



NZ GUNNER

Royal New Zealand Artillery Association Newsletter



Ray Gempton (served Sep 1941-Mar 1946 4th & 12 Field Reft. 10th Heavy Regt, 2nd NZEF) and Adam Gibson (past Levin RSA president and current patron. 1 locating Troop RNZA. Drum Major 5 WWCT Btn Band)

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100 YEARS**

84TH AGM

Levin RSA celebrates 100 years

The Levin RSA celebrated 100 years of existence on 10 May. It came into being after an initial meeting in April 1919 with more than 100 returned servicemen in the district. The Levin RSA nearly went into closure in September 2015 due to a lack of finances and high overheads, but a new executive committee and volunteers kept the club going. Today it has 441 members – including two life members – 45 over 90s, 77 returned servicemen/women (two of which are still serving), and 106 service members.

The celebrations commenced with the Presidents March on 10 May where the 22 presidents who have served the Levin RSA since 1919 were represented by family members. Of the 22 past presidents all but four were contacted, and 16 were able to be represented by family members who carried a sign with each president's name in the parade. The centenary cake was cut by past gunners Ray Gempton (96) and past president and current club patron Adam Gibson. Both are members of the Horowhenua Artillery Assn. Sadly, Ray passed away on Gunners Day, 26 May, only two weeks after the Levin RSA 100th anniversary. The celebration lasted all weekend and concluded with a memorial service on the Sunday morning. Levin had a very strong Gunners element, and the Horowhenua Artillery Assn was founded in 1960 and is still going strong. In May 2020 it will celebrate its 60th anniversary and all gunners will be welcome to attend.



Continued from previous page: Craig Hewett (right) with brother Ross in the Levin RSA Presidents March for their father Lew Hewett, who was a Levin RSA committee member and president, and past WW2 Gunner with 14th LAA Regt Served Jan 1941-Jul 1945.

President's Report, December

By Tony Mcleod

Another year has come and gone and your committee presses on and on, without change. After the excellent reunion in Taupo in November, I emailed your committee to thank them for their efforts over the past years (up to 10 years in some cases), and for their willingness to soldier on. These hard workers, without whom the wheels of the Association would stop turning, don't do it for the pay or the recognition – there is neither. They get very little thanks and are virtually invisible but they have all stepped up and volunteered their time and effort for another year. So on your behalf may I give a big shout out to thank Greg Thwaite (VP), Colin Jansen (Op Ubique, Facebook), Chris Morris (Webmaster, Membership Secretary), Andrew Donnellan (Quartermaster), Chris Pearce (Secretary Treasurer), Craig Hewett (Auckland coord), Martin Coomber (Wgtn coord), Skin Frances (Christchurch coord), and Brian Meyer (Australia coord). By their contribution they continually display 'they have not forgotten'.

Congratulations to Peter Miles, our latest Life Member. Peter saw active service as a signaller in David Weston's FO party in SVN. He later transferred to 11 A Battery, and has been an active supporter of the Association ever since, with a stint on the committee (including as a veterans adviser) before moving to Taupo and organising this year's reunion.

It was unfortunate that Bernie McCort's health took a turn for the worst, which prevented her from attending the reunion, but I took the opportunity to present her Life Membership Certificate to Danny on Bernie's behalf to show we were thinking of her. All the best for a speedy recovery Bernie.

I hesitate to single out members who have passed away, so I hope I may be excused for paying special tribute to four of our special gunners who passed away during the year; Col Matt Beattie, Col Peter Hansen, WO1 Tiny Hill, and Capt (rtd) Graeme Black. Their service was outstanding – long may they be remembered for their contribution to the family, which is the Royal Regiment of NZ Artillery.

So what's in store for your 'new committee'? More of the same. We will keep the 'traditional' wheels turning with commemorations as appropriate, and we will also strive to make ourselves more relevant to the newer members. I am very happy to say that we have a very good relationship with 16th Field Regiment and we are very thankful to WO1 Heath Southcomb (RSM) in particular for his energetic support. Keep your eyes open for a possible invite to the gun position in May 2020. The future of the Assn depends on establishing support from those recently retired gunners, particularly those who have retired in the Palmerston North area. For those in the Auckland area we look forward to more contact with 11/4 Battery. As I look forward to a Christmas / New Year in Ireland (at my son's wedding, not looking forward to the weather), may I wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.



Last Post

Since the last newsletter we have said goodbye to the following:

- DIXON Charles Edward (Ted).
 - 617326, Gunner, NZ Artillery, 2 NZEF, WW2.
 - Passed away 13 November 2019 in his 96th year.
- PILBROW Samuel Whiteford (Sam).
 - 9/408612, Gunner, NZ Artillery, 2 NZEF, WW2.
 - Passed away 31 October 2019.
- BOWICK Owen Stewart.
 - N66116, 6th Field Regt, NZ Artillery, 2NZEF, WW2.
 - Passed away 11 September 2019, in his 97th year.
- MACKINDER Brian Jack (Jack), ED.
 - 11(A) Bty, RNZA.
 - Passed away 7 April 2019, aged 74 .
- TUMAI, Bunny.
 - Passed away 11 October 2019
- HANSON Peter.
 - Colonel, RNZA.
 - Passed away 25 October 2019, aged 76.
- BEATTIE Matthew (Matt).
 - Y759390, Colonel, RNZA. Col Comdt of the Royal Regt of NZ Artillery.
 - Passed away 9 September 2019
- TAYLOR Alan Foster.
 - Maj, RNZA, Korea. Former committee member RNZA Association.
 - Passed away 14 October 2019.
- HILL Stanley Frank (Tiny), MBE.
 - 818397 and 32867, WO1, RNZA.
 - Passed away 2 October 2019
- HOHEPA Fynn.
 - RNZA.
 - Passed away during 2019.



RNZAA 84th Annual General Meeting

Over the weekend of 8-10 November our 84th Annual General Meeting and reunion was hosted in Taupo. It was a great chance to catch up with friends and comrades from the past, and many great stories were shared. [You can read the minutes of the 84th Annual General Meeting here](#)

Friday night drinks

Gunners gathered on Friday evening for a meet and greet, an opportunity to meet some old friends, and rekindle shared experiences of the past (or in the case of Op Ubique participants, the weekend maintenance activity). Held at Suncourt Lounge, Taupo.





Saturday boat trip

In the afternoon, a group ventured out to Mine Bay Māori Rock Carvings. It was a great cruise on Lake Taupo to view the Māori carvings, do some scenic cruising, and to catch a few trout (catch and release). It was a great time to do some relaxing and socialising.





Saturday night dining

A great night of semi-formal dining including members from 16 Fd Regt and guest speaker Graeme Williams.





Sunday morning remembrance service

Superbly guided by Greg Thwaite. Despite the weather and the need to move indoors, the service was well attended and even managed to accommodate a bugler (fortunately under cover outside).





K Force Association winds up

By Tony Mcleod

The national K Force Association organisation wound up two years ago, however, 21 November, 2019 saw the winding up of the Auckland branch, with the final meeting being held at the Birkenhead RSA.

The meeting resolved to dispose of any funds with a donation to the Korean Paengyong-do and Kapyong Middle School Bursaries, controlled by the NZDF-appointed board and NZ Government Embassy Defence Attache Seoul Korea.

The meeting also agreed to retain their committee structure of President Sandy Herlihy, Vice President Neill Butt, and Sec/Tres Roy Hills to be available as points of contact into the future.

On behalf of the RNZAA I offered them any assistance they may need. The offer was received with thanks but they do not foresee any need to take it up.

The K Force Association is mainly naval personnel, but photographed below are five 16th Field Regt veterans; Ray Hills, Arnold Hayman, Wally Wyatt, and Neil Butt. Colin Stanbridge was not well enough to attend the meeting so we wish him all the best in his recovery.



An interview with Wally Wyatt

Wally Wyatt (photographed above, second from the right), headed off to Korea as part of the 163 battery in World War II. He was interviewed about his time in Korea, and also what it was like when he got back to New Zealand. You can watch the full 45-minute interview here: [Wally Wyatt interview](#)



Memories of Vietnam

By *Wayne Robson*

On 27 May 1965, the New Zealand Government, after a great deal of anguish and hand wringing, announced that it was to send 161 Battery RNZA for active duty in Vietnam. I must confess that I and the rest of the Battery greeted that decision with glee. All of us were professionals who had spent past years training, and here was the test. For the next two months, we busied ourselves preparing for the move. The army, with typical thoroughness, sent us to Waiouru in the middle of winter, amidst snowdrifts to carry out training for the tropics. After a spell of departure leave, the Battery left in the very early hours of 19 July. We flew in a Hercules C130 via Townsville, Australia and Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea to Bien Hoa Airbase near Saigon.

Arrival in Vietnam

When we arrived in Bien Hoa we became part of the 173rd Airborne Brigade of the United States Army. On 29 July the 173rd left Bien Hoa for the town of Vung Tau. In the good days, Vung Tau was a holiday resort used by the French colonialists. The 173rd was to conduct an operation in the area. The Battery and the 1st Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (1RAR) were left at Bien Hoa. The night of 30 July was interrupted by Viet Cong (VC) activity in the area. Small arms fire took place throughout the night attended by equal degrees of excitement, apprehension, and confusion. I thought to myself that while I was in Vietnam I wasn't going to get much sleep. It was on this occasion that the Battery suffered its first casualty, Bombardier Williams, who was hit in the leg by a rifle bullet. Rumour persisted for some time that he was shot by another gunner in the confusion. In the first two weeks in Vietnam, the battery fired 789 rounds of 105mm artillery ammunition. The bulk of July and August was spent at Bien Hoa base acclimatising to the new theatre of operations and developing our base area. During this period we were mainly involved in H&I (harassment and interdiction). H&I targets were selected on the basis of intelligence reports, as likely enemy routes, camps, or staging points. It was in these shoots that guns would be fired at random intervals, often during the night with the object of catching the VC in places and at times when he thought he was safe. At its best, it could be very effective, although at its worse it meant that everybody was awoken whether they were on duty or not. It was during this period that the Battery experimented with breaking down the guns and fitting them into Australian armoured personnel carriers. The advantage of this was that we could travel to operation areas, without the VC knowing until the last moment that we were armed with artillery pieces. On 18 August the Battery was deployed approximately 6000 metres outside of the base area in armoured personnel carriers of the Prince of Wales Light Horse. During the day the Battery fired 500 rounds. At about midday, a patrol from the 1RAR patrolling the south bank of the Dong Na River saw a small group of VC across the river. They opened fire and the guerrillas returned fire from a belt of trees on the north bank. The Battery opened fire and the rounds fell directly on the woods. The patrol reported two enemy soldiers killed. On the following day, 400 sandbags and metal pickets arrived at the base and we were reintroduced to the joys of base development again. On 3 September, the battery was deployed for the first time in Vietnam by helicopter. At that time the UH1B and the UH1D Iroquois was the only helicopter available in any quantity in Vietnam, and neither version had the capacity to lift the larger American field guns.

To be continued next issue...



Veteran support, a dialogue

By Tony Mcleod

I recently asked Rob Munro if he would put together his thoughts on where we are at with veteran support as a kind of reference point that we could refer back to in the future to check our progress to see if we are going forward or backwards. Rob immediately returned the serve to me, asking, "What does the RNZAA see as its priorities for veteran support?" So I would like to start a dialogue in this newsletter to get feedback from our members as to what you think our priorities should be. I have very little first-hand experience of receiving support from Veterans Affairs NZ, so I reflected on the outcome of the RNZAA Veteran Advisory Group we put together in Oct 2016 (Mike Dakin, Rob Munro, Peter Miles, Lindsay Skinner, David Weston, and myself) to consider the association's input to the Paterson Review of VSA14. That group identified lots of issues but ended up focusing on two ongoing outputs we wanted from the VSA 2014 Legislation. Firstly, the need for a mechanism for veterans to have face-to-face contact with their case managers, and, secondly, the need to have treatment considered holistically, not item by item as per the ACC model. We also noted the need to keep pressure on politicians to ensure the financial vote for veterans is not eroded in this day of highly conflicting social needs. Whilst we may have an active and knowledgeable Minister of Veterans Affairs at the moment, this may not always be the case, and some form of lobby group may need to be established to maintain pressure on the politicians. When I read about what the Australians are doing I am always conflicted. Their programmes seem to be so comprehensive and supportive, but then the next day I read a report that states that an Australian Victoria Cross holder is recommending people don't join the Australian Defence Force because of the lack of support? A big thank you to Brian Meyer for keeping us informed of what New Zealanders in Australia are saying, with reports on Mike Wadsworth's initiatives. Mike is urging the NZ Govt to examine and match the Australian veteran support measures. We all recognise that our welfare support structure is somewhat fractured, with the RNZ RSA struggling to establish (or retain) its identity as the primary point of contact for servicemen's welfare and with organisations like 'No-Duff' emerging to try to set up a mechanism for crisis support for the younger veteran. There is no doubt from the feedback I have received that Veterans Affairs NZ has turned a page in terms of their reaching out and making contact with all veterans and their active and accessible approach to support. They really are on the right path at the moment, will it continue?

Comments by Rob Munro

The key is that changes are needed to the law. Hence the necessity to address politicians. And of all parties. It's a long-term project. That's what the former Ombudsman said over two years ago in his report to CDF. CDF and other seniors ducked. Sad. Many useful quotes in the report supporting change but limited response by the Government. I suspect it's gathering dust. It needs flesh and blood added. VANZ staff do their best within what they have. But limited resources, keeping within budgets, and the 2014 Act itself preclude many desirable improvements. Widows, kids, suicides, PTSD, and private hospital availability spring to mind as areas that deserve improvement. So what should be the first improvement sought, and what next? Anyway, let's run your thoughts up to a larger group and see if there are any responses.



Comments by Barry Dreyer

We did try to give some high-level input during the Patterson review, and some of the things we were pushing were noted but not implemented by the government, nor by Veterans Affairs. I totally agree that this continues to need action, and it needs to be done at the political level, with pressure on every politician we can get our hands on, with a coordinated message and approach. On Veterans Affairs, the new partnership with Ranfurly seems to be progressing pretty well. The new chief executive has done an excellent job in conjunction with Veterans Affairs so far in developing outreach to Vietnam veterans, and she is now working on Bosnia and later veterans. In my view the base problem in the whole process is that at any level we cannot identify veterans in the community, i.e., none of Veterans Affairs, RNZ RSA or local RSAs are able to provide a complete list of veterans in their community. This needs a concerted and long-term fix where Defence provide details of veterans' location and contact details as they return from operational service, and as they depart from full-time service. This will need the approval of the veteran for it to occur, but much work from Defence. It will need a centralised and continually maintained database probably in the hands of Veterans Affairs. To me this is clearly the main issue – we do not know where people are nor who needs help. Now on the political side, I agree with Rob. We need to form some type of joint task force, which will lead and coordinate a national campaign with every MP, regardless of party, to pressure government into providing the funding and direction that will provide the proper support to veterans. We will not get anywhere with penny packeting here, it needs a major national effort. So that's the start of the dialogue.

Please forward your comments for inclusion in the next newsletter to the Secretary/Editor Chris Pearce at rnza.association@gmail.com. What do you think our priorities should be?



Can you name the soldier?

The photo below is of Fred Summers (laughing) and Kevin Rongonui from the Quin Tikis sharing a joke with gunners from 161 Battery, RNZA at Nui Dat, 1969. From left to right are: LBdr Les 'Jacko' Jackson, Gnr Paul 'Mini Truck' Carr, Gnr Reg Tuahine, and unknown. Do you know who the soldier is right at the back in the middle? Reply to Jack Hayes: john.hayes@nzdf.mil.nz.





16 Fd Regt



Changeover of BSMs. Front: WO2 Richie Bray hands over to WO2 Carlos Denegri. Rear: WO2 Jason Wells hands over to WO2 Kamal Singh, 3 December 2019.



Eighteen members of the Regiment receive a farewell haka at the parade on 3 December 2019.



Padre Tony Brooking is farewelled from 16th Field Regiment by the Commanding Officer, Lt Colonel Kristian Dunne, 3 December 2019.



WO2 Kamal Singh, BSM 163 Battery, receives his 20-year certificate from the Commander 1 Brigade, Col Matt Weston.



St Barbara's Day



Auckland



Papanui



Papanui



Dunedin



Waihi



The moral of the story...

A farmer died leaving his 17 horses to his three sons.

When his sons opened up the will it read:

My eldest son should get 1/2 (half) of total horses;

My middle son should be given 1/3rd (one-third) of the total horses;

My youngest son should be given 1/9th (one-ninth) of the total horses.

As it's impossible to divide 17 into half or 17 by 3 or 17 by 9, the three sons started to fight with each other. So, they decided to go to a farmer friend who they considered quite smart, to see if he could work it out for them. The farmer friend read the will patiently, after giving due thought, he brought one of his own horses over and added it to the 17. That increased the total to 18 horses. Now, he divided the horses according to their fathers will.

Half of 18 = 9. So he gave the eldest son 9 horses.

1/3rd of 18 = 6. So he gave the middle son 6 horses.

1/9th of 18 = 2. So he gave the youngest son 2 horses.

Now add up how many horses they have:

Eldest son ... 9

Middle son ... 6

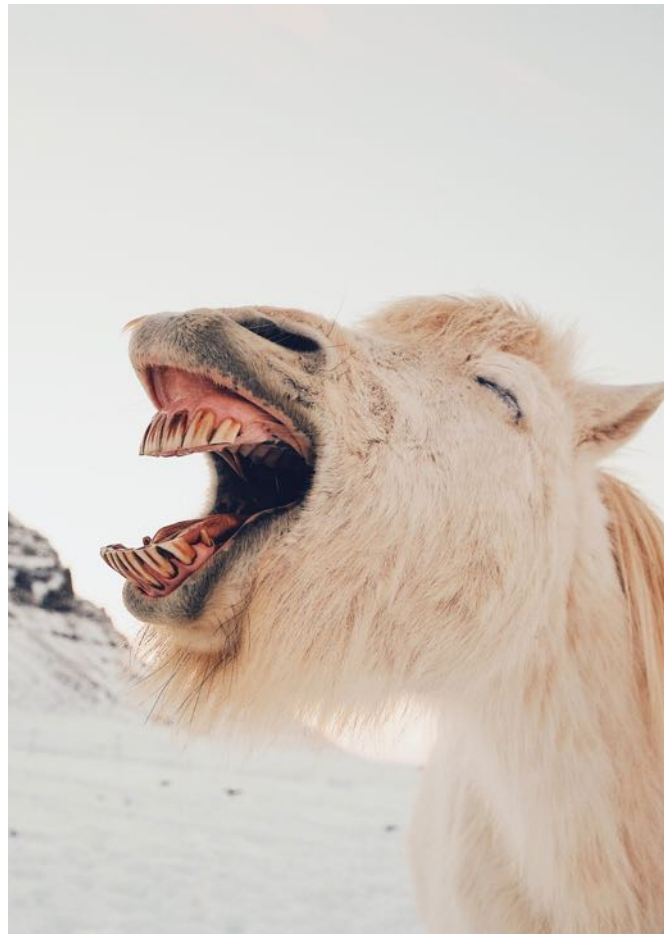
Youngest son ... 2

TOTAL IS 17.

Now this leaves one horse over, so the farmer friend takes his horse back to his farm.

Problem solved!

Moral: The attitude of negotiation and problem solving is to find the 18th horse, i.e., the common ground. Once a person is able to find the 18th horse the issue is resolved. It is difficult at times. However, to reach a solution, the first step is to believe that there is a solution. If we think there is no solution, we won't be able to reach one!





The Q Store

Quartermaster: Andrew Donellan

For orders and enquiries, email rnzaaqstore@gmail.com or visit the website: rnzaa.org.nz

To support the RNZAA, the Q store offers an array of items for you to collect and buy. We are working on additional items. Postage is included for all New Zealand deliveries. Please enquire for the cost of posting overseas.

From top left, clockwise:

- RNZAA Coffee Mugs. Cobalt blue with gold print. \$25 each.
- Polo Shirt with Gunners logo on right breast with crest on the left. \$65 each.
- Beret Patch. \$5 each.
- Once A Gunner Always A Gunner Badge. \$20 each.
- RNZAA Baseball Cap. Black with red piping. Gun crest on the front. \$35 each.
- Lapel Pin. \$10 each.

Conditions apply in terms of waiting times and payments. Check the website for further info, or email Andrew at the email above.



Behind the lines: the editor's page

- Input into Gunner News: short stories, especially with accompanying photographs, are always welcome for inclusion. The editor's email address is: rnza.association@gmail.com. Please send contributions as an attachment in MS Word format.
- Muzzle Flashes and website items to Chris Morriss at: webmaster.rnzaa@gmail.com
- Secretarial/Treasurer matters to Chris Pearce: rnza.association@gmail.com
- Items for Gunner News to Chris Pearce at: rnza.association@gmail.com
- RNZA Assn Bank: Ac # 38 9007 0694501 00

The views and opinions expressed in this newsletter don't necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Royal NZ Artillery Assn, The Royal Regiment Of NZ Artillery, or NZDEF.

To all ex RNZA locators

We are trying to locate all of those who served in 1 Locating Battery RNZA and then 1 Locating Troop RNZA until its disbandment. We want to reconnect with a view of a reunion in the future. We have set up a Facebook group. Search for 1st Locating Troop - Royal New Zealand Artillery (www.facebook.com/groups/316302939253878) and answer the questions to join the group. Or email [Craig Hewett at 1loctroop@gmail.com](mailto:CraigHewett@gmail.com).