



ESTABLISHED 1934

NEW ZEALAND PERMANENT FORCE OLD COMRADES ASSOCIATION (INC)

Secretary. (John Rout)

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NEWSLETTER No. 117

March 2003

ROUTINE ORDERS

SUBSCRIPTION FEES

Subscriptions for 2003 are now due. Honorary and Life Members are not required to pay a subscription. Lady Associates pay \$5 and all other members \$10 per year. All members are eligible for election as a Life Member on reaching the age of 80. **When you reach the age of 80 please let the Secretary know as records of birth dates are not held.**

To be financial to Dec 2003 you are required to pay \$

If an amount is not shown above you are financial. If paying by cheque (preferred) please make it payable to NZPFOCA and send it to the secretary. To save postage receipts will not be returned but will be held by the Treasurer for audit requirements or your inspection if required. We will accept more than one years subscription if you wish to send more.

Remember we need the subscriptions for the production of this News Letter and other administration costs. **Non payment for a period greater than three years will result in a warning note and cancellation of membership if payment is not received.**

Prompt Payment Incentive.

As an incentive for prompt payment the association has purchased copy number 400 of the recently released painting "Moor Gun Picket". For those that have not seen the painting it depicts guns and gunners old & new located in the Moawhango River Valley in Waiouru. During the Assn' committee meeting in late May or early June this year a draw will take place to select a winner of this magnificent painting. All paid up financial members, including life and honorary members, will be included in the draw. The cut off date is to be 16 May 2003, if you are not a financial member at that time you will not be included in the draw. The result will be published in the June News letter.

LAST POST:

- ✓ Chris Diamond in Kaitaia on 14 December 02
- ✓ WO1 Norman Bennetts in Auckland on the 18th of December 2002
- ✓ Major General Les Pearce CB CBE in Auckland on 21 December 2002
- ✓ Brigadier Blackie Burns DSO MBE in Wellington on 11 January 2003
- ✓ Capt Bob Bennett in Motueka on 14 February 2003.
- ✓ Mrs Vicky Dunn in Queensland on 17 February 2003

CHANGE OF ADDRESS:

✓ Capt Bob Bennett to: P.O. Box 179, MOTUEKA
 ? Alan Petrie *deceased* to: c/o S Altoft, 217B Waikawa Road, PICTON.
 ? Hugh Gibson *resigned* to: Flat 2, 15 Bengston Street, EKETAHUNA
 ✓ Ross Goldsworthy to: 2/37 Fairdene Avenue, Henderson, WAITAKERE CITY.
 ✓ Lt John Basham to: 93C Grace Road, TAURANGA
 ? Mrs Phyllis George to: 202/40 Fenton Crescent, Francis Hodgkins Retirement Centre,
 St Clair, DUNEDIN.

NEW MEMBERS:

✓ WOIR. M. Bushy Mclean Auckland Army Centre, Grey Lynn, AUCKLAND.
 ? Daryl McLaren 9 Ranch Place, PUKEKOHE.

RESIGNATIONS:

R. V. G. Wilson, Mrs Phyllis George.

NEW LIFE MEMBERS (On reaching the age of eighty)

Congratulations to Lt Col H.S. Cocks OBE, Cliff Cole and Bill Beveridge.

FROM THE EDITOR**DWINDLING MEMBERSHIP.**

A study of our last four News letters, this one included, reveals that we have lost 28 members (deaths, resignations and non payment of fees). During the same period we have managed to add 5 new members. Approximately ¼ of our membership (70) is made up of life members they are all 80 plus years old and sadly are not going to be around for ever. Obviously if we are going to continue as a viable assn', in the future, we need to recruit new members now.

Although present day recruitment is restricted to gunners who have served in the Regular Force RNZA for three or more years there must be hundreds out there who qualify including, those still serving. You will know some of these people therefore, in the main, recruiting new members is in your hands.

We are a unique organisation. Our roots are buried deeply in the early history of this wonderful country and few organisations have an all ranks membership from Gunner up to Major General. Some prospective members are put off by the word 'Old' in our assn' name and think we are nothing but a bunch of 'Old Fogies. That is far from the truth and although some are old, some are aging and some are very young. As I see it the important word in our assn' title is 'Comrades', Old, aging and young we are all Comrades who have been fortunate enough to serve the guns. Of vital importance is our comradeship between Old and Serving members of the RNZA.

The ball is in our court let us all try hard to increase our membership.

EMAIL NETWORK.

Graeme Black has set up an information network. This is a very handy network for rapidly passing on news, good, bad, happy and sad. The network is not restricted to NZPFOCA members and in fact includes some Australian Gunners. If you have an email capability and would like to be included send an email to Graeme at gbb@thenet.co.nz or to me at johnbr@paradise.net.nz.

REUNION 2003

A reminder that this years reunion in Taupo is to be over the period 31 Oct to 2 Nov, with the AGM and Dinner on Sat 1 Nov. If you are intending to come along please let me know by email or a quick note. I will publish a list of the names, of those showing an intention, in the next two News Letters. The list may be enough to stir some life into members who are trying to make up their minds. Let's make Reunion 2003 a Boomer.

CAN YOU HELP? (If you can help, use the attached email addresses or inform the secretary.)
In most cases these enquiries from our website are directed onto NZ Defence Records. Here the enquirers may be looking for the personal touch.

TVNZ are putting together a documentary about New Zealand's involvement in overseas conflicts and have asked for our help. In particular they want to borrow home movie films, preferably colour, that were filmed whilst serving during the World War II, Korea, Malaya, Malaysia and Viet Nam conflicts. If you can help you can get in touch with the secretary or ring Lemuel at TVNZ 09 916 6914.

FROM AND ABOUT MEMBERS

Brigadier John (Blackie) Burns DSO, MBE, BSc passed away on 11 January 2003. His funeral service was in the Eastbourne Church of San Antonio, a church he attended as a boy. He was accorded full military honours. Gunners from 16 Field Regiment RNZA performed the duties and from all reports their drills and turnout were absolutely immaculate. Two of the Pallbearers were Col Don Kenning and our Patron Brig Ray Andrews. During the service Roger Newth placed a wreath on behalf of our Assn'. We have since received a letter from Blackie's wife, Shirley, thanking Roger and the Assn' for the floral tribute. In the letter Shirley states "As you know, I'm sure, Blackie's long years of association with the Old Comrades was one of the things that gave him so much happiness. I think of all army connections this was the one he held most dear".

Blackie was a stalwart member of our Assn', he believed very strongly in the objects of the Assn' and the old saying "Once a Gunner always a Gunner". He was also one who believed it is essential to ensure that the link between the Assn' and the present day serving gunners was maintained as strongly as possible. We will surely miss you Blackie.

The following extracts are from the eulogies presented by Lt Gen Don McIvor CMG OBE and Maj Gen Scotty Gordon OBE at the funeral of Brig Blackie Burns. The complete eulogies will be available on our Website soon.

Lt Gen Don McIvor:

John Burns was born in Napier in 1917 and grew up in Mt Victoria, Wellington. He was educated at St Patrick's Town and from there went on to the Royal Military College Duntroon where he was given his nickname "Blackie". In 1938 he graduated into the RNZA, Blackie served in the NZ Army for 37 years.

He sailed for the Middle East with the 6th Reinforcements in 1941 and was taken prisoner for the first of three times on the 5th of July 1942. That was the start of that odyssey of in his own words, "imprisonment, escape, evasion and final refuge", until he rejoined his unit in mid 1944. His exploits over this period are recounted in his recently published Book "Life is a Twisted Path" a remarkable account, which, though understated in typical Blackie fashion, reveals more than those events themselves. In 1945 Blackie was awarded the MBE.

In 1953 Blackie went on to command 16 Field Regiment in Korea. For Blackie, this posting was one of his pre-eminent military achievements. Noted for his cool unflappable command in all situations he was awarded the DSO for his command of the NZ Guns when the enemy breached the allied lines in the fighting preceding the Armistice (the last DSO to be awarded to a NZ officer in action).

In the later 1950,s he filled other posts in the Royal Regiment including that of Director. In January 1961 he was appointed as Commandant Army Schools. He left Waiouru in 1964 and was posted as Assistant Army Liaison Officer in London. He was informed he told me that he "had reached his limit". He went on to say "never give up – if you persevere , things will turn in your favour".

Major General Les Pearce. Passed away on the 11th of December 2002 Although Les spent most of his army career in the Infantry he began his 34 years in the Army as a Gunner and was a member of our Association. In 1940 he joined 26 Infantry Bn in Egypt as a Sergeant Major. Rumour has it that the Commanding Officer of 26 Bn, the late Brigadier Rusty Page, (All Black, Gunner, Late member of this Association) was in need of a CSM and managed to get Les posted to his unit. Of course Les's excellent Rugby strengths had nothing to do with it. Maj General Les was the first soldier in the history of the NZ Army to rise from the ranks all the way to the top.

Our Ron Cross served, on secondment, in 1NZ Regiment, Malaya, when the General was the CO. Ron attended the funeral and has sent us the following report.

A SOLDIER'S FAREWELL

The Funeral of Maj Gen Leslie Arthur Pearce 1918-2002

We gathered at St Peter's Church in Takapuna on a fine and peaceful afternoon to remember and say farewell to Les Pearce, the soldier's General. The church was packed as full as an old battler's kitbag, as tight as a North Shore rugby scrum should be. Fay and her children (now all grown up and parents themselves) seemed assured that we valued the sacrifices they'd made so husband and father could lead us all those years ago. My own special memories of the service will always be of how well Bishop of Aotearoa Vercoe spoke of becoming his Padre and ours, how bravely the sons and daughter spoke of living with their Dad, how great his contribution was to the careers all of the ex-soldiers present, how well Doc, my CO's RSM, read the lesson from John 14 "Let not your heart be troubled . . ." and how fervently the representative of Les's 26th Battalion read from Revelations 21 "for the former things are passed away . . ."

At the grave-side, I met again many of my comrades from our First Battalion, few knowing that Les had enlisted as a Gunner – but never mind, he was always "ours" no matter where or what we were. When his hat, medals and NZ's flag, worn so proudly in life and now in death, were gently lifted from his coffin they were replaced by a magnificent bouquet of white gypsophila and red roses – symbols of the peace he fought for and the love of Fay, of his children and theirs. Symbols also of the love of the men who, with him, served their country then and do so now.

As the salvos of the firing party reverberated, echoing across the valleys surrounding his grave, we said good-bye. Until we meet again, Sir. Driving away from the cemetery, moments after the reveille that ended his funeral, a magnificent Tui flew out of the graveside bushes and across my front. The white bib feathers were the medals of my Rangitira Pearce and its black feathers his shroud, Tui's flight North, his farewell.

Sadly Maj Gen Les Pearce's wife, Fay, passed away on the 6th of February just 7 weeks after the death of her husband.

Les Pye was awarded the Queens Service Medal (for public services) in the New Years Honours. Well done and congratulations Les.

Catherine Rivers. A belated congratulation to our Webmaster on her qualification as PhD. Catherine's thesis was "The Co-ordination of Vehicle Routing." The Logistics of Supply Train Management. Since qualifying Catherine has received several enquiries, some from overseas. Well done Catherine.

Henry Salt sends New Year greetings to all the gang from the warm and sometimes very warm temperatures in Queensland. His home town of Gatton managed to dodge the recent spate of bushfires the closest being about 35 Km away. Henry and his wife Thel recently celebrated their 60th Wedding Anniversary. They received congratulations from the Queen, The Aust' Gov' Gen', The Aust Prime Minister and other Gov' and Local Reps'. Please also accept our congratulations Henry and Thel.

Matt Crawley. Reports from Tauranga. A gathering was held in the Tauranga RSA to celebrate the 80th Birthday of Bill Beveridge. Between 50 and 60 family members and comrades joined in the celebrations. Roger Newth and wife Lois from Paraparaumu Beach and John Rout from Papakura also attended. Matt has also invited all Gunners and partners to a luncheon in the Tauranga RSA on Gunners Day Mon 26 May. Tauranga RSA has some welfare unit available for \$50 per night, \$10 extra for each additional person, book directly with the RSA Ph: 07 578 9654. If you are intending to attend the Luncheon please inform Matt at 2/159 16th Avenue, TAURANGA or Ph: 07 577 0502.

Matt has put in a plea for members living in the Tauranga area to attend the next reunion in Taupo. He mentions that there were at least 15 who maybe could have attended. He has suggested that if you have travel or other problems get in touch with him and he will endeavour to help. Finally "come on Guys lets have a better showing in 2003, happy new year to all.

SOME WORLD WAR TWO TRIVIA.

The first German serviceman killed in WWII was killed by the **Japanese** (China, 1937), the first American serviceman killed was killed by the Russians (Finland 1940), and the highest ranking American Killed was Lt Gen Lesley McNair, killed by the US Army Air Corps... So much for allies.

The youngest US serviceman was 12 year old Calvin Graham USN. He was wounded and given a Dishonourable Discharge for lying about his age. (His benefits were later restored by an act of congress).

At the time of Pearl Harbour the top US Navy Command was called CINCUS (pronounced "sink us"), the shoulder patch on the US Army's 45th Infantry Division was the Swastika, and Hitler's private train was called "Amerika" All three were rapidly changed.

More US servicemen died in the Air Corps than the Marine Corps. While completing the required 30 missions your chance of being killed was 71%.

Generally speaking there was no such thing as an average fighter pilot. You were either an ace or a target. For instance Japanese ace Hiroyoshi Nishizawa shot down over 80 planes. He died while a passenger on a cargo plane.

German submarine U-120 was sunk by a malfunctioning toilet.

Among the first Germans captured at Normandy were several Koreans. They had been forced to fight for the Japanese Army until they were captured by the Russians and forced to fight for the Russian Army until they were captured by the Germans and forced to fight for the German Army until they were captured by the US Army.

Finally.

Following a massive naval bombardment 35,000 US and Canadian troops stormed ashore at Kiska, in the Aleutian Islands. 21 troops were killed in the fire fight. It would have been worse if there had been any Japanese on the island.

By Wally Ruffell

THE GUN

Continued From NL 116

The early 1880s saw the introduction of the 'disappearing gun,' featuring several systems chief of which was the Armstrong (EOC) illustrated in Fig. 137.

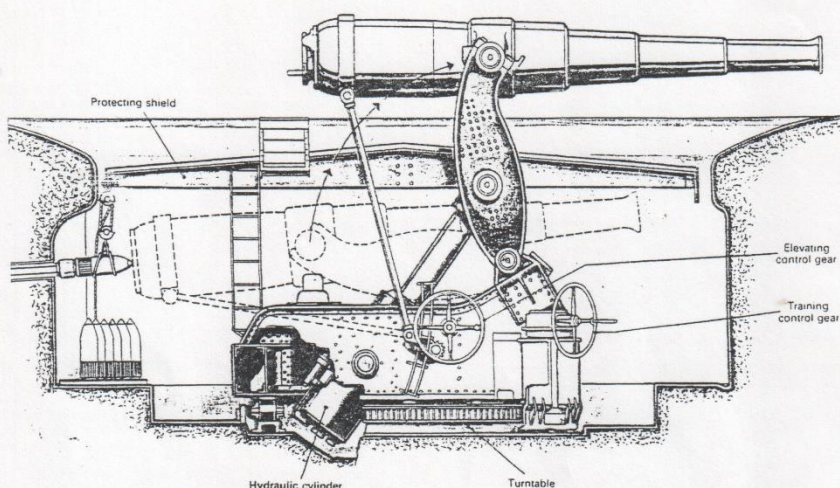


Fig. 137: BL 6-in (or 8-in) Armstrong gun on Elswick hydro-pneumatic disappearing carriage. NB: 6-inch and 8-inch systems were identical except for size. Dotted outline shows gun in loading position.

The large emplacement enabled the whole detachment to work below ground level beneath a steel shield. When ready to fire the HP system lifted the gun to the firing position, and after firing controlled its recoil back to the loading position.

As a protection for the detachment the idea was commendable but as an effective means of defence against steam-powered warships which by the 1850s were capable of 16 knots, not so praiseworthy. Even a well-trained detachment took a minute and a half to get a single round away.

The New Zealand Government purchased 10 BL 8-inch and 13 6-inch of the Armstrong pattern disappearing guns in 1885 for installation at the four main ports. First to be installed was one at Summit Battery, Fort Cautley, North Head. Members of the Armed Constabulary began work on the emplacement late in 1885 and continued through 1886 'allowing nine months for the concrete to settle.' The gun was finally mounted in 1887.

By 1912 disappearing guns were obsolete but survived in New Zealand until the late 1920s when they were finally retired. The North Island guns were scrapped in 1929, but fortunately from a historical point of view the scrap merchant struck financial difficulties, abandoned the project, and left two complete equipments at Devonport (less breech mechanisms).

One may still be seen at South Battery, Fort Cautley, North Head, and one at Mt Victoria (formerly Fort Victoria). Unfortunately the latter was vandalised during World War 2 by local authorities seeking non-ferrous metals; they removed the HP system, severely damaging the mounting in the process.

A few of the South Island guns . . . may still be seen, notably those at Ripa Island (Fort Jervois) and Taiaroa Head (Dunedin). Some of them were found still serviceable at the outbreak of World War 2, and were proved and recalibrated for cordite.

Experiments carried out during the late 1890s proved that it was virtually impossible for a warship to register a direct hit on a disappearing gun emplacement, i.e. a 'pinpoint target.' Thus coast artillery reverted to less expensive mountings.

By 1900 the central pivot type (CP) of mounting was being adopted for all guns while at the same time recoil systems were becoming more sophisticated. Runout no longer relied upon gravity; springs now took over. Fig. 138 shows a typical example of a CP mounting.

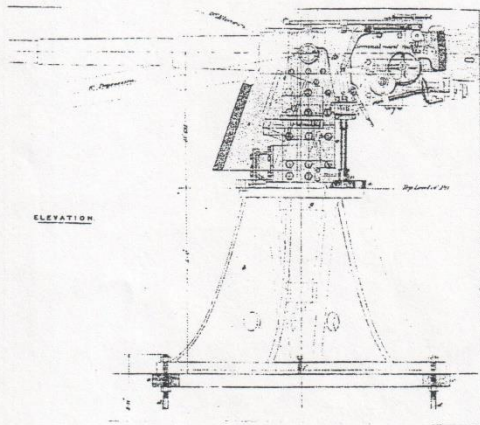


Fig. 138: Showing QF 4.7-in gun mounted upon a central pivot (CP) type mounting

By 1900 the CP mounting was being adopted for BL 6-in and 9.2-in guns which were in the future to comprise the bulk of coast artillery armament.

At the same time improved recoil systems of oil buffers and spring recuperators were introduced. Runout no longer depended on gravity. See Fig. 140.

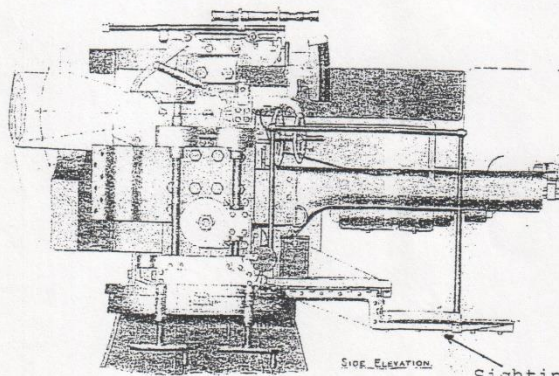


Fig. 139: BL 6-in Mk 7 on CP mounting (left side).

The lower portion of the mounting is not shown but resembled that in Fig. 138. It was high enough to enable men to traverse and elevate the gun from the floor of the emplacement as well as from the sighting platform. Suitable indicators were provided in the former case.

Sighting platform

TO BE CONTINUED

