

Gunner of Renown



Royal Australian Artillery Historical Company

Brigadier Richard Kennedy FULLFORD, OBE

(1918-2006)

Ken Fullford was born at Lane Cove, NSW, on 22 August 1918, the eldest of two children born to Richard and Stella (nee Wood from Hay, NSW) Fullford. He was educated at Lane Cove Public and Chatswood Intermediate High School. His father was the Director of Searches, Registrar General's Department of NSW.

He joined the militia coast artillery as a cadet in 1934 and rose through the ranks, being commissioned on 31 May 1940. He served at several forts in the Sydney and Wollongong area before being promoted major to take 'O' 155 mm Heavy Battery to Port Moresby then Buna. He did not have a very exciting war and in May 1945 he was seconded to the British Borneo Civil Affairs Unit as Staff Officer Grade 2 Agricultural Lands and Survey. He wrote about his experiences in *'Picking Up the Pieces'* in 1988. Back in Australia, he went on the Reserve of Officers on 30 July 1946 and, after short stints as a Country Party organiser in Coonamble and then as a factory manager making surgical cat gut sutures, he was invited to join the Interim Army on 29 November 1948.

After attendance at the School of Artillery 'RMC Wing' in early 1949, he was confirmed as a temporary major as BC 1st Coast Artillery Battery at South Head. He was a student at the Australian Staff College, Queenscliff, in 1950 where he gained a B pass and then returned to Eastern Command a married man and as General Staff Officer Grade 2 Training before moving to Army Headquarters Melbourne as GSO2, Schools and Courses and Overseas Training. In 1954, he was nominated to attend the Long Gunnery Staff Course at Larkhill with a colleague, Peter Norton. 'Much jubilation in my little family', he wrote.

He gained an A Pass – a rare honour, for at the time he was the only serving officer and the only Australian to gain this distinction. With his 'psc' and G, he was 'rara avis' in the Gunner community. His next stop was Headquarters Royal Artillery 1 Corps, British Army On the Rhine, at Bielefeld (West Germany) where he opted for a 'real' job as GSO2 RA rather than do an 'attachment'. This brought him into contact with US atomic artillery and the importance of range safety (which he later introduced at North Head). With another officer, he also wrote an exercise for the Corps Locating Regiment, upon which the Corps Counter Battery Officer commented very favourably. Fullford described his attachment as 'having massively extended his professional horizon'.

In January 1957, Fullford was appointed Senior Instructor at the Gunnery Wing, School of Artillery and set about improving the aims, duration and positioning of some courses to make them 'firm, progressive and searching' in their relevance to gunnery. He was nicknamed 'Hesh' by the RMC graduating gunners of 1957, comparing his bald head with the rounded nose of the 25 pounder HESH round. He returned later as CO to prepare officers and NCOs

for Australia's commitment to Vietnam and develop Command Post drills for the 105mm Pack Howitzers, and conduct radar trials, among other developments.

Meanwhile, in January 1958, Fullford was posted as 2I/C 1st Field Regiment at Holsworthy before becoming CO in December. He trained his regiment assiduously for two major exercises – 'Grand Slam' in Queensland in 1959 and 'Icebreaker' in the Putty area, Gaspers Mountain, in 1961. The latter was a trial of the Pentropic divisional concept, and 25 pounders had given way to the US M2A2 105mm Howitzer. He was proud of the fire plan he prepared and fired on the slopes of Mount Monundilla.

In 1965, Fullford went to Darwin as Commander Northern Territory Command, his first big administrative job. It was the time of Indonesian President Sukarno's 'Confrontation' of Malaysia, so there was always something happening - RAAF and Air Defence exercises and cooperation with RAN and RAAF commanders. This included dispatching an armed force on *HMAS Bass* to a nearby island to establish whether a mystery submarine, thought to be Russian, had landed a party there. He set about his new job with his customary enthusiasm after sniffing out embedded problems and fixing them as far as it was possible to do so although his initiatives were not always welcome.

In November 1966, Fullford was promoted Colonel as Director of Manning, Adjutant Generals Branch, AHQ. He remained in this position for seven years and made two visits to Vietnam, and visited the US and Britain, to discuss and compare manning policies and problems. Manpower liabilities and assets, mathematical modelling, vertical flexibility and posting turbulence became his daily bread along with forecasts of strength, personnel records, computers, contingency plans, reinforcements, the 'training pipeline' and some research.

Much of this was a 'black art' to his fellow directors and superiors and Fullford conceded he was helped by many able and highly intelligent people in his directorate. In January 1970, he was awarded the OBE and according to the citation: 'He was responsible for the absorption of National Servicemen into the Regular Army and for manpower maintenance/reinforcement of the force in Vietnam, and much else, efficiently'.

Fullford was a loyal and obedient subordinate, a good planner, intelligent and articulate. He conceded that he could be too readily swayed by another's argument, but saw himself as a perfectionist, a quality he looked for in subordinates. In his early Staff Corps career his reports noted he was individualistic and 'not given to suffering fools gladly'. Like most ambitious men he enjoyed praise and reaching the goals he was given and those he set himself.

On retirement on 1 April 1973, Fullford became a well-known historian of the coast artillery defences of Sydney, (*'We Stood and Waited' – 1994*), and shortly before his death on 15 October 2006 he completed *'Port Kembla Harbour Defences, 1945'*. His battery's record in Papua New Guinea was *'They Also Serve'*. His final work was an autobiography *'Once a Gunner Always a Gunner'* completed in 2003. He was also a member of Legacy for 30 years and he was a member of community organizations, where he contributed time and expertise until his health declined.

He married Dallas Nea Tanner, born Hobart, Tasmania, 2 September 1925 and was survived by his wife and two sons, Andrew and Richard and their families.

Sources: Army Lists; Eulogies by Richard and Andrew Fullford; *Once a Gunner, Always a Gunner*, Ed. A. H. Smith; *Cannonball*, No. 54, p.10-12; Alan H. Smith. Also see the obituary on this website.