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Front Cover

Fire Support and Patrol Base Coral – May 1968

Top Photograph: No 2 (Bravo) Gun of Sergeant Len (Skeeter) Humphry.
Bottom Photograph: View from the left flank of 102nd Field Battery with No 6 (Foxtrot) Gun of Sergeant Max Franklin in the foreground. To the left rear is No 4 (Delta) Gun of Sergeant John Stephens and immediately behind Foxtrot is No 2 (Bravo) Gun of Sergeant Len (Skeeter) Humphry. These three guns were heavily involved in the battle with Bravo and Foxtrot being damaged during the battle and with Delta Gun firing ‘Splintex’ anti-personnel rounds over open sights at the North Vietnam Army (NVA) attackers. This photograph was taken after the initial attack as indicated by the development of sandbagging and overhead protection. The main NVA attack was from the left of the picture. Photographs provided by Colonel Ian Ahearn (Retd).

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RAA Historical Company Directory

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AUSTRALIA'S MEMORIAL WALK
A NATIONAL COMMEMORATIVE WALKWAY

NORTH HEAD SYDNEY, NSW

AUSTRALIA'S MEMORIAL WALK - A Remembrance Pathway

Australia's Memorial Walk honours those who have served and supported the defence of Australia in peace or in war. The paved pathway links five monuments erected to remember the major conflict periods in Australia's history. It covers the Colonial Era, World War I, World War II, Post World War II Conflicts and Peace Keeping. (A special Gallipoli monument also stands along the pathway).

The Walk is made up of individual pavers, each commemorating an individual. Centrepiece pavers have been placed by units or associations and organisations.

The Walk provides an opportunity for individuals and organisations to commemorate family members, units and ships of the Navy, Army, Airforce and Merchant Navy.

THE WALK

The Memorial Walk was built along an old track that ran through the bush at North Head, Overlooking Sydney Harbour and at the Heads through which many servicemen and women sailed off to and returned from war. It is an idyllic site for a memorial that commemorates those who have served the Nation. The Monuments have been designed to provide the visitor with information on the period of service commemorated and allows a chance to rest, reflect and to remember.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE

For a tax deductible donation of $70 your personally inscribed paver will become part of this historic walkway, ensuring future generations are forever reminded of those who supported the defence of this great land of ours. Subsequent pavers in the same order attract a discount.

Corporations, clubs, business and community groups are also encouraged to donate a $1500 Centrepiece paver inscribed with your logo and message. Individual pavers associated with a Centrepiece attract a discount.

PAVER ORDER FORM

You can obtain a paver order form by emailing memorialwalk@artilleryhistory.org or by calling (02) 9924 9275.

Alternatively you can visit the Royal Australian Artillery Historical Company website www.artilleryhistory.org and download an order form.

Time is running out to be part of this stunning Memorial Walk. Get onto the website and download an order form now or email or call.

Visitors to the Walk, get a close up look

peaceful corner
INTRODUCTION

New Editor Steve Nicolls

Steve Nicolls entered the Royal Military College Duntroon in 1970 and was posted to the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery in 1975. He spent his Regimental service exclusively in 8th/12th Medium Regiment at a time when it was unparalleled for excellence in gunnery. He served with 103rd Medium Battery, A Field Battery, Headquarters Battery and commanded 102nd Field Battery.

Following a posting to RMC Duntroon as a captain instructor, his staff appointments included SO3 and SO2 Surface to Surface in the Directorate of Artillery after which he went to the Royal School of Artillery as the exchange Instructor in Gunnery.

After Command and Staff College at Queenscliff Steve was the Staff Officer to the Chief of Operations, followed by time in DPLANS and then DGOP as the Director of Operations.

He was then posted as the Australian Contingent Commander UNTSO and served as the Chief of the Observer Group – Lebanon before being posted back to Command and Staff College Queenscliff as a member of the Directing Staff. It took four years to graduate the second time but he then escaped to Headquarters United Nations, New York, serving in the Mission Planning Service and the Operations Team in DPKO.

Steve then moved to HQ TRADOC, US Army, as the Chief of Schools Division under the Deputy Chief of Staff for Training. He was then sent to Puckapunyal in 2001 on a ROSO – somewhere he had never wanted to serve. However, he rapidly settled in as the Chief of Staff, Land Warfare Development Centre and transferred to the Army Reserve in 2004.

Steve is still in Puckapunyal and currently serves as the SO1 Doctrine Validation at the Army Knowledge Group and, as a day job, is the Production Manager for Army doctrine publications.

Steve lives in Avenel with his wife Steve (Stephanie – but don’t call her Steph) and has two mature aged children Kelly and Sarah and two grandsons Dylan and Kai. He participates in competitive road cycling and his interests include woodwork, gardening, red wine and single malt scotch. Steve has been known to take a history book to bed as a sleeping tonic.

14th Annual General Meeting

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ARTILLERY HISTORICAL COMPANY

All RAAHC Members are invited to the 2012 Annual General Meeting of the Royal Australian Artillery Historical Company which will be held at the Western Conference Room (former School of Artillery Headquarters Building), North Head Barracks Manly NSW 2095 on Saturday 13th October 2012 commencing at 1030 hours.

Copies of the Agenda, Motions, Financial Report, Proxy Forms and Nomination Forms for the AGM can all be obtained from the RAAHC website at www.artilleryhistory.org

The AGM will be followed by a morning tea and a briefing on the RAA.

Please join us for our 2012 AGM!
Letters to the Editor

Artillery Service Recollections

The editorial of Cannonball issue No 83 indicated you would like some history of reader’s service. I tender mine. About 1930 I witnessed (with my parents) two trucks bringing 18 pounders Mk III into action on the Holsworthy Range. After some shooting the vehicles returned and took the guns away. Then in 1937/1938 in school cadets I served in an infantry platoon.

National Service in 1940 sent me to camp at Warwick Farm Race Course with the 60th Battery 18th Field Brigade which was mechanised with a variety of vehicles. New boys went to the guns mainly. Service was for three months. After a while they discovered I had done Maths I and II in 1938 and consequently became the CPO A. It was a very interesting and I learned the slide rule.

I joined the 2nd AIF in June 1940 opting for Artillery and hopefully a CPO A job. The Brigade system had now changed to a Regiment of two Batteries of three Troops. Each Battery had a CPO and CPO A and four men. On training it appeared I was fairly efficient and I ended up in the Battery Command Post. I qualified as a Battery Surveyor – I’d originally gone to High School with the aim of being a surveyor. Instead I left Tech College as a Wool Classer.

After the unit was sent to the Middle East I remember our Battery, 12 guns in line with associated vehicles advancing across the desert. Communication was by a series of flags. As we were a Corps unit I was one of three people – one from RHQ Survey and one from each Battery Command Post – sent to a counter bombardment school.

After action in Syria we were sent to Aleppo where we acted as a Brigade Regiment for a British and several Australian Brigades. Officers and others went to training schools etc. and control of the Battery Command Post changed often. Then there was the three Battery, two Troop, Regiment. Returning to Australia changes of officers continued.

I did a command post assistant’s school at Moorebank and did a Battery shoot on the Holsworthy Range. Then the Battery Command Post was one officer and two men.

In 1943 with 2 stripes I decided that I needed a change. I was posted to a gun crew as No 2 on 25 pounders. On the guns I would be called to assist in calculations after a calibration shoot. A quick learning curve – the No 1 saw relief in sight – I passed a gun layer course. At Meraube we did a small boats course with the Navy. I assisted as an instructor in a second course. I passed a Wade Mobile School in 1945 and was awarded the 3rd stripe and became No 1 of the gun.

I tried the CMF in 1953/4 – I passed Tech and Military Law exams for a WO but resigned on family reasons.

R.B. (Dick) McNeill
NX28724
2/9th A Field Regiment 1st Australian Corps

Co-ord Editor: Many thanks for answering the call to put pen to paper and outline your service in the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery. It sets a fine example to those who have followed you into the Regiment and who are reluctant to make the time to record their experiences thereby assisting in preserving our history and heritage for future generations.

Mann 5.5 inch Mortar

I am researching the 5.5 inch mortar and cast iron base which was designed by Gother K. Mann especially for use in New Zealand which were cast in Sydney in November 1845 and several were used at the Battle of Ruapekapeka.

My understanding is an 11 man detachment of (Colonial) Artillery recruited from Ex Royal Artillery gunners residing in Australia led by Lieutenant Wilmot and Sergeant Kerr arrived in New Zealand in July 1845. They brought with them two x 4.5 inch Coehorn mortars, two x 6 pounder brass field guns and 200 x 6 pounder war rockets and two launching tubes.

In December 1845 four x 5.5 inch Mann Mortars arrived in New Zealand and are said to have been used in the Battle of Ruapekapeka between 31st December 1845 and 10th January 1846. A detachment of Royal Artillery did not arrive in New Zealand until two weeks after the battle was over.
We are not sure what happened to the Mann Mortars after the Battle of Ruapekapeka we presume they were returned to Australia.

I am compiling an information page on the Mann Mortar and any help with providing information and images would be much appreciated. There is an image of the Mann Mortar titled Coehorn Mortar included in the RAAHC Magazine (Cannonball) issue No 82 (November 2011) on pages 10 and 11 in an article by John MacPherson and Brian Whiddup. If possible, I would like a high resolution digital copy of this image and the present whereabouts of this Mann Mortar. Although this is a Mann Mortar, small mortars at this time were referred to as Coehorn Mortars hence the confusion.

Best Regards,
Dr John Osborne, DTT PhD FSG
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T: (64) 9409 3835
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Co-ord Editor: I encourage readers to contact Dr Osborne if they can assist with his research. I will ensure that the authors of the Coehorn Mortar article are aware of your request.

Notice to all RAAHC and RAA Members

DEDICATION OF AUSTRALIA'S MEMORIAL WALK

Australia’s Memorial Walk, North Fort, North Head Sanctuary, a significant project of the Royal Australian Artillery Historical Company, will be officially dedicated as an enduring memorial on Saturday, 1st December 2012.

The Dedication Service will be held at the entrance to the ‘Walk’ and will commence at 10:15 am, with all attendees to be seated by 10:00 am.

All who have donated commemorative pavers to this magnificent project, and members of the RAAHC and the RAA will be most welcome to attend the service and the reception afterwards.

Dress will be uniform with medals or civilian attire with medals. Families will be most welcome to attend the event.

Further information, as it becomes available closer to the dedication date, will be placed on the RAAHC website: www.artilleryhistory.org.
Dear RAAHC Members & Friends

Welcome to the first edition of our RAAHC Cannonball issued in conjunction with the biannual RAA Liaison Letter (RAALL). I thank the Head of Regiment and the Editor of the RAA Liaison Letter, Terry Brennan, for agreeing to this arrangement.

Your Directors believe this combination will result in a better exposure to Gunners past and present of both current and historical RAA matters – those in the RAAHC will now benefit from the current information in the Liaison Letter and those who receive the RAALL will now also receive our the RAAHC Historical journal. It will also eliminate some duplication between these publications and hopefully encourage all Gunners past and present to read and contribute to both journals. We would welcome your comments on this approach and encourage you to join in making this change a beneficial one for the Regiment.

The RAAHC continues to develop as a truly national artillery association with the aim to assist in the preservation and development of our artillery history and heritage across Australia. We wish to support all those other organisations and individuals around Australia with an interest in Australia’s Artillery story, its people, its equipment and facilities. We will continue to develop our website at ‘www.artilleryhistory.org.au’, Cannonball and our collection to support this aim. The addition of the details of all NSW’s historical guns to the website (the Gun Register), and the ongoing work to extend the coverage to all states and territories is providing a worthy historical and heritage resource.

We are working closely with the RAA Regimental Committee and we propose to positively support its strategic, communications, finance and heritage plans. We also work closely with the RAA RC sub-committees, particularly the History Sub-Committee. The Board is critically aware that much of the history of Australian artillery since the mid 1970s has not been well recorded, particularly

the many training and operational activities undertaken recently by regular and reserve Gunners both in Australia and overseas. Please take up your pens or iPads and write about your experiences as a Gunner and then send your accounts to the Editors of the RAA LL and Cannonball for publication.

There is one major issue that all Gunners need to be concerned about – the Australian Army Artillery Museum. As you are aware the museum closed at North Fort in December 2010 and most of the artillery collection held there, including that part owned by the RAAHC, was moved to Bandiana and stored under the care of an Army History Unit curator. The intention is to move the bulk of the collection to a new combined Armour and Artillery museum to be built at Puckapunyal. This project is now significantly delayed and is currently programmed for completion in 2021. The RAAHC is encouraging Defence to bring forward this build, to make appropriate interim arrangements to properly preserve the collection at Bandiana and to make arrangements to publically display a portion of the collection. Your support for these actions would be gratefully appreciated.

The Company’s Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday 13th October at North Head, Sydney. The agenda, supporting documents and administrative details are available from our website. I encourage all RAAHC members to read the AGM papers and to either attend the meeting or send your proxy and vote to the Directors or others attending. After the AGM we are planning an update to attendees on various RAA matters.

Most of you would be aware that the RAAHC has built a wonderful Australia’s Memorial Walk (AMW) at North Fort containing over 4000 individual pavers and some 65 centrepiece pavers that acknowledge service in support of Australia. The memorial is still being developed with the active support of the site managers, the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust. As described elsewhere in Cannonball, we plan to dedicate the AMW on the 1st December. I invite all interested parties to attend this dedication.

Finally let me once again thank our previous Cannonball Editor, Alan Smith, for the great work he did to establish Cannonball as a significal historical publication. I welcome our new Editor Steve Nicolls to that role and again thank Terry Brennan for his overarching support as the editor of the combined publication.

Best Wishes to all

Major General Tim Ford, AO (Retd)
The Real Story

Preface
The Real Story of the First Battle of Coral has been written in response to an incomplete, and in places, flawed account in *The Official History of Australia's Involvement in Southeast Asian Conflicts, On the Offensive – The Australian Army in Vietnam 1967–1968*.

This account is written from my perspective as the Gun Position Officer of 102nd Field Battery Royal Australian Artillery at Coral on the night of the 12th/13th May 1968. My recollections of that night have been augmented by some ten years of presenting the story to the cadets at the Royal Military College, Duntroon. The presentations at the College are given by a group of veterans who were involved in the full period of the operations from 12th May to 6th June 1968 and their personal experiences have been reinforced by broad based research and interviews with other participants.

I would like to express my gratitude to Bob Lowry, Gordon Alexander, Stan Carbines and Tony Jensen for their contribution to the story and their more than helpful editorial comment. I would like to also thank John Mordike for his advice, his massive effort in improving the presentation of the story and for providing a ‘fresh pair of eyes’.

Finally this story is dedicated to the men of 102nd Field Battery RAA, Headquarter Battery 12th Field Regiment RAA, Detachment 131st Divisional Locating Battery and the Mortar Platoon 1st Battalion Royal Australian Regiment who were so steadfast on a night that will live in their memories for the rest of their lives.

Ian Ahearn
Canberra, 2012

Background – Operation Toan Thang
Operation Toan Thang (Complete Victory) was launched on 8th April 1968. It was a combined operation deploying 70,000 US, Vietnamese, Australian, New Zealand and Thai troops with the initial aim of destroying enemy forces in the III Corps area.

Australian participation in the combined operation commenced on 21st April 1968 with the deployment of 1st Australian Task Force (1 ATF). The infantry component of the Australian Task Force was the 3rd Battalion and 2nd Battalion Royal Australian Regiment (RAR). The two infantry battalions were supported by their two affiliated gun batteries from 12th Field Regiment (12 Fd Regt) Royal Australian Artillery (RAA), a squadron of armoured personnel carriers from 3rd Cavalry Regiment (A Squadron), 1st Field Squadron Royal Australian Engineers and 161st Independent Reconnaissance Flight Army Aviation. While its normal area of operations was Phuoc Tuy Province, the Australian Task Force was deployed into Long Kanh Province, some 16 kilometres east of the large US base at Long Binh.

Initially, the aim of 1 ATF was to delay and disrupt enemy infiltration into Long Kanh, thus destabilising and frustrating any enemy preparations to attack vital targets located within the province or its neighbouring provinces. This aim was to be more sharply focused as the operation developed and possible enemy movements became clearer.

On 3rd May 1968, nearly four weeks after the Australian deployment on the operation, 3rd Battalion (3 RAR) was relieved by 1st Battalion Royal Australian Regiment (1 RAR). On 5th May,
the two Australian battalions – 1 RAR and 2 RAR – were redeployed further north into Bien Hoa Province. The redeployment enhanced the Australian force’s ability to provide protection for the large allied military complex of Bien Hoa/Long Binh but it also put the Australians into an area within the eastern approaches to Saigon.

The North Vietnamese Army struck Saigon on 5th May. It was a daring attack, but the enemy failed to achieve the success of its earlier Tet Offensive in February of the same year. By 7th May the enemy attack on Saigon had been successfully repulsed and the Americans believed that the enemy was withdrawing from the area.

The enemy withdrawal from Saigon was a significant development for the Australian force, which, to this stage, had seen little action in its area of operations to the north-east of the Bien Hoa/Long Binh complex. But, on 10th May, events began to unfold that would place the Australians in the thick of the most prolonged and intense fighting experienced by an Australian force in the Vietnam War.

This account of the battle at Fire Support Patrol Base Coral on 12th/13th May 1968 is written by a participant in the battle; not a commander located in a static headquarters at some distance from the events; not a staff officer involved in drafting plans and orders; not a logistics officer concerned about supply or repair issues; but a junior combat officer, who, with the other officers and men on the ground, was directly engaged with the enemy face-to-face from the start to the finish. The author’s actual position is emphasised in this instance because it provides an understanding of his perspective of the battle and, consequently, his account of what transpired.

Individual perspectives can influence accounts of what happened. This presents a historian writing some decades after the event with some difficulties in producing a credible narrative. Indeed, some question the value of history at all. In this vein, it has been said that God cannot change the past, that historians alone can do that. Perhaps some readers will judge this to be a cynical observation, but it resonates with this author and his colleagues in the ensuing battle and, importantly, to correct a number of the flaws existing in the official account by McNeil and Ekins. To begin at a basic level, the official historians chose to use the acronym FSB instead of FSPB. This is not a trivial issue of nomenclature. The term FSB was used by the American Army and was based on its established practice of using firepower alone to dominate and control an area in concert with the use of fire power; hence the use of the term FSPB. Significantly, the different operational methods used by American and Australian forces were an enduring feature of the Vietnam War. Perhaps McNeil and Ekins were unaware of this fundamental, but important, operational reality of the Army that they were writing about. But ignorance is no excuse in this case. The acronym FSPB was used in all of the relevant primary source documents relating to the operation of Australian forces at the time of the battle at Coral. But, for some unknown reason, McNeil and Ekins used an American term instead.

The following account uses the same major headings as the Official History to enable easier reference to events.

**Occupation of FSPB Coral**

Operation Toan Thang had been underway for some four weeks when, according to the Official History, the 1 ATF Commander, Brigadier Hughes, attended an Orders Group at the American II Field Force Vietnam Headquarters at Long Dien on 10th May 1968. According to the Official History, at that Orders Group Hughes was told ‘... the [Australian] task force was to move again, further
The mission assigned to 1 ATF was to ‘... occupy blocking positions within AO Surfers to interdict enemy withdrawal routes from the South and SW’. Area of Operations (AO) Surfers, as the Australian area was called, was to be divided into subordinate areas of operations; AO Bondi allocated to 1 RAR and AO Manly allocated to 3 RAR which replaced 2 RAR on the same day as the orders group. 12 Fd Regt was to be centralised as a combined force in FSPB Coral with the Australian 102nd Field Battery (102 Fd Bty), the New Zealand 161st Field Battery (161 Fd Bty) Royal New Zealand Artillery (RNZA) and the US ‘A’ Battery, 2/35 Battalion. The centralisation of the three artillery batteries into a Regimental Gun Position allowed both Australian infantry battalions to be supported by all the fire units available, although the normal battery/battalion affiliations remained with 102 Fd Bty in Direct Support of 1 RAR and 161 Fd Bty in Direct Support of 3 RAR. This meant that the respective Battery Commanders and Forward Observers were embedded within the Headquarters (HQ) of their respective infantry battalions; the American ‘A’ Battery was placed in General Support of both battalions but all batteries could be used to provide fire for any of the deployed infantry.

The deployment to FSPB Coral was to commence with the fly-in of B Company 3 RAR at 0700 hours. B Company’s role was to secure the Landing Zone (LZ), thus establishing a safe area for other elements of the force to be landed in. B Company would be followed into the LZ by the reconnaissance parties from 12 Fd Regt, 102 Fd Bty, 161 Fd Bty and 1 RAR at 0705 hours. The role of these reconnaissance parties was to select the battery areas and lay out each battery gun position. The remaining three companies of 3 RAR were to be inserted at 0745 hours. The four 1 RAR companies were to be landed in three elements; one at 0945 hours, one at 1155 hours and the last at 1246 hours. 161 Battery guns were to arrive at 1000 hours followed by 102 Fd Bty guns at 1230 hours and the 1 RAR Mortars at 1245 hours.

Altogether four LZs were specified in the written 1 ATF Fragmentary Order No 6 to Operation Order 19/68 but only one LZ, which was designated as K Pad, had a specified map grid reference location. This was the pad that B Company 3 RAR was to secure at the start of the landing operation. Five minutes after the B Company insertion, the Artillery and 1 RAR reconnaissance parties were to use the same LZ. 161 Fd Bty main body was to use Z Pad, 102 Fd Bty was to use X Pad and 1 RAR was to use H Pad. No map location was given for any of these LZs. This was a departure from established practice for a major operational deployment. Failure to designate grid references for Z, X and H LZs can hardly have been an oversight and it can only be surmised that separate instructions were given to somebody to identify the locations of the LZs and pass the information on to the units and sub units earmarked to use them. Whatever the reason for the failure to specify the exact locations of the LZs in the original 1 ATF Fragmentary Order, no subsequent co-ordinating instructions were issued.

There was another factor which had the potential to upset the smooth execution of the deployment of the force. The 1 ATF written orders for the operation were never sighted by the subordinate units. This meant that the operation was to proceed on the basis of verbal orders alone. As Commanding Officer 1 RAR, Lieutenant Colonel Phillip Bennett recalled:

‘On 10 May Comd 1 ATF gave verbal orders for an air assault landing at FSPB Coral. Later that afternoon this was amended by HQ IATF to being an airlanding.’

According to Robert Lowry in his recently published biography of Bennett, both Shelton, the Commanding Officer of 3 RAR, and Bennett ‘... deny that they received the written orders either at or after the orders group. They also denied that Brigadier Hughes’ verbal orders, given late on the 10 May, at Bearcat, a US Base near the town of Long Thanh in Bien Hoa Province, conveyed anything other than that there would be elements of units withdrawing to base areas north of Saigon ... ’. (3) The assessment of the enemy’s size and sense of well-being would later prove to be incorrect, but, in the meantime, it was misleading information that influenced the way in which the infantry forces, in particular, would be deployed.

The Artillery Fragmentary Order (FragO), transmitted by radio, was received on the night of the 11th May 1968. It emphasised the 1 ATF mission and summarised the enemy as withdrawing in small groups with low morale away from its unsuccessful fighting in the Saigon area. It contained one map reference, XT925284, and made no mention of K Pad let alone any other LZs. The FragO also contained the vital technical data for the artillery (such as centre of arc, ammunition holding, timings for movement of reconnaissance parties and guns, and time to be ready to provide fire). The order included instructions for the movement of regimental and battery reconnaissance parties and its whole tenor
indicated a regimental deployment. The order also indicated that the Regimental Second-in-Command (2IC), Major Brian Murtagh, would be the FSPB local defence commander. The movement of the American ‘A’ Battery, which was equipped with 155 mm self-propelled howitzers too large for airlift, would be deployed by road on 13th May 1968. Therefore, it would be one day before FSPB Coral had a full regimental complement of firepower – 18 guns in all. Significantly, the radio orders received by the artillery revealed the inconsistencies in the 1 ATF written FragO. The latter directed each infantry battalion ‘to establish’ its affiliated direct support battery in Coral. Such a direction would have been meaningless to the artillery if they had received it, but no such direction was received in the radio orders. In accordance with orthodox military practice, 102 and 161 Bty expected a regimental deployment complete with the Regimental 2IC allocating the battery areas. Then battery Gun Position Officers (GPO) would lay out the sites for the battery’s individual guns within the area that they had been allocated by the Regimental 2IC. This expectation was met when the 1 ATF orders included instructions for a Regimental Reconnaissance Party. The only intelligence provided in the written orders on the enemy echoed the original verbal orders received by Bennett and Shelton: ‘the enemy was withdrawing from the Saigon area, in small groups, with low morale’.

The Official History makes much of the passage of the intelligence on the expected enemy threat. In simple terms it is ‘much ado about nothing’ since both CO 3 RAR and CO 1 RAR have strenuously denied that the intelligence about formed bodies of the enemy reinforcing Saigon was passed in the orders. Likewise, no sub unit commander or subordinate officers received any information that the enemy was present in strength and spoiling for a fight. The written 1 ATF orders confirm this. The mission given to the task force and the subsequent deployment of the companies in dispersed ambush positions – a dangerous move for an enemy operating in any strength – point to a breakdown in the passage of intelligence to the battalions and the Gunner regiment. According to the Official History, the 1 ATF Intelligence Officer Major Cameron stated that:

‘Once we arrived at Coral we realised that we had stirred up a hornets’ nest, but that is exactly why HQ II FFV sent us there in the first place.’ *(4)*

Perhaps the passage of time has dulled Cameron’s memory, but his statement reproduced in the Official History is clearly inconsistent with the 1 ATF verbal orders, the 1 ATF written orders and the recollections of the senior infantry commanders as well as those of the artillery officers involved. If Cameron’s statement in the Official History is correct then it suggests that HQ 1 ATF was in possession of vital intelligence on the enemy that was not passed on to the combat force that needed it. The critical information about the enemy would have prepared the combat troops for what they were about to receive. Failure to pass along the enemy capabilities in full would cost lives. The Official History failed to analyse the question of enemy intelligence in relation to the tactical stance adopted by the Australian force. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the authors simply did not understand the vital military implications of the intelligence issue. As a result, one of the key lessons to be learned from the deployment at FSPB Coral is not addressed in the Official History.

### Delays and Disruption

The initial deployment did not go smoothly. It set the scene for a day where there was considerable confusion, with important decisions being made on the spot as events unfolded.

The first disruption reported in the deployment, according to the Official History, was made by Lieutenant Colonel Shelton CO 3 RAR when he discovered that the US Army was in contact with the enemy in the vicinity of Coral. According to the History, Shelton, after radio discussions with the Commander 1 ATF, began to make rapid changes to the plan. The History does not say what those rapid changes were and, at the time, no information was passed to the Gunner elements of the deploying force about any changes, rapid or otherwise.

According to the Official History, an ‘American air commander’ prevented B Company of 3 RAR from landing at K Pad at Coral. Yet, the reconnaissance parties of 12 Fd Regt and 1 RAR which were scheduled to land at K Pad (Map Reference XT9252840) just five minutes later did so without any problems. On arrival the reconnaissance parties (of which the author was a member) were met by US troops, not members of B Company 3 RAR. Contrary to this reality the Official History states that B Company 3 RAR on landing at an LZ some 1,000 metres to the South West ‘hurried’ to the original landing zone which could only have been K Pad. If so they were not sighted by the reconnaissance parties or 161 Fd Bty.

All was confusion on the LZ. The helicopters containing the Gunner and 1 RAR reconnaissance parties landed at 0720 hours into an area secured
by a company from the US Army 1st Division (the Big Red 1) with airstrikes being conducted to the West. The 102 Fd Bty GPO, Lieutenant Ian Ahearn (the author), together with a Gun Section Commander, 2nd Lieutenant Bob Lowry and a Gunner Surveyor Gunner Geoff Dwyer, had travelled with the 161 Fd Bty party. Adding to the growing confusion, the Regimental Reconnaissance Party, which included the 2IC of 12 Fd Regt, on landing, disappeared from the LZ and, at first, could not be contacted by radio. The only clue to the whereabouts of the party was provided by an American infantryman when he advised that ‘... some guys had left the perimeter’ and headed out into ‘Indian country’.

The Gunners in the reconnaissance parties expected that the procedures for a Regimental deployment would be followed. That is the 2IC of the Regiment, Major Brian Murtagh, would indicate areas for each of the three gun batteries (including the US Battery that was to deploy the next day). Normally, the total area would be approximately 400 metres square. Each of the GPOs would then lay out their gun positions in their assigned areas. But the disappearance from the LZ of the Regimental Reconnaissance Party and the inability to establish radio communications prevented an orderly deployment of the artillery from the very outset.

Growing confusion was suddenly compounded by the unexpected arrival of the 161 Fd Bty guns. The sky above the LZ quickly filled with Chinook helicopters carrying the guns of 161 Fd Bty, but with the absence of the 2IC there was no designated area in which to land the guns. There were also no gun tractors on the ground, so once the guns were landed, an action that the helicopters wanted to complete immediately, the only way to move the guns was by manpower. Apart from the intense problem that now existed on the ground, the arrival of these guns was the first sign that there was disruption to the planned air insertion. According to the plan, 161 Fd Bty guns were not due until 1000 hours. The New Zealanders had no choice but to accept their guns and Lieutenant Rod Baldwin, 161 Fd Bty GPO, sprinted away to lay out the gun markers.

Despite repeated efforts by both 161 Fd Bty and 102 Fd Bty, the 2IC could not be contacted by radio until the time when the helicopters began to land the 161 Fd Bty guns. With communications being finally established, the 2IC acknowledged the pressing situation and ordered that the 102 GPO Party move to his location ‘... just up the track’. Such an obscure order was not at all helpful. The 2IC, whose actual location was still unknown, provided no map reference. The area had formerly been a rubber plantation and, naturally, it was littered with tracks. It was impossible to know what track the 2IC was referring to. The author therefore requested the 2IC to throw a smoke grenade to provide a visual indication of his location. The author then took a compass bearing on the smoke and he and his two companions marched out of the LZ now in a state of frantic activity with the deployment of the New Zealand guns.

In his book, The Battle of Coral, Lex McAuley described the actions of Murtagh’s party once they had arrived at K Pad:

‘The recce party checked the location and found that they were 1000 m away from the desired location, so they set off in that direction.’

This comment seems to explain why Murtagh’s party had disappeared from the LZ and moved off into surrounding country. It is not clear which member of the ‘... recce party checked the location’ but whoever it was could not map read. Apart from the confusion caused by the absence of the 2IC from the LZ at a critical time, this error in basic navigation was to have an impact on the subsequent operations around Coral.

The Official History failed to understand what transpired during the initial landing at the prescribed LZ when it declared that ‘... the guns (161 Fd Bty) were landed in an improvised landing zone, a clearing some 1,000 metres to the southwest of FSB Coral.’ That statement is wrong; as explained above, 161 Fd Bty guns were landed at the only map location given in the orders. The location was subsequently verified by a report at 1045 hours that 161 Fd Bty, despite the frantic confusion, had expeditiously established the battery on the ground and was ready for action at map grid reference 927284. This grid reference specified a position just 200 metres from the LZ designated in the orders. On this basis alone, it is indisputable that 161 Bty was delivered to the right location and the Regimental Gun Position should have been grouped around that location.

Things did not turn out so well for the Australian battery. Murtagh selected a site for 102 Fd Bty that was simply too far from the initial LZ. The only explanation for Murtagh’s decision to site 102 Fd Bty so far from the initial LZ was poor map reading and a mistaken appreciation of how much real estate was needed to accommodate the future tenants of Coral. When the author’s party eventually found Murtagh, he was some 1500 metres from the LZ area. Deeply concerned, the
author pointed out the enormous gap between the battery locations but Murtagh was unmoved and replied that as the Task Force was deploying, the space would be needed.

To determine an accurate location of the area, Ahearn, Lowry and the Battery Surveyor moved off into the rubber to a set of ruins that appeared on the map; this meant that the ruins could be given a grid reference. Using a theodolite the three moved back to the position, which Murtagh had indicated, to provide an accurate map location for the guns. As they moved through the rubber, they came upon an area with a hundred freshly dug circular weapons pits and picked up an AK-47 round and a lolly with a Ho Chi Min wrapping. These were obvious signs that an enemy force had rested in the area within the last day or so. This vital and disturbing information was reported to Murtagh, but it appears that he told no one.

At this stage of the initial deployment it was now apparent that 1 RAR was not to land as planned since the supporting US helicopters had been temporally withdrawn resulting in a delayed fly-in. The withdrawal of helicopter support did affect the orderly arrival of 102 Fd Bty guns which began to be flown in at 1230 hours before 1 RAR. Some of the battery sorties were delayed until later in the day. D Company 3 RAR, the company designated to defend the FSPB, indicated that it arrived at Coral (although timings are confused). According to Lex McAuley, the Officer Commanding (OC) discussed the situation with Murtagh ‘... came to some arrangement’. The OC of D Company explained that: ‘There was a gap between the rubber trees; we’d move our company up and sit there where we could get good views over the open ground on either side of the rubber. Now whether that was where we were intended to go or not, I’m not sure, but that was agreed with Brian Murtagh on the ground and we duly went off and dug in there.’ (10)

The precise location of D Company 3 RAR was never advised to 102 Fd Bty or the 1 RAR Mortar Platoon when the latter finally arrived at Coral. D Company 3 RAR was to take no further part in the activities of the first night at Coral. The vagueness of the ‘arrangements’ arrived at by Murtagh and the OC indicated the beginnings of the muddled planning and preparation for the defence of Coral. The alarming feature of what was unfolding was that Murtagh had been told about the close proximity of freshly dug enemy weapon pits, had seen the nervous Americans at the landing zone and had seen the airstrikes to the west. Such information should have had a significant impact on the officer who had been charged with the responsibility of local defence commander of the FSPB.

The Official History obliquely comments on the poor planning for the defence of Coral:

‘Major Brian Murtagh, second-in-command of 12 Fd Regt and commanding the artillery tactical headquarters, was the designated commander of the fire support base; he was faced with the difficult and complicated problem of coordinating the defence of FSB Coral with his two batteries of guns some 1500 metres apart instead of being located at Coral and two battalions in his general area’. (11)

This comment needs to be considered in detail. Murtagh was not ‘commanding the artillery tactical headquarters’ he was commanding 12 Fd Regt Regimental Headquarters. The appointment of a FSPB defence commander was common standard practice and had been followed in all deployments previous to Coral. The procedures and practices of coordinating FSPB defence were therefore well known by infantry company commanders and gun batteries. Up to this point in time, Murtagh had no real experience of being an FSPB defence commander. In addition to his lack of experience – and probably because of it – Murtagh had complicated the FSPB defence problem by his own poor decision to site the two batteries 1,500 metres apart. While the Official History portrays Murtagh as being ‘faced with the difficult and complicated problem of coordinating the defence of FSB Coral’, the history fails to say that it was Murtagh’s own decisions that created the major problem of the dispersal of the two batteries. Furthermore, the presence of the two infantry battalions ‘in his general area’ was not a problem as the Official History suggests. The presence of two battalions was a temporary and common practice and each only transited through ‘his general area’ into their own operational areas. Indeed, the two infantry battalions were irrelevant to Murtagh’s role as defence commander of the FSPB because those units were not integral elements of the FSPB itself. The battalions would have no affect on his duties as the defence commander.

The infantry company allocated to FSPB defence, D Company 3 RAR, was not given clear orders by Murtagh nor, subsequently, were the other tenants of Coral under his command. It would seem that Murtagh himself contributed a great deal to the ‘difficult and complicated problem of coordinating the defence’. Bob Lowry accurately described the end result of the deployment with a concise comment on the defence problem:
'The fire support base was under command of Murtagh for local defence, but was actually two separate bases, one clustered around 102 Battery and the other around 161 Battery, with the reconnaissance party of Headquarters 1 ATF and its Defence and Employment Platoon stranded between them. To compound matters, except for 10 Platoon located with 161 Battery, the remainder of D Company, 3 RAR, was too far away to assist in the local defence of either base.\(^{12}\)

From the tactical perspective, the layout of the military force was quite unsound. In view of indications of the presence of a disciplined military force the poor tactical stance was inviting trouble.

With the return of the US helicopters at the end of their temporary withdrawal, the disjointed fly-in recommenced and the infantry companies of 1 RAR began to flow through the 102 Fd Bty area. It was obvious that they were confused and disoriented; most sent their affiliated artillery Forward Observers to 102 Fd Bty to check on the map location before moving out to their night ambush positions. Second Lieutenant Gordon Alexander was sent on such a task by his OC, Major Tony Hammett:

‘At the gun position, Alexander spoke to Ian Ahearn, the Gun Position Officer (GPO), and one of the Section Commanders, Bob Lowry. They told him of the newly dug positions in the rubber trees just north of the guns, and that they thought there was something funny going on’.\(^{13}\)

The gunners of 102 Fd Bty were unable to carry out the normal defensive tasks such as the erection of barbed wire and the bunding of guns since the neither the defence stores nor the battery bulldozer had arrived. They were set to work digging their personal weapon pits to Stage 1 (four feet deep), a task that none enjoyed but an effort that saved lives later on.

The Official History states that:

‘Most 102 Battery soldiers had no time to dig their individual “shell scrapes” deeper than fifteen centimetres before they had to stand to.’\(^{14}\)

The statement gives a false impression and appears to be based on the recollections of Lance Bombardier Forsdike who was a member of HQ Bty 12 Fd Regt, not 102 Fd Bty. As indicated above most of 102 Fd Bty had dug to Stage 1 (1.5 metres deep) although some individuals may have only constructed shell scrapes. Unfortunately for the CP staff they also had to dig and then set up the CP since the bulldozer had arrived. A trench about two meters deep was dug then ‘shelves’ levelled out on each side to provide space for the CP staff (duty officer, two operator command post field and a signaller). Sandbags were placed around the edges, wooden beams laid over them for protective cover and the peak of an 11x11 CP tent placed on top of the beams. Radios, connected to an R 292 mast aerial were set up outside the CP against the sandbags and the handsets passed through into the CP.

As the fly-in was coming to an end, a detachment of 131st Divisional Locating Battery comprising two listing posts (LP) and a mortar locating radar was airtifted in among the last sorties. LP 31C was deployed near the machine gun in front of Number 4 gun and the radar was positioned between 102 and the Regimental CP on the western side of the gun position. LP 31E moved on foot over the 1500 metres to the 161 Bty position.

The 102 Fd Bty helicopter sorties to Coral were complete by 1720 hours and they included additional ammunition, part of the battery defence stores and an O-Sized bulldozer. The latter was quickly put to work piling up protective earth bunds around individual guns. The 1 RAR Mortar Platoon was among the last to arrive on the ground with last light fast approaching. The Mortar platoon was located at the left (northern) flank of the gun line some 50 metres from the nearest guns and like the guns it had a centre of arc of 1600 mils (due east).

The Mortar Platoon was not isolated on the perimeter as claimed in different accounts of Coral; in a further display of the poor defensive layout the Mortar Platoon, 12 Fd Regt HQ and 102 Fd Bty actually formed the perimeter! Misleadingly, the Official History incorrectly presents a picture of a totally isolated mortar platoon\(^{15}\) when in fact the mortars formed what could be regarded as a seventh gun platform in 102 Fd Bty located on the left–northern-flank of the gun position (when viewing the gun position in relation to the easterly centre of arc).

It was at this stage that CO 1 RAR decided that his HQ would not move out to join one of his companies as planned but would remain in Coral protected by his battalion’s Assault Pioneer and Anti-Tank Platoons. The battalion headquarters and the two platoons were the closest infantry to the mortars and 102 Fd Bty, being some 400 metres south-east of the former and about 300 metres from the latter.

The poor defensive layout was only one aspect of the defence problem. As Lieutenant Tony Jensen, the Mortar Line Officer at Coral observed:

‘1 RAR mortars did not arrive on the position until approximately 1700 hours and there was no FSPB defence coordinating conference.’\(^{16}\)
Remarkably, there were no orders issued to any elements on the ground for the defence of Coral on that first night, including 161 Fd Bty isolated some 1500 metres to the south-west. The New Zealanders were left out on their own, a situation that was also noted in the Official History.

As local defence commander, Murtagh was also responsible for coordinating 161 Fd Bty defence and tying it in to the overall defence plan; the problem was that no plan existed and that the positioning of the two batteries had made the defensive task impossible. The defence principle of mutual support had been ignored.

At the 102 Fd Bty position Jensen and Ahearn sited and coordinated the arcs of the two Battery machine guns placed in front of Number 4 Gun and Number 6 Gun with the Mortar Platoon machine gun. In addition Jensen tied in the arc of the Regimental CP machine gun with the latter. No coordination was carried out with any of the HQ elements of 1 RAR nor was any orders group held by the FSPB Local Defence Commander.

The Official History recorded that the 1 RAR Anti-Tank Platoon’s two 90 mm Recoilless Rifles (RCL) were sited to fire across the front of Jensen’s mortars. This comment reinforces the impression that the mortars were in a totally isolated position. This was not the case, the Mortar Line was shielded from the RCLs by the Guns of 102 Fd Bty. The RCLs could only fire across the right flank of the 102 Fd Bty gun position. In any case, no one informed Ahearn or Jensen that such a significant action had been taken.

A telephone line was run between the Mortar CP, 102 CP and the Regimental CP. The line was not extended to HQ 1 RAR. No defensive wire barriers were constructed since the wire had finally arrived on the position late in the day and erection of barriers could not be completed by last light. Furthermore, no claymores mines were deployed since the location of D Company 3 RAR was not known as darkness fell. The claymore mine was a powerful local defence weapon that, something like a large shotgun, simultaneously fired thousands of steel balls parallel to the ground. A command detonated weapon, the mine could have a devastating effect on enemy forces attacking a position. On a more positive note, the O-Size bulldozer completed the protective earth bunds around Number 4, 5 and 6 Guns before last light.

With the dark came ‘stand to’, the practice whereby work ceased and all were required to ‘watch their front’ and maintain quiet in anticipation of an enemy assault. ‘Stand to’ was also implemented each morning at first light. It was essentially an infantry practice that was, at times, inappropriate in a gun position. The first night at Coral was one of those times as, what would normally be a period of attentive quiet, the last light ‘stand to’ was shattered by 105 mm Howitzers adjusting Defensive Fire tasks for the companies from the two infantry battalions which were still deploying. Indeed, the need to stop defensive work for a full stand-to under these circumstances was highly questionable and resulted in only the northern guns (Number 4, 5 and 6) being bunded before the bulldozer was obliged to stop. The bunding around the Number 4, 5 and 6 Guns was to prove another stroke of luck. The map on page 13 shows the locations of the elements in and around Coral at last light on 12th May 1968.

The photograph of the 102 Fd Bty position on page 14 has been rendered from a photograph taken by then Gunner Ross Alexander on the 13th May 1968. It shows the gun and mortar position as it was at last light on 12th May 1968.

The Enemy Responds

Unbeknown to the Australians and New Zealanders, the deployment of 1 ATF into Coral had been watched by elements of 7th North Vietnamese Army Division (7 NVA Div) and the enemy commander quickly decided to respond to this incursion. One battalion of 141 NVA Regiment augmented by 275 and 269 Infiltration Groups were tasked to attack Coral that night. It was a bold move that, along with surprise, would take advantage of the nascent state of the local defence preparations at Coral.

The NVA converged on Coral marching through the early hours of darkness and ultimately digging in a forming up place for the attack only 250 metres from the guns and mortars. The deployed infantry companies of 1 RAR detected the approach of the enemy to the FSPB. D Company 1 RAR reported a sighting of enemy at 1809 hours; a contact resulted with one North Vietnamese killed and one Australian wounded. At 1936 hours B Company 1 RAR fired at a party of enemy without any result. A Company 1 RAR reported the firing of two red flares which were acknowledged by two others and D Company 1 RAR reported green tracer being fired vertically into the air from different locations. These tracers were also noted by the sentries at the 102 Fd Bty gun position. Green tracer was a certain sign of enemy forces since the allies only used red tracer.

At about midnight the Mortar Platoon machine gun opened fire on three enemy soldiers who were sighted at the edge of the Mortar position. Stand to
was ordered during which an enemy machine gun returned fire which caused the Regimental CP to accuse Jensen of firing at them; Jensen replied that he only had red tracer and that the incoming tracer was green! No further incidents occurred and ‘stand down’ sent most of the gunners and mortar men back to bed as the machine gun sentries resumed their vigil.

At approximately 0215 hours the machine gunner of 12 Platoon, D Company 1 RAR, deployed in an ambush some 2,000 metres north of 102 Fd Bty, opened fire on a group of the enemy moving southwest towards Coral. Retaliation by the enemy was swift and deadly as a salvo of Rocket Propelled Grenades (RPG) exploded in the trees above 12 Platoon and in a blink of an eye eleven of the platoon became casualties. The 102 Fd Bty Forward Observer with the company, Gordon Alexander, quickly called in a fire mission and the tranquillity at the 102 Fd Bty position was broken as ‘Contact! Contact! Fire Mission Battery’ roared out over the tannoy system. The gunners tumbled out of their weapon pits and wrestled the six 2.2 tonne howitzers around to the north and began delivering their deadly 105 mm projectiles in support of the infantry company. ‘End of Mission’ was received some twenty minutes later and the details of the final target recorded as a Defensive Fire task.

Bob Lowry had fired the mission but the Battery Commander, Major Gavin Andrews, probably reflecting the concern of the 1 RAR Commander, asked for the GPO and Ahearn was called to the CP. Andrews was obviously worried about the activity around D Company 1 RAR, probably reflecting Bennett’s concern, and asked if the Battery could handle two Final Preventative Fire (FPF) tasks. Such a task involved guns being laid and loaded on the most likely target so that they could be fired immediately. It was agreed the Battery would have two FPF tasks, one using Number 1, 2 and 3 Gun laid to the east (B Company 1 RAR) and one using Number 4, 5 and 6 Gun laid to the north (D Company 1 RAR); a decision that would prove the ‘value of luck’ in battle.

The decision to adopt two FPF tasks and the associated ‘divided’ orientation of the guns

**Night locations 12th–13th May 1968.** Note: The purple circular area shows the area to be occupied taken from Annex A to FragO No 6 to OpO 19/68. The purple cross is the location given for K Pad which B Company 3 RAR did not use and the reconnaissance parties did. The 102 Fd Bty position lies 1000 metres outside the original area.
resulted in some individual accounts of the battle describing their position as being located in ‘front of the guns’ – in fact this was not the situation.

The gun detachments cleaned up the residue from the fire mission around their gun platforms and most returned to their personal pits; the detachment on Number 4 Gun stayed up, preferring a coffee and cigarette to sleep. This action would also have a bearing on the events that were to follow.

At about 0230 hours the Mortar Platoon position and 102 Fd Bty were engulfed in a hailstorm of RPGs, mortars and machine gun fire. Manning the machine gun in front of Number 6 Gun, Gunners Mick Grimes and John Schwartz could not believe their eyes as RPG and machine gun fire flashed over their heads into the Battery position. Grimes recalled:

‘Johnny and I saw no more than 150 metres out massed ranks of (enemy) infantry just stood up and came forward.’(18)

They began engaging the NVA with their machine gun but the weapon jammed on three occasions and they fell back to their gun platform. The enemy followed up onto the top of the protective bund where desperate fighting took place. Grimes was ‘stitched up’ by an NVA with an AK47 rifle, and was wounded in the hand but saved from the full effects by his Self Loading Rifle (SLR) which took the full brunt of the burst. Second Lieutenant Matt Cleland, Section Commander, arrived at Number 6, emptied his pistol at the NVA then sprinted to his pit to retrieve his F1 Sub Machine gun. In the confusion the Australians dropped the M60 machine gun which had been brought in from the sentry pit.

The NVA were now hurling grenades, and the Gun Sergeant, Max Franklin, ordered his detachment to fall back to Number 5 Gun. The Australian Gunners had no grenades to reply with against the NVA as they could only be released with the approval of the Regimental CO or 2IC (a consequence of an Australian officer being killed by a grenade in Nui Dat). Franklin took the howitzer’s firing pin with him; a wise precaution that he failed to tell any of his officers about.
At the same time 2000 metres north, D Company 1 RAR had just completed a dangerous medical evacuation of their wounded via two lifts from US helicopters, and were observing a very large stream of enemy moving south towards the Coral position. The Forward Observer, Gordon Alexander, called for a fire mission:

‘One four, fire mission battery’. The reply from GPO Ahearn was, ‘This call sign under ground assault’ to which Alexander could only reply, ‘oh!’

On Number 4 Gun the detachment, being the only gunners that had not returned to bed, quickly retrieved their personal weapons and as their machine gunner forward of the gun came scrambling back, opened with withering small arms fire on the enemy assault. The gun was one of the three that had been ‘bunded’ hence the detachment was protected and the barrel was pointing north straight into the axis of the enemy attack; the NVA were assaulting into the mouth of a 105 mm cannon. Ahearn was asleep in his weapon pit and was woken by the barrage. He raced to the CP just as Sergeant John Stephens (Gun Sergeant Number 4) reported on the tannoy that he had opened fire on an assault to his front and that he was running out of small arms ammunition and requested resupply. To complete his report, Stephens requested permission to open fire over open sights, a last resort for guns under attack from close quarters.

Each gun was equipped with six Splintex anti-personnel rounds for use in a situation just like this. Each Splintex round contained 7,200 flechettes – fin stabilized projectiles similar to small arrows. The only problem was that the Battery had never fired the round before this night. Lowry and Ahearn turned to the technical instructions but could find no reference to the correlation between the time fuse setting and range. They decided on a setting of 0.05 seconds, as Lowry passed the order to Number 4 Gun and Ahearn ducked outside the CP to monitor the effect. The projectile was fitted with a tracer base and Ahearn watched in dismay as the two rounds fired appeared to malfunction as they disappeared into the night. As it transpired these rounds were later found to have exploded over the NVA Reserves some 400 metres out from the perimeter. The fuse setting obviously needed adjustment so Lowry ordered the fuse to be set to ‘muzzle action’ and the results visited awful damage on the assaulting NVA.

Ahearn decided to leave Lowry in the CP and to set off around the gun position to see what was happening. The stressful situation produced unexpected reactions and Lex McCauley recorded in his book: Lowry was ‘illogically’ concerned ‘because Ahearn was not wearing a shirt, so took his own off and gave it to him’. (19)

At the CP entrance Ahearn met the Battery Guide, Warrant Officer Class Two Les Wheeler and briefed him to assemble an ammunition party and get a small arms resupply to Number 4 Gun. Leaving Wheeler to organise the resupply, Ahearn moved around the gun position to check on each of the gun detachments and their guns. The first thing that he discovered was that due to the earth ‘bunding’ raised around the three northern guns the incoming NVA fire was high and therefore movement around the position was feasible.

Ahearn found that all gun detachments were either standing to around their guns or, in the case of Number 4 Gun continuing to fire over open sights. The detachments of Number 5 and Number 6 Guns were manning the edge of Number 5 Guns bund and observing Number 6 Gun, which alarmingly was now in enemy hands. Ahearn instructed that Number 5 Gun was to be loaded with Splintex and laid on Number 6 and at the first sign that the NVA were trying to move or turn the gun, Number 5 gun was to engage. Ahearn did not know that Franklin had the firing pin of the Number 6 Gun safe in his pocket making it impossible for the enemy to use the gun.

Returning to the CP Ahearn again met with Wheeler who had arranged the delivery of a small arms ammunition resupply to Number 4 Gun detachment and he suggested that additional Splintex should be provided to that gun. It was agreed that all guns except Number 5 would give up four of their six rounds and that additional high explosive (HE) rounds would be moved up to Number 4 Gun.

At the Mortar Line Jensen and his men were also under attack:

‘The first warning of the attack came from Corporal Hickey, a section second-in-command (later killed in action), who alerted the Platoon second-in-command as the mortar attack began, and stated he was one of the picquets and there were about 400 enemy 50 metres away and gibbering. This information was immediately passed to 1 RAR CP on the Battalion command net, and on the internal defence net to FSPB defence CP’. (20)

The Mortar Platoon was over run immediately and Jensen called for fire from 161 Fd Bty and the 3 RAR mortars located with them. Jensen shouted to his Platoon telling them of the incoming rounds warning them to stay in their pits. He advised both
the local defence CP and HQ 1 RAR of his situation but the latter needed three reports before they understood what was happening at the Mortar Platoon. The men of the platoon took refuge in their shell scrapes; arriving last on the position at last light the men of the Mortar Platoon had not had sufficient time to fully develop their individual weapon pits. From their shell scrapes, the men of the Mortar Platoon began to engage the NVA with their personal weapons.

Near the Regimental CP, Lance Bombardier Andy Forsdike (HQ Bty) who was in charge of the machine gun team, heard ‘loud rustling in the grass’ and telephoned the Regimental CP to request permission to open fire. His request was denied since the Regimental ‘HQ was not sure what was going on’. Forsdike then saw the NVA stand up close to his team and recalled ‘... everyone including the VC went to ground as a very heavy barrage of Mortar and Rocket fire came into the gun position.’ (21)

The attack on the Mortar Platoon and 102 Fd Bty was simultaneous, not ‘... through the mortar platoon and then onto 102 Field Battery’ (22) as described by Bennett, the CO of 1 RAR. Both Bennett, and the 1 RAR after action report which recorded the event, were wrong in this observation; had the attack come only through the mortars in the first instance as claimed, the Gunners would have had more time to prepare and the immediate engagement of the NVA assault by Number 4 Gun would not have been possible.

Jensen and his men were trapped by the speed of the NVA assault, the main factor influencing Jensen’s decision to stay and fight. It would have been possible for the men of the Mortar Platoon to pull back into the guns (two mortar men did just that) but such a move would have required the mortars and ammunition to be left behind as well as opening the way into the flank of the gun position. Jensen thought the NVA appeared to be surprised when they hit the Mortar position; this view is supported by the effect of the fierce resistance which broke up the attack. There was also a lack of concerted effort by the NVA to carry a very valuable treasure trove of equipment away. It would appear that the Mortar Platoon had moved in after the NVA had conducted their reconnaissance for the attack and that their presence disrupted the NVA assault.

Down the track to the west of the Mortar Platoon, Forsdike and his team were in all sorts of trouble.

‘Enemy swirled around Forsdike’s men; the young bombardier’s M60 jammed. He wrestled with it. Two men fell to his rear: one dead one wounded.’ (23)

The savage fight around Forsdike’s machine gun was to leave two Australians dead and two more wounded.

The Mortar Platoon was also in trouble with the NVA ‘... systematically firing at each pit, tent or sign of occupation.’ (24) Casualties began to mount; Corporal Jock Witten was hit and Private Graham Stevens went to his aid but an RPG killed Whitton and wounded Stevens. The NVA had managed to seize an Australian mortar firing three rounds before Jensen’s men stopped their efforts with heavy small arms fire. Jensen was subjected to scrutiny by ‘... a big bare headed man in khaki, wearing a Vietnamese belt and a holstered pistol, hands behind his back, peering down at me. He just, strolled away but did not get far. I shot him.’ (25)

Overhead the pitch dark sky was lit up by the mini guns and rockets of Cobra helicopter gunships. The gunships had been called in by the Fire Support Coordination Centre (FSCC) at HQ 1 RAR. Major Gavin Andrews, 102 Fd Battery Commander, was busy organising artillery support from any American artillery in range. In all some nine batteries including 161 Fd Bty, were dropping rounds onto the immediate surrounds of Coral. All was now bedlam within the 102 Fd Bty position.

Number 4 Gun was still firing over open sights. It had expended 22 rounds of Splintex and had switched to High Explosive (HE). The comment in the Official History by Major Murtagh that the direct action fuses were set to ‘delay’ and ‘The guns were depressed to fire the shell at the ground some 40 to 50 metres in front of the gun. The round ricocheted and exploded in the air, close to the ground and over the heads of the enemy’ (26) is sheer fantasy. The barrel was close to parallel to the ground with just enough elevation to clear the bund and the detachment too busy to set fuses to delay. In fact so intense was the pressure that they fired at least two unplugged rounds (returned by the infantry next day) and one illuminating round that created some excitement. In all Number 4 Gun fired eighty four rounds over open sights.

Number 2 Gun was hit by an RPG that blew out its tyres and punctured the trail. One of the detachment was slightly wounded. Lance Bombardier Geoff Grimish ‘was carrying a round to the (No 4 Gun) from his own position, and distinctly saw an NVA jump up onto the bund and aim an RPG, but ignored him, buoyed up with “a feeling of invincibility”, and a split second later the NVA was gone; he had been standing directly in front of the cannon (No 4 gun) as it fired.’ (27)
An RPG rocketed over the position and exploded in the ammunition bay of Number 1 Gun. The ammunition began to burn fiercely as the cordite in the cartridge cases caught fire. Sergeant Ray Dial the Gun Sergeant, tried to extinguish the flames but gave up and took his detachment a short distance along the road to the south, waited for the flames to die then returned to his gun. Ammunition continued to be delivered to the forward guns and Bombardier Riley, the 102 Fd Bty Transport NCO, drove the Battery Landrover backwards and forwards despite the heavy enemy machine gun fire that the vehicle attracted. The O-Sized bulldozer sat forlornly in the middle of the gun position riddled with bullets and shrapnel and leaking fuel.

Ahearn continued to move around the position, returning at intervals to the 102 Fd Bty CP to brief both Bob Lowry and, by radio, Andrews at the 1 RAR CP. Andrews gave an overview of the artillery and air support that he was coordinating and advised that ‘Spooky’ would shortly be on station. Ahearn also reported to the Regimental CP but no orders or instructions were issued by the FSPB Defence Commander save one; an order to throw grenades at the machine gun in the Number 6 Gun position that was causing the Regimental HQ some discomfort. Grenades and M79 rounds delivered from Number 5 Gun platform silenced the machine gun. The grenades had to be retrieved from the Battery stores before they could be used.

Neither Ahearn nor Jensen received any other orders or instructions from Murtagh, the Local Defence Commander. In Jensen’s case this would have been difficult since his telephone connection with the Regimental CP had been severed. 102 Fd Bty CP had telephone communications with the Regimental CP throughout the battle but with the exception of the order to throw grenades no instructions were issued.

Communications were becoming a problem. The battery radio used for the Regimental Command Net had been hit and destroyed; one radio was on the Battery Command Net linking the 102 Fd Bty CP with the Battery Commander at 1 RAR HQ and the Forward Observers with the infantry companies. A third radio was on the 1 RAR Battalion Command Net allowing 102 Fd Bty to listen to exchanges between the Mortar Platoon and

The 102 Battery, Mortar Platoon and Regimental CP positions showing the extent of the NVA penetration. Note that the three guns at the right of the photograph are pointing north while the remaining three guns are pointing east.
HQ 1 RAR. Only two of the terminals, No 4 Gun and No 5 Gun, of the gun command tannoy system linking the howitzers to the 102 Fd Bty CP, were operating. The wire linking the system had been cut by incoming RPG and mortar rounds. The telephone line between the Regimental, 102 Fd Bty and Mortar Platoon CPs was operative although the Mortars dropped off the line shortly after the assault began. At least two wounded gunners (Grimes and Nichols) were brought to the 102 Fd Bty CP and placed on the rear shelf, making life a little overcrowded.

'Spooky' made an appearance over the battle and announcing his presence by lighting up the battle with enormous parachute borne flares. 'Spooky' or 'Puff the Magic Dragon' was an AC 47 aircraft (military version of the DC3) fitted with 2 or 3 GAU-2A 7.62mm miniguns (Gatling guns) capable of delivering 6,000 rounds per minute. The sight of the red tracer streaming down from the heavens was a sight that many of the Australian soldiers would remember for life. 'Spooky', continued to circle 'hosing' the perimeter of the FSPB; adding to the rain of tracer from 'Spooky', the helicopter gunships continued to make their runs up and down the northern flank.

At this stage the infantry companies out in their ambush position began to call for artillery support. Although enemy fire was still coming into the gun position Number 1, 2 and 3 Gun began firing in line shortly after the assault began. At least two wounded gunners (Grimes and Nichols) were brought to the 102 Fd Bty CP and placed on the rear shelf, making life a little overcrowded.

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The fight had been underway for more than two and a half hours and dawn was fast approaching. The situation in the Mortar Platoon was getting worse. The gun position had tried to contact the mortars by voice but those attempts only resulted in increased machine gun fire. The 102 Fd Bty CP could hear Jensen on the 1 RAR Command Net as he repeatedly called for Splintex to be fired over his position; the CO 1 RAR finally relented and agreed.

The Official History version of what happened next is pure fiction based on a misinterpretation of the military terms 'call for' and 'directed' and a misreading of those terms in an interview with Jensen. The Official History version deserves stating in full to reveal just how wrong it is:

*In desperation Jensen saw the only option open to him was to direct the fire of the 90 mm RCLs onto his own position. He had been providing very clear reports of the situation and Bennett had no compunction into agreeing to the fire missions. Several times Jensen called for such fire. Bennett regarded this as the second critical period in the battle, when the enemy had actually achieved a break-in.’

'Stay down', Jensen shouted to his platoon each time through the din, 'Splintex coming in'. 'He would then immediately call for fire, and the bangs quickly followed.'

Certainly, Jensen had been providing very clear reports to Bennett while persistently calling for Splintex fire across his position but Bennett was reluctant to approve what appeared to be a drastic solution. 102 Fd Bty CP listened to the discussions on the 1 RAR Command Net and Jensen made several transmissions 'calling for' Splintex to be fired over his position. These calls were not fire missions as the Official History recorded; they were repeated requests to take a course of action. Furthermore, Jensen was not considering the fire from the 90 mm RCLs which belonged to the Anti-Tank Platoon. Jensen wanted Splintex fire from the 105 mm guns of 102 Fd Bty.

So, while quoting Jensen, the authors of the Official History misconstrued what Jensen was doing. There are a few considerations that highlight this misconstruction. An examination of the layout of the FSPB by the Official History authors would have revealed that it was physically impossible for the RCL of the Anti-Tank Platoon to fire over the Mortar Line as the latter was screened from the former by 102 Fd Bty guns. From his perspective on the ground in the Mortar Platoon position, it was abundantly obvious to Jensen that it was only the guns of 102 Fd Bty which could help relieve the desperate situation his platoon was in. The use of the RCLs never entered his mind and, furthermore, the RCLs were at the outer limit of their Splintex range (300 metres).

Another factor was that the RCLs only had eight rounds of ammunition for each of the two weapons to begin with and had they been firing for two hours at 'opportunity targets' as indicated by Second Lieutenant Les Tranter they would not have had the ammunition to fire multiple fire Splintex missions near the end of the action. In short the version of the firing of Splintex over the Mortar Platoon in the Official History is pure invention. These considerations and conclusions are supported by Jensen in his article in *Infantry* in 1973. Remarkably, Jensen’s article was known to the authors of the Official History because it was
quoted as a source in other areas in the Official History. In his article, Jensen recorded:

‘At this stage the mortar position was engaged with splintex by 102 Field Battery. The accuracy of their fire was revealed after the contact. Some enemy had attempted to drag away a complete mortar (which they couldn’t dismantle) and their bodies and the mortar were found about five metres from the mortar pit. Several splintex darts had penetrated the barrel and also about 20% of the ammunition on the mortar line’. (30)

The authors of the Official History might also have researched the 1 RAR After Action Report which recorded at 0425 hours 13th May 1968:

‘Gunners from 102 Fd Bty were able to engage en with HE and splintex rounds and fired over the Mor Pl position.’ (31)

Ahearn also described the incident in his report on the attacks on 102 Fd Bty:

‘At approximately 0500 hrs a request was made by the mortar position to fire splintex across their position. No 5 gun fired 5 rounds across the mortars which proved very effective.’ (32)

Yet another description of the event was recorded by Lex McAuley:

‘For a long time there had been no contact between the mortars and the guns, but at last Tony Jensen acknowledged the call from Ian Ahearn, who had gone to No 5 gun pit in an effort to determine what had happened to the infantry mortar platoon and it was arranged that splintex would be fired across the mortar position. He called for his men to get down and the lethal hail from 5 rounds slashed overhead.’ (33)

In short the Splintex fired over the Mortar Platoon was fired by Number 5 Gun 102nd Field Battery and it was one fire mission comprising five rounds. The Official History account is totally wrong and the authors failed to refer to readily available sources to cross reference their version of events. Both Jensen and Ahearn met with Ekins, one of the Official History authors, after the publication of the Official History and pointed out the errors regarding the firing of Splintex over the mortars but Ekins declined to accept their eye witness account.

Close-quarters fighting

‘On reaching the artillery position, the North Vietnamese overran two guns and desperate fighting at close quarters occurred between the gun emplacements.’ (34) This description in the Official history is wrong; at no stage were two guns over-run; Number 6 Gun was the only gun over-run. By using the phrase ‘on reaching’ the
Official History gives the false impression that the fighting was over in the Mortar Platoon and had now switched to the gun position. The assaults on both the Mortar Platoon and the Gun Position were simultaneous as was the fighting. The re-taking of Number 6 Gun did not occur until almost first light and the events have been described above. First light (dawn) occurred at 0510 hours (5.10 am) not as reported in the Official History at ‘5.45 am’. (35)

The NV A began to withdraw and by first light artillery and the gunship helicopters were engaging their withdrawal routes as they fled to the north, north east and south west. In the 102 Fd Bty position two groups had been assembled; one tasked to assault Number 6 Gun and re-take it from the enemy and then to move out to clear the area in front of the gun and mortar positions. The other group was to be prepared to move into the Mortar Position to provide aid. As first light came these patrols did just that.

The first patrol swept through Number 6 Gun around the front of the mortars and around to the rear of the Regimental CP. Greg Ayson, a member of Max Franklin’s Number 6 Gun, and a member of the clearing patrol, was later surprised to realise that ‘all the training at Canungra, [the Australian jungle training centre] all the rigmarole you go through came out then. Out we went, no hesitation about it and we did a fairly good job of clearing the area.’ (36)

The patrol shot and killed one NV A in their sweep meanwhile the second patrol moved out into the Mortar Line and found chaos. There were dead and wounded mortar men scattered throughout the position and the 102 Fd Bty medic, Corporal Alistair ‘Doc’ McKenzie, began treating them immediately. One NV A wounded was carefully searched and given first aid, he had been wounded across the chest by a burst of what appeared to be 9 mm rounds.

The Official History makes no mention of the 102 Fd Bty patrols and mistakenly reports an ‘... enemy killed in the Number 6 emplacement at 6.10 a.m.’ (37) and gives the impression that the 1 RAR Anti-Tank Platoon conducted the first clearing patrol. The 1 RAR After Action Report is the information source of the NV A killed in the Number 6 Gun position, but it is wrong since at this stage 102 Fd Bty had reclaimed the gun. The presence of the 102 Fd Bty patrols and the recapture of Number 6 Gun by the gunners is confirmed by Tony Jensen in his Infantry article. (38)

The 102 Fd Bty clearing patrol was withdrawn back into the gun position when HQ 1 RAR advised that they were mounting a patrol. 102 Fd Bty personnel remained at Number 6 Gun and in the mortar position. The presence of a 3 RAR patrol which ‘... carried out a sweep from the north to the south...' (39) is not recalled by either Jensen or Ahearn. The HQ and D Company were the closest 3 RAR troops to the 102 Fd Bty position and they were to the west not the north. Any patrol from the north would have had to risk being mistaken for enemy by the helicopter gunships still operating in that direction and by the gunners in 102 Fd Bty. The Official History does not provide a reference for this information.

As the Australians began to recover and count the cost it was revealed that nine Australians had been killed and twenty eight wounded. Jensen’s Mortar Line bore the brunt of the casualties with five dead and eight wounded out of eighteen men. Two Gunners were dead and four wounded. Fifty two NV A dead lay strewn around the guns and mortars and one NV A soldier was taken prisoner. Two of Jensen’s mortars were damaged and one 105 mm Howitzer was damaged beyond immediate repair and had to be flown out, another had both tyres blown out and a hole in its trail but the gun stayed in action. The 102 Fd Bty O-Sized bulldozer was riddled with small arms fire and also had to be back loaded. Every piece of canvas (used for ammunition bays) was shredded and all personal sleeping tents (‘Hoochies’) were riddled with bullet and shrapnel holes.

The NV A began to withdraw shortly after first light and they were harassed by helicopter gunships and artillery. HQ 1 RAR issued orders for the scattered companies to concentrate on Coral. D Company on its way back into Coral struck a group of enemy and mounted a company attack. The company called for artillery fire ‘... and so created for Gavin Andrews, the commander of 102 Battery his most vivid memory of the entire operation, the one I feel privileged to have. The answer for this battery target was, first two guns fired, then three, then five and then the badly damaged gun fired a couple of rounds and they were all firing.’ (40) Andrews was partly wrong; only five guns fired since Number 6 was unable to fire but the emotion of the moment clearly stayed with him.

The mission was in support of D Company 1 RAR as it closed in on the FSPB and made contact with a group of NV A. Major Tony Hammett led his company in an assault, over open ground with fixed bayonets and 102 Fd Bty’s ‘walking’ artillery fire falling just 150 metres ahead. It was to prove inspirational to a company that had been badly hit during the previous night particularly as the assault succeeded in over running the enemy position without a single casualty.
Working parties from 102 Fd Bty and the 1 RAR Anti-Tank Platoon began to collect the Australian and NVA dead and wounded. This grisly task was still underway when the road conveys containing the remaining elements of 1 ATF arrived. An engineer bulldozer was used to dig a mass grave in front of the guns and the fifty two NVA dead were interred there. The Australian dead and wounded were evacuated by helicopter to the US hospital at Long Binh.

The gunners began to clean up their gun platforms. Number 6 Gun was severely damaged and was flown out dangling from a Chinook as was the battery bulldozer. A replacement gun, bulldozer and gun tyres for Number 2 were air delivered later in the day. Defences were improved including the deepening of personal weapon pits, addition of overhead cover, construction of machine gun bunkers within the bunds of each gun, wire defences, and sandbagging the roof of the CP.

The Gunners of 102 Fd Bty had been in a savage and bloody fight and had survived almost unscathed a result that was due largely to luck combined with a dogged will to win through. On the other hand the NVA commander had little luck; his reconnaissance elements had failed to detect the mortar position and his assault was dislocated by the resistance of the mortar men, his troops moving in on the FSPB struck his assault was dislocated by the resistance of the mortar elements had failed to detect the mortar position and his assault was dislocated by the resistance of the mortar men, his troops moving in on the FSPB struck Number 2 Bty 2/35 and the Task Force Maintenance Area. Enemy mortar rounds blew out the tires on the hapless Number 2 Gun and scored a direct hit on the 102 Fd Bty CP which survived the blast. Sergeant ‘Robbie’ Robertson was wounded in the eye during the bombardment and was evacuated. A Gunner from ‘A’ Bty 2/35 Battalion US Artillery was killed. An estimated NVA Regiment struck A Company and D Company 1 RAR in turn. Massive US artillery and air support including strikes by fighter bombers using napalm was instrumental in defeating the NVA assault.

Although this was the last ground assault on Coral the enemy continued to mortar the FSPB on a regular basis. On 24th May the Australian Centurion tanks arrived at Coral and their presence was to prove a major advantage for the Australian struggle with the NVA.

On 24th May FSPB Balmoral was established north of Coral and occupied by 3 RAR and a troop of tanks. 161 Bty moved to Coral which was able to provide 18 guns to support Balmoral. The NVA reacted violently to the Australian move and on 26th May at 0345 hours a preliminary bombardment preceded a battalion sized assault on Balmoral. Mortars and RPGs were used against Coral in an attempt to suppress supporting fire but the attempt failed. 102 Fd Bty guns were soon hard at work providing supporting fire missions. Gunner Stan Carbines, an Operator Command Post Field in the 102 Fd Bty CP recalled:

‘It wasn’t long before we had a second fire mission so we had three guns firing on the original target...’
and three on the next. Then we had a call for another fire mission, this time for illumination. My first reaction was that we could not calculate three fire missions simultaneously, however, with suggestions from Trevor and the lieutenant, and quick manipulation of our equipment and with our high level of training we accomplished it without making errors. This was not textbook stuff. It was survival for the FSB and providing support to those who were in desperate need. For every adjustment to the firing the surveyors had to recalculate and the bearing and elevation of the guns altered. The radio messages kept coming for the three fire missions, adjust fire, add two hundred metres, fire, drop fifty metres, fire, five rounds fire for effect, fire, add two hundred metres ten rounds fire for effect, so on for hours and hours.\(^{(41)}\)

Once again massive artillery and air support decimated the enemy who were also subjected to accurate tank fire. Later on the same day D Company 1 RAR and a troop of tanks became engaged for three hours in an enemy bunker system. Artillery and mortar fire provided a protective box around the infantry and armour allowing them to methodically destroy individual bunkers until deteriorating weather forced a withdrawal.

The action proved the effectiveness of tank/infantry assault on bunker systems as opposed to tackling such systems with infantry alone where the likelihood of casualties was high. Despite the scale of the bunker position and the tenacity of an enemy that refused to withdraw, the company and troop destroyed a large number of bunkers and NVA without suffering any casualties – not one scratch.

The second attack on Balmoral came early in the morning on 28th May. Once again there was a preliminary bombardment and once again Coral came under mortar and rocket attack. Once again the NVA were repulsed with heavy casualties. This attack was the last NVA attempt to overrun the Australian bases.

Tanks and infantry again combined on 30th May when C Company 1 RAR came under heavy fire some 3,000 metres east of Coral. The company had deployed with Armoured Personnel Carriers (APC) and after dismounting, found themselves in a bunker system occupied by aggressive NVA units. The company called for tanks and two Centurions and a troop of APCs linked up with the Company and the tanks began to systematically destroy the bunkers. Artillery, mortars and airstrikes supported the action and continued as the Australians withdrew after nearly four hours.

This action proved to be the last major action for the Australian’s in Operation Toan Thang. Although there were minor contacts with the enemy over the next few days it was decided to withdraw 1 ATF on 6th June 1968. This brought to an end what should be regarded as the first brigade sized operation involving all combat arms (infantry, artillery, tanks, cavalry and aviation) since World War 11.

For their actions in Bien Hoa the Royal Australian Regiment, 1st Armoured Regiment and 3rd Cavalry Regiment were awarded the Battle Honour ‘Coral Balmoral’. 12th Field Regiment was not awarded a Battle Honour as artillery units consider the guns their colours; 102nd Field Battery was awarded an Honour Title and is now known as 102 ‘Coral’ Battery.

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Author:
Ian Ahearn has retired to Canberra after a 35 year career in the Australian Army and then 8 years in the information technology industry. He saw active service in South Vietnam with 12th Field Regiment RAA and service overseas with 28th ANZUK Field Regiment in Singapore. He was the Commandant 1st Recruit Training Battalion in 1988/1989 and ended his service in Army Headquarters as Director Information Plans and Policy-Army. He was President of the RAA Association (ACT) from 1991 to 1995, Vice Chairman of the Australian Industry Defence Network 1998/2000, President of the Federal Golf Club 2005/2006 and is currently the Colonel Commandant RAA Eastern Region. Ian is a Graduate of the Royal Military College, Army Command and Staff College and the Joint Services Staff College. He holds a Dip Grad – Defence Studies from the University of NSW.
102nd (CORAL) Field Battery
Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery

The Honour Title CORAL is awarded to 102nd Field Battery, Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery, in recognition of its conduct during the Battle of Coral in South Vietnam between 5th May and 6th June 1968.

During Operation One Way round Field Battery deployed to Fire Support Base Coral in support of 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment. Early morning on 5th May an intense enemy barrage of rocket propelled grenade and small arms fire was directed into Coral. The barrage was the prelude to an assault by and Battalion, 1st Regiment, 7th North Vietnamese Army Division, against the Battery and the 1st Battalion's Mortar Platoon (sourced). The Battery engaged the assault with its 25mm and 81mm Mortar firing anti-personnel rounds over open sights. The enemy encountered the 102mm Howitzer and the Mortar Platoon. During the fire, a rocket-propelled grenade and an 81mm Mortar round caught fire. At the request of the Mortar Platoon's Second Platoon commander, the Battery engaged the mortars positions with un-named rounds. Throughout the assault, the 102mm Howitzer continued to fire in support of the Battery's efforts until contacting the enemy attempting to move to fire at the Battery.

The Battery continued to support the 1st Battalion's Fire Support Base 25mm and 81mm Mortars fortified in support of the Battery. Although Fire Support Base Coral was never seriously threatened during the second assault, the Battery continued to support the 1st Battalion's Fire Support Base until 6th June 1968 where the 102mm Howitzer was relocated to Phu Bai District. These operations encountered heavy resistance and required Battery fire support of the highest calibre.

The Battery encountered two enemy mortar and rocket attacks, and two enemy rocket attacks. Within 10 minutes, 5th State Battery was deployed in support of 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, in operations in South Vietnam.

For Excellence, Major General D.M. Jeffery, AC, CVO, MC

Governor-General
May 1968
THE GREAT WAR

World War One Trophy Guns

Kevin Browning

Introduction
The Royal Australian Artillery Historical Company is compiling a record of all the historic guns in Australia. It has involved updating previous information obtained in the early 1980s and assistance to the Royal Australian Artillery History Sub-Committee in meeting one of its project’s goals. Work initially focused on the guns in NSW and, thanks to Graham Hampton, this has now been downloaded to the RAAHC website at www.artilleryhistory.org. It is now planned to include information on the other States and Territories and everyone can help. Whenever travelling simply keep a lookout for those park guns and if possible take a photo of the gun and record any serial numbers, or just tell us you saw a gun. We are interested in all historic guns including those on military establishments.

Among the historic guns in Australia is a large number of guns and trench mortars (minenwerfer), brought back to Australia after World War I. Their distribution was based on a number of factors. A quantity was retained for the Australian War Memorial; weapons captured by a particular AIF unit were allotted to the CMF unit retaining the heritage of that AIF unit. Finally the remainder were allotted to towns throughout Australia. The latter formed the bulk of the weapons and were allotted between 1919 and 1922.

Allocation
The distribution was entrusted to State Trophy Committees composed of:
• a Senate representative as Chairman,
• a representative of the State Government,
• a representative of the State Opposition,
• an AIF representative, and
• the Director of the Australian War Memorial.

The basis of the allotment was the town. Each capital city received an agreed number of weapons for distribution amongst the suburbs. Towns with a population:
• greater than 10,000 would receive two guns and two machine guns,
• between 3,000 and 10,000 one gun,
• between 1,500 and 3,000 one gun or one trench mortar, and
• between 150 and 1,500 one machine gun(1).

A small number of communities considered the basis of distribution inequitable or the actual allocation unfair or embarrassing. Tamworth City Council in NSW believed the difference in population was too great, a town with 3000 people getting the same as one with 10,000. They also pointed out that only two towns in NSW would qualify for the over 10,000, Newcastle and Broken Hill. Tamworth’s population at the time was just below 10,000. Williamstown in Victoria were not happy because a School had received a gun and the town allotted a machine gun(2). Some of the complaints resulted in success but only where a weapon was available. Bexley in Sydney is perhaps the greatest example of success. Originally allotted a trench mortar they eventually received a 150 mm gun. Whether the fact their local member at the time was also Premier of NSW had any bearing on the result is not known.

Regardless of the weapon allotted there were pre-conditions that had to be met. Three trustees, including a member of the AIF, had to be appointed to act on behalf of the town and they had to forward to the State Trophy Committee a signed agreement:
• to arrange for the trophy to be permanently housed in a public park, garden or building within the town, and for its preservation and safe custody;
• to bear expenses connected with its movement from the nearest railway station and installation; and
• to arrange a simple ceremony at which it would be formally taken over.

1,110 towns were offered trophies with 57 declining the offer. Included in the final allocation were trophies presented by the French Government in appreciation for the part played in the war by Australian soldiers.
Numbers involved

Whilst gathering information for the Artillery Register we have attempted to identify how many guns actually existed. This is never easy as the information, if available, is often at variance. In regard, the World War I trophies, the Australian War Memorial has within its records a series of cards that show where the guns were allotted. However, these cards do not record all the guns. Bill Billett in his book ‘War Trophies – From the First World War 1914 to 1918’, published in 1999, included a list prepared from these cards for the artillery pieces. We have followed his listing and checked it with the Australian War Memorial cards and also compiled a list of Minenwerfer (trench mortars) but did not include machine guns as they fall outside our area of interest and are too numerous to include simply for interest.

From the cards we identified 413 guns and 396 minenwerfer. But in 1922 the Minister for Home and Territories (Senator Pearce) advised the number of trophies distributed to communities totalled 461 guns, 431 trench mortars and 4,218 machine guns. The article included the breakup by States but when these are totalled the trench mortar number totals 434 and the machine guns 4,418. For our purposes the numbers for the guns is 461 and trench mortars 431 (or 434). To further cloud the matter the card system shows at least two guns allocated by the Australian War Memorial in the 1950s. The totals do not include the 46 guns allotted to the Australian War Memorial (all accounted for) or their trench mortars and the 89 guns allotted to the CMF units. Some of the latter guns found their way into the local community as units disbanded. These figures when totalled are at variance with a statement made by Mr Glynn, the Minister for Home and Territories, in replying to a question in Parliament where he stated ‘I think they include about 800 guns, 3,800 machine guns, 520 trench mortars, 217 motor vehicles ... ’.

Where are they now

2012 marks the 90th anniversary of the completion of these trophies. Although a pre-condition to receive these trophies included their permanent preservation and display, many of the guns and trench mortars are no longer on display and many no longer exist. Why has this happened?

Almost from the very start there were questions asked as to why the trophies were needed and objections to their display. They were said to glorify war, were eyesores in the beautiful parks where they were displayed and were burdens on the available funds. Sydney Council refused to accept those allotted to them in 1922. The NSW State Government refused to allow war trophies to be displayed in State schools. A local Council in Northern Queensland voted to remove the guns from public display and dump them. They changed their minds when the local community threatened to rise up and dispose of the council.

As time went on the elements commenced to work against the trophies as the metal work rusted and the timber wheels collapsed. By the 1930s the depression caused enormous problems with the lack of funds available to maintain the objects. The easy option was to dispose of the trophy to the local dump. When World War II commenced the guns were seen as a possible target for an enemy aircraft and were removed to the local dump. Then in February 1942 the Defence Department advertised for the guns to be returned for scrap iron to be turned into munitions to attack the enemy.

Following World War II the continuing deterioration of the trophies saw more of them being disposed of. One council actually gave their trophy gun to the local RSL to be sold for scrap and the money going to the Kids Christmas Party Fund. £5 ($10) was raised as a result. A saving grace about this time and even to more recent times has been the private collector who saw the significance of these objects and undertook to save them from the scrap heap. Then they undertook to restore the items. Without these collectors many more of the trophies would now be simply a thing of the past.

The existence of two guns is due to the work of collectors. One in NSW was stopped from being disposed of. One council actually gave their trophy gun to the local RSL to be sold for scrap and the money going to the Kids Christmas Party Fund. £5 ($10) was raised as a result. A saving grace about this time and even to more recent times has been the private collector who saw the significance of these objects and undertook to save them from the scrap heap. Then they undertook to restore the items. Without these collectors many more of the trophies would now be simply a thing of the past.

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soon reward the authorities responsible for the ongoing care.

Information

The aim of the Artillery Register is to identify those trophies (guns and trench mortars) that still exist and where possible to identify what happened to those that no longer exist. For those remaining it is also hoped the information provided will influence the ‘guardians’ of these trophies to better protect them for future generations in a manner best suited to the finances available and conditions under which the trophy is displayed.

All of the trophies are significant. Some to the local community, others to the nation and some as rare examples of the technology they represent. It is hoped the significance of each item can be recorded to assist with decision making when restoring/displaying the object. This should also ensure errors of the past are avoided.

Many of the missing trophies still require information on what has happened to them. Unfortunately modern guns, those from the 1880s onwards, are not designed to be left in the elements without proper care. There are many areas on these guns and trench mortars where water can accumulate and cause rust, salt air in the coastal regions attack the iron works, the timber is prone to decay and the weight of the guns further stresses the timber. Normally the wheels will collapse. Whatever the deterioration it means the safety of the item is questioned, especially those displayed in parks where children can use them to play on. Their appearance can become an embarrassment. The local authorities may see the easy option is to remove them from sight. It is also the cheaper option.

A list of all the guns and trench mortars distributed after World War I is on our website and is being amended as information becomes available. The original lists contained only the calibre of the gun but this is being updated to type. The present location is also being added. For those guns known to have been disposed of the details are being added. We welcome old photos taken when the guns were unveiled or whilst they were on display as they help us identify the type of gun.

The future

It is hoped the Gun Register will mean no further trophy guns are sent to the scrap heap, regardless of its present condition. The original pre-conditions remain but for those unwilling to meet these obligations they need to consider passing on the responsibility to someone who is willing to accept it.

The material now available on-line will assist us to identify the significance of the individual guns and this should then encourage them to better respect what they have. Regardless of the individual history of a gun the unmistakable fact remains. It represents the sacrifices given by all those who served in World War I and their families and as such are significant to the Australian nation.

Ideally all the trophies will be restored to a suitable standard, and for the guns that means replacing the missing wheels, and then display them supported under a shelter at least but enclosed if possible. All levels of government should assist and the communities as well. In front of each trophy there should be a simple sign that reads ‘We thank them’.

End notes:

1. The Argus 25 December 1920 p. 3
2. R.S. Billett. War Trophies. p. 53 states 'In Victoria the State Trophy Committee determined to distribute trophies to Schools. Those with attendance of 280 to 686 pupils were presented with a gun. Below this bracket schools were allocated a trench mortar'.
3. Sydney Morning Herald 11 August 1922 p. 9

The Author:

Kevin Browning has retired to Sydney after a 29 year career in the Australian Army and 4 years in the Superannuation industry. He saw active service in South Vietnam with Detachment 131st Divisional Locating Battery and 12th Field Regiment RAA. He attended the Long Gunnery Staff Course (Locating) at the Royal School of Artillery, UK. He has held appointments as Master Gunner School of Artillery, Land Command Artillery and the Regiment and ended his career as Regimental Sergeant Major Training Command. He has been a member of the Royal Australian Artillery Historical Society/Company since 1985 and is the past Chair. He is currently the NSW Representative on the Royal Australian Artillery History Sub Committee.
Turkish Trophy Guns

Kevin Browning

Among the trophy guns of World War I distributed throughout Australia in the early 1920s are a number of guns captured during the fighting in Palestine against the Ottoman Empire (Turkey). Understanding the inscriptions on these guns has been a challenge and only a few experts can read the script as the old Ottoman Turkish script (Osmanlı) is no longer used in Turkey being replaced in 1928. However thanks to the efforts of Charlie Clelland, Osmand Levend and Tosun Saral it is now possible for the general public to better interpret those markings but importantly decipher the numbers. Among other interests Charlie and Osmand are involved with a site, Landships II, recommended to anyone interested in the artillery of World War I. It can be viewed at: http://landships.info/landships/artillery_articles.html#. This article is based principally on information provided from them and I wish to acknowledge their generous agreement for it to be used here.

The majority of the guns used by the Turkish forces were manufactured by the German arms manufacturer Krupp but some were produced at the Turkish Imperial Arsenal ‘top hâne i âmire’ (Top Hâne), and some had been captured from countries allied to France and Britain. A small number of guns captured by the Australian Light Horse were used by the German and Austro-Hungarian forces supporting the Turks. The latter can usually be identified by their calibre and location of capture which is shown in the distribution of war trophies list which can be viewed at www.artilleryhistory.org.

The German manufacturer Krupp was criticized by its own citizens for selling arms to foreign countries but they were a private company working in a world market that was much larger than the orders available from the German military. They probably justified their sales of the standard field gun by providing a weapon whose calibre was smaller than that provided to the German Army. The standard German calibre being 77 mm and the export guns 75 mm (note the German measurements were normally expressed in centimetres not millimetres which is now the accepted form). However, as the export market price was higher than the home price they were not averse to providing enhancements in the export gun which would later find their way into the later home orders.

One might say the foreigners were paying for production upgrades. They also produced larger calibre guns for export and some of these were common with the German issued weapon.

The table on the next page lists Krupp guns imported by Turkey between 1861 and 1914.

Records of the guns manufactured by Top Hâne are not readily available but it appears between 1908 and 1920 they manufactured:

- 450 – 7.5cm L/13 GbK
- 130 – 8.7cm L/24 FK
- 100 – 12cm L/11,6 FHb
- 20 – 15cm L/14 Hb
- 12 – 7.5cm L/30 FK
- 16 – 7.5cm L/14 GbK

In 1914 Turkey was rebuilding its army after the disastrous Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913. 36 infantry divisions were spread unequally between four Armies. Most divisions had only 21 x 75 mm field howitzers out of an establishment of 24. The corps medium artillery was mostly complete with a total of 12 x 105 mm howitzers for their three batteries per corps and there were a number of Mountain Batteries and Horse Artillery. This artillery was a mixed bag of French Schneider, German Krupp, and Austrian-Hungarian Skoda pieces, about 1000 field pieces. Overall the Army needed 280 field guns to bring it up to war establishment.

During the World War, the 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th Armies were established. However, although the number of Armies was increased during the war, the Empire’s resources of manpower and supplies were declining, so that the Armies in 1918 were not bigger than the Armies in 1914.

It has not been possible to establish the number of guns obtained by the Turks during the war but as mentioned previously a number of captured guns were employed. Some of these were brought to Australia as trophy guns but will not be mentioned further here as we concentrate on providing information to assist in the identification of the guns made in or exported to Turkey.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number and Type of Gun</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number and Type of Gun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>1 – 9cm (9.15cm L/22) Krupp FK</td>
<td>1898</td>
<td>1 – 7.5cm Krupp L/30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1863</td>
<td>48 – 9cm (9.15cm L/22) Krupp FK</td>
<td>1902</td>
<td>6 – 5.7cm L/40 Krupp SK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12 – 9cm (9.15cm L/22) Krupp FK</td>
<td>15 – 15cm L/40 Krupp SK</td>
<td>1903</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>48 – 8cm (7.85cm L/25) Krupp FK</td>
<td>15 – 21cm L/40 Krupp SK C/00</td>
<td>96 – 7.5cm L/30 Krupp FK C/03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1864</td>
<td>12 – 9cm (9.15cm L/22) Krupp FK</td>
<td>1904</td>
<td>10 – 3.7cm L/20 Krupp Revolver-K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 – 7.5cm L/40 Krupp SK</td>
<td>6 – 4.7cm L/40 Krupp SK C/97</td>
<td>12 – 5.7cm L/40 Krupp SK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8 – 7.5cm L/14 Krupp GbK</td>
<td>30 – 5.7cm L/40 Krupp SK</td>
<td>18 – 7.5cm L/40 Krupp SK C/97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18 – 10.5cm L/40 Krupp SK</td>
<td>5 – 10.5cm L/40 Krupp SK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1867</td>
<td>186 – 9cm (9.15cm L/22) Krupp FK</td>
<td>1905</td>
<td>12 – 3.7cm L/20 Krupp Revolver-K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12 – 15cm L/6,3 Krupp Ms</td>
<td>12 – 5.7cm L/40 Krupp SK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>462 – 7.5cm L/30 Krupp FK C/03</td>
<td>138 – 7.5cm L/14 Krupp GbK</td>
<td>18 – 10.5cm L/30 Krupp Belagerungs-K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>138 – 7.5cm L/14 Krupp GbK</td>
<td>18 – 15cm L/14 Krupp Hb</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1868</td>
<td>214 – 8cm (7.85cm L/25) Krupp FK</td>
<td>1906</td>
<td>4 – 3.7cm L/20 Krupp Revolver-K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1869</td>
<td>100 – 7.5cm L/27 Krupp FK C/73</td>
<td>1907</td>
<td>4 – 3.7cm L/20 Krupp Revolver-K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>100 – 8.7cm L/24 Krupp FK</td>
<td>1908</td>
<td>108 – 7.5cm L/16.7 Schneider-Canet GbK MD2 T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>100 – 12cm L/6,3 Krupp Ms</td>
<td>1910</td>
<td>8 – 5.7cm L/40 Krupp SK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1872</td>
<td>20 – 15cm L/6,4 Krupp Ms</td>
<td>90 – 7.5cm L/30 Krupp FK C/09</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20 – 24cm L/6,4 Krupp Ms</td>
<td>4 – 7.5cm L/16 Rheinmetall GbK M. 1910 (trial guns)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22 – 24cm L/35 Krupp K C/80</td>
<td>8 – 7.5cm L/50 Krupp SK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1874</td>
<td>7 – 35.5cm L/35 Krupp K C/80</td>
<td>1911</td>
<td>88 – 7.5cm L/30 Krupp FK C/11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>178 – 8cm (7.5cm L/27) Krupp FK C/73</td>
<td>2 – 10cm L/12 Krupp GbH zarlegbare (two trial guns of different model)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12 – 21cm Krupp FK C/50</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>1 – 7.5cm L/28 Krupp BaK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>52 – 9cm (9.15cm L/22) Krupp FK</td>
<td>1 – 7.5cm L/30 Krupp BaK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>120 – 15cm L/6,4 Krupp Ms</td>
<td>52 – 7.5cm L/31,4 Schneider-Canet FK PD 2 [Serbian guns seized in 1912 at Salonika]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20 – 21cm L/6,4 Krupp Ms</td>
<td>4 – 15cm L/14 H</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22 – 24cm L/35 Krupp K C/80</td>
<td>18 – 10.5cm L/12 Krupp Hb</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7 – 35.5cm L/35 Krupp K C/80</td>
<td>1913</td>
<td>20 – 10.5cm L/12 Krupp Hb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20 – 7.5cm L/27 Krupp FK C/80</td>
<td>36 – 15cm L/10.5cm Krupp sFHb</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>389 – 8.7cm L/24 Krupp FK C/80</td>
<td>1893</td>
<td>54 – 7.5cm L/30 FK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20 – 12cm L/6,3 Krupp Ms</td>
<td>12 – 10.5 cm L/18 Skoda FHb M.14T</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20 – 15cm L/6,4 Krupp Ms</td>
<td>1896</td>
<td>2 – 3.7cm L/20 Krupp Revolver-K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20 – 21cm L/6,4 Krupp Ms</td>
<td>2 – 15cm L/40 Krupp SK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22 – 24cm L/35 Krupp K C/80</td>
<td>1897</td>
<td>12 – 10.5cm L/35 Krupp FstK C/80 [war trophies, taken during the War against Greece]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7 – 35.5cm L/35 Krupp K C/80</td>
<td>20 – 24cm L/35 Krupp K C/80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22 – 24cm L/35 Krupp K C/80</td>
<td>4 – 37cm L/35 Krupp SK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7 – 35.5cm L/35 Krupp K C/80</td>
<td>1893</td>
<td>54 – 7.5cm L/30 FK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20 – 10.5cm L/12 Krupp Hb</td>
<td>1914</td>
<td>54 – 7.5cm L/30 FK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>36 – 15cm L/10.5cm Krupp sFHb</td>
<td>12 – 10.5 cm L/18 Skoda FHb M.14T</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Identifying Turkish Guns

Krupp guns produced for export were inscribed for the market to which they were going. Those exported to Turkey have the Krupp’s logo and name and some also have the cypher of the Ottoman Sultan. It is generally thought the pre-World War I Krupp guns were processed through the Top Hâne and were inscribed there in Osmanli script with a translation of the manufacturer’s name, the processing date, barrel weight and Ottoman serial number.

After the start of World War I imported guns went directly to the Army without being processed through the Top Hâne. The only guns with Osmanli script markings post-1914 are those guns manufactured by the Top Hâne.

The guns manufactured at Top Hâne are generally based upon designs of German guns and although they attempted to manufacture the quick firing guns in the 1900’s it is believed the lack of funds prevented their production in any quantity. Markings on guns manufactured at Top Hâne are in Osmanli script.

Translating numbers written in Arabic script is relatively simple but the text is a far more complicated arrangement as it appears as a continuous script (running writing), Osmanli and all Arabic script for that matter, prizes calligraphic beauty above utilitarian communication value so the letters are often distorted and exaggerated to conform to a calligraphic ideal. It is not possible here to even attempt to tell how it can be read. Therefore as much of the script is common on all guns, a visual example of the text and a simple translation is provided.

Generally the gun would display the following markings:

- cypher of reigning Monarch,
- manufacturer,
- serial number,
- weight of barrel, and
- date of manufacture.

Cypher of Reigning Monarch

The Sultan was the reigning monarch of the Ottoman Empire and his cypher is termed a Tughra. All Tughra followed the same basic pattern of ovals, arabesques and vertical lines. Each Sultan’s Tughra was unique, listing his given titles, name and father’s name in beautiful calligraphy ending with the words ‘forever victorious’. Very careful comparison is required to identify a particular Tughra. Those interested in the

Sultan Abdulaziz
(25th June 1861 – 30th May 1876)

Sultan Murad V
(30th May 1876 – 31st August 1876)

Sultan Abdulhamid II
(31st August 1876 – 27th April 1909)

Sultan Mehmed V
(27th April 1909 – 3rd July 1918)
visual elements of a Tughra should visit [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tughra](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tughra). Presently it is not known the extent of the range of Tughra appearing on the guns within Australia. Therefore only the Tughra of the four Sultan’s that reigned during the period 1861 to 1918. The name of the Sultan and the period of their reign of each Tughra is listed on the previous page.

**Manufacturer**

Top Hâne is a neighbourhood in the Beyoglu district of Istanbul deriving its name from the Imperial armoury which was built between 1451 and 1481 during the reign of Sultan Mehmed II to manufacture cannons and cannon balls. Guns manufactured at Top Hâne carry the cypher shown below which translates as *top hâne i âmire* (Imperial armory).

![Top Hâne cypher](image1)

The markings generally found on guns manufactured for the Turkish forces by the German manufacturer Krupp can be seen on the photograph below taken from a gun allotted to Glenorchy in Tasmania.

![Krupp markings](image2)

The manufactures name is given in German (FRIED.KRUPP A.G. ESSEN,) and the Krupp logo of three overlapping circles also appears. On this gun what appears to be two Osmanli words is actually three words which take a bit of picking apart and demonstrates the difficulty in translating Osmanli. The closest translation of the Osmanli script is *Fridrik Krup Essn*.

**Serial Number**

Two examples of the script appearing with the guns serial number are shown on the next page. Though they look dissimilar, careful comparison feature by feature will reveal they are the same word. It translates as ‘Number’. Interpretation of the numbers is discussed later. The serial numbers of pre-World War I Turkish guns were allocated by Top Hâne according to type regardless of which purchase they belonged to. For example, the Krupp 75 mm were numbered from 1 to 624 (in Arabic) although they represented four different orders over 7 years.
Weight of Barrel

The text appearing with the weight of the barrel is shown in the example on the right. It translates simply as ‘Kilogram’ and the actual weight appears with it. Interpretation of the numbers is discussed later.

Decoding Numbers in Arabic

Arabic numbers are recorded as individual figures and are read from left to right. The table below shows the Arabic number characters on the top line and below is the Latin equivalent. Care needs to be taken when viewing the characters representing the numbers 2 and 3.

When translating the weight and serial number of the gun the numbers as translated represents the weight (in kilograms) and serial number. However, when translating the year of manufacture a further step is required.

Date of Manufacture

Dates marked on Turkish guns refer to the Islamic calendar in which a year consists of 12 lunar months (354 or 355 days) and the years number from the emigration of the prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina occurred (this occurred in the western calendar year 622 AD). The Georgian calendar is used by most western countries and it replaced the Julian calendar in 1582 AD. Both the Georgian and Julian calendars are based on a year consisting of 12 solar months (365 or 366 days) and the year’s number from the Birth of Christ.

In 1839 the Ottoman Empire adopted the Rumi calendar for civic matters only and was in use until abolished in 1925. Rumi is based on the Julian calendar, the years commence with the migration of Muhammad. Therefore dates in the Ottoman Empire may relate to either the Islamic or Rumi calendar but it appears the serial numbers marked on the guns are based on Rumi. The symbol used below the numbers representing the year is shown below and translate as ‘Sene’ or ‘Year’—the underline indicates the date is based on the Rumi calendar.

Islamic Calendar Conversion. To convert the date from the Islamic calendar to the Georgian calendar it is necessary to use a formula: Islamic date x 0.97 + 622 = Georgian date.

Rumi Calendar Conversion. To convert a date from the Rumi calendar to the Georgian calendar for the period we are interested in, the conversion is quite simple: Rumi date + 584 = Georgian date.
Markings on a gun manufactured by Krupp. The date is based on the Rumi calendar and the numbers translate to the year 1323 which equates to the Georgian calendar 1907. Below the date is the serial number that translates to 522. Gun number 522 was allotted to Glenorchy, Tasmania.

Markings on a gun manufactured by Top Hâne. The date is based on the Rumi calendar and the numbers translate to the year 1321 which equates to the Georgian calendar 1905. The serial number was placed separately on this gun. Note the script appears first on this gun. The number translates to 14. The gun was originally allotted to Vaucluse, NSW but is now at Camden, NSW.

End notes:

1. Osman is a frequent contributor to the Ottoman Empire section of the Axis history forum and has interests in the Ottoman Army order of battle and the Ottoman field post system.


3. According with Das Militärwesen in seiner Entwickezung während der 25 Jahre 1874 – 1898 als Jubiläumsband der v. Löbell’schen Jahresberichte. Berlin: Ernst Siegfried Mittler und Sohn 1890, Erster Theil, p. the Arsenal manufactured 96 – 7 cm GbK system Krupp, but it supossed that 200 more mountain guns had been manufactured.

4. According to the Bulgarian official history of the Balkan War I, p. 262 the Arsenal manufactured, besides the mountain guns, only 69 – 12 cm L/11.6 howitzers (instead of 100).

The Author:

Kevin Browning has retired to Sydney after a 29 year career in the Australian Army and 4 years in the Superannuation industry. He saw active service in South Vietnam with Detachment 131st Divisional Locating Battery and 12th Field Regiment RAA. He attended the Long Gunnery Staff Course (Locating) at the Royal School of Artillery, UK. He has held appointments as Master Gunner School of Artillery, Land Command Artillery and the Regiment and ended his career as Regimental Sergeant Major Training Command. He has been a member of the Royal Australian Artillery Historical Society/Company since 1985 and is the past Chair. He is currently the NSW Representative on the Royal Australian Artillery History Sub Committee.
The Artillery – What ‘Activity’ Means

The Sydney Morning Herald, Wednesday 17 January 1917

Recently we published a letter from Sergeant Ulric K. Walsh, son of Mr P. Walsh, of Nowra, in which he paid a tribute to the heroic stretcher-bearers in France. We now give some extracts from a letter on ‘artillery activity,’ written by Sergeant Walsh, from Epsom Hospital, Surrey, England, under date November 15, 1916.

“In these days of increased activity at the seat of war, the civilian buys his morning paper and scans the headlines with more expectation than hitherto. Often he is disappointed. The official communiqué may simply state ‘The day was quiet generally. In some parts our artillery was active.’ This is a bald statement – ‘artillery activity.’ I wonder does the ordinary reader fully comprehend the immensity of those two words, or does he, with a gesture of impatience, turn to another part of the paper? Might I give a very short description of ‘artillery activity,’ just one of those ordinary events which happen and have happened every day of the war at some part of the line.”

“The time is 1 a.m., the night dark – one of those black, foreboding nights so common in France during unsettled weather. Since dusk the front has been almost quiet. Occasional greenish white flares hiss skywards in a path of yellow sparks, burst into momentary brilliance, and then sizzle out. The flares cause fantastic shadows to rise over the rents and hollows, and the mounds and trees are thrown out in strong relief. ‘No Man’s Land,’ for a few seconds, becomes bright as day, and patrols and working parties are compelled to halt or seek cover. Sometimes the lights reveal one or two careless ones, and machine guns spit out their lead in that direction, or sweep the parapet of the opposing trenches, in the hope of getting an unwary sentry.”

“At 1.30 all patrols and working parties were reported back, and 15 minutes later everyone ‘stood to.’ There is now a slight feeling of tension and expectation in the air, and the whole front seems particularly quiet. One minute before the hour the boom of a solitary howitzer resounded far back beyond our reserves. It is the signal.”

“Guns upon guns, batteries upon batteries, lie back there all ready, like angry dogs straining at the leash. Two o’clock. Boom. Hell let loose. One mighty, crashing roar thundered from all parts of our rear. On it comes, at first whistling like the cold, cutting wind on a winter’s night, then taking a sterner note, till it becomes the howling of savage wolves. They are over our heads now, screaming, shrieking, barking, jostling all anxious to be first to reach their prey. Another crashing ‘gurrrunch,’ and the shells explode against the opposing parapet. Hundreds of flares shoot up from nowhere, and the night defies the day. Sandbags, gravel everything is sent flying into the air, and shows up clearly in the ghostly white light, whilst the earth writhes and rocks beneath the hammer blows of a thousand shells.”

“The enemy sent up red flares for his artillery support; then the duel commenced and the din increased. Small 18-pounders send forth their shells rapidly, like the barking of cheeky terriers, and far back great howitzers utter their deep growl, all intermingling in strange discord. A weird orchestra. The whole landscape is like some huge kaleidoscope, flickering and brightening as the red tongued artillery belches forth, and the charges explode in great crimson and yellow flames. A sight never forgotten, wonderfully awful, fascinatingly grand! And this orchestra plays on for a couple of hours, until it ends almost as quickly as it had begun. The end sought for was accomplished, and one by one these growling wolves retire to their lairs, until only one or two are left to bark intermittently, when they also follow the rest into quietude.”

“Now the pit-a-pat of the machine guns rings out, seeming strangely small and even harmless after the din of their big brethren; but at dawn, when the first flush rises up from the east to begin a new day, they, too, quieten down, and the front is once more its normal self. Next morning the official communiqué will tell the world ‘There was considerable artillery activity south of X — last night.’”
SECOND WORLD WAR

Random Shooting

A personal recollection of Artillery at the Battle of El Alamein

By Jim Quilliam Editor of ‘Dial Sight’
2/7th Australian Field Regiment Official Journal
Reproduced from ‘Dial Sight’ October 2012 Edition

About 30 years ago I wrote a story about my impressions of the El Alamein Battle. I tucked away the story and recently found it with other personal papers of my life. Here it is.

I well remember the opening night of the Battle of Alamein. In one sense it turned out to be my ‘lucky night’. On the formation of the Regiment into its various occupational groups, such as signallers, gunners, drivers, surveyors, cooks etc., I was appointed as the Observation Post signaller of Ac Troop of the 13th Battery, and had been involved with that job right up to the final Battle of El Alamein.

I was at the Observation Post in Egypt when the Regiment fired its first shot in anger at the enemy in September 1941. The Observation Post was located in the sand hills near the beach looking up at ‘Hellfire Pass’, which wound its way down the escarpment near Sollum. For the next twelve months or so the OP crew was always in the ‘thick of things’, so to speak, and we always knew what was going on, or thought we did anyway. But that changed for me on the eve of the Battle of Alamein, because the sergeant of our signal group was made LOB. (left out of battle) and our subsequent reorganisation meant that I was elevated to the exalted position of Lance Bombardier, and exiled to the gun position in charge of the signallers in that area. Another chappie took my place. I was reluctant to give it up, as I believed, with most of my mates, that this was the beginning of great things. But – I had a career to think of – I was on my way, wearing one stripe.

The Great Barrage began about 9:40 pm and I sat all night wearing headphones on the field wireless set at the gun position, taking messages from our Forward Observation Post, which was in a Bren Gun Carrier moving forward with the infantry lads. The Gun Position Officer’s (GPO) Command Post was situated about 30 yards behind the four guns, about mid-point, and in a dug-out.

The noise from the thundering guns was tremendous and even the earth seemed to be shaking in sympathy with them. The dugout was reverberating with each explosion, and combined with the intense static and jumble of Morse Code signals coming out of the atmosphere into the wireless set, my head was ‘roaring’ with the concentrated noise. There were, of course, about 996 other pieces of artillery banging away at the same time. I was completely dazed and had lost my OPO’S signal as well. We were totally out of communication with the Observation Post. At that time it was not too serious from the gunners’ point of view as they were firing from prepared programmes and would do so for several hours. But!! !!! the reason I had lost my signal to the OPO was that the Bren Gun Carrier had received a direct hit; the officer, Captain Bill Ligertwood, had been fatally wounded and the signaller who had taken my place was badly wounded. (He did not take further part in the war). We received this information from Battery Headquarters, which had been informed of the event by the Infantry Company Commander. It was just on daybreak.

A short time later the GPO, Lieutenant Bishop, told me he had been ordered to take the place of Captain Ligertwood. He asked me to allot a signaller to go with him in a two man armoured car. My very swift answer was, ‘Yes sir, me’. To be perfectly honest I had had enough of all that booming, thumping roar at the gun position and was glad of the chance to get back to the Observation Post again. I can well remember the look of relief on the lieutenant’s face when I volunteered for the job, as we had been on several forays together, when the troop commander was having a ‘rest’ leading up to the Battle.

After the war Lieutenant Bishop and I became firm friends and he told me one day that he was very glad I had offered to go with him on that occasion, as he was worried because most of the other signallers had little experience of OP work. Anyway, we spent the next two days and nights up there with the infantry lads and the tank attack gunners. We scooped a shallow hole for ourselves and ‘dug in’ the tiny armoured car about one foot. Bullets from machine guns and shellfire from the opposition were not conducive to working above ground level, particularly as our position was
something like being out on a finger of land, where the enemy could shoot from in front of us and shell from behind us. From time to time I would hop into the vehicle and send a message by wireless to the gun position, to let them know what was going on, but rarely did we have the opportunity to carry out a shoot. This seemed to have been organised beforehand and everything was proceeding to a set pattern. Taking it in turns; we searched the area through the one set of binoculars and, when being too venturesome and sitting up in our shallow trench, I managed to get my right shoulder splattered with splinters from bullets disintegrating on the armoured car. The lieutenant had a pair of tweezers in his kit and promptly removed the most cumbersome chips.

However, the next day all hell broke loose. The Gerries mounted a Tank attack ... about thirty tanks came straight towards us in two lines. Our portees were moving around on our left firing Anti-Tank missiles. (A portee was a truck upon which an Anti-Tank gun was mounted), our tanks were in a hull-down position firing away and our artillery was having a go, because our observation post officers were giving details of the tank movements. The tank attack chappies just in front of us had thrown the camouflage nets off their guns and were waiting for the enemy to get closer, while the enemy was dropping heavy artillery in support of its tanks. Our fire power proved to be more effective. The contestants had decided that was time to act. Our first rounds from the guns were very accurate and the patrol went to ground. The infantry lads thought we were ‘nuts’. We could not move out of the post for any reason what-so-ever. At night, when we left the position we would leave one or two match sticks slightly protruding at strategic points near the rim, as markers for the following day. If the matches were disturbed during the night, it meant that the enemy had become aware of our position.

I remember one occasion, during the early afternoon, when the Gerries sent out a patrol, which we decided was definitely looking for us as it was heading our way. The boss held fire until we could see the ‘whites of their eyes’ and then he decided it was time to act. Our first rounds from the guns were very accurate and the patrol went to ground. The Gerries must have decided ‘enough was enough’, because they hoisted a Red Cross Flag and we observed two men from the German lines come out bearing a stretcher. The boss held fire, the ‘body’ was loaded and the party headed for their trenches. However, just before they reached home, the ‘body’ jumped off the stretcher and all ran for their lives.

I was with Captain Ligertwood most of the time in the desert until that fateful night at El Alamein. Strangely enough, his sister who must have been at primary school when he was killed, recently joined our bush walking group.
‘Go to Blazers’

‘Scrubber’

Reprinted from Gunner Issue 33 September 1973

The Cartoons appear from ‘Bang! Bang! Bloody Bang’ by permission of the Cartoons

‘Go to Blazers’ is one of the more polite terms used by Australians among Australians to signify that a particular presence is no longer required in the immediate vicinity. In Singapore the same phrase becomes a set of instructions to sundry bill collectors, barracks repair men, bus drivers, staff officers and all who wander into the 106th Field Battery, Royal Australian Artillery’s area with queries pertaining to the British contingent of 28 ANZUK Field Regiment.

The 1st Light Battery, Royal Artillery (The Blazers) have formed part of the illustrious Royal Regiment since Moses played winger for Jerusalem Hotspurs. They received their somewhat (to Australian eyes) spurious nickname when some Worthy Oriental Gentleman tried to seize the battery funds at the Battle of El Harishment. It is rumoured that the BK rallied the battery with the cry ‘the money, my Gawd the money ... fight like blazes’... or words to that effect.


Personalities are the key to the character of any unit, especially the personality of those leaders of men common to all armies; the sirs, the officers. At the time of writing the BC of the ‘Blazers’ is an experienced, well travelled, much maligned officer dedicated to the finer things in life-sport and money in the battery account.

He has been heard to describe a certain infantry officers’ mess, which admits dogs but not women to their bar, as ‘Kinky’. The culinary art absorbs some of this gallant officer’s time; he has almost been to the edge of hysteria when his investigations into corned beef fritters revealed that 200 of the said delicacies were produced from one tin of corned beef ‘D’y’know?’

Part of any BC’s mandate is to plan and control exercises. BC ‘Blazers’ carries out this aspect of his duty with flair and flourish. An anecdote is in order. ‘Tis the Brigade exercise at Asahan Range; the Regiment is involved in displaying its wares to a fascinated audience of infantry. The scene: the CO paces nervously backwards and forwards across the front of a dreamily contented BC ‘Blazers’. The CO knows that the Regiment is to go into a training camp at the conclusion of the demonstration, but he is thinking of the ramifications of a drop short on the VIP tent.

‘Sir!’ – BC ‘Blazers’.

‘Eh-uhh-yess’ – CO

‘Sir about the training period at Batu Pahat …’.

A gleam appears in the CO’s eyes; at last a BC who is interested in what he was supposed to be doing at least two days hence. The CO staggers forward, adopts an attitude of prayer, his elbows on the FS table at which BC ‘Blazers’ sits, his chin cupped in his hands is eyes alight:

‘Aahh yes BC, I’ve gone nap on some excellent ideas for the period’.

‘Supah Sir, supah but could you tell me how long we’re going to be there?’

‘Well I’m considering keeping the gun groups there for three or four days, you see then …’.

‘Three or four days ... mmmm. Makes it a bit tricky. (The CO beams, it is obvious a master plan
is forming). Tell me sir ... should I get three or four movies, if I get three we might ...’.

It is a long low cry of a soul in torment. The head sinks, the eyes dim, the CO has lost again.

The pen having writ moves on to that partner in crime of all BCs; the BK. Who is it that managed to make a tidy profit out of thirsty grunts on exercise? Who is it that can make a profit of 50% per month in Battery funds? Who is it that can be relied upon to produce the battery magazine in between bridge hands? BK ‘Blazers’ that’s who.

BK ‘Blazers’, by tradition takes no interest in the more mundane aspects of Army life. Among the more mundane he counts sport (tiring), exercises (the worst place to get cold tonic for the gin) and all other activities not directly concerned with raising cold hard cash. That is not to say that he is not fully aware of what is going on in the battery at any time; it’s just that he hasn’t been given a time yet.

On to the FO’s, those vital links (some say missing links) with the Queen of the battlefield. 1st Light Battery RA has them in all shapes, sizes and nationalities. FO1 with his bush hat by Dior, greens by Pucci and his genuine South American Aardvark leather belt, takes his duty to the infantry seriously (whenever he can fit them in between sailing, squash, croquet and other pressing matters). A quintessential Pom. FO2 is a dark horse; not much is known about this officer as he is rumoured to spend his time working. At what no-one is prepared to say. Your correspondent has been assured that his habit is due to him being some sort of colonial. FO3 is an Australian ... it is thought.

Then there is the General Purpose Officer (GPO); the technical officer of the battery. There have been two of these splendid products of British gunnery who have performed admirably in the period covered by this report. The first managed to keep his identity disguised for some by posing as a bean pole. Nothing escaped his eagle eye, mainly because that eye (in company with another) was perched some 188 cm from ground level.

The present incumbent of this previously lofty position was transferred from the IRA when the latter found that the British Army was beginning to win in Northern Island. Since his attachment he has striven valiantly to cause confusion and chaos by issuing such orders as ‘Close up and spread out’. Unfortunately most orders issued by the GPO are traditionally ignored a factor not taken into account by the IRA Posting Staff.

Both the GPOs are firm believers in the value of FACE (the ballistic computer type not the Asian type). However like the Asian type they are always loosing FACE when it pops a poofle valve or the gyro topples. It gives a whole new meaning to the phrase ‘FACE down!’.

It is said the backbone of any Army are the senior NCOs. The senior NCOs of the ‘Blazers’ are the backbone, thigh bone, shin bone and funny bone of the battery. They are ably led by the BSM who tells his officers only that which he knows will lead to know harm and will not confuse them. He is ably supported by his Sergeants and TSMs who talents vary from a very passable imitation of a heavy smoking, deep-talking personage of the Antipodean persuasion to the purloining of enough spares to build a fully functional L5 howitzer.

The gunners of the 1st Battery are a happy bunch of thugs despite the concentrated efforts of the BC to sport them into the ground. They are the source of the BK’s profits; the despair of the BC’s sporting hopes but the members of a tug-of-war team par excellence.

Such are the personalities of the 1st Light Battery RA (‘The Blazer’s’). Put them together and what have you got. A battery second to one (One-O-Six Field Battery RAA that is), although that particular claim is moot – governed by the particular national bigotry one entertains.

The days of 28 ANZUK Field Regiment are sadly numbered. A chapter in the history of inter Army artillery cooperation is closing. If nothing else it has been fun and the memories and friendships cultivated should last for many years. In the years to come I would like to think of the ‘Blazers’ gathered around the battery funds box, being led by the BK in that old favourite:

There’ll always be an England
An England can’t be free
It’s going to cost you 10p more
And 5% for me.
We started to plan the trip over twelve months ago and at that early stage there were quite a few members and partners interested. However due to health and other constraints there were 10 of us that finally made the trip comprising five members, two widows and three wives. It was a trip of a lifetime that no one will ever forget. What surprised us most was the positive reception we got from the locals when they heard that we had returned after 50 years.

The Battery arrived in Singapore on board the MV Flaminia on 2nd October 1959, where the 1st Battalion Royal Australian Regiment (1 RAR) disembarked and we sailed up to Penang arriving on Sunday 4th October. We spent our first twelve months at Butterworth and when the Emergency finished on 31st July 1960 we went to Terendak, Malacca where we became the third Gun Battery in 26th Field Regiment, Royal Artillery. We boarded the Flaminia in Singapore on 27th October 1961 and sailed to Penang to pick up 1 RAR and arrived back in Sydney on 12th November 1961.

On our visit to Terendak to visit the Cemetery there, we hardly recognised the camp. Tom Simpson served with 101st Field Battery in Malaya and with 105th Field Battery in Vietnam where he died of Cerebral Malaria on 9th December 1965. Major Peter Badcoe who is also buried at Terendak served with 103rd Field Battery who replaced us in 1961. Sergeant Lionel Tucker also served with 101st Field Battery and died of leptospirosis on 26th February 1961 at Terendak and is buried at the Cheras Cemetery in Kuala Lumpur.

I have included some historical information on the ‘Johore’ Battery sent to me by our guide Kannon Menon for the ‘Reflections of World War II in Singapore’ tour. The following is an extract from his email regarding the Johore Battery.

With regard to the ‘monster guns’, that is the site of the ‘Johore’ Battery we visited during the tour. I have provided some information in connection with the Battery as well as a couple of my diversions.

With Japan’s military menace looming large by the 1930s, it was vital for the British to develop Singapore as a naval base. Work went on at full speed. Changi was chosen as the base for the Royal Artillery batteries comprising of six batteries of 15-inch, 9.2-inch and 6-inch weapons sited at the eastern entrance to the Johore Straits to guard against any attack on the Naval Base under the Changi Fire Command to protect the naval base at Sembawang against attack from the east. The north east coastal batteries, together with the others in the south and west coasts, contributed to making Singapore the most fortified area after the United Kingdom in the defence of the British Empire.

Of these, the 15-inch battery located in the remote Bee Hoe area was to be the main artillery battery. Work began at a feverish pace at first to fortify the area, but soon had to stop due to budget cuts in Britain. At a time when Japanese ambitions were becoming more apparent, the Sultan of Johore donated £500,000 as a Silver Jubilee Gift for King George V in 1935. Of this, £400,000 was used to finance the installation of two of the three 15-inch guns in Bee Hoe. The last of the guns was mounted in 1938. This group of three 15-inch guns and their installations were named the Johore Battery in acknowledgement of the Sultan’s contribution.

The Johore Battery, came to be established in 1939, and was the main artillery battery of the British coastal artillery defence network set up on the northeast coast of Singapore. Other batteries in the area were at Changi, Beting Kusah, Pulau Tekong Besar (and Pengerang in the State of Johore). The Johore Battery was located at the Bee Hoe area in Changi (Cosford Road off Upper Changi Road North).

These big guns were the largest installed outside Britain during World War II. The other two 15-inch guns in Singapore were mounted at Buona Vista Battery in the south. The gun barrels were as long as five cars and as heavy as 45 cars. The three 15-inch guns, so called because of the 15-inch (38 cm) diameter of the shells they fired, were placed in a row 500 m from each other. The guns had a 16.5 m long barrel. They had a 360 degree traverse enabling them to target both land and sea objects. Vertical shafts led to a labyrinth of tunnels three storeys underground connected to a bunker housing
the ammunition. The shells came up on hydraulic lifts and were pushed into the breech by a ram. The ammunition was capable of piercing the armour of the most powerful ship 30 km away.

However, the guns had limited impact on the Japanese invaders. To prevent them from falling into the enemy’s hands, the British defenders destroyed them on the night of 12th February 1942. However, the numerous coastal guns were useless against enemy forces coming from land. It was mentioned that the ammunition being the armour-piercing type designed for seaborne targets failed to explode when the shells landed on soft earth. The battery was not stocked with any high-explosive rounds suitable for destroying enemy infantry and artillery.

The three guns had a traverse of only 270 degrees as it was arranged out of consideration for the Sultan of Johore so that they could not be fired at his State of Johore. It was only the last two or three weeks of the campaign against the Japanese forces that one of the guns had its traverse increased to a full circle by extending the rails on which the gun turned. With the exception of the Buona Vista 15-Inch Battery and the southern-most 15-Inch gun of the Johore Battery at Changi, all the guns had all-round or near all-round traverse. All the guns were however, wrongly placed for an attack from the north, but as coastal artillery, which they were designed for, they were ideally situated.

Each of Johore Battery’s guns had its own ammunition bunker. These were about 500 metres apart, arranged in a line that stretched from the present site onto what are now the runways of Changi Airport. Though these guns were originally intended to stop an attack from the sea, two of Johore Battery’s guns could turn around and fire to the rear, towards Johor Bahru. The third, the one located at this site, could only fire out to sea.

From 5th to 12th February 1942, the two guns of the Johore Battery that could turn around, fired landward in Singapore’s defence. They shelled Japanese infantry positions from Johor Bahru, just across the Causeway, eastwards to the area north of Tanjong Punggol. They also joined in the battles for Bukit Timah Road and Pasir Panjang. The guns of Johore Battery fired 194 rounds before the demolition by the British on the night of 12th February. This demolition, and the post war upgrading of Changi aerodrome, means all that remains are the underground tunnels on this site, which once housed ammunition and power plants.

They were the biggest guns to be installed outside Britain during World War II.

They were originally called ‘Monster Guns’ when tested in England in 1934, before being sent to Singapore. When World War II started, there were only seven of these defending the coasts of the British Empire. Two were near Dover in England, and five in Singapore. Besides the Johore Battery, Singapore also had two 15-inch guns at Buona Vista Battery. They were located at the junction of Ulu Pandan and Clementi Roads, in the West of the island.

When the British forces left Singapore, the Johore Battery was forgotten until the Singapore Prisons Service discovered it during a routine cleaning at its Abington Centre in April 1991. The place was then spruced up with a replica of the 15-inch gun and an 800 kg shell, and marked as the 60th historic site. The historical site was officially launched on 15th February 2002 as part of a commemorative programme for the 60th anniversary of the fall of Singapore. This event was witnessed by 200 returning POWs, their immediate friends and family members.
CUSTOMS & TRADITIONS

Are We Our Own Worst Enemy?
The Recording of our Regimental Customs and Traditions

Keith Glyde

Introduction

Editorial comment in past Liaison Letters has highlighted a gradual deterioration of Regimental expectations in such areas as Mess etiquette and dress standards. This is of course affecting the Army and indeed all the Services equally, and the latter examples are symptomatic to some extent of economic rationalisation. At the same time the Services, their institutional practices, and their behaviour as groups or individuals on operations or within the community have come under unprecedented public scrutiny and comment, a good deal of it negative.

At such a time it would be refreshing for the members of our Regiment to move into the future with pride, secure in the knowledge that by their continued commitment to duty they are perpetuating and enhancing the traditions and records already established by our forefathers. But have we, as the present custodians of those customs and traditions, recorded them accurately and completely? Sadly in a number of cases, no, and our own Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery Standing Orders (RAA SO) affords examples of that neglect.

Standing Orders have existed since the formation of the permanent branch of the Regiment, and indeed within its colonial antecedents. Standing Orders were then exactly as the name implies, defining the role of the Regiment, setting out the duties and responsibilities of each appointment from the Commanding Officer Royal Australian Artillery down to the Canteen Orderly, effectively everything pertaining to the command, administration, training and discipline of the Regiment. There was at this time no reference to tradition or historical aspects of the Regiment, nor were the Militia artillery considered.

By mid 1961 a need was determined for revised RAA SO to record Regimental customs and traditions which had been either the subject of orders or instructions, or had been passed down by word of mouth. Draft chapters were apparently circulating amongst the Gunner community by the mid to late 1960’s and by May 1975 RAA SO were in use, at least within the Directorate of Artillery. New editions were published in 1988, 1997, 2001 and 2008. Several errors of fact appeared in the historical chapters of the 1988 edition and while later editions have been amended or expanded to take into account changes in ceremonial and administrative procedures, no effort has ever been made, despite greater accessibility of information, to ensure that our historical information is correct.

The Directorate of Artillery’s own more broadly based publication on the subject a decade later not only perpetuated these errors but introduced more.

Examples of Error and Misinformation

The following paragraphs illustrate some examples of error and misinformation in regard to RAA customs and traditions which appear in both RAA SO and Customs and Traditions.

His Majesty King George VI as The Colonel-in-Chief of The Royal Australian Artillery

The claim is made in RAA SO, Paras 4.4 and 4.10, that His Majesty King George VI held the appointment of Colonel-in-Chief of the Royal Australian Artillery when certain honours were granted to the Regiment during 1949. Examination of The Army List, 1950, shows that this was not the case, nor is there a reference in extant Governor-General’s correspondence held by the National Archives of Australia (NAA) to suggest that any such application was approved prior to that monarch’s death on 6th February 1952. He was at the time of his death Captain-General of the Royal Regiment of Artillery, and Colonel-in-Chief of the Royal Canadian Artillery and the Royal New Zealand Artillery. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II assumed the appointment of Captain-General of the Royal Regiment of Artillery after her father’s death but did not become Colonel-in-Chief of the Royal Australian Artillery until 1953.
It is of interest to note that the first to hold this appointment was the Master Gunner, St James Park, Field Marshal, The Right Honourable, Earl Roberts, VC, KG, KP, GCB, OM, GCSI, GCIE, VD, who was appointed Honorary Colonel-in-Chief to the Australian Artillery on 28th March 1908, holding this appointment until his death on 1st November 1914.(5) Thereafter the appointment lapsed until accepted by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

The Granting of the Battle Honour UBIQUE

RAA SO, Para. 4.10, records that the current Regimental mottos UBIQUE and QUO FAS ET GLORIA DUCUNT were granted to the RAA by Australian Army Order (AAO) No. 6 of 1950. AAO 6/1950 however read in its entirety.

‘Advice has been received that His Majesty The King has been graciously pleased to approve the adoption by the Royal Australian Artillery of the motto of the Royal Regiment of Artillery ‘Quo fas et gloria ducunt’. The use of the existing motto of the Royal Australian Artillery “Consensu Stabiles” will be discontinued’.(8)

It will be noted that there is no reference whatsoever in this instruction to the motto UBIQUE. Permission to use the latter motto was not sought and indeed no case for its introduction is made in correspondence between the Director Royal Artillery (DRA), the War Office, the Military Board, and the Prime Minister. In fact the Minister for the Army in appraising the Prime Minister of the proposal for the adoption of the motto QUO FAS ET GLORIA DUCUNT states that the motto UBIQUE was already in use in the design of the cap badge, and that under these circumstances it would be appropriate if the Royal Australian Artillery were permitted to adopt the second motto also.(9)

The Regiment itself was clearly in no doubt in that period that only the one motto had been granted. A souvenir brochure published by Headquarters RAA 3rd Division in late 1951 devotes a full page to the adoption of the new motto, reproducing AAO 6/1950 in full, and referring only to QUO FAS ET GLORIA DUCUNT. In addition a draft history submitted by the DRA on 20th November 1953 notes the acceptance of the ‘... Royal Artillery Motto – ‘Quo Fas et Gloria Ducunt’ into the Royal Australian Artillery ...’.(10) At what stage after 1953 the mistaken impression that the motto UBIQUE was authorised in addition by this order has not only crept in but been continually perpetuated is not known. Certainly it appeared as such in RAA SO in 1988 but was current prior to this, for instance Brook, Roundshot to Rapier, p. 312, published in 1986, alludes to the granting of ‘... [the] mottoes ...’ in January 1950, although p. 285 of Cubis’s A History of ‘A’ Battery, published in 1978, refers to the regimental motto only as QUO FAS ET GLORIA DUCUNT, perhaps considering UBIQUE as simply a battle honour.(11)

The Regimental Hat Badge

Even our humble hat badge does not escape misrepresentation. RAA SO, Para. 4.4, goes on to state that HM King George VI granted the RAA permission to adopt the badge of the Royal Artillery (RA) in 1949, with notification of this honour promulgated in AAO 5/1950. Not only is there no evidence that such permission was ever required, sought or granted, AAO 5/1950 in fact notifies the campaigns selected for the study of military history by officers sitting for promotion during the period ending 31st December 1951 and recommends suitable reference sources on the subject.(13) A typographical error perhaps, with the following AAO 6/1950 dealing with the adoption of the RA motto being the authority intended, but the latter makes no reference to the hat badge.

Published sources by Festberg and Jobson suggest that the RAA hat badge in the shape we wear today was introduced in 1913.(14) This is completely unsupported by contemporary source material, written and photographic, from that period, which shows that the grenade badge, introduced to the RAA in 1903, continued to be issued at least until 1920.(15) In that year it was superseded by a design consisting of the large RAA scroll in brass, which was itself abolished in 1921 when wearing of
distinctive regimental and corps badges ceased. Between 1921 and 1930 the Commonwealth Pattern General Service badge, the ‘rising sun’, became the sole head-dress and collar badge of the Australian Military Forces, in brass, gilding metal or gilt for all officers and all members of the Permanent Forces, and in oxidised copper for all other ranks of the Citizen Forces. On 10th April 1930 the Director of Ordnance Services notified the various District Headquarters of the descriptions of badges that had been authorised for units of the Australian Military Forces, and on 17th April 1930 an amendment to Standing Orders for Clothing, 1925, authorised the wearing of approved regimental pattern badges by members of the Citizen Forces. It was at this time that the ‘gun’ badge described in the previous paragraph was introduced. This badge ceased to be supplied for the Citizen Forces in 1941 and authority for wear was withdrawn in 1942. Remaining stocks of these badges were re-issued after 1948 and they were not replaced until the mid 1950’s by the revised badge bearing the new motto and crown.

The Meaning of the Motto CONSENSU STABILES

Customs and Traditions notes the adoption by the RAA of the motto CONSENSU STABILES after Federation. This was originally only the motto of the permanent Royal Australian Artillery Regiment and had been in use prior to Federation by the Queensland Regiment of Royal Australian Artillery. It remains unclear as to whether its adoption relates to the status of the Royal Australian Artillery as the first Federal regiment, being formed in fact before the six separate colonies federated as the Commonwealth of Australia, or perhaps because of a desire to retain in the new Regiment some aspect of the traditions of each of the three former colonial Regiments of Royal Australian Artillery. In 1930 the whole of the Australian artillery, permanent and militia, adopted the cap badge bearing this motto. Customs and Traditions goes on to provide three interpretations for this motto: Strong in Agreement; Firm and Ready; and Firm and Steadfast, the latter identified as the most widely accepted. But was it the most widely accepted, and by whom? On the contrary, in 1949 the DRA, the professional head of the Regiment, identified the meaning of CONSENSU STABILES as Strong in Agreement. We can be certain that the latter was in fact the only accepted interpretation at that time because it was described by the DRA in his submission for the adoption of the RA motto in lieu. It is highly unlikely that the DRA acted to change the motto without discussion with his peers and Latin having long been a specialised language, it is likely that discussion focused on the meaning in English of which motto would now be more appropriate. Furthermore, while STABILES does not translate literally from the Latin as Strong, the words Firm or Steadfast being more correct, CONSENSU itself translates variously as Agreement, Consensus, Harmony, or similar terms, and cannot be confused with either Firm or Steadfast.

The Motto of A Field Battery RAA

Equally disputed is SEMPER PARATUS, Always Ready, the motto claimed by A Field Battery RAA. Jobson questions the adoption of this motto by this battery, stating that it is incorrect and that SEMPER FIDELIS, Always Loyal, is the original motto of the New South Wales Artillery (NSWA). Reference to The New South Wales Army and Navy List of 1898 and 1901 clearly shows however that SEMPER PARATUS was the motto of the permanent New South Wales Artillery and its successor New South Wales Regiment of Royal Australian Artillery, and The Sydney Morning Herald of 29th February 1896, in describing the menu cards at a dinner given by the officers of the NSWA (Permanent) for Major-General Hutton on the 26th of that month, records that they bore the Regimental monogram and the motto SEMPER PARATUS. SEMPER FIDELIS was the motto of the partially paid New South Wales Artillery and on this basis the current A Field Battery, as the perpetuating link to the permanent New South Wales Artillery, is entirely justified in claiming SEMPER PARATUS.

The Right of the Line

Brook, Roundshot to Rapier, records an annual camp attended by 48th Field Battery and 9th Light Horse Regiment in 1937 at which the light horse were ‘... noticeably rather disconcerted ...’ to find the battery exercising their privilege of taking the right of the line at a march past and review. This privilege is not currently held by the RAA, in fact there is no modern record to suggest that it has ever been held; no mention appears in RAA SO, and Jobson states the RAA has not been accorded this privilege. Indeed, in view of the fact that although the Australian artillery was horsed until 1939 it was not horse artillery in the sense of an elite Corps such as the Royal Horse Artillery to which the tradition belonged, there seems no justification for the practice in Australia, and the value to our Regiment...
of such a tradition, the origins of which appear to have been lost over time, is open to interpretation. Be it as it may, Victorian Government Gazette Notice No. 125 of 9th October 1891 amended Regulations for the Victorian Military Forces, Part I, Sec. II, Precedence and Distinctions of Corps, by providing that when on parade with its guns the Victorian Horse Artillery (VHA) was to take the right of the line, taking precedence of the Victorian Cavalry.\(^{(28)}\) No doubt this practice ceased on the disbandment of the VHA in 1897 however it was reinstated for the artillery of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1904, and until 1949 the Royal Australian Artillery Regiment, if mounted, and units of the Royal Australian Artillery (Militia) allotted to cavalry divisions were, when on ceremonial parade with their guns, to take the right and march at the head of regiments of the Australian Light Horse.\(^{(29)}\) This provision lapsed in 1949.\(^{(30)}\)

Notwithstanding that this privilege is no longer held by the Regiment it was actively practiced on significant occasions during the period prior to the Second World War by both our Regular and Reserve components, each of which no doubt took pride in the precedence accorded to them.\(^{(31)}\) For this reason alone it needs to be recorded as part of our history of the evolution of our Regiment, not simply discarded and forgotten as irrelevant simply because our modern Regiment is no longer accorded the privilege.

**Conclusion**

In summary the consistent thread through the examples quoted is the failure by our historians to utilise primary source material contemporary to the periods being recorded to the extent that specific authorities quoted in RAA SO and *Customs and Traditions* clearly have not been viewed by either past or present historians. While there is no doubt that source material for the period was not as readily available during the 1960’s as it is now, and perhaps recourse had to be made to the fallibility of men’s memories, it is simply not an acceptable standard in the 21st Century.

Customs and tradition are not like doctrine; they are not continually reviewed as a result of operational experience, changes in technology or simply a greater availability of information. Our system is not conducive to dissent in such matters, and indeed why would we question our teaching in the first place. We are far too much in awe of rank, length of service or posting as indicative of complete knowledge of our customs and traditions, forgetting that our senior soldiers are merely passing on to us what they themselves have been taught - the basis of esprit-de-corp. We in turn, with natural pride in our Regiment’s achievements, pass that history onto others. The downside of this process is that once an error has established itself it becomes part of recorded history and correction is approached with reluctance by a generation that has only ever known the error.

The modern Australian Army demands a higher level of personal accountability from every individual member regardless of rank than has generally been the case in the past. We, as a Regiment, must demand greater accountability from our historians. We are the current custodians of our Regimental records with the responsibility for passing that history intact onto future generations of Australian Gunners. We do not have a mandate to change our history, or to lose it by perpetuating errors or by failing to record the facts. More so now than ever we need to be prepared to address our past and present shortcomings in recording our whole history, be it our unit and sub-unit lineages, activities and operations, or our customs and traditions. The loss otherwise will be wholly our responsibility.

**End notes**

1. For example NAA: A1194; 20.41/6616, Standing Orders of the Queensland Permanent Artillery 1899. GO 116/1902 of 22 Jul 02 directed a committee of officers to assemble for the purpose of drafting *Regimental Standing Orders* for the RAA and these appear to have been published in 1905. Refer NAA: A1194; 20.41/6638, for editions of 1905 and 1910, for the Royal Australian Garrison Artillery (RAGA) of 1913, and the Royal Australian Field Artillery (RAFA), 1914. A provisional edition was published in 1930, see NAA: A1194; 20.41/17287, and a further edition in 1936, see NAA: A1194; 20.41/20750. These provided only for the Permanent branches of the Regiment.

2. Royal Australian Artillery Historical Society of Western Australia (RAAHS of WA), LTCOL J. Houlton Papers, for draft Chap. 3. Royal Australian Artillery Historical Company (RAAHC) Accession PA 1492 UH: 342-2-106A, Org/Reorg-Arty-Numbering Arty Units, letter Arty 347/75 of 13 May 75, Acting DARty to the President, 2/3rd Anti-Tank Regiment AIF Association, quoting Para. 202, and a handwritten minute paper dated 15 May 75 entitled Numbering of ARe batteries - RAA, with attached copy of Chapter 2. This writer has been unable to locate a published version of these Standing Orders and some aspects of Chapter 2 in use in 1975 were deleted from the editions published in 1988 and later.
3. All paragraph references from this point forward are to RAA SO 2008. In the 1988 and 1997 editions the subject of mottos and insignia formed Chapter 3. Incorrect years for the raising of artillery in the various Australian colonies prior to Federation appear in Chapter 1 and the existence of Permanent artillery in colonial Western Australia is ignored completely.


5. Article dated 7th February 1952 in The Examiner, Launceston, listing the titles, honorary offices and colonelcies-in-chief held by King George VI. Any appointment in respect of the RAA would have appeared in both the Commonwealth of Australia Gazette (CAG) and The Army List.

6. CAG No. 76 of 26 Nov 53. See also the brief notice quoting the Minister for the Army on this and appointments to other Corps that appeared in The Argus of 27th November 1953. It should be noted that although Her Majesty The Queen is listed as Colonel-in-Chief of the Royal Australian Artillery in The Army List, 1st April 1953, the Commonwealth Gazette is the penultimate authority for her appointment. See correspondence dated 30th July 1952 and 13th August 1952 in NAA: A2880; 18/1/137, in which the wishes of Her Majesty to defer the assumption by herself of any new Colonelscies-in-chief until her Coronation are conveyed to the Governor-General and Prime Minister of Australia. The Coronation took place on 2nd June 1953.

7. NAA: MP84/1; 1815/5/8, Field Marshal Earl Roberts as Colonel-in-Chief of the Australian Artillery; Despatch No. 22, The Under Secretary of State to the Governor-General of Australia dated 23rd January 1908. Although the request, and reply in the affirmative, states the whole of the Australian Artillery, the entry in The Army List suggests this appointment was to the field and garrison branches of the Militia, or Citizen Military Forces, only, and does not show the appointment as Honorary. Earl Roberts was also the Colonel-in-Chief of the Royal Canadian Artillery.

8. Australian Army Orders, bound volume for 1950, p.19, Research Centre, Australian War Memorial (AWM), Treloar Cres, ACT.

9. NAA: MP742/1; 36/1/539, Adoption of Royal Artillery Motto by RAA, letter dated 26 Oct 49 from the Minister for the Army, the Hon. Cyril Chambers MP, to the Prime Minister of Australia, the Right Hon. J.B. Chifley MP. As the final approval of the King was required the submission was made through the Prime Minister’s Office with the support of the Governor-General.

10. AWM113; 7, History of the Post-War Army, Para. 5(b).


12. The Sydney Morning Herald of 30th September 1930 records the parade of 1st Heavy Brigade RAA on the previous day as the first occasion that full dress uniform had been worn since the Great War, referring to the “… shine on the dot of the ‘i’ in Ubique …”. See also articles in the Morning Bulletin of 30th August 1933, The Mercury of 16th December 1936 and 1st July 1939, and The Argus of 27th February 1937, 4th March 1939 and 11th October 1941, all of which refer to the motto UBIQUE as being that of the permanent and militia elements of the Royal Australian Artillery and emphasise it as a battle honour. The Advertiser of 30th January 1931 regards it as “… interesting ...[that the]... old motto UBIQUE ...” had been retained on the newly issued cap-badge. The motto CONSENSU STABLES ceased to be shown in The Army List from the 1935 edition onwards and UBIQUE was not shown at all.


15. Plate showing kit layout, SO RAFA 1914, in which the grenade badges on the helmet and slouch hat are clearly shown; photograph of an identified gunner, No. 10 Company RAGA, taken between April-August 1916, in writer’s possession; Cossum, Cloth Insignia of the Army in Australia 1860-1993, photograph p.58 of a member of the RAGA dated August 1916 or later as he is also wearing the Badge, Volunteer, Home Service, introduced by MO 395/16 of 22 Aug 16; Price List of Clothing 1918-19, and Priced Vocabulary of Military Clothing and Necessaries (PVCN) 1919-20, describing Badge, Hat or Helmet, RAA - large grenade, in brass and oxidised copper.

16. PVCN, 1920-21 and 1921-22 editions, in which the grenade badges on the helmet and slouch hat are clearly shown; photograph of an identified gunner, No. 10 Company RAGA, taken between April-August 1916, in writer’s possession; Cossum, Cloth Insignia of the Army in Australia 1860-1993, photograph p.58 of a member of the RAGA dated August 1916 or later as he is also wearing the Badge, Volunteer, Home Service, introduced by MO 395/16 of 22 Aug 16; Price List of Clothing 1918-19, and Priced Vocabulary of Military Clothing and Necessaries (PVCN) 1919-20, describing Badge, Hat or Helmet, RAA - large grenade, in brass and oxidised copper.

17. Standing Orders for Clothing, Part I, Permanent Forces, 1921, and Standing Orders for Clothing, Part II, Citizen Forces and Senior Cadets, 1921, both of which provide only for the Commonwealth pattern badge in Scales of Issue; Standing Orders for
Clothing, Part III, Description, Orders of Dress, &c, 1922, Para. 20; PVCN, 1922-23 edition, which no longer lists head-dress badges for the RAA. Military Board Instruction (MBI) Q.116 of 3 Nov 28 authorised the issue of brass buttons and gilding metal head-dress and collar badges, and badges of rank to Warrant Officers of the Citizen Forces in lieu of the oxidised copper items then on issue.

18. NAA: CRS P618; Registration cards and booklets for correspondence files, multiple number series (1), 1924-1951, 415/1 and 415/2; AAO 191/1930, bound volume for 1930 in writer’s collection.

19. RAAHS of WA, LTCOL J. Houlton Papers, draft Chap. 3, Para. 303, stating that the Military Board had approved the badge in June 1930, although this conflicts with the notification by the DOS on 10th April 1930; see endnote 12 for the earliest reference located in a daily newspaper to wearing of the badge by the permanent forces; The Mercury of 14th May 1930, in its regular Naval and Military column, records that regimental badges had now been approved for the corps of the Australian Military Forces, the field and garrison artillery to wear their cap or hat badge with QUO FAS ET GLORIA DUCUNT replaced by CONSENSU STABILES; The Advertiser, in an article dated 30th January 1931 records that new hat badges, similar in design to that of the Royal Regiment of Artillery, had been issued to members of the various batteries in South Australia; the badge first appeared in PVCN 1931. MBI Q.127/1931, MBI Q.95/1933 and AAO 270/1937 notified Stokes and Son of Melbourne as the contractor for supply, although just prior to the outbreak of the Second World War a second manufacturer, Arendsen, supplied a badge of slightly altered shape.

20. NAA: MP508/1; 36/702/107, Military Board Letters 1038 of 7 Jan 41, 22049 of 2 Mar 42 and 28410 of 19 Mar 42.

21. Issue of the old pattern badge appears to have been inconsistent across Military Districts, probably related to stock holdings. For instance 3 Fd Regt in Western Australia wore regimental badges, 6 Fd Regt in Tasmania continued to wear the Commonwealth Pattern badge. It is unlikely that the badge with new motto was issued with the Kings Crown, the normal process of design and approval, and the shortage of material and manufacturing capacity available for Service requirements contributing to delays. Notification that a new design had been approved for the badge bearing the new motto did not appear in newspapers until late 1951, see for example the article in The Mercury of 12th October 1951. The death of King George VI at the beginning of 1952 ensured the process of redesign to accommodate the crown of Queen Elizabeth II had to commence over again. Sources differ but it appears that the design we wear today was not generally available until 1954 or 1955.

22. Customs and Traditions, p.34. The earliest reference mentioning the motto located by this writer is CAG No. 71 of 12 Dec 03, Part I. - Regulations for Uniform, Equipment, &c., for the Royal Australian Artillery.

23. The List of Officers, Queensland Land Forces, 1897; Standing Orders of the Queensland Permanent Artillery 1899.

24. NAA: MP742/1; 36/1/539, Adoption of Royal Artillery Motto by RAA, Minute DRA/172 of 3 May 49, DRA to the Adjutant-General.

25. Customs and Traditions, p.34.


27. Customs and Traditions, p.37.


29. NAA: A1194; 20.21/6412, The Australian Regulations and Orders for the Military Forces of the Commonwealth, Provisional Edition, 1904, Part I, Para. 1, Precedence of Corps, ‘... The Royal Australian Artillery Regiment (if mounted) and the Batteries of Australian Field Artillery (if allotted to units of Light Horse) on parade with their guns, to take the right and march at the head of the Light Horse Regiments ...’; The Defence Act 1903-1941 and Regulations and Orders for the Australian Military Forces and Senior Cadets, 1927 (1942 Reprint), AMR&O 83. (R.68) (2), in writer’s possession.

30. Cancelled by an amendment (Serial No. 54) to AMR&O 83. promulgated by Statutory Rules 1949, No. 68, notified in the CAG of 15 Sep 49.

31. The King’s Silver Jubilee Review at Centennial Park, Sydney, on 7th May 1935 is reported on by The Sydney Morning Herald of that date which gives the Order of March as the Royal Australian Navy, followed by the Corps of Staff Cadets, with 1st Field Cadre RAA and 21st Field Brigade AFA leading the Light Horse, which were then followed by 1st Heavy Brigade RAA, the remaining Australian Field Artillery and the Australian Garrison Artillery. An article in the same paper dated 4th May 1935 gives the details of King Edward’s Birthday Review at the same location on 9th November 1907, in this case the order of march being the Staff, the Naval Brigade, the Field Artillery with its new 18pr guns, followed by the Light Horse and then the RAA. The reference to 18pr guns almost certainly refers to A Instructional Cadre RAA as the batteries of Australian Field Artillery allocated to the light horse brigades in NSW at that time were still equipped with 15pr guns.

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VALE

Brigadier Bruce Lockhart Bogle

Colonel Arthur Burke OAM (Retd)
Photograph courtesy Colin Cunningham
Editing by James Bogle

Brigadier Bruce Lockhart Bogle passed away on 11th May 2012 at 90 years of age. Though resident in England since his resignation from the Australian Army in 1975, he is uniquely remembered within the 105th Field Battery as the commander who re-raised the unit in 1955 and led it through Australia’s first two years of the Malayan Emergency.

Bruce was born on 5th March 1922 descending for a very old Scottish family. Named after a direct ancestor, King Robert I (Robert the Bruce), he was raised in Western Australia and educated at Hale School, Wembly Downs, WA. He married Susan Christie, daughter of Brigadier William James Christie who, by coincidence, had served in the 105th Howitzer Battery as a subaltern during the Great War before being appointed to the staff of General Birdwood’s 1st Australian Crops in France. Bruce’s sister, Nancy married the late Major General John Whitelaw so there was a strong Gunner association in his extended family.

Lieutenant Bogle was commissioned into the Australian Staff Corps through the Royal Military College (RMC), Duntroon in 1942. Appointed to the Royal Australian Artillery (RAA), he was posted to the Citizen Military Forces with 10th Australian Field Regiment in his home state. Some 14 months later, he became a ‘learner’ staff captain on HQ RAA 2nd Australian Division also in WA. Whilst attending the Staff School, the predecessor of Staff College, he was awarded the only ‘A’ pass that the School had ever given. Electing to serve abroad with the Australian Imperial Force (AIF), he move through 3rd Australian Field Regiment and the AIF RAA reinforcement pool to the 2/3rd Australian Field Regiment (Jungle Division) serving in the Wewak Campaign in New Guinea. As the war ended,Lieutenant Bogle was promoted captain and became the personal assistant to the Vice Chief of the General Staff.

In the post-war Army, Captain Bogle became an instructor at RMC before attending a Long Gunnery Staff Course in the UK. On return to Australia he was promoted major and took up the appointment of Brigade Major at HQ RAA 3rd Division in Melbourne.

When the National Service scheme of the 1950s spawned HQ 5th Army Group Royal Artillery (Field) in 1952, Bogle became its Brigade Major in Brisbane. In 1955, Australia agreed to commit ground forces to the Malayan Emergency and Bruce Bogle was chosen to raise M (for Malaya) Field Battery which became the 105th Field Battery on 1st July 1955. In three months, he trained and equipped a rather disparate group of gunners and led them to war.

On 1st January 1956, Major Bogle fired the first RAA round in anger since the Second World War. Though the Malayan Emergency was predominantly a gun troop war, no one was in any doubt who was the 105th Battery’s commander. His war diary is a credit to detailed staff work and provides a marvellous record of the unit’s tour of duty. Under his command, the battery not only survived the intimate inspections of British administrators, but was described as ‘the best administered unit’ in the brigade group by its commander. On the other hand, the brigadier thanked the 105th for its ‘rapid and flexible support ... always given’. Bogle was Mentioned in Despatches for this most professional and dutiful service which ended in October 1957.

Back in Australia, Bruce became an Instructor in Gunnery at the School of Artillery till promoted lieutenant colonel and appointed Staff Officer Royal Artillery Grade One (SORA 1) at Headquarters Southern Command in Melbourne in mid 1958.
Lieutenant Colonel Bogle again packed his family off to England where he attended the British Joint Services Staff College (JSSC) in 1960-61 and was then appointed to the College’s directing staff. The Bogle family was quartered in the beautiful surroundings of Latimer House, near Chesham in Buckinghamshire. All this staff training led him back to Canberra in 1963 for the next four years as SORA 1 in the Directorate of Artillery, General Staff Officer Grade One in the Directorate of Staff Duties, then promoted colonel and served as the Director of Equipment Procurement.

Colonel Bogle’s forte in training next saw his appointment as Commandant of the Officer Cadet School at Portsea, Victoria, followed by promotion to brigadier and a move across Port Phillip Bay to Commandant of the Australian Staff College at Queenscliff in 1969.

Brigadier Bogle spent his last three years of service back in Canberra. He worked on Major General A.L. MacDonald’s staff as the Director of Military Requirements and resigned in 1975 at 53 years of age.

In retirement, Bruce returned to England and settled at Hawcombe House, Porlock, West Somerset. There he remained apart from an interlude in Minehead until last year when he suffered a stroke following a cancer operation and was moved to Eastleigh Care Home in Minehead. There he passed away on 11th May 2012 a few weeks after his 90th birthday, which he had happily celebrated surrounded by his immediate family.

As the honorary historian for the 105th Battery, I corresponded with Brigadier Bogle periodically over the last 20 years and always found him the perfect ‘English’ gentleman. It was always by letter as I believe he abhorred computers. When we first formed the 105th Battery Association, I wrote inviting him to be our patron. He replied politely saying that he had never been a member of an all ranks association so would respectfully decline this offer. Even his last letter to me after I had forwarded details of his father-in-law’s service with the 105th began ‘Dear Colonel’.

The ‘Brigadier’ is survived by this widow, Susan still living at Eastleigh Home, Minehead, and three sons: James, a barrister of the Inner Temple and a former colonel in the British reserve forces; David, a professor of chemical engineering and Head of the Graduate School at the University College, London; and Angus, a portfolio manager with Fidelity (UK) plc, the world’s largest fund manager. All three are married and there are four grand-daughters.

Son James organised a full military funeral in the Porlock Parish Church of St Dubricius with buglers, choir and a piper. Mourners followed the hearse and piper through the streets of Porlock to the grave side, not far from Hawcombe House. The casket was adorned with a silver sword, hat, gloves and the ‘Brigadier’s’ medals. When the bugles had sounded Last Post and Sunset and the last strains of Flowers of the Forest, the Scottish lament for the dead faded from the pipes, mourners walked up the Combe to Glen Lodge for a final reception. It was a fitting farewell.

Vale Brigadier Bruce Lockhart Bogle, officer, gentleman, exceptional trainer and the one who re-raised and led the 105th Field Battery to war. Called to that Great Gun Park up above to raise the standards of fellow Gunners.

Montague
‘Monty’ Thomas
Archibald Wedd

Kevin Browning

Monty Thomas Wedd an artist and historian was well known throughout Australia for his detailed illustrations of Australian military uniforms and widely recognized for his painstakingly researched cartoon strips on historical episodes that appeared in the Sydney Daily Mirror over many years. What many readers may not know is of the support he gave over many years to the Royal Australian Artillery.

Born at Glebe in Sydney in 1921, Monty loved to draw. He decorated his school books and traced drawings of soldiers and aeroplanes. One of his first jobs was drawing advertisements for the department store Grace Bros. When the Second World War commenced he joined 1st Survey Regiment, RAA as a sound ranger where his drawing skills would have been utilized. He
transferred to the AIF and joined 1st Field Regiment but when all his friends were posted overseas he transferred to the RAAF where he worked as a fitter on various aircraft.

When the war ended he completed an arts course at East Sydney Tech and made a career from comics and cartooning. His illustrations were used on the covers of many fiction titles during the 1950s. His first comic strip ‘Sword and Sabre’ was followed by his trade mark character ‘Captain Justice’, an Aussie Robin Hood bushranger. It ran for 23 issues. Commencing in 1965 through to 1966 Monty produced the cartoon mascot ‘Dollar Bill’, which appeared in a series of educational cartoons as part of the public information campaign about Australia’s switch to decimal currency in 1966.

In the 1970’s he began a long and successful association with the Sydney Daily Mirror drawing historical cartoon strips illustrating Captain cook’s journal, the hugely successful life story of Ned Kelly followed by Ben Hall (400 episodes) which was eclipsed by its successor, Birth of a Nation which appeared around the time of the Bicentenary. Birth of a Nation was also self published in two booklets in 1988. The accuracy of the historic events portrayed in his works was of the highest order.

In 1982 he produced the illustrated book Australian Military Uniforms that contains a Foreword by Sir Roden Cutler VC. Information for this book came from the extensive records he had gathered since the 1950s when his passion for military history manifested itself in the beginning of his magnificent collection of militaria. His collection would undoubtedly be the largest private collection of its type in Australia.

Monty was an honorary member of the School of Artillery Officers’ Mess and provided advice to the RAA on artillery heritage matters. In 1981 he was a founding member of the RAA Historical Society and served as a Board Member until his move to Newcastle in 1988. During the centenary of the School of Artillery in 1985 he produced artwork for the commemorative envelop issued to mark the occasion. He has also been a strong supporter of the military through his generous contributions to artworks used during the centenary of the Sudan celebrations in 1985 and more recently in support of the military celebration in the Hunter region. He was an honorary member of the Fort Scratchley Historical Society. In 1993 he was awarded a Medal in the Order of Australia for his services as author, illustrator and historian.

His assistance was always readily available. Last year when information was requested on the uniform worn by the Submarine Miners in NSW not only was the information quickly provided but also an invitation extended to visit him and view the uniform. One week before he passed away he was again providing information on the uniform worn by the NSW Artillery during Sudan War.

Monty Wedd passed away on 4th May 2012, aged 91, leaving behind his wife Dorothy and children Sandra, Justin, Warwick and Deborah. They will continue his work with the Monarch Historical Museum at Williamtown, NSW which they plan to expand and re-open in early 2013. If you are ever in the area it is recommended you visit the Museum and view the remarkable collection of this truly proud Australian.

Gunner Jack Mulholland

One of the last living defenders of Darwin during World War II has died. Gunner Jack Mulholland was stationed on what is now Darwin’s esplanade area, when the Japanese launched their first raid on the city in February 1942. He was in his early 90s when he died last Tuesday after a long illness.

Tom Lewis from Darwin’s Military Museum says he was a brave soldier whose memory will live on. ‘We intend to remember him here in the displays we have,’ he said. ‘We also have him on a permanent loop film and when he was up here we interviewed him and he actually wrote a book too and he was also a great friend of the museum.’

Mr Lewis says it is important to remember the names and the contributions of the defenders. ‘Jack should be remembered here always as one of the original defenders of Darwin,’ he said.

For the 70th anniversary of the bombing of Darwin in February, Gunner Mulholland told the ABC that the attack remains a silent legacy. ‘Nobody says anything about what happened in Darwin and Darwin was a battle. Ask the blokes who were in the ships when they were being pounded. And as far as I’m concerned the name should be the battle for Darwin,’ he said.
Gunner Mulholland was 20 at the time, an anti-aircraft gunner, when Japanese bombs rained out of the morning sky. He never forgot the horrors he saw. ‘Oil on the harbour alight, blokes trying to swim, I had a fantastic view of the harbour and it’s a battle which has never been acknowledged,’ he said.

Footnote from Kevin Browning, RAA History Sub Committee

Jack Mulholland was very generous in allowing material from his book ‘Darwin Bombed: an Anti-Aircraft Gunner’s Reflections published in 2006’ to be used in the History of Australian Anti-Aircraft Artillery.’ This provided a soldiers view of events. Jack was very keen to ensure the real story of what happened was put in the public eye. The video attached to the story done by the ABC indicates he was partially successful but I know he would have been disturbed to hear the word ‘the Army fled from Darwin’ used and also the suggestion later that it wasn’t censorship that hid the story but other events.

I had the pleasure of visiting him a couple of years ago and also communicating since by phone and email. He could not be convinced that the weight of the 3.7 inch projectile (complete round) was as heavy as it was. His comment being that he couldn’t have lifted it. If people haven’t read his book I would recommend doing so.

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Announcement by the RAAHC

**Creation of a ‘Australian Gunner Obituaries’ Resource**

The RAAHC announces that it will make Australian Gunner Obituaries readily accessible by hosting and retaining recent and past obituaries on the RAAHC website: www.artilleryhistory.org

The ‘Australian Gunner Obituaries’ page on the RAAHC website will host all obituaries made available to the RAAHC for publishing. It is intended that the obituaries resource will be grown to be a valued source for family members, genealogists and military history researchers. It is also intended that the obituaries page will be designed to encourage the capturing of increased numbers of obituaries of gunners of all ranks. The creation of an ‘Australian Gunner Obituary’ resource furthers the preservation of Australian artillery history and heritage.

The RAAHC has included obituaries in its professional Journal ‘Cannonball’, over the years. With the consent of the authors, these will be placed on the web page. There are numerous other sources of obituaries, and all of them are welcome to submit their obituaries for inclusion on the RAAHC website. The author of an obituary will be recognised in each entry. Colonel Arthur Burke, a well-known obituary author, has already agreed to provide all obituaries he has published to the RAAHC for inclusion on the page. The intent is to start with an alphabetical listing by name, however with time, more sophisticated search tags might be able to be indexed, such as: state/territory of birth, names of units that members served in, and awards for gallantry.

The contact for the placement of obituaries on the RAAHC website is Peter Bruce, who is contactable at: pjbruce8@bigpond.net.au

Peter Bruce will manage the development of the detailed approach and ‘formatting’ requirements to permit consolidation of obituaries into a single accessible resource. An important aspect is that should a visitor to the RAAHC site decide to print an obituary, the RAAHC intends that a suitable and respectful print will be able to be made. There will probably be some IT hurdles, but it will be worth the effort overcoming them. It is expected that up to two hundred obituaries could be available on the web page by mid to late 2013.

Through the ‘Australian Gunner Obituaries’ initiative, the RAAHC has created an opportunity for the Australian gunner family that will be lasting and appreciated.

Please give it your support; future generations will thank you.
Memorial Walk

Kevin Browning

The Royal Australian Artillery Historical Company is seeking your assistance to complete the Memorial Walk at North Fort. Consisting of five monuments and a paved path the walkway is a place where visitors can reflect on the service given by the members of the defence force and their families throughout our nations history. The path follows an old track that weaves through the flora of the headland and offers views over the entrance to Sydney harbour. Many troops moving overseas would have sailed past the headland on their way to foreign shores.

The Walkway contains five memorials commemorating the Colonial Wars, World War I, World War II, Post 1945 Conflicts and Peacekeeping. Each memorial will contain story and photo plaques that tell the story conflicts. Funding for the project commenced with a $10,000 grant from the Department of Veterans' Affairs. Through the donation of an engraved paver we have raised a further $225,000 but we are still short of completing the project. Donations of engraved pavers, donations are tax deductible, has slowed in the past year and we require another 300 donations to achieve our goal. Presently we have over 3500 pavers and 58 centre piece pavers. The centre piece pavers have been generally donated by Associations, units and organisations such as RSL Clubs. They cost $1500 and provide the organisation members a reduction in member contributions for general pavers. The general paver costs $70 for one, $130 for two and $190 for three. Many families have contributed to the project and it is very interesting to hear their stories and reflect on how much many families have contributed. Allied servicemen and families have also supported the work. Service from the Imperial troops to the present conflicts have been represented.

If your organisation, contingent or individually you would like to contribute please contact us. An Order Form is enclosed and it contains our contact details. Once we have the fund to complete the monuments a dedication ceremony will be organized to formally recognize the Memorial Walkway. It is one of the larger memorials in Australia in terms of names recorded and certainly in one of the most scenic locations.

The volunteers of the RAAHC have constructed the walkway as a memorial to all servicemen and their families. Please assist us to complete the memorials.
ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ARTILLERY HISTORICAL COMPANY

Invites YOU to be part of

Australia’s Memorial Walk

At

Historic North Fort, North Head, Manly

For a tax deductible donation of $70.00 your name or message will be engraved into a paver which will then be laid permanently in our walkway which features five memorials dedicated to the men and women of the armed forces of Australia, her allies, and people who served in the civilian services, as well as volunteer organisations from Australia’s colonial past through to the present. The five memorials are for: Colonial Wars, WWI, WWII, Post 1945 Conflicts, and Peace Keeping Operations.

To order your paver please complete and return the order form below.

Become a major sponsor.

For $1,500.00 your unit badge, club emblem or organisation logo will be engraved onto a centre piece paver measuring 460mm x 460mm.

Phone (02) 9824 9275 for further information regarding major sponsorship package.
**ORDER FORM**

FOR MEMORIAL WALK PAVERS

Please address paver and Walk enquiries in the first instance to: memorialwalk@artilleryhistory.org or (02) 9824 9275

Please complete the details of the name or message you would like engraved in your paver/s in the template provided below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paver No 1</th>
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<td>Line 2:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Line 3:</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Line 3:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Line 3:</td>
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For more than three pavers, please photocopy this page and return it with your order.

To help your engraving details here are some common rank abbreviations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranks</th>
<th>ABBR</th>
<th>Ranks</th>
<th>ABBR</th>
<th>Organisations/Other</th>
<th>ABBR</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>MAJ GEN</td>
<td>Warrant Officer Class 1</td>
<td>WO1</td>
<td>Headquarters</td>
<td>HQ</td>
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<tr>
<td>Major</td>
<td>MAJ</td>
<td>Warrant Officer Class 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brigadier</td>
<td>MJN</td>
<td>Staff Sergeant</td>
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<td>Colonel</td>
<td>COL</td>
<td>Sergeant</td>
<td>SGT</td>
<td>Regiment</td>
<td>REGT</td>
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<tr>
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<td>LTCOL</td>
<td>Bombarder</td>
<td>BDR</td>
<td>Battalion</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Corporal</td>
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<td>Battery</td>
<td>BTY</td>
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<tr>
<td>Squadron Leader</td>
<td>SQNLDR</td>
<td>Lance Bombarder</td>
<td>LBDR</td>
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<td>Lance Corporal</td>
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<td>Captain</td>
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<td>Gunner</td>
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<td>Squadron</td>
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<td>Private</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second Lieutenant</td>
<td>2LT</td>
<td>Trooper</td>
<td>TPR</td>
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</table>

Name: ........................................ Day Phone ( ..........................

Address: ..........................................................................................................

Email Address: .................................................................................................

Post Code: ..................

Simply complete the following details and return with your donation of $70.00. For additional pavers donate $60.00 each. See table below:

Payment Authorisation: Cheques should be made payable to:
Royal Australian Artillery Historical Company

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>One Paver</th>
<th>Two Pavers</th>
<th>Three Pavers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$70.00</td>
<td>$130.00</td>
<td>$190.00</td>
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Please tick: □ Cheque □ Credit Card □ Money Order

Please debit my (tick): □ MasterCard □ Visa

Card Number: .................................................... Expiry Date: .....................

Card holders name: ........................................................ Signature: ..........................

Date: ..............................................................

Please mail you completed order form with full payment to:

Honorary Secretary
RAAHC
PO Box R1638
Royal Exchange 1225

Thank you for your support.
Application for Ordinary Membership or Renewal of Membership of the Royal Australian Artillery Historical Company (RAAHC)

Honorary Secretary
RAAHC
PO Box R1638
Royal Exchange NSW 1225

For Membership Enquiries
Phone: 02 9908 4618
Email: membership@artilleryhistory.org

I apply to become a Member/Renew my Membership of the Royal Australian Artillery Historical Company (RAAHC) and agree, subject to my admission, to abide by the Company's Constitution and its By-Laws.

Rank/Title ........................................... Surname .................................................................

Given Names .................................................................................................................................

Post nominals/decorations/qualifications .............................................................................................

Address for mailing and contact details:

No & Street ........................................................................................................................................

Suburb ....................................................... State .............. Post Code .............................

Phone (.....) ............................................. Fax (.....) ........................................... Mob ......................................

Email ...................................................................................................................................................

..........................................................................................................................................................

(Signature) ............................................................................................................................ (Date)

Membership Rates As applicable, subscriptions are due for renewal on 1 July each year

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Membership</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ordinary Membership</td>
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<td>OR Ordinary Membership</td>
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<tr>
<td>Donation (1)</td>
<td>$</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Payment Options
For Bank Transfers, please use BSB 032 086 A/c # 179215. Include description "(Surname-Initials) Subs".
Please make cheques payable to the RAAHC.
For Credit Cards (Visa and MasterCard only), please complete the details below

Card No. ............................................................................................................................................

Expiry Date: ........../......... Cardholder's Name: ...........................................................................

Signature: .......................................................................................................................... Date: ........../........./........

Note: 1. The RAAHC is a not-for-profit organisation and is registered as a Deductible Gift Recipient with the Australian Tax Office. Donations over $2.00 are Tax Deductible. Please consider making a donation to help us preserve the heritage and history of Australian Artillery.

Note: 2. The RAAHC relies on Volunteers to assist with our work. Please see our Website.
NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT

The Royal Australian Artillery Historical Company needs your help to support the preservation and promotion of Artillery History and Heritage and the management of the Regiments Collection Nationally.

How Much Does It Cost?
$30.00 (1 year), or $120 (5 years)

All Gunners and friends of the Regiment are invited to join.

What You Get In Return?
RAA Liaison Letter and Cannonball twice annually
Free access to the Artillery Museum (temporarily closed) and most other museums in the Australian Army Museum network
Use of the Artillery Museum’s library resources
Personal satisfaction in supporting the preservation of Artillery heritage

How Does The Company Benefit?
They can add your weight to the membership numbers when seeking grants and other assistance from public and non-public sources

Your subscription assists with ongoing administration costs

How Do You Join?
A membership form can be found in this publication
Submit a form and start supporting a very worthwhile cause

RAAHC THANKS YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT