



ESTABLISHED 1934  
NEW ZEALAND PERMANENT FORCE OLD COMRADES ASSOCIATION (INC)  
Known as the

## ROYAL NEW ZEALAND ARTILLERY COMRADES ASSOCIATION

Secretary. (John Rout)  
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WEB SITE - [www.riv.co.nz/rnza/](http://www.riv.co.nz/rnza/) Webmaster Catherine Rivers PhD.

## NEWSLETTER No. 120

DECEMBER 2003

SEASONS GREETINGS

Our President and your Committee send all members their best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. At this time our thoughts are with those of you who have lost loved ones during the year and for those that have not been in good health we wish you a speedy recovery.

### ROUTINE ORDERS

#### LAST POST:

George Blandford. ✓	In Auckland on the 6 <sup>th</sup> of August 2003. (Life Member)
Bill Beveridge ✓	In Tauranga on the 8 <sup>th</sup> of September 2003. (Life Member)
Alan Petrie ✓	In Picton on the 14 <sup>th</sup> of August 2003. (Life Member)
Jim Kirk ✓	In Tauranga on the 30 <sup>th</sup> of September 2003. (Life Member)
Lt Col Bill Dillon ✓	In Wellington on the 25 <sup>th</sup> of October 2003. (Life Member)
Maj Vern Duley MC ✓	In Papakura on the 4 <sup>th</sup> of November 2003.
Eric Bickerton ✓	In Papakura on the 16 <sup>th</sup> of November 2003. (Life Member)
Maj Red Potts ✓	In Auckland on the 23 <sup>rd</sup> of November 2003.
SSgt Gordon Weaver ✓	In Hamilton on the 35 <sup>th</sup> of November 2003. (Life Member)

#### CHANGE OF ADDRESS:

✓ Carole Weatherhead	to: 10 Tavistock Place, Avonhead, CHRISTCHURCH.
✓ Michael McMahon	to: Apartment D 481 Northbridge Retirement Village, 45 Akoranga Drive, Northcote, AUCKLAND.
✓ Rod Simpson	to: 6 Central Park Drive, Henderson 1008, AUCKLAND
✓ Des O'Connor	to: 53/267 Glengarry Road, Greenview Park Village, Glen Eden Oratia, AUCKLAND
✓ John Blaker	to: 22E Beach Road, KATIKATI

#### NEW MEMBERS:

✓ Robert McAulay 5 Callis Avenue, PAPA KURA

#### NEW LIFE MEMBER (On reaching the age of 80).

✓ Bill Morley.

<b>FROM THE EDITOR</b>
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**SORRY**

Apologies for the late issue of this News Letter. I have been waiting on some news about a grant from the Lotteries Commission. We asked the commission for a grant to assist with next years November reunion. The commission has decided to grant us some funds however, no where near what we asked for. Your committee at their next meeting will now decide how the grant will be used.

Our application for a grant included a request for airfare and accommodation assistance for reunion 2004. The idea was to provide some financial assistance for our South Island and lower North Island members to attend reunion 2004 in the Auckland area. Auckland mainly because a large number of our older members live in the general area and it is an easy city to fly into. We will now have to have re-think about what to do with the very much smaller amount granted. The first News Letter in 2004 will include our decision.

**PRESENT DAY GUNNERS**

"They are not as good as we were in our day" or words to that effect are often mentioned in casual conversation when groups of us retired gunners get together. Over the past several weeks I, and other members, have attended the Military Funerals of several members. The standards of drill, turnout and the professional manner with which Gunners from present day units of the RNZA have performed their duties at these funerals has been as good as it gets. If these same gunners perform their other duties to the same standard and I am sure they do, then gunners today are at the very least as good as we were and may even be better. We can be very proud of our modern day gunners.

**THE GENESIS OF FIELD ARTILLERY**

I found the following on Website [www.landscaper.net](http://www.landscaper.net) . This a United States Artillery site which is worth a visit.

*In the beginning, there was chaos, and the chaos was the infantry, the queen of battle. However, the queen was alone. And fear was with the infantry, so she cried out unto the Lord saying, "Lord save me for I am afraid!"*

*And the Lord heard her grunts and set some of the infantry on beasts of burden, and these he called the cavalry, and the cavalry became armour. And when the Lord saw what he had done, he laughed saying, "Well, you can't win them all!"*

*As time passed, the infantry and the armour again cried out unto the Lord saying, "Lord save us, for we are afraid." The Lord heard their cries and decided to end their weepings.*

*The Lord said unto them, "I shall send unto you a race of men noble in heart and spirit." And the Lord created the Field Artillery, and named them the King of Battle.*

*And the Lord said unto the infantry and armour, "When it is dark, the King shall light your way. And when you need smoke, there shall be smoke, and when you need it to rain down death and destruction upon the enemy, you shall have it."*

*And the Lord gave the King big guns and big bullets. And the infantry and armour were jealous, for they had not. And the Lord gave the artillery rockets and missiles and nukes. And when the infantry and armour saw this, they fell to their knees in awesome wonder, saying surely the Lord is on the side of the artillery, the King of Battle.*

*And the Lord said, "CHECK!"*

*And abideth infantry, armour and artillery, but the greatest of these is the artillery.*

**Treasures Report**

In his report the Treasurer also made reference to the fact that a large number of life members and a general decline in membership was having a detrimental effect on our funds. He recommended that we do all we can to recruit younger members and also consider raising the annual subscription.

As you will see later, membership was discussed in general business. As a result of the treasures recommendation the meeting decided to raise the annual subscription to \$20. Members who have paid subs in advance will not be required to pay more until their advance payment runs out.

**Webmasters Report.**

Since its inception at the 1998 AGM, the Old Comrades' website has grown steadily in strength and popularity. Since last year's AGM, the site has had 270,000 hits, a remarkable achievement for a non-profit organisation.

You might think that because the site seems to be providing a service for the international artillery community (judging by the number of hits), we need do no more to it, but this is not the case. It is very important that the site is updated with fresh material on a regular basis. There is a growing interest among New Zealanders for information on their military history and current military affairs, and this Association has the capacity to provide our people with authoritative, reliable information. If you have data on any NZ artillery units or equipments, please let the Webmaster or Secretary know, so that suitable pages can be constructed. We need about twelve articles each year. And if you are willing to proofread pre-publication material, please contact the Webmaster. The website reflects the Association; lets ensure that the image is healthy and dynamic.

Catherine Rivers, PhD  
Webmaster, NZPFOCA  
email: [crivers@riv.co.nz](mailto:crivers@riv.co.nz), phone: (06) 327 8831, postal: RD3, Marton, NZ

**General Business.****Membership Rule 4 (b) Rule Change**

In the light of the dwindling membership numbers the following Notice of Motion to change the above rule was discussed. The secretary stated the idea of the motion was to stimulate a discussion on membership.

**NOTICE OF MOTION**

26 September 2003

Motion to change NZPFOCA Associate Membership Rule 4(b)  
I move that rule 4(b) be changed to read as follows:

Ex-members and serving members of other Corps of the New Zealand Army not included in Rule 4(a) and ex-members and members of foreign Armed Services, may be accepted as Associated Members if during their service they have been attached to the RNZA (RF) or have had close affinity therewith. Such members shall be elected by the Executive Committee: Provided that four-fifths of the members present at the Committee meeting at which such an application is considered shall vote in favour thereof. Every such member shall be entitled to all privileges of membership except the right to vote at meetings. Widows of deceased members may be elected Associate Members at half the normal subscription rate.

The mover was Jeff Waters. Seconder John Rout.

This motion was passed unanimously and the meeting agreed that this rule change will also permit deserving ex and serving TF members of the RNZA to join. The committee still has the final say on who may and may not join.

Our new patron Col Don Kenning stated that a name change, that does not include the word 'Old' may also help to increase membership. After a very good discussion the meeting decided to keep the Incorporated Society name (NZPFOCA) but from now on we will place emphasis on an As Known name which is to be 'The Royal New Zealand Artillery Comrades Association'. If you look at the heading of this News Letter you will see how we intend to use the new name. We have written to the Colonel Commandant RNZA asking for his approval to use this name.

#### Wally's Ashes

After the AGM a small party including Lorraine Ruffell, her daughter Leah and Padre Derm Buchanan travelled to Waiouru where a short service was conducted and Wally Ruffell's ashes were scattered. For those familiar with Waiouru the ashes were scattered adjacent to the old Barbara & Howitzer horse paddock at the entrance to Home Valley

#### The Dinner & Church Parade

The dinner on Saturday night was very successful. Ex Nursing Sister Pam Terry was the guest speaker. Pam served in with the NZ Forces in Vietnam, her address was informative and very well received.

The Church Parade on Sunday was very well attended. Padre Derm Buchanan officiated and the service ended with the reading of the names of members who had passed away over the last 12 months. A very good RNZA Band recording of The Last Post, The Ode and Reveille was then played.

#### RNZA Band CD

If you are interested the RNZA Band CD Title is 'Lest We Forget' and is available from Marbecks Record Shop 15 Queens Arcade, Auckland. Call Free 0800 113 344 or [www.marbecks.co.nz](http://www.marbecks.co.nz). The CD includes a total of 20 Marches etc.

### FROM AND ABOUT MEMBERS

**Eric Bickerton.** In the latter half of 1942 Eric was attached to the Headquarters of The Third New Zealand Divisional Artillery which departed for the Pacific Islands in early December 1942. The following passage is from the Unofficial History of the Third NZ Division Artillery, titled 'The Gunners'.

'On 10 October 1942 the unit proceeded to Tirau by road and rail where a tented camp was pitched under the capable guidance of Sergeant-Major Bickerton, or 'Bick' as he was known to most of us. Every era produces its famous men: be they statesmen or gangsters. 'Bick' was one of the world's greatest 'acquirers.' He came from a great family of 'acquirers'- the Gunners. It was once said of him that if a quartermaster observed even casually in the course of conversation that he was worried over the shortage of a few nuts and bolts; 'Bick' would show up with a 25-pounder gun which he had 'found in the bush.' And so, on arrival in Tirau, the odd bit of timber and oil drum found its way into our camp.'

**Red Potts.** Red did not request a full Military Funeral, only the playing of The Last Post, Reveille and the reading of The Ode where requested. However almost right on cue several loud claps of thunder echoed round the Snapper Rock Cemetery. So Red was sent off with some very appropriate bangs.

**Henry Salt** sends, from Queensland, his best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all members.

### THE GUN

By Wally Ruffell

Continued From NL 119

QF GUNS IN FIELD ARTILLERY:

When the South African War broke out on 11 October 1899, the Royal Artillery was still equipped with BL 12 and 15-pr guns adopted in 1883, and fitted with open sights attached to the piece plus fixed telescopes. Thus they could not undertake indirect fire except after lengthy messing about with aiming posts, an exercise entirely unfitted for the mobile warfare about to be fought. Their crude 'axle-spade' recoil systems tended to make guns 'rear up' on firing, and on runout to put them anywhere up to 10° off for line.\* Thus time taken loading with separate BL ammunition as well relaying after each round made the rate of fire comparatively slow. See Fig. 147.

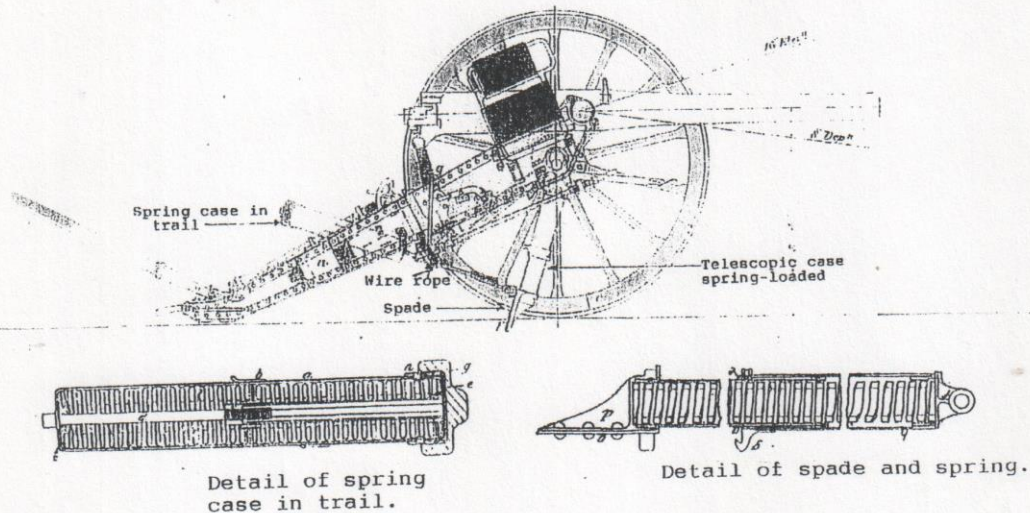


Fig. 147: Axle-spade recoil system on BL 15-pr carriage.

On the other hand the Boers had purchased QF 75-mm guns developed during the mid-1890s by the firms of Creusot (France) and Krupp (Germany). They were equipped with sights designed for indirect fire as well as hydro-spring recoil systems which kept a gun steady both on recoil and runout. Thus these systems coupled with the ease of loading with fixed QF ammunition made the rate of fire significantly greater than that of the British guns.

Realising the benefits to be derived from firing from concealed positions the Boers copied France and Germany in adopting indirect fire as standard procedure, and had modified their tactics in the field to suit. Also, their new guns outranged British 15-prs by 1000 yards (914 m).

Royal Artillery tactics on the other hand had changed little since Waterloo. Guns came into action in the open a few hundred yards from the enemy, and the inefficiency of the old-time musket let them get away with it.

But by 1899 most infantry were armed with high-powered rifles which could kill at 2000 yards (1829 m), of which the RA were soon painfully reminded, especially at the Battle of Colenso (15 Dec 99), where they came into action within range of Boer riflemen, suffered over 30% casualties, and lost 10 guns. They then woke up.

\* The late Major HCF Petersen MBE RNZA who became familiar with the BL 15-pr prior to World War 1 confirmed this figure.

To remedy the situation Sir Henry Brackenbury, Director General of Ordnance, recommended in 1900 that the British Government replace all RA equipment in the next three years. His recommendation was approved, leading to the adoption of the QF 18-pr for RFA and the QF 13-pr for RHA in 1903.

Immediate action to deal with the unsatisfactory situation in South Africa resulted in the purchase from the German firm of Ehrhardt of 108 (18 batteries) of QF 76.2-mm (15-pr) field guns Model 1900, which possessed the features the BL 12 and 15-prs lacked. See Fig.148.

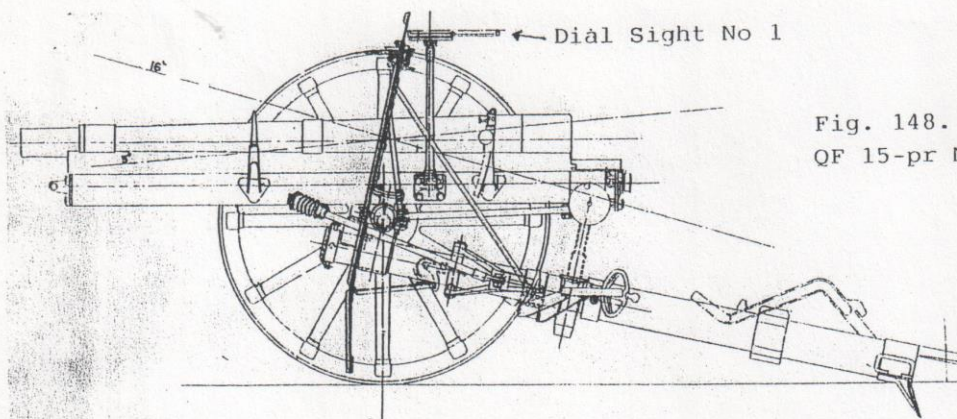


Fig. 148.  
QF 15-pr Mk 1.

Calibre: 76.2-mm (3-inch).

Range: 5852 metres (6400 yards).

Elevation: 17°.

MV: 510 ms (1674 fs).

Top traverse: 7°.

Weight of shell: 6.58 kg (14.5 lbs)

An outstanding feature of the QF 15-pr was its recoil system which proved equally as efficient as that of the 'famous' French 75. Observers reported that the firing of the gun failed to displace a coin placed on top of a wheel.

Equally important was the German 'lining plane' which enabled indirect fire to be put down quickly and easily. As the lining plane was basically a dial with a sight bar rotating upon it the Royal Artillery dubbed it 'Dial Sight No 1.' Critics berated its position on the carriage which obliged a layer to expose himself to enemy fire when using it!

The Royal Artillery modified the carriage by attaching to it a shield, the first RA equipment to have one. It immediately provoked an outcry from the media and old 'Colonel Blimps' who loudly condemned Gunners as cowards for 'hiding behind shields' instead of 'keeping up the old tradition' of standing up in the open to be shot at like true Britons.

A less attractive part of the QF 15-pr carriage was the pole-type trail of tubular steel which prevented the gun being elevated above 17°, unless a hole was dug to lower the spade and the gun laid by clinometer. In this respect the carriage was no better than those it replaced, but at least the gun range now equalled that of the enemy.

IN the meantime armament manufacturers were invited to submit designs for new QF equipments to replace not only the old BL types but also the German QF 15-pr. As no individual gun met all service demands the firms involved were invited to cooperate in producing a composite equipment. From this exercise came the QF 18-pr for field and the QF 13-pr for horse artillery.

To the surprise of many who did not believe replacement possible over the recommended three years, the two guns were ready for trials in 1903! In the past similar exercises had taken up to ten years!

AS they were identical except for size and weight comments will be confined to the 18-pr. See Fig. 149.

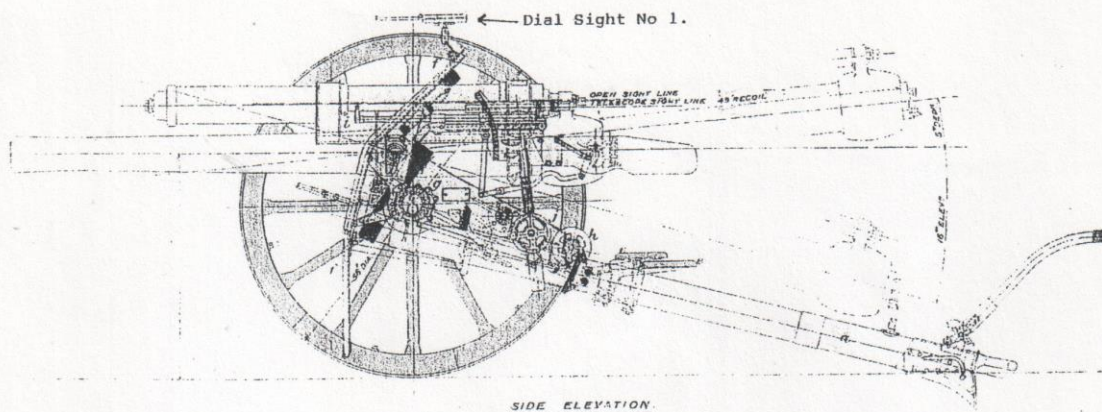


Fig. 149: QF 18-pr Mk 1 on Mk 1 carriage (1903).

<u>QF 18-pr</u>	<u>QF 13-PR</u>
Calibre: 3.3 inches (83.8-mm)	3 inches (76.2 mm).
Range: 6600 yards (6035 m)	5900 yards (5394 m).
MV: 1615 fs (492 ms)	1677 fs (511 ms).
Elevation: 16°	16°
Top traverse 8°	8°
Weight of shell; 18 lbs (8.4 kg)	13 lbs (5.9 kg).
Weight in action: 2827 lbs (1285 kg)	2196 lbs (998 kg).

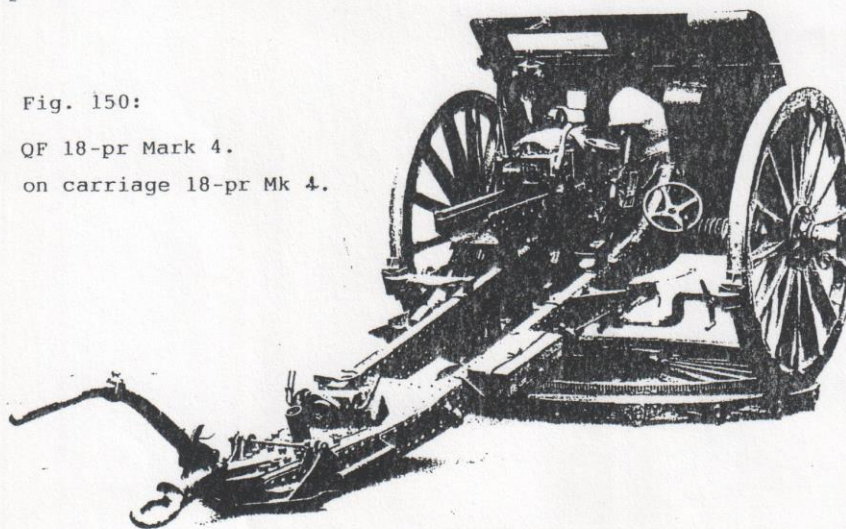
A comparison of Figs. 148 and 149 will give at least one good reason for the quick production of the two guns; in each case the carriage was a close copy of the Ehrhardt 15-pr. Both have tubular steel trails, which limited elevations to 17 and 16° respectively. Thus while the 18-pr was capable of achieving a maximum range of 10,000 yards, its trail restricted it to 6600. For each additional 1000 yards a hole lowering the spade a foot (30 cm) had to be dug, and the gun laid by field clinometer - a distinct handicap during mobile warfare.

Gunners were to be frustrated by this limitation during World War 1 when called upon to provide long-range support for their infantry - and the battlefield was too much of a quagmire to permit horse-drawn artillery moving forward.

By 1918 the 18-pr Mk 1<sup>and 2</sup> had been superseded by the 18-pr Mk 4 with a range of 11,100 yards (10,150 metres). No digging was required as the trail permitted an elevation of 37°30'. See Fig. 150.

Fig. 150:

QF 18-pr Mark 4.  
on carriage 18-pr Mk 4.



TO BE CONTINUED