto:rnzaaqstore@gmail.com) or visit the website: [rnzaa.org.nz](http://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.**

