

AUSTRALIAN GUNNER OBITUARY RESOURCE

Warrant Officer Class One Keith Maxwell Cossart, MSM, RAA, (Ret'd)

(26 July 1933 – 25 November 2016)

By Major Ian K Cossart RAA, (Retd)



Keith Maxwell Cossart, the second son to LTCOL Leslie and Isabelle Cossart was born on 26 July 1933 in Sydney, NSW. Although being born in Sydney, Keith grew up in Queensland where his father was stationed with the Army.

Keith was educated for brief periods from 1938 to 1941 at Woolowin, Caloundra, Gatton, Beaudesert and Ascot State Schools. In January 1942, he commenced at the Church of England Boy's School in Toowoomba (and at Southport where this school was located from April 1942 to December 1943 while the Australian Army occupied the Toowoomba school premises) where he remained until mid-1946 after which he attended the Church of England Grammar School in Brisbane for the remainder of 1946. He then attended the Gatton High School until July 1949.

Following in his fathers (WWII) and grandfathers (Boer War) footsteps, Keith enlisted in the ARA. Firstly, as an Army Apprentice (1/8506) on 28 July 1949 and then transferred to the Royal Australian Artillery (1/2688), North Head, Sydney, for Corps training after which he was posted to 1 Field Regiment, RAA at Georges Heights Sydney on 9 September 1952.

In 1954, he was transferred to the ARA Cadre Staff of 3 Light Regiment RAA (re-designated later to 23 Light Regiment) where he was promoted to bombardier (January 1955), temporary sergeant (September 1955) and sergeant (August 1956). Postings to the Directorate of Artillery at Army Headquarters Melbourne (1956), 1 Field Regiment and then to the Cadre Staff of Headquarters RAA 1 Corps (1957) followed.

On the disbandment of the RAA 1 Corps in 1960, Keith was posted to the newly raised Headquarters RAA 1 Division where he was promoted to staff sergeant in August 1961. Keith was then transferred to 4 Field Regiment, Wacol, Queensland in October 1963 and promoted to Warrant Officer Class Two as the Troop Sergeant Major of "D" Troop, 105 Field Battery. It was during this time that Keith deployed with Exercise "Tasman III" with 16 Field Regiment, RNZA as the Battery Guide, 105 Field Battery; an appointment that his son, Ian Keith Cossart would occupy some 26 years later. In 1965, he was again posted to 1 Field Regiment in Holsworthy, firstly as the Troop Sergeant Major "A" Troop, A Field Battery and later as the Battery Sergeant Major, Headquarters Battery. Unbeknownst to Keith, his son would follow in his footsteps by being appointed to the same position in 1995 some 30 years after him. Keith was then appointed as the Battery Sergeant Major of 131 Divisional Locating Battery and in 1967 to the ARA Cadre Staff 130 Gun Locating Battery as the ARA BSM where he was awarded the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal.

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On 16 June 1970, Keith would move his family to Canberra where he was promoted to the rank of Warrant Officer Class One as the "Clerk Technical" in the Directorate of Equipment Policy. On the 5th April 1971, Keith was appointed as the Regimental Sergeant Major of Army Headquarters. It was during this time that he was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal in July of that year. He was fiercely proud of this appointment and that as the PMC of the Army Headquarters Canberra Sergeant Mess of which he held for 4 years (1971-1974). Keith was then transferred to the Directorate of Army Recruiting as a Staff Officer Class 2 before retiring from the ARA on 1 August 1976.

After retirement from the Army Keith worked for the NRMA for 14 years as a Claims Officer and as Legal and Touring Officer. In 1990 he went to the Australian War Memorial as an Information Assistant and later as the Public Events Coordinator. One of the many highlights during his time at the (AWM) was his direct involvement in the Memorial's 75th Anniversary Celebrations, the Entombment of the "Unknown Australian Soldier" and the 50th Anniversary of the end of World War 2, (Australia Remembers 1995).

Not to be left idle, Keith took on other pursuits for many years in and around the Canberra area. Somehow, in amongst his lawn bowls and grandchildren, Keith managed to fit in being the first National Secretary of the Australian Defence Force Welfare Association (ADFWA), Hon Auditor of the Canberra Swiss Club and many other local organisations, Hon Auditor of the ACT Artillery Association for many years, on the Board of the Woden Valley RSL, and in his spare time was a Hospital Visitor for the Woden Valley RSL and Treasurer of the Body Corp where he lived for 20 years as well as being a Justice of the Peace, (ACT). He was an active participant of the 105 Battery Association and enjoyed going to the various reunions to catch up with mates.

Keith fully retired in August 1996 spending his time in Canberra coupled his annual pilgrimage to Golden Beach, Caloundra where he and his wife Monica (the daughter of the late LTCOL Hal Hartnett MBE, also a Gunner) would beat the Canberra winter.

Keith passed away peacefully in Canberra Hospital surrounded by his close family. He leaves behind a very full and successful life of duty, camaraderie, tales, and devotion to everything he undertook. Keith was a gentleman and tribal elder of the Canberra Gunners with strong values, who was held in high esteem by all who served with him. He always showed a fond interest in the RAA happenings and to those who would follow in his footsteps. He will be sadly missed.