

LIEUT COL C.S. HARLE, R.L., J.P., 1877/2

20/23 QUEENS ROAD,

BRIGHTON, N.S.W., 2216.

12TH JULY, 1988.

L.P. HINDMARSH, ESQ.,
7TH FIELD REGIMENT, (FORMERLY BRIGADE),
ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ARTILLERY ASSOCIATION,
5 MCCRAE PLACE,
TURRAMURRA, N.S.W., 2075.

DEAR *hans*,

IT WAS KIND OF YOU TO WRITE GIVING ME THE PARTICULARS OF THE FORTHCOMING REGIMENTAL HISTORY. I HAVE THEREFORE, IN RESPONSE TO YOUR "MEMORY JOGGER", COMBED MY MIND FOR THE SKETCHY DETAILS THAT HAVE REMAINED THEREIN. THE FOLLOWING IS THE RESULT:

(A) DRESS:

WE HAD ONLY ONE ISSUE OF WINTER DRESS WHICH HAD TO DO FOR SUMMER AS WELL AND IT WAS DREADFULLY UNCOMFORTABLE IN CAMPS AND BIVOUACS. THE CHANGE FROM THE WAR-TIME A.I.F. PATTERN JACKET AND RED HAT-BAND TOOK PLACE SOME TIME AFTER 1930 WHEN THE BLUE PATROL-TYPE TUNIC WITH SCARLET COLLAR FACEING AND THE PUGAREE FEATURING THE SINGLE RED FOLD BECAME STANDARD FOR ALL GUNNER UNITS. REG-HAT AND COLLAR BADGES ALSO MADE THEIR APPEARANCE AT ABOUT THIS TIME. THE WHITE LANYARD BECAME AN OPTIONAL EMBELLISHMENT UPON THE CESSATION OF THE COMPULSORY SERVICE REQUIREMENT

(B) PARADES:

WEEKLY PARADES WERE NORMAL, ALTHOUGH PAY WAS NOT AVAILABLE FOR ALL OCCASIONS. BEING A CADET I DID NOT QUALIFY FOR PAY. THE CONDITION DID NOT SEEM TO TROUBLE THE "UNDER EIGHTEEN" CONTINGENT. IT WAS THE TIME OF THE DEPRESSION AND CONSEQUENTLY THERE WAS NO SHORTAGE OF "VOLUNTEERS" TO CLEAN, POLISH AND PAINT THE GUNS AND LIMBERS AND KEEP THE CONTENTS OF THE HARNESS STORE IN ROYAL HORSE GUARDS CONDITION.

(C) PAY:

THE PAY WAS NOT LAVISH BUT PAY PARADES WERE PERENNIALY WELL ATTENDED. AS MENTIONED ABOVE, BEING A CADET I HAD NOT REACHED THE AGE OF EMANCIPATION.

(D) CAMPS:

I SEEM TO REMEMBER ATTENDING AT LEAST ONE CAMP. IF MY MEMORY IS AS RELIABLE AS I WOULD LIKE IT TO BE AT THE END OF ONE PERIOD OF ENCAMPMENT MY CLOTHING BECAME BESPATTERED WITH FOUL OIL AS THE PISSABER (?) WAS DRAWN THROUGH THE BARREL OF AN 18 PDR THEREBY RUINING MY LIGHTCOLOURED BREECHES. ON ONE OCCASION I DID AN ALL NIGHT STINT ON HORSE-LINES DUTY. I DID NOT THINK MUCH OF IT! FIELD FIRING AT PORCUPINE WAS MUCH MORE TO MY LIKING.

ONCE A NEAR CALAMITY OCCURRED WHEN A GUN-TEAM BOLTED THROUGH HARRIS CREEK. THE GUN AND LIMBER TURNED ON ITS SIDE AND THE GUNNERS RIDING ON THE LIMBER WERE THROWN CLEAR WITH ^{NO} MORE THAN SOME SOLID BRUISING. FORTUNATELY THE TEAM WAS UNHURT. THE LESS SAID ABOUT THE RATIONS IN THE OTHER RANKS MESS THE BETTER. SHEARS COOKS WERE ALWAYS HIRED AND THEY NEVER MOVED WITHOUT THEIR THEIR OWN RUM RATIONS. THE SERGEANTS AND OFFICERS FARED RATHER BETTER.

OUR ACCOMMODATION CONSISTED OF THE USUAL EMPTY 1914/18 STYLE CORRUGATED IRON HUT MOST OF WHICH INEVITABLY FEATURED IN THE END-OF-CAMP INTER-BATTERY HUT RAID. AN OCCASIONAL BROKEN LIMB EU-SUED BUT IN THOSE DAYS PEOPLE DID NOT WRITE TO THEIR M.P.s. OR EVEN THE PRESS. MEN WERE MEN THEN. FROM MEMORY AGAIN I HAVE A RECOLLECTION OF ONE DAY BEING SET ASIDE FOR FIELD WORK WHEN THE BATTERY SEVERAL TIMES MANOEUVRED IN AND OUT OF BATTION WHILE THE OFFICERS SIGNALLLED CHANGES IN DIRECTION BY THE USE OF THEIR SWORDS.

[E] TRAINING

THE TRAINING DOCTRINES THEN WERE BASED UPON 1914/18 CONCEPTS. I DOUBT IF ANY THOUGHT WAS GIVEN TO THE PROBABILITY OF ANOTHER WAR.

[F] EQUITATION

TWO VENUES SPRING TO MIND. THERE WAS AN ENCLOSED MENAGE LOCATED BEHIND THE DRILL HALL, WHERE, WHEN MOUNTS WERE AVAILABLE SOME TRAINING WAS DONE. BAREBACK RIDING AND RIDING WITHOUT THE USE OF HANDS OR FEET AND POSTURE TAUGHT. THE OTHER PLACE WAS IN THE AREA OF OUR CAMPS

[G] SCHOOLS

OCCASIONALLY SOME N.C.O.s WERE SENT OFF SOMEWHERE MOST PROBABLY TO THE SMALL ARMS SCHOOL AT RANDWICK.

[H] PROMOTION

THOS SEEMED TO BE FAIRLY RAPID. I WAS ELEVATED TO CADET LANCE BOMBARDIER WITHIN THREE MONTHS OF JOINING. OTHERWISE SUBSTANTIVE PROMOTION USUALLY FOLLOWED EXAMINATIONS HELD TWICE YEARLY UNDER BATTERY ARRANGEMENTS.

[J] COMPULSORY TRAINING

I CAME FROM BEING A JUNIOR CADET IN 17TH BATTALION IN 1930 BUT CANNOT RECALL THE SIGNIFICANCE OR EFFECT OF THE CHANGE TO THE VOLUNTARY SYSTEM.

[K] COMPETITIONS

THERE WAS THE ANNUAL MILITARY GYMKHANA AT THE SHOWGROUND. THE MAIN EVENTS SEEMED TO INCLUDE THE DRILL COMPETITIONS, TENT PEGGING FOR MOUNTED UNITS

WATER TROUGH ERECTION FOR ENGINEERS AND SOME ATHLETIC CONTESTS INCLUDING THE INEVITABLE TUG-OF-WAR. I CANNOT RECOLLECT ANYTHING INVOLVING ARTILLERY EVENTS.

(L) PERSONALITIES

THERE MUST HAVE BEEN HUNDREDS OF GUNNERS AT WARRANE ROAD IN MY DAY BUT MY POWER OF RECALL APPEARS TO HAVE SUFFERED MORE THAN I SUSPECTED. THE BATTERY COMMANDER WAS A CAPTAIN HUMPHRIES HE WAS A STICKLER FOR CORRECT AND TIDY DRESS. HE FREQUENTLY DREW ATTENTION TO HATS NOT WORN AT THE RIGHT ANGLE ON THE SIDE OF THE HEAD AND ALSO MADE HIS ANNOYANCE KNOWN IF ANYONE CARRIED ANYTHING IN THE BREAST POCKET OF HIS TUNIC. SERGEANT MAJOR NUGENT (ALWAYS RESPLENDENT IN HIS A.I.C. UNIFORM - SAM BROWNE AND LEGGINGS GLEAMING) NEVER SEEMED TO LEAVE THE DRILL HALL. TWO SERGEANTS SPRING TO MIND; TYRELL AND MOUNTFORD AND THEN THERE WAS A.S.C. CORPORAL CLEM JONES WHO LOOKED AFTER THE HORSES AND THE MENAGE. LIEUTENANT (LATER BRIGADIER) KELSO WAS ON THE STRENGTH OF 27TH FIELD BATTERY. ALSO MAJOR FORBES WHO NEVER APPEARED WITHOUT HIS DORK HELMET (INDIAN PATTERN). WHAT HAPPENED TO ALL THE OTHERS?

DREGGING MY MEMORY REGRETTABLY HAS FAILED TO UNEARTH ANYTHING MORE OF A USEFUL NATURE. AFTER ALL FIFTY SIX YEARS IS A VERY LONG TIME. ANYHOW LAURIE, I HOPE YOU MAY BE ABLE TO MAKE SOMETHING OUT OF THE BITS AND PIECES I HAVE ENUMERATED ABOVE.

WITH MY kindest REGARDS,

YOURS

*Sincerely,
Charles Clarke*