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A Field Battery Association, Inc.

# National Newsletter

June 2008

## President Ron Bassan's Report

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G'day fellow members,

Firstly I would welcome you all to our new look Newsletter. The people who get their newsletter through

the post will notice that it is printed in greyscale; this is because we are now getting the newsletter printed on A3 paper and this will save us money at the printer.

The people who receive their newsletter by email will still get theirs in full colour.

We still have a few people who have not bothered to pay their yearly subscription, as from the next issue these members will no longer get a copy of the newsletter.

We hope to have four issues of the newsletter each year from now on.

I have been very busy since the last newsletter. I attended the Dawn Service at the Sherwood Services Club on ANZAC DAY, even had a chat to Rex Taylor and then attended the march in Brisbane.

The attendance was very poor and I believe it was the same in Sydney. The boat trip on the Brisbane River after the march was excellent, we had a two and half hour leisurely cruise and BBQ with members of 105<sup>th</sup> Mdm Bty Assn and two other Bty's, our committee hope it will be on next year.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> we had a committee meeting at Ray Alcorn's residence at Chapel Hill.

From Brisbane, Bonnie and I travelled to Canberra where we attended the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the

Battle of Coral and Balmoral ceremonies with Ray and Lorraine Alcorn and Brian and Margie Miller.

The first service we attended was at the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial in ANZAC Avenue at 1000hrs on the 13<sup>th</sup> May. This was quite a moving event with six M2A2's leading the Colours and Guidons of the units who took part in this action and of course the Battalions who took part in these actions have it embroidered on their colours.

The Queen's Banner was not included because it can not be carried when the guns are on parade, as the guns are the Artillery Colours.

The second event was the unveiling and dedication of a Plaque for 12<sup>th</sup> Field Regiment, RRAA at the Australian War Memorial at 1130 on the 13<sup>th</sup> May.

At this event I was an invited guest, as I helped representatives of the other Batteries who served in 12<sup>th</sup> Field, unveil the Plaque. This included people like **Mal Hunt**, representing HQ Bty, **John Sullivan**, 104 Bty, **Rod Baldwin** 161 Bty, RNZA, **John Dellaca**, Det 131 Div Loc Bty, **Peter Geelen**, 102 Bty.

The Chaplain who dedicated the Plaque was Father **John Tinkler** MBE, CSC (Retd), I think everyone who served came across (Tink) somewhere during their service.

**Don Tait** gave the Commemorative Address.

After the Dedication we were invited to a light lunch and a tour of the post war exhibition at the AWM. Many old faces were seen and spoken to, people like **John Stevens**, **Skeeter Humphries**, **Max Franklin**,

**Brian Murtagh**, **Robbie Robertson**, **Dodger Noonan**, **Dale Quigley** and **Geoff(Grimmo) Grimish** just to name a few.

In the evening of the 13<sup>th</sup> Ray, Brian and I attended the National Gunner Dinner at the Federal Golf Club, Canberra; this was a black tie event.

The Queen's Banner was marched in and Ray and I sat at a table with serving members.

Each table had a different centrepiece, would have liked to abscond with a couple. I had the RSM of the School of Artillery sitting to the left of me and I found out from him that all the brass from the old School of Artillery that I mentioned in the last newsletter, went with them to the new School at Pucka.

The guest Speaker was the GPO of 102 Bty at the Battle of Coral, **Ian 'Scrubber' Ahearn** and he told it how it really was.

There was about 180 people attend, from the Head of Regt, **Brig Phil Winter CSC**, Deputy Head of Regt, CO School of Artillery, CO's and RSM's from all the Regiments, also some of our retired officers, for example, **Des Mueller**, **John Salmon**, **Don Weir** and **Dave Kelly**.

There were members down to Bombardiers' and we all had a great time.

This was the first National Gunner Dinner since the opening by the Queen of the RAA National Memorial on Mount Pleasant, Canberra in 1977.

The RAA Memorial is well worth a visit for anyone who visits our National Capital.



On the 14<sup>th</sup> May there was a solemn ceremony held at the RAA National Memorial on Mount Pleasant where the Governor General, **Maj General Jefferies**, presented the Commanding Officer of 8/12<sup>th</sup> Mdm Regt, **Lt Col Craig Furini** with the certificate signed by the GG, giving 102 Field Battery the honour title of Coral.

The CO of 8/12<sup>th</sup> Mdm Regt is to hold the certificate in trust until the Coral Battery comes back on the order of battle. I believe it is immoral that 102 Coral Bty was ever taken off the order of battle and I know some will not like me saying this, 107 and 108 Bty's should have been taken off the order of battle before 102 and 104 Bty's.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> June we had a Committee Meeting at the Brookvale Travel Lodge and there was a full Committee except for John Smith.

We had two visitors from N.S.W. and they were Don Green and Wayne Brooking accompanied by their wives.

On the Sunday we visited North Fort and the Army Reserve Bombardier who was on duty, gave us a most comprehensive tour, this included the gun sheds which we did not see last year, even included the workshop.

A most enjoyable time was had by all those who attended.

It is getting close to our Annual General Meeting and Reunion at the Maroochy River Coach House, Maroochydore, Qld, so please put it on your calendar of events.

I would love to see more people turn up than what we had last year in Sydney. The dates are from Friday 12<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> September 2008. You are to make your own bookings; the phone number is (07) 5448 4344.

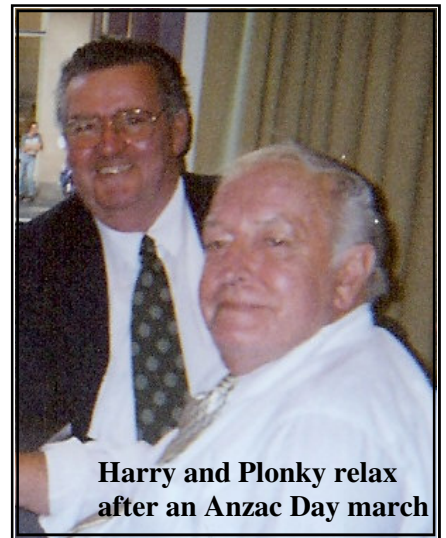
Good news I just received all the ACB's. For the people who are entitled to a miniature (You must have been a Sgt or above) and have their large ACB, we will be posting them out as well. Does anyone know the address of Dale Quigley?

Finally it is my sad duty to inform you all that we have lost another old and bold.

**Bernard (Plonky) Wine** passed away on Wednesday the 4<sup>th</sup> June and was interned on the 11<sup>th</sup> June. I believe that everyone who knew Plonky will miss him deeply and I know Harry will.

I would like to pass on to his son, Mark, the Committee's deepest sympathy.

**Ron (Tex) Bassan**



**Harry and Plonky relax after an Anzac Day march**

**A report of our ANZAC DAY down in the south from John Smith**

The day started off cool & showery out here in Penrith for the Dawn service, we had a good gathering though.

After a breakfast at Penrith R.S.L. I caught the train to the City, on arrival at the meeting point I met up with Ian Leven & his wife at around 9am we then waited on the others to turn up.

By around 10.00am the Land Rovers had arrived, together with the Battery Chaps, (around 30 or so you know I'm getting to know quite of these now.) the B.C. & B.S.M. we all were quite a bit rowdy as the gang was getting a bit impatient. However when the time did come to move off, the heavens decided to try & quieten us up a bit (out with the raincoats & Brollies) so off we go, about 200metres & stop, wait for around half an hour in the rain,( Gets a bit boring doesn't it.) When we finally started to move off the dam rain eased up & stopped (same as last year) the March then proceeded quite well, the crowd was very supportive of everyone & I think bigger than last year, all the chaps picked out our old stalwart "Dick Smith" in the crowd.

After the March the meeting place just has to be the Coronation Hotel, once again we had a terrific time here, the staff really looked after everyone, the boys of the Battery did a fine job to set everything up,(all the association chaps really appreciated the work that you put into the day).

There were a few of ours that couldn't do the march & were at the Hotel when we arrived namely Bernie Wine, Harry Cook, Dodger Noonan & a few others (they didn't get wet) we dropped John Downes off at the Menzies as he was unable to march & travelled in the Rover.

Harry was assisted with his lovely wife, Bernie was assisted with Mark & daughter Kathy who I met for the first time. While I was there I had a very good time & I am sure everyone else did so too.

So now it's off to next Year, I really hope we get a fine one. Since the Anzac march, sadly Bernie Wine has passed away

**Vale . 2/8766 GUNNER BERNARD WILLIAM WINE**

**26/10/37-----04/06/08**

**(BERNIE—PLONKIE)**

Bernie passed away early on Wednesday 04/06/08.

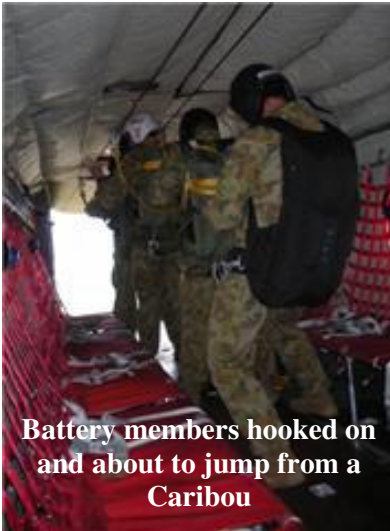
Bernie was not very well on Anzac Day & he finally died on the 04/06/08

Bernie was Cremated at Rookwood on 11/06/08. John Knight, Reg. Ettainne & John Smith attended the service together with family & friends.

**Rest in Peace Bernie**

## “A” FIELD BATTERY REPORT - from Lt. Peter Watkins.

The first third of the year has seen the Battery participate in a number of activities. Apart from exercises in Singleton and Townsville there has also been ANZAC Day and Parachute Continuation Training (PCT).



**Battery members hooked on and about to jump from a Caribou**

Of the three exercises conducted already in the training year, two of them have been support for Joint Terminal Attack Controller (JTAC) courses at Singleton and the other was a field exercise with 107 Field Battery in Townsville.

The JTAC courses were both only a week duration and afforded a

valuable opportunity for new detachments and parties to work together and for the Battery to have a general shake-out before the larger exercises for the year.

ANZAC Day was again a highlight, with a dawn service being conducted at the Battery followed by breakfast, the obligatory two-up, and then the march through Sydney City with the Association.

In late May the Battery conducted three days of PCT at the Parachute Training School in Nowra. Eighteen members participated and almost all conducted six descents including one with combat equipment. It was the first time most had jumped for over a year and the opportunity to jump again was invaluable for maintaining skills. For a total of 99 descents overall, there was only one injury sustained which was minor and required only an overnight stay in hospital.

On the operations front, the six members of the Battery chosen to deploy with 29 Commando Regiment Royal Artillery to Afghanistan continue to participate in pre-deployment training and exercises in Britain and are performing well. They will deploy to the Helmand province of Afghanistan around about September and will take over from the 8/12 Medium Regiment gunners who are already there and acquitting themselves well with 7 Parachute Regiment Royal Horse Artillery.

The members of the Battery chosen to deploy to Afghanistan with the 4<sup>th</sup> Reconstruction Task

Force did so in dribs and drabs over the March and April period and have acclimatised to the country and settled in to their roles and tasks.

The end of the poppy harvesting season is approaching and, as it concludes, several locals will most likely be looking to occupy their time in other ways...



**Adjusting fire from the OP at Singleton**

The Battery has also deployed ten personnel to East Timor to augment the 3RAR Battle group and they are approaching the half-way mark of their deployment, where they have been employed mainly as signallers.

As this is written the Battery is busy packing for Exercise CATA, a month-long exercise at High Range in Townsville, which will take almost the entire June period. There is another exercise in Townsville in late July after that and then a period of courses will begin to qualify soldiers as sigs, detachment commanders and command post operators.



**A Battery member conducting training at Wide Bay prior to deploying to Afghanistan**

**EDITOR'S COMMENT:** When I first read Lt. Peter Watkins's report on what is happening with the serving Battery, I thought, lucky buggers, how great would that be? Then I remembered back a few years and realised that although their job is exciting it is also dangerous. An accident happened at the High Range training area on the 28th May 2002; when a shell detonated inside a 105mm gun, injuring six gunners.

Two of the personnel, suffering shock, lacerations, bruising and burns were taken by Black Hawk to Townsville Hospital while the other four were treated at the Barracks.

A spokeswoman commented, "It appears a round exploded in the bore of the 105mm field gun; safety is paramount and we have suspended all use of 105 ammunition till further notice."

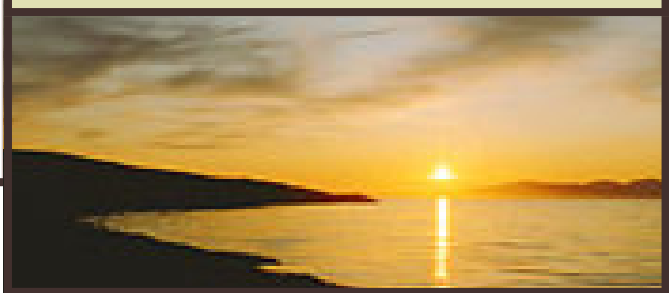
The High Range training area was also where 18 soldiers died in the 1996 Black Hawk tragedy.

Still our admiration for these young gunners is not without a touch of envy.



*They shall not grow old,  
As we that are left grow old.  
Age shall not weary them,  
Nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun,  
And in the morning,  
We will remember them.*

- KEN. AGNEW**
- TREVOR. BEER**
- S.J. BLANCH (OAS. Malaya )**
- TOM. CARRUTHERS**
- KEITH. CHRISTENSEN**
- RICHARD. DUGGAN**
- R.M. DUCAT (OAS. Malaya )**
- PAT. DALY**
- TOM. DAWSON**
- GEORGE. FORSYTHE**
- ROBERT J. (BOB) GRAY**
- MICK. HARKEN**
- B.D. HENDERSON (OAS. Malaya )**
- KEN. KENNEDY**
- BOBBY. LEWIS**
- JOHN. MACDONALD**
- L.G. MATHERS (KIA. Vietnam )**
- E.J. (LOFTY) MOORE**
- R.J. PARKER (OAS. Vietnam )**
- DAVE. QUIRK**
- CLIVE. RALFE**
- R. F. SMITH**
- BRIAN. WHISKER**
- BERNARD. (PLONKY) WINE**
- JOHN. WORBOYS**




**BERNARD  
( PLONKY )  
WINE  
1937 - 2008**

**We regretfully announce the sad passing of Gunner Bernard Wine, known to all "A" Battery as Plonky, not because of any indulgence of ports or sherries but a nickname associated with his surname, Wine. Not that Plonky wasn't partial to having a beer or two with his mates, especially Harry Cook when they got together. Plonky was a Gun Layer with Bravo Troop he was good at his job and a good bloke who will be sadly missed by all of us. We all know his son Mark and we convey our sympathy to him and his family.**



Benny Bennito, Bubbles and Plonky

 On the 15th June 2006 the CASAC was asked to make a decision on the retrospectivity of the Army Combat Badge. The CA determined that the badge would be retrospective to 1950 in line with the award of the Infantry Combat Badge. The Committee of the "A" Field Battery Association has been involved in attempts to obtain the Infantry Combat Badge for many years. The Battery has been used as Infantry during operations in the Malayan Emergency and in recent years had served in Timor as a Company of an Infantry Battalion. For example; in June, July and August 1958 the Battery conducted infantry style long patrols in the jungle for 3 RAR. I believe these patrols were on the Battalion's Patrol Program. In fact, the CO 3RAR briefed the Battery's Patrol Commanders in Bravo Troop on the 2nd of August 1958 at Lintang. Even though many of us operated as infantry on jungle operations during the Malayan Emergency, we were not entitled to the Infantry Combat Badge. The reason: We were not Corps of Infantry. The association could make no headway in trying to obtain recognition for the operations similar to infantry soldiers of 3 RAR. At long last the Army has recognised the Gunners and others who contributed to operations; especially in the infantry role **This information kindly submitted by Ray Alcorn.**

## Coonabarabran Youth, Highlight the Anzac Day Commemoration

During an articulate and emotional speech from St. Lawrence's School Captain, Tessa Morrissey, she stated that future generations need to be reminded that happiness has a price.

Tessa concluded her remarks by saying, "The Anzac spirit exists in each one of us, so therefore, let us be guided by the Spirit of Anzac in facing the national and personal challenges ahead, and let us strive to be worthy of the memory of those we honour on Anzac Day."

The March was led by Coonabarabran High School Captain Ricky Duggan, grandson of our favourite gunner the late Dick Duggan.

It will not surprise any of us to see this impressive young man accepting the duty of leadership.

We wish young Ricky and indeed all the Duggan family continuing success and happiness in the future.



Ricky Duggan ( right ) leads Coonabarabran High School at the Anzac Day Commemoration



Boy's School Captain of Coonabarabran High School Ricky Duggan, grandson of the late Dick Duggan

### Above and Beyond the Call of Duty from Don Sinclair and Bob Cunningham

I was asked on ANZAC Day is there much work entailed getting our guns into town for the parade?

Perhaps more of you would also like to know, so here is how it all happens.

A week before ANZAC day Bob Cunningham and myself go out to 1st Field Regiment where the guns are stored and get the guns prepared. This

entails first washing them then removing all the brass fittings. These are taken home where they are buffed and polished and later replaced. Any rust is removed followed by patch painting and a final clean and polish all over with car polish and tyres blackened. Two days before the march the guns are towed out to the transport yard where the tyres are pumped up and placed in a position for the Barnes Auto Company flat top tilt truck can



Meet Sadie our cleaning lady, personal gun maintenance assistant to Saint and Bob.

load them next day. The day before the march Bob brings all the accessories from home (dial sight, telescopic sight, sight clino, rammer etc) and straps them onto the guns. Barnes Auto truck arrives and both guns are winched onto the tray and taken to the company's security storage depot at Rocklea to spend the night. Next

morning, ANZAC day, at 6am the guns are delivered to designated area where they are unloaded and hooked up to their restored military vehicles, then towed to their place in the march. This has to be completed by 8am as the roads are then closed.

At the conclusion of the march the guns are taken to a designated area and unhooked and reloaded back onto the Barnes Auto truck and transported back to the 1st Field Regiment's transport yard. Next day Bob and I give the guns

another clean and oil, remove all the accessories then with the aid of some diggers and a land rover the guns are moved back into their storage sheds and locked up for another year.

It is appropriate to acknowledge that the Barnes Auto Company do this for us every year at no cost. Perhaps we should do something to show our appreciation. **Saint.**



**Editors note:** Now you know how hard our two "Gun Wallahs." work behind the scenes, it wouldn't hurt to buy them a beer next time. Oh, and while your at the bar, the poor old Editor works so hard and it may help when it is your turn to be eulogised.

### A letter from Ray Alcorn.

My wife, Lorraine and I recently spent four days in Melbourne and caught up with Harry Cook and his new bride. The four of us spent the afternoon chatting about old times and getting to know Harry's lovely wife Ivy.

Harry looks the best I have seen him in years and it's obvious that married life is agreeing with him.

We were sorry to have missed Banger and Ann Harris. They left Melbourne the same day that we arrived. Maybe next time Banger.

We left Melbourne for Canberra and met up with Tex and Bonnie Bassan and Brian and Margaret Miller.

All of us were attending the ceremonies associated with the 40th Anniversary of the Battles for Fire Support Bases Balmoral and Coral.

We attended the Gunner's Dinner and the award to 102 Field Battery of the Battle of Coral.

This battle honour was well earned and a military first.

I urge all gunners to read up on the magnificent effort put up by 102 Field Battery and the 1 RAR Mortar Platoon



The Captain Cook pulls in to the Wharf to take on the Gunners for a river cruise

members in repulsing heavy assaults by the NVA in May-June 1968 in South Vietnam.

At long last in Brisbane the Gunners had a magnificent venue for their "After March" get together. The 105 Field Battery did a great job in organizing the Brisbane River Cruise and the Captain Cook Cruise Staff were excellent.

Many thanks to Arthur Burke,

OAM, for his efforts in getting this off the ground.

The A Field Battery Association wrote to Arthur on 8th. March 2007 suggesting that the after march venue be changed as the current one was considered unsuitable.

This new venue on Anzac Day in Brisbane is excellent and the committee urges all members to take advantage of this in Brisbane for 2009.

The cost is met by each member and is more than reasonable.

Gunners from all the other States will be most welcome next year.

**Ray Alcorn.**

## A Brief Historical Account of the Battles of Fire Support Bases, Coral and Balmoral, Vietnam

In May 1968 Australian troops established Fire Support Bases (FSB) Coral and Balmoral across the route used by the Viet Cong to depart, and approach, Saigon and nearby Bien Hoa.

The bases provided defended positions for artillery, mortars and armoured vehicles which would, in turn, support infantry patrols of the area at a time when expectations of enemy attacks on Saigon were high.

The 1st and 3rd Battalions Royal Australian Regiment (1 and 3RAR), 102 Field Battery, Royal Australian Artillery, and 161 New Zealand Field Battery, deployed into FSB Coral on 12 May 1968. 1 and 3 RAR began preparing ambush positions but these were incomplete when a North Vietnamese Regiment attacked the base during the early hours of 13 May.

The North Vietnamese, having penetrated the 1RAR Mortar Platoon and 102 Field Battery positions and

briefly forcing the defenders to abandon one of their artillery pieces, were forced back after heavy fighting.

Coral came under attack for a second time at 2.15 am on 16 May when an estimated three battalions of North Vietnamese infantry assaulted the base which was, along with infantry, now also defended by armoured personnel carriers of A Squadron, 3rd Cavalry Regiment. Fighting lasted several hours before the attackers were forced to withdraw.

Further mortar and rocket attacks on Coral followed, on 22 May, and again on 26 and 28 May, but the base was not seriously threatened again.

Having had the opportunity to establish a strong defensive perimeter, the Australians were able to launch their own attacks against the North Vietnamese.

On 26 May, in a major contact, infantry and tanks destroyed part of a North Vietnamese bunker system that had been discovered in the vicinity.

The Australians continued to launch aggressive patrols from Coral,

engaging in combat against North Vietnamese forces and experiencing some fierce actions through until the end of May.

By this time the North Vietnamese had turned their attention to FSB Balmoral which had been established by 3RAR some 4.5 kilometres north of Coral on 24-25 May.

Tanks from Nui Dat helped Australian infantry defeat a two battalion-strong North Vietnamese attack just hours after their arrival at the base on 25 May.

A second attack followed on 28 May, but a combination of infantry, armour, aircraft, artillery and mortars repelled the North Vietnamese assault. North Vietnamese activity in the area subsided and operations at Coral and Balmoral were suspended on 6 June 1968.

Twenty six Australians were killed during the fighting at Coral and Balmoral.

Estimates suggest that more than 300 North Vietnamese were killed in these actions, but exact figures cannot be obtained.

For those wishing to learn more about the battle, the following sources may serve as an introduction.

Ian McNeill and Ashley Ekins, *On the offensive, the Australian Army and the Vietnam War, January 1967 - June 1968*, Allen and Unwin in association with the Australian War Memorial, Sydney, 2003, chapters 12 and 13.

Lex McAulay, *The battle of Coral*, Hutchinson Australia, Melbourne, 1988

Paul Ham, *Vietnam, the Australian War*, Harper Collins, Sydney, 2007, chapters 28 and 29

## Indonesian Confrontation

In January

1965, A Field Battery equipped with 105mm L5 Pack Howitzers, prepared for its second tour to Malaya (now Malaysia) and on 23 June 1965 the Battery regained its independent status.

The Battery flew to Malaysia and joined the 28th Commonwealth Infantry Brigade at Terendak Garrison (near Malacca) on 21 October 1965.

The Battery initially was a sub-unit of 45th. Light Regiment RA and then 6th. Light Regiment RA from early 1966.

During its tour of Malaysia the Battery participated in frequent exercises on both the east and west coast, and assisted with security measures to guard against possible Indonesian infiltration of West Malaysia.

The Battery was on the verge of a five month tour in Sarawak in August 1966 but internal events in Indonesia saw the end of direct hostilities

in East Malaysia (and of Confrontation itself) just as the Battery was due to depart from Malacca.

On 12 September 1967 the Battery returned to Australia by air and became A Field Battery 19th Composite Regiment RAA at Holsworthy. In October 1969 the Battery was redesignated A Field Battery 12th Field Regiment RAA

## The Vietnam War

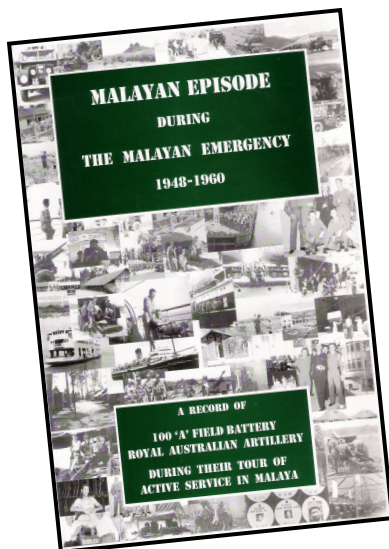
12th Field Regiment was warned for service in South Vietnam in 1971 and the Regiment moved from Tobruk Lines, Holsworthy to Lavarack Barracks in Townsville in January 1970.

On 26 January 1971 the Battery assembled in Sydney and on a parade at Victoria Barracks, A Field Battery in recognition of the approach of its Centenary Birthday and its long association with Sydney, was granted Freedom of the City of Sydney by the Lord Mayor.

On 27 January 1971 the

advance party emplaned for South Vietnam where it was joined by the main body at the 1st. Australian Task Force base at Nui Dat on 4 February 1971. A Field Battery and the rest of 12th Field Regiment took part in operations in Phuoc Tuy Province until the withdrawal of the 1st. Australian Task Force in November 1971.

On 7 June 1971 during a contact with North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces, Second Lieutenant I. Mathers, an A Field Battery Forward Observer, received mortal wounds from enemy small arms fire. His Assistant, Bombardier P.M. Maher, was later awarded the Military Medal for his part in the contact.. In addition, 50 cartridge cases, fired by the Battery to celebrate its Centenary were presented to various persons and organisations (including the Australian War Memorial which also holds the cartridge case of the first round fired by A Field Battery in South Africa in 1900).



For a more extensive report on the New Australia, France Stove collision in September 1957 there is an excellent article featuring newspaper reports etc. in **The Malayan Episode** available from Don Sinclair.

The following information is from Saint as he composed the original story for this wonderful book

I contacted Captain Holmes through my son Greg and spoke at length to him over the phone. He also wrote me a letter, later on.

One thing he did tell me about the collision was that as the two ships were heading for a head-on collision, the captain of the New Australia grabbed the wheel from the coxswain and swung it hard over giving the ships just enough difference in direction to avoid a head on, which he said would have been disastrous for both vessels as they would have locked together and caught fire. He said we never knew how lucky we all were to survive.

The investigation showed that the pilot of the oil tanker was at fault and was given a suspension.

**Its all in the book.**

## ASSOCIATION MERCHANDISE

We now have good stocks of "A" Battery Association merchandise available.

|             |         |
|-------------|---------|
| Polo Shirts | \$35    |
| Caps        | \$15    |
| Stickers    | \$6 (2) |
| Plaques     | \$30    |

Please add \$5 postage

To order contact

**Bob Cunningham at  
(07) 3350 1394**

or mail to

**26 Kilburn Street**

**Chermside Brisbane 4032**

email: [carolchermside@optusnet.com](mailto:carolchermside@optusnet.com)

Please make cheques or money orders payable to: "A" Field Battery Association Inc.



**HONG KONG BAR IN CHULIA STREET - the fighting men's bar**

extremely popular with the RAF/RAAF/RAA personnel when they were



stationed in Penang and every visitor seemed to have left a memento there, including their photographs. the bar is stacked to the ceiling with plaques, badges, lifebuoys etc and there are piles of photo albums. the fighting men are gone now but the bar lives on.



The photograph of this A Battery group enjoying a night out is still on display on the wall of the Bar. The Old Jukebox standing at one corner of the Bar is a living testimony of the old days and plays mostly old songs. The popular drink at the Bar is the local beer

**DVD of 101 BATTERY MEMOIRS**

David Troedel is the Editor of the 101 Battery Newsletter and is currently compiling a DVD, if you can help David with more Photos taken in Malaya that you would like to see included in this project, please send them either email or post. After scanning he can return them to you if required.

It has been suggested that a charge of \$12 which will include postage, all profits to go to 101 Battery funds. David plans to have the DVD completed by the end of June 2008, so please act now

His biggest challenge is to include a photo of all who served in Malaya between 4th Oct. 1959 and 29th. Oct. 1961.

These are the names of the gunners he requires to complete this exciting project

|                |       |                 |                         |             |
|----------------|-------|-----------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| R J Barrie     | AACC  | Max Beck        | Bommer Brown            | RAEME       |
| Bob Burrell    | AACC  | Jim Carruthers  | Ray Clarke              |             |
| Bob Cowdroy    |       | David Crompton  | Jack Crook              |             |
| John Cummings  |       | Roy Dillon      | Terry Dinneen           | AACC        |
| Peter Draper   | AACC  | Bill Dunstan    | Burnie Farley           |             |
| Ted Gannon     |       | Ben Goddard     | George Godfrey          | RAEME       |
| Jim Goodhew    | RAEME | Lindsay Goreman | T D Hanson              |             |
| Dale Hayes     | RAEME | Darryl Herbert  | Arthur Hird             |             |
| C G Hilton     |       | Stan Irvine     | G J Jarvis              |             |
| D J Johnson    |       | J King          | Tom King                | 101/103 Bty |
| Bill King      |       | Dick Knight     | Norm Kollias            | RAEME       |
| Kurt Konnertz  |       | E J Lyon        | Rex Martin              |             |
| Ken Matthews   |       | Ron McCluskey   | A McWhinney             | RAASC       |
| Frank Mitchell |       | Snow Morgan     | B C Mulheron            |             |
| Mel Myers      | RAEME | Len Oliver      | Peter O'Meara           |             |
| Ernie Palmer   | RAASC | Doug Phillips   | L A Reudavey            |             |
| Ray Ruoff      |       | E Sassoon       | Mick Seats              | RAAMC       |
| J S Smith      |       | Kevin Smith     | Hugh Stewart            |             |
| N E Thompson   |       | Peter Tilbrook  | Trevor Waghorn          | (Prideaux)  |
| Alan Whalley   |       | W K White       | Keith (Shorty) Williams |             |

**Please send photos and information to David at this address** →

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**THE KIWI CONNECTION**

On 27 May 1965 the Prime Minister, Sir Keith Holyoake, announced the Government's decision to send 161 Battery, Royal New Zealand Artillery to South Vietnam in a combat role. Comprised of nine officers and 101 other ranks, 161 Battery was initially under command of the United States Army's 173rd Airborne Brigade based at Bien Hoa near Saigon.

In June 1966 the Battery was reassigned to the 1st Australian Task Force at Nui Dat, in Phuoc Tuy Province east of Saigon. From then until its withdrawal in May 1971, the Battery served with Royal Australian Artillery field regiments in support of Australian and New Zealand infantry units.

In May 1967, New Zealand's combat strength in Vietnam was increased by a 182-strong rifle company, designated Victor One Company, from the 1st Battalion Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment in Malaysia. In December 1967 Victor One Company was joined by Whisky One Company, also from the 1st Battalion.

Both companies came under the Australian Task Force's command and formed part of an ANZAC infantry battalion.



*Vietnam: 161 Battery position.*



## Perfect Post March Party on the Brisbane River.

The Anzac Day post march get together was a wonderful new experience, with the sound of the cheering crowds still echoing in our ears we headed for the Riverside Pier to board the Captain Cook for a cruise organised by 105 Field Battery.

We were a little early for boarding, which did not create any problem at all as we enjoyed a couple of drinks in the outdoor garden area of the Pig and Whistle Bar and Restaurant.

When we finally boarded the Captain Cook we were treated to a complimentary first drink as we settled into the comfortable conditions on board and cast off for our cruise in perfect weather conditions.



The meal was advertised as a sausage sizzle and proved to be much more upmarket than that with perfectly cooked sausages, hamburgers, heaps of fried onions fresh buttered bread rolls and a wide choice of salads.

All this as we cruised the beautiful and interesting Brisbane River, eating, sipping and swapping yarns with old friends as we took in the picturesque and ever changing views along the river bank, the friendly family atmosphere was further enhanced by the attendance of a lot more than usual, wives and partners.

The charge for the complete package for this enjoyable afternoon was a modest \$20 per head, hopefully this cruise will be repeated next year and I would suggest you book in early as I am sure that all who were lucky enough to do this trip will be first on board next Anzac Day.



Prior to the march Ray Alcorn and Tex Bassan pose with these lovely and colourfully attired girls who were part of the contingent of Vietnamese veterans from the Republic of Vietnam



The sun is over the yardarm, it's time to splice the mainbrace and doing just that is, portside, Arthur Burke, amidships is Ray Alcorn and Bob Cunningham, hard to starboard



The Preso, pouting petulantly pleads for privacy from the paparazzi while settling down to a great luncheon, the look says it all, and the paparazzi pest p—ed off ! Didn't seem to worry the Baron though.



Ron Hart doesn't look out of place on board the boat, put a navy blue jacket on and he is easily mistaken for an Old Salt. Bonnie demonstrates the size of the sausages

## The SS New Australia

The New Australia was a ship with a long and interesting history. She bore three names during her life and this is a brief account of her service and her brief, yet eventful connection with A Field Battery.

She started life in 1931 as the SS Monarch of Bermuda, one of a pair of luxury cruise liners, her sister ship was the Queen of Bermuda and they were the crack liners servicing the tour trade between New York and Bermuda.

The SS New Australia rose from the charred remains, when on the 24th. May 1947 the Monarch of Bermuda was gutted by fire while being refitted. She was declared a total loss and earmarked to be sold as scrap, a last minute reprieve saw her saved to be rebuilt as an emigrant ship. She was renamed the SS New Australia in 1949. On 15th. August 1950 she made her first voyage from Southampton to Sydney transporting British migrants to Australia. The return journey was via Japan, taking BCOF forces from Japan back to Britain.

Among the migrants on board in 1951 was a group of fourteen "orphaned" children, sent to Australia by the Fairbridge Society. These children were part of the child migration scheme made infamous as "Leaving of Liverpool" kids. Many still had living parents and had been sent to Australia without their knowledge or permission.

In 1952 the New Australia delivered members of 1st Battalion, RAR to Korea, landing them at Pusan. March 1953 again saw the New Australia go to Korea with members of 2 RAR to relieve 1 RAR.

The 29th September 1957 saw the New Australia again used as troop transport, on this occasion she was taking members of the 3rd Battalion RAR and A Field Battery, together with their families to Malaya for a two year tour of duty.

We gratefully acknowledge the following eye witness account of the collision with another vessel in Torres Strait from Captain George Holmes RD-Torres Strait Pilot since 1980 and the apprentice on the New Australia at the time.

A brief account of how the collision occurred is worth recalling to appreciate how conditions have improved for present day Pilots.

A simple analogy could be compared to two people meeting on the pavement and not talking.

Simultaneously both go one way, then both go the other way and inevitably they collide. Severity of the collision dependent on how fast they were walking towards each other.

At 1.30 on a clear starry night, we were proceeding westward through Torres Strait with no premonition of the of the events to follow. Pilot, Captain, Staff Captain, 4 watch keepers a 3rd Officer and the apprentice, all on the bridge.

The Swedish tanker France Stove



As we approached Hammond Rock a vessel was sighted approaching from the South, some 2 or 3 miles distant on our port side showing green.

The two vessels closed and it appeared the other vessel would cross ahead before we reached Hammond Rock. Our vessel gave 2 short blasts, indicating we would alter to port, presumably to give the other vessel room and more time to round Hammond Rock, but also inferring a green to green passing situation.

However, immediately after we indicated our action the other vessel gave one short blast indicating she was continuing to turn to starboard.

As the two ships were closing, probably at a combined speed of over 20 knots, decision making process was obviously speeded up, our ship gave one short blast and altered to starboard, followed by the other vessel giving two short blasts and altering to port.

By then collision was inevitable. Before impact our engines were going astern, water tight doors were closed and emergency signal sounded.

New Australia struck the "France Stove" on her starboard bow, sliding down the full length of the tanker before breaking free. Fuel tanks of the tanker were ruptured; fire and flames broke out between the two vessels. As we were the bigger and had the higher freeboard of the two ships, we inflicted more damage than we received.

The Starboard Bridge Wing of the France Stove was bent backward through 90 degrees, however our fore peak was holed above the waterline and our starboard anchor ended up in their starboard lifeboat



The two vessels separated, left the burning fuel behind and proceeded to anchor to assess damage and complete a muster for crew and passengers. Fortunately it turned out that no one was injured.

Both ships remained at the site of the incident for three days while repairs were made. Effecting repairs to the fore peak of the New Australia involved the use of life boats to collect sand from a nearby beach for concrete and sand bags to help plug the large hole on the fore peak, before we continued to Singapore.

Late 1957 following the Torres Strait collision the New Australia was withdrawn from service and for the second time destined for the scrap heap.

In January 1958 she was saved again when a Greek Line bought and renamed her Arkadia, staying in service until her last voyage on 16th August 1966.

In November 1966 she was laid up in the River Fai, Falmouth, Cornwall, and on 8th December 1966 she arrived at Valencia, Spain, for scrapping.

In a sad coincidence the Queen of Bermuda, her sister ship arrived at Faslane on the Clyde on the 6th December 1966 to be scrapped.

Two days ahead of her older sister ship.

Thus ends the 35 year story of the once proud and luxurious ocean liner with three different names.



The New Australia

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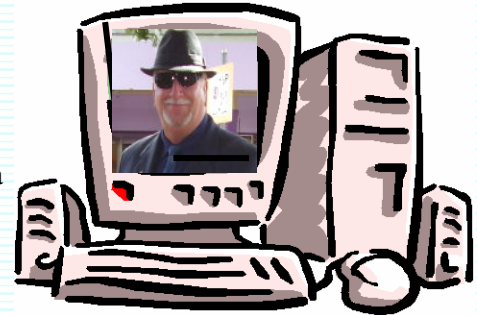
An amazing collection of photographs and news items covering the 1940s to the present day with A Field Battery.

This website is addictive, with the news, links, notice board and a great selection of music while you browse away.

One of the best websites available and kept up to date by Kimbo.

You will want to put this address into your favourites

<http://afdbty.australianartilleryassociation.com/>



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**‘A’ Field Battery Association Inc.  
Nomination Form for Committee**

We, the undersigned financial members of ‘A’ Fd Bty Assn Inc.

Hereby nominate.....

For the position of .....

Proposer\*.....Signature.....

Seconder\*.....Signature.....

**Acceptance of nomination**

I,.....  
A financial member of ‘A’ Fd Bty  
Assn Inc.

Accept  
nomination.....  
(Signature of Candidate)

\* Please Print

***Stolen from and sung to the tune  
of Okie from Muskogee***  
**A SMARTY FROM THE ARTY**

We don't smoke marijuana in the Arty  
We don't take our trips on LSD  
We don't get full of grog while at a party  
We like livin' right and bein' free

I'm proud to be a smarty from the Arty  
A place where even squares can have a ball  
We love being sober hale and hearty  
And direct fire's still the biggest thrill of all

We don't make a party out of lovin'  
We like holdin' hands and pitchin' woo  
We don't let our hair grow long and shaggy  
Like the hippies down in Byron Bay all do

I'm proud to be a gunner from Canungra  
A place where I would learn to shoot the gun  
Back when I was fit an a lot more younger  
And dixie bashin was not what I called fun

Leather boots are still in style for manly footwear  
Beads and Roman sandals won't be seen  
The mess queue, it's always best to be first there  
And our sergeant is always nice and never mean

I'm proud to be a rammer on our gun crew  
At ceasefire we like to laugh and have a ball  
We become a laughing happy fun crew  
And never ever get the shites nor have a brawl



*If you look in the mirror  
and see a beer belly,  
bald head, big red nose,  
varicose veins, and a  
complexion like leather,  
..Look on the  
bright side...  
at least your eyesight  
is OK!!*

After many years of experience, I have decided to pass on some hard earned knowledge, free of charge to some of our less sophisticated gunners

There are some rules and technique that must be adhered to when dealing with members of the opposite sex, one of these is the female brassiere, an item of intimate apparel that the average male finds difficulty in coming to grips with..

**How to unclasp a bra with one hand**

1. With the palm of your dominant hand facing her, slide your middle finger under the bra strap, right between the clasp and her unbelievable body.
2. Pull the clasp out away from her with your middle finger, and pinch the strap between your thumb and ring finger. Pull your middle finger out, and begin to hum "Moon River."

3. Slowly snap your fingers to accomplish the mission. If she has a double-clasp bra, you may have to snap twice; don't get flustered, just suck in deep breaths and the reward will be twofold, allowing the other hand to hold your stubbie.

Keep practising on various sized subjects from C-cup to J-jug.