

THE ARTILLERY NEWS.

DECEMBER 2006 – FEBRUARY 2007



Official Correspondence.

R.A.A Assoc. of Tas. Inc.

Hon. Secretary, Norman B. Andrews OAM., SBStJ.

Tara Room, 24 Robin St;

Newstead. Tas. 7250.

E-Mail: forfar@gmail.com

R.A.A. Association of Tasmania Inc.

Homepage: <http://www.tasartillery.o-f.com/>

R.A.A.A.T. NORTHERN HISTORICAL WING

The October general gathering of the R.A.A.A.T. Inc. Northern Historic Wing was held on 12th. October commencing at 2.00 p.m. However, as this date was Launceston Show Day - and the Inveresk area and its parking facilities were required for Show patrons - we met at **Mt. Esk Nursing Home - St. Leonards**, as we have on several previous occasions, as guests of Eric Ryan who is now a permanent resident in that facility. Please note that all members of the Association are cordially invited to attend any of our totally informal bimonthly get-togethers. Our R.A.A.A.T. Historic Wing meetings are held on the second Thursday of every second month and, usually, at the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery at Inveresk in the Friends of the Museum meeting room.

Those who attend these meetings usually bring a small plate of goodies to share.

Members present at Mt. Esk were:

Norm Andrews, Eric Ryan, Gordon Rowlings, Frank Stokes, Rick Wood, Max Frost, Marc Smith, Bill Hoyle, Des Salter, Charles Tee, Graeme Petterwood, Gunter Breier and Joe Ferguson. Several apologies were noted.

The gathering was organised to finalise attendance plans for the El Alamein Day ceremony to be held in Hobart on Monday, 23rd. October 2006 and confirm interest in the Social Wing luncheon re-union due for Saturday, 9th December at South Launceston Football Club rooms to celebrate St. Barbara's Day.

Other important dates such as Remembrance Day 11/11/2006 and the Annual General Meeting – to be held in Hobart on 18th. November 2006 - were also briefly discussed informally.

The use of an Army minibus, to cater for those 12 or so members who wished to attend the El Alamein ceremony, had been kindly offered by **Defence Support Group, Corporate Services & Infrastructure – Tasmania, Anglesea Barracks**

It is appropriate that a '**Thank you**' be extended to the Army for that great gesture - from those of us who would not otherwise have been able to attend.

Frank Stokes and Graeme Petterwood had offered to lay the R.A.A.A.T. wreath and Charles Tee and Norm Andrews would act as the official flag party..

A reminder of the A.G.M. was distributed and advance nominations were called for – a pleasant and positive response was forthcoming from our Historic Wing members. A sub-committee was also selected from volunteers to organise the December luncheon. An official invitation will be sent direct to members and a notification was to be placed in the Examiner newspaper on several occasions.

Frank Stokes also reminded us that, due to the fact that many of our members are also involved with the 6th Field Gunners Association, the Gunners had invited all our R.A.A.A.T. members to attend their annual re-union luncheon at S.L.F.C. on the 21st. October 2006 commencing at about 12 noon for 12.30 sit-down..

After the information session was completed, we all enjoyed our afternoon tea and got down to some serious 'gunner gossip' and tossed around a few ideas that might be worth pursuing in the future.

THE EVENTS

Saturday 21st October.

The 12.00 for 12.30 Gunner's luncheon at the South Launceston Football Club rooms was attended by about 50 members and guests.

To save confusion, all invitees were given a label to attach to their person. Most of us knew each other – but it was still handy for those of us who can remember faces but can't remember names whenever we have our 'senior's moments'.

A giant raffle was held and the donated prizes were all of a high standard – especially the stuffed pieces that would make great Christmas presents for grandchildren.

The function was a departure from the previous format but, it was obvious, that it was very successful and had breathed new interest into the group.

The re-election of the previous committee was completed in double-quick time by the more than satisfied membership.

Gunner's President, Ray Tilley, delivered the '*state of the association*' address and praised those on his executive committee who had assisted him over the last 12 months. Special mention was made of the efforts of their new treasurer, the energetic little joker in the pack, Bill Hoyle, who was also a member and friend of many in the R.A.A.A.T.

Note - *Unbeknown to many, the fact was that Billy was a very sick man – but he never complained or let it show amongst his fellow gunners and friends until the last few weeks of his illness. Bill went to meet his Maker, peacefully, on November 29th 2006 after his final courageous battle with cancer.*

(See R.A.A.A.T notice later in this newsletter)

Monday 23rd October.

Whilst the sun was shining in Hobart, the breeze coming off the Derwent River was rather stiff and still had a touch of morning chill in it when we arrived.

The Cenotaph on the Queen's Domain in Hobart was not quite as well attended as in some previous years as Time has undoubtedly taken its annual toll on the veterans of the event..

This year - and from now on – it was decided that the Day will be commemorated at 11.00 a.m. on the anniversary of the actual day of the famous battle.

Being a weekday may have had some bearing on local attendance, however, their numbers were swelled with the arrival of our small bus bearing the Northern contingent.

Within a few minutes a lot of reminiscences were being swapped before the official business got underway. Sometimes sad, and sometimes proud with a bit of Aussie cheek thrown in - but always memorable – the inspiring words of the service were again the order of the day and everyone who participated went away a little richer in spirit.

Afterwards, the traditional get-together with our comrades took place at the Waratah Hotel and, over excellent fare and a few doses of suitable lubricant, the tongues got wagging once more about the 'good times' with mates – some of whom, sadly, are no longer able to join us. **LEST WE FORGET!**

Saturday 18th November.

The Annual General Meeting of the Royal Australian Artillery Association of Tasmania was held at Derwent Barracks, Dowsing Point, Hobart on the afternoon of Saturday 18th November 2006 commencing at approx. 1.45 p.m.

It has to be said that the attendance was rather sparse with only 9 members present but, it should also be noted that the weekend was a busy one on the public and military social calendar and a substantial list of apologies was recorded. However, we had a dedicated quorum and all essential Committeemen were in attendance to present their reports of the last year's events.

The full A.G.M. report will be forthcoming through official channels in due course.
The meeting was quite productive and it was obvious that the R.A.A.T was in good financial shape and had a very good idea of its direction for 2007

Those in attendance were: President Barry Bastick, Secretary Norm Andrews, Treasurer Brett Coulson, Steve Carey, Alistair Chilcott, Ray Brown, Joe Ferguson, Des Salter and Graeme Petterwood.

The members present re-elected the existing Executive and general Committee without the necessity of calling for volunteers or holding ballots for any position as there were sufficient nominations received in advance.

BEREAVEMENT

WILLIAM 'BILL' MAXWELL HOYLE
JULY 5, 1920 – NOVEMBER 29, 2006



Bill Hoyle

The Artillery News was deeply saddened to learn that Bill Hoyle, who was one of our own R.A.A.T members as well as the Treasurer of the 6th. Field Gunners, passed away on the 29th November after a short, but losing, battle with cancer.

To many of us within the gunner fraternity, the news came as an utter surprise as Bill had never complained about the seriousness of his illness.

We never realised that, within 6 weeks of the Gunners re-union function, and our last R.A.A.T. Historic Wing meeting that some of us would be attending another more sad occasion in which Bill would be involved.

Bill was one of those 'nature's gentlemen' – a cheery rascal that we loved to be associated with – he had a wealth of experience that most of us couldn't jump over, and - if Bill couldn't get a smile from you, things must have been pretty crook!

He will be sorely missed as he was one of those blokes than we thought would always be there to brighten us up with his trademark tap on the shoulder..

The R.A.A.A.T. membership offers its deepest sympathy to Bill's extended family and to members of both associations who had the honour of calling Bill – a friend. Family Personal Announcements were published in the 'Examiner' Newspaper 30/11/06 and the funeral, organised by C.T. Finney, was scheduled for Tuesday 5th. December 2006.

FINAL CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2006

DECEMBER 2006

9th Dec: The Northern Social wing dinner to celebrate St. Barbara's Day will be a 'neat dress' mixed function at the South Launceston Football Club – as per official invitation notice.

REPORT IN BRIEF: This event attracted about 40 members – not a bad roll-up considering the time of year with Christmas preparations now in high gear. The Welcome - and the appropriate toasts - were done by Harold Mullins and Joe Ferguson. Fallen comrades were remembered. Yarns were swapped – before, during and after the very nice meal - and members enjoyed the company of their mates in the very nicely decorated, and well-catered-for venue- it was, pretty well, as good as it gets !

As usual, the traditional lucky door tickets were appreciated, and, due to the increase in the amount of donations this year, more happy members received a little extra for Christmas.

14thDec: Northern Historical /Social wing meeting at Queen Victoria Museum INVERESK 2.00 p.m. – As this is the final meeting for 2006, please bring a small plate. All R.A.A.A.T. members and guests/friends of Artillery are invited, as usual.

PLEASE NOTE – ALL OFFICIAL R.A.A.A.T. INC. CORRESPONDENCE SHOULD BE ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY, AND NOT TO THE EDITOR – AS IT MAY SAVE DELAYS AND DOUBLE-HANDLING.

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR



A BLAST FROM THE PAST

For those younger 6th Field Regiment Artillerymen who were a product of the 18th National Service Training Battalion of the mid 1950's this one's for you – particularly if you were part of 4 Platoon in the 2/56 intake.

Most of us could never forget our sometimes Sergeant, sometimes Bombardier (more often than not), Tommy Black who had an occupation as a Queensland coal-miner before Korea. He was rugged, average-sized soldier and he could be tough as nails when he had to be – but he was also a good bloke with it.

Bombardier (Acting-Sergeant) Black was a career regular soldier who had certainly been around the block a few times – but he treated us callow youths like the men he wanted us to be. He proudly wore the blue American citation earned at the battle of Kapyong in April 1951 along with his other ribbons. At this time the American award was known as the Distinguished Unit Citation but it later was redesignated the Presidential Unit Citation in November 1966.

Tommy had known what grenade fragments felt like long after that bitter conflict in Korea drew to its inevitable stalemate and he often dulled the memories and pains as best he could.

Tommy had sandy-ginger hair and like most people so blessed he liked to have a few drinks, a laugh, and a friendly grapple with other non-coms as time permitted. It was strongly rumoured that his absence from our platoon photo was because he was doing a short spell in the camp cooler after a boisterous night in the Sergeant's mess and because Tommy had bent someone's nose a bit.



**Bombardier 'Bazza' Barry McFarland is seated in the Front Row 3rd from the left.
Bombardier 'Tommy' Black is absent from this group.**

The tales were legend about this rough diamond 'hero' (at least we thought of him as such) – so why let the truth spoil a good story.

This one actually came from a gunner friend who heard it from one of Tommy's bombardier mates, Barry 'Bazza' McFarland (*picture below*) – who was also known to bend the elbow with him when opportunity knocked.



Evidently, one night – well after midnight – these famous two were coming quietly back into camp, in one of the far northern states, by way of the beach after a fine evening out hunting – or whatever - and they were attacked by what they thought was a swarm of giant mosquitoes. In fear for his life, Tommy, who was a bit worse for wear as he had consumed a few extra nips to brace himself against the night air, blasted away with his .303 until he ran out of ammo and had resorted to using the last few shells of a 12 gauge shotgun that they had with them.

A surprised scream of terror and of undescrivable pain came from out of the darkness – it appears that Tommy had put some pellets into the cook's assistant's bum by accident.

Evidently - the bloke had been up, as cook's assistants are, at an ungodly hour to prepare the morning sacrifice for the troops. He had been emptying the night-before's slops and disturbed the hordes of those very large blowies that tend to settle near discarded army tucker overnight so they can get an early start next morning.

From the shots, and then the blood-curdling racket, the picquet thought there had been murder committed and promptly took the two warriors into custody while the victim was getting his pants down to inspect the damage.

"Well, they sure sounded like giant killer mozzies," the still-suffering Bazza related in defence of their efforts of self-preservation as they were marched away..

Next morning, Tommy and Bazza were paraded in front of the C.O. and things looked extremely grim until they boys mentioned that they had decided to go shooting after coming back from a Rugby match - and the assistant cook had actually contributed to his own discomfort by disturbing the flying predators who attacked our heroes.

As luck had it the C.O. was a Rugby tragic – a real fanatic – and, definitely not a lover of camp tucker - so, *after a friendly chat*, the charges were dropped – but they didn't get away completely scot-free.

They had to nail a sign to their barrack-room door stating, *"Beware - Live Wires"*. Well, I believe it even if you don't!

Tommy could also take a joke – but, sometimes, he made us remember it too.

One early morning, in the middle of 1956 winter we fell out for 6.00 a.m. reveille and, as a joke, the whole platoon decided to put our slouch hats on backwards so the turn-up was on the wrong side. Tommy came out, gave us a funny look – he obviously twigged straight away – and, because he thought “*we must have idle time to think of such twaddle*” he gave us a bit of exercise to fill in that time. After calling the roll, he made us march up and down a dark 100 yd stretch of road 2 – 3 times in the bitter cold without so much as another question or reprimand about our hats - except a begrudging comment about ‘*acting as a unit at long last.*’ It was ‘brass monkey weather’ that May with just our greatcoats over pyjamas and boots on bare feet. We never did it again – we valued our personal accoutrements too much to risk the cold again – but each of us was able to keep our dignity, our hats on backwards as we marched - and we will never forget it. In some respects, I believe, Tommy Black was a haunted man who wanted to make sure that ‘his’ trainee gunners were given the best chance of survival that he could drum into us – but I’ll bet quids that Tommy appreciated the lark - and had a quiet chuckle later on.



GUARD DUTY WITH SLOUCH HATS ON THE CORRECT WAY – JUNE 1956

The Artillery News.

Graeme E. Petterwood. (Editor).

P.O. Box 10, Ravenswood. 7250. Tasmania.

Email: pwood@vision.net.au

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**Mr. Peter Gutwein (Liberal MHA - Bass).
Henty House, Civic Square, Launceston 7250.**