12 Field Regiment (Vietnam) Association

INFORMATION BULLETIN No. 34 5/05/15

1. Anzac Day Reports:

104 Battery: Western Australia member Ian Macauley has sent us this photo of the Germs (former 104 Battery members) who marched behind the 104 Battery banner in Perth. It shows from left to right Keith Smith, Phil Burns, Hugh Ritchie, Bob Perkin, Max Clothier (kneeling) Ian Caporn, Tony Ferraro, Ian Macauley. What a fine looking bunch of men!

102 Battery: The reunion in Sydney went extremely well and all attendees had a terrific time. The march behind the 102 Coral Battery banner on Anzac Day was special, and the chance to get together over a few refreshments was priceless. For those interested in seeing some excellent photos, this is a Link to Bruce Morris’ collection: bcmorris@iprimus.com.au

Also note that the Association now has a few copies of the CD containing the 102 Battery theme song The Toucan Battery Blues, and another song called Lone Pine Lament which is a Centenary of Anzac tribute to the families of diggers killed in the battles at Lone Pine. These can be ordered at a cost of $10 (including postage) from Laurie Bird.

12 Field Regiment (Vietnam) Association is a Branch of RAA (NSW) Association Inc. The Association ABN is 90 248 386 329. However, the Association is not registered for GST and is Tax-exempt.
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**Dawn Service in the Kimberley:** President Flood sends us this report and attachment.
*The attached is a copy of the talk given by Jason on ANZAC Day. Jason is currently on long service leave from the SAS and is working with Kimberley Expeditions.*
*It was written from a serving soldier’s perspective which I found very moving (biased, I know!) Flood.*

2. **Report on the 18-Pounder:**

Attached is a report from Mark Jamieson giving details of the ceremony held to present the restored carriage to the Governor General. What a great success this whole project has been!
Also regarding the event, Cossie has sent us a photo of the Governor General with Mark Jamieson, and notes that the GG is wearing the 102 Battery wristband which Mark had presented to him earlier. Photo attached.

3. **Ingleburn RSL - Coral Ceremony:**

This annual service to remember the fallen at FSB Coral will be held at 1100hrs on 16th May at the RSL Club, 77 Chester Rd, Ingleburn. Members who have attended on previous occasion have been very impressed by the quality of the ceremony. As usual, all members of this Association are invited and will be warmly welcomed. A copy of their invitation is attached to this Bulletin.

4. **New Member:**

On your behalf, we welcome Max Murray as a new Ordinary Member. Max served as a WO2 in Vietnam with 12 Field Regiment from 22nd July to 17th December, 1971. He lives in Nar Nar Goon, Victoria, with his wife Kulsoom. Hopefully we’ll get to meet Max at a reunion sometime.

5. **Scrubber:**

Whether they were in 102 Battery or not, most former members of 12 Field Regiment know who Colonel Ian Ahearn (Rtd) is, and his on-going work assisting all things Arty. However, not very many know how he came to be called “Scrubber”. We received this explanation from an un-named source……
Apparently, way back when he first started as a cadet and received his first army haircut, several of his classmates commented:
"Geez Ahearn, you look like a scrubbing brush". The rest is history.

6. **Merchandise:**

QM Laurie Bird advises that we have ordered another 12 All-weather Jackets and they are still at the very competitive price of $55 including postage. Those lucky few from 102 Battery who were wearing them on the sailing ship in the foul weather on Sydney Harbour on the day after Anzac Day, will attest to how warm and comfy they are. And so will the envious blokes who were there and didn’t have them! Laurie also reminds everyone about the CDs mentioned earlier in the Bulletin.
Also don’t forget the usual shirts ($27), caps ($15) and ties ($27) etc. that are still available.
To order please contact Laurie Bird on his email address birdlawrence@outlook.com or phone 02 49548248

The Association acknowledges the ongoing support of the Ingleburn sub-Branch of the RSL in the publication of these Bulletins, and thanks them for their assistance.
‘Where Right and Glory Lead’

Fig 1. The gold plated cap covering the muzzle opening of the 18-pr.¹

On an overcast day in Fairbairn ACT on 15 April 2015, a small group of artillery enthusiast was busy putting the final touches on a magnificently restored World War One (WW1) 18 pounder (18-pr) Quick Firing (QF) gun. Today, marked the day that the 18-pr was to be presented and blessed by the Governor General Sir Peter Cosgrove. A project instigated by members of the Royal Australian Artillery Historical Company (RAAHC) that drew together master carriage builders, a master horse trainer and carriage driver, and military enthusiasts with one common goal; to create a living piece of Australian military history.

The 18-pr and its ammunition limber required an immense amount of work for it to be restored to its original WW1 condition. It is only one of a handful of 18-pr guns remaining in Australia and the 100 years of work and wear had taken its toll. The accumulation of rust, in and around

¹ Mark Jamieson, personal photograph taken 15 April 2015.
the rivets and bolts, to the near rusted ammunition storage section of the limber needing to be painstakingly rebuilt by hand. As the 18-pr gun wheels needed complete replacement, rivets had to be handmade; and hours were spent sanding, honing and assembling until it was returned to its WW1 origins.

![Fig 2. Above photographs showing the limber in its restoration stage.](image)

To talk about artillery, we must begin with its formation in Australia, and this began in 1788 with the arrival of the First Fleet in Sydney Cove. Landed from HMS Sirius, the guns were

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2 Ian Ahearn, personal photograph.
3 Mark Jamieson, personal photograph taken 15 April 2015.
positioned in an area that is now known as Macquarie Place with a purpose to command and defend the approaches to Sydney Cove. This first deployment of guns represents the formation of Artillery in Australia and following on from this, Artillery units began arriving in Australia from 1856.

The evolution of the artillery gun is worth understanding and especially the importance of the 18-pr Q.F to Australian military history. With the invention of rifling in the barrel, the smooth bore and muzzle loading guns became obsolete, the newly developed guns were classified ‘rifled-muzzle-loading’ (R.M.L). These were subsequently succeeded by the ‘rifled-breech-loading’ (R.B.L), to be later known as ‘breech-loading’ (B.L). The 18-pr ‘quick firing’ gun (Q.F) was applied to the guns that were able to sustain a higher rate of fire than the B.L guns. The classification of the gun is also important. The 18-pr got its name from the size of the projectiles weight that it fired. This was a common way of distinguishing the guns used British forces. This method was quickly adopted by the Australian Artillery, and therefore, the guns were referred to as the 12-pr, 18-pr, and 25-pr.

In 1903 there were only 48 15-pr B.L’s available in Australia, and this was considered to be inadequate. In 1905 a decision was made to purchase 24 of the newly developed 18-pr Q.F. guns. At the outbreak of WW1, Australia had now purchased 116 18-prs. One third of these were soon to be sent with the First Division, Australian Imperial Forces (A.I.F).

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6 ibid.
7 ibid., p. 37.
8 ibid., p. 40.
Steepled in history the 18-pr was the workhorse of the Australian Artillery throughout WW1, with Gallipoli marking the beginning of its inclusion in the war by the Australian batteries. It is recorded that a single 18-pr from the 4th Battery Australian Field Artillery (AFA) was dragged ashore and was positioned on a knoll south of the beach. The gun fired its first salvo at 6 pm, much to the delight of the troops. The following day more field artillery began arriving from the 7th Battery AFA.

Fig 3. The No.4 gun, 18 pound field gun of B sub-section 9th Battery in action firing from McCay’s (M’Cay’s) Hill, Gallipoli 19 May 1915. The Australian gunners, all from Hobart Tasmania are stripped to the waist in tough Aussie fighting spirit.

10 Gower, Guns of the Regiment, p. 40.
The 18-pr Q.F. gun was far more effective than the French 75mm and the German 77mm, and as a result of this, caused considerable damage to the opposing forces throughout the war. The 18-pr was a weapon that provided great protection to the infantry; it was used to bombard the enemy forces, thus providing a protective screen for the advancing troops. This tactic was also well used by the opposing force and a considerable loss of life to both sides was a direct result of artillery fire.

This brings us back to the present day in Fairbairn ACT. Just as the gun and limber was hauled into battle by six horses during WW1, six horses were saddled up with a rider allocated to each two horse team ready to haul the gun and limber down the road to their meeting, not of battle, but for a blessing from the Governor General. The gun detachment dressed immaculately in their WW1 uniforms mounted the horses and formed up around the 18-pr and limber and marched forward. With call of ‘detachment walk on’ soon followed by the calls of ‘wheel right’ and ‘wheel left’ as the gun detachment made their way from their holding station, down the roads to their final stop at the old Fairbairn guardhouse. With the call of ‘detachment halt’ and ‘eyes left’ echoing, horses and gun detachment promptly halted in front of the Governor General and assembled party.

Fig 4. The gun and limber on its way to be blessed by the Governor General.12

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12 Mark Jamieson, personal photograph taken 15 April 2015.
The Governor General then addressed the gathered crowd and spoke of the importance of remembering not only the 18-pr and its place in Australian military history, but signifying its importance by stating that ‘the backbone of the brigades was the horse drawn artillery’.

The Governor General goes on to say,

This is a very auspicious day and would I like to congratulate the Royal Australian Artillery Historical team for bringing to life what most of us have seen in paintings or photos, and of course I refer to that iconic scene of the horse, the gun and the limber.\(^{13}\)

The 18-pr gun and limber is now part of the nation’s military treasure and we are now able to glimpse back into the history of our nation at war in WW1, and the essential role played by the Artillery of the AIF.

The Governor General finished with ‘I will now bless the gun’, and with this, the detachment readied itself and the call of ‘detachment walk on’ could again be heard as the gun and limber moved forward.

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\(^{13}\) Mark Jamieson, Recording of the Governor General Sir Peter Cosgrove addressing the crowd in Fairbairn ACT, 15 April 2015.

\(^{14}\) Mark Jamieson, personal photograph taken 15 April 2015.
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References

Books


Websites


Photographs

Ahearn, Ian. Personal photographs (permission to use).

Jamieson, Mark. Personal photographs by the Author.