

Gunner Dinner, 2000 (Cont)

(This was the first time that an Australian gun had been overrun since Lagnicourt in April 1917). The gunners beat off the NVA with heavy casualties and the gun was recaptured.

Since 1971

During the Gulf Crisis 1990/1991, 16th Air Defence Regiment deployed two RBS-70's and their detachments on board HMAS "Success" for service in the Persian Gulf . Later, another RBS-70 was deployed on board HMAS "Westralia". Australia gunners have since served in peace keeping operations in Cambodia, Western Sahara, Somalia and Bougainville.

In September 1999, 114 years on, "A" Battery deployed again with INTERFET in East Timor. This time it was without its guns and provided communications and an infantry company. Our history indicates that as gunners, we are good at patrolling. We do this to assist others but much prefer to use our guns. Our motto "UBIQUE" could not be more appropriate.

**Laurie Hindmarsh,
5 August 2000.**

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ARTILLERY ASSOCIATION (NSW) INC



GUNNER DINNER, 2000

(73rd Annual Gunner Dinner)

5 August 2000

THE GUNNER DINNER, 2000 **(The 73rd Annual Gunner Dinner)**

As we assemble with our guests for the 73rd annual Gunner Dinner, it is appropriate to pause and reflect on significant events in the history of the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery.

1885 – Sudan and School of Gunnery

On 29 March 1885 a 6 gun battery of the NSW Permanent Artillery disembarked at Suakin as part of Australia's first expeditionary force, raised to avenge the murder of Major General Gordon at Khartoum. The battery, equipped with 6 RML (rifle muzzle loading) guns, did not go into action but did maintain two guns ready for action at Handoub and supplied mounted patrols with the 20th Hussars. The NSW gunners were regulars. They represented a positive reinforcement for the artillery of the British force, which consisted of a battery RHA, and a mountain battery RA. Driver E Lewis died of fever at Suakin; the first Australian gunner to die on active service. Another significant event in 1885 was the establishment of a School of Gunnery at Middle Head by the NSW Government.

1900 – 1901; South Africa

In 1900, fifteen years later, the permanent field battery, now "A" Battery, saw active service in South Africa. It was never destined to fight as a battery in the campaign; its three sections were deployed many kilometres apart to subdue the Boer guerillas. The battery also carried out mounted patrols. "A" Battery's service in South Africa was rewarded when King Edward VII presented the King's Banner to the RAA in 1904.

1914 – 1918; First World War

Another fifteen years later, 85 years ago on 25 April 1915, a gun of 4th Battery, 2nd AFA Brigade AIF was landed at ANZAC Cove. It was dragged into position with great difficulty and opened effective fire at 1800 hrs.

Gunner Dinner, 2000 (Cont)

From that day until the end of the war in 1918, Australian Gunners were constantly in action supporting Australian, British and American Infantry on the Gallipoli Peninsula, in France and in Belgium. On 8 August 1918, all Australian artillery (less the Siege Brigade) serving in France made a positive contribution to the success of the opening phase of the Amiens offensive. At that time, the professionalism of the Australian artillery was equal to that of any artillery – either Allied or enemy.

1939 – 1945; Second World War.

The Second World War saw an unprecedented expansion of the RAA. It is estimated that between 120,000 and 150,000 Australian gunners served during the war. Unlike the First World War, they served in many different units on a multiplicity of equipments. Also unlike the First World War, the Australians served in a variety of terrains and climates. Just to ensure that nothing had changed since 1885, 2nd Battery, 2/1st Tank-Attack Regiment AIF was trained in 1945 as infantry. The unit carried out aggressive patrols in the Aitape district, New Guinea.

1950 – 1971; Korea, Malaya, Borneo and Vietnam.

Individual Australian gunners served in Korea with British and New Zealand artillery units and with 1 and 3 RAR. Three Australian field batteries served from 1955 to 1960 in Malaya during the emergency.

In 1964/1965, individual Australian Gunners served with RA units in Borneo during the "Confrontation".

The largest deployment of Australian artillery since the Second World War occurred in Vietnam during 1965 to 1971. The gunners were involved in many actions. One of the most significant was at FSB Coral in the small hours of 13 May 1968. In that action, the 102nd Battery was attacked by the NVA who broke into the gun position and overran one gun.

ORIGIN OF THE GUNNER DINNER

In 1921, a group of gunner officers met at dinner to honour Brigadier General Walter Coxen, GOCRA Australian Corps, for his contribution to the success of the corps' operation on 8 August 1918. A legend that Coxen had commanded more guns in action than any one man grew that on that day. Coxen did command between 520 and 550 guns on that day but the on the previous month, 732 guns supported the Australian Corps' operation carried out by the 4th Australian Division at Hamel. The GSO2, HQRA, Australian Corps, Lt Col H D K McCartney claimed that for the breaching of the Hindenburg Line on 29 September 1918, Coxen commanded 1,200 guns.

What is certain is that Coxen commanded more guns in action than any other Australian before or since. Furthermore, the professionalism achieved by Australian gunners during the First World War became the norm for Australians during the Second World War and subsequent operations.

It is not known who was present at the first dinner but it is likely that the list included C A Callaghan, T A J Playfair, R Rabett, C Rosenthal and J C Selmes. All of these officers rendered distinguished service ending their military careers with "red hats".

The dinner has been held at various venues over the years including the Paddington Town Hall, Hotel Australia, Imperial Service Club (Barrack Street), School of Artillery, Coral Lines Holsworthy and currently, the Willoughby Legion Club (since 1998).

HONORARY PRESIDENT RAA ASSOCIATION (NSW) INC

His Excellency the Honorable
Gordon Samuels, AC CVO
Governor of New South Wales

GUEST OF HONOUR

Lieutenant General Peter Cosgrove AC MC
Chief of Army

DINING PRESIDENT

Lieutenant Colonel Ken J Broadhead, RFD

MENU

ENTRÉE

**GRILLED FILLETS OF OCEAN PERCH
SERVED ON RICE**

OR

**CHICKEN STIR FRY
SERVED ON RICE**

MAIN COURSE

FRESH ROASTED BEEF AND VEGETABLES

OR

VEAL SCALOPPINI WITH MUSHROOM SAUCE

DESSERT

MIXED BERRIES CHEESE CAKE

OR

APPLE CRUMBLE

WINES

**QUEEN ADELAIDE CHARDONNAY AND PINOT NOIR
DIRECTORS' PORT**

CHEESE SELECTION

COFFEE, TEA, DINNER MINTS

TOASTS

The Loyal Toast

Capt Phillip J Easton

Message of Loyalty

Maj Bob Corbett, RFD

The Royal Regiment

Col Don M Tait

Banner Party

23 Field Regiment

Ensign: Lt A McGrath

Escorts: WO2 W Friend,
Sgt J Richards