

CHAIR RAAHC REPORT TO RAAHC ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

12 NOVEMBER 2022



This Chair report will outline the activities of the RAAHC since the last AGM in November 1921. Detailed information. Including plans and finance can be found on the RAAHC website. The Board continues to meet regularly although our experience with Covid has led to more regular electronic meetings with an electronic link between physical groups in ACT and NSW with our individual directors in QLD and VIC.

This report will outline the RAAHC activities in 2022. The RAAHC Corporate Plan 2021-2024 has been revised and will be placed on the RAAHC website. I welcome back Nick Floyd to the Board following his completion of his actions for the 150th Anniversary of Australian Artillery. There has been little change in the Board from last year. The Board now comprises:

Chair - Ian Ahearn

Deputy Chair Nick Floyd

Honorary Secretary Rob Crawford

Honorary Treasurer Peter Lawrence

Directors:

John Cox, Schon Condon Craig Furini, Ron West, Bill Foxall and James Eling

Lieutenant General Greg Bilton continues as Patron

December 2021 saw the changeover of the Head of Regiment (HoR) appointments. With effect 4 December 2021, Brigadier Damien Hill was appointed HoR 21; LT COL Mathew Hodda, CO/CI of the School of Artillery, was made Deputy HoR and WO1 Anthony M Hortle assumed the appointment of the Regimental Master Gunner (RMG). We wish them all the best for the future.

The Board welcomed the presence of the HoR, Brigadier Damian Hill and the Head of the Australian Army History Unit (AAHU), Mr Tim Gellel, at the May 2022 Board Meeting.

The Journal of the RAAHC, Cannonball, has reached its 100th edition with Edition 1 dating back to 1980. Not a bad effort by retired Gunners over a period of 42 years! Our thanks to Terry Brennan

It would be remiss of me not to comment on the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II the Captain General of the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery. As the longest serving monarch the Queen was a presence in all our lives over the past 70 years. There is no doubt of the affection and esteem that she attracted from the Commonwealth and the World. We should all wish her successor, Charles III, all the best for his reign.

150th Anniversary of Australian Artillery

It has been decided to cancel the joint initiative of the Australian Artillery Association (AAA) and the RAAHC to conduct photo/video/essay contests during 2021. The response was disappointing with only one photo and one essay received.

Volunteer Recognition - 150th Medallions

Volunteers are the backbone of the Company and continue to provide unstinting support to our all endeavours. An opportunity arrived to allow us to recognise some of our volunteers when the AAA commissioned a medallion set to commemorate the 150th Anniversary of Australian Artillery. Queen Elizabeth II, our Captain General, gave approval for the use of Her image on the set which is shown below.

The AAA offered four sets to the RAAHC and it was decided that the medallions would be presented to RAAHC volunteers for outstanding contributions.



Boxed medallion set

The four medallions were awarded to:

- Roy Clausen-for his work in the collections area.
- Roy Mellier – for his work on AMW.
- Aaron and Sandy McMillan- for their work on the ACG.
- Harold Ganter- for his work on the ACG.



Chair Ian Ahearn presented the medallions to Aaron & Sandy McMillan (above left) and Harold Ganter shown in above right with Sandy

I would like to take this opportunity to thank **all** the volunteers for their support and outstanding efforts over the past decade. We could not succeed without you and your generous donation of time is appreciated beyond words.

Gun Gate at RMC

Kevin Browning raised the issue of the condition of the two guns now on display at the Gun Gate. Whilst the guns are generally in fair condition there are areas where the condition of the guns is less than it should be and, if not addressed, could have serious result on the integrity of the guns. The guns are on loan from the Australian War Memorial and it was suggested that should Duntroon wish to continue the tradition of displaying these guns at that location they need to take responsibility for the proper care of them. Photos of the guns are shown below



The HoR offered to take the matter up with the Commandant RMC, the Australian War Memorial (AWM) and the Defence Security and Estate Group (SEG). An offer that was greatly appreciated and the HoR subsequently advised that there will need to be an assessment of the work required and the source of funding. The AWM Loans Team have indicated that a conservator's condition check will be scheduled prior to the 30 Sep 22. A SEG Environmental and Heritage Manager will also attend this condition check to ensure any actions required by Defence for the heritage sensitivities of these historic assets are managed in accordance with the loan agreement. The RAAHC has offered support as subject matter experts on what "right" looks like for restoration.

Puckapunyal Combined Arms Heritage Learning Centre

The Head AAHU gave the Board a brief on the previous Federal Government's decision to construct the Puckapunyal Combined Arms Heritage and Learning Centre (CAHLC). It is proposed to provide a modern, purpose-built facility to house the Royal Australian Armoured Corps (RAAC) and Royal Australian Artillery (RAA) heritage collections. The proposed name of Combined Arms Heritage Learning Centre does not reflect the true nature of the Centre and should be challenged. The advent of a new government and the study into Defence needs may affect the proposal which planned that the Centre would be opened in financial year 2024-2025. We will need to wait and see.

Essential History Project

John Cox and Nick Floyd continue to manage this project. Steady progress is being maintained and regular meetings with AAHU are being conducted. AAHU has flagged that it would like access to an early draft of the manuscript for Artillery Museum planning purposes. It has been recognised from the outset that the two 'endeavours' should complement each other. Changes to AAHU staff have slowed development of the History; a natural outcome of a change in personnel. At this date, it still appears the RAAHC will not need to provide any funding for the Project.

Saving Nigel Evans WW2 Artillery Website

John Cox became aware that an often consulted and valued resource (WW2 artillery technical information) was likely to be lost due to the death of the owner, Nigel Evans (former RA & RAA). Fortuitous contact from Nigel's widow with the CRC resulted in being able to contact a UK based person (Pete Mallett) who had managed to obtain a copy of the 'old school website'. The web files were sent on the understanding that the RAAHC would host for free on the RAAHC website and provide attribution to Nigel Evans. Excellent work by Graham Hampton and Paul Camilleri saw a successful outcome achieved in a few days.

The RAAHC has received the following accolade from Pete Mallett:

Fantastic news guys, great to see the website preserved by RAAHC, Nigel would be overjoyed to know that it will retain a home in Australia. Glad too to know that the Webmaster has had no issues with uploading the pages to your website, I didn't think he would have as I did manage to get Admin access to the old site and downloaded the site as an entire block. Although, whilst I was sure it ought to work straight from the backup I hadn't actually, fully tested it myself, so, very glad to know that there was nothing missing and no broken links!

Australia's Memorial Walk (AMW) Entry Monument Redesign Project

The RAAHC is proposing a project to redesign the entrance plinth to the AMW by adding a bronze plaque to explain the background of the AMW and an Acknowledgement of the Traditional Owners of the site of the AMW. Currently the entrance monument sits immediately to the south or right of the AMW path and opposite the Defence of Sydney Memorial. The monument is shown below.



The redesign of the entrance monument will involve a bronze plaque will be commissioned to provide an acknowledgement of the traditional owners of the land and provide a background for and welcome .to, visitors to the AMW. The plaque will describe the background to the creation of AMW and the method to obtain additional information on the memorials and pavers. The plaque will be to the same high standard employed throughout the AMW (these were upgraded by the RAAHC two years ago).

The redesign work proposed to the monument is to:

- a. Remove the existing four mini-desks.
- b. Retain the existing sandstone base and tabletop.
- c. Careful remove of the existing four badges from the mini desks.
- d. Supply new sandstone desk to match existing monument sandstone and the associated facing and internal secure supports.
- e. Install a bronze plaque in the centre of the desktop.
- f. Install the existing four badges on the new desktop.

Agreement for the redesign has been obtained from the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust. The Trust has also suggested that text on the plaque that relates to the First Nation's people be a copy of the text used by the Northern Beaches Council. Estimated cost based on quotes will be \$12,000. Peter Lawrence will manage the project.

The AMW Warden, Roy Mellier, remains unwell and has been hospitalised a number of occasions since the beginning of the year. We wish Roy all the best. However, the AMW remains in remarkably good condition with the occasional sweeping only needed. An advertisement with Volunteering Australia for a volunteer warden has been fruitless. Orders for donated pavers have dropped off since over the year. At this stage there are appropriately 4650 individual engraved pavers and 77 centrepiece pavers.

Cutler Research Centre (CRC)

Requests for information are being frequently received. There are now seven volunteers engaged at the CRC at North Head. These volunteers continuously improve the online catalogue (almost 6000 items) and holdings of

scanned items while undertaking research to address enquiries. Locating information to answer inquiries is improving as are scanning methods. The CRC volunteers work with a network of subject matter experts across Australia to ensure the accuracy of history that is shared. The CRC Manager (Tim Ford) says there is room for more volunteers who either attend the CRC or can work remotely.

With respect to making information on Australian Artillery history widely available, the RAAHC decided to invest in changing the operation of its catalogue from a local (not shared) application to a worldwide shared online Content Management System (CMS). It has been a transformational project. This required expenditure on data transfer between the old system and a new selected system, namely eHive. This type of online system can do much more than the well-known 'library catalogue'. A licence fee applies to the use of eHive, which the RAAHC has funded. Improvements in the LAN were made to complement the change to a CMS. Thankfully, application for government funding via a grant was successful to the tune of about \$8000, helping the RAAHC service the cost of the project. Success with populating the CMS has resulted in the quantity of information available online exceeding the initial low level licence limit so the RAAHC recently invested in a licence upgrade. Overall, more was expended on the CRC improvements than any other RAAHC operation over the period.

Significantly, the RAAHC eHive record has also now been accepted by the National Library of Australia and can be found on its Trove website. Data quality continues to improve as does volunteers' experience with the CMS. CRC volunteers are progressively adding PDF indexes for the eHive files and adding more Gunner periodicals as electronic records become available from Gunner associations. Most Cannonball, RAA Liaison Letters, RAAWA newsletters, Cascabel and some sub-unit newsletters are now searchable in pdf form.

An important achievement in the period is the development of a CRC Procedures manual. The manual is essential as operations have become more sophisticated, particularly for managing online content and associated storage of data.

In summary, the CRC is now well placed to achieve contemporary high standards in curating information on history. There is a demanding road ahead, particularly in prioritising and digitising the most used and valuable items held at the CRC.

Middle Head and Georges Head Interpretation

The RAAHC has been assisting the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service with signage at Middle Head. The physical signage will also be supported by digital interpretation with the development of three new webpages. This will focus on the Inner Fort and Outer Fort at Middle Head plus Georges Head (and the Obelisk Bay gun emplacement). These webpages will host the animations that NSW Parks & Wildlife Service have commissioned and will be accessible via a QR code on the signs.

All Souls Church Memorial

Queensland has reason to be proud of its many tributes to its fallen soldiers, and in most cities, towns, and hamlets are to be found lasting edifices in honour of them, but the little chapel at Victoria, Ingham, is a particularly fitting and appealing. See [Monument Australia website](#) for more information.

In February 2022 a letter of support was sent in response to a request for a proposal to restore the All Souls Anglican Memorial Church Schneider 75mm gun. The proposal sort a major DVA major grant but they were unsuccessful, however they did obtain a \$10,000 grant. The funds will be used to construct a memorial path embedded with eleven brass plaques to honour the local young men who fell during WW1. The gun mount foundation will also be repaired. Additional grant funding is being sort to enable the site to be improved and to

ensure the gun is weather protected. The organisers have received support to repaint and stabilise the gun from Wilmar Sugar Australia but have requested the use of the RAAHC letter of support for further grant applications.

Kevin Browning provided all the work for the supporting letter and is to be congratulated on a good outcome. The photos below show the Memorial Church and gun before the recent development and the work done on the memorial to date.



Financial Position

The company is in a stable and solid financial position as evidenced by the financial report issued as part of the AGM. Peter Lawrence, as Honorary Treasurer, has done a sterling job over an extended period and deserves the appreciation of all members.

As you can see we have had a busy year. Finally, I would like to extend a huge thank you, to the wide range of volunteers around Australia that assist our activities. I wish to particularly acknowledge those volunteers working on our various projects and in the CRC. Thanks are also due to all the RAAHC Directors for their significant contributions throughout the year. I offer a special thank you to our Patron, Lieutenant General Greg Bilton as well as to our Honorary Solicitor, Paul Fordyce and our Honorary Auditor, Graham Martin.

Ubique,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ian Ahearn". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ian Ahearn

Chair RAAHC Board of Directors