

AUSTRALIAN GUNNER OBITUARY RESOURCE

Lieutenant Colonel James Desmond Ireland

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Des Ireland died on Australia Day 1998, after a long illness, aged 63 years. Those who had dealings with Des in any of the many areas to which he contributed, appreciated his affable and competent manner, his warmth towards all those around him, and his ability to quickly establish effective and harmonious working relationships. It is a great testimony to Des' strength of character that his dedications never faltered even when his medical condition became oppressive.

I came to know Des best through activities of the RAA Association (NSW). He demonstrated the necessary qualities to take the helm of the association, and guide it through the uncertain period in which the School of Artillery was to move to Puckapunyal, and the Association would need to rely much more on its own resources. He was elected President of the Association on 21 August 1996, and re-elected at the 1997 General Meeting even though by then his cancer was closing upon him. In 1997 he hosted the Associations' most successful ever ANZAC Day Reunion at the Sydney Hilton, and conducted superbly the final Gunner Dinner at the School of Artillery at North Head in August.

He initiated the invitation to the Governor of NSW, His Excellency Justice Gordon Samuels, to become Honorary President of the Association. He successfully oversaw the change of the Association from a homeless nomad to one based at North Fort, alongside the RAA Historical Society. He supported the Newcastle Sub Branch of the RAA Association (NSW), and represented the Association to other organisations. He was a member of the RAAHS Management Committee and a Board Designate Member of the RAA Historical Company.

Des Ireland joined the CMF in late 1951 and entered OCS Portsea in January 1952. On graduation in June 1953 he was posted to 14 NS Training Battalion. This was followed by regimental postings to 1 Field Regiment (103 HAA and A Fd Bty), and as AA and locating instructor at the School of Artillery. He was senior launching office at the Army Guided Weapon Trials Unit at Woomera, and undertook a series of postings to 131 Div Loc Bty, 121 LAA Bty, Army Office (on a met study), and attended Royal Military College of Science (UK) (RMCS) in 1967/68. He attended Army Staff College Queenscliff in 1971, had a series of technical gunner postings in trials and evaluation and was on Directing Staff at RMCS in 1978 and 1979. He resigned from the Regular Army in May 1980 and served in the Army Reserve until May 1984.

In civilian life, from August 1980, he served as senior Assistant Secretary of the Australian Academy of Science, then as Director of Administration in the High Court of Australia. In this role he planned and implemented the opening of the High Court when the original planner died 10 days prior to the opening! He worked as AGM and computer consultant to Canberra's Southern Cross Club and as Deputy Executive Director to the professional Centre of Australia (formally the Science Centre Foundation). At the time of his death, he was Executive Officer of the Institute of Radio and Electrical Engineers (IREE) at North Sydney, and he had been invited to serve as a foundation Board member of the Royal Australian Artillery Historical Company. He was active in several community organisations, including Rotary.

His funeral was held at St John's Anglican Church, Dee Why on Thursday 29 January 1998. A guard was provided by 8th/12th Medium Regiment RAA and a number of his Regular Army gunner comrades acted as pallbearers. A private cremation followed the funeral service.

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He is fondly remembered as the much loved best friend and partner of Freya Luick, father of Stephen and Diane, Tim and Peta, and grandfather of Jane and Sarah. We are thankful for the contribution of Lieutenant Colonel Des Ireland to the RAAHS, for his friendship and as a shining example of great achievement under the heaviest personal pressure imaginable.