

THE ARTILLERY NEWS.

SEPTEMBER - NOVEMBER 2006



Official Correspondence.

R.A.A Assoc. of Tas. Inc.

Hon. Secretary, Norman B. Andrews OAM., SBStJ.

Tara Room, 24 Robin St;

Newstead. Tas. 7250.

E-Mail: forfar@gmail.com

R.A.A. Association of Tasmania Inc.

Homepage: <http://www.tasartillery.o-f.com/>

MESSAGE OF LOYALTY ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ARTILLERY DAY 1ST AUGUST 2006

On or about 1st August each year, Artillery Associations in every State and Territory of Australia hold dinners to celebrate the raising of the first permanent unit of Artillery in the Australian colonies on the first of August 1871. At these dinners the message of loyalty to Her Majesty the Queen and any response from Her Majesty are traditionally read to those attending.

The representative Colonel Commandant, Maj Gen RT Ford AO sent the following message of loyalty:

“The Colonels Commandant, the Head of Regiment, and all ranks of the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery convey to Her Majesty, their Captain General, their respect and loyalty on the occasion of Royal Australian Artillery Day, 1st of August 2006. On this day the Regiment celebrates 135 years of dedicated service.”

The response from Buckingham Palace is as follows:

“Please convey my warm thanks to the Colonels Commandant, Head of Regiment and all ranks of the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery for their message of loyal greetings sent on the occasion to celebrate my eightieth Birthday which is being held today.

As your Captain General, I much appreciate your kind words and, in return, send my best wishes to you all.”

ELIZABETH R



“Boys of the Old Brigade” sing-a-long after the Gunner dinner.

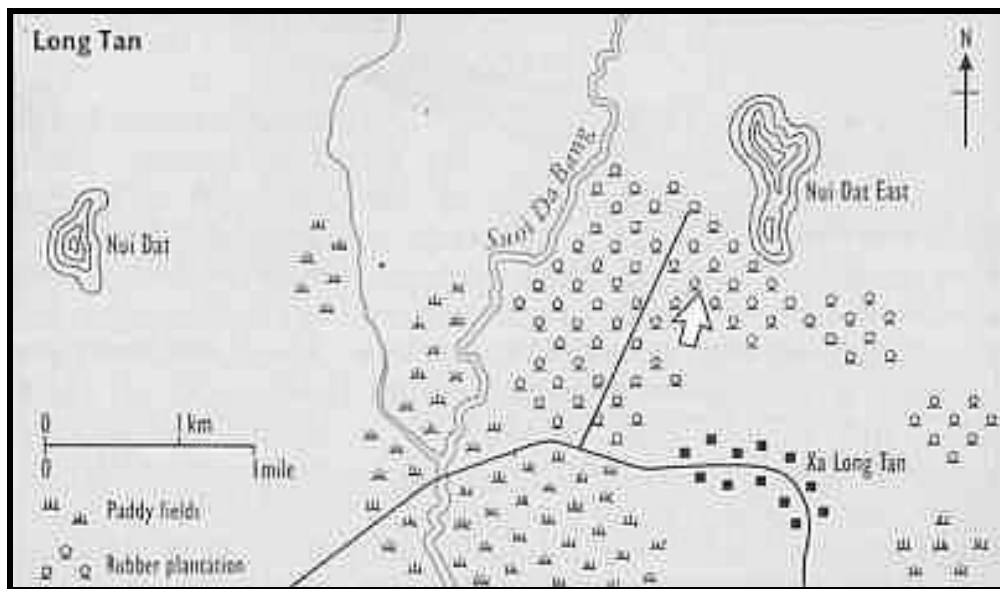


From the Secretary's Desk

LONG TAN ADDRESS TASMANIAN GUNNER DINNER 19th August 2006

By COL MARK CAMERON RFD

COLONEL COMMANDANT TASMANIA REGION



Proximity of Nui Dat to Long Tan

There is an old saying that “the infantry never understood their orders, the cavalry ignored them and the Artillery made their own arrangements”.

Tonight I will recount the actions of these three corps 40 years ago. I speak particularly of D Coy 6th Bn RAR, 1st Fd Regt RAA and 3 Cav Tp, in the action history records as *The Battle of Long Tan*.

The gunners included 161 Fd Bty RNZA (the DS Bty to D Coy), 103 Fd Bty, 105 Fd Bty, A Bty of the US 2/35th Artillery and 131 Div Loc Bty.

Imagine you are a young gunner, possibly a national serviceman, all those years ago.

The guns have been in action most of the night. It is hot, sticky, tropical. Skin conditions – tropical ulcers, ringworm, tinea - and the eternal humidity add to your misery. Your position was mortared the night before and one of your comrades has been killed. Everyone is tense. Perhaps an attack is imminent.

Ammunition; there is more than the Regiment can handle. A Major Crowe on TFHQ has been going on about “human wave” attacks during the Korean War and the need for more ammunition. Even the RSM is overwhelmed.

Standing and clearing patrols must continue. Trenches; ammunition bunkers and CPs to be dug; defence stores laid out. There is no rest.

By late afternoon all the dunnage wire is laid, the Little Pattie/Col Joy concert is underway in front of you. Pity you missed it but perhaps there is time for a beer! The KIWI Bty begins firing in support of D Coy.

Then it comes – **FIRE MISSION REGIMENT** – the method is 10 rounds fire for effect. (That’s different from the average 14 rounds per day.) The fire order is repeated **four** times and followed by ‘Gunfire One Zero Seconds’. (Rate 6)

You are laying your gun. It’s pouring with rain. Like something from Dante’s *Inferno* - guns fire, muzzles flash and lightning strikes. Gunners are thrown to the ground as switchboards and tannoy cables are struck. The tannoy is out. Fire orders are bellowed.

D Coy is in the open. Their mortars are out of range and the weather won’t allow air strikes. You are firing over their heads and as close as possible. Section commanders insist on accurate laying. They check your bearing. Your No 1 double counts the charge bags and orders fresh ammunition to be stacked in like batches and weights.

The sights are drenched and fogging up. The Canadian sight is removed and replaced with the Italian sight from the dehumidifier box. You must now change your drills for the new sight.

You can hear the radio loud speakers in the Command Post. It seems the FO will not direct fire onto the 11 Platoon position despite their precarious situation. You hear the calm encouragement of his Bty Comd who agrees to firing as close as safety allows. The BC then re-directs the fire of the American medium guns onto enemy mortar positions then back to give weight to the fire of the field guns.

D Coy will get an ammunition resupply. The FSCC has guided the helicopters under the artillery fire.

You get a break from laying. A gunner has been overcome from the heat and cordite in the ammunition bunker and has to be dragged clear. Even above ground there is little respite from the cordite laced mist that envelops the gun position. A Gun Sgt collapses in his gun pit as do several gunners.

You help carry ammunition with a round on each shoulder and one or two rounds across your back. You stagger with cooks, medics, locators, soldiers who simply stopped off to help on their way back from the concert.

All around appears chaos and mayhem. Ammunition from WW11 is opened to find charge bags rotten and the contents spill onto the ground. A resupply of ammunition reveals each round has to have a fuse fitted before it can be used. The ground is covered with ammunition boxes, cartridge cases, charge bags and all manner of debris.

The tempo slows. 3 Cavalry Troop with reinforcements has driven into the enemy's flank. Your harassing and interdiction fire follows the enemy withdrawal. Back on your gun, all the aiming posts are gone. Someone has tied a bicycle lamp onto a star piquet to lay onto. The guns are black with the paint burned off. (You can cook an egg on the barrel.)

You change your sights and follow your drills.

The assault by the enemy's 5th Division to destroy the Australian Task Force with human wave attacks has been thwarted.

After the battle an infantryman is recorded as saying of the enemy: "a solid line of them – it looked like hundreds – would suddenly rush us. The artillery would burst right in the middle of them.... The survivors would dive for cover... wait for the attacking line, get up and leap over the dead to resume the rush".

The assault lasted three hours; 3,000 rounds and about 1,000 enemy casualties. (Who knows exactly)

The Artillery may have made its own arrangements but it has been a *team* effort. Significantly, apart from one minor case, no Australians were injured by the Artillery fire. All our losses were due to enemy action.

Ladies and gentlemen, as you view the print of Long Tan tonight, recall the words of D Company's Commander, Harry Smith (a Tasmanian) when asked what single factor had greatest effect on the outcome of the battle, he replied in one word –

'ARTILLERY!'

R.A.A.A.T. HISTORICAL WING

The August general gathering of the R.A.A.A.T. Inc. Northern Historic Wing was held on 10th August commencing at 2.00 p.m. at the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery at Inveresk in the Friends of the Museum meeting room as usual.

All members of the Association are cordially invited to attend our totally informal bimonthly get-together. Historic Wing meetings are held on the second Thursday of every second month.

Those who attend these meetings usually bring a small plate of goodies to share.

Members present: Gunter Breier, Frank Stokes, Bill Hoyle, Rick Wood, Graeme Petterwood, Norman Andrews, Gordon Rowlings and Des Salter.

Although this was an informal meeting, we received and recognised the official apologies from Lloyd Saunders, Terry Higgins and Max Frost.

Our next informal Historical Wing meeting will be held at the same time -

Thursday 12th October 2006 at 2.00 p.m.

However, as this will be Launceston Show Day and the Inveresk area and its parking facilities will be required - it is planned that we will meet at **Mt. Esk**

Nursing Home - St. Leonards, as we have on previous occasions as guests of Eric Ryan – health permitting. Bring a plate to share.

R.A.A.A.T. member **Frank Stokes**, who is also a Committeeman in the ranks of the **6th Field Gunners Association**, has reminded us that the Gunners have kindly extended a welcome to any of our Association members to attend their annual get-together on Saturday 21st. October at 1200 hours at the Sth. Launceston Football Club clubrooms. (See details below)

Norman detailed the Inwards correspondence and newsletters he had received either by post or email and he also mentioned several mainland events for which a general open invitation had been extended to members of the R.A.A.A.T. to attend at their own cost. Those members, with email access, were advised as usual with a request that the detail be passed on to any associates they thought may be interested. However, regrettably, due to the fact that the invitations were all at relatively short notice, and mainly concerned events being held by Artillery organizations in other states, the information could not be acted upon until our next quarterly membership mail-out and not prior to the acceptance deadlines.

MEDALS

One of the newsletters contained a discussion on Medal protocol and it is timely that certain facts are mentioned in regard to the wearing of medals especially on formal or ceremonial occasions.

“Every country's system of honours and awards is highly structured and embraces many formal aspects. Such a system essentially concerns itself with the national recognition of its citizens' achievements ranging from gallantry in action, bravery in everyday life, distinguished armed forces service, and service to fellow citizens or to humanity at large. As a result it has been necessary to form rules, codes of behaviour and etiquette to handle the many aspects which arise from such a system. These rules have been developed over many years and most of the facets of protocol have been derived either from tradition or by regulation.”

Firstly, any official medals belonging to relatives are always worn on the right breast and, although they may be worn on Anzac Day and Remembrance Day, due to a special dispensation, they should not be worn on other formal occasions except by the person who earned them.

There is a special Order of Precedence by which medals should be arranged
The most prestigious Medals or Orders are nearest the heart and work through the Order of Precedence towards the left side and any official foreign medals will

always be at the far end of such an arrangement. As this list is too extensive to be published here, we suggest that individual members make themselves familiar with it from other existing publications or, if you have access, from the Internet site shown below

Secondly, 'unofficial' commercially produced medals should be only treated as commemoratives – which they are - and may only be worn on the right breast, but not worn at all on formal ceremonial occasions.

Thirdly, medals should be mounted in either of two ways:

Court Mounted – which means that they are placed on a rigid backing or bar to save them clashing with each other. Etiquette demands that medals should be Court-mounted in Royal or Vice-regal presence or ceremonial occasions.

Swing Mounted – meaning they are casually loose but still usually attached to a pin-on brooch bar. Individual medals should not be pinned onto a garment just by the ribbon. Miniature medals should be only worn by the actual recipient at evening functions or where it is inappropriate to wear full-size medals – they should be court-mounted and worn on the left breast.

Those with Internet access should refer to the 'Digger History' site for more detailed information about this subject.

Refer: <http://www.diggerhistory.info/pages-medals/medals-mount.htm>

It has come to our notice that a former local Bombardier applied for the latest Australian Defence Medal and received a notification back that his request would be processed in due course. I'll bet his smile was pretty wide as he saw that his former rank had been unexpectedly and rapidly elevated to that of - Brigadier.....! TRUE.



Australian Defence Medal

CALENDAR OF EVENTS for 2006

OCTOBER 2006

12th Oct: Northern Historical /Social wing meeting.

Venue: Mt. Esk Home, St. Leonards – Bring a plate.

21st Oct: 6 Field Gunners Reunion Dinner – LAUNCESTON

(Due to the fact that many of our members are also involved with the 6th Field Gunners Association an open Invitation has been made by the Gunners' Cttee for any R.A.A.A.T member to attend this function

Venue: Sth. Launceston F.C. - Cost \$15.00

Time: Saturday 12.00pm. for 12.30pm. start.

R.S.V.P. –

Mr. Bill Hoyle 12 Greenway Avenue, Norwood 7250

Ph: 6344 4731

23rd Oct: El Alamein Day memorial day – HOBART

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING IN HOBART

1.30 p.m. Saturday 18th November 2006

Derwent Barracks, Dowsing Point.

DECEMBER 2006

9th Dec: Northern Social wing dinner mixed function at South Launceston Football Club.

14thDec:Northern Historical /Social wing meeting at Queen Victoria Museum INVERESK

PLEASE NOTE – ALL OFFICIAL R.A.A.A.T. INC. CORRESPONDENCE SHOULD BE ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY, AND NOT TO THE EDITOR – AS IT MAY SAVE DELAYS AND DOUBLE-HANDLING.

The Artillery News.

Graeme E. Petterwood. (Editor).

P.O. Box 10, Ravenswood. 7250. Tasmania.

Email: pwood@vision.net.au

The Artillery News respects the privacy of our readers. Correspondents with comments, queries or suggestions, may chose to provide us with personal information including contact address or other relevant information and, while *The Artillery News* may hold writers' addresses and other details for the purposes of communication and copyright protection, it will never make such addresses or personal details available to any member of the public without the permission of those involved.

The printed copy of this newsletter is published with assistance from the office of:

Mr. Peter Gutwein (Liberal MHA - Bass).

Henty House, Civic Square, Launceston 7250.