



# Artillery WA



Official Newsletter of Royal Australian Artillery Association of WA (Inc), RAA Historical Society of WA (Inc)

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## **75<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE OF CRETE**

### **THE SEQUEL**



**Presentation of Shield to the Society**

Edition 2 of AIMING POST described the Society's donation of a stainless steel plaque to the Military Museum at RETHYMON CRETE that reflected the contribution of members of Western Australian Units that participated with distinction in the battle.

The plaque was presented to the Director of the Museum on the Society's behalf by members of the Bessell-Browne family who made the pilgrimage to CRETE in honour of their Father, Major I. J. Bessell-Browne MBE, Foundation Member and Past Patron of the Society.

Major Bessell-Browne commanded 6 Battery 2/3<sup>rd</sup> Field Regiment throughout the Greece – Crete Campaigns and was second in command of Australian and New Zealand forces during the battle of RETHYMON. He was captured by German forces and incarcerated as a POW for the remainder of the war.

Members of the Bessell-Browne family and the Society's Management Committee met informally at Leighton Battery on 13<sup>th</sup> July to discuss the pilgrimage and the family described the emotion surrounding the commemoration ceremony and the high regard in which Australians and New Zealanders are still held by the Cretan population.

As a mark of respect for the Society's recognition of the significance of the RETHYMON battle, the Museum Director reciprocated with the presentation of a Shield of the 5<sup>th</sup> CRETAN Division, asking the Bessell-Browne family to present it to the Society on his behalf.

The Shield is to be mounted and framed alongside a replica of the Society Plaque with a brief narrative of the story. The frame will hang in the Visitor Reception Centre at Leighton Battery where it will be seen by all visitors to the Tunnels.

## **NOTICE BOARD**



<b>Edition</b>	<b>Collation Period</b>	<b>Deadline to Editor</b>	<b>Editing and Preparation</b>	<b>Final Edition</b>	<b>Deadline to Printer</b>	<b>Mail Out</b>	<b>In Time For</b>
4	3/10/16 to 19/11/16	19/11/16	20/11/16 to 7/12/16	7/12/16	7/12/16	21/12/16	Xmas
2017 1	4/1/17 to 19/2/17	19/2/17	20/2/17 to 7/3/17	7/3/17	7/3/17	22/3/17	
2	3/4/17 to 19/5/17	19/5/17	20/5/17 to 7/6/17	7/6/16	7/6/17	21/6/17	
3	5/7/17 to 19/8/17	19/8/17	20/8/17 to 7/8/17	7/8/17	7/8/17	17/8/17	

**To ensure that the printing deadline is met please observe the dates listed above.**  
**Copy for publication in the newsletter should be emailed to [arnold353@bigpond.com](mailto:arnold353@bigpond.com).**

### **RAAHS BUSY BEES FOR 2016**

29 October 26 November 31 December

### **LEIGHTON BATTERY OPEN DAYS**

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

# THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ARTILLERY ASSOCIATION OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Fellow Gunners, Let me apologise for not having an article in the June edition, unfortunately due to some confusion and a change to email addresses. Since my last report there is much to update you on.

## **ANZAC Day 2016**

As tradition has it, I attended the 13 Brigade ANZAC Dawn Service and laid a wreath on behalf of the Association and members. We were fortunate that the rain held off during the Dawn Service but not so lucky for the ANZAC Day parade in the city where those attending got drenched. That said there was a good attendance at the parade and the camaraderie was excellent. Many retired to HAP to enjoy a bit of fellowship. A great opportunity to catch up.

## **BTY Birthday/ RAA Corps Dinner**

On Saturday the 9th of July I attended the Battery Birthday/RAA Corps Dinner which was well attended by 90 past and serving members and their partners. A great night was held by all.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan and the Association invited five Vietnam Veterans to attend, four of whom served the Gun Line in support of the Battle on the 18th August 1966 and one was a member of D Coy 6 RAR.

The Association's Annual Award for the most outstanding soldier was presented to Gnr Yannick Siegwart. Gnr Siegwart joined the Australian Army Reserve in January 2012 and was posted to 3 Light Battery. He has been an asset to the Battery as he consistently volunteers and attends Battery activities including Battle Group and Brigade short notice tasks. As a fly in fly out worker he is able to balance his civilian employment with his Army Reserve commitments. Well deserved!

Again a very successful night. I would like to acknowledge the efforts of Stan Davies, Tom Arnautovic and Peter Rowles who assisted by organising the Dinner and thank the BTY for their support. Well done all!

## **Gunners Day 2016**

Our next major event will be Gunners Day which will be held on Sunday 6th November. We form up at St Matthew's Church, Stirling Square, Guildford at 11:00 am and step off shortly thereafter. After the march we will have snacks in the Church Hall and then retire to the Rose & Crown Hotel for refreshments. I would encourage all Gunners to attend and look forward to seeing you there.

## **Feast of Saint Barbara**

The Feast of Saint Barbara will be held at Hobbs Artillery Park on Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> of December. This year we are inviting all past and serving Bombardiers and above and those who support the Gunners. We are inviting the State President of RSLWA Mr Peter Aspinall, who was an Artillery Forward Observer in Vietnam, involved in the Battle of Long Tan. We understand Mr. Aspinall will attend. The cost is anticipated to be \$ 80.00 per head.

## **Artillery WA**

I would like to thank Bob Arnold for agreeing to become the Editor for Artillery WA until such time as we can find someone more permanent.

## **Raising a Light Artillery Regiment**

I have saved the best news until last. I was at the Brigade Commander's briefing on 5 September when he announced that 2 Division ARES will raise an Artillery Light Regiment to command all Reserve Light Batteries. 3 LT BTY will now transfer from Under Command 11/ 28 BN RWAR reporting to the new Regimental HQ. Some sense at last. This should see improved C2 and training for the LT BTYs.

**Ubique**

Bob Farrelly LTCOL

President, RAA Association

## BATTERY COMMANDER'S REPORT

**2**016 continues to be a busy yet exciting year for 3 Light Battery.

We celebrated the Battery Birthday in fine style on Saturday 7 July with close to 90 current serving and past gunners and their partners coming together at Hobbs Artillery Park.

As we approached the 50th Anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan it was fantastic to welcome Gunners Peter Treleaven, Rick Walsh, Laurie Willey, David Cornell and Harley Webb of D Coy 6 RAR who served with distinction in the Vietnam War.

A highlight too was the Cadets from 51 RCU Swan Regiment Drums and Pipes. They acquitted themselves extremely well and all present commented on the excellent entertainment during the dinner.

I take this opportunity to again publicly Thank Stan Davies for all his hard work in making the dinner the success that it was.

Two Officers from 3 Light Battery were in France as part of the Commemorations of the Centenary of the Battles on the Western Front. Both Captain Brad Pearce and Captain Nick Mahr represented the Australian Army and the 13 Brigade with distinction. They returned to Australia in mid August and I look forward to hearing the details of the trip and viewing the photos.

The focus for the Battery is working towards and building capability as we move into the Ready Cycle next year as part of the Force Generation Cycle. The Battery will be live firing on the weekend of 19-21 August and at this stage it looks like the Battery will be involved in a two week exercise with 3 Bde in Townsville in October.

These activities will culminate with Exercise Hamel in July 2017.

The Battery has welcomed six new members and we are currently conducting a Mortar Course to qualify these gunners.

The next ceremonial activity will be the Queen's Birthday Salute at 12pm on Saturday 24 September. I welcome all to come and witness the Battery in action in the vicinity of the War Memorial at Kings Park.

This event is then followed by Gunners' Day in Guildford on 6 November. I look forward to catching up with many Gunners at this annual event.

*Ubique*

*Rob Coales*

Battery Commander

### DEMON'S DICTIONARY

#### A–E

**Armour:** The kind of clothing worn by a man whose tailor is a blacksmith.

**Auctioneer:** A man who proclaims with a hammer that he has picked a pocket with his tongue.

**Barometer:** An ingenious instrument which indicates what kind of weather we are having.

**Bore :** A person who talks when you want him to listen.

**Court Fool;** The Plaintiff

**Coward:** One who in a perilous emergency thinks with his legs.

**Dentist:** A prestidigitator who putting metal in your mouth pulls coins out of your pocket.

**Envelope:** The coffin of a document; the scabbard of a bill; the husk of a remittance; the bed gown of a love-letter.

## THE AIMING POST

### The Royal Australian Artillery Historical Society of Western Australia (Inc.)

**W**elcome members, to your latest Aiming Post.

Your Committee has continued to steer the Society's business items in a proper manner.

In my last report I mentioned the link between the Society and the 2nd AIF in Crete in 1941. Members of the Bessell- Browne family returned to Perth with details of how impressed they were with the regard in which our soldiers' family members are held by the people of Crete today.

The Rethymon Museum presented the Society with their 5 Cretan Division Shield in recognition of our donation of the plaque acknowledging the 75th Anniversary of the Battle of Crete.

The heavy maintenance tasks have been completed at the Battery site. The unsightly concrete cancer is gone , replacement steps adorn the radar room, and the C.P. has re-built steel shutters. A three part matching colour scheme has been applied.

I would like to thank Ron Cahill for producing the sign now attached to the 6 inch Gun and Shield Profile advertising Tunnel Opening hours. Tunnel numbers are up already!

Turning now to the 5.25" project. This complex and expensive undertaking will occur over the next couple of years. A concrete roof will have a steel fabricated turret and barrel placed on it. The gun floor and support rooms will be ventilated, illuminated, and painted before we plan the sorts of display material to go into the spaces.

This phased construction task will be out-sourced to professionals. The Society is expected to contribute a proportion of the capital costs in conjunction with the Town of Mosman Park and Lottery West.

Society Curator/Special Projects member Don Rae's business skills have proven invaluable in this project to date. As President I award Don a mental pay rise and a another course of "youth pills"!

Additional above ground interpretive signage will shortly be erected providing walkers historic data of the site.

Committee member Graham McKenzie Smith has completed the refurbishment plan for all the tunnel spaces -

this task was a strong recommendation of our professionally produced Interpretation Plan. Our active members will take on the variety of changes on busy-bees and mid week, via the Karrakatta members. Museum displays cannot stay static for too long, and ours are no exception.

Our team continue to staff the Battery Site. I thank each one for your on-going enthusiasm.

In July several members attended the Battery Birthday Dinner at the Hobbs Drill Hall. An excellent meal was complimented by a pipe band. The company was pleasant, but the showers drenched several couples as they arrived. I was delighted to catch up with you, Ray Bird.

Our recent Busy-Bees at the site have involved some heavy duty shifting of several tonnes of spoil from below ground - the dust certainly is a reminder of what the original fellows experienced during construction in the 1940's.

If you, dear reader, would like to help the crew down there on the last Saturday of each month, please contact our Secretary John Blylevens several days prior, that way he can cater for you. And yes Bob E. it was great to see you at the July Busy-Bee!

It has been a productive past few months with lots of jobs ,small and large, being done. I am certain that all concerned get a sense of job satisfaction along the way. I guess that is what we volunteers are in it for.

I am looking to Springtime.

As for the Redlegs? There is always next year!

My regards to you all.

David Carter.

President

**DRONE (ING) ON!**



n Sunday the 18th of September the Battery Site was inundated with a hundred youngsters decked out in flash orange shirts, who dashed about seeking answers to military questions as part of 'STOMP'. This community activity was part of the Mosman Park Youth Advisory Council's initiative.

We supplied 10 site related questions and they hunted down the answers.

Whirring about above our heads was a drone, that kept a remote eye on proceedings.

A good time was had by all.

David Carter and fellow members.



## 50th Anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan

The Anniversary was commemorated at the Battery Birthday/RAA Corps Dinner on 9th July 2016. Among those attending were five guest Vietnam Veterans who had participated in support of Delta Company 6 RAR during The Battle.

Captain Peter Treleaven, 105th Field Battery RAA has kindly submitted his recollections of the Battle.

### MEMORIES OF THE 17-18 AUGUST 1966

Fifty years on and the distant memory of those days is just a blur.

On the 29th April 1965 a week after my 23rd Birthday

Prime Minister Menzies announced an Australian Infantry Battalion with supporting troops would be sent to Vietnam. 1RAR Group was deployed by 10 June 1965. 161 Field Battery RNZA with four 105mm L5 Pack Howitzers followed and reported "Ready" on 17 July 1965.

This ANZAC Force was under command of Headquarters Australian Force Vietnam (HQ AAFV).

When it was decided to provide more balance to this Force by adding a Field Battery, a Troop of Engineers, a Light Helicopter Reconnaissance Flight, a Signals Detachment and additional Logistic Personnel. 4 Field Regiment RAA based at Wacol Qld was placed on 21 days notice to move a battery overseas on operational service with effect from 28 July 1965,

105 Battery RAA was selected. 4 Field Regiment RAA was stripped to send the most experienced personnel to bring it up to augmented establishment of an Independent Battery. On 24 September 1965 aboard HMAS Sydney the 105th became the first RAA unit to leave Australian Shores for active service in Vietnam.

On 28th September 1965 HMAS Sydney anchored 2 miles off Cap St Jacques Vietnam and American landing craft ferried the Battery ashore to Vung Tau. Two days later Hercules aircraft flew the 105th Battery to Bien Hoa and the officers and men started establishing a gun position/base camp in a disused rubber plantation.

The 105th was under command of the AAFV and the operational control of the Commander USMACV in sup-

port 173rd Airborne Brigade (US). Ammunition was delivered on 1 October 1965 and the 105th Battery fired their first round in the Vietnam War the following day.

The Battery conducted 8/9 operations from our Bien Hoa Base but eventually moved to Nui Dat 65 km SE of Bien Hoa on 23 May 1966 to secure the future home of the Australian Task Force (IATF) which had committed to the war effort in Vietnam.

During the night of 16/17 August 1966, 105 Battery had fired on enemy mortar positions following the mortaring of the Task Force. 24 Australians were wounded in this bombardment.

18th August 1966 Forward Observer Capt Morrie Stanley 161 Battery RNZA ordered "Fire Mission". 161 Battery was in Direct Support of 6 RAR, 103 Field Battery was in Direct Support of 5 RAR, 105 Field was in General Support as was A Battery 2/35 Artillery Battalion (US) . The Col Joye Little Pattie Show was about to commence and I moved off to pick up "tucker" prior to going to the show.

I could hear the small arms fire and presumably mortar fire coming from the vicinity of the 6 RAR perimeter and clearly 161 was engaged in the Battery Target called.

I was wandering away from the Battery Command Post with the two Section Commanders when I heard over the tannoy "Fire Mission Regiment". It can only have been minutes after the initial battery target was engaged by 161 RNZA, Unfortunately it took 8-10 minutes to get a clearance to use all 24 guns. As I understood later the TF Commander Brigadier OD Jackson was loath to use the other Batteries that took them away from their

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supporting roles while he was trying to gather all of the situation reports and understand the enormity of the problem,

During the next three hours the battle raged and the gunners faced numerous problems on the gun line, problems that would be a real test of character and professional skill.

The torrential rain was horrific, the like of which we had never accounted before. It started soon after the engagement had commenced. Lightning cut the tannoy lines, this resulted in orders having to be shouted from the Command Post to the guns in relays until the damage had been repaired. The continuing lightning and rain also short circuited the tannoy system so much so that it caused an open line from the Command Post to the guns and they could now hear what was going on "up front" via a radio in the Command Post. I remember when the order came through "Drop 50" someone remarked "shit that will be on their heads". I believe that at that moment we all realised just how close we were firing in front of our own troops and just how much the computations in the Command Post and laying and corrections at the guns had to be in "doubly spot on" as this was really close.

Another problem we were facing - the guns were losing their GAP's (Gun Aiming Points) with the continuing rain and smoky haze from the cordite fumes. The Gun Sergeants had to improvise and use bicycle torches attached to a star picket. This compounded a problem we had throughout the tour in Vietnam, condensation and fogging that we experienced with the sights.

Soon after we had arrived in country we had adopted a policy which proved to be very fortunate with the ammunition to be fired. We noticed a large variation in firing different lot numbers. Fall of shot appeared to fall all over the place so we sorted our ammunition by lot numbers into 'Close Target' and then "Harassing and Interdiction". One batch of numbers was used by all guns when firing in close support of our troops.

The toxic gas hanging in the gun line produced a further

problem. While we had torrential rain there was no wind, and the gases from the cordite took its toll on some members of the gun line. A clerk assisting in the ammunition bunker was overcome by the fumes and passed out. One of the gun Sergeants had to hand over to his Bombardier and others were just plain sick. The cordite fumes were not dispersing and formed a smoky haze around the gun position making it difficult to breathe. Ammunition supply was causing grave concern. Then at approx. 0200 hours a big Chinook helicopter arrived with a slung load of desperately needed artillery ammunition and this had to be manhandled from the helipad to the ammunition dump. Every available person was dragged into lugging the heavy ammunition to the gun position.

Whilst the battle raged the Battery had to continue our regular routine. A standing patrol had to move out under command of a gun Sergeant, machine gun pits had to be manned, which further reduced numbers on the gun. We unboxed Splintex rounds in case the gun line was threatened by an assault from Charley, and every available person to a man was engaged in the supply of ammunition - cooks, clerks, medics, RAEME and locators from the Div Loc Detachment.

Gun line fatigue was experienced by all. Most of the Battery had been awake since the mortar attack on the night 16-17 August. At 0700 hrs of the 19th August, most were suffering fatigue. The total ammunition expended by all Guns during the three hour period was 3198 rounds of 105 mm, 242 rounds of 155mm. Consequently, the task of bringing the guns back to full ammunition entitlement again, tidying up the gun position and removal of spent cartridges and unused cordite bags left us all quite-buggedgered!

The 105th left Vietnam on the "QANTAS Freedom Bird" 24 Sep 1966 and arrived back in Australia on the 25 Sept. We had fired approx 30000 rounds during the 12 months of operations. We lost 2 KIA, 5WIA, 1 DWOAS, and I evacuated with cerebral malaria.

The 105 Bty returned to its lines at 4 Fd Regt, Wacol.



## ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ARTILLERY

### **GUNNERS' DAY**

**SUNDAY 6th NOVEMBER 2016**

All Gunners, their families, guests and other interested parties are invited to attend the Annual Gunners Day parade and service at Stirling Square Guildford Sunday 6th November 2016.

11:00am: RV at St Matthews Church

11:10am: Parade forms up in church entry off Johnson Street. Guests and families seated at dais in front of memorial

11:15am: Parade steps off, follows path to church then south through Hobbs Gates, left onto Stirling Street, left into Meadow Street, past the saluting dais then left into memorial

11:25am: Wreath Laying Ceremony

11:45am: Gunner's Day Service in St Matthews Church

12:30pm: Light Luncheon in the Church Hall

Parade led by Australian Army Band Perth, Gunners past and present, serving Officers and Soldiers of 3 Light Battery RAA and members of the Australian Cadet Corps.

Reviewing Officer: BRIG Gerry Warner: Representative COL COMDT Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery  
Service will be conducted by Reverend Katrina Holgate  
Guests include Members of Parliament, Local Government, R&SL and other Associations.

Enquiries to Hon Secretary Royal Australian Artillery Association Western Australia (Inc): John Blylevens 0438 695 711

GUNNERS Day has been conducted every year since 1928 in memory of those who fell during WW1 (and subsequent conflicts). It is a special day for remembrance and a great opportunity to catch up with Gunner colleagues.

**UBIQUE**

## BASTILLE DAY MARCH

The 11th/28th Battalion, the Royal Western Australian Regiment (11/28 RWAR), is an Australian Army Reserve unit based in Perth, Western Australia. The Battalion has seen service in multiple theatres, most notably Turkey and the Western Front in World War I. In July 2016, 11/28 RWAR was given the privilege of deploying personnel to France for three weeks after an invitation from President François Hollande to lead the annual Bastille Day march. This saw eight personnel from 11/28 RWAR join a 120 strong Australian Army, Navy and Air Force contingent. Most notably, as 3 Light Battery falls under 11/28 RWAR, local gunners Captain Pearce and myself were given the opportunity to deploy as a part of this contingent. The first contingent responsibility was to troop the colours of the Australian Battalions that served on the Western Front in World War I. This would occur along the Champs-Élysées. The second was to participate in the Centenary of Anzac commemorative services at Fromelles, Polygon Wood and Pozieres. This would involve a number of services and interments of soldiers who had lost their lives there.



**The entire Australian Defence Force Contingent  
at the Saint-Cyr L'École military school.**



**Ensigns and escorts from 11th/28th Battalion in front of the 1<sup>st</sup> Division  
Memorial in Pozieres.**

**Captain Pearce is fourth from the right, Captain Mahr is third from the  
right.**

The contingent initially resided at the military school at Saint-Cyr L'École, 25km from Paris. It was here and at the French barracks in Sartori that rehearsals for the Bastille Day parade took place. On the 14th of July, at the head of 3264 French soldiers, 212 vehicles and 100 New Zealanders, the contingent marched along the Champs-Élysées in front of thousands of Parisians, the Arc de Triomphe setting an incredible image behind them. The personnel who deployed as part of the commitment from 11/28 RWAR carried and escorted the Queen's and Regimental colours of both the 11th and 28th Battalions, and found the parade to be both an exceptional honour and remarkable experience.

Following the parade, the Army contingent redeployed to the northern city of Lille to begin rehearsals for the Centenary of ANZAC Commemorative services. The first service was held at the town of Fromelles, which was the site of Australia's first major offensive in France. It was here that the headstones of six previously unknown soldiers were re-dedicated. The contingent

then took part in the burial

of an unknown soldier at the cemetery in Polygon Wood, Belgium, the site of another significant Australian battle and part of the larger Ypres action. The final ceremony was a burial of three unknown soldiers at Pozieres, followed by a service in front of the 1st Division memorial. During the fighting at Pozieres, Australia suffered 23,000 casualties in seven weeks. When time permitted, the contingent was given the opportunity to take leave and explore both France and Belgium. This allowed personnel to see and experience the extensive historical sites and local cultures. The entire trip was an incredibly moving experience that will likely remain a highlight of the careers of all personnel involved.



**The Australian Defence Force Contingent prepares to step off during the Bastille Day Parade.**

**The Arc De Triomphe makes for an impressive backdrop**

Captain N Mahr  
Instructor Gunnery  
3rd Light Battery, Royal Australian Artillery

## **HIGHLIGHTS OF THE BIRTHDAY DINNER**

Members of the 51<sup>st</sup> Army Cadet Unit Swan Regiment Pipes and Drums piped Guests to the Dinner and provided a stirring background of Highland Tunes throughout the meal.

Later in the evening four very professional Cadets performed the traditional Sword Dance to the accompaniment of the Pipes and received an ovation for their skill.



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Left to Right - Major Rob Coales    Mr David Cornell    Mr Rick Walsh    Mr Laurie Willey  
 BC 3 Lt Bty                      131 Div Loc Bty              105 Fd Bty              105 Fd Bty

Mr Harley Webb    Mr Peter Treleaven    Sgt Robert Toase  
 "D" Coy 6RAR        105 Fd Bty                      3 Lt Bty

### **THREE LIGHT BATTERY RAA TOP SOLDIER**

Gunner Yannick Siegwart was the recipient of the Royal Australian Artillery Association's Award to the Most Outstanding Soldier 2016. Here, Gunnar Siegwart proudly displays his Award Certificate and the Canvas Mounted Photograph of the M777 155mm Medium Gun and Detachment in the "ACTION" role. The M777 Gun is standard issue to Australian Gun Regiments.

Congratulations and "Well Done" Gunner Siegwart





### **10% discount to any current or former RAA or their families**

Sandgroper is a West Australian family owned and operated camper trailer & caravan hire company that has a proud history of providing great customer service and a high quality camping fleet.

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### **NEW TOUR GUIDES – WELCOME**

Are you keen to promote one of WA's premier military history sites to others?

Then you are welcome to join our team of guides who volunteer their time for a few hours, on a roster basis once a month on a Sunday, to conduct public tours.

This historic site is the World War II Gun complex built as a part of Fortress Fremantle Defence located at Buckland Hill in Mosman Park.

- You will be trained and coached
- You will be part of a friendly team
- You need to be able to climb steps
- Vacancies for Guides and Cashiers

For further information call David Carter 93673539 (after hours)