

ESTABLISHED 1934

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

THE ROYAL NEW ZEALAND ARTILLERY COMRADES ASSOCIATION

Secretary/Treasurer. Capt Graeme B. Black BEM
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NEWSLETTER No. 122

June 2004

ROUTINE ORDERS

MOST URGENT:

It is with a heavy heart that I have to inform you of the passing of our Secretary John Rout on Monday 24 May. The Funeral was held on Thu 27 May. Messages can be sent to 39 Milson Drive, Papakura.

John has been our Secretary for about 4 years and in that time displayed his normal attitude to any task set to him with above average ability. He treated Reunions as if it were his personal responsibility to ensure that the weekends went without the slightest hitch and that all personnel who attended went home truly satisfied.

He was my very close friend for nigh on 45 years where we served together, courted our wives together, lived beside each other and our daughters were the best of friends. In later years we were to continue our relationship again on the Committee of the Old Comrades. For me this loss was very personal.

I have been officially appointed as Secretary/Treasurer and will do everything in my power to continue the very high standard of work that you have been enjoying from John. Believe me it will be a hard act to follow.

The double hat of Secretary/Treasurer was brought about by John Barrett not being in a position to give the task his best shot due to work and personal commitments, so it was decided to combine the appointments.

John's Funeral, Roger Newth writes that the Military Funeral was carried with the normal professionalism and dignity of 16th Field Regiment. There were at least 300 there and the service was conducted by an LDS Pastor who I had great difficulty in hearing. The speakers were very good, Johns brother David and his two sisters were first and they spoke of his early days before joining Regular Force Cadets. Then came Denis Dwane speaking on behalf of the Army and Johns brothers-in-arms, then Woody Barrett on behalf of WOSL and finally Johns son (whose name I didn't catch but is a SSgt in RNZ Sigs) who was quite emotional, and then Jan spoke thanking everyone for their messages of condolence etc.

After that it was on to the Gun Carriage and off to the cemetery where John was placed with due respect and ceremony. The Gunners doing the bearers job and the firing party were very good and the bugler did a fine rendition of the Last Post and long Reveille.

I couldn't put names to everyone there but I was able to see and talk to the following Old Comrades: (In no real order) Brigadier Warren Whiting, Bob Blankley, Barry Cook, Geoff Hitchings, Dave Collins, Bob Kerslake, Don Potter, Scratch Millyn, Dave Roberts, Bill Giles, Teach Macown, Bill Powrie, Ted Lile, Alan Taylor, Denis Dwane, Woody Barrett, John Ross, Jeff Waters, Graham Henderson, Fred Biggwither, Allan Boyd, Yogi Young and Bill Morland. Barry Dreyer and Grant Box were also to the fore as well as a lot of other Gunners from the past. There may well have been others that I didn't see.

APPOINTMENT TO COLONEL COMMANDANT

It is my very great pleasure to advise the appointment of Brigadier Graham Birch MBE to Colonel Commandant of the Royal Regiment of New Zealand Artillery.

Bob Blankley and I visited Brigadier Birch to congratulate him on behalf of our Association and to brief him about our feelings for the future of this and other Gunner Associations. Discussed was the fact that we have two choices, one, let the Association quietly die away or, two, pack down and give it our very best shot to reignite interest. Graham has pledged his support and will provide what ever help he can in the position of Colonel Commandant.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

If you are one of the guilty people, and are game, re-read what John Rout had to say about SUBSCRIPTION FEES in the last Newsletter then read the following that comes from Newsletter No 63. Sept 1989:

'STRUCK OFF STRENGTH FOR FAILURE TO PAY DUES'

(There are 14 names mentioned, but more importantly the notes beneath which read):

'Most of us in the older age groups consider an Association worth joining is worth supporting. If we come to believe otherwise we say so, try to improve it or resign. Obviously the above named (the 14) no longer consider the Association worth supporting. But without exception they have continued to accept our transaction for well over three years without saying a word – or sending us a cent. It makes us wonder what the modern Gunner is made of.'

It is rather disappointing that John has had to write in a similar vein, some 15 years later. Subscriptions collect so far this year \$1876.97 and outstanding \$1540, not too good is it!

RECEIPTS

It has been the policy in the past to not send receipts for subscriptions, donations etc. That has now changed and receipts will be sent out where appropriate with Newsletters.

LAST POST:

Eddie Forbes 27 Kingston St LOWER HUTT 9 February 2004

John Mc Meiken 19 Aramoana Ave DEVONPORT 28 April 2004

John Rout 39 Milson Drive PAPA KURA 24 May 2004

CHANGE OF ADDRESS:

Bernie Ayling to: 62/40 Lakeside Crescent, Currimundi, Queensland 4551, AUSTRALIA.

WOI Paul Galloway to: 4th Otago & Southland Bn Gp, P.O. Box 2045, South Dunedin, DUNEDIN.

WOI Kemp Solomon to: HQ 16 Fd Regt RNZA, Linton Camp, LINTON.

Mrs Iris Rowntree to: Greenvalley Lodge, Greenvalley Rise, Glenfield, AUCKLAND 1310.

Mrs Kath Kitney to: 105/45 Akoranga Drive, Northcote. Auckland

Neville Fisher to: 104 Hilton Drive, WHANGAMATA

Neil Moros to: 28 Gunner Drive, Te Atatu Peninsular, AUCKLAND.

NEW MEMBERS:

Nil

RESIGNATIONS:

Mrs Joyce Vine, Paul Kitney.

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

Ted O'Neill,

COMING EVENTS

WARNING ORDER:

The Reunion this year will be the weekend Friday 5 to Sunday 7 November. The format will be much the same as previous years with the expected costs as follows:

Spa Chalets per 2 people \$100. Each extra person \$10

Spa Studio per 2 people \$70. Each extra person \$10

Breakfasts \$10 per person. Bowling Club dinner \$35 per person

Spa bistro meals on Friday night as per the menu board.

IF YOU ARE GOING TO ATTEND THE REUNION AND WANT SPA HOTEL ACCOMODATION PLEASE BOOK THROUGH THE SECRETARY. THE NEXT NEWSLETTER WILL HAVE THE OFFICIAL BOOKING REPLY FORM.

As with previous years where you can provide some small prize for the raffle, that would be greatly appreciated. Remember the proceeds of the raffle help to defray the weekend's cost e.g. Taxis, Port etc.

OLD COMRADES MEMORABILIA

Currently I have a number of items of memorabilia at home that really should be housed in the Artillery Museum in Linton for any visitors to view. Items such as The In Memoriam Book, historical badges, Wally Ruffell's gun etc. It is my intention to deliver those item to the Regiment in the next week or so.

SOME VERY INTERESTING REFLECTIONS FROM PREVIOUS NEWSLETTERS

Newsletter No. 45. 1984

A WORD ABOUT GUNNERS Gunner is a name given to a Private soldier in the Artillery, but it means more. It refers not only to rank, trade, profession or calling, but to our very tribe, if you like, because gunners look upon themselves as a race apart. All members of the Regiment are Gunners, from the Master Gunner St James Park, who is a General, down to the newest recruit.

The rank Gunner goes back over 600 years. City of London archives dated September 1339 provide the earliest record of 'gonnes' in England; later they became known as 'guns'. 'Gunnars', the men who manned them, are first mentioned in a list of 'persons of the ordnance' dated 1344.

The Gunner was intensely proud of his knowledge and skills, and considered himself superior to all other soldiers. Furthermore, he was not backward in letting them know it – in language not always calculated to win friends.

Under the Board of Ordnance, who ran the Artillery as a kind of private army he enjoyed more 'home comforts' as well as a discipline somewhat less strict than that prevailing in the rest of the army, other factors which did not add to his popularity. Indeed up to the end of the 17th Century

the Gunner had an evil reputation, especially among the foot soldiers who made up the bulk of the forces. Like most members of the working classes from which they came, these men were extremely superstitious. Few could read or write, and even those who could were incapable of appreciating the simplest technicalities. The intricacies of the Gunner's art were quite beyond their comprehension.

To these simple souls the sights and sounds of a battery position were frightening; the thunderous explosions and sulphurous smoke, punctuated by the lurid profanity of the Gunners, their faces blackened by powder, their tempers tried by precocious pieces, conjured up visions of the infernal regions. They were convinced all Gunners were in league with the devil.

So what has changed??????

FROM AND ABOUT MEMBERS

Alan Boyd, has supplied us with the following information about the photo of the Spiked German 88mm that was published in News Letter 121. Allan was there. The soldiers were all from A Troop, 27 Battery, 5 Field Regiment. Left to right they were Len Garland, Mickie Hackett and Jim Watson. Sadly all three have now gone to the Gun Park in the sky. The 88mm was located at Alan Niall in the Southern Sector shortly after the Battle of Alamein. When the lads from A Troop found the gun it had been spiked and there were dead Germans and flies all round it. Allan and Jim Watson poured petrol over the bodies and set fire to them.

Bernie Ayling, has moved into a very nice retirement home in Queensland and sends his regards to all his mates in NZ.

Bob Blankley, overhearing a discussion regarding the nationhood of offspring of service people born in Singapore as to whether or not they are Singaporeans the comment was made "Just because the cat had her kittens in the oven doesn't make them scones!!!"

Depending, of course, whether or not the oven was switched on.

Methuselah, "giving a politician money and power is like giving whisky and car keys to a 16 year old boy."

Girls it seems you are let off the hook here but never mind I will think of something.

Graham Birch, has done some extensive research into equipments, history of Units and what they were called way back when first formed to what the ones left are called. If anyone has any queries about our past please do not hesitate to ask, but remember as Col Comdt Graham is a very busy man.

Joyce Hankey, is keeping reasonable health in Whangarei and is soon to consider a shift to Matamata where because of being closer to Taupo will try to get to a Reunion in the future.

Iris Rowntree, enjoys keeping abreast of the news with our Newsletters and very kindly sent us a donation towards the Assn. Also says hello to her many old friends.

Darkie Forrester, his Vet!!!! has banned him from traveling but hopes to make it to a reunion one day. The ban came when he had been granted free travel by Veteran's Affairs. As Bill Gates says, "Life is not fair – get used to it." Darkie, you once taught me to be a QM so when I attend this year's reunion I will check the stocks of amber fluid at the Taupo RSA and if they are carrying too much stock I will attempt to reduce their holdings!!!

Roger Newth, writes about the 288th Anniversary of the forming of the Royal Artillery, Gunner's Day, in the Capital.

At 1100hrs we gathered in the Hall of Memories at the National War Memorial (the Carillon) for a short service conducted by a Padre arranged by Ron Turner. Ron then read an excerpt from the official history of the Artillery from WW2 regarding the Battle for Cassino. The Padre then gave a blessing and I repeated Binyon's Lines.

After that we went to Molly Malones Irish Bar in Courtenay Place for drinks & eats.

Gunners in attendance, in no particular order, Des Wallace, Chris Brown, Rob Munro, Ron Turner, Lindsay Skinner, Con Flinkenberg, Roger Wylde and his wife Jean, Bob Burns, Fred Goodall, Pat Helm, Warwick Wright, John Boot, Wally Fraser Brig Warren Whiting, five serving officers and myself.

David Ralph (Spike) Hughes, Irene writes that Spike is a bit poorly and is in Elderslea Rest Home, Fergusson Drive, Upper Hutt. Lindsay Skinner has taken the time to visit him and anyone in the area is asked to make a visit from time to time or even send him a card.

The Royal Canadian Artillery Association

L'Association de l'artillerie royale canadienne

I am in contact with the President Lt Col Phillip Sherwin(Retd) and will provide his address to anyone who wishes to make contact with that Assn.

North Queensland Gunners Assn

Again, I am in contact with The President of this Assn, Eldon Bryant, and have his address for anyone who wishes to make contact.

1st Michigan Light Artillery

Another contact is Lloyd Heuvelhorst of Church's Battery D, 1st Michigan Light Artillery, a Civil War re-enacting outfit based on the original Battery which served in the Army Of The Cumberland in the Western campaigns and saw action at Stones River, Chicamauga, Missionary Ridge, Nashville. They participate in events ranging from military encampments, local re-enactments, and national events. He has participated in live-fire competitive shooting matches with Co. E, 7th Wisconsin, of the North South Skirmish Association. They compete in rifle, carbine, mortar and artillery matches at local events and the Nationals in Winchester, Virginia. Lloyd and I first came into contact when he was enquiring about the Armstrong 6 pounder, mainly the measurements of the barrel. Can anyone out there help?

When a 'drop short' is considered accurate fire!!

From '2nd New Zealand Divisional Artillery by PJ Murphy'

This is an extract from the battle on Crete:

What made the outlook even more uncertain for F Troop was that the stock of accurately weighed propellant charges was almost finished. When these were gone the charges would have to be made up by careful guesswork. Already in the afternoon of the 23rd the gunners had experimented with makeshift charges, to Bevan's astonishment. He had called down fire on the prison area and was startled to see one round fall far short of its predecessor. It was far short of where he thought the foremost enemy positions were and it was a revelation to him when several Germans rose up and ran from the vicinity of the shell burst. *Just like lotto, you never know when your luck is in or in the case of the Hun – oh dear, how sad, never mind!!!*

Artillery/Infantry relationship

Hardly a day goes by when some uninformed infantryman makes a ribald and occasionally insulting remark about the Artillery. For that type of person the reading of a section of the Preface to '2nd New Zealand Divisional Artillery by PJ Murphy' should be mandatory, and I quote:

'New Zealand Gunners always thought the infantry were the salt of the earth. If this book by a Gunner for Gunners, gives any other impression it is wrong. I have seen few Gunners proud of what they themselves did in the field of battle; their admiration was always reserved for the doings of the infantry – or of Gunners with other natures of guns.

Actually I would recommend this book to, at the least, all Gunners. It is well written and easy to read and tells of courage, gallantry and sometimes sheer bloody bulletproofedness. *Now there is a word you will not find a dictionary and of course it means 'You cannot hurt me, I am a Kiwi and bulletproof!!!' "Hey you, unfix that bayonet you might put a hole in someone!"*

Notice of Motion AGM 2004

It is my intention to submit a Notice of Motion at the 2004 AGM to amend some items in our Rule Book. At present the Notice is being fine tuned with ideas and suggestions from the Committee. If anyone out there would like to see and comment on my Notice please do so by contacting me at the address on top and I will send you a copy as it is to date.

Basically the following is being considered:

- a. That although we will never change the legal name of our Association we should be known as The Royal New Zealand Artillery Association, and not *The Royal New Zealand Artillery Comrades Association*. However, before this can take place we will probably have to obtain permission.
- b. All reference to RF should be removed and that TF be allowed to join as Full Members. Over the years we have had TF Cols Comdt who once their term is complete no one wants to know them. There have been COs, BCs, RSMs, BSMs, even down to the lowliest Gunner, who have given most of their spare time to serving the Guns. We are one Army and one family.
- c. Life Membership should be an award of excellence to financial Full Members for service rendered and be for Life. In fact the clause where Life Membership was granted at age 80 does not appear in The Incorporated Societies. *Those of you who are already Life members shall retain that Membership.*
- d. Associate Membership should be available to individuals with a close association to a Full or Life Member. *Such as immediate family.*

There are other alterations which do not in fact change what is already in the rules all it does is tidy up the wording.

Remember 'The darkest hour – is only sixty minutes'.

'The gates of hell are never locked – they are always open to all men.'
There we go letting the girls off the hook again.

That's it I have run out of steam and paper. Until August or when those 'on-line' hear from me. In the August Newsletter I will bring you up to date with discussions I am having with other Gunner Associations throughout New Zealand and in fact the world. Once a Gunner always a Gunner
Graeme (Jack) Black