



15th Field Artillery Regiment The Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery

Annual Report 2016





The 15th Field Artillery Regiment, The Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery is an Army Reserve Regiment located at Bessborough Armoury in Vancouver, British Columbia. The Regiment is a unit in 39 Canadian Brigade Group.

39 Canadian Brigade Group is a reserve brigade formation within 3rd Canadian Division (Western Canada), and supports the efforts of Joint Task Force Pacific (in British Columbia) during times of domestic emergencies such as forest fires and flood watch. During expeditionary operations, 39 Canadian Brigade Group provides individual augmentation to regular force battle groups.



The majority of serving members have civilian jobs or attend university and work part-time for the army reserve.



In 2016, the 15th Field Artillery Regiment, RCA command team consisted of the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Brent Purcell, CD and the Regimental Sergeant Major, Chief Warrant Officer George Dempsey, CD The Adjutant, Captain Wayne Baxter was posted out in September with Lieutenant Richard Jones employed as temporary backfill. The Unit Operations WO, Warrant Officer Heath Porritt, completed a transfer to the Primary Reserve and was replaced by Warrant Officer Adam Wierenga.

The Regiment has a strength of 166 members with 20 new members enrolled this year.



Honorary Colonel Bill Rodgers has been with the Regiment since 2010. He was appointed Honorary Colonel in 2015 on the appointment of Honorary Lieutenant-Colonel Al De Genova.

Some of the Regimental highlights of the year were centred on our old home of Yorke Island. Two weekend excursions were carried out. On the first weekend, the Commanding Officer, Regimental Sergeant Major, the Honorary Battery Commander 85 Battery, the President of the Vancouver

Gunners Association and family members participated in a memorial service for Gunner Brunt who had died in a tragic drowning off the Island during the Second World War. This was followed by a second weekend with Regimental members receiving a fantastic guided tour of the island by the Honorary, Battery



Commander Ross Keller. The island had been the location of one of our coastal defence and an anti-air battery during the Second World War to defend against the back door approach to Vancouver. The Gunners spent the trip traversing the old trails that overlap the island exploring the remaining buildings, searchlight bunkers, and the coastal defence battery. While many of the structures have long since been removed or collapsed with age, the remaining structures of the fort are significant. Notably, the entire structure of the battery, observation post tower, and ammunition store rooms remain intact. The Gunners were able to fully explore these structures and appreciate the incredibly difficult task of defending the island during the war. After exploring the history of Yorke Island, the Gunners returned to Sayward and reinvigorated an old Yorke Island/Sayward relationship. During the war, soldiers stationed on Yorke Island would have gone into Sayward to socialize and made many local connections. The Gunners of today attended a local pig roast and met with several Sayward locals who were thrilled to host them. The trip was a fantastic opportunity for the members to learn the history of their Regiment and create a bond with the local community.

Many deserving members of 15th Field Artillery Regiment, RCA received awards for their dedication and hard work over the year. Sergeant Daniel Scott was awarded the Most Proficient Detachment Commander Award as well as the Top Shot Award for C7 marksmanship. Bombardier Xavier Dandurand was named the Bombardier of the Year, Corporal Alan Lam the most proficient Corporal, and Gunner Brandon Eyre Gunner of the Year. Most Proficient Recruit was awarded to Pte Zeshan Syed while Second Lieutenant Christopher Purdon was awarded with the Subaltern of the Year Sword. In June, Warrant Officer Heath Porritt received the 3 Canadian Division Commander's Commendation to recognise his exemplary professionalism and expert application of trade knowledge during his term as the Ops WO for the Regiment.

Several members of the unit were employed extra regimentally including Captain Darryl Bannon who deployed with 3 Canadian Division to Eastern Europe as a part of Op REASSURANCE and Bombardier Darryn Lacomel who participated in Canada's longest running domestic operation, Op PALACI, the Canadian Armed Forces contribution to Parks Canada's avalanche-control program. The Unit's Chief Clerk, Sgt Andrew Ukrainzow spent four months on a Technical Assistant Visit at Operational Support Hub Europe where he helped support both Op REASSURANCE and Op UNIFIER as the Chief Clerk.



31 Battery

15th Field Artillery Regiment RCA

The senior battery, 31 Battery, is the designated Headquarters and Services Battery. It was commanded by Major Ian Watt with Master Warrant Officer Clyde Roberts, CD as the Battery Sergeant Major.

Captain Rob Wishnicki, CD, the Battery Captain, has recently returned to the unit from Headquarters 39 Canadian Brigade Group. The Troop Commander, 31 Battery, Second Lieutenant Purdon and Bombardier Dandurand have demonstrated an organized and thorough approach to attracting and recruiting future gunners into the Regiment. 31 Battery continues to support these initiatives by attending community recruiting drives and demonstrating to the public the many skills our soldiers have achieved over years of training and participation in domestic and international operations.



The training cell is managed by Master Bombardier Brama and Master Bombardier Sewell who ensure their troops are being constantly challenged with appropriate and required training in their respective career development. 31 Battery recently conducted Exercise “Damaged Gunner” which achieved our aim at supporting domestic operations in the Lower Mainland if and when called upon to do so. 31 Battery was also responsible for ensuring the annual Soldiers’ Christmas Dinner was run successfully.

Of the three educational bursaries awarded by the former Honorary Lieutenant-Colonel Peter Veuger Bursary, two of them were awarded to soldiers within 31 Battery for their consistent attendance and hard work throughout the year.

Without the support and hard work from Captain Walker and Sergeant Skuce in our Quartermaster Stores and Sergeant Ukrainzow, Sergeant James Cooley and Master Corporal Varga in the Regimental Orderly Room none of this would be achievable as the Battery constantly relies on their support to achieve its goals.



68 Battery

15th Field Artillery Regiment RCA



Live fire exercises included Exercise Cougar Conqueror 16 in Wainwright, Alberta from 14 – 21 August,

The Regiment's firing sub-unit, 68 Battery, under the command of Battery Commander Major Andrew Grieve and Battery Sergeant Major Master Warrant Officer Rob Garrett ran another demanding and fulfilling year of training, both gunnery and basic soldier skills related.



The year started off with gunnery training

while the Battery ramped up to its first live fire exercise of the year, deploying in a Battery context for Ex CAUSTIC SHOCK at the Yakima Training Centre, Washington in February. Afterwards, the unit worked on their domestic operations skills with Ex COUGAR READY simulating a natural disaster and the Regiment's role in aiding the local community. In April, 68 Battery saw several of its members participate in the British Columbia Rifle Association Blair Shoot and once again deployed to Yakima, Washington for a live-fire exercise in support of the infantry regiments of 39 Canadian Brigade Group.

68 Battery was able to put to use its basic soldier skills during May for a month of urban operations training which lead up to Ex VICIOUS GUNNER in Chilliwack, BC where members became familiarised with the use of simmunition. Throughout the summer the Battery stood down and its members headed out across the country to be employed as candidates or instructors on various courses or other roles where they learned valuable skills that they were able to bring back to the Regiment.



In August members of 15 Field Artillery Regiment, RCA accompanied 39 Canadian Brigade Group to Canadian Forces Base Wainwright for Ex COUGAR CONQUERER where they deployed a combined mortar Battery with 5 (BC) Field Regiment, RCA and later re-rolled as the Opposing Force for the final assault made by the Battle Group. The small force of gunners managed to inflict heavy casualties while fighting the defensive before being overrun by superior numbers and fire power.

September saw 68 Battery return from summer stand down and

launch immediately into Individual Battle Task Standards (IBTS) training with refresher training and Ex SNIPING GUNNER at Volkes Range in Chilliwack where members were tested on their marksmanship, grenade handling, and Chemical Biological Radiological and Nuclear drills. October had a defensive theme with gunners learning and developing their skills both in the defence of the gun line, and the defence of The Bessborough Armoury during a domestic operations exercise. In November 68 Battery once again performed its annual duty of firing the 21 gun salute on Remembrance Day in down town Vancouver.



Band of the 15th Field Artillery Regiment

15th Field Artillery Regiment RCA

2016 was another busy year for the Band of the 15th Field Artillery Regiment. The highlight of the year was the International Military Band Concert on Victoria Day. For the first time in its 26-year history, the



15th Field Regiment Band hosted the International Military Band Concert in Surrey, BC. An audience of nearly 700 saw musicians from the US Navy Band Northwest, the Naden Band of the Royal Canadian Navy, the Air Command Band, and the Seaforth Highlanders of Canada Pipes & Drums perform a concert of patriotic and

popular music. Funds raised through ticket sales were donated to a local charity and used to provide musical instruments for elementary school band programs in the community. Other public concert performances during the year included shared concerts with the Capilano University Concert Winds and the Cascadia Wind Ensemble.

The Band of the 15th Field Artillery Regiment was also busy with parades in 2016. July first saw the band join forces with the NADEN Band of the Royal Canadian Navy to lead the annual Canada Day Parade through the streets of Vancouver. More than 300,000 people saw the unit's musicians wave the flag. Later in the month, the band performed in the third annual Okanagan Military Tattoo in Vernon, BC. In addition to providing the core for the massed bands of the tattoo, the band provided clinicians for the cadets from the Vernon Cadet Camp band who were also performing in the show. After their return to Vancouver, the band did one day of performances at the Pacific National Exhibition. In September the Seaforth Highlanders of Canada celebrated their homecoming and the Band combined with the Seaforth Pipes and Drums and the Chor Leoni Mens Choir for a wonderful musical display.

The Band continued to support annual events such as the Point Grey Fiesta Days, Canada Day Gun Salute in Stanley Park, Battle of Britain, BC Lions Canadian Armed Forces Appreciation game and countless Remembrance Day ceremonies around the lower mainland. The Band also supported several mess dinners in support of units across British Columbia and performed at several Change of Command parades for units in the lower mainland.



Regimental Society

15th Field Artillery Regiment RCA

During 2016, the Regimental Society funded the renovation of the Sergeants' and Warrant Officers' Mess. This was a major undertaking which required the removal of the ceiling, installation of new overhead fan-lights and controls, repair of the fireplace, fabrication and installation of the bar (including a beer spigot!), new drapes, fresh paint and a new door with embossed artillery crest.



The Regimental Society funded the Regiment's 12-member team for the Tough Mudder event at Whistler. The Mud Gunners were great ambassadors for the Canadian Army and for the Regiment. The Regiment's 105 mm howitzer started the event by firing a round that resonated throughout the Callaghan Valley.

The Regimental Society provided funding for the Childrens' Christmas Party at the Armoury. It was a fun day. The children enjoyed the bouncy-castle, making crafts, checking out the guns and trucks and playing in the "obstacle course". Santa presented gifts to the 31 children of our soldiers. The day concluded with lunch in the Sergeants' and Warrant Officers' Mess including yummy hot dogs, chips and pop.

Thanks to a generous donation from Mrs. Suzanne Veuger, the Regimental Society established the Peter Veuger Scholarship Fund in memory of our former Honorary Lieutenant-Colonel. Three deserving soldiers selected by the Commanding Officer and the Regimental Sergeant-Major received \$500 scholarships.



The Regimental Society also supported in various ways the initiatives of the Commanding Officer for the attraction and retention of soldiers. Additionally, the Regiment's affiliated Cadet Corps, 2472 RCAC, received funding for the purchase of new tents and the Regimental Band received funding for the purchase of travel jackets.

The Directors of the Regimental Society are Honorary Colonels, Bill Rodgers and Al DeGenova as President and Vice-President, Major(ret'd) Bob Mugford as Secretary and Mr. Bernard Rowe as Treasurer.

The Society gratefully acknowledges the many donations received over the year and would be please to arrange bequeaths and provide tax receipts on future donations.



Commanding Officer's Advisory Committee

15th Field Artillery Regiment RCA

The Commanding Officers' Advisory Board is an organization intended to provide the Commanding officer with suggestions and advice on matters of a non-operational basis. It consists of the Honorary Colonels, retired Commanding Officers, Regimental Sergeants Major and other key personnel selected by the Commanding officer.

The Committee has provided input into the following item:

15th Field Regimental Centennial 2020, chaired by Lieutenant-Colonel Kent Wickens is intended to highlight the 15th Field Artillery Regiment's 100 year Anniversary and is expected to include an exercise of our Freedom of the City Parade, a Special Mess Dinner and Regimental commemorative coins. Leon Jensen has offered to collect the history of the Regiment on the www.vancouvergunners.ca website in preparation for accumulating the material required to publish a Regimental Anniversary Book.

Centennial Battlefield Tour is planned by Major James Barrett. A travel agent has been engaged to do preliminary planning for 2019 Apr/May time frame.

15th Field Artillery Society and Association Badges were discussed and preliminary agreement reached on a potential design. The badges require staffing through the Directorate of History and Heritage.

Regimental Society website is now on-line. The aim of the Regimental website is to provide information on current events and those events being planned for the future. This should differentiate it from the Association which focuses more on the past history of the Regiment and its members. It is possible that the two sites may be merged in the future.

Family Social List was discussed and set to move forward.

Whisky fundraiser was a success and raised approximately \$1,200.00 which has been split between the 78th Fraser Highlanders and the 15th Field Artillery Society.

The Vimy to Juno display concept was supported. The event was subsequently held at the Seaforth Armoury and included our 25 Pounder gun.



Museum & Archives

15th Field Artillery Regiment RCA

The Museum of the 15th Field Artillery Regiment collects photographs, documents, and artifacts telling the story of the Artillery and its contribution to the life and defence of Vancouver, B.C. The archives collect archival material related to artillery units and installations in the Greater Vancouver area. The holdings consist primarily of unit orders, wartime (World War II) documents such as war diaries and records of defence installations, and photographs of Vancouver units with the emphasis on the 15th Field Artillery Regiment, RCA.

The display cases by the museum door feature information on Regimental dress, artillery casings and pictures of the sub calibre training on 6-inch guns. The display case by the North East door has a photo display of vehicles and animals used by 15 Field Artillery Regiment, RCA and 43rd Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment RCA.

Interviews with Burma Star veteran, Major Frank Kellins have been taking place on a regular basis in the Museum

A new secure weapons display case has been acquired and features a Martini-Henri rifle, Ross Rifle, Lee-Enfield and Sten Gun.

A special event at this year's dinner was the unveiling of the Captain Oliver Alexander Mowat MC display on the North wall of the Bessborough Armoury. Captain Mowat was killed in action while serving with the 68th Battery, 16th Brigade, Canadian Field Artillery at Spasskoe, Russia. The 68th Battery of the 16th Brigade, Canadian Field Artillery is perpetuated by today's 68 Battery, 15th Field Artillery Regiment, RCA. The mementos of Captain Mowat's service were donated by his descendants to the 15th Field Artillery Regiment Museum & Archives. With support from the Regimental Society, Captain (ret) Noel Dykes was engaged to produce the display case.

The Museum organized a fundraising push and presented a successful bid for the silver plate given in 1945 to our former Honorary Colonel William Cultham Woodward ED CD. Colonel Woodward was an Artillery officer with the 1st Canadian Heavy Artillery in World War I, a Lieutenant in 5th Siege Battery 15th Brigade Canadian Field Artillery in 1922, Appointed Honorary Lieutenant-Colonel in 1933, and served without pay as executive assistant to munitions and supply minister C.D. Howe during WWII. The silver plate was presented to him on the completion of this duty and prior to his appointment as the Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia.

Major-General (ret) Stuart T McDonald CMM is the current President of the Museum Society with Colonel (ret) Leon Jensen OMM as Vice-President. The Curator is Professor Major (ret) Peter Moogk CD who is ably assisted by Mr John Redmond MB and Mrs. Susan Moogk.



Vancouver Artillery Association

15th Field Artillery Regiment RCA

The Vancouver Artillery Association (also known as the Vancouver Gunners) consists of former and serving members of the Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery (regular and reserves), their families and other supporters of the Regiment. Its main purpose is to preserve and safeguard the history of The Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery in the Lower Mainland.

The Vancouver Gunners established their website, www.vancouvergunners.ca in 2016 and have been busy populating the pages with the history of the 15th Field Artillery Regiment RCA since its formation on 2 February 1920. It has also begun tracing back the histories of the perpetuated batteries prior to that date including the 31st Field Battery and the 5th Siege Battery which fought at Vimy and the two batteries that formed part of the two Russian Expeditionary units after the First World War (the 68th and 85th).

The Vancouver Gunners have also begun the task of collecting the names of all those that have served with the 15th Field Artillery Regiment RCA, its perpetuated Batteries and the units that have been absorbed by the Regiment (43rd Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment RCA, 43rd Medium Anti-Aircraft Regiment RCA, 102nd Coast Artillery Regiment RCA, 15th (Vancouver) Coast Brigade RCA and the 15th Brigade CFA). The nominal roll currently lists 2,400 names.



The Vancouver Artillery Association also mans the historic 25 Pounder owned by the Regimental Museum. The gun, and the Field Artillery Tractor, have been displayed at the Defence Policy Review meeting in Langley, the From Vimy to Juno Exhibit, Boundary Bay Airport Airshow and at the Remembrance Day ceremony at Portside Park. The Association is currently fundraising to reach \$6,000.00 required to properly outfit the gun detachment. The target has reached the



halfway mark with the assistance of member's charitable donations and the Regimental Bear program.

The Vancouver Artillery Association is also actively involved in the preservation of the Yorke Island fortification. An expedition was mounted in August with members of the Regiment holding a memorial service in the memory of Gunner Wallace Brunt who had died in a drowning accident off the island in 1941. The Association has been approached by Parks BC and is engaged in the initial stages of forming a partnership to assist in future projects in the Yorke island Conservancy.

The Vancouver Artillery Association participated in the ceremonies at Portside Park on Remembrance Day by forming up with the Regiment and the Cadet Corps. The senior, present, able-bodied former

Commanding Officer (Brigadier-General (ret) William (Bill) Wickett) stood in as the Battery Commander with the senior, present, able-bodied former regimental Sergeant Major (Chief Warrant Officer (ret) Brian Cormier) as his Battery Sergeant Major. There were 18 members on parade.

Membership with the Vancouver Artillery Association is available for an annual payment of \$25.00. The membership fees assist the Association in providing a weekly newsletter in combination with the Royal United Services Institute and also the upkeep on the Association website.



Officers' Mess

15th Field Artillery Regiment RCA

The Officers' Mess was shared with the members of the Warrant Officers' and Sergeants Mess through much of the year as they awaited the completion of the renovations on their mess.

The year's social calendar started off with the Subalterns' Archangel Gunner dinner with white t-shirts as the dress requirement. The dress was required as the participants dug into their barbecue ribs.

The Officers' Mess organized a successful Saint Barbara's Day Special Guest Night. Eighty-two guests were present with a dinner held on the parade square. The Band of the 15th Field Artillery Regiment RCA gave a spirited performance throughout the dinner, including a black light performance and culminating in the traditional Regimental Marchpasts of our guests. The Treasurer of the Regimental Society was presented an Officer's sword (albeit a somewhat truncated version) for his work on balancing the books over the years.



Warrant Officers' & Sergeants' Mess

15th Field Artillery Regiment RCA

After considerable renovations the Warrant Officers' and Sergeants' Mess once again became an active Mess. September saw the first ever mess dinner held in the Mess itself since the 1960s, rather than in the Officers' Mess, classroom or parade square. It was an eventful evening and complete success with an attendance of well over 52 members and guests.

The Mess hosted a 40th birthday celebration for a member's spouse.

The Warrant Officers' and Sergeants' hosted the Officers of the Regiment for the annual Levee followed by a steady flow of personnel from other 39 Canadian Brigade Group units.

There will be more events planned for the Mess in 2017. Its new décor provides an excellent venue for beer tasting, wine tasting, annual mess dinner, social night and jam along sessions.



Junior Ranks Club

15th Field Artillery Regiment RCA

The Junior Ranks Club's main social events throughout the year focused on a half dozen birthday parties celebrated by the members. In addition, the Club hosted a successful graduation smoker for the Basic Military Qualification (BMQ) course that was conducted at Bessborough Armoury.

The Junior Ranks Club has been working on plans for the refurbishment of their Mess. Two of their refrigerators required major rebuilds through the year and there are considerable amounts of furniture requiring replacement. It appears that the planning will be leading to the start of renovations in 2017.



Obituaries

15th Field Artillery Regiment RCA

The 15th Field Artillery Regiment RCA lost two former members during 2016.

Captain William (Bill) Joseph AMOS CD

11 Sept 1946 – 19 June 2016

Bill joined the 15th Field Artillery Regiment RCA in 1969. He spent his early years in the Motor Transport Section (209 Bty). He was promoted to Bombardier in 1971 and Sergeant in 1974. In 1980 he was awarded the Dumoulin Trophy as the most efficient member of the Sergeants Mess. In 1976 he was promoted to Master Warrant Officer, then Chief Warrant Officer and was appointed Regimental Sergeant Major from 1983 to 1986. After completing his term as RSM he was commissioned Captain in 1986 and retired in 1990.



Bill's family arranged a service in the church where they went as children on Thursday 21 July at 13:30 South Burnaby United Church

7591 Gray Avenue (corner of Rumble Street) Burnaby, BC

The family held a short reception at the church following the service.

Captain Scott PATCH CD



Scott Patch, 75 years, passed away in Langley on Sunday August 14, 2016. He will be lovingly remembered by his wife of 38 years, Jackie, his daughters Cindy (Duane Monsen), Jennifer (Dominic Bifolchi) and his son Nathan (Vanessa Leslie). He is sadly missed by his grandchildren, Laura and Derek Monsen, and many relatives and friends. Scott was born in Vancouver and moved to Kelowna as a teenager. He graduated from Kelowna Secondary School in 1959. He worked for the provincial government for over 35 years, first in the Department of Highways and then in Emergency Management, working throughout the province before settling in the Lower Mainland. He served with the Reserve Forces in Kamloops

(Rocky Mountain Rangers), Kelowna (British Columbia Dragoons), Sault Ste Marie (49th Field Artillery) and Vancouver (15th Field Artillery), retiring as a Captain after 26 years. Scott was active in historical re-enacting, both in Canada and Washington State and he enjoyed many stories around the camp res with his fellow re-enactors. After retirement Scott enjoyed Wednesday lunches with friends, birdwatching, reading about military history, and time with his family. A memorial service was held at Henderson's (Langley) Funeral Home on Monday August 22, 2016 at 1:00 pm. In lieu of flowers donations were accepted by the Rocky Mountain Rangers Regimental Museum, 1221 McGill Road, Kamloops, BC.