



# ARTILLERY CORPS FIELD DAY

## 50th Anniversary of Magee Barracks, Kildare 1939 – 1989

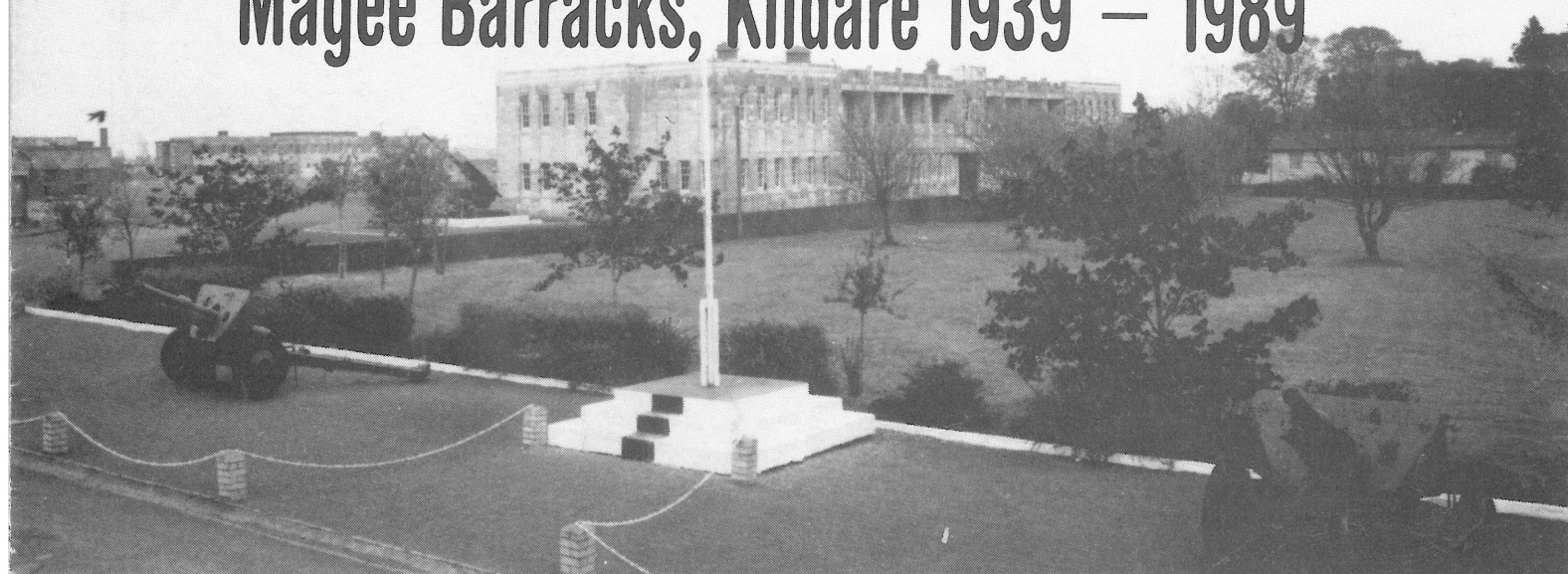


Photo: Comdt P. Walshe (Retd)

### Foreword

Saturday 16 Sep 89 is the Second Artillery Corps Field Day and I am delighted that it is taking place this year in Magee Barracks, Kildare, to coincide with our 50th Anniversary.

It was in 1939 that the Sisk Company completed the building of Magee Barracks, and Gunners who until then had been exiled in Plunkett Barracks from 1936 to 1939, marched proudly through the gates to take up residence – and there they have remained until this day.

Today we remember all those Gunners who have served in Magee Barracks, whether it be in Depot and School Artillery, Air Defence Regiment or 6 Field Artillery Regiment, down through the years. We also remember those who have come to Magee Barracks on the various courses in the Artillery School as part of their Artillery formation, and we remember those Gunners who have passed away, and are no longer with us.

Magee Barracks has been the home of Artillery and has served the Corps well. Long may it continue to be so.

I hope that everyone will enjoy the day and that it will serve to unite in friendship and comradeship past and serving Gunners in the Corps.

In conclusion, I wish to thank Lt Col J.Hall and his hard working Committee, for their dedication, organising and planning, which will help in no small way to ensure the success of this Second Artillery Corps Field Day.

M. McMahon  
Colonel.

Director of Artillery.

### Programme of Events

- 14.00 : Display Commences
- 14.15 : ARW Display
- 14.30 : Tug-O-War Semi Finals
- 15.00 : Mortar Competition Semi Finals
- 15.30 : Final Tug-O-War
- 15.45 : Final Mortar Competition
- 16.00 : Presentation of Prizes
- 16.15 : Band Recital by Band of C Comd
- 16.30 : Buffet/Barbecue

Kiddies Corner; Refreshments and Bar facilities available.



A Piece of History Courtesy of An Cosantoir. RSM N. Fahy: "How can one man dig one hundred holes through rock and tarmac in one week?" Sgt Spud Murphy: "It's the delicate finger work you see". (Photographed by Capt P. Walshe during Arbour Day at Magee Bks, Kildare.

# WELCOME

It is indeed a great honour for me as Officer Commanding Magee Barracks to welcome you all to Magee Barracks on this special occasion when we celebrate the Second Artillery Corps Field Day and the 50th Anniversary of Magee Barracks.

In my present appointment I am very conscious of the unique role played by Magee Barracks in the traditions and history of the Artillery Corps. Ever since 1901, Kildare, then a hutted camp built for the Royal Artillery, has been associated with guns, horses and Gunners. In the 20s and 30s, the whole Corps was stationed together in Kildare and it was here that the Technical Instruction in Gunnery Skills were built up until the formation of the Artillery School in 1931, and the building of Magee Barracks in 1939.

During the war years 1939 to 1945 large numbers passed through the Barracks on the many courses run by the Artillery School, and Magee Barracks was also the location for the Annual Competition for the Battery and Regimental Trophies.

Thus, it has played a prominent role in our Gunners careers down through the years and I am delighted to welcome all Gunners serving and retired to share in the unique spirit of the Corps and to renew old friendships and acquaintances in what we hope is an enjoyable environment for all concerned.

K. Doyle

Lt Col

OC Depot Artillery and Magee Barracks

## The Magee Gun Trophy

This Field Artillery Trophy commemorates the heroism of Irish Gunners in an Historic Epic of the Insurrection of 1798 and typifies the spirit which keeps the guns firing at any cost. The Trophy is a replica of the French Six Pounder fired by Sergeant Magee of the Franco-Irish Army, against the British Forces at Ballinamuck, Co. Longford, on September 8th 1798.

This Trophy was presented as an Annual Award by the Depot and School Artillery Corps to the Field Artillery Regiment attaining the highest marks for fighting efficiency in an Annual All-Army Competition. It was won by 3 Field Artillery Regiment in 1944 and 1945.

The model, mounted and suitably inscribed with the right wheel broken, just as it was before firing for the last time, was made in the workshops of the Depot and School Artillery Corps in 1943.

The Historical Research and Design was carried out by Captain C. Ua Donachair, Artillery School.



The stand was prepared by Captain T. J. Lambert, Depot Artillery Corps. The gun, wrought in bronze, is the work of Coy Sgt Jas J. Scanlan of the Depot and School Artillery Corps, pictured here in a very rare photograph obtained from the Scanlan family, Kildare Town. Coy Sgt Scanlan served in Magee Bks from 1925 to 1958.

### Commanding Officers - Magee Barracks

1939	Capt D. S. Farrell
1940	Comdt P. Hally
1940	Comdt J. P. Kelly
1942	Major A. Dalton
1946	Major W. Donagh
1947	Lt Col P. Curran
1953	Lt Col D. S. Collins
1955	Lt Col M. P. McCarthy
1961	Lt Col C. M. Mattimoe
1961	Lt Col M. Sugrue
1965	Lt Col I. P. Noone
1966	Lt Col J. S. Nolan
1973	Lt Col D. Burke
1974	Lt Col J. White
1974	Lt Col M. O. Fitzsimmons
1977	Lt Col T. M. McDunphy
1978	Lt Col T. Boyle
1980	Lt Col T. A. Ryan
1982	Lt Col M. Moriarty
1984	Lt Col M. McMahon
1988	Lt Col K. Doyle

### Sergeants Major

1939	RSM F. Whitty
1943	RSM W. Downey
1946	RSM H. Maxwell
1947	RSM P. Egan
1957	RSM D. Scott
1958	RSM P. Dwyer
1975	RSM N. Fahy
1980	RSM J. Ryan

## The Unveiling of the Statue of St. Barbara at Magee Bks on 5th April, '54



His Lordship addressing the Troops after the Unveiling Ceremony

### 'St Barbara of the Gunners'

(Patroness of Artillery)

*'They are firing, we are falling, and the red  
skies rend and shiver us,  
Barbara, Barbara, we may not lose a  
breath -*

*Be at the bursting doors of doom, and in the  
dark deliver us,  
Who loosen the last window on the sun  
of sudden death'*

*'The touch and the tornado; all our guns  
give tongue together,  
St. Barbara for the gunnery and God defend  
the right,*

*They are stopped and gapped and battered  
as we blast away the Weather.  
Building window upon window to our Lady  
of the light.*

*For the light is come on Liberty, her foes  
are falling, falling,  
They are reeling, they are running, as the  
shameful years have run,  
She is risen for all the humble, she has  
heard the conquered calling,  
St. Barbara of the Gunners, with her hand  
upon the 'gun'*

— Extracts from 'St. Barbara of the Batteries'  
by G. K. Chesterton.



His Lordship Most Rev Dr. Keogh, Bishop of Kildare & Leighlin, who Unveiled the Statue, inspects the Guard of Honour, accompanied by Col McLoughlin, Director of Artillery.





Lt Col K. Doyle, OC Depot & School Arty pictured third from left with the Magee Gun Replica Shield and the winning Depot Arty Team and Mentors after the Annual Mortar Competition 1988, at McKee Bks.

## ‘Mind You, I’ve Said Nothing’

*It was an offer that could not be refused: name in the Hall of Fame for a few fiddler’s plucks on the lost chord that bound those old Kildare buildings together for fifty years. ‘Anecdotal will do’ were the riding instructions. Softly, softly.*

—By Lt Col J. P. Duggan (Retd)—

**B**UILDINGS, LIKE WORDS, have lives of their own. They are not simply structures with a roof and four walls intended as a place for living and working in. I won’t blind you with science about mix and mortar or how the buildings, when treated disrespectfully, effected a lightning change of grid. It didn’t pay to disillusion the proud parading beholder that his perception of beauty was flawed. The moral was that pulling on the ball was fine so long as the right connection was made. Redress was the name of a greyhound. Spike Island not excluded, “Sit down Commandant” or “Why aren’t you wearing breeches and leggings” were standard put-down punctuations.

### Shots in the Dark

It was the simple pleasures of the poor in those days. The permissive society had yet to deluge. There were unrequited pangs for which ‘batin’ the heads off one another was no real substitute. Better than the British outlet of playing Rugby in the dining room or ‘Cook’. ‘Cook’ was a post grandial game played out in the shrubberies. One party hid behind a bush and called ‘Cook’. The other party fired a shotgun at where he thought the call came from. A form of hide and seek.

Directors told ritual jokes to lacquered grins and recorded laughter. Commanding Officers rarely told jokes. You had to know your Glen for the topographical titters. “Knock, knock, Who’s there. Coan. Coan who? Coan cluck yourself”. Collapse of stout party.

Allowances were made for country cousins when they yocked in from the sticks ringarooming and tiddlywinking. That was spoken Ogham for the half dozen stout which was promptly planked behind the curtains for when the bar closed.

### Tales from the Mess

The Officers Mess was well heated. Backside warming in front of the open turf fire was brought to a fine art by a couple of connoisseurs. It was said by one officer that if his orderly didn’t call him soon he’d be late for Parade. Putting up decorations for a dance was thirsty work too. Pity to miss the dance over them. It was all that auld dust. The move out to the Glen was notified for 0830 hrs. Mischievously it pulled out at 0800 leaving Junior Officers in a panic to catch up. A sheep was used as a reference point in a famous nomadic shoot. The

octagonal shaped field was a home from home. Half concentrations into the sheep pen brought many a bad boy in from the cold. Split rock had its own imagery.

The anti-tank range was built out of muscle and bone. ‘Tondalayo’ was a stray Rita Hayworth film shown in draughty halls. Foil from cigarette packages aided plugs to help the grumbling projectors over many a whirring breakdown. The silent screen was filched too for famous names to fuel fantasies and fill voids. What was there to laugh about? That’s a good question.

And then the epigrammatic gems that could have been honed only in Clonmel. Joseph’s quotes! ‘Up all day last night and up all night again today.’ The Mess Sergeant muttered ‘dem officers is deadly’, he coined ‘Stop talking when you’re speaking to an NCO’. Enough Said

### Veterans and Virgins

Coventry and London isn’t a million miles away. Soldiering was a deadly serious business. You could do what you liked as long as you were good at that. There was a lot of combat experience to rub shoulders with: World War I; the 1916 Rebellion; the War of Independence; the Civil War. ‘Jump Sir’ snapped the Vimy Ridge veteran Sergeant-Major when Pierse asked on the Saturday morning inspection why one barrel of a gun was higher than another. Pierse inspired awe and affection. ‘Like an Auxie’ was said half in admiration half in amusement. Tremulously ‘The 5th Tanky-ank Battery’ was handed over to him. At a Potential Officers Interview Board the question ‘Bhfuil aon ghaedhille agat?’ brought a reply ‘No, but I play a little rugby’. Myles na gCopaleen, the black humorist of the day was always good for a laugh. Sergeant Johnny Desmond from the American Forces Network brightened things up a bit, ‘Radio Eireann’ made a religion of being po-faced.

The four black horses, Lt Gen P. A. (Pick Axe) Mulcahy, Col ‘Pie’ Maher are magic names in the genesis of the Corps. So are ‘Scan’, Louis, Barney, Jim, Jerry, Joe .... the list is as long as your arm.

I bhflaitheas an bFhiann go raibh a nánam go léir. They only fade away.

And the limbers go rolling along – Keep them rolling!



*The Artillery School, Magee Bks. Established in 1931, the existing building was not completed until 1942. By 1943 the Arty Corps had twenty-two full strength Batteries organised into seven Regiments. Being The School, the School Staff were less than popular among the 'line' Officers of the day, but there was no escape for anyone of any rank. A whole series of tests, written and oral, were carried out by the School Staff. While the Officers sat in Trodden Hall, sweating and grousing through written papers, lowly gun layers were being tested in Fuze setting and Sight setting and suchlike, and Signallers were wrestling with messages, packed with pitfalls. The aim of all this was to produce professional and well trained 'Gunners' who were tested to the limit in the Glen of Imaal in Shoots and Exercises. To come last of the 22 competing Batteries was to guarantee the frightful penalty of being dragged from one's home station and attached to the School for a period of several months intensive training. The winning Battery of course, received the Magee Shield, the ultimate indescribable glory!*

*Comdt P. D. Kavanagh (RIP)*

## The Air Defence Regiment

The AA Battalion was disbanded in 1945 and reorganised into four AA Battery Cadres. The 1st and 2nd were in McKee Bks, Dublin and the 3rd and 4th in Murphy Bks Ballincollig, Cork. 1952 saw the disbanding of the Cadres and the establishment of an AA Training Regiment under Lt Col A. Dalton.

During this period L60 and L70 Bofors 40mm guns and Mk7 FC Radars were purchased. The Regiment also had the HAA 3.7" guns where one of the first students was Lt T. M. O'Neill now Lt Gen, Chief of Staff.

In 1959 the FCA Batteries in Dublin (2 AA Bty) and Limerick (3 AA Bty) were integrated with Regimental Headquarters and 1 Regular Bty in Kildare. Further reorganisation followed when 1 AA Training Regiment became 1 Air Defence Regiment in 1984. 4 Bty (FCA) in Spike Island was acquired in 1979 and moved to Belmont, Cobh in 1985.

Today the unit is very proud of its Unique position in the Defence Forces in that it is –

- The only Air Defence Unit in the Army.
- Completely integrated with its FCA Btys.
- The only Unit that has sub-units located in three Commands.



*FCA Btys of ADR in action with Bofors L 60 guns.*



*A close up view of the L 70 firing on the day.*



*A GPMG in action in the AA role.*

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

OC 6 Fd Arty Regt acknowledges subscriptions towards Arty Corps Field Day from the following traders:

Laurences Man's Shop, 2 Station Road, Kildare.

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*Congratulations to Magee Bks and its personnel on your  
☆ 50th Anniversary ☆*



Heading for the former Belgian Congo and Service with ONUC in 1961. Personnel L/R: Capt D. J. Whelan, Capt G. O'Sullivan, later to be Chief of Staff, Capt J. Lawlor and Sgt R. McCarthy.

## Do I Remember? What!

By RQMS R. McCarthy (Retd)

*When we arrived in Kildare, we were in awe of 'Red Ned' (Bty Sgt P. Dwyer), but luckily he was recuperating in hospital. His motorbike had an argument with a pole (lucky us). The year was March 1950.*

*The Troop was named 'Fox' Troop, the famous Sgt 'Sculptor' Reidy was in charge and strangely enough he was the only Kerryman I knew who played hurling, and of course then you had the infamous Cpl P. J. Egan of Kilkenny and All-Ireland fame.*

**W**E HAD COMPLETED ten weeks in McDonagh Bks (GTD), the place was over-crowded, Comdt W. Rea, later Col and passed to his reward, arrived one day – and interrogated us – the sheep on right, the goats on left – anyway we embused for Kildare and Depot Arty. About forty of us, under the baton of the late Lt P. McDonald. It was a great thrill at the time to come to a comparatively new Barracks. Col P. Curran was Commanding Officer in 1950 and Sgt Major P. Egan 'Pat the Dog' was Barrack Sergeant Major, incidentally still alive, 86 years young.

Practically every County in Ireland was represented. There was only Depot Staff, Recruits and Attachments like Tiffy Scanlan, Tiffy Johnston, 'Saddler' Pete Scanlon, 'Tip Cart' Matt Creevy, Medic Sgt Christy Burke (Doc), Cpls M. Murphy, 'Soldier' Ryan and 'Daisy' O'Connor of the MPC.

### The Quick and the Dead

The Depot Staff consisted of RQMS P. Nolan, Battery QMSs M. Flynn in the School, J. O'Donnell as Bk Acct; Sgts Jack Costello, Barney McCourt, Louis Carroll, Larry O'Reilly, G. 'Hoggie' Horgan, P. McCann, and John Phelan, all deceased. Cpls John Farrell, Christy 'Happy Har' Harrington, J. Rankin, Cook Cpl; T. Barrett, M. McInerney, P. O'Riordan, T. Foley 'Gertie', Con Baldwin, P. 'Doc' O'Callaghan and James McArdle the popular Pay Cpl. Gnrs Nick Fahy later RSM, Billy Watson, Paddy Cardiff, Tommy Taylor, 'Sammy' Ryan the Tailor; Charlie Graydon as Barber; P. Gately, P. Watters. Aiden McCann, Billy Scully, 'Mutt' (J.) Furlong, John Phelan, P. O'Brien, later RSM 2 Fd Arty Regt; Billy O'Brien, Joe Finlay, Billy 'Footloose' Allen, John 'Judge' Kenny, Matt Nevin, J. Stringer, 'Spot' Reilly, J. Mulpeter, J. Stafford, Tom Hall. Joe 'Forty' Hall, 'Vin' Finucane, 'Bren-gun' Kelly, 'Hatcha' Cronin, Davy Morgan, 'Snooky' Byrne, J. Brabston, driver of the only transport in Bks, a V8 Truck and the only Battery in Bks as well! Tom O'Neill, Mickey 'Monkey Face' Crossan. They were a wonderful group. Not forgetting Sgt Joe Haughney the Orderly Room Sgt.

### Sporting Times and Actors

The rivalry between Depot Staff and Fox Troop, especially on the hurling field was deadly, and was the

harbinger of the famous 'Blue Gold' Artillery Hurling Teams of the fifties, which went on to win Camp Championships, Todd Burns Cup, Co. Kildare Hurling Championships and formed the nucleus of the Curragh Command Hurling Team and Co. Kildare Hurling Team of that era. We had a wonderful team of supporters both Artillery and civilian – the Bk Field and Curragh were like mini All-Irelands. Hungry times but good times. The V8 truck used to do several runs, not all Arty pers, to the Curragh.

In the latter half of the 50s, 1 AA Regt was formed, Col A. Dalton was the Commanding Officer, and this brought an influx of NCOs, Gnrs and Recruits – 'Tex' and Co and it was into the realms of soccer and gaelic football. We won some soccer championships, unfortunately Gaelic Football eluded us but we reached the final on a couple of occasions. There was a great air of activity in Bks – we had the 'Mummers' Theatre Group – who set their ambitions a bit high, 'Waiting for Godot'.

A favourite story by our Drill Instr was, when he stood the Squad At Ease, that his father, once, being good, gave him soldiers made of wood, he'd thought he'd lost – till now!!

Then UN Service started – that was the end of sport as we knew it – hard and fair. The arrival of the 'Refugees' from the 'Troubles' in the North. They were great times, (never to be recovered). 4.5" Howitzers then in vogue – a wonderful bunch of lads, Esprit de Corps was the keyword.

I would like to mention in passing just a few of the Officers who contributed to the 'Renaissance' of the 50s/60s era.

Patsy McGonigle, Des Duff, T. E. Ryan, K. Duffy, N. Bergin, P. Monahan (Team Mentor), M. McMahon, Tony Wall, Johnnie Hall, Liam Donnelly, Ned Campion (Equit School), K. Doyle.

Finally in the late fifties along came 'Gnr' Malone, All Army and Irish Lightweight Champion – 'Mo' Connolly, A. Murphy, a son of the famous Tommy Murphy (Laois), N. Brick, N. Power, M. Meaney, Walsh, Teehan, Conlon (Radar/Sigs Group) The Riding School was no more.

I write this to try and recapture the good old days and great times. If I have omitted anyone, I apologise.

Joe 'Forty' Hall was Duty Cook, someone asked 'What's for dinner', 'Stew' was the answer, 'Count all Larry O'Reilly's dogs' was the solution.





*Lt Gen T. M. O'Neill, Chief of Staff pictured at the opening of the NCOs Mess in Magee Bks in 1987. Front Row L/R: Sgt Major J. Ryan; Lt Col M. McMahon, then OC Depot & School and now Col D Arty; Lt Gen T. M. O'Neill; Bty Sgt D. Finn; Col P. F. Monahan, then D Arty and now Brig Gen, GOC E Comd; Sgt Major Keating. Rear Row L/R: Bty Sgt P. Confrey; Bty QMS M. Hughes; Cpl Dowling; Cpl Carroll; Sgt Page; Sgt Sage; Sgt T. Leigh, Sgt N. Brick, Cpl McGrath, Gnr J. Cleere, Sgt P. Rooney; Mr. Dick McCarthy; Bty Sgt S. Fortune; RQMS Costello and Sgt S. Fortune*



## 6 Field Artillery Regiment

At the end of the Second World War the LDF became known as an Forsa Cosanta Aitiuil (FCA). The three FCA Infantry Battalions in the 'Kildare' area continued to operate in that capacity until integration came along in October 1959. From that date the Battalions changed over to Artillery weapons and they also underwent an identity change. The Edenderry Bn became the 11 Heavy Mortar Battery, the South Kildare Bn became the 5 Field Artillery Battery and the North Kildare Bn became 6 Field Artillery Battery. Each of these Batteries were sub-units of 6 Field Artillery Regiment. The Regimental Headquarters being based at Magee Barracks, Kildare.

Since the original Artillery Shoot in August 1960, the Regiment has fired a considerable variety of

weapons including the 25 Pdr, 3.7 inch Howitzer, 4.5 inch Howitzer, the 81mm Mortar and the 120mm Mortar. 5 Fd Arty Battery along with 6 Fd Arty Battery joined a composite battery in 1981 to fire the 105mm Light Gun – the first (and only) FCA unit so far to do so. Comdt George Murphy was the Regimental Commanding Officer during this milestone in our history. This particular Shoot was carried out using the Field Artillery Computer Equipment (FACE) and the Laser Range Finder. The spectacular results achieved on this Shoot opened all our eyes to the benefits of computer technology in the modern day Artillery Corps.

On the ceremonial front the Regiment has had a very busy time over the years. The individual Batteries of the Regiment also take

part in civic functions and events organised locally.

Although FCA units, by nature, tend to have a high turnover of members, 6 Field Artillery Regiment has not suffered at NCO/Officer level in this regard. Each Battery Commander has in excess of 20 years service, while the other serving Officers have an average of 17 years service. Long serving NCOs include RSM Tom Murphy, BQMS Joe Meade, BQMS Frank Lawlor, Bty Sgts Tom Morrissey and Charlie Byrne, Sgt 'Podger' Dunne, Larry O'Reilly and 'Kipper' Herron. There are many other serving members with long service, for which we are extremely appreciative as it leads to good continuity when each year's training commences.

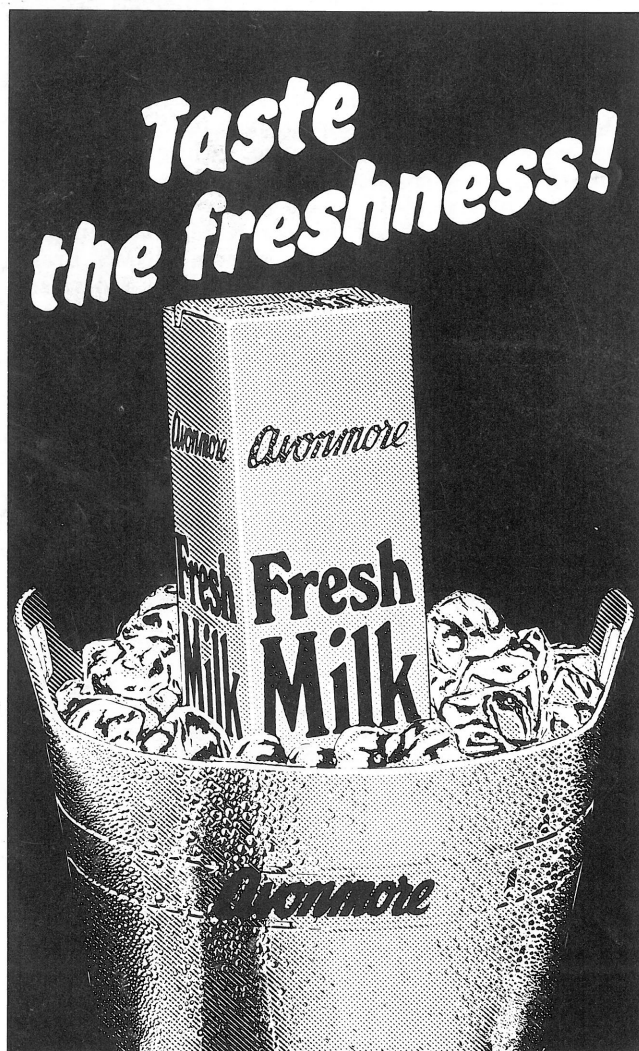
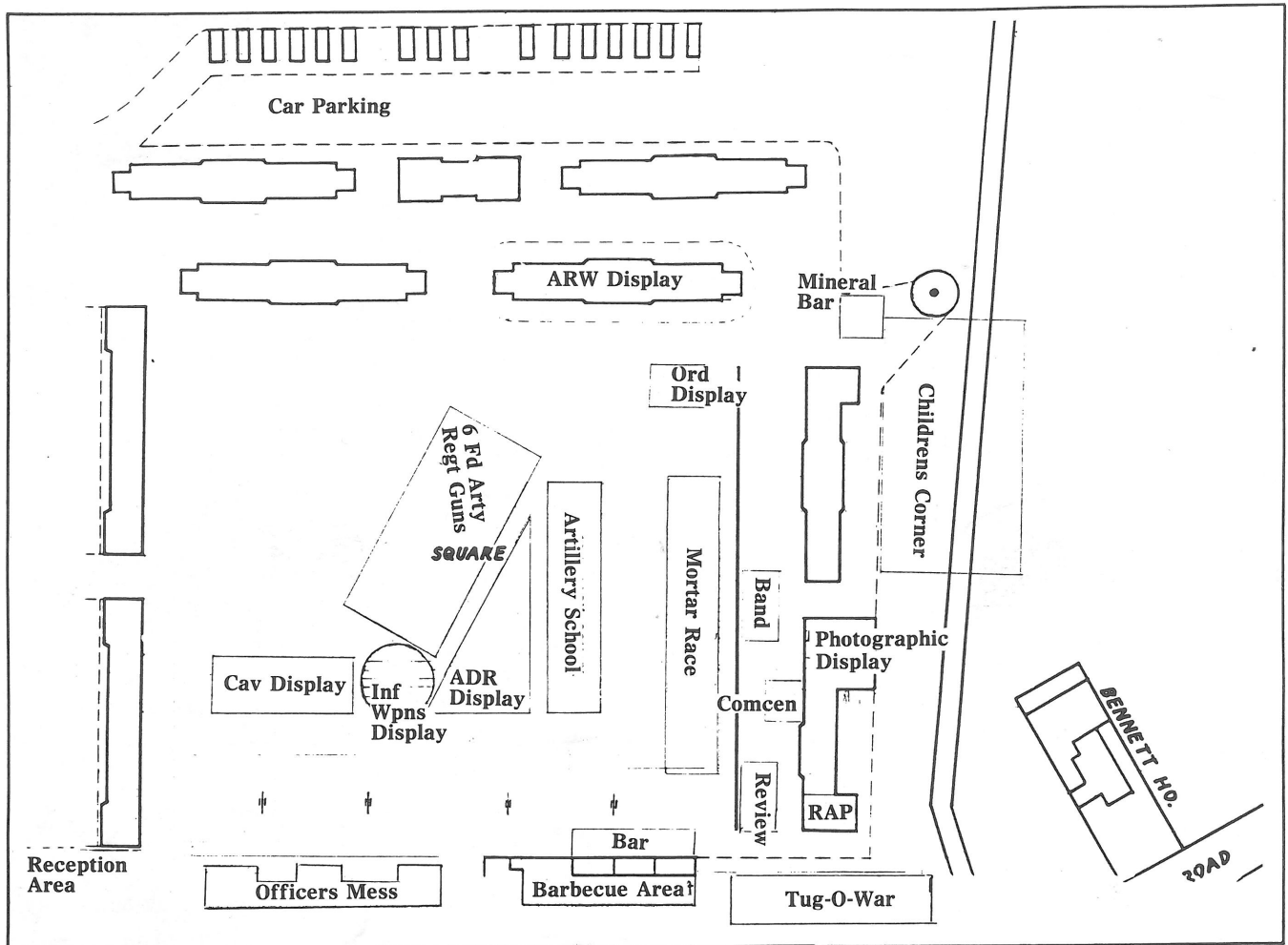
Courtesy of Lt G. Gibson.



*Comdt Thomas Wickham shot by a Syrian soldier at Rafid in Syria while serving as an unarmed Observer with UNTSO on June 1967. Wickham Hall Arty School is named in his Honour.*

*Captain Charles Trodden, the first School Commandant of the Artillery School. He completed an American Artillery Officers Course at Fort Sill in 1926. Trodden Hall is named in his Honour.*





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