

The Afghanistan and Zulu Wars Memorial



The move of regimental artefacts from Woolwich to Larkhill is nearing completion. The latest memorial to be relocated is the South Africa and Afghanistan memorial on which is recorded the names of the 395 Gunner officers and soldiers killed in wars in Afghanistan and South Africa between 1877 and 1881. Dismantled and moved by a specialist company, the memorial has been reassembled on the grass between the entrance to the RA Barracks and the Garrison Church at Larkhill where it is accessible to members of the general public.



The weekend of 20-22 February saw the gathering of the Royal Artillery TA at Larkhill for the second Exercise Bustard Challenge - a packed weekend of information, activities and good old Gunner fun. First in the order of the day was a chance to see all things modern and new in the Gunner arsenal. A round robin of stands showing off the latest equipments used across the Regular and Territorial Royal Artillery, varying from the L118 Light Gun to Rapier missile systems, gave us all the chance to catch up. As a recently converted close support field regiment it also gave many of our ex-air defenders a chance to travel down memory lane!

The stands included a wide range of activities, kit and vehicles but one of the highlights was the HAC stand. Often seen as a mythical and mysterious unit among the TA, they opened many eyes to life up close with the special OPs and the vast range of surveillance and target acquisition (STA) kit, cameras and radios that they carry on operations, in addition to their usual equipment! The HAC gathered a wide audience of interested folk and hopefully managed to shake off some of the mystery.

Opportunity

Also on display was a range of vehicles from the Warrior OPV, a Stormer HVM and an AS90. All the syndicates got ample time to clamber over the equipment not often seen by the TA. A chance to see through the vehicles' sights and targeting systems gave our OPs the opportunity to see things in the sort of detail only dreamed of by dismantled troops!

The afternoon saw a change of activity and venue for all. The officers and senior ranks moved to the Newcome Hall for a series of detailed presentations by the DRA, his staff and Lt Col Learmont, CO of 7 Para RHA. These presentations covered a wide range of



Exercise Bustard Challenge



topics, from the 'State of the Nation' and the ongoing Review of Reserve Forces to a highly charged summary of recent experience on operations in Afghanistan. The afternoon gave us a chance to reflect on where we are and the current demands placed on the wider Army, alongside a look ahead on the year to come for the TA.

Bashes and bruises

For the junior ranks the afternoon saw a fun-filled range of activities and adventure training including horse riding, clay-pigeon shooting and quad biking. There were a few bashes and bruises to show for it all but no one can deny they had the best of the weather.

Rounding off the day's activities was the annual National Artillery Association prize giving ceremony held in the Newcome Hall. The dozens of prizes ranged from best field close support and air defence batteries to best navigation driving skills teams. All worked hard to earn the trophies but for 105 Regt RA(V) it was magnificent haul in silverware, including the Queen's Cup and the National Artillery Association Trophy - what a year! All agreed that to convert in three years from an air defence regiment to winning the Queen's Cup as a close support regiment is no mean achievement and the regiment is justifiably proud of the rewards for all its hard work; the members of 207 (City of Glasgow) Bty RA (V) doubly so as they won best battery too!

How do you follow a day like that? Well it was a good old Gunner party! The officers retired to the Packway Mess for the annual NAA dinner where they enjoyed an evening of good food, good conversation and good music from the HAC Band. The senior NCOs spent the evening at a relaxed function hosted by the RASM while for the soldiers it was chance to escape to Salisbury for a run ashore



and the delights of the local nightlife.

Ex Bustard Challenge is a great chance for the various regiments of the Royal Artillery Territorial Army to get together, keep up to date with what is going on in the Royal Regiment and to celebrate the National Artillery Association competition awards.

The year ahead

We look forward to Bustard Challenge 2010 and the NAA competitions of the year ahead as 105 Regt RA (V) fights to keep the silverware we won in 2008!

by Capt Doug Bertram