

3rd DIVISION FIELD ARTILLERY A.I.F.

COMMEMORATION DINNER

50 YEARS FROM DATE OF DEPARTURE - 11TH MAY 1916

ANZAC DAY - 25TH APRIL 1966

M E N U

Today in Martin Place we think of other days
Such as '88 at sea with heavy meals that come our way.
And later at Gun Station, Raggon Line and Billett,
We had no pleasant juicy steak la Fillett.
Our normal fare was bully beef and stew -
How we longed for something new.
Oh! for a change from dog biscuits and plum jam,
But now we can enjoy dainty food of chicken and ham.
We remember when cold and wet along the Somme
How we longed for something light but strong.
Sometimes we chanced our luck
On stolen pig or fleeing duck,
Now, with waist line broad and hair so white,
We can enjoy a feast so light,
With apple pie and cream we smile
and send our heart and mind to think awhile
Of other places and friends we lost,
Where food was scarce, and drink was not.
So, while we dine A la Carte at Cahills
Remember pals who sleep in Flanders Field.

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HISTORY

Sydney, 1915 - the A.I.F. Artillery Recruit Depot was transferred from the Showground to "The Warren", Marrickville, where various reinforcement units for overseas service were formed. Then came the formation of a new A.I.F. Division, and so the 7th Field Artillery Brigade was created under the command of Col. R.S. Pearce.

After initial training in the rudiments of military discipline, the Brigade had a farewell march through Sydney streets and, at 3 a.m. on the morning of 11th May 1916, left "The Warren" for places unknown, and moved by trams loaded with Bandolier, Greatcoat, Rifle and Kitbag, and at 6 a.m. embarked on the s.s. "Argyllshire" A8, which was to be home for members for about nine weeks.

And so the 7th Brigade said goodbye to Sydney Harbour, passing through the Heads and down the coast, for distant parts.

How many of the youthful soldiers on board A8 that day who had never been on anything larger than the Manly Ferry, wondered what the future would be, and when they would see their home again.

The A8 was under the command of Captain Chicken, and the troops aboard were under control of C.O. Troops R.S. Pearce, L/Col; O.C. 7th Brigade Tristram James, Major; O.C. 9th Brigade, F. O'Mahoney L/Col; O.C. 9th Field Ambulance F.A. Maguire, L/Col.

After 63 days of living under cramped conditions, travelling without lights and visiting some ports in South Africa, we arrived in England on the 12th July 1916, and immediately moved to the Training Camp at Lark Hill, on Salisbury Plains.

We will remember our short periods of leave to visit relatives and friends in Great Britain and see the sights of London, also our training periods at Winchester and Swanage.

During the next four months of extensive training, the 7th Brigade was transferred into an efficient fighting unit of Officers, N.C.O's, Drivers, Gunners and Specialists, later to be known as the "Eggs-a-cooked" Artillery of the famous 3rd Division, A.I.F. under the Command of General Sir John Monash.

Arriving in France in December 1916, the youthful troops wondered how they would react under war conditions they were shortly to experience.

The 7th Brigade was made up of -

Headquarters :	Lt. Col.	McCartney, H.D.K.	48
25th Battery :	Major	James, T.B.	210
26th Battery :	Captain	Playfair, I.A.J.	200
27th Battery :	Captain	Pearl, M.A.R.	212
107th Battery :	Captain	Patterson, G.H.	194.

At Strazelle, the four units were changed to 6 Gun Batteries when Queenslanders and personnel from other States joined the original N.S.W. members.

Our first introduction to warfare was in the allegedly quiet sector of Armentieres where we met the famous Mademoiselle of Armentieres, enjoyed good Blanc Vin and eggs at the remaining Estaminets, and experienced hot baths in the mine rats.

What memories are revived - tragic, with loss of mates, happy, with comradeship and understanding.

Twelve months in Flanders, with such places as -

Armentieres,	Ploegsteert,	Messines,
Zillebeke,	Passendale,	Dickensbusch,
Ypres,	Hell Fire Corner,	Menin Gate.

Then we think of the wonderful horses we had who knew they were fighting a war as well as the men, and how we scrounged fodder from different dumps to give a little extra rations after a trying and hard time with guns, ammunition and rations, through the shell-worn roads and muddy gun stations.

Then the forced March in 1918, from Bailleul to Doullens, when 85 miles of terrible roads were covered in 100 hours, as the call came to stem the Hun break-through in the Somme.

Can we ever forget the experiences through Somme towns such as - Amiens, Villiers Bretonnearix, Bray, Perone and Bullecourt.

Many still remember leave in Paris, London and other places, and the change of life in such cities compared with the stench and mud of warfare.

Then the dreary period after the Armistice whilst waiting for the 3rd Division schedule of transport for home.

The losses and sadness felt on leaving so many comrades on foreign soil,

with the words of John McCrae:

In Flanders fields the poppies grow
Between the crosses, row on row
That mark our place, and in the sky
The larks still bravely singing fly,
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the dead, short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow
Loved, and were loved, and we lie
In Flanders field.

Take up our quarrel with the foe,
To you from falling we throw
The torch, and be yours to hold it high
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders field.

JOHN McCRAE
FLANDERS - 1915
YPRES.

Also saying goodbye to the horses who had served the Division so well for two long years. And so the 7th Brigade, having finished its war duties, the members left for Australia in batches - the first two on the 12th May and the final grouping on 2nd July 1919. On arrival in Sydney on the 18th August 1919, the 3rd Art. Division A.I.F., ceased to exist. Now it was a question of finding employment, returning to old occupations or renewing studies, made difficult by four years of army life and war service. During service in France, the 7th Brigade lost Officers and other ranks - 72 killed in Action; 42 died of wounds; 12 died of illness; 126 deaths; 526 wounded and gassed.

In addition to the 864 original members of the Brigade, reinforcements totalled 340. So a total of 1200 passed through the ranks whilst on service and of these some 1070 returned to Australia. The number on strength at the Armistice were 860.

And now, 50 years later, we who are still alive come together today to commemorate not the glory of war but the comradeship enjoyed in training camps and battlefield, and during the post-war years. We remember those companions of our youth who did not return as we did, but who lie in distant fields, and of those who have passed to their reward since returning to Australia.

Our thoughts go out today to those who are unable to attend this commemoration function because of disabilities arising from either war service or having passed the three-score years and ten, and are now not enjoying good health. The normal roll, at the present time, is approximately 300 - a number being located in other States.

We are looking forward to meeting once again ex-members of the Brigade who have not joined our reunion gatherings or who have been absent in recent years.

The Reunion Club formed in 1919, retained the spirit de corps of active service and so continues 50 years later.

The Committee of the 3rd Division A.I.F. Artillery Association convey to old comrades thanks for continued support at the Annual Re-union throughout the post-war years. To our Patron Brigadier T.A.J. Playfair the Committee express their appreciation for close association and assistance over nearly half a century.

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