



## Update on AAAM, North Fort and RAAHC 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2011

Dear Gunners and Friends

I am writing to further update you all about recent activities concerning the Australian Army Artillery Museum (AAAM), Army's presence at North Fort and the artillery collection under the care of the RAAHC. This update outlines progress since my message of 11<sup>th</sup> December 2010 and the outcome of a range of recent meetings involving the Army, Sydney Harbour Federation Trust, the RAAHC and groups of volunteers.

### **The Australian Army Artillery Museum**

In accordance with the Army decision in early December, the AAAM officially closed at North Fort on the 19<sup>th</sup> December. The Army History Unit and Army staff at the AAAM are now preparing to vacate North Fort by mid 2011 and to transfer the AAAM collection initially to storage at Bandiana. AHU moved some large outside items owned by the AAAM to Bandiana before Christmas and will move more in the next few weeks. Army advises that access to North Fort to visit the Memorial Walkway and for volunteers to assist the transition is available from 9AM-3 PM Monday to Friday. Army will hand over the tunnels and external access to the North Fort area to SHFT from 1st February.

Army have confirmed that a new Army museum to display the artillery collection will definitely be built at Puckapunyal where the School of Artillery is now located. It is likely to be a new combined Australian Artillery and Armour Museum built on the perimeter of the base to allow easy public access. The Deputy Chief of Army has assured me that every means is being examined to quickly build this facility, and he will advise further on planning for this soon.

The Army has allocated considerable funds to ensure the move of the AAAM items to Bandiana is professionally handled. I am assured the Collection will be securely housed there under cover and in waterproof and aired containers. A curator will be specifically assigned to account and care for the Collection, and funds approved for quarterly inspections by experts nominated by the Regimental Committee. Nevertheless, it is of concern that the AAAM collection may be stored in Bandiana for some years. While it is proposed that items from the RAAHC collection that most appropriately should be held by the AAAM will be loaned to Army as part of the future AAAM collection, alternative arrangements are required for some RAAHC items that would deteriorate in storage or to which the Regiment and the public needs access to in the interim. This includes the library, the Whitelaw collection, some of the uniforms and other valuable items.

### **North Head and the SHFT**

The Sydney Harbour Federation Trust (SHFT) was set up by the Australian Government to conserve, protect and improve public access to former Defence and Commonwealth sites around Sydney Harbour. The sites include Cockatoo Island, North Head Sanctuary, Headland Park,

Chowder Bay, Woolwich Dock and Parklands, Macquarie Lightstation, Marine Biological Station, Snapper Island and HMAS Platypus. The SHFT aims to develop these sites into public spaces that offer tours, education programs, events, exhibitions, parklands, walks and business tenancy. It has a current charter as an independent organization through until at least 2033.

In recent years the SHFT has developed a management plan for the North Head area (called the North Head Sanctuary – NHS) which recognizes the historical links that the military have had at North Head through the School of Artillery, and acknowledges responsibility to maintain the various fortifications and tunnels on North Head, the Defence of Sydney Monument and the Memorial Walkway. The Trust's Management Plan for the NHS was adopted on 3 September.

SHFT has clarified that they fully support the further development of North Fort in accordance with their management plan. They plan to open the complete NHS area for public access as soon as possible after 1<sup>st</sup> February including an Orientation Centre and a refurbished Café at North Fort. They intend to use the NHS to interpret the story of the Defence of Sydney. They propose to keep and develop further as appropriate the Battle of Sydney Monument, the Memorial Walkway, the 9.2 in Gun emplacements, tunnels and associated fortifications, and they will support the establishment of a significant Defence of Sydney museum that will also acknowledge the artillery and School of Artillery history at North Head. As a result of recent meetings at North Head, they have recognized the valuable work and projects being undertaken by the volunteer guides and workshop groups at North Fort, and are looking at how they can best maintain this capability. It appears the SHFT will wish to retain at North Head a maintenance capacity and guided tours of the tunnels, fortifications and their Museum. The SHFT has agreed that the RAAHC can maintain the existing library at North Fort in its current building for the interim, and to provide other support to the RAAHC during the transition period.

The RAAHC is prepared to loan a few appropriate items to the SHFT for display at NHS and elsewhere around Sydney. Consultation on what this might entail has commenced.

It has also been agreed between SHFT and the RAAHC that the Memorial walkway will continue to be administered by the RAAHC with the support of the SHFT. It is intended to complete the walkway and conduct an opening dedication during 2011.

### **The RAA Historical Company (RAAHC)**

In late 2010 the RAAHC refocused as a national artillery organization with the aim to foster, maintain and promote the heritage of artillery throughout Australia. In this respect it plans to work closely with all federal, State, regional and local organizations interested in the past and present history and heritage of Australian artillery. The RAAHC will be contacting State and regional artillery organisations over the next 6 months or so to further develop a partnership that appropriately develops a national perspective on all artillery matters.

The RAAHC has a valuable artillery collection; some under trust from individuals and benefactors, mainly located at North Head with a portion on loan to some other artillery organizations around Australia. A good amount of its collection has been on loan to and displayed at the AAAM at North Fort. The Collection includes guns, field, locating and air defence artillery equipments and ancillaries, vehicles, uniforms, maps, special collections, books and pamphlets, and artillery memorabilia. Multiple numbers of some items are held in the collection.

Discussions are underway with the AHU to clarify the ownership of some items in the current

holdings at North Fort. It is the intention of the RAAHC to loan to the Army all those items that should be most appropriately displayed in Army museums including the future AAAM. Other items in the RAAHC collection might be loaned to other national, state, regional or local organizations, including the SHFT, that may have a close historical association with items or can best display and maintain the items, but the process to finalise this allocation will take time. In the interim, the RAAHC is therefore negotiating with the SHFT to temporarily retain some of the Collection at the NHS for further classification and repair. **We will continue to need RAAHC members and volunteers to support this process.**

The RAAHC has also agreed with the SHFT and the AHU to maintain its library at North Head for the foreseeable future as a national artillery research centre, possibly including a Sydney fortifications section. It will remain in its existing building at least for the next 12 months. **We will need volunteers in the Sydney area, and elsewhere where technology allows, to assist in the development and maintenance of the Artillery Research centre.**

### **Websites**

The RAAHC currently manages the North Fort website [www.northfort.org.au/](http://www.northfort.org.au/) . In light of what is happening at North Head and the revised focus of the RAAHC, this is not now appropriate as the RAAHC website. This website will therefore close soon and a new RAAHC website will be established.

The official Army artillery website is [www.army.gov.au/RRAA/](http://www.army.gov.au/RRAA/) . This website is managed by the RAA Head of Regiment staff and has recently been revised and improved. All official information on RAA matters, including history and heritage, will be displayed on this website.

There are also a large number of other Artillery related websites operating in Australia based around regional RAA Associations, past and present artillery unit associations and interested organisations. I encourage all these websites to be linked and to assist in informing all gunners, past and present, and all interested individuals about artillery matters.

### **Future**

The RAA Regimental Committee and the RAAHC Board will continue to closely monitor, and influence where possible, the development of this situation. We are determined to ensure the preservation of the artillery collection at the future AAAM and around Australia. We see this process as an opportunity to ensure a better national perspective and approach to artillery matters.

I will keep you informed as the situation develops. We encourage the constructive support of all Gunners and friends through this process, and encourage the continued support and assistance of our volunteers both during the next few months and as long-term supporters of the RAAHC and the Regiment.

Ubique,

Major General Tim Ford, AO (Retd)  
Representative Colonel Commandant and Chairman RAAHC  
23<sup>rd</sup> January 2011