



Chair Report for AGM 7th November 2020

This report outlines the activities and progress of the Royal Australian Artillery Historical Company (RAAHC) since the previous Annual General Meeting held on the 16th October 2019. Over the last year, the RAAHC Board of Directors has met regularly and continued to develop the Company as a national organisation focused on its core purpose **to promote the significance of Australia's Artillery, its history and heritage**. The COVID-19 Pandemic caused interesting experiences when the Board met once by email and a second time by video link.

The achievements of the RAAHC over the last 12 months are detailed in the Board papers and Financial Report for 2019/20 that are available on our website as well as being reported throughout the year in "Cannonball" on our Facebook site and by RAAHC periodic "Airburst" newsletters.

The RAAHC Corporate Plan FY 2021-24 has been developed and is available to all members and the public on our website. A critical focus of the Corporate Plan is support to the activities associated with the commemoration of one hundred and fifty years of the establishment of permanent Australian Artillery.

The major activities planned for the 150th Anniversary are:

- 1 August 2021. 150th Commemorative Ceremony at the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery (RRAA) National Memorial, Mount Pleasant, Canberra, ACT.
- 1 August 2021. Last Post Ceremony, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, ACT.
- 6 November 2021. Parade and Drum Head Service, Presentation of a new Queen's Banner followed by a function, Victoria Barracks, Sydney, NSW.
- Date to be advised in November 2021. Laying up of old Queen's Banner, School of Artillery, Puckapunyal VIC.
- Further information can be obtained by contacting Head of Regiment Staff at raa.hor@defence.gov.au.

Both the RAAHC and the Australian Artillery Association (AAA) are supporting the anniversary. The RAAHC is planning to provide a photo book titled *Australian Artillery, Book of Days 1871 – 2021*. Copies of the book will be presented to the units of the RRAA. The AAA will be holding a 150th Anniversary Dinner at Caloundra, Queensland on 20-21 August 2021. Information is shown on the AAA website at: <https://australianartilleryassociation.com>.

I note that the RAAHC's two major ANZAC Centenary projects – the ANZAC Centennial 18 Pounder Memorial Gun Project and the *Firepower* History Seminar Series – have come to an end. The RAAHC Board decided that the ANZAC Centennial Gun needed to be placed

on display pending the construction of the Puckapunyal Combined Arms Heritage Learning Centre (the Army definition of a museum). Temora Aviation Museum was selected as the temporary custodian and the ANZAC Centennial Gun is now proudly on display in its main exhibition hangar. The *Firepower* History Seminar Series ended with a bang with Lieutenant General Greg Bilton, Chief Joint Operations, launching the *Clash of the Gods of War: Australian Artillery and the Firepower Lessons of the Great War* in August 2020. On behalf of the RAAHC members I wish to express our gratitude to all those involved in these two outstanding efforts, which were superbly supported over four years.

The RAAHC is embarking on an ambitious project to create a publication detailing the essential history of the Regiment. This publication is aimed at providing serving gunners of all ranks with a brief, highly accessible, and engaging source of information that presents the basic facts of the history of Australian artillery from the colonial period to well into the 21st century. A tentative title is *Essential History of Employment of Artillery for Australian Gunners*.

It is to be targeted at, and appeal to gunners, with an amateur to professional interest in their Regiment's history, while meeting specific requirements. In particular the *Essential History* is intended to:

- Provide a resource for professional military education on the employment of Australian artillery.
- Be used to support School of Artillery programmed lessons on history.
- Support the maintenance of the Regiment's esprit de corps.
- Complement and inform displays at the 'to be built' 'Australian Army Artillery Museum'.
- Be designed to be of interest to, and valued by a wider audience.

The *Essential History* will be a joint project involving the RAAHC, the Australian Army History Unit (AAHU) and the RRAA. The project is led by Nick Floyd and John Cox.

The RAAHC continues to actively promote the history and activities of the Regiment through the RAAHC Website and the periodic distribution of our journal Cannonball, our newsletter Airburst, and on our RAAHC Facebook site. The RAAHC website (<http://www.artilleryhistory.org>) has received a complete upgrade/redesign while still providing much valuable historical and current information on the RAA. It now has a capable search capability as well as feedback and information upload facilities. The upload facility enables all to add to these records by sending to us additional data on guns around Australia and biographies of Gunners. I thank Graham Hampton and Paul Camilleri for their continued development our electronic media and Kevin Browning and Peter Bruce for their input to the records.

Tim Ford has continued to assist in the development of the Sir Roden Cutler VC Artillery Research Centre (CRC) at North Fort from a stand-alone, paper and other media-based library to an online, remotely accessible research centre, while retaining and improving fundamental library capabilities. This development is a long-term; complex project that needs to embrace technology while at the same time ensuring that unique, rare and fragile items are cared for. At the same time, the CRC, in conjunction with the RAA Regimental History Committee with its network of specialist researchers, has continued to respond to requests for information and to provide a wide range of historical and heritage information services. I encourage anyone inclined to join the Company's research efforts to contact us to offer their

volunteer support or to explore opportunities. Tim's efforts and the dedication of his volunteers are greatly appreciated.

Australia's Memorial Walk (AMW), which is listed on the NSW national memorials register, was initiated by the RAAHC in 2002 and dedicated in December 2012 by the then NSW Governor Her Excellency Dame Marie Bashir. Located within the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust's (SHFT) North Head Sanctuary and in a bushland setting, the Walk starts near the Australia Remembers Memorial at North Fort. The AMW includes five major monuments and a Gallipoli memorial either side of a central path of pavers; the latter were built and clad with sandstone by professionals.

When commissioned, four of the five monuments contained descriptive panels relevant to the military period represented. The fifth – Peacekeeping Monument - consists of cast bronze panels. The remaining panels originally were engraved aluminium which became illegible due to weathering in 2015. They were subsequently replaced with a laminated film product, which has now also failed. Consequently, we have commenced a project to restore the illegible panels with bronze plaques. Peter Lawrence is heading up the project. The Department of Veterans' Affairs has assisted by providing a grant as part of the funding (the RAAHC is providing the bulk of funds) for this major project. The installation is expected to be completed prior to the AGM. John Balfour and Royal Mellier are providing valuable service in managing requests for new pavers and maintenance of the Walk.

Another project that is nearing completion is the restoration of the Port Jackson 4 Pounder. The project involves the restoration of a 4-pounder gun barrel from the School of Artillery and the construction of a replica naval carriage. Work was carried out at North Head by volunteers and funded by the RAAHC. The barrel has been restored and the carriage is almost complete. COVID 19 has delayed the project but it will be completed and the restored gun moved back to the School. Thanks to Sydney Harbour Federation Trust (SHFT) support and the great work of the volunteers a valuable artefact has been preserved. A photo of the restored 4 Pounder is shown below.



Port Jackson 4 Pounder

I am pleased to report that the project to fully restore the Werribee Gun (12 Lb Armstrong), used by the Werribee Half Battery from 1889 to 1893, is now finished. The gun is the property of the RAAHC but will be displayed locally. The work was carried out on behalf of the RAAHC by volunteers of the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust and Werribee Half Battery living history group. Funding was made available by Werribee Local Member, RAAHC, Royal Australian Artillery Association (Victoria), Linfox Transport and 131 Locators Association. Sydney Harbour Federation Trust and Werribee RSL provided the restoration facilities. Work commenced in 2016 and moved to Victoria in 2019. The full story of the restoration is available at:

https://artilleryhistory.org/moments_in_history/colonial_artillery/restoration_of_the_werribee_gun.html



The 12 Pounder



James Henderson and Benjamin Casey demonstrate the use of the axle seats

I am sorry to report that the Head of Regiment (HoR), Brigadier Richard Vagg, has advised that the combined journal of the RAA Liaison Letter and Cannonball will no longer be supported by the Defence Publishing and Library Information Services (DPLIS). The DPLIS has indicated that public funds cannot be used to support a registered not-for-profits company. HoR is proposing that the RAA Liaison Letter will contain a History and Heritage Supplement drawn from future Cannonballs. The RAAHC will continue to publish an electronic copy of Cannonball and the Board will examine the options for publishing a hard copy. The demise of the excellent journal, which covered both artillery past and present, is a sad day for the Gunner community.

Members should also be aware that the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust, our landlord at North Head, is seeking to change the MOU conditions, including those of the Cutler Research Centre. Hopefully we will be able to negotiate a reasonable solution to this issue.

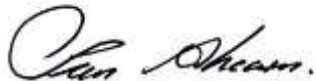
In conclusion, it has been a busy year for the RAAHC despite the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. We continue to support the Regiment as well as promoting the history and heritage of Australian Artillery around Australia. To do so we need all Gunners, serving and retired, to engage with us and support our efforts. Any individual can do this by

joining as a member, making a donation or putting up their hand to undertake some volunteer work. Thanks to all our members who have renewed or joined in 2020. Thanks also to those that have donated or volunteered.

I also remind all that anyone who is serving in the Australian Defence Force or is already a member of one of the artillery associations around Australia may become an affiliated member of the RAAHC for free. Tax-deductible donations and bequests to support our activities are always most welcome and do assist the RAAHC to ensure we can continue our contribution to maintaining the heritage of the RAA and Australian artillery.

Finally, I wish to sincerely thank all those who have contributed to the success of the RAAHC this year, particularly the wide range of volunteers around Australia that assist our activities and an expanding range of heritage projects. Amongst these, I wish to particularly acknowledge those volunteers working on our various projects and in the CRC. Thanks also to all the RAAHC Directors for their significant contributions throughout the year. Finally, I offer a special thank you to our Patron, Major General Steve Gower AO, AO (Mil) as well as to our Honorary Solicitor Paul Fordyce and our Honorary Auditor Graham Martin.

Ubique,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ian Ahearn". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Colonel Ian Ahearn, (Retd)