



Kia Ora & Welcome

There is a saying that tells us that change is good for the soul and also that change is as good as a holiday. I am not too sure about either of these adages at the moment, having been thrown in the deep end on being appointed Editor of this newsletter and then being told I have two weeks to get it out. No pressure. Thanks Tony.

I have some fairly large shoes to fill in that Marie Roberts has edited the newsletter for quite a while now and she has been brilliant at it. If I do half the job she has done then I would have done well.

We have a lot to read in this issue. The veterans of 161 Bty RNZA recently celebrated 50 years since reporting ready for action in South Vietnam.

Ex Ben Cat was held in September during which 163 Bty completed helicopter lifts with the new NH 90's and Skin Francis is having forty fits and growing older by the day. You can save his bacon.

Tony McLeod has been gallivanting around central Europe and causing mayhem and Capt. Catherine Dymock is one of several Gunners serving in Sandland.

These stories and more are inside. Enjoy.

David Bähler. 027 280 7915 or davidbahler@paradise.net.nz



Artillerymen believe the world consist of two types of people; other Artillerymen and targets.

“Skin Francis is having forty fits and growing older by the day. You can save his bacon.”

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Anthony and Tony McLeod with German team mates, Mt Nemrut, SE Turkey

Observations from the Silk Road — Tony McLeod

I have recently returned home from a 15,000km motorbike trip along the general route of the Silk Road, the ancient trading route between China and Europe. I did the trip with my son Anthony and two German friends, also a father and son combination. The route took us from Germany through Austria, Italy, Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, central Turkey, Georgia, Azerbaijan to the Caspian Sea at Baku, and return through Georgia, Turkey along the Black Sea coast to Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, Austria and finally Germany. We were riding 800cc BMW Adventure bikes, and I thought members might be interested in some of my observations from the trip.

Turkey. The highways across central Turkey were amazing, reflecting both the high level of expenditure which has gone into Turkey since it became a member of NATO in the 90s, and the thriving economy which has achieved an average of 8% growth in GDP over the past few years. It is the Turkish President's wish and intent to make Turkey a top world economy by the centenary of the founding of the modern republic in 2023. This growth has included the construction of huge hydro-electric dams, of which not ... >> p5

Life in the MFO — Capt. Catherine Dymock, RNZA.

There are currently 27 NZDF personnel on Operation FARAD, the NZDF contribution to the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO), located in the Sinai Peninsula, Egypt. The MFO is an independent international organization with peacekeeping responsibilities established in 1982. It was set up to ensure that Egypt and Israel comply with the Treaty of Peace set out from the 1979 Camp David Peace Accords. The mission of the MFO is to Observe, Verify and Report alleged violations of the Treaty of Peace. New Zealand has been sending members of the NZDF to the MFO for the last 33 years.

There are approx. 1700 personnel working for the MFO, from 12 different troop-contributing nations (TCNs), plus civilian employees. There are two main camps — North Camp in Northern Sinai near the border with Israel and South Camp, a smaller outpost on the edge of the Red Sea near a popular tourist resort called Sharm El-Sheik. There are also over 30 Check Points at Remote Sites throughout the Area of Operations. The New Zealand Contingent (NZCON) is based in North Camp.

Day to day life in the MFO NZCON is very busy. We have a Transport Section which regularly performs arduous driving tasks though very difficult conditions to deliver supplies to the Remote Sites and to uplift supplies and equipment from Israel. The NZ contribution to the Force Engineering Office (FEO) is constantly working on the upgrade and maintenance of these Remote Sites. The Force Training Team (FTT) plans and conducts the individual induction training for the Force, from driver licensing to Remote Site Commanders courses and collective training for units and Battalions. Not to forget the Liaison, admin and support staff, with their ever-diminishing supply of imported coffee, who work hard to ensure the smooth running of the MFO and NZCON>> p3

<< from p2. **Life in the MFO.**

operations.

Despite the relentless dry heat there is always time for PT, which is run in the mornings by the PTIs from the Australian Contingent (AUSCON). The 25m pool here is always a favourite with the PTIs ("just a relatively short session") and to cool down in the weekends. We have a dedicated bunch of gym bunnies on this rotation and in their quest to "Get Massive" have been working hard and putting in the extra hours where they can. This week sees the first few games of the annual MFO Volleyball Competition, first up we are playing Fiji and they will surely thrash us, but the game that anyone really cares about is NZCON vs AUSCON.

What do I miss about NZ? The ski season and strangely enough, being cold! The hottest it has got so far was 48 °C one day, but averages around 35ish most days. Contact from home is great with skype and social media it makes it very easy. But what is far better is mail and packages from family and friends. It's such a morale boost even if it's something small like photos or food from NZ — thanks for the lolly cake Mum, it was such a massive hit with everyone you need to send more asap!!

What do I like about the MFO? First and foremost it's the people. Meeting like-minded military personnel from all over the world, learning about their culture, traditions and food is by far the best part of being here. We are always invited to celebrate National Days (Norwegian Day and Canada Day were the highlights so far) and to discover new food and drink (imported Norwegian lobster anyone?) Soldiers share similar values the world over and it's great that the MFO brings everyone together for a common purpose. Our time here has gone very quickly so far and it will come to an end too soon..... don't make me go home just yet! <<



Capt. Catherine Dymock in the Sinai

You can't describe the moral lift,
when in the fight your spirits weary
hears above the hostile fire,
your own artillery.
Shells score the air like wavy hair
from a forward battery.
As regimental cannon crack
While from positions further back,
in bitter sweet song overhead
crashing discordantly
Division's pounding joins the attack;
Mother like she belches shell;
Glorious it flies, and well,
As, with a hissing screaming squall,
A roaring furnace, giving all,
she scars a path for the infantry...."

- Aleksandr Tvardovskiy, from the poem "Vasily Tyorkin" 1943

The Colonel Commandant reports:

The last quarter has been a busy period for the Regiment, as you will see from other reports in this newsletter. As an example, when the Vietnam veterans joined the Regiment in mid-July during the Palmerston North Reunion, the Regiment had 55 of its soldiers away overseas. This is quite typical of today's Army, with heavy demand on manpower for active service and peacekeeping operations, offshore training and local course activities. Field exercises rarely have even two thirds of posted manpower in the field.

At the start of July, during 163 Battery's field exercise and live shoot in Waiouru, the Regiment hosted Sir Peter Jackson and a small team of camera and sound specialists. The aim was to allow Sir Peter's team to record good sound effects of incoming artillery fire and close-in fire support that he could use in his future film and historical activities. Recording was also done on the gun line during fire missions. The sound and film recording of incoming artillery fire was done from the close target observation post, allowing the guns to be brought into 100 m from the mics and camera laid out in the tussock, and the same distance from the Jackson team in the close target bunker. Needless to say they were all quite excited. On the gun line Sir Peter managed to sit in the number 3 seat on a gun during six rounds fire for effect. The next task is to record some World War I fire orders to match.

July also saw the excellent 161 Battery Vietnam veterans' 50 year reunion with the Regiment. Woody Barrett has reported separately on that, but I need to publicly thank the Regiment and 161 Battery for their outstanding support to this event. Highlights were the gun park layout in 161 Battery, the Regimental parade and haka, and the Regimental attendance at the excellent dinner. Special thanks to all those involved.

One of the flow on's from the reunion is that some of the surplus funds will be used to prepare a framed presentation to 5 RAR in Darwin who have asked for a photo of the late Captain Peter Williams. Peter was killed in action together with his company commander and company 2IC on 14 February 1967, whilst on operations as the forward observer with C Company 5 RAR in SVN. The framed photo which includes a full set of medals and an inscription will hang with similar photos of Battalion personnel killed in action, in the Battalion lines in Darwin.

Contact Us

This newsletter thrives on contribution's from our members, so if you feel the urge to write something, don't hesitate. Just do it then find some photo's if you can and then send it to me at davidbaler@paradise.net.nz

Give it a go—you never know, you might just have started a career as an author.

(How do you think Pat Duggan and Pete Glassborow started their careers as multi-published authors?)

Immediately after the Regimental parade the outgoing Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Andy Shaw was promoted Colonel and was on his way as Senior National Officer for New Zealand's deployed active service force in Iraq. On behalf of the RNZA I wish Colonel Andy well in his significant new role. Andy has been really good to work with and has continued the focus of previous COs in raising the personal and professional standards of the Regiment with a particular refocus on battle group and formation level gunner operations.

Chris Morriss has written elsewhere about Exercise Ben Cat in early August. I spent the preceding few days in the field with 163 Battery as they prepared for their ARTEP (Army Training and Evaluation Programme) the following week. This is a formal live firing tactical gunner exercise over a few days for the School of Artillery to test the operational capability of a battery. I understand that despite the snow and the cold, 163 Battery performed well during the testing phase after the veterans had left Waiouru. Many thanks to 163 Battery for hosting us during the exercise.

The Regiment remains equally busy in the final quarter of the year, with the better part >> p6

<< from p2 ... Observations from the Silk Road

everyone is in favour. Our journey took us to the south eastern corner of Turkey, a town called Hassankerf about 100km from the Syrian border, where the Kurdish people are leading the ground war against ISIS. We enjoyed exploring the ruins of an ancient Hittite settlement and much later a Greek and Roman settlement on the Tigris River, but our hosts, the local Kurds, were not so happy, as this particular dam will not only flood their current town but also the ruins which could provide a great tourist attraction if they were to achieve their own homeland.

The Kurds we met were absolutely certain that they could wipe ISIS off the map if they were properly armed, but the Turkish government, of course, is not so happy to do this as the Kurds might then turn those same weapons and organisation against Turkey in the pursuit of their homeland dream. The Kurds were passionate in their desire to rid the world of ISIS, but equally vocal about their dislike for the current Turkish government. It is a real Catch 22 situation which hopefully can be resolved without more bloodshed. The atmosphere in Hassankerf and the neighbouring city of Diyarbakir was friendly, but tense, and we will watch what the future holds for these people with a compassionate interest.

Georgia. This part of the world has only recently emerged from Soviet domination. Notably Joseph Stalin was born in Georgia, so the country is an interesting mix of modern attitudes and architecture and the older Soviet approach to bureaucratic matters, for example Police activities. Our misadventure there had nothing to do with politics, more with exuberance over common sense — we headed off into the Caucasus Mountains due north of the capital city Tbilisi, to visit the ruins of a deserted mountain village on the Russian-Chechnya border. The weather forecast was for storms but we pushed on anyway, ever upwards into the mountains over 100km of dirt road to the ruins of Chantili. The inevitable did happen, the storm closed in before we had cleared the ranges and we were forced to camp the night up at the top of the mountain pass (3000m).

The following day wise heads should have dictated that we head straight back to Tbilisi, but the sense of adventure won out and on we went to Chantili. After the turnaround again the inevitable happened; another thunder-lightening-snow-sleet storm hit before we could get back over the pass. Unfortunately rain turns dirt roads into muddy slippery tracks and we had to not only get the bikes up and through the pass, but then negotiate the switchbacks, with very steep fall-offs, all the way back. This would have been difficult enough if the bikes were all in decent repair, but when one got a puncture at the top of the pass, it made for a very desperate but exhilarating `slide` down the mountain. A dangerous adventure, and memorable for that reason, just as long as you overlook all the dumb decisions leading up to it!

There were many other `experiences` throughout the 3 months with the Azerbaijani Police incident springing to mind, as does riding through Istanbul, riding through the Romanian countryside, riding up and over the Transfagarasan Highway, riding around Gallipoli, visiting the ruins at Ani near Mt Ararat and I'd be happy to bore people to death with them over a beer at some stage.

Suffice to say that I came home from the trip a lot younger in spirit than when I left; so for anyone who is feeling like they're getting a bit past it, do an adventure, it keeps you young (if you survive!).
<<

The Chechen's first rebellion started after they observed Finland's fight against Russia during WWII and this caused the Chechens to begin to believe that now was the time to achieve their long-desired liberation from the Russian yoke.

By February 1940, two brothers established a guerrilla base in the mountains of south-eastern Chechnya, where they worked to organize a unified guerrilla movement to prepare an armed insurrection against the Soviets. In February 1940 the rebel army took large areas of South and Central Checheno-Ingushetia. The rebel government was established in Galanchozh and even now they are still 'rebellious'.

...<< from p 4... The Colonel Commandant Reports.
of two months deployed in the South Island on Exercise Southern Katipo, as well as the usual range of overseas attachments, operations and exercises.

The Band of the RNZA is in good form. Under the musical direction of Bandmaster Steven Booth there has been substantial gains in repertoire and music quality. For those in Auckland and interested, the band will have their next public engagement on Monday, October 19 at the Bruce Mason Centre in Takapuna. Keep an eye on the Association website for the availability of tickets. This is an annual entertaining hour or so of music.



Major Tony Robinson, Sir Peter Jackson & Col Barry Dreyer

The RNZA Heritage Trust continues to develop under the leadership of Rob Munro. The identification and recording of gunner artefacts throughout New Zealand is almost complete. The Trust now has a reasonable level of its own funds so charitable status bank accounts are being opened to replace the accounts that the Association have been managing on behalf of the Trust.



Two limited edition bronze Gunners

Work continues in preparation for the selection of an author to write the Brig Reg Miles story on behalf of the Trust. It is important that we select the best author possible to tell the story of the whole life of this important New Zealander.

The main fund-raising activity for the Heritage Trust is the production of the limited edition Bronze Gunner by Matt Gauldie, the Army artist. This is a valuable, important and superb bronze piece, and is being produced in a limited edition of 50, each individually finished by Matt. The picture shows the first group of statues just out of the mould. They are available either as you see them in the picture, or on a 105mm shellcase.

If you have an interest in purchasing one of these bronzes please contact Bernie McCort, the Association Secretary, or Dave Weston, the Heritage Trust Treasurer, or the Colonel Commandant for details.

The year has been a good one for the mixing of gunner regulars and territorials, the old and bold and relative newcomers and families. There is one more major function — the Association Reunion in Christchurch 13 – 15 November, as well as a bunch of local activities around St Barbara's day in early December. I would encourage all of you to attend the Christchurch function and your local St Barbara's day gathering.

With best wishes to all for an enjoyable and successful run up to the Christmas break, and for those on operations and in difficult parts of the globe, best wishes and Godspeed.

Ubique—Barry Dreyer—Colonel Commandant to the RNZA

Last Post

BALDWIN, Lawrence Frank Alfred, 26 Jul 2015, SSgt, 4 Fd Regt RNZA, 2 NZ Div., WWII.

BELL, Sandra Elizabeth, 3 Jun 15. 2Lt, 1 Loc Tp, 16 Fd Regt RNZA

BLAMPIED, Harold Hamon (Hal), 4 Sep 2015, Auckland. DFC. Flt Lt, RNZAF, Lt, RNZA.

EMERY, Geoff K, 4 Aug 2015, Christchurch. WO1, RF Cadet 1965, RNZAMC, 161 Bty SVN 69/70

GALLOWAY, Louis Marton (Lou), 25 Jun 15, Papatoetoe. Gnr, WWII

McGILL, Martin J. 25.12.14, Whangaparaoa. Gnr, 161 Bty SVN.

MARYAN, Edward William (Ted), 8 Aug 2015, Paraparaumu. Sgt, RNZA. Ex RA & POW Korea.

MUIR, Robert Bruce (Bob), 7 July 2015, Upper Hutt. Gnr, 16 Fd Regt RNZA Korea

ODLUM, Harry Townsend, 12 Aug 2015, Wanganui. 35 Bty, 17 Fd Regt, 3 NZ Div. Artillery. WWII.

STACK, Laurie, 9 Aug 2015, RNZAF & Sgt 16 Fd Regt RNZA, Korea.

They shall grow not 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

We will remember them

Old Gunners visit Ex Ben Cat 2015.

Fifty years ago 161 Bty went into action in its first major offensive operation in Vietnam, Operation Ben Cat, a search and destroy operation in which Sgt 'Al' Don and Bdr 'Jock' White were tragically killed and two others wounded on the first day of the operation when their Land Rover was blown up by a command detonated mine.

Each year around this time 16 Fd Regt commemorates that operation by holding Ex Ben Cat at Waiouru, and on the weekend of 8-9 August the Regt, and this year 163 Bty, once again generously invited members of the Assn to join them on the gun line for a day, and then hosted us with very warm hospitality for an evening BBQ, accommodation in the Officer's mess overnight, and breakfast the next morning.

The weather forecast was for nothing less than what we all expect of Waiouru in mid-winter, and there was quite some array of wet and warm weather gear on display when everyone staggered out into the snowy scene.

Quite a few of us gathered for a get together and meal at the Oasis on Friday night and then after waking to snow cover cars and breakfast at the Oasis we rendezvoused with the Adjutant, John Garton, on Saturday morning to begin our day with 163 Bty. The heavy weather clothing, nothing to do with ageing limbs of course, made for some hilarious slow motion attempts at entering and exiting the Pinzgauer vehicles we were transported about Waiouru in.

It was certainly icy, snowy, and plenty cold with snow showers on and off all day. Due to the weather and a problem with one of the RNZAF NH90 helicopters, the planned day of 163 Bty carrying out an airborne deployment into the field and live firing had to be postponed until the following day, but that didn't stop us having a fascinating and entertaining day watching the Bty prepare and then deploy the guns under the NH90s by air to a rehearsal gun position near camp. During the day we were warmed up with a very good Army hotbox lunch. In the end even the rehearsal deployment was cut somewhat ... >> p8

<< from p7. Old Gunners visit Ex Ben Cat 2015

short by a solid afternoon snowfall that grounded the NH90s.

We were then transferred to the Officer's mess to warm up with a hot shower and tidy up before gathering for drinks and a BBQ evening meal with a number of the Officers, WO's, and NCOs from the Regt, plus a couple of visiting US Army gunners, one of whom had even played Rugby at college in the US. As usual when gunners gather there were plenty of stories swapped and told, all of them true of course, in particular all of Danny McCort's tales!

Only the Army does a BBQ outdoors in steadily falling snow, but they made it work and it was a fun and very friendly night, even if we did end the night watching the All Blacks play Australia in Sydney.

There is a rumour that two infantrymen later attempted a light hearted night raid on the room of one of the Assn's former gunners, looking for a treasured old bottle of Artillery port, but I am assured that despite the gunner's state of undress and being outnumbered, he eventually fought off the early hours raid. All was friendly the next morning when the three combatants were seen shaking hands.

16 Fd Regt generously provided us with a cooked breakfast in the 800 man mess on Sunday morning to see us on our way, and we all headed home, with the Desert Rd still well and truly closed, driving cautiously on icy roads for those heading North via the west side of the mountains. I watched an oncoming car pirouette sideways past me after the driver lost it on a straight but icy stretch of road near the Chateau Tongariro turn off, fortunately not hurting anything but their pride.

Many thanks for a wonderful visit to the personnel of 16 Fd Regt, in particular the Adjutant, Capt. John Garton and the Col Comdt Barry Dreyer, to all in 163 Bty and to the Waiouru Officer's mess for their warm and generous hospitality in once again hosting the Assn on this exercise. Also thanks to the Assn personnel who helped organise the visit for the rest of us, including Bernie McCort and Colin Jansen. The ability for members to attend this exercise each year is, I know, much appreciated and valued enormously by the Assn, and by those individuals who attend.

Association attendees this year were: David Bahler, Tony

Bauer, Bernard Bailey, John Deazley, Jim Gilchrist, Mathew Hartigan, Colin Jansen, Danny McCort, Peter Miles, Jack Mills, Bryan Moles, Chris Morriss, Tutu Ormsby, Wayne Robson, David Seymour, Kevin Stone, Peter Stutsbury, John Taylor, Paul Waldren, Wayne Waretini & David Weston. <<

Chris Morriss



"Gunners will always fight together, drink together, laugh together, and mourn together." - Unknown

President's Report

I would like to take this opportunity to once again thank Marie Roberts for all her efforts over the years as Editor of this Newsletter, and to welcome on board, as the new Editor, David Bähler.

The commemoration of the 50th anniversary of 161 Battery in SVN reporting the first gun ready, would be the highlight of the last 3 months. It was a great reunion for all those 140 veterans who attended and it established a very special link between the 161 Battery veterans of old and the gunners of 161 Battery today. Our thanks and congratulations go to the staff of 16 Field Regt and 161 Battery and Woody Barrett and his organising committee for commemorating the occasion in such a memorable manner.

Ex Ben Cat was once again a great success, twenty one members attended and this opportunity for ex gunners to get into the field and see how the modern gunners go about their business has become a highlight of the year for association members. Once again I would like to thank 16 Field Regt and 163 Battery for making this event happen.

Veterans Support Act. There has been a fair amount of feedback from members since the passing of the Veterans Support Act 2014. Many veterans are being faced with a new set of conditions which they may not necessarily be equipped to deal with. Mike Dakin has written a paper, printed later in this newsletter, which highlights the problems, amongst which are an apparent diminishment of veteran's rights, and an apparent distancing of VANZ from the individual veterans themselves.

Mike describes the Act as 'a goldfield hidden in a mine-field'. He would like to see, amongst other things, an active 'Field Liaison' level of staff at VANZ, whose job is to establish and maintain contact with every veteran, and to retain accountability for that 'case' throughout the veteran's lifetime, not just while a specific 'condition' is addressed as per the ACC modus-operandi.

With the ever-decreasing level of veteran expertise available at branch level of the RNZRSA, it is the intention of the RNZA Assn to follow this matter up and to use Mike's paper as a discussion paper to establish an RNZA Assn position which may be progressed through 'the system'. It is our intention to initially convene a small group of interested people to discuss Mike's paper and determine the path forward. So feedback from anyone/everyone is sought, as this matter is not only important to the veterans and soldiers of today, but also to future generations of New Zealand

soldiers. I would ask all members to read Mike's article and to forward comments to our Veterans Support Officer Peter Miles for collation and consideration as appropriate.

Finally the team in Christchurch under Skin Frances have been working hard to organise the Reunion to be held 13-15 November. I would urge all members to try to get to Christchurch to show our support for our South Island comrades.

Remember our last reunion in Christchurch was held in the Speights Ale House because the RSA had been destroyed. This reunion will be held in the new RSA, a great tribute to the spirit and endeavour of those RSA and Assn members who have held strong throughout all the trials of the earthquakes.

I look forward to catching up with as many of you as possible in Christchurch.

Tony McLeod
President, RNZAA

Ubique 300

As members will be aware, the Royal Artillery will be commemorating its Tercentenary (300 years since its formal foundation) on and around 26 May 2016. The celebrations will include a Church Service at Salisbury Cathedral on Thursday 19 May (this Service is free but entry is by ticket only), and the RA Review, to be held at Larkhill on Thursday 26 May 16 (details of tickets etc. for this event are yet to be advised but entry will be controlled in some way).

We are aware of interest amongst RNZA Assn members to attend these events, and so whilst it is not our intention to organise a tour to the UK, if someone did wish to volunteer to organise a tour we would make our various media tools (Facebook, MuzzleFlashes, Newsletter, contact details) available. We do intend however to contact the RA with the hope of securing a certain number of places (tickets) to the Service and to the Review for Assn members who may wish to travel independently.

So, if anyone is willing to organise a tour please let the Secretary know ASAP. Also, if anyone wishes to attend these commemorative events under their own steam, please advise the secretary ASAP so we have an idea of how many attendees there may be. The email address is; rnza.association@gmail.com

Tony McLeod

161 Battery Vietnam Reunion

The 15th of July 2013 marked the 50th anniversary of 161 Battery RNZA, reporting 'One Gun Ready' at Bien Hoa in the Republic of South Vietnam. From the 14th to the 16th of July this year 130 veterans and 62 partners gathered at Palmerston North to celebrate the anniversary. It was a privilege to have the widows and families of some of our fallen at the reunion, especially the widow of Peter Williams, the widow and daughter of Jock White and Stu Ellwood's sister. On the Tuesday attendees gathered at the Palmerston North Cossie club for registration and a mix and mingle, and to renew old friendships. A fair bit of the brown stuff was consumed, but not as much as would once have been the case.

Wednesday morning, as predicted by the weather gods, was wet and gloomy. Buses picked everyone up and headed out to Linton Camp for the day's events. On arrival at 161 Battery's lines we were welcomed by a Powhiri from 161 Battery and Rangitane, the local Tangata Whenua. This was followed by a display by 161 Bty bringing guns into action and a static display. The old soldiers spent a lot of time giving the new equipment the once over, whilst the young gunners kept an eagle eye on their kit. This was a wise move, with all the members from the old 'Hydraulic' Battery, wandering about. As the rain returned, everyone moved into the Gun Park, which had been setup with photos and memorabilia from the Vietnam era. Lunch was laid on with hot drinks and was welcomed by all.



Members of 16 Fd Regt perform the Regimental Haka



161 Bty Veterans form up on the Parade ground

Following lunch everyone moved to the 16th Field Regiment parade ground and the sky cleared. The edge of the parade ground had been set up with 30x20 tents and chairs for the spectators. The parade commenced with the firing of a blank from an L5, manned by members of the original gun crew, which fired the first round in Vietnam, supplemented by other members from the original Battery. As the gun fired, the Regiment marched on for the first part of the parade which involved presentations of awards to members of the Regiment. The veterans then marched on, under the command of Paul O'Connor.

Following an address from the reviewing officer, Brigadier Chris Parsons MNZM DSD, the Acting Deputy Chief of the Army, two presentations were made to 161 Battery on behalf of all 161 Battery Vietnam Veterans. Rangi Fitzgerald presented a carved Taiaha in a Rimu case and Pat Duggan presented a Mere carved from Takaka marble, both of which had been carved by each presenter.

The veterans then did an about turn (sort of!!), to face the members of the Regiment who then performed a Haka that had been especially written in honour of the veterans. It was a stirring and memorable performance and remains the highlight of the reunion for most of the veterans. After



WO1 (Rtd) Pat Duggan presents a Patu to Regimental staff

Congratulations to Lt Col (rtd) Ron Turner for the award of the QSM for services to the community.

Amongst Ron's many good works is his service as a Judicial Justice of the Peace.

(Couldn't have been awarded to a finer gentleman—Ed)



Lt Col (Rtd) Ron Turner at the 161 Bty Reunion

marching off everyone boarded buses and returned to Palmerston North.

Wednesday evening it was back on the buses and travel to the Awapuni Events Centre for the reunion dinner. 240 sat down to dinner including 25 all ranks from 161 Battery. The setting was great and the meal was superb. Music was provide by Craven Noble and many young gunners learnt the danger of passing the dance floor, on the way to the bar, only to be grabbed by one or more of the ladies.

Thursday morning was a more sombre affair as everyone gathered at the Cossie Club for a memorial service. Padre David Bähler conducted his usual moving service which culminated in the reading of the Roll of Honour and the names of the 240 veterans who have passed on since we returned home. Following the service lunch was provided before everyone dispersed to home locations.



Former Gunner Rangi Fitzgerald presents his hand carved Taiaha to Regimental staff

Reunions do not succeed without a lot of effort from many people, accordingly I would like to thank Barry Dreyer for his guiding hand and wrangling with Army General staff, Tom Roche and his team for all the 'on the ground' running around and organisation, Bernie McCort for organising and running the registrations with the help of Catherine Noble, Brian Meyer for his indefatigable efforts at tracking down names and addresses and all the other members of the committee. Special thanks go to the CO and members of 16 Field Regiment and the BC and members of 161 Battery, who bought into the concept from day one and put in so much effort to make the reunion such a memorable event.

John (Woody) Barrett
Reunion Secretary/Treasurer



Maj (Rtd) Denis Dwane has a medal meltdown



The Memorial Wall at HQ 16 Fd Regt RNZA, Linton

**Royal NZ Artillery Association
81st Annual Reunion
Christchurch Memorial RSA,
13-15 November 2015**

The 81st Annual General Meeting and Reunion of the Royal New Zealand Artillery Association will be held over the period 13-15 November 2015 in Christchurch. (Friday 13 November is Canterbury Anniversary Day, a public holiday). The weekend's events will be centered in the new Christchurch Memorial RSA, 74 Armagh Street. The RSA is centrally located to the CBD and is close to Hagley Park, hotels, motels, shopping and the casino. You can view the RSA and facilities on line at **www.christchurchrsa.org.nz**.

The RSA provides a full range of services including the Trenches Restaurant and Bar. The lower level bar and restaurant facilities are open to the public and the upper level provides similar services for RSA members. Those attending the Reunion will receive discounted beverage and food prices in both the public and RSA areas.

The Registration Form is available on the RNZA Assn Website (**mzaa.org.nz**) and may be returned by downloading the Registration Form and returning by email or post. Full details are on the Website.

Costs: Registration \$120 per person which includes the Reunion Dinner and all activities except the Friday Guided Vineyard tour, which is an extra \$35 per person. Dinner only Registration is \$75.

Registrations will close on SUNDAY 1 NOVEMBER 2015.

There are many other activities going on in Canterbury, as this is "Show Week" (to see these go to: www.nzcupandshow.co.nz). Some may be interested in the "Red Bus Rebuild Tour" (see www.redbus.co.nz/christchurch/rebuild-tour), which operates 7 days a week from 11:30am and takes about 90 minutes.

A wide range of accommodation options are available in Christchurch. Click the "Accommodation options/offers.", which has a short list of Hotels, Motels, Bed & Breakfasts and the YHA, all of which are close to the RSA.

When contacting accommodations providers explain the booking is an RSA activity. All have agreed to try and offer a "special rate".

Ed's Note: THE CLOCK IS TICKING :

Having been previously involved in organising a reunion for the RNZA Assn I know how frustrating it can be while you are waiting for registrations to roll in. Even if you have an inkling that you might go to this one in Christchurch, how about dropping a line to Skin Francis on <skin_frances@outlook.com> and put him out of his misery.

My worry is that if you don't, by the time I get down there, he will have reverted to the skinny wee chap I first met in the early 70s when we all thought he was a refugee from Biafra.

VANZ — Veterans Support - Mike Dakin reports.

Chronology

In the late 1990s, War Pensions administration was separated from the Department of Social Welfare (WINZ) and established as Veterans' Affairs New Zealand (VANZ). Under the War Pensions Act 1954, WINZ had administered fourteen or so War Disablement Claims Panels which were homed at WINZ offices around New Zealand.

Panels had a mix of WINZ staff, medical professionals and RSA representatives as permanent members. Their role was to assess claims and decide on their outcome. Panels could require claimants to appear, and the veteran had the right to attend while his claim was considered. Two advantages of this process were that local RSA reps were integrated into panels at the local level, and the veteran was included in the process. A veteran could go to a Senior Centre at WINZ at any time, speak to a case worker and ask for advice and assistance.

The RSA members of the panels were also familiar and experienced with both the 1954 statute and WINZ procedures. They spread their knowledge, skills and experience through the RSA network, making reliable information, advice and assistance easy to access by vets. People knew each other.

The main disadvantage was that similar claims, when considered by two or more panels, frequently resulted in dissimilar decisions; consequently, there was widespread rancour among claimants who were treated less well than others with the same disablement. The 1954 Act had no mechanism for regularising dissimilar decisions.

A second disadvantage was that administration costs were high due to the constant movement of case files from the central registry to a claims panel and back again. The system was uneconomic and inefficient.

There was good reason to change the process. The Government of the day, wanting to improve services and economic efficiency, set up VANZ after consulting with the RNZRSA.

There were, of course, 'unintended consequences'.

VANZ vacated WINZ premises to centralise in Wellington and Hamilton. Case workers became available only by phone, fax or mail at first, then later by email. There would be no more face time between veteran and VANZ.

The local claims panels were disbanded, cutting off the direct association of local RSA representatives with claims panels, with the consequent loss of informed advice. New, national claims panels were appointed. They would travel, as necessary, to a few decentralised locations, where claimants – who still had the right to attend and be heard – could meet with the panel. In practice, veterans have had to make round trips of 400 km or more, to be given little consideration on arrival.

From 2008, VANZ partnered with RNZRSA to train RSA support advisors, intending to replace the welfare officer of the past with well-informed veterans' advisors and advocates. VANZ then required all claimants to be represented by a qualified advocate or support advisor. *(This may have been reversed under the new Act with no advocate allowed, veterans' social media reports.)*

Throughout this period, telephone contact with VANZ has been a barrier and a stressor to deaf veterans, whose numbers are significantly greater as a proportion of the veteran population, compared to deaf people in the general population. Yet veterans are now worse off than clients of WINZ and ACC, who can at least go into their local centre to speak to someone in person. ... >>p14

>>from p13—VANZ — Veterans Support

Veterans' Support Act 2014

The Veterans' Support Act 2014 (VSA) has brought change – and teething troubles. The VSA has introduced many provisions that were not in the old 1954 statute; it would be unreasonable to expect that everything would switch on seamlessly. Regulations and the Veterans' Code of Rights are unpublished, qualified assessors are not appointed as yet, and operational policies and procedures are in flux.

New diktats that would further disadvantage veterans have been announced, then reversed shortly after. One attempted to shift pre-1975 vets from Part 3 rules of the Act to Part 4 post-1975 rules, if they made a new claim. Another denied supply of alternative medicines and supplements which had previously been supported.

Other innovations, such as Your Plan and Our Agreement, formal documents that require formal assessment of each veteran's rehab needs, consultation with the vet and the identification of rehab goals, do not comply with the VSA. Our Agreement is generalised, one size fits all document, that does not reflect the unique circumstances of each vet.

Your Plan, similarly, is supposed to set rehab goals *identified by the vet* through the assessment process. At present, VANZ views each veteran as a list of unrelated impairments and deals with them in this way. At this point, with no assessment process, no goals have been identified. In reality, each vet is more likely to experience interactive impairments; for example, the ongoing, combined effects of straining to hear *and understand*, continuous pain, pressure and tension. The vet's view of goal-setting will differ from VANZ's.

Parts of the Act do not operate until 7 December 2015. These include Part 4, and Sub-part 4 of Part 5. Part 4 applies to veterans with service post-1974. Part 5, Sub-part 4 will initiate the Veterans' Independence Programme.

What conclusions can we draw from this outline?

"The artillery was my strongest tool. Often it was my only reserve I repeatedly said it was more a matter of the infantry supporting the artillery than the artillery supporting the infantry.... I wish I knew the countless times that positions were taken or held due solely to TOT's"

*Maj Gen R. O. Barton,
Commanding US 4th Infantry
Division, World War II
(Reminiscing with his
Divisional Artillery
Commander)*



161 Bty RNZA Veterans preparing to march on to the parade ground

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Email Addresses: Are you on the Internet? The Secretary may not be aware of your address. If you are not getting messages from the RNZA Association and wish to do so, please forward your address. Have you changed ISPs? Have you updated your Internet address? Some mail is being returned.

Input into Gunner News: Short stories, especially with accompanying photographs, are always welcome for inclusion. The Editor's email address is: **davidbahler@paradise.net.nz**. Please send as an attachment in MS Word format.

Member Registration: New members are most welcome. **ALL** Gunners are eligible for Full Membership, it is **FREE**, and automatic once a gunner has served in the Regiment for more than 3 months. Associate Membership is available to anyone who has been attached to an RNZA Unit or has had a close affiliation therewith, and to close family of RNZA Gunners and to Gunners of any nation around the world. Membership application forms are on-line at the new website: rnzaa.org.nz.

Death of a Member: If you know of the passing of someone who was a Gunner or a member please tell the Secretary. Where possible a representative of the Association will attend the funeral.

Muzzle Flashes items to Skin at: **muzzleflashesnz@gmail.com**

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Items for Gunner News to David at: **davidbahler@paradise.net.nz**

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