



## CHAIR RAAHC REPORT TO RAAHC ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

26 OCTOBER 2024

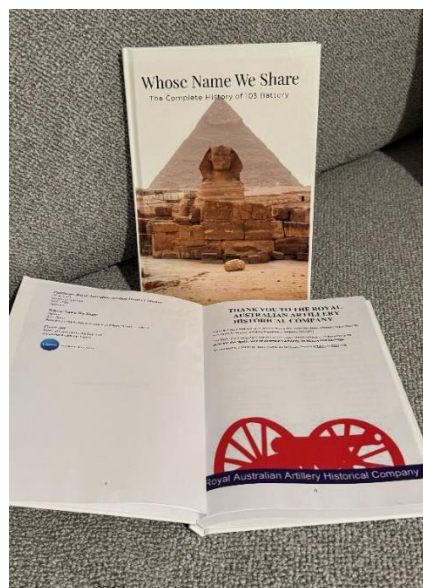
**Dear Members and Friends,**

The Board composition has had minor changes. Sean Ryan has joined us and assumed the role of Honorary Secretary. Craig Furini has resigned from the Board to focus on his role as the Representative Colonel Commandant. He has accepted the invitation to remain an ex-officio member of the Board. We still need new blood so please put up your hand if interested. The current Board is shown below:

- Chair - Ian Ahearn
- Deputy Chair - Nick Floyd
- Honorary Secretary – Sean Ryan
- Company Secretary – Rob Crawford
- Honorary Treasurer - Peter Lawrence
- Directors - John Cox, Schon Condon, Ron West, Bill Foxall, and James Eling

Lieutenant General Greg Bilton continues as Patron.

**Whose Name We Share**

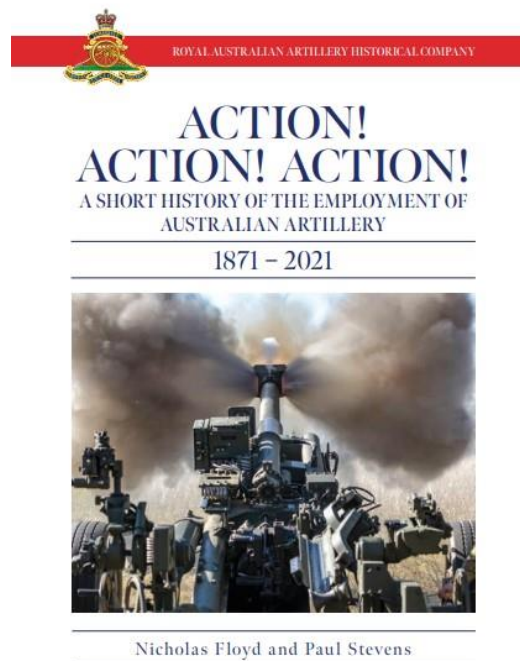


The RAAHC has been active supporting LBDR Hemi Croft (formerly of 8/12 Regiment) produce and publish his book "**Whose Name We Share: The Complete History of 103 Battery**". Over 160 pages Hemi lays out the rich history of all the batteries that have carried the 103 Battery title since the raising of the first 103 Howitzer Battery at Tel El Kebir on 6 March 1916. This book has taken on added importance as the RAAHC has recently learnt that 103 Battery will be disbanded in January 2025. As a recognition of Gunner Croft's efforts, the RAAHC has paid to print a restricted number of copies for distribution to 103 Battery, the Cutler Research Centre and selected personnel who assisted in the development of the book.

It has been a privilege to support a young NCO with a passion for his Battery and its history, and to encourage him in his ambition to write the book. A small number of books have been produced for Hemi to distribute but the e-version can be found on the Australian Artillery Association website at <https://www.australianartilleryassociation.org/books/books.html>.

The RAAHC congratulates Hemi on his achievement and thanks him for producing such a useful Battery history. We further stand ready to support and encourage any other budding or experienced historians who want to write about their Battery, Regiment or experience as a Gunner. Once a Gunner, Always a Gunner.

#### RAAHC Book Launch.



The Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery birthday was celebrated in Canberra on 1 August 2024 in a gathering of over 150. A series of gunner events were conducted in Duntroon Officers Mess on the day commencing with the launch of '**Action! Action! Action!**', followed by the cutting of the Regimental Birthday Cake and then the tie presentation to the artillery graduates from the Royal Military College.

As Board Chair RAAHC I started proceedings by outlining the events for the evening, describing the core purpose of the Company and provided an overview of selected Company activities, I then introduced Lieutenant General Simon Stuart, AO DSC, Chief of Army, who graciously agreed to launch **'Action! Action! Action!'**



*Chair RAAHC sets the event in motion*

*Chief of Army launches 'Action! Action! Action!'*

Sadly, one of the authors, Lieutenant Colonel Nick Floyd, could not be present as he was deployed overseas however, he was able to phone in. His co-author, Major General (Retd) Paul Stevens, AO replied to the Chief of Army, thanking him for his generosity in launching the book. Paul went on to outline the process and challenges that he and co-author Lieutenant Colonel Nick Floyd experienced in developing the book. His address is shown below:

*'This book had its genesis when the seminar series conducted by the Historical Company during the centenary of WW 1 stimulated renewed interest in Gunner history. That war is often conceived of as a brutal slog in the mud with little to commend it, but was much more nuanced than that, and for the Gunners it saw the emergence of technology and techniques that are still with us today.*

*We Gunners have the good fortune to have a detailed history of artillery service up until the mid-1990s authored by Professor David Horner. At the end of the seminar series the call arose to complement it by marking the approaching 150 years of permanent service with a concise, illustrated history available to new Gunners as a foundation for their service. That's where Nick and I came in. We found it challenging to write. What do you put in? What do you leave out? Is the depth sufficient*

*We've been pleased and relieved that early reviews have been favorable, although we're equally aware there will always be aspects that can be improved. The book covers the organisation of the artillery over time, which waxes and wanes with the nation's strategic and economic circumstances. Thereafter we look at its employment, first tactically given the particular threat and conflict, and then technically. Here we run into the constant search for the answer to the gunnery problem, which can be summarised as: How do you, from the gun position, hit a distant target you cannot see with the opening rounds of an engagement?*

*It's an interesting challenge. Modern guided missiles and projectiles simplify the issue somewhat, but for most of our history, and still today, armies have relied on conventional*

*projectiles that are, in fact, mini-ballistic missiles. Once you aim them and power them from the barrel, they are uncontrolled. Therefore, you better get the launch bearing and elevation as accurate as possible, and that's what the history will show our Gunners have constantly striven to do.*

*As COA reminded us, after four decades of low-level conflict against fleeting adversaries, and eighty years since we last deployed a divisional level joint force, our nation faces a greater prospect of conventional warfare. I foresee the Gunners returning to centre stage, providing air defence, long range fire, and the firepower that will enable their comrades in arms to manoeuvre. The likely depth, breadth and complexity of the future battlefield will be a challenge for them, our Army, and our defence force.*

*If this book provides a foundation for our Gunners and others, if it stimulates them to think and enquire, Nick and I will be well satisfied.'*

The photographs below show Major General (Retd) Paul Stevens, AO (Right) responding to the Chief of Army and Brigadier (Retd) John Cox, AM Director RAAHC and Project Manager for the publication describing the ups and downs of the project and thanking key supporters for their efforts. The support list was a long one and John observed that it took a village to bring the project to fruition. the development of the project.



John Cox outlined the ups and downs of the project and thanked key supporters of the effort. The support list was a long one and John observed that it took a village to bring the project to fruition. Sales of the book have been steady with XXX books sold.



### Cutting of the Regimental Birthday Cake

The RAA Association ACT arranged a cake to celebrate the 153<sup>rd</sup> birthday of the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery. The cake was cut by Lieutenant General (Retd) Greg Bilton, AO CSC. The Patron of the RAAHC and Staff Cadet Matthew Hile, who is about to graduate from the Royal Military College as a gunner and was therefore deemed to be the youngest gunner present.

The cake and the cutting of the cake are shown below.



### Tie and Lanyard Presentation

Twenty-five RMC graduates have been selected to join the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery. Each graduate was presented with a regimental tie, a gunner lanyard and a copy of '*Action! Action! Action!*'. Three graduates who were to enter the Australian Intelligence Corps after regimental experience with the gunners were not present.



*The lanyards, ties and books set up in readiness. The trophy at the rear is the Urquhart Trophy which is awarded to the best RAA graduate.*



*A group of the graduates with the Chief of Army (far Right)*



*The remaining graduates*

### **Cutler Research Centre (CRC)**

The CRC continues to focus on:

- Maintaining and improving the CRC collection, assets and eHive catalogue
- Responding to Requests for Information as coordinated by the RAAHC History Director
- Aligning the collection in accordance with RAAHC policy
- Improving CRC procedures and processes
- Digitising appropriate CRC documents

Australia's free online research portal, **Trove** is a collaboration between the National Library of Australia and hundreds of Partner organisations, **Trove** connects users to digital collections

from our hundreds of Trove Partners across Australia, including libraries, museums, galleries, the media, government and community organisations and more. The RAAHC, through the CRC, has signed the Trove Collaborative Services Agreement to become a Trove Partner.

**Content Management System (CMS)** CRC staff continue to update the CMS on the eHive account which is responding well. Close liaison is maintained with the National Library Australia (NLA) staff how the record is displayed on Trove. Members can view progress on the CMS going to the website at <https://ehive.com/collections/201005/cutler-research-centre>.

The CRC has responded to several significant request for information (in association with other members of the RAA Historical Committee). One response received a donation of \$150 to cover the time and effort. In addition, the RAAHC continues to receive small periodic payments for sales from our auctioneers for excess items (per our RAAHC retention policy) passed to them. For information eHive records show that there have been over 330 visits to the site between 1 March and 1 May 2024.

### **ANZAC Centennial Gun (ACG)**

**Training Limbers.** The ACG training limbers have been gifted to the Australian Army History Unit. The two limbers were used for training horses and drivers as shown in the photo below. Both limbers were WW1 vintage.



**Trailer.** The ACG trailer is currently installed at Fairbairn in a facility provided by Terry Snow, a friend to the project who has sadly passed away. The trailer is currently unregistered, and it was decided that it should therefore be offered for sale. No bids have yet been received

**MOU with Temora Aviation Museum** In light of the cancellation of the Combined Arms Heritage Learning Centre, the Temora Aviation Museum was contacted with a view to extending the MOU for a further five years. Temora agreed on an extension for two years as they have plans for the area of the ACG display. They have agreed to a two-year extension to allow us to try and find an

alternative display location. We will need to consider alternative locations or other alternatives for the ACG. Any suggestions from the membership for a display location are welcome

### **Corporate Plan**

A new Corporate Plan 2025-2029 is under consideration by the Board and will be presented to the AGM in November 2024.

### **Website Redevelopment**

Paul Camilleri, the RAAHC Webmaster has undertaken a redevelopment of the RAAHC Website. It is hoped that the site is attractive to users and is easier to navigate. Members are encouraged to provide feedback which can be directed to both [chair@artilleryhistory.org](mailto:chair@artilleryhistory.org) and [webmaster@artilleryhistory.org](mailto:webmaster@artilleryhistory.org). Please include both addresses on your email

### **RAA National Memorial (RAANM) Development Project**

**Background** The RAA National Memorial stands atop Mount Pleasant. The memorial was officially dedicated and opened by Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on the 9 March 1977, as part of her Silver Jubilee visit to Australia. The memorial is under control of the Canberra National Memorial Committee and depicts several conflict honours spanning the Royal Regiment's proud history from Sudan through to South Vietnam. There is currently no option to add more recent conflicts to the existing memorial without modifying the existing layout. The RAA intends to expand the existing National Memorial with an initial five modern era conflicts. These conflicts are:

- Somalia
- Peace Operations
- East Timor / Timor Leste
- Iraq
- Afghanistan

**Action.** The Representative Colonel Commandant and the Head of Regiment have appointed a Project Manager who is assembling a project team and refining the requirements for the development. In the broad the RAANM extension designs should remain sympathetic to, and ideally preserve, the original footprint and RAANM design. The existing UBIQUE Battle Honour, located on the eastern and western walls and bracketing the existing conflict names, remains as intended by the Queen. These will act as a key link between the existing memorial and this extension.

The existing eastern and western walls of the RAANM ramparts should be extended by 10-12 metres. The wall extensions must use identical matched materials to those in the original walls. Wall extensions must be an identical style, height, width, and finish to those of the existing memorial.

Funding is planned to be obtained through donations by serving and retired gunners, sponsors and grants and the opening and dedication of the new elements and rededication of the original memorial is currently anticipated for the 9 March 2027.

### **Progress on the Restoration of 1795 Six Pound Bronze Cannon for AWM**

While not a RAAHC project, it may be of interest to report on the restoration of the bronze cannon for the AWM. The Australian War Memorial and the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust agreed



to co-operate in the restoration of a historic British Light 6 Lb Smoothbore (SB) Bronze Cannon. This report provides a synopsis of the project mid-way.

**Provenance.** The AWM required the production of a wooden carriage for a bronze 6 lb SB cannon barrel (Cannon Barrel) recently acquired from a private individual who rescued it from destruction in the 1970s at Parramatta. The cannon is historically significant for Australia's history as it is one of the first four field guns in the colony of NSW. Manufactured c.1795, this gun and another arrived in Australia before 1800 to supplement two earlier field guns from HMS Sirius.

It is noted in the *'Return of Guns and State of Batteries at Sydney* in October 1800 and August 1801, the guns were probably at Government House Parramatta, and that the carriages for all four guns in March 1807 were recorded as 'Unfit for service'. It is unknown what the type of carriage that this gun would have been mounted on when it arrived in Australia. The earlier 'bracket' style carriages were being incrementally phased out and replaced with the new type of 'pole' trail carriage. Thus by 1807 its carriage may have been already of the 'pole' type or was probably to be replaced by this type of carriage around the time of the 'Rum Rebellion' in 1808.

**Purpose of the Restoration Project.** To replicate the pole trail carriage of the AWM's bronze 6 lb SB cannon, as accurately as possible using drawings detailed in C E Franklin's book, *'British Napoleonic Field Artillery, The First Complete Illustrated Guide to Equipment and Uniforms'*.

The barrel and elevating mechanism were delivered to the North Fort Restoration Centre in September 2023 initiating the work. All work is being carried out by Harbour Trust Volunteers, with the exception of the manufacture of the pair of wheels (by a wheelwright). The project is due to be completed in March 2025. The photos below show the work being done.



***Rough out of trail by chain saw.***



***Shaping Cheek Plates to Trail.***



***Fabricating the Cheek Brackets and Trunnion Caps. Insertion of Barrel and Elevating Mechanism into Trunnion Cups***



***Barrel fitted to trunnion and wheels.***

#### **Australia's Memorial Walk (AMW)**

Our thanks go to our two AMW volunteers who continue to keep the AMW swept and weed free. Thanks also to the Sydney Harbour Trust volunteers who help with the heavier work including using the water blaster to remove mould from the sandstone.

In mentioning the AMW volunteers I also wish to acknowledge our wide range of volunteers around Australia that assist our activities, thank you for your support and effort over the past years. Thanks, are also due to all the RAAHC Directors for their significant contributions throughout the year. We are grateful to our Patron, Lieutenant General Greg Bilton, AO, CSC and appreciate the efforts of our Honorary Solicitor, Paul Fordyce and our Honorary Auditor, Graham Martin.

This is my last report as Chair. The time has come for new blood. I do not intend to stand for Chair at the election of office bearers at the Board meeting following the AGM. I will stay on as a director and carry out the duties associated with social media, the website and Cannonball. I have enjoyed my time as Chair and for the support I have had from the Board and all our volunteers, and I wish the new Chair all the best for the future.

Ubique

*Alan Shearn.*

Chair RAAHC Board of Directors