



NZ GUNNER

Royal New Zealand Artillery Association Newsletter

PRESIDENT'S REPORT:

BY SHAY BASSETT

Greetings fellow Gunners

This week I was privileged to, once again, present the Gunner of the Year (GOTY) award on the 16 Fd Regt end of year change of command parade. A more complete article will be in our new year edition, but suffice to say LBdr (now Bdr as he was promoted later that day) O'Hara was not only GOTY, he was also Soldier of the Year, and NZDF Person of the Year! An incredible trifecta, and proof positive that the quality of our Gunners today continues to be outstanding.

Turning to the near future, the big fat fella in the red suit will be heading our way shortly, and I have to admit to longing for the Xmas break more than normal after feeling cheated of our summer last year. I wish everyone all the very best for the festive season, and look forward to catching up in 2024. In closing, for those who were unable to be there, the following is an abridged version of my President's report at this year's Annual General Meeting:

When I look back on this year the stand out event for the RNZA, and therefore the Association, has been the crowning of our new King followed by his accepting the now traditional role of Captain General. A significant occurrence for all Gunners of the realm countries, and something I look forward to hearing more about from our Colonel Commandant.

The next most important milestone for us, I think, occurred very recently. I refer to the opening of the Waikato Artillery Museum. Although the weather was not as good as it could have been, it was a memorable day, although sadly I suspect it was also the last time most of us caught up with Hugh Vercoe who was the driving force behind this magnificent project.

In terms of the business your Executive Committee has focused on this year, it may be broken into two broad areas.

The first has been centred on continuing to keep communication going between our members via social media and the newsletter –for which I would like to publicly thank Chris Morris and Marty Coomber for their outstanding and ongoing efforts.

The second area of our focus is new work made up of three key areas, these being; member support, Op Ubique, and the new constitution.

Thank You to:

- Bernie McCort continues to provide our key linkage to Veterans Affairs (VA) and, together with her merry band, attends VA expos around the country.
- Paul Weld and Brian Moles for their dedication and hard work. Refurbishing old guns in dire need of some TLC.
- John McNicol our under praised Secretary
- Chris Morris for undertaking the formidable task of reconciling our membership list of some 1300 names with our contact list of around 900.
- Greg Thwaite, who once more stepped up in my absence at the AGM and the sound advice I can always rely on
- Johnny Garton for all his assistance with organising the Reunion this year
- Finally, a fond farewell to our treasurer Chris Pierce

Recently there have been changes to legislation regarding Incorporated Societies and charities which will necessitate some work. There is also some way to go in developing a functional and useful member support system and processes

Your next committee, I know, will continue the great work of this year. So in closing I ask that you might consider joining or assisting them in some way, whether that be as a committee member, in an adjunct role, or just making a donation in order to help keep our Association fees free. Thank you.

Shay Basset - President

Q Store:

For a wide range of RNZA and gunnery items

<http://www.rnzaaQstore@gmail.com> - The Association Q Store.

Contact Us:

RNZAA Website: www.rnzaa.org.nz

President: Shay Bassett: SHAY.BASSETT@nzdf.mil.nz

RNZAA Secretary: John McNicol: rnza.association@gmail.com

Newsletter: Marty Coomber: martin.coomber.nz@gmail.com

Q Store: Craig Hewett: rnzaaQstore@gmail.com

Donations

Donations can be made to our account as follows:

Account name: RNZAA. Account number: 38-9007-0694501-00 Reference: Donation.

You can claim tax credits for donations of \$5 or more when the donation is made to an approved charity. The RNZAA meets the charity criteria. Receipts for donations are available.

CONTACTING VETERANS AFFAIRS

BY BERNIE MCCORT

Veterans Affairs phone lines operate between 9.00-3.00pm Mon - Fri only. They can be accessed by email outside of these hours.

There is a shortage of Case Managers at present, but this has been worked on in the last few months and should resolve itself by the New Year. It takes approx. 3 months to train a new Case Manager and then, they still have their training wheels on!!!

The majority of Case Managers do not have any Military experience, but there are now several staff members who do, that they can consult with.

PLEASE BE PATIENT. Your request will be dealt with by its priority and the information that you have provided. So the more information and background history to the condition that you can provide will make the outcome better and dealt with easier.

The Veterans Affairs posts that appear on our Facebook page are only shared by me for your information - so I have no background knowledge of individual situations.

Veterans Affairs do have their own Facebook page which you can ask questions of a general nature.

Remember, the purest form of Welfare is connection with each other on a grassroots basis, therefore forming an informal support network.

THE KING OUR CAPTAIN GENERAL

BY COLONEL BEN BAGLY REGIMENTAL COLONEL RNZA

Kia ora Fellow Gunners,

Many of you will already be aware that His Majesty, King Charles III, has agreed to become our new Captain General, as announced by the Master Gunner of St James's Park

I will write a letter to The Master Gunner thanking him for his representation of Commonwealth Artillery Regiments to enable The King to be the Captain General of all Commonwealth Gunners. 🇳🇿

It is my great privilege to be able to report that His Majesty King Charles III has agreed to become Captain-General of the Royal Regiment of Artillery, succeeding in the role from his Mother, Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

His Majesty will also fulfil this role for the Regiments of Royal Canadian, Royal Australian and Royal New Zealand Artillery.

This is a great honour and continues a tradition established by His Majesty's Grandfather, King George VI, who at a dinner at Woolwich in 1950 expressed his desire to be Captain-General Royal Artillery rather than Colonel-in-Chief, a change in title that was effected in January, 1951. This also revived a rank originally dating from the 15th Century.

The Royal Regiment looks forward to establishing a close relationship with our new Captain-General as the Gunners look to a brave and exciting future.

*Lieutenant General Sir Andrew Gregory KBE CB
The Master Gunner St James's Park*

What is King Charles military service?

During his second year at Cambridge, he requested and received Royal Air Force training. He then trained as a jet pilot in March 1971, passing out that September before embarking on a naval career.

He then served on the guided missile destroyer HMS Norfolk between 1971 and 1972 and the frigates HMS Minerva 1972 to 1973 and finally HMS Jupiter 1974.

In 1974, he qualified as a helicopter pilot at RNAS Yeovilton, and then joined 845 Naval Air Squadron, operating from HMS Hermes.

On February 9, 1976, Charles took command of the coastal minehunter HMS Bronington for his last ten months of active service in the navy.

He learned to fly on a Chipmunk basic pilot trainer, a BAC Jet Provost jet trainer, and a Beagle Basset multi-engine trainer; he then regularly flew the Hawker Siddeley Andover, Westland Wessex and BAe 146 aircraft of The Queen's Flight until he gave up flying after crashing the BAe 146 in the Hebrides in 1994. – Stuff 5 May 2023

SOME EXPERIENCES OF A VIETNAM FORWARD OBSERVER 161 FIELD BATTERY, ROYAL NEW ZEALAND ARTILLERY

BY LT COL (RETD) WALLY STEWARD

Author's Note

This is being written 55 years after the events and may thus include some inaccuracies (minor, I hope), which I shall put down to a dimming memory. Full operational details have been published in many other accounts and this is not intended to be a history but mainly a collection of personal experiences.

Background

My first tour in Vietnam had been in early 1966, when I was posted for Air OP duties with 161 Bty RNZA, part of 173rd Airborne Brigade, US Army based at Bien Hoa and including the 1 RAR Group. I was, in fact, to join Capt Roger Pearce RNZA in a US Army aviation company flying "Huey" utility and gunship helicopters in support of infantry I was to join, on the ground, later in 1967.

Pre-Deployment Training

I joined several others at the School of Artillery in Waiouru, in mid-1967, to commence pre-deployment training. This was mostly concerned with Gunner matters but I seem to remember a good dose of physical training and an introduction to the "Wooster" method of close-quarter rifle shooting, which proved very effective both by day and by night.

Appropriately, a lot of time was spent at the OP end on the Waiouru ranges. We had the great benefit of an experienced Royal Artillery IG in the shape of Major John Allen, who also plied us with hot, milky cocoa on the cold winter mornings.

Part of our range work included entering a very solid bunker, which had been constructed in a patch of native bush, to the rear of the ranges (most of our preparation for jungle warfare was, inevitably, conducted on the tussock plains of Waiouru). This was used to gain experience of calling rounds down very close to our own position and as the impact distance reduced, "stopped by safety" inevitably came over the radio at every drop correction. John's immediate reply was always "IG responsible" until the safety plot merged with our position and so we gained the required exposure.

Nui Dat : 1 ATF, 161 Bty RNZA and 7 RAR

Training and leave behind us, I finally joined 161 Bty at Nui Dat in September 1967. Nui Dat was a defended, sprawling encampment, near the coast to the SE of Saigon, where we lived in sandbagged tents in a rubber plantation.

The Battery was part of an Australian all-arms task force (1ATF), which was formed after moving from Bien Hoa in 1967 and included elements of the NZSAS and from late 1968, V and W RNZIR Companies, together with a US Army battery of M109 155mm SP guns and another of SP 8 inch and 175mm howitzers.

The Battery was then in Direct Support of 7 RAR. I joined one of the rifle companies as their FO and was taken in hand on matters such as how to discard surplus items from the several days of ration packs, with which we were issued for an operation, to lighten my load but not go hungry.

My kit included ammunition for my Armalite rifle (never fired in anger), several water bottles and an emergency ration on my belt, my compass and binos around my neck and maps and codes in my pockets.

I also carried the OP party's spare batteries for the US ANPRC25 manpack radios (one on the Gunner regimental net and the other on the infantry net). These had a much better battery life than the UK A41 and A42 radios and served us very well, especially with the aid of a di-pole thrown up into a tree on longer stops.



The 25 and 77 sets are visually identical, the latter an upgrade that replaced the vacuum tube amplifier with transistor equivalent. Incremental improvements to the management of interference were also included.

I had also acquired a slab of C4 plastic explosive and a shaving from this burnt fiercely and was good for making a quick brew.

I slept on a ground-sheet (the Australian inflatable sections soon punctured and I used my pack as a pillow) under a fly-sheet and mosquito net, but dug a shell-scape or trench, sometimes with OHP, depending on the perceived threat.

These first 2 or 3 months were fairly quiet but I do remember one event. My 7RAR company commander was a bit of a sceptic about artillery capabilities and challenged me to hit a nearby, large dead tree on one deployment. I was pretty confident that I knew where we were and where the tree was and called for a fire mission. Luck was on my side as he first ranging round struck the tree and 161 Bty rose considerably in his estimation.

Arrival of 3 RAR (Old Faithfull)

In December 1967, 3 RAR arrived at Nui Dat and 161 Bty was switched into Direct Support of 3 RAR, renewing the very close relationship, which had been built-up in the earlier Korean War.

I joined Major Ian Hands' Charlie Company and we were soon on progressively more demanding deployments, as they settled into the Theatre.

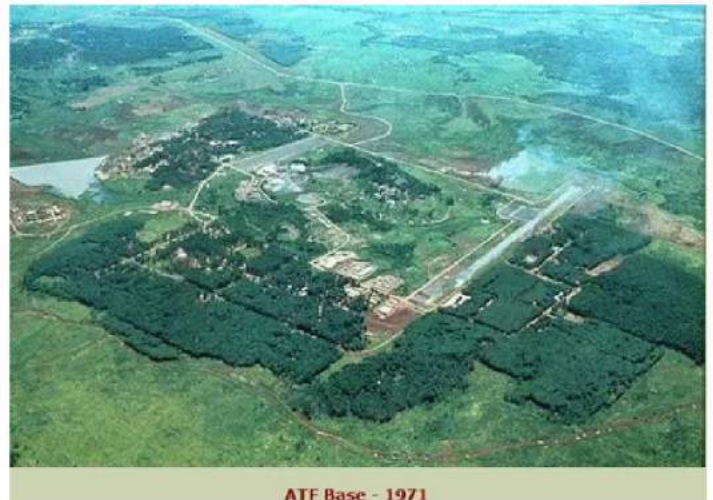
With apologies for my poor memory, I recall only the name of my senior OP sig (LCpl John Haywood, on loan from 1 RNZIR). A vital part of the OP sig work was keeping full details of all fire orders in a notebook, which John did unfailingly.

The OP parties lived with their supported infantry even while in Nui Dat, with regular visits to the 161 Bty gun position.

3 RAR had come under a lot of pressure on their pre-Vietnam work-up and Charlie Company was a close-knit team of regulars and National Servicemen. Ian was an excellent leader with a cool head at moments of pressure and a great method of keeping up spirits on operations.

We were resupplied every few days by helicopter with rations (water daily in the dry season) and a periodic delivery of clean clothing and letters, etc.

Laundry day was followed by an "O" group in the evening, when platoon commanders and sergeants quietly joined company HQ with their mugs for a round of Bacardi, which had been tucked in with the clothing by the CQMS, to accompany the briefing.



ATF Base - 1971

Although we had changes of clothing, there was usually no spare water to wash with other than using the shaving water to clean my hands; going without a wash for weeks on end did not seem to cause any problems.

On one operation, we were in a night defensive position in elephant grass when one of the sentries opened fire with his M60 at suspected movement on the perimeter. I was asked to provide some illumination for a search of the contact area and was allocated a 155mm M109 from Husky Bravo, our US in-support medium battery.

My grid reference for the point to illuminate was too accurate for comfort, as an illuminating shell burst overhead and the base-plug came waffling down into our position; I could do nothing but hope that it did not hit anyone.

On other operations, I remember finding wild boar sleeping "nests", festooned with fat leeches, which had recently gorged on their hosts. At another time, we came across an extensive bunker system, destroyed by the tracks of the US Army 11th Armoured Cavalry Regiment; primary jungle had not proved to be a barrier to their tanks.

Navigation was always important, so that accurate position reports could be provided to TFHQ to be used for ground clearance for artillery fire, etc. The US "picto" maps were most useful, being based on recent aerial photography and showing tree lines and features in photographic form, with an overlaid grid. The terrain was largely a mixture of elephant grass, rice fields and patches of jungle.



An FO was expected to provide pretty accurate navigation, as an aid to delivering rapid, safe fire support. Platoons (7, 8 & 9) also kept a running plot of their positions and location reports were passed for night and other stops. I used to record two close DFs at night, positioned roughly at 90 degrees apart.

I would start at about 1000 metres away from my navigation position and drop slowly until I heard shrapnel pinging in the tree tops, (from, say, 600 metres away), all the time taking compass bearings to the sound of the fall of shot.

When the targets had been recorded and coded grids received from the Bty CP, I would plot these and mark our location at the intersection of my two bearings. With luck, this spot was never too far from my own navigation position.

FO Party with 7RAR, late 1967.

Wally is on the left. The party consisted of 2x OP Sigs and Bty Surveyor - if anyone has the names of the other members, please let us know.

TET Offensive 1968.

I departed to Singapore from Saigon Airport on R&R in early Feb. Although I could see smoke rising from a number of locations being attacked by the VC, as they attempted to penetrate Saigon, I missed the actions at Nui Dat where 3RAR had remained to protect the base while the other battalions were deployed to the north on Op Coburg. They were involved in fierce urban warfare in the nearby town of Baria and suffered several casualties.

Op Coburg

In mid-February, 3RAR relieved 7RAR at FSPB Andersen, east of Bien Hoa where we were subjected to three mortar and RPG attacks, suffering a number of casualties.

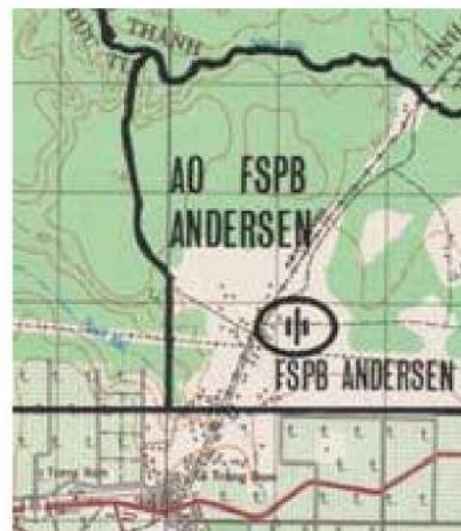
One attack was mounted against the US Army M109 155mm SP battery perimeter and was repulsed with the aid of the gun barrels being lowered to the horizontal and rounds fired with fuses set to burst not far from the muzzle, to spectacular and deadly effect.

This was also a busy time for 161 Bty, as they were directly behind the M109s and in the line of incoming RPG fire. I do recall that manning the fire support net during an attack, in a bulldozed trench with only a canvas cover for overhead protection, while being mortared, was distinctly uncomfortable.

Op Coburg had been successful in hindering the enemy's intentions to attack the Long Binh / Bien Hoa complex and 3RAR returned to Nui Dat at the beginning of March.



View over FSPB Anderson



Gun position FSPB Anderson

Long Hai Hills – Op Pinnaroo

After returning from Op Coburg, C Coy re-joined 3RAR and 1ATF on Op Pinnaroo, deploying to cut-off positions around the base of the Long Hai hills, which were then carpet bombed for several days by USAF “Arclight” B52 missions.

An earlier 1967 operation in the hills had resulted in a lot of casualties from M16 mines, probably removed by the VC from the Horseshoe area minefield, and the B52 raids were intended to assist in clearing the mines.

The sounds and sights of the shockwaves in the smoke from 1000lb bombs was most spectacular and it was hard to believe that any VC resistance could survive this onslaught. It was possible to see the sun reflecting from the silver bodies of those B52s that were still not painted black, as they turned back to Guam after dropping their loads.

When I was airborne in an Australian Sioux during the operation, the precise carpet bombing became apparent, with parallel rows of craters neatly stitched across the ground, apart from one or two early releases, which, thankfully, missed 1ATF units.

On one of my flights, I conducted a shoot from a US Navy warship and it was interesting to see, from smoke puffs, the pairs of rounds from a turret using rocket assistance, in mid-trajectory.

Charlie Company was chosen to assault up the hill and we did so with little opposition, establishing a firm position into which another company and sappers were helicoptered.

Sadly, several casualties arose from mine explosions, as many tunnels were cleared. VC personnel and quantities of equipment were captured in these tunnels and large-scale demolitions then sought to deny their future use to the VC.



PHUOC TUY PROVINCE, SOUTH VIETNAM. 1968-03. D COMPANY, 3RD BATTALION, THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN REGIMENT (3RAR), MOVES TOWARDS THE LONG HAI HILLS IN COMPANY WITH ARMOURED PERSONNEL CARRIERS (APCS) AND CENTURION TANKS, DURING OPERATION PINNAROO. TROOPS CROSS OPEN PADDY FIELDS JUST PRIOR TO ENTERING THE JUNGLE AT THE FOOT OF THE HILLS, BELIEVED TO BE THE STRONGHOLD FOR VIET CONG IN THE SOUTH-EAST CORNER OF PHUOC TUY PROVINCE. PHOTOGRAPHER DAVID WALTER BROWN.

Battles of FSPBs Coral & Balmoral

Maj Geof Hitchings had taken over command of 161 Bty from Maj Tom Martin, in April 1968. In early May 1968, HQ 1ATF, 2RAR and 3RAR were deployed with artillery and armour to the north of Bien Hoa, to interdict enemy routes from Saigon, following the TET offensive.

1 ATF had clearly deployed into an area very sensitive to the NVA and several large-scale attacks by NVA units (multi-battalion on at least one occasion) were mounted against FSPB Coral and FSPB Balmoral.

Although the perimeter was breached and a gun of 102 Fd Bty RAA in FSPB Coral was temporarily overrun, all attacks were repulsed with heavy NVA casualties but, sadly, not without significant Australian casualties, as well. 102 Bty fired anti-personnel splintex rounds over open sights, with a devastating effect, against waves of NVA storming into the battery and 1RAR mortar platoon positions at FSPB Coral.



FSPB Coral



A troop of RAAC Centurion tanks, which had been “walked” to Balmoral with an infantry escort, proved devastating with their cannister rounds fired at close range against NVA near the wire. Capt. Martin Steeds RNZAC received an MID for his role as FO D/3RAR. C/3RAR was initially deployed in an outlying location, where I registered close DFs with a section of 3RAR mortars.

It rained heavily and John Haywood and I were both flooded out of our trenches, during the night. As we were not being attacked, I monitored the artillery net as enormous firepower, from the TF batteries as well as all US guns in range plus USAF fighter/bombers and “Spooky” C47 and helicopter gunships joined in pounding the NVA locations.

After the first attack on Coral, we were relocated to the main 3RAR location in Balmoral, where I registered a close DF with 161 Bty and we were mortared (with one wounded), but not directly attacked. We returned to Nui Dat, in early June. In 2018, the Australian Unit Citation for Gallantry was awarded to those units, which were forward in the Battles of FSPBs Coral and Balmoral. 102 Fd Bty RAA is now known as 102 (Coral) Bty RAA..

The next few months seem to have been reasonably quiet and after some 200 days in the year on operational deployments out of Nui Dat, mainly with C/3RAR, I returned to NZ and flying duties at Hobsonville in late 1968 and then took early retirement in late 1969. After a period of commercial flying to the Sedco 135F offshore oil rig and supporting mountain mineral survey work in the South Island, I spent the summer of 1971 flying in the Canadian Arctic amongst polar bears and musk ox. I then joined the British AAC at Middle Wallop in early 1972 and finally retired in late 1992. I keep in regular contact with the survivors of Charlie Company (CC68), as well as my fellow gunners from 161 Bty.



Dorset, U.K. September 2023

WALLY STEWARD – ARMY PILOT

Wings over New Zealand interviewed Wally about his flying experiences in October 2023. The following is an extract

Wally was selected to train as a pilot with the RNZAF, to become an Air Observation Post pilot for artillery spotting. Training on North American Harvards up to the stage where he gained his pilot's brevet, he then progressed onto the Auster J5. He worked as both an artillery officer on the ground and a pilot for a while, before he and fellow Army pilot Roger Pearce were selected to train as helicopter pilots, under the instruction of John Reid of Helicopters (N.Z.) Ltd.

Once they were proficient flying helicopters, Wally and Roger were sent to Malayan Borneo where they formed an Air OP troop at a detached base outside of Kuching, with Roger in charge and Wally and another pilot flying three Sioux. They were supporting a British artillery regiment.

After several months Wally was posted to Kalabakan, in the Sabah region, in the north of Borneo to take command of the air platoon of the 1st Battalion of the Scots Guards, with two Sioux helicopters flying from a dirt strip.

In January 1966, Wally was posted into Vietnam. He converted onto the Bell UH-1D Huey at Bien Hoa, and there he then joined A Company ("The Cowboys") of the 82nd Aviation Battalion, in support of the US 173rd Airborne Brigade.

Wally did a second Vietnam tour as a Forward Observation Officer (FOO) at Nui Dat with the First Australian Task Force, which included a New Zealand Rifle Company, 161 Battery RNZA, and a NZ SAS detachment. He served mainly during this tour with 3 Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment.

Wally later left the NZ Army and joined the Army Air Corps of the British Army, and served a further 20 years with that Army. Seven years of that was as a test pilot.

Use this link to hear the full interview

<https://cambridgeairforce.org.nz/WONZShow/2023/01/wonz-270-wally-steward-army-pilot/>

AGM

Treasurer's Report (Extract)

Overall trading results were similar to the 2021/2022 period. Our total cash position is up, at \$61,023.99, an increase of \$1,750.67.

Q Store and Reunion/AGM activity remained the single largest sources of income for the Association. These also represented the major expenses for the Association.

Q Store purchases during the period leave the Association with a healthy Q net position leading into 2024. There are a number of items that have been procured by the Q which are not yet available for sale. The benefit of these procurements will be reflected in the 2023/2024 accounts.

There was a one-off event in 2023 to secure Col. Horseford's medals at auction, which included Vietnam decorations. The cost of this acquisition was offset by specific donations targeted to assist with the acquisition. Purchase cost - \$3831.00. Donations in support - 1820.00.

General donations were down in 2022/2023. This may be attributed to the general cost of living but may also have been tempered by the targeted donation request for the Col. Horseford medals

Chris Pearce

Incoming RNZAA Committee

President: Shay Bassett

Secretary: John McNicol (and RNZRSA Liaison)

Treasurer: Richard Gordon

Committee Members

Greg Thwaite - Welfare Officer.

Rob McAulay - Op Ubique - North Island

Peter Dawson - Op Ubique - South Island

Chris Morriss - Membership and Webmaster

Craig Hewett - The Q Matters

Barry Dreyer - RNZAA Historic Trust

John McNicol - RNZRSA Liaison

Maj John Garton

Serving Gunners Representatives

WO1 Heath Southcombe, WO RNZA,

WO2 Iain Sutton, 16 Fd Regt rep.

Newsletter Editor: Marty Coomber

Webmaster and Membership Report (Extract)

The Association Website and private Facebook Group continue to tick along, with regular new members joining the Facebook group, which has a membership of over 1100, with fourteen new members in the last two months, about 80 new members in the last year or so, and new posts made in the group almost every day.

The association website gets about 4000 individual page accesses from NZ visitors per month, with an average visit length to a page being about two and a half minutes long. The most frequently downloaded things are newsletter pdfs, and the most frequently accessed webpages are the home page, "contact us", QStore, muzzle flashes, and newsletter pages.

We have had association teams attend VA forums in Auckland and Palmerston North in the past year, both of which saw us get several new members aboard, so many thanks to those teams.

Craig Hewett has as always been of great assistance by finding new members and updating details of existing members via his QStore activities.

Thank you again also to Brian Meyer for his dedicated work in keeping me informed of gunners who have passed away.

We have 29 more members with email contact addresses than we had a year ago, 982 vs 953, and over the last three years, despite covid restrictions. This is a 53% increase over our 2017 membership records. **Chris Morriss**

Q Store (Extract)

Purchases from the Q Store this remained steady through this financial year at \$1,132.22. The Q Store has seen a new range of products coming onto store this year. These include reversible Cummerbunds, Bow ties and pocket squares for the more formal occasions. New Assn Lapel pins with the KCIII have been designed and made.

Our special thanks goes to Eliza Tappe a talented Graphic Designer domiciled in New York. She is the wife of Mark Pedersen who many of you will remember. She volunteered to redesign both the RNZA & RNZAA gun crest to incorporate the Crown of King Charles III. **Craig Hewitt**

Full Minutes of the AGM can be found by clicking this link:
[Minutes of the 2023 AGM](#)

RECENT LSP

BY SHAY BASSETT

Here are some photos from a recent LSP



OPERATION UBIQUE

BY PETE DAWSON

With all the work being carried out by the Op Ubique responsibilities split between Rob McAulay (North Island) and Peter Dawson (South Island).

After getting final approval from today from the Cust/West Eyrton RSA President, The first South Island project is now underway with the refurbishment of of an M101A1 at the Cust War Memorial in North Canterbury.

The gun refurbishment will complement the rebuild of the memorial completed in 2013.



OPERATION UBIQUE

BY ROB MCAULAY

Just a quick note to introduce myself and my role with Op Ubiq. My name is Rob McAulay and I was in the Regiment from May 1980 to May 1985 as an OPCP, OP Ack and Surveyor.

I have picked up the reins from Paul Welrand for Op Ubiq in the North Island working with Pete Dawson who is looking after the South Island.

It is not my intention to hands on manage the activities of the group, there are more capable and experienced gunners out there that can do that, but to co-ordinate and support the various teams as best I can. What that support will look like I don't know but I am open to suggestions.

Specifically, I hope to continue the great work started by Colin Jansen and others that has been continued by many association members.

What's coming up? A weekend TOD to Waiouru is in the planning with the purpose of checking and cleaning the guns displayed in camp and hopefully supporting the Museum through cleaning the guns in their gun park, but all this is yet to be confirmed so watch your email in boxes for details.

I also get reports messages concerning the state of some guns around the motu and a big thank you to those members who I've asked/shoulder tapped/press ganged into taking some time to view these. I hope to develop a database of what guns are where, their condition and who the local point of contact is to enable Op Ubiq team members to assist with the maintenance and preservation of these guns. The aim of the exercise is to ensure the gun, our colours, reflect the pride we all have in our Regiment.

If you are aware of any guns nearby (North Island) that could benefit from a bit of TLC feel free to contact me - details below. I have already been contacted regarding the Kaikohe L5, the Pt Chevalier RSA L5 and a Naval 40mm Bofors in Palmerston North. It would great to get an update on the following,

- Papakura L5 (outside the Papakura Cosmopolitan Club),
- Papakura BL5.5 (Papakura Cadet Unit),
- Swanson RSA L5.

Chris Morriss and Paul Welrand have provided me with some email addresses of those who have assisted previously, and we are currently updating this but if you would like to be involved, please feel free to send me your name and contact email.

Ubiq - Rob

Guns in Need? What to help out?

If you have information about a gun in need or you want to help out please call

North Island: Rob McAulay
macpenny@xtra.co.nz. - 021 246 090

South Island: Pete Dawson
petedawson1950lytt@gmail.com - 021 334 381

LEIGHTON BATTERY HERITAGE SITE

BY MARTY COOMBER

I received the following photos from John Blylevens - Hon Secretary - RAAWA

Leighton Battery at Buckland Hill, Mosman Park, Western Australia, was part of the Coastal defences of Australia during World War II and the Fremantle Fortress, protecting Fremantle Harbour.

The battery initially consisted of two 6-inch Mk VII naval guns, operational from February 1943. The two guns were removed in 1945 and replaced by three 5.25 inch dual purpose coastal artillery/antiaircraft guns.

While it was envisioned to have all major ports in Australia protected by these type guns, the Leighton Battery became the only one ever operational. The battery was dismantled and the equipment disposed of for scrap in 1963.

The battery site was added to the Western Australian State Register of Heritage Places in August 1999 and was awarded an Engineering Heritage National Marker in November 2014.

While some above-ground installations have been restored, the underground installations consisting of underground tunnels, rooms, observation post and semi-buried command post are considered an outstanding example of technical achievement.

The Commonwealth of Australia gave up the Buckland Hill site in 1984, handing it to the Town of Mosman Park. Most of it was redeveloped while other parts became a public reserve. The area previously occupied by the Leighton Battery was awarded to the Royal Australian Artillery Historical Society of Western Australia for the purpose of operating a museum at the site.

During the 1980s and 1990s, the site was restored and officially opened on 29 November 1997 by Major General Michael Jeffery, Governor of Western Australia.

In 2014, a gun shield removed from HMAS Adelaide during a refit in 1943 and dumped on a rubbish tip on the Mornington Peninsula, Victoria, was transported to Perth for refurbishment. A member of the Royal Australian Artillery Historical Society of Western Australia, which had been searching for such a shield for 20 years as a match for a 6-inch Mk XI naval gun it held from HMAS Sydney, a ship scrapped in 1929, had spotted the shield at location.

The naval gun and shield were installed at Leighton Battery in September 2015 to replicate the original 6-inch guns at site.



Recently installed 5.25 gun house cut-out installed at the Leighton Battery Heritage Site.



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LAST POST



- GEE, Walter Thomas "Watty". 20785, Lt (Ret'd), RNZA – K Force. Passed away peacefully, at Leslie Groves Rest Home, Dunedin, on 26 Nov 2023, aged 96.
- SUTHERLAND, Le Roy Hoani. Gnr, 16 Fd Regt, RNZA. Passed away after a motor accident on 16 Nov 2023 in Palmerston North, aged 18.
- LYNCH, Patrick T. 43656, Gnr (Ret'd), 161 Bty RNZA, Vietnam. Passed away on 13 Oct 2023 in the Coffs Harbour region, NSW, aged 74.