



Artillery WA

Official Newsletter of Royal Australian Artillery Association of WA (Inc) and RAA Historical Society of WA (Inc)
WebSite: <http://www.artillerywa.org.au> Email: info@artillerywa.org.au

Edition 2 / 08

June 2008



Anzac Day 2008 – Forming Up



**"An Australian Light Horseman collecting anemones near Belah in Palestine".
Picture: Frank Hurley, 1918**



Notice Board

Mark these dates in your calendars

Saturday 12/7/2008 Battery's 60th Birthday Dinner – HAP
Sunday 2/11/2008 Annual Gunners Day Guildford

RAAHS BUSY BEES 2008

19th Jan 23rd Feb 29th Mar 03rd May
31st May 28th Jun 26th Jul 30th Aug
27th Sep 25th Oct 29th Nov 20th Dec

LEIGHTON BATTERY OPEN DAYS

The Leighton Battery Heritage Site is open on a regular basis on the first Sunday of every month from 10 AM to 3:30 PM with tours of the tunnels every half hour.

- COVER – Anzac Day 2008 -

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Next Issue – September 2008

Subs to your Association or Society are now due – RAAA of WA (Inc) - \$ 15 RAAHS - \$ 25

We now have a Direct Debit facility – Please find the details in the relevant sections -

The Editor gratefully acknowledges the contributions to the newsletter by the members.

Articles, editorial comment or book reviews for publication should be submitted to the editor, Gabriel D'Uva at: Royal Australian Artillery Association of WA (Inc)
PO Box 881, Claremont WA 6910. Phone: 93836544 Fax: 93836370 or E-mail the Editor at info@artillerywa.org.au

ADVERTISING

ANYBODY INTERESTED IN ADVERTISING THEIR BUSINESS IN **ARTILLERY WA** FOR A DONATION OF \$ 10 (TEN) PER YEAR, (Four Issues), BOTH IN PRINTED AND WEB SITE EDITIONS, PLEASE MAIL OR EMAIL THE EDITOR TO THE ADDRESSES SHOWN

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ARTILLERY ASSOCIATION WA (INC)

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

On Anzac Day the Battery conducted the Dawn Service at Hobbs Artillery Park which was well attended by our members.

The introduction was by Major S. Mathers the Battery commander of 7 Field Battery and the service conducted by Chaplin D. Burgess.

A moving Requiem by Captain Cowdry, brought back memories to those who served and of those who did not come back.

Our Colonel Commandant Bill Ritchie gave an interesting address and is to be commended.

The Anzac Day Dawn Service Programme prepared by the Battery was in the best tradition and to those involved, Thank you.

After the Service, the Gun Fire Breakfast was enjoyed by all, and following the March many returned for fellowship.

In conclusion our thanks to Major Steve Mathers, the Battery and all concerned, for the Dawn Service and afterwards.

The next event will be the Battery 60th Birthday Dinner on Saturday 12/7/2008 and this occasion, which is one of the highlights of the year.

Ubique

Bruce G. Campbell OAM
President

DAWN SERVICE HOBBS ARTILLERY PARK ANZAC DAY 2008



Artillery from around the world



RAA JACKET POCKET BADGE – Actual size of Badge is 100mm wide x 90mm high - CAN BE ORDERED THROUGH THE ASSOCIATION – COST \$25 EACH - PLEASE USE THE ORDER FORM IN LAST PAGE OF THIS NEWSLETTER.

RAA ARTILLERY EMBROIDERED BERET BADGES – Actual size is 55mm wide by 40mm high - CAN BE ORDERED THROUGH THE ASSOCIATION – COST \$10 EACH – PLEASE SEND EMAIL REQUEST TO THE SECRETARY

FOR GUNNERS IN NEED OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE!!!

WELFARE FUND and OFFICER

John Walsh is the contact person as the Association's Welfare Officer. Anybody that needs to discuss any Welfare Funding can contact John via email at info@artillerywa.org.au or jfxwalsh@bigpond.com.au or by phone on 93836544, Wednesday mornings.

Access to Funds can be made by applying in writing using the Welfare Fund Form, which is available on request. *(From the Treasurer)*

The Association reminds Members that access to the Fund to help Gunners financially at a time of need is strictly confidential and all applications are treated as such.

Anzac Day 2008



Ronnie Roach in style



Handcock brothers

Artillery from around the world



Waiting the order to fire a camouflaged eight inch gun from the 1st Australian Siege Battery before the main attack on Polygon Wood in Belgium. Picture: Frank Hurley, September 1917

Anzac Day 2008



Gunners, family & friends Battery Dawn Service 2008



Lou Grime, Bruce Nind, Bill Kerr, Frank Langford



Dick Albury, Les Herbert, Ron Cutten, Richard Carter

You can Now pay your Membership Fees by Direct Debit!

Members can go to any bank (or do it by electronic transfer) and make a deposit quoting The RAA Association's BSB and Account Number and your Name. The Funds will automatically be transferred to the Association's Account along with your name.

It's that Simple!!

If you choose this method please quote:

RAA Association of WA (Inc) – (Note: Some banks may required the full wording)

Commonwealth Bank

BSB Number: 066 163

Account Number: 0090 2583

*Please do not forget to include your name, so we know who the payment is from.
Thank You.*

7 Field Battery, 3 Field Regiment



**BC Maj Steve Mathers leading Officers & Soldiers of 7 Fd Bty RAA
In Anzac Day Parade Perth 2008**

Anzac Day 2008 (London – UK)

RAAA Committee Member John O'Brien was in London for Anzac Day, he writes:

"The sun was shining for our parade in Whitehall, (we had snow the week before in Yorkshire) and following security check with photo ID needed and special invitations I formed up in the next street down from Downing Street, to be led out by the band of the Irish Guards. The road was blocked off as the Centotaph is located in the middle of the road, so we wheeled into Whitehall past crowds of people who were there for the ceremony, and others who stumbled upon it. There were a large lot of serving soldiers, sailors and airmen from

Aust and NZ who are on exchange in UK and all came up to London for the service, as well as British service and ex servicemen and women. Peter Garret MP was representing us, for the wreath laying and others for UK and NZ as well as others from the armed forces and ex-service organisations.

Following the parade we all filed into Westminster Abbey for the 1 hour service where the Duke of Kent represented the Royal Family.

Everywhere Where Right and Glory Lead

It was quite interesting to see a Turkish soldier in the flag party, taking equal place with the Guardsman, Aussie digger and Kiwi sailor. The most moving part was the reading by the Turkish ambassador of the words of Attaturk,

"Those heroes that shed their blood and lost their lives...you are now lying in the soil of a friendly country. Therefore rest in peace. There is no difference between the Johnnies and the Mehmets to us, where they lie, side by side here in this country of ours. You, the mothers who sent their sons from faraway countries wipe away your

tears. Your sons are now lying in our bosom and are in peace. After having lost their lives on this land, they have become our sons as well."

At the end of this service we all filed out, under the peal of the bells and saw the throngs of tourists waiting to see what special dignitaries were leaving this Abbey, and saw all of us... the servicemen, ex-service men and others who had attended the service of commemoration the 93rd anniversary of ANZAC Day.



Photo by John O'Brien Anzac Day Parade 2008 in London



RAA Association Committee Man John O'Brien marching in London Anzac Day Parade 2008 (yellow arrow)



Australia presence Anzac Day 2008 in London
Everywhere Where Right and Glory Lead



THE AIMING POST

The Royal Australian Artillery Historical Society Of Western Australia (Inc)

President's Report:

Over the past few weeks the Society's Restoration Team has been on the move, fortunately from the current site to a new location in the building on the southern end of Hobbs Artillery Park Parade ground.

The Co-operation of 7 Field Battery to this arrangement is very appreciated.

At the 'New Location' the Restoration Team can continue with its work although on a reduced scale as some of the heavy Equipment has been sold off as this will not be required in the future.

The change over has involved considerable time and effort, and to all involved Thank You.

In respect to the Leighton Tunnel Complex planning work, the roofing over the 5.25 gun pit is proceeding and this will area will provide display space for expansion.

Ubique

Bruce G. Campbell OAM

President

News Flash News Flash News Flash News Flash News Flash News Flash

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RAA Historical Society of WA (Inc) - (Note: Some banks may required the full wording)

Commonwealth Bank

BSB Number: 066-103

Account Number: 00903744

**Please do not forget to include your name so we know who the payment is from.
Thank You.**

Inside the amazing cave city that housed 25,000 Allied troops under German noses in WWI

By ROBERT HARDMAN

16th March 2008

The wax is still melted on to the chalk pillar which served as an Easter Sunday altar for the men of the Suffolk Regiment more than 90 years ago.

Old helmets are scattered around the floor. A heap of cans, including a tin of Turnwrights Toffee Delight, lies alongside a collection of old stone jars - flagons of rum, perhaps, to numb the fear of the battle ahead.

The word 'Latrine' is still written above an arrow on a 30ft chalk pillar. Next to it, two large rusting buckets sit beneath wooden holes.



Robert Hardman sits where troops once waited to attack

Further down the labyrinth, another arrow points up to 'No 10 Exit'.

Here a staircase hacked into the rock leads up to a tunnel and on through 60ft of chalk towards the outside world.

Today, the tunnel is blocked. In 1917, it led to fresh air and daylight. But it was also a stairway to hell.

And I feel extraordinarily privileged to be one of the few people to climb it without feeling the angel of death sitting on his shoulders.

After the best part of a century, a stupendous remnant of World War I can be unveiled to the world.



Toffee delight: Remains of soldiers' food and drink

Here, beneath the northern French town of Arras, years of careful excavation have finally unveiled the secret city where 25,000 British and Commonwealth soldiers lived just yards beneath an unsuspecting enemy.

Canteens, chapels, power stations, a light railway and even a fully functioning hospital were all established in this chilly labyrinth where I am standing with freezing water dripping on my head.

Scarred by the devastating losses on the Somme in 1916, British generals came up with a new strategy ahead of their next major offensive at Arras in 1917.

A series of subterranean medieval quarries on the edge of the town would be linked by tunnels to create the most extensive underground network in British military history.

These were not narrow shafts for men on all fours to crawl along. Tunnels had to be wide enough for soldiers to march in one direction and pass stretcher parties coming the other way. The larger routes had to accommodate a supply railway as well.



Sweethearts: A drawing of a woman on a cave wall

It proved to be a mighty feat of engineering but, in the chaotic aftermath of war, it was simply forgotten and covered up. But that neglect is our gain.

Today, much of it remains exactly as it was on that extraordinary morning in 1917 when, at the given signal, several British divisions burst forth under the noses of the enemy.

By the end of one day, they had advanced further into enemy territory than the entire British Army had advanced in years.

And yet the subsequent Battle of Arras would still see the worst bloodshed of the war.

As far as the Great War is concerned, the Arras discovery is on a par with the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb.

Next to a suburban supermarket, beneath a former camp site, the public can take a glass elevator from the 21st century straight down to the world of Tommy Atkins and bully beef.

Clever lighting and sound effects have created a mesmerising insight into life on the Western Front.

Accompanied by a bilingual expert and an excellent audioguide, parties of 20 are able to weave their way through an authentic slice of the Great War.



The museum entrance to the tunnels

And I have been allowed an exclusive wander among the chiselled walkways, wells and troughs, the 91-year-old graffiti and wall etchings.

Who is that mysterious dark-haired sweetheart drawn on the wall next to the regimental cookhouse? Who carved an exquisite little crucifix into a pillar?

The trenches, the poppy, the Somme and Flanders' fields have become sacred elements of our national identity - and that of many other countries.

The received story is one of heroic failure and senseless slaughter. We do not associate the Great War with much brilliance and ingenuity. But that was not the case in Arras.



Hardman enters the tunnels through a manhole cover

The generals had learned a few lessons from the 1916 Battle of the Somme. Chief among them was the fact that frontal assaults on well-defended enemy trenches and artillery were mass suicide.

As the Western Front stalemate continued from the North Sea to the Swiss border, the French hatched a grand plan to win the war in 48 hours. They would smash through the German lines along the River Aisne in the spring of 1917.

The British would play their part with a colossal pre-emptive strike around Arras 50 miles to the north. A dazzling plan then took shape.

Today, Arras is an unremarkable town an hour's drive south of Calais. Most British tourists whizz past it on the autoroute as they drive to Paris and beyond. But if they look out of the window, they will glimpse some clues to the carnage in these parts.

Beautifully tended Commonwealth War Graves are dotted on either side. Soaring to the east is the stirring Canadian memorial to the 11,000 men who died in the heroic capture of Vimy Ridge. It is often said that Canada came of age as a nation that day.

Arras was a forlorn and battered frontier town. In 1914, it had been captured by the Germans, recaptured by the French and then put under British control to allow the French to concentrate elsewhere. In 1916, it was a shell of a place.

Civilians had been evacuated and British occupied the ruins while the Germans, who held the higher ground, sat to the East lobbing shells into the town.

It was just another stalemate situation on the Western Front. But, unseen by the Germans, something extraordinary was going on under the ground.



Behind Hardman is one of the exits used by the troops

As an ancient town with Roman origins, Arras had an extensive network of cellars, tunnels and sewers - known as *boves* - running beneath it.

But the Royal Engineers had also learned that the countryside between the British and German positions was full of underground caves from where chalk had been quarried during the Middle Ages. Some were cathedral-sized caverns.

Sappers of the Royal Engineers decided that if they could link all these various subterranean holes in secret, an entire Army would be able to move safely from the rear to the front of the German positions and avoid all the initial horrors of the Somme.

Until then, tunnelling had merely been used by both sides to detonate explosives under enemy lines. Now, it would take on a very different purpose.

It was a hugely ambitious plan, but the 500 men of the New Zealand Tunnelling Company - all professional miners - set to work with a battalion of 'Bantams', Yorkshire miners below the Army's minimum height of 5ft 3in.

In a matter of months, they had created two interconnected labyrinths, 12 miles long and capable of hiding 25,000 troops.

The tunnellers named this dark, damp kingdom after home towns. The southern part of the network became New Zealand. From one huge quarry called Auckland, soldiers could march through to Wellington, Nelson, Blenheim, Christchurch, Dunedin and so on.

The northern section linked Glasgow, Edinburgh, Crewe and London among others, plus a side-tunnel which led to a trio of quarries called Jersey, Guernsey and Alderney.



This exit came up in Rietz Gardens

The Arras attack was set for Easter 1917 and, a week before, the generals started filling up their underground city.

It had to be done in total secrecy. Alain Jacques, the spirited boss of Arras's archaeology department, shows me how it happened.

'The soldiers could enter the network through a few cellars in the town and then walk for miles to their positions and wait there for days,' he says.

He has an old photograph of the dilapidated bakery in the Place des Heros in the middle of Arras. Below it, two doorways have the letters 'TOC' above them.

'This meant: 'To the Caves,'" says Alain.

'You can still see where they went in.'

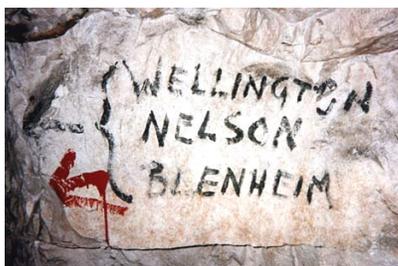
Sure enough, the bakery is in the same spot on this pretty square and doing a roaring trade. One of the basement doorways is exactly the same (these days it leads no further than a cellar).

It was an awesome feat of logistics. Imagine marching a Premiership football crowd beneath your local newsagent and keeping them there for days.

Each quarry housed a whole regiment and was really a maze of caves propped up by huge chalk pillars, each of which had its own number. The troops found their designated quarters by following the numbers.

There were strict orders on what should be in each cave - battalion headquarters in one, a sick bay in another, a kitchen area and so on.

Not far from Auckland, beneath what is now a manhole in the Rue St Quentin, the tunnellers built a whopping great 700-bed hospital, complete with operating theatres and a mortuary. It was christened Thompson's Cave after Colonel A. G. Thompson of the Royal Army Medical Corps.



Homeward bound: The soldiers' graffiti shows where their hearts lay

In this disorientating, half-lit underworld, men waited for more than a week, playing cards, singing and writing heartbreaking letters which should be on every school curriculum.

Writing to his wife and baby son by candlelight, Private Harry Holland scribbled: 'Kiss our Harry for me. When I see him again, it will take me all my time to catch him.'

Private Holland never saw another sunset, let alone baby Harry. There might have been freezing water dripping from the ceiling but, compared to the trenches, this was a cushy billet.

When the time came, at 5.30am on April 9, 1917, Easter Monday, the British Third Army marched down their exit tunnels, up their designated stairwells and out in to the open.

They found a bitter wind blowing sleet and rain in the faces of the enemy and a carefully timed artillery barrage blasting the enemy's positions-ahead of them.

The German guns, already hammered by their British counterparts, had little time to readjust their sights and bring fire down on an enemy which was suddenly a mile closer than anyone had expected.

There was heavy fighting, of course. Thousands of brave men, like Harry Holland, did not survive the day, but the losses were nothing like the Somme.

Germans surrendered bootless and still in night clothes. Up in the northern sector, around Vimy Ridge, the Canadians faced much stiffer opposition but they, too, had been helped by their own intricate tunnel arrangements leading up to the German lines.

Day One of the Battle of Arras was, without doubt, a great success. Within a couple of days, the Allies had advanced eight miles. By the woeful standards of that war, it was like capturing a continent.

In the weeks ahead, the battle would revert to the familiar pattern of epic slaughter for tiny gains.

There would be a murderous battle in the skies, too, as Baron von Richtofen and his Flying Circus arrived in the Arras sector, reducing the life expectancy of British pilots from three weeks to 17 hours.

The war would drag on. But the Arras tunnel network had done its job brilliantly.



A newspaper seller hands copies of the Daily Mail and the Mirror to a British soldier in Arras

Come Armistice, these tunnels were simply closed down and Arras was rebuilt. People wanted to forget it all.

During World War II, a few locals with long memories used them as secret air raid shelters and then, once again, the caves were sealed. And that is how they remained until 1990 when Alain Jacques decided to investigate.

'I could not understand why there was all this English writing on the pillars and signs to places such as Wellington,' he says, still thrilled at the recollection of his discovery.

'And then I worked out that these must be the tunnels of the Great War. We had no records of it, so I went to the archives of the Royal Engineers in Chatham and the Imperial War Museum, and it all became clear.'

He had discovered the Blenheim quarry. Over the subsequent years, he would find much more. In 1994, a gas pipe repair led him to Thompson's Cave.

Gradually, he worked out where the soldiers had emerged to meet the enemy.

His problem was that post-war Arras had simply expanded over the entire network and out into what had once been No Man's Land.

Much of the network has collapsed, much else is extremely unsafe and French laws meant that there could be no question of opening any museum underneath private homes.

Along with Arras's director of tourism, Jean-Marie Prestaux, Alain worked out that just one quarry - Wellington - had the potential for safe public access because it lay under a council-owned campsite.

Now, 18 years after Alain's first discovery, a £3 million visitor centre and a lift have been constructed. The Carriere Wellington, underground home of the Suffolk Regiment 91 years back, is, finally, open to the world.

'Everyone knows the Somme and Verdun,' says Jean-Marie as he shows me round his beloved project.

'Now people from all over the world will learn of Arras. Even most French people know nothing of all this.'

When I finally resurface, blinking and speechless, into the daylight, I ask Alain to show me where the inhabitants of Wellington would have emerged on that freezing dawn in 1917. He takes me down several suburban streets, until we reach a crossroads on the Rue St Quentin.

'Here,' he says, 'this is where they came out to fight the enemy.' The scene could hardly be more poignant. Full of fun and laughter, it is a children's playground. Wherever he may be, I am sure poor Harry Holland would approve.

THERE IS A SILVER LINING!

In the April 2008 edition of AIMING POST under the heading "END OF AN ERA" readers were informed of the closure of the Society's Restoration Workshop at Irwin Barracks with the appeal for a generous benefactor anxious to obtain a non rent paying tenant!

Well, our appeal did not pass unnoticed! With the total support of Majors Andrew Dunje and Steve Mathers, Defence Support Group agreed that the Society could have access to a building within 7 Field Battery previously used for Gun Service and Maintenance provided that we scale down the scope of our operation and dispose of our non compliant heavy equipment.

Naturally we were more than pleased to comply and commenced the transition from the old premises to the new location in May. Deciding what should be kept or disposed was one heck of a problem and many arguments ensued before matters were rationalised. Now almost completed, operations in the new location have been planned. The first task is the restoration of a 25pr Gun Howitzer currently on display outside Hobbs Artillery Park where it has suffered the ravages of rust and decay for many years, followed by the reassembly of an L5 Pack Howitzer currently in "a million pieces" in the old workshop.

There is renewed energy and enthusiasm among those members of the Restoration Team who thought their world had come to an end.

The Society is most grateful to the Battery for its generous support.

FOR SALE

As a result of the closure of the Restoration Workshop a number of items of equipment have become surplus to our future requirements. Among the larger items is a 17 inch Swing Lathe and a Power Hacksaw – both wired for 3 Phase current.

In addition there is a collection of odds and ends that may be attractive to the home handyman.

Interested readers should contact the Curator, Don Rae by phone – 9446 3682 or by email – devar@iinet.net.au and viewing will be arranged at a mutually convenient time.

LEIGHTON BATTERY HERITAGE SITE

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

As a means of further authenticating and enhancing the Heritage Site, plans for development have been produced primarily through the efforts of member Roger Martin. We are influenced by constraints imposed by the Heritage Council of Western Australia and, by the Town of Mosman Park as structural changes are involved.

A concept scheme was submitted to both Authorities who have encouraged us to proceed in detail by issuing an agreement in principle. The next phase involves the production of detailed design drawings and specification that must be lodged with both Authorities in formal application – approval first must be granted by the Heritage Council followed by approval from the Town of Mosman Park.

Professional assistance was required from a consulting engineering firm, the charges for which could not be met from Society funds. An application to LOTTERYWEST early this year was successful and VDM Projects has been commissioned to design and produce all relevant material for submission to the Authorities.

The development plan involves the removal of the unattractive fencing from the 5.25inch Gun Pit and Stairwell access, “roofing” the Gun Pit in reinforced concrete and providing a “telescopic” hatch cover for the stairwell. In addition, it is proposed to redevelop the No.2 6inch Gun Floor to resemble its WW2 layout – as near to identical as possible to the No.1 Gun Site Floor.

Assuming that the concept will be approved, funding application for the considerable cost involved will have to be sought before work can proceed. Regardless of the outcome, there is already an atmosphere of confidence and we eagerly await VDM’s design concept and detailed drawings that will permit moving to the next stage in seeking approval for the work to proceed. You will be kept informed.



The 5.25 gun emplacement, clearly shows the present 'security' fencing with, in the foreground, the engine installation access cover.

JOURNEY TO THE INTERIOR

Past President Ray Bird conducts a Tourism and Hospitality Business Consultancy staffed by two of his sons, Andrew and Matthew. One of Matthew's clients is the Wunambal Gaambera Aboriginal Community at Kalumburu who operate a guided tour activity at the Kimberley WW2 Truscott Airbase under the guidance of an adviser.

Matthew contacted the Society recently seeking Society involvement through the services of one or more of our members to act as a coordinator and training officer during the peak tourist season June – September. The Society was flattered to have been approached and discussions are well under way for member Neil Lodge to “trial” the proposal from end June through early August.

The Society will receive a retainer for services provided and the attending member/s will be suitably reimbursed for his contribution in this remote region.

Should any of our readers be interested in participating in such an adventure please do not hesitate to contact the Society's Curator Don Rae by phone, 9446 3682 or by email, devar@iinet.net.au

“UBIQUE” takes on a completely new meaning with our involvement in this venture!

Refer to page 15 for “Route Map”.

60TH CELEBRATION OF - BATTERY BIRTHDAY

The Battery Commander has invited RAA Association members to attend and help celebrate the 60th birthday of 7 Field Battery at all ranks Formal Dinner on Saturday 12th July 2008.

RSVP for attendance is contained on the attached Bty Dinner Flyer. Please forward the RSVP with payment and attendance details asap.

The President and committee of RAA Association WA look forward to catching up with members at the Dinner.

UBIQUE



ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ARTILLERY ASSOCIATION
of WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Everywhere Where Right and Glory Lead