

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE NEWCASTLE VOLUNTEER ARTILLERY BATTERY ©

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Due to the fears of a Russian attack, which was spreading in the colonies as a result of the war that Britain was fighting against Russia in the Crimea? A public meeting was called on the 1st December 1855, of interested people, a resolution was passed at the meeting to form an Artillery Unit and Rifle Corps and they also appointed a committee to collect the names of interested volunteers. Several of the speakers at the meeting explained that great cost in uniforms was quite unnecessary, inasmuch as a suitable dress might easily be adopted by every volunteer by which his wife or mother could make for him.

8th January 1861 — The New South Wales Government of the day proclaimed the formation of the 3rd Field Battery Volunteer Artillery, the beginning of 113 Field Battery. Ewen McPherson was elected Captain and Battery Commander, Samuel Halt was elected First Lieutenant and on the 13th August 1869 he was promoted to Captain and became Commander of the unit. The following Dr Kraggs Fredrick Ash, John Burrows and S.L. Halt the brother of Samuel Holt were elected Sergeants. Although the unit was the 3rd Battery Volunteer Artillery it was referred to as the Newcastle Battery Volunteer Artillery.

1869 —1878 — The organization and designation of Artillery from this time on, tended to follow the British pattern, modified to suit Australian Conditions. The Battery also had a name change and this was to No 5 Garrison Artillery, Newcastle.

1878 — In this year the Volunteer Artillery Brigade was transformed into the New South Wales Regiment, Volunteer Artillery and this included No 5 Garrison Artillery, Newcastle.

September 1888 — A detachment of twenty five gunners from the N.S.W. Artillery at Fort Scratchley armed with carbines and a five barrel Nordenfelt machine gun were transported by rail to the New Lambton Colliery. As a serious disturbance had taken place, but by the time the troops arrived the large assembly had dispersed. A few days later the miners strike started to get out of hand again, so 86 men from the Fort were again deployed to the Colliery for protection of the property and those men that defied the strike and worked. The strike was all over in a few days and the men returned to the Fort.

1893 - The Artillery forces in New South Wales consisted of a Brigade Division of Field Artillery (one permanent battery and two partly paid batteries) and the 1st Garrison Division (two permanent companies) and the 2nd Garrison Division (four partially paid companies). In all these units totaled over 1000 gunners, of these 200 were permanent and the remainder were partially paid. The Newcastle unit was then No. 5 company, 2nd Garrison Division.

1899 – The Artillery in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland were designated Regiment of Australian Artillery. Major General G.A. French ordered the words Field and Garrison to be added.

1st January 1902 – From this date through to the 1st July 1927 the unit had various title changes from 5 Company N.S.W. Garrison Artillery to 13th Heavy Battery Australian Garrison Artillery.

8th February 1936 – The Newcastle Morning Herald recorded that the title of Royal was conferred upon units of the Australian Artillery and the Australian Engineers.

1936 – The word Militia was added to units that were not permanent units thus the Battery then became 13th Heavy Battery, Royal Australian Artillery Militia.

1st March 1936 – All heavy Batteries RAA (M) in the 2nd Military District were grouped into the 5th Heavy Brigade RAA (M) and Major C.R.M. Shannon became the Militia Commanding Officer thus the severing of a long connection with the permanent batteries.

1st January 1939 – The Militia batteries added 100 to their designations to avoid confusion with the permanent batteries with similar numbering, so the battery went from 13th Heavy battery RAA (M) too 113th Heavy Battery RAA (M).

1939-1945 – A mixture of Permanent and Militia gunners manned the fixed defences in this period. The gunners adopted the battery title to which they were posted eg, Wallace Battery, North Fort Battery, Darwin Battery and Scratchley Battery etc.

8th June 1942 – On this morning at 0217hrs the enemy submarine I-21 commanded by Captain Matsumura began shelling Newcastle from 7,000 Yards north east of the entrance to the harbour. The alarm was raised and the battery began engaging the enemy at 0226hrs, the guns only fired four rounds before the submarine submerged. The Japanese say that they fired 34 rounds but official authorities say only 24 rounds were fired by the Japanese. This action is claimed to be the only occasion on which coast guns on the main land of Australia were fired against an enemy warship.

1945 – At the end of hostilities and up until National Service was reintroduced, the battery was manned by some 30 personal and it was then called 2 C.A. (Coast Artillery) Battery Newcastle.

21st May 1952 – Following the introduction of National Service Training a Militia battery was re-formed to again man the guns at Fort Scratchley, the unit was designated 13th Medium Coast Battery RAA. The (M) which stood for Militia was dropped in 1949, when the Royal Australian Artillery Regiment and the Royal Australian Artillery (Militia) were amalgamated into the Royal Australian Artillery.

1956 – The story of changing designation resumed when the Battery reverted to the 113th Battery, it was then 113th Medium Coast Battery RAA.

1st July 1960 – The word 'Medium' was dropped from the Battery's name.

26th October 1962 – After a long life of over 100 year as a coastal defence unit, the role of the unit changed and it became an Air Defence unit and it's new designation was 113th Light Anti-Aircraft Battery RAA. Despite the change of armament the units home remained at Fort Scratchley.

9th December 1972 – The change was in the air again for the unit, this time it was the relocation to Adamstown Depot from Fort Scratchley.

30th June 1975 – Due to a further re-organisation of the army the battery then became a field battery and was then 113th Field Battery RAA. Thus the unit has come a full circle, as its original weapons having been 6 pound Smooth Bore Field Guns.

1st October 1976 – As a result of the Miller Report on Rationalisation of the Citizen Military Forces in

