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JOHN MASTERS STORY

Following the publication of John Master's book, 'A Bridge Over', Hank Emery and I have been quietly working to see if it was possible to facilitate a meeting of John and Hariprasad Gurung, the ex Gurkha Sergeant Major whose life he saved in Borneo in an extraordinary display of courage which led to John being awarded an Immediate Military Cross. Some have opined the award should have been a Victoria Cross. In addition to the MC John was made an honorary member of the Simoor Club (the Gurkha Regimental Association). This was only the fourth such award in 150 years and John is one of only two still alive today.

The John Masters story is of course much more than that encompassing his time as the last commander of 161 Bty in Vietnam; his Court appearance for 'disturbing the peace' when, under orders he paraded the Bty down Queen Street as part of an official 'Welcome Home'; his part in the fight to achieve recognition of the fact the Vietnam Vets were exposed to Agent Orange and his role in the resolution process; his achievement in the raising of a seven figure sum for the rebuilding of the Rannerdale Veterans Home in Christchurch and more.

I can advise that what started out as a relatively modest initiative has ballooned into a full scale 'John Masters - This is Your Life' type TV documentary to be screened on Maori TV as one of their icon programmes on ANZAC Day (approx 4pm). MTV is established as the lead broadcaster for ANZAC Day coverage. It is the one day when our TV is tuned exclusively to MTV. They do it with sensitivity and style.

The programme interviewer is Judy Bailey whom many of you will recall from her TV1 days. She has been the anchor person for MTV ANZAC Day coverage for a number of years.

The programme will feature the reunion between John and Hariprasad whom we have brought out from Nepal for the programme along with an ex QGO (Queens Gurkha Officer) as his 'minder'.

While much of the programme was shot at John Masters home, the reunion sequence took place at the Papanui RSA on Wednesday 17 February and was preceded by a formal Powhiri. I have no doubt it was an emotional occasion and so it should have been. Many veterans, especially those from Malaya, Borneo and Vietnam attended.

This is a special tribute to a man whose life should serve as an inspiration to all New Zealanders.

Article supplied by Ross Miller



CSM Hariprasad Gurung (ex Gurkha) and
Lt Col (Rtd) John Masters, RNZA

John's account of what he did which resulted in him being awarded the Military Cross starts on Page 7

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2. LAST POST

**Edward John VALINTINE
OBE, ED, ADC, 17 May
1929 - 8 December 2009**

John Valintine, The Gunner

(Note: This eulogy was written primarily for what was a non military occasion)

I was honoured a couple of months ago when John asked me if I would speak at his funeral of his second family – the Royal Regiment of New Zealand Artillery. (The RNZA). Now I am shocked that it has happened so soon.

John was just so proud to be a gunner, and he was a gunner extraordinaire in all ways but one – unlike most of us he was not deaf!

John served as a Territorial Force gunner from the private soldier level (Gunner) to the rank of Brigadier (a 1 star General equivalent), the highest rank a peacetime TF soldier could achieve, and after his retirement from the active army he was appointed Colonel Commandant of the Royal Regiment of New Zealand Artillery. This is an honorary appointment, and it is as one of his successors in this appointment that I speak to you today.

John chose not to have a military funeral – he could have had, had he so chosen – but you will note the military accoutrements on his casket. The New Zealand Ensign; his medals, including the OBE, the ED with a number of bars and the medal struck for the coronation of our present Queen; the Lemon Squeezer with the RNZA badge that he wore at that coronation; and his artillery sword. These are all very meaningful to those of us who wear the military uniform.

John's first involvement with the military was as a school cadet at Hamilton High. He reached the rank of Cadet Sergeant when in the 5th Form in 1946, and also attended his first camp at Hopuhopu in the same year. It was the following year when, still as a school cadet, he had his first experience with the guns – live firing 6 Pdr anti-tanks guns out to sea just north of Raglan.

1949 brought the introduction of universal conscription for 18 year olds – CMT – and John was very disappointed (as he was then 20) not to have been balloted. So it was off to Knox St to enlist as a volunteer. His first visit was to the office of the 1st Armoured Regiment, but was told they were not accepting volunteers at that stage. However it was suggested that he speak with Major Nolan, who was in the process of raising a gunner regiment. John duly presented himself for an interview – presided over by a number of WW2 veterans – and from the wide ranging questions asked had the impression that they were looking for a Major General rather than a gun number! He must have impressed as in 1950 he joined 4 Medium Regiment, at that stage equipped with 6in howitzers, left over guns from WW1.

In 1951 4 Mdm Regt was equipped with the up to date WW2 designed 5.5in medium gun, and this became John's love along with the men who manned them and the Matador gun tractors that hauled them. There were parades every Thursday night at Knox St, monthly weekend camps at Hopuhopu, and yearly annual camps at either Tihoi or Waiouru where they would live fire their guns.

An anecdote from that time – during the 1950s apart from the few vehicles held by the Regiment there was a requirement to pick up additional vehicles from the stores depot at Sylvia Park in Auckland. John was tasked to pick up an ex US Army GMC, drive it to Hopuhopu, load it with ammunition and deliver the said vehicle and its load to Tihoi. John had never driven a heavy trade vehicle before however he happily but with some anxious moments drove to Tihoi, without being able to find overdrive, and safely delivered the ammunition. The Regimental Transport Sergeant at that time was a traffic officer with the Hamilton City Council – "*Bombardier, have you a heavy traffic licence?*" "*No Sergeant*" "*Well you should have if you can drive that truck all this way. Give me your licence*" He



then endorsed it for heavy trade, and John confidently drove the GMC back to Hamilton with a full load of gunners in the back.

John quickly worked up through the ranks and became a gun sergeant - the commander of a gun with a detachment of 10 men – and then started cross training in command post duties. In 1952 he was selected for officer training and joined an officer cadet training unit.

Buck (John's Brother in Law, who delivered the first obituary) has spoken of John's delight in being part of the 1952 Coronation Contingent. It almost didn't come about. At this stage John was a Sergeant, about to be commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant, and the coronation requirement was for private ranked soldiers. However the then commander of the Northern Military District, Brig Walter McKinnon, a good gunner, allowed John to revert to the rank of acting gunner for the period of the deployment. So it was off to Sydney on the HMNZS Black Prince and on to UK on the Australian aircraft carrier, HMAS Sydney. John took part in the street lining on coronation day, and later completed a 24 hr guard duty at Buckingham Palace.

John was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant on his return from UK, and a number of his fellow officers of this period are here with us today.

Well, John worked his way up through the ranks and appointments. In 1964 he became the Battery Commander of 4 Mdm



Bty, this was when I first got to know him, and he held this appointment for four years. He was a most conscientious BC and could be found at the Battery lines at Hopuhopu most weekends. At this stage the Bty was still equipped with the 5.5in gun, with the 4.2in mortar as a backup weapon. 1967 brought the appointment of 2IC 16 Fd Regt, becoming CO as a Lieutenant Colonel in 1969. John's first staff appointment was as GSO1 Field Force Command, after which he was promoted to Colonel and became the Deputy Commander of our then premier operational formation the 1st Infantry Brigade.

In December 1977 the then Chief of General Staff (the head of the Army) invited John to become his TF Advisor in the rank of Brigadier. This is the senior TF appointment and required John to represent the entire TF. He travelled widely and also attended monthly meetings of the CGS's Advisory Board. John retired from the active army in 1979, but renewed his association with the Regiment as our Colonel Commandant from 1981 to 1985.

John was very much a people person, and a traditionalist. He quickly came to learn the names of those he came across, and remembered aspects of their lives that he would follow up on later contact. He related well with all ranks, and was never more comfortable than having a brew with a gun detachment under a camouflage net on a gun position,

or with the staff in a command post. He was always conscious of our Regimental history and traditions, and guarded them to the utmost.

Buck has spoken of his launch, the *Connie V*, and I well recall many joyful 'Coastal Artillery Study Weekends' out on the Hauraki Gulf. A number of us would gather at Westhaven on the Friday afternoon and spend two very convivial days exploring and socialising before returning to normality on the Sunday afternoon.

John was an active member of the Hamilton Officers' Club, the Auckland Artillery Officers' Mess, and was the TF member of the advisory committee for the recent publication of our gunner history. I have messages of sympathy from the Chief of Army, Major General Rhys Jones, who is represented here today by Colonel John Broadley, and from the CO and all ranks of 16 Fd Regt.

To some gunnery is a mysterious art. One of our predecessors wrote: "The art is like a circle without end, or like to a labyrinth, where a man being well entered in, knoweth not how to get out again".

John didn't know how to get out. He treasured his gunner family and links. Thank you John for your service - to the NZ Army and to the Royal Regiment of New Zealand Artillery. Farewell now fellow gunner, comrade in arms, dedicated soldier, dear friend.

**Graham Birch, Brigadier (Rtd)
Colonel Commandant RNZA**

**ALAN (CRAFTY) BOYD, 5
Fd Regt, WW11, 16 Fd Regt,
Korea, on 15 February 2010, at
Auckland, in his 92nd year**

**Alan Boyd Seventy Years a
Gunner.**

Alan Boyd joined the RNZA in January 1940, four months after war was declared. He died in February 2010. A Christchurch man, Alan had worked there for a WWI gunner and asked to join the Corps on his enlistment. Trained in Hopuhopu Camp in the Waikato, Alan was one of the originals of 5 Fd Regt - and was the Secretary of the 5 Fd Regt Assoc for 26 years,

until quite recently. There remain only two originals of the Regt.

He sailed from Wellington with the 2nd Echelon of 2NZEAF on 2 May 1940, along with 6828 other men on four merchantships, bound for the Middle East. While in the Indian Ocean, the by now seven troopship and three warship convoy, having been joined by Australian troopships, was diverted to the UK for the defence of Britain during the forthcoming Battle of Britain. The convoy sailed via Capetown, Sierra Leone and into the Irish Sea where torpedoes fired at them missed, docking in Greenock at about the time of Dunkirk, and reaching Aldershot on 18 June 1940. After a short period training, the Regt deployed to the south Coast to defend the UK, equipped with 8 French 75mm guns - big iron wheeled monsters. There were neither range tables nor gun sights, so they constructed gun sights from match sticks! Not sure how. The 75mms were formed into two batteries, with the rest of the Regt becoming infantry, penny-packed around Kent with long bayonets and rifles - early on with one rifle to five men and a machine gun per 20.

In early November 1940 when the threat went, the Regt returned to Aldershot, got 25prs and went back to gunner things. The Regt embarked for Egypt on 17 December from Liverpool, arriving 16 February 1941 to make the Divisional Artillery complete for the first time.

In early March the Regt embarked for Greece with the bulk of 2 NZ Div, arriving in Piraeus the port for Athens, then driving hard for the northern Greek border. Germany invaded on 6 April. Alan described Greece as hard fighting with lots of shooting as they were driven south by the Germans. The Regt destroyed their guns north of Athens and went out over small beaches around the city. In the lottery that was delivery to Crete or Alexandria or left behind in Greece, Alan got Egypt. Only 25% of the Regt went straight to Egypt.

They had no gear at all - so plenty of gun drill and deployment drills but without guns.

Alan then saw lots of action in the Western Desert. The first and second Crusader battles, Minqar Qaim, Bel Hamad, Ruweisat Ridge where a battery from the Regt was decimated. 23rd Battalion and 27 Battery took Fort Capuzzo in a copybook surprise attack, with the guns not requiring to fire a shot! The Battery then supported the Maori Battalion in the capture of Sollum. There was also plenty of ambushing of the Bardia Road and in the Hellfire Pass area by infantry and guns, and guns on their own. At one stage during the very fluid fighting Alan's battery was cut off by the Germans for three days – wouldn't have suited Alan with neither food nor water.

During Minqar Qaim, 21 and 27 Batteries were sent a long way forward to relieve a British Regt and support the Brits. When they got there the Brits had gone – the Batteries were promptly attacked in the open desert by 18 Dorniers – I recall Alan saying there were 58 killed. After the Minqar Qaim breakout by 2 NZ Div Alan's Battery spent quite some time by itself looking for the Division, such was the fluidity of the battle.

Alan also talked of the Cauldron and the Kaponga Box – both with lots of “mixed fighting”, and plenty of shoot-and-scoot gun actions at troop level. During one of these Blackie Burns was captured. 5 Fd Regt returned to El Alemain and the battles there – “shooting all day and all night”. Alan was impressed by the new 8th Army, its cohesion and activity.

Before the Western Desert campaigns, the Regt had driven to Baalbek in Syria through Gaza, the Dead Sea, and Damascus to the Baalbek Valley which they set about fortifying. After the German threat from the North quickly abated Alan returned to Heliopolis before the Div went back into action to bolster a faltering 8th Army.

At the completion of the Western Desert Alan came home to NZ on furlough, spending most of his time in Taihape (where he must have developed an early liking for

Waiouru), I think with his brother, or a close regimental mate.

He returned to Europe with the 12th Echelon just after Casino. As one of the very few experienced men, Alan was rotated across the guns in the Regiment to train the new men – almost all gun-line gunners. He talked of the 20 year old Ron Hassett getting a serious baptism of fire on his very first day in the line with a battery – describing him as not at all happy about it!

Now move to Korea and 16 Field Regiment. Alan describes Kapyong as “pretty exciting times”. His battery was with the Argyles on the 38th parallel. The Chinese had broken through and they had to get out of it in a “big hurry”. They moved back seven miles very rapidly and then again to the outskirts of Seoul.

Alan's later service was as a trainer, using his very detailed and war developed knowledge of guns and gunners. He was with the training battery preparing gunners for Korea. He completed a Master Gunners course at Larkhill in the mid-fifties. He was Master Gunner at the School in Waiouru where most of the readers will remember him. He personally taught a large number of our officers (and NCOs) their gunnery immediately after they were commissioned and before heading out to Korea or Vietnam. His last two years were at Fort Cautley as RSM.

After WWII Alan joined Marshall Pre-Cast as a maintenance carpenter in Auckland – he had a hand in the Otahuhu Post Office and the little Church at Matakana. He moved onto NZ Marble Company as a marble polisher, and then joined K Force to go to Korea.

After his final stint in the Army Alan was with NZ Forest Products for 11 years with the wallboard operation in Penrose as the Admin Manager. He “played and lost” on the share market in the mid 80s, and retired to Green Bay and New Lynn.

Alan was a very good rugby player. He played for his Regt in Africa and Italy – a pretty mean loose forward – including the final of the Freyberg Cup in Italy



against 25 Battalion. In Italy the teams went straight from the line to the game and back to the line, sometimes not even changing after the game until back with the Regt. He was selected for the Kiwi trials – that great post-War rugby team that toured Europe.

In Auckland he played for Ponsonby seniors for three or four years in the late 40s – and he was well remembered by a past club president at his memorial service. Alan was also with Manurewa club in its very early days where he played and coached.

Alan married Emma, a wartime nurse, in April 1946 in Auckland. They had one son, Murray. Murray has six children and there are lots of great grandchildren and great great grandchildren, most of whom were present during his last days.

He married Elsie towards the end of 1968.

Alan was an exceedingly independent man and a huge influence on the RNZA in the 50s and 60s. He was a true friend to all gunners. He lived a long and wonderful life, mostly in the service of his country - and serving the guns for 70 years and one month. He was the last living WWII gunner who had joined the Regular Force – one of a line of great New Zealand gunners. He was the last of a couple of generations, the like of which we will not see again – he was an adventurer – what Shakespeare would call “a staunch and true man”.

**Eulogy presented by
Lt Col (Rtd) Barry Dreyer, RNZA**

3. REPORT BY The Col Comdt Brig (Rtd) Graham Birch.

39 Mor Bty RNZA

The 9th of December 2009 was a red letter day for the RNZA. We raised a new RF Battery, 39 Mortar Battery, as part of 16 Field Regiment. The Battery has taken over the infantry 81mm mortars and is manned by both artillery and infantry officers and other ranks. The BC is Major Matt Ottaway RNZA. The Battery's nomenclature, 39 Mor Bty, re-establishes the title of a Bty that was first raised during 2 NZ Division's service in Italy during World War II, and is significant as this earlier Bty was formed to replace the 4.2in mortar units that had been part of the divisional infantry battalions. The original 39 Bty was formed from elements of the 7th Anti Tank Regiment and was established in April 1944. This is well covered in the 2 NZ Divisional Artillery Official War History, pages 590/2. The title 39 Mor Bty therefore provides both a linkage to a historical wartime artillery unit and to the infantry from which that unit originated.

The Bty is domiciled in Burnham and is housed in Burns Lines, named after Brig Blackie Burns.

The 20 Fd Regt 25 Pdr Cartridge Case

Those of you who attended the reunion last year may recall that the Association was presented with a brass 25 Pdr cartridge case engraved as having been fired by 20 Fd Regt at Waimate North in the Bay of Islands during World War II. 20 Fd Regt was raised in early 1942 as the direct support Regiment of 12 Infantry Brigade, which in turn was one of the two Brigades of 1 NZ Division. This Division was raised to defend the Northern Military District (basically a line from New Plymouth to East Cape north) from possible Japanese invasion). 12 Bde was headquartered at Whangarei. The 20 Fd Regt Order of Battle was, in addition to the RHQ, 15 Fd Bty, 128 Fd Bty, 129 Fd Bty (never

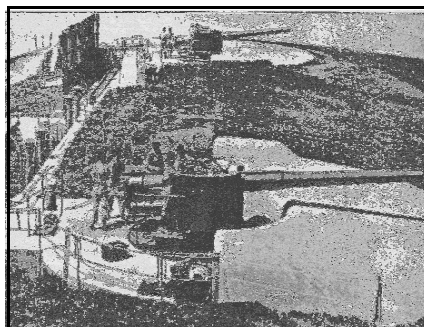
raised), a Sig Sect and 63 LAD. The Regt was equipped with sixteen 25 Pdr and its establishment was for 31 officers and 498 other ranks. With the threat of invasion over it was reduced to a small cadre staff in June 1943 and was disbanded in Jun 1944.

The 15th Hy Bty NZA Efficiency Cup

Again those of you who attended the AGM last year may recall that Colin Jansen presented the Association with the 15th Hy Bty NZA Efficiency Cup, a piece of Regimental silver that Colin had rescued from a junk shop. This presentation was well covered in the last newsletter.

The origin of the cup is somewhat obscure. It was not initially a gunner trophy. It was first presented about 1905 by the citizens of Petone to a Petone boating club for cutter races. It was only presented in 1905 and 1906 before mysteriously reappearing in 1922 as the 15 Bty Efficiency Cup. It was then presented reasonably regularly through to 1939 to the most efficient section of 15 Bty. It could be that there was an association between the Petone boating club and No 6 NZ Garrison Artillery Volunteers (The Petone Navals), a volunteer artillery unit that existed from 1879 until it was absorbed into No 3 Coy NZ Garrison Artillery (NZGA) in 1908, but this is only surmise.

What we do know is that in 1921 No3 Coy, NZGA was redesignated 15 (Coast) Bty, NZA, headquartered at Fort Dorset. 15 Bty was equipped with two 6in BL Mk7 Coastal Artillery guns.



15 Bty NZA 6in BL Coastal Defence guns at Fort Dorset 1939

4. REPORT BY CO 16th Field Regiment Lt Col Matt Boggs

The last 6 months have been an eventful period for 16th Field Regiment, seeing the return of Task Group Gyro 6, several major field exercises, a short notice deployment to form Task Group Gyro 8, the reformation of 163 Battery and the standing up of the NZ Army's newest sub-unit, 39 Mortar Battery. All of this activity has presented an array of challenges to the Regiment, but having successfully met these we are now postured better than ever to be able to meet our current and any future commitments.

Kapyong Battery, having been reinforced by the return of Task Group Gyro 6, carried out Exercise Quad Enjoyable in early September 2009. This exercise was in support of several courses being run by the School of Artillery over this period. The aim of these courses was to enhance the skills of our senior Gunners and Junior Non-Commissioned Officers in order for them to further progress within the RNZA and contribute to the Regiment.

Exercise Quad Enjoyable was run over a period of 2 weeks in the Waiouru Training Area. The exercise tested the skills of Kapyong Battery and the students in all aspects of gunnery. It was a difficult exercise for all with the notorious weather of Waiouru bringing us snow in the first week and scorching hot temperatures the next.

The exercise culminated in a direct-fire shoot allowing the students and many brand new gunners to see the effects of the L119 Light Gun first-hand. The students performed well on the exercise and would then go on to fill new roles utilising their newfound skills.

While some rest may have been in order for the Regiment, this was not to be the case. Upon our return to Linton we discovered that 16th Field Regiment was responsible for forming the bulk of the upcoming Task Group Gyro 8 to Timor Leste and that Pre-Deployment Training was to begin

the following week. This group was to be commanded by Major Kendall Peacock and would have only eight weeks to train before being deployed to East Timor in late November.

Their build-up training saw the whole regiment get behind them, with many personnel who had only just returned from East Timor mentoring those who would soon carry the same responsibilities.

The Task Group is currently in East Timor carrying out their duties and will remain until May 2010.

October 2009 saw the newly reformed 163 Battery head south for Exercise Black Templar, which was touted as being "bigger than Ben-Hur". This proved to be no exaggeration as the exercise saw all arms within the New Zealand Army as well as the Air Force carrying out combined-arms live training in the Tekapo Training Area. Working with other units proved challenging, but ultimately 163 Battery came away with a good performance on the exercise and the experience necessary to further aid us in cooperating with those who need our support.

The major event of the end of the year was the formation of 39 Mortar Battery based in Burnham Military Camp. 39 Mortar Battery consists of both RNZA and RNZIR personnel who have come together to enhance the Mortar Capability of the New Zealand Army. This sub-unit will be based in Burnham in order to provide support to 2nd/1st Battalion, RNZIR. The standing up of 39 Mortar Battery saw most of the Regiment make its way down for a parade which was attended by the Chief of Army, Colonel Commandant and the Regimental Colonel. In 2010 39 Mortar Battery will be busy training and conducting a number of combined-arms exercises in the South Island.

The year 2010 so far has seen 16th Field Regiment preparing to undertake new challenges. Most of the regiment is preparing for upcoming exercises over the winter months. The largest challenge facing 16th Field Regiment will be the successful implementation of IFPS, a new fire control system

which will enhance our capabilities in every respect. The introduction of this system will allow us as Gunners to be prepared for any task required of us in the contemporary environment.

**Lt Col Matt Boggs,
CO 16 Fd Regt, RNZA**

5. Lt Col Nick Gillard reports in from London:

After a high tempo three years spread between command of 16 Fd Regt and Chief of Staff of the New Zealand Provincial Reconstruction Team in Bamyan Province, Afghanistan, I now find myself in the somewhat more leisurely post of Military Adviser London. Whilst the post is both busy and varied it is certainly poles apart from the previous three years. My wife is certainly grateful for that.

The basic function is to form a conduit between the NZDF and the British Army and wider UK MOD. I have a role in enhancing that relationship in a variety of areas such as capability, operations, doctrine, logistics and ceremonial activities. We are a small team of five uniformed and 12 civilian staff headed by Brig Phil Gibbons. We are based at New Zealand House on Haymarket which sits halfway between Piccadilly Circus and Trafalgar Square.

Thus far I have visited the Royal School of Artillery Larkhill to catch up with our RNZA exchange officer, Captain Gareth Miller. He is posted to 34 Battery, 14 Regiment, Royal Artillery as an FST commander (what we used to call an FOO) although he also has a training function. He has also been able to complete the IG course. Gareth has just returned from a battlefield tour of Gallipoli where he was able to present the ANZAC perspective to his British colleagues.

In addition I am also accredited to Belgium as the Defence Advisor. This has a similar although much lower key role to the UK. The primary function is a ceremonial one and I will be attending ANZAC Day services in Flanders this year.

There are three main events with successive services at Polygon Wood, Messines Ridge and Ypres (Menin Gate). I also get further afield attending various NATO conferences and working groups around Europe as the NZ representative. Having participated in Exercise Long Look 1995, deployed to Bosnia with 4 and 40 Regiment's Royal Artillery in 1997 and attended UK Staff College during 2001-03, the UK and the British Army are very familiar. Learning the ropes and fitting in has been a simple process for me and my family.

However, the unusually cold winter, traffic, commuting, beer, awful rugby and obsession with football take a small amount of getting used to. Although only three months into the posting I have quickly appreciated what a privilege it is to be here and the unique opportunities it presents.

December 2012 seems a long way off and we intend to make the most of the opportunity. Gunners and St Barbara's Day will present the chance to meet more of the Royal Artillery family and I will keep you informed.

I hope this note finds you all well and enjoying the Autumn. Spring has finally arrived here.

**Nick Gillard. Lt Col, RNZA,
Military Advisor , London**

6. NEW MEMBERS

GLACKIN, John Russell. John served the guns between 1966 and 1972. He was commissioned into the TF and posted to 32 Bty for this period. Between 1972 and 2002 he was a secondary school teacher. John is currently a guide at the RNZN Naval Museum at Devonport. John has an interest in military history which has led to the publication in 2009 of "In Defence of our Land", a tour of NZ's historic harbour fortifications.

He has been co-opted to the Assn committee to assist with the compiling of the Assn's history.

He and Margaret live on the North Shore.

7. IMMEDIATE MC – The John Masters Story

Taken from the book “Kiwi Gunners in War and Peace” by Mike Subritzky

From the mid-sixties of the last century, the British Army, some 50,000 strong and including Australian and NZ battalions, was involved in combating General Sukarno of Indonesia, and his grandiose plans for much of South East Asia. In the Borneo First Division, British Infantry battalions operated against the Indonesian lines of communications. They were mainly pre-emptive strikes known as “Claret” operations, and were politically deniable. Their purpose was to wrest the initiative from the Indonesians who had had early successes with terrorist attacks on Borneo and Sarawak.

On the 26 June 1965, the 2nd Battalion, King Edward VII’s Own Gurkha’s took over the Lundu Area of Operations in Borneo relieving the 1st Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. In Direct Support of the Gurkha’s was a New Zealander, Captain John Masters, Troop Commander, who was to act as an Artillery Forward Observer. He had originally been seconded from the NZ Army to 29th (Corunna) Battery, 4 Light Regiment, Royal Artillery, and had been in Borneo for some six months patrolling with the Argylls and 3RAR.

The Lundu AO was very flat terrain, intersected by large meandering jungle rivers, with occasional rocky outcrops rising straight up out of the thick primary jungle. The whole of the AO was also prone to flooding at the very first hint of rain.

The actual border with the Indonesian province of Kalimantan was little more than a line drawn on an old Dutch map, and both the Indonesians and the British often took advantage of this situation explaining away any concerns as simply “Map reading errors; sorry”.

On his first operation with the Gurkha’s, John accompanied Captain Surendraman Gurung who was temporarily in command of Support Company, and on the 2nd

of August, the Company sprang a very well planned ambush accounting for eight Indonesian soldiers, all KIA. This was followed by a second successful company-sized patrol with Captain Chris Bullock where a further twenty-seven Indonesians soldiers were killed with the loss of a single Gurkha.

In his book of his memoirs, published thirty years later in 1995, Chris Bullock (now Rtd Brigadier) has a comment about John Masters on that patrol that John particularly treasures.

“After the battle and quick check that everybody was present we moved off the hill and back to our base in the swamp. Can remember intense irritation as John Masters, our Artillery Officer, slowly retrieved his drying socks and laced up his jungle boots. As we moved off, he readjusted his guns to fire on the hill we had just vacated. A few minutes later, the Indonesian attack went in on the now empty hilltop with what seemed like at least a platoon. As they reached the top, the first 105mm shell crumpled in above up on the heights”.

Gurkha jungle patrols averaged 14 days against the normal 7 day patrols of Brit and Australian infantry battalions. After the second patrol returned to base, it was decided that a seven day break was in order and John was looking forward to catching up on a mountain of Troop administration that had been quietly gathering dust while he was out on operations.

Almost immediately Brigade informed the Gurkha’s that as a result of their activities during the last two patrols in the AO, the Indonesians were moving a reinforcement company into the area.

Following deep penetration patrol reports from Sergeant-Major Lawrence Smith, SAS, Captain Chris Bullock was back in command of a very reduced Support Company, totalling about 60 men. 45 of these were to be used in the upcoming ambush, and the remainder kept in reserve at a rear recce position about 2 clicks away. The Company was in such a depleted state due to the rigours of

the two previous patrols and the onset of scrub typhus among some soldiers after being bitten by mites. They were, however, the soldiers who had been to that area twice before.

As the river was in flood Chris Bullock judged that the Indonesians would probably make the journey on foot. The area was reced on the first day, after a walk-in of four days. Early the following morning, the ambush was laid covering a well-used track running parallel to the river so that both the track and the river formed the killing ground.

(Thursday, 2 September 1965) Chris Bullock was forward amongst his men and had established a checkpoint 20 metres to the rear through which all of the killing group were to move once the ambush had been sprung and the order to withdraw had been given. Located at the checkpoint were John Masters the Forward Observer, Acting CSM Hariprasad Gurung, a radio operator and the company medic. Each of John’s RA Driver Ops were a casualty of the earlier patrols, and the scrub typhus mites. He had a Gurkha rifleman to carry his fire orders net radio.

To the right flank and near the river lay the Bren gunner, Rifleman Ramparasad Pun and members of the Recce Platoon. SAS intelligence was impressive, accurate and timely. It was Rifleman Pun who first sighted a group of Indonesians moving into the ambush area and they appeared to be arriving in depth. With great courage Rifleman Pun held his fire until there was some twenty-five enemy soldiers in the killing area and their lead scout was almost on top of him. He then initiated the ambush with a long and murderous burst of automatic fire killing instantly the lead scout and three other enemy close behind.

Immediately all hell broke loose. The Indonesians (who were in fact a reinforced Company) stung by the initial surprise, reacted instantly. With great courage they attacked the ambush group in an attempt to overwhelm the numerically inferior ambushers (40 in number). Screaming and firing

from the hip, they attempted to roll over the right flank. The Anti Tank Platoon, which made up the left flank, engaged the enemy, shooting from the prone position and, in less than a minute, had accounted for a further twelve enemy.

Again the Indonesians quickly regrouped and launched a second attack but this was broken up when Lance Corporal Birbahadur Pun detonated a bank of Claymore mines into the onrushing Indonesians, and that attack faltered. As well, individual Gurkhas threw M26 grenades into the confusion causing further enemy casualties. The Indonesians were still firing wildly, and 20 metres back at the Check Point, the crack and thump of incoming small arms fire seemed to be everywhere. After his first "Contact, Wait, Out", John Masters had radioed a full set of Fire Orders, with a hold on the final command to fire.

The Gurkha's, to a man, remained in position and each time the Indonesians reformed and attacked, the Gurkha's waited until the enemy were right on top of them and then cut them down with outstanding fire control.

To be continued in the next issue of The NZ Gunner

8. THE BATTERY GUIDE (BG) - A personal view

Back in the early 1940's there was a great big war that ran for about six years and the armed forces learnt lots and lots of things through hard and sometimes bitter experience. The field artillery found that the best organization for it's guns was an eight gun battery split into two four gun troops that were self contained and could exist as an effective fire power unit away from Bty HQ and the other troop for extended

periods. The battery strength was around 150 personnel and even included about six men designated as LMG/Local defence numbers, there were also three warrant officers, a Battery Sergeant-Major (BSM) and two Troop Sergeant-Majors (TSM). In this era of shiny and slippery toilet paper and brown linoleum the gunners were content with this organization, it was based on war experience, it worked well. It even survived the Korean War in the early 1950's.

By about 1960 a form of peace existed, at least as far as the gunners were concerned, non-skid toilet paper and floor carpets were starting to appear, Army Orders were replaced by mighty tomes called Regulations and Standing Orders (R&SOs) and almost every time something untoward occurred these R&SOs were amended or extended to prevent a re-occurrence and to ensure the right people were able to protect their backsides. A period of enlightenment was upon us! A thing called the Pentropic Division was conceived. I consulted my Oxford Dictionary to find: pen, a female swan; thropic, turning towards!! What it actually meant in the overall context was a mystery to we lowly junior NCOs at that time. It was however quite clear that early versions of "bean counters" were involved

A field battery was now to consist of six guns with a capability to split to two, three gun sections for limited periods of time. The total number of personnel was around 125 and with the move away from two self contained troops two TSM's were without gainful employment and unwanted, as were a few others, the savings in equipment are fairly apparent.

Someone, somewhere had the nous to realize that

cutting two of three warrant officers in a battery would cause considerable muttering and discontent within the ranks and came up with the concept of the Battery Guide (BG); there was also the need to have someone to carry out the duties of the TSM's during deployment. There was a suggestion that the BG could be graded as a Staff Sergeant, fortunately that idea was discarded and the rank of Warrant Officer Class II was retained for the appointment. In broad terms the BG accompanied and assisted the Gun Position Officer (GPO) during the reconnaissance of a new gun position. He then returned to the gun battery, briefed the appropriate personnel and guided them onto the new gun position. Being an experienced soldier the BG would then retire from sight and attempt to avoid human contact, these actions were quickly noted and when the great tome, R&SO Vol 2 was consulted it was found the "Warrant Officers Class II may be called upon to carry out the duties of a subaltern officer". A useful provision that allowed the Orderly Officers roster to be packed out and personnel and guided them onto the new gun position. Being an experienced soldier the BG would then retire from sight and attempt to avoid human contact, these actions were quickly noted and when the great tome, R&SO Vol 2 was consulted it was found the "Warrant Officers Class II may be called upon to carry out the duties of a subaltern officer". A useful provision that allowed the Orderly Officers roster to be packed out and for BGs (and BSMs) to be rostered as duty officer in the command post (CP).

This in fact was not a bad move as the RNZA tended to have WO's who were of a

Regimental bent and others who were more technically inclined, many of the BG's came from the command post trades. By the time of the Vietnam war various BG's had placed their stamp on the appointment and performed the duties according to their experience. A number of the BG's came from School of Artillery staff where they had been training battery surveyors and young officers and there was an expectation that these personnel would be a sort of technical expert who would unobtrusively continue to extend guidance and education to the subalterns and others, this guidance sometimes took place in the privacy of the ammo dump. It was rather surprising some of the technical items that were presented for explanation, clarification or direction to a BG, often the dark recesses of the memory had to be searched. This was an important and satisfying aspect of the BG's job, there were the inevitable personality clashes, although relatively few, but in general there was a good feeling and a mutual respect between the BG and the young officers. This extended to a mutual confidence where it was deserved and on a couple of occasions FO's were known to delay an attack until the BG was on duty, this was not a reflection on the abilities of other duty officers but rather a situation where the FO's knew the capabilities of the BG and preferred to utilise his experience. The BSM and the BG could easily clash, their perception of their individual duties could cause an overlap and consequential ill feeling although most went out of their way to avoid any conflict. WOI Jack Keinzley (BSM 1968-69) kept as far away from the deployed gun line as he could, he firmly believed that the actual gun position was the BG's province, in fact a couple of days after the battery

deployed at a fire support base (FSB) he would return to Nui Dat. This attitude made for good relations between the BSM and BG and enabled the BG to control the discipline of the gun line without having to worry about undermining the BSM, not all of the BSM's were as punctilious as Jack. The BG was often the Battery Captains (BK) understudy for local defence and many entertaining hours were spent using the guns in that roll with various combinations of ammunition, charge and elevation being tried. HE or WP fuzed M565, charge 3, with a fuze setting of 2.0

and a QE of 120mils was most spectacular, it did give rise to a bit of grizzling and complaining from the other occupants of a FSB but seemed to have the desired effect as no one bothered us close up. The odd deployment as an OP added further variety to the BG's life. The appointment of BG during the Vietnam era was a challenging yet satisfying time, it allowed the practical application of skills learnt over many years, it often allowed one to observe the performance of personnel into whose training one had had input. The insistence of the School to teach the basics of gunnery rather than a modified Vietnam version was vindicated. .

**David Roberts. BG. 161 Bty
1969-1970 South Vietnam**

9. A HISTORICAL ITEM

MOBILIZATION PROCEDURES, 1904

The following extracts are from the Fort Bastion Record Book which appears to have been compiled by a Captain C.B. MacKenzie around the turn of the century.

Mobilization Signals

The signal to mobilize will be as follows:

By day: A red flag surmounted by a pennant will be hoisted on the flagstaff on the Public Library, Wellesley Street, Auckland. Three guns will be fired in rapid succession from Albert Park.

By night: Two red lights will be hoisted on the Public Library flagstaff and three rockets will be fired at one minute intervals from Albert Park. The firing signals will be repeated at North Head.

The following will be the procedure on Mobilization.

The order "Mobilize" will be received by the OC Permanent Forces, who will issue orders to the Permanent Force, also to the No 1 Coy, No 8 Coy and No 9 Coy, Garrison Artillery Volunteers. The No 1 Coy and No 8 Coy GACs will assemble at the Drill Hall, Auckland and after being medically inspected will be ferried to North Shore (or proceed by route march to the forts on the South side of the harbour (Fort Bastion), there to be stationed).

Details of kit for Permanent Artillery and Garrison Artillery Volunteers:

Personal: Full dress head dress, khaki jacket and trousers, leggings, boots, cloth cap, two pouches on waist belt, great coat (rolled), haversack containing knife, fork, spoon, plate, pannikin and one days cooked rations, water bottle (filled), pocket knife and lanyard.

In Kit Bag: Blanket, waterproof sheet, flannel shirt, socks, towel, soap and brushes, extra pair of boots and laces.

Officers: Same as men, but must also provide themselves with field glasses, watch,

compass, not book,
pencil and whistle.

Corps will bring with them all ammunition which may be in their possession, equally distributed and in pouches: the balance to complete each man with 120 rounds being drawn at destination.

Transport will be arranged for and rations issued by The DAAG of the District on arrival at destination, but every officer and man must carry in his haversack a sufficient supply of food for one day.

10. G U N N E R S ' B A C K W A R D S C O M P A T I B I L I T Y ' C H A L L E N G E

Earlier this year a handful of Australians spent time training in the far north, 61 degrees north with plenty of snow, at Niinisalo 200 km NW of Helsinki. They were at the Finnish artillery school on a short course for over 20 men and women from Australian, British, Canadian and German artilleries to ready them for training and mentoring Afghan National Army (ANA) artillery.

The challenge for western gunners with this role is that the Afghans use Russian guns, most

commonly the 122mm D30 Howitzer, probably the most widely used gun in the world today.

Some western armies have previously undertaken D30 familiarisation in former Warsaw Pact countries, and a few western countries have processed D30's for a few decades.

However, the formal international course in Finland seems to be a first. Not only is the gun new to most westerners, there's the added fun of no computers because the ANA uses manual methods to produce firing data, however, it seems that Soviet mil sights (circle 6000) have been replaced by 6400 mil ones.

The D30 entered Soviet service in 1963 and was produced by China, Egypt and Iraq. There is a very wide variety of ammunition for it, but the ANA only has standard HE, HEAT, smoke and illuminating which is separate loading with 5 charges.

The gun is unusual being fired from a mounting, a three-leg trail and sole plate with the wheels raised above the trails and towed with all the trails attached to the muzzle brake where the towing eye is. This arrangement was originally developed in Germany in 1943 for a 10.5 mm field howitzer that did not enter service. The gun follows the

standard Soviet pattern of a range drum for each charge and is notably robust. Gun stores are sparse and the only tools needed are a sledgehammer, mole wrench and a Gerber pocket knife! Other key features are: HE shell weight: 21.8kg, Maximum range: 15.4km, Elevation: -7 to +70 degrees, Top traverse: 360 degrees, Weight in action: 3150 kg.

The ANA D30s are in an artillery company in the combat support kandak (battalion) of each brigade. Training and mentoring Afghan gunners has taken place for the last year or two, the problem has been that no sooner are Afghan gunners trained than they find themselves reverting to infantry due to the operational pressures on the ANA. Training observation parties has yet to start.

Article written for the Nov 09 issue of Gunfire by Nigel Evans.

Disorder in the Court

Attorney: Now Doctor, isn't true that when a person dies in their sleep, they don't know about until the next morning?

Witness: Did you actually pass the bar exam?



NZ Army 1 Recce Flight, Jan/Feb 1963 at Kariori

(left to Right) Ft Lt Hawkins, AC2 Hughes, Cpl K Piper, Sgt D Roberts, Capt J Masters, Lcpl Cook, WO11 M Nabbs, and Capt R Pearce

12. NOTICEBOARD

A. ANZAC OF THE YEAR

The RNZRSA's first ANZAC of the year will be known on Anzac Day. The RNZRSA has launched the annual award to honour the efforts and achievements of a New Zealander who embodies the 'spirit of Anzac' by displaying the qualities of comradeship, courage, compassion and commitment. The result will be announced on MTV at 8.25 pm on ANZAC Day

B. HOROWHENUA ARTILLERY ASSOCIATION

Is celebrating it's 50th Jubilee at the Levin RSA at 11-00am on Wednesday 19th May 2010
All members are invited to attend
Please register with the Secretary Adam Gibson, 34 Gordon Place, Levin 5510

Cost will be \$25 per person attending

It is intended that there be a parade and service at The Colours at 11-00am followed by Luncheon in the RSA at 12-00pm, there will be incidental music playing after lunch

C GAIL FLUTEY'S MESSAGE

While we were in Kaitaia in our Motor Home Roly needed to get to the hospital.

He looked like he had had a stroke. The boys and their wives were great. Not only did they give us a pick up and drop off service but also offered us their cars. One couple arrived within a few hours of Roly getting to hospital. Arthur Simeon arrived the next morning with his car just in case we needed it.

Anyway all is good, he has Bell's Palsy and each day is getting better. It will be a while before he

is right but with out his brothers in arms it would have been longer.

Thank you for your care and understanding while we were in Kaitaia.

Regards Gail Flutey

C. SHAY BASSETT HAS AN ENQUIRY/

I'm hoping you can help me with a request for information that we have received from the Minister of Defence's office. I'm one of the few Gunners currently working in Army General Staff, so have gotten involved. Basically the background is that **the Marlborough RSA in Blenheim has asked for the history of their 25 Pdr** which they were given in 1994. So far we have only managed to determine that it was one of two that came from outside King Edward Barracks (KEB) in Christchurch when they were closed in the early 1990s, but we can't find anything more than this

My guess would be that it was probably a 3 Fd Regt gun that was mounted outside KEB soon after the 25 Pdr went out of service in 1977, but this is only a pluck. If you are able to help with any further information via your various communication networks, it would be greatly appreciated. The gun is a 1942 Canadian MK 1 number 10210, but other than that and the above, I have no other information I'm afraid.

D. DISTRIBUTION OF THE NZ GUNNER ELECTRONICALLY.

To save costs and to meet the needs of our members we are about to be able to send your copy of The NZ Gunner to you electronically. If you wish to take advantage of this service please advise the Secretary (Tony McLeod) of your wish and your up to date email address by email to :

rnza.association@gmail.co.nz



CALLING ALL GUNNERS
Come and Join Us!
On 19th March 2011
Celebrating
100 Years
since an Artillery Unit
was established in Hamilton

All past and present gunners, RF or TF, whether you served the Waikato guns or not, you are welcome to join us.
If you are interested in receiving regular newsletters about this event simply advise your contact details (e-mail or postal address) to Hugh Vercoe:
hugh@vercoes.co.nz
or
PO Box 246 Morrinsville, 3300

Behind the Lines: The Editor's Page

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Subscriptions: *Accounting policy* - The 2008 AGM endorsed the Committee's policy of accepting only 'full year' payment of subscriptions, that is, \$20 or multiples thereof. This action is necessary because the accounting process does not cater for fractional years. Odd sums will be credited to the Welfare Fund in the donor's name.

Donations: All charitable and welfare donations over \$5 are now tax deductible as the Association is a Registered Charity.

Receipts: Receipts are issued for all incoming monies and sent out quarterly with the next issue of *The New Zealand Gunner*.

Email Addresses: Are you on the Internet? The Secretary may not be aware of your address. If you are not getting messages from the RNZA Association and wish to do so, let him have your address. Have you changed ISPs? Have you updated your Internet address? Some mail is being returned.

Input into *The New Zealand Gunner*: Short stories, especially with accompanying photographs are always welcome for inclusion. The Editor's email address is dgroberts@xtra.co.nz

New Members: New members are most welcome. ALL Gunners with a minimum of 3 years service *or* an Operational Tour are eligible for Full Membership. Associate Membership is available to anyone who has been attached to an RNZA Unit or has had a close affiliation therewith, and to close family of RNZA Gunners and to Gunners of any nation around the world. Membership application forms are on-line at www.riv.co.nz/rnza/folk/join.htm, or MuzzleFlashes.blogspot.com.

Death of a Member: If you know of the passing of someone who was a Gunner or a member please tell the Secretary. Where possible a representative of the Association will attend the funeral.

Muzzle Flashes items to Mike at: muzzleflashes.blogspot.com

Secretarial/Treasurer Matters to Tony at: rnza.association@gmail.com

Items for *The NZ Gunner* to Marie at: dgroberts@xtra.co.nz