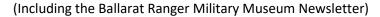
The North-Western Ranger



8th/7th BATTALION – 2RVR ASSOCIATION Inc.

VICTORIA'S OWN COUNTRY BATTALION





Vol 28 No 3 September 2024

Patron: The Commanding Officer, 8/7 RVR, Lt Col Derek Sonogan

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Committee:

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Committee Members 2023/24 Greg Code

Lindsay Govan Bruce McKinnon

Ian Nunn Les Taylor

8/7 Battalion – 2 RVR Association

AGM - Ballarat, October/November

Annual Activities:

ANZAC Day – Ballarat & Warrnambool Annual Dinner – Warrnambool, October Annual Dinner – Ballarat, October/November

Monthly Activities:

Committee Meeting – Normally the First Tuesday of the Month, Alfredton Sports Centre, Cuthberts Road, or Ranger Barracks, Ballarat.

The Association's Newsletter Editor's email address is <u>87th2rvrassoc@gmail.com</u> For urgent newsletter matters please use <u>nkaleckie@outlook.com.au</u>

This newsletter was printed by the office of:



RECENT EVENTS

A Day at the Range (Neil Leckie with Jason County)

Eighteen association members and friends attended a 'Day at the Range' at Puckapunyal on Sunday 11 August 2024. Three attended from Warrnambool, two from Shepparton, two from Melbourne, one from Metcalf, one from Rushworth and the remainder, including one from Bacchus Marsh, were on the bus from Ballarat. WO1 Dick of 8/7 RVR met them at the Puckapunyal Military Area Main Gate and was the Security Escort for the day. The visit was arranged to observe part of the range qualification component of the Infantry Initial Employment Training (IET) Course. 8/7 RVR was running the course. The students were drawn from as far as Western Australia.



At the Static Mechanical Range (SMR) WO1 Dick gave everyone an 'admin brief' (interrupted by short bursts of machine-gun fire) and a run-down on the training regime for Army Reserve Infantry members in today's Army.

Some years ago, Army Reservists undertook the same Recruit Course of thirteen weeks as the Regular soldiers did. Quite an impractical length of course for part-time soldiers who are employed. The course length had been dropped to 39 days, but now is just 21 days, much more achievable for those who are employed. For Reserve Infantry members, four weeks of Infantry training is their next requirement.

The following 'Corps Training' is undertaken in two two-week blocks or Modules. The current course was Module 2, with Part 1 being nine days being the field (or bush) phase, which had been held in May and included such subjects as map reading, navigation, fieldcraft and minor tactics. The second phase is the range qualifications on the Steyr rifle and Minimi machine-gun. The visitors were seeing the range phase.



After the briefing the members were taken to the rear, and side, of the range where WO1 Dick explained how the range and its computers showed how the firer is shooting. In between details the attendees were able to enter the firing point and see the equipment close-up.

After the Army supplied lunch of 'gourmet style' sandwiches (of which there were plenty), fruit, fruit juice and tea or coffee, the

visitors were taken past a number of workshops and vehicle parks where WO1 Dick identified the various vehicles. It was then onto the National Service Lines, where WO1 Dick had a task to undertake. This allowed the visitors a little freedom and Barry Harris found his former D Company, 2 RTB, but from 1967

and Neil Leckie found his former C Company hut from 1968. A quick walk to the northern fence showed that every 1960s/70s Nasho's pet hate, 'Tit' Hill', was now covered by trees and could no longer be seen. The plaque from the 'Tot' Hill Cairn has been moved to the park in Blamey Drive, the entry road to Pucka.

With the visit now effectively over, it was back to the bus and out the gate to the car park. After thanking WO1 Dick for his time and effort, a social gathering was undertaken for some time there. A most enjoyable session was held with thanks to Chris Liston and his goodies. From there, it was time for all to go their own ways. A good day was had by all!



UPCOMING EVENTS - Dinners and the AGM

Ballarat: The fit in with other events/availabilities, the Ballarat dinner will be held earlier than usual.

Date/Time: Saturday, 5 October 2024, 6.30pm for 7.00pm **Place:** Sebastopol Bowling Club, Albert Street, Sebastopol

Dress: Gents: coat, association tie, miniature medals. Ladies: evening wear.

Drinks: First drink: each attendee will be issued with a ticket for their first drink (no top shelf drinks).

Others drinks at bar prices.

Meals: Order at the Bistro: member to pay.

Invited Guests: CO and RSM 8/7 RVR

RSVP: By 28 September 2024, to Dick Wilkie: or richardwilkie@outlook.com

Association Membership of \$25 (cash) can be paid on the night.

AGM. To keep the regular tradition going, the association's AGM will be held on the same weekend as the Ballarat Dinner.

Date/Time: Sunday, 6 October 2024, 10.00am

Place: Alfredton Sports and Recreation Centre, Cuthberts Road, Alfredton.

Lunch: Will be provided after the meeting.

Note: Nomination and Proxy Forms are printed on the back page. To be sent to The Secretary, Jason County at <u>j_county@hotmail.com</u> or PO Box 543, Ballarat West, Vic, 3355, by 28 September 2024.

Warrnambool Dinner: This year's dinner will be held on Saturday 12 October. Details to be advised.

Date/Time: Saturday, 12 October 2024, 6.30pm for 7.00pm

Place: Warrnambool RSL

Dress: Neat Casual

Drinks/Meals: Report to the association 'Reception Desk'. Each attendee will be issued with a ticket for

their first drink (no top shelf drinks), other drinks at bar prices. Two course meal \$40 paid *in cash* at the 'Reception Desk'.

RSVP: By 5 October 2024, to Lyndon King.

Call or text with your name and number attending with you.

Guest Speaker: Colonel Catherine McGregor

Association Membership of \$25 (cash) can be paid on the night.

Other activities being considered:

Lal Lal Falls and ANZAC Memorial Park, Point Cook Museum and A Day at Dunolly (armoured vehicles).

8/7 RVR Appointments:

8/7 RVR farewells the CO, Lieutenant Colonel Derek Sonogan, and the RSM, Warrant Officer Class 1 Matthew Vermey at the end of the year.

The new CO will be Lieutenant Colonel Paul O'Donnell. Paul is a Ballarat local, having spent his Platoon Commander time at the then B Company, 8/7 RVR, in Ballarat. He was with 5/6 RVR before his civilian career moved him to the Pilbara where he was a Career Advisor at Career Management Authority and the Training Officer for the Regional Force Support Group. Paul is married with a newborn and will be based in Ballarat for 2025/26. He works for BP, still loves trains (having at one time been a train driver), PMV-Ms and coffee.

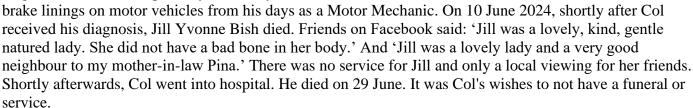
The new RSM will be Ballarat born Aaron Roberts. Aaron joined the Army in 2002 and following Recruit Training was allocated to the Royal Australian Infantry Corps. Following Corps Training he was posted to 1 RAR. Aaron progressed through various postings within the battalion, including as a CSM and as the Operations Warrant Officer. He has had postings including to RMC Duntroon and The Infantry Training School in the UK Aaron has deployed to Timor and on Ops Astute and Slipper. He has been involved in such non-military operations such as Covid, floods and bushfires. Aaron is married and has two teenage children.

VALE:

Colin Macrae Bish was born in Melbourne on 21 August 1936. After he left school, he trained as a Motor Mechanic. He married Jill and the couple moved to Warrnambool in 1961. They had two sons: Rod and David. After arriving in Warrnambool, Col joined the CMF with 10 Medium Regiment on 29 January 1964. He was promoted to Bombardier in 1963. On 10 February 1965 the artillery in Warrnambool transferred to 2 RVR as Support Company. That year Col was promoted to Sergeant. Col had an interest in electronics and was transferred to the Signals Platoon where he excelled. (Right Gunner Colin Bish on an ANZAC Day in Warrnambool.)

While he liked, and was proud of his military service, Col's life would take a different turn. He also had an interest in flying and around 1967 obtained his light plane Pilot's Licence. 1970 saw the family move to Mareeba in North Queensland where Col took up a Crop-Dusting Contract. When the contract expired, Col returned to his trade in Motor Mechanics. After the move north, the CMF placed Col on the Non-effective List on 3 May 1970 and he was discharged on 14 September that year.

In later life Jill had developed heart problems and Col was diagnosed with cancer, possibly caused by the asbestos dust from



John Lawrence Kerwin was born in South Melbourne on 22 November 1942 to Harold Boden and Margaret Harford 'Madge' Kerwin. By the time his brother Don was born four years later, the family was in Deniliquin, NSW. On 21 June 1959 Harold died in Echuca when John was 16 years old and Don just 12. Life became tough for the family then, but they survived. John had several jobs in his lifetime including working in a ball-bearing factory in Echuca. When the factory closed in the late 1970s, John took

a trip to Russia. He later found work on the Campaspe Shire in the water treatment and reticulation area and then worked for Simplot Foods in Echuca. Simplot took over the Echuca site in 1995, which harks back to 1978 when it was originally the Plumrose tomato paste plant. The site also produces products under Leggo's, Edgell, Chicken Tonight, Raguletto and Harvest brands.

John married Rosemary 'Rosie', but the couple did not have any children. For some years before her death on 25 August 1982, John and Rosie cared for John's mother Madge. Both John's parents are buried in Echuca.

On 4 July 1966 John joined the then Citizen Military Forces (CMF) as 3177069 at the Echuca depot of the 2nd Battalion, the Royal Victoria Regiment (2 RVR). When Kevin Hone asked him why he had joined the CMF at 23 years-of-age, John replied that he 'wanted to do his bit!' He progressed through the ranks and by the time that the National Service era had finished in 1972 he had reached the rank of Sergeant. On 1 January 1973 the Shepparton/Echuca C Company, 2 RVR was transferred to 22 RVR at Puckapunyal to bolster that battalion's numbers in the wake of the cancellation of National Service. Around this time the CMF was redesignated the Army Reserve. 22 RVR closed in mid-1975 and



the company returned to 2 RVR as A Company. By this time John had moved across into the Quartermaster or 'Q' Stream and had been promoted to the Company Quartermaster Sergeant (CQMS) of A Company with the rank of Staff Sergeant. In 1987 2 RVR was renumbered as 8/7 RVR, returning to its historical 1948-1960 battalion number. The Echuca depot closed in 1999. John served on at Shepparton for a couple of years before retiring.

Away from the Army, John was good friends with his Army 'boss', Major Kevin Hone, who also resided in Echuca. The two travelled extensively together. One trip saw them drive the full length of the Canning Stock Route. The Canning is a track that runs from Halls Creek in the Kimberley region of Western
Australia to Wiluna in the <a href="mid-west region. With a total distance of around 1,850 km it is claimed to be the longest historic stock route in the world. 'The Route' is a popular but challenging four-wheel drive trek typically taking 10 to 20 days to complete. John and Kevin did it in 14 days, sleeping in swags under the stars. John always had a pair of binoculars with him and Kevin often saw him at night looking at the stars through his binoculars. John and Kevin crossed every desert in Australia, driving across many highways constructed by Len Beadall, who is known as the man who constructed the Gunbarrel Highway and many of the roads in the central and western areas of Australia. Beadall was also involved with the Woomera Rocket Range. During their travels John stood on the site of the atomic test at Maralinga, SA. As they aged, caravans became the acceptable way to travel.



Left: John Kerwin (at right) with former Shepparton/Echuca Company staff members Denis Scott, The Pickens brothers and Peter Dempster.

John was passionate Essendon football supporter and in his younger days often drove to Melbourne to watch his beloved 'Bombers' play Aussie Rules. He also loved driving his yellow sports car! In retirement, John and Rosie moved closer in to Echuca. John has some heart issues and had a heart valve replaced. In later years Rosie was suffering with Dementia and John became her Carer. John was making arrangements for Rosie to go into care,

but unfortunately, before this could happen, John's heart issues returned. He had not been well since about November 2023. John passed away on 17 July 2024. His funeral was held on 26 July at Tobin Brothers in Echuca and was attended by Ex-Army Reserve members including former Company Commanders Kevin Hone and Denis Scott along with Lorraine Gallagher, Wayne Kennelley, Tony Melis, Barry and Keith Pickens, Travis Rosenow, Ken Wilson and Dick Wilkie. Kevin said that John could be untidy, messy and often ran late, but whenever the going got tough, and he was there, he lifted everyone's morale.

Anthony John Linnane: Those who served in 8/7 RVR in Ballarat in the 2000s will remember the two

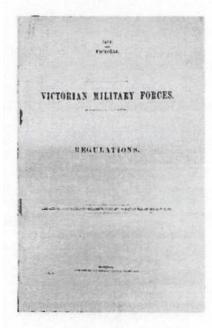
sergeants, who were brothers, but had different surnames: Tony Linnane and Steve Linane. Apparently, there had been a split way back in the family and one part of the family changed the spelling of their surname, while the others kept the traditional spelling! Steve was a runner and was incredibly fit. Tony also looked fit.

Tony Linnane was born on 15 September 1959, the oldest of seven siblings who were all very close. Tony and Steve both completed their many years of service with 8/7 RVR. Tony had married Vivienne and they had a son Luke, who died in a traffic accident. Luke was an organ donor and Vivienne recalled for the first ten years, on the anniversary of Luke's death, the lady recipient of one



of Luke's kidneys sent a Thank You card. Sadly for Vivienne, on 11 April 2014 her husband Tony died of a brain aneurism, thirteen years after their son Luke. Vivienne made the choice again to donate organs. The oldest organ donor in Victoria in 2023 was 83 years and of the 142 deceased organ donors, 76 were over 50 years old. It is never too late to become an organ donor!

Militia Regulations 1884



We came across these words on discipline of the Victorian Militia

"As it is desirable to keep up in all ranks a proper feeling and high sense of honour, by which the correct and willing discharge of duty will best be insured, Officers of every rank should be impressed with the advantage which they individually, their own Corps, and the Service at large will derive from the adoption towards the Non-commissioned Officers and privates of a system of command and treatment which shall insure respect towards superiors.

Officers are to adopt such a system themselves, and are to require it to be adopted by the Non-commissioned Officers; and the example of Officers will have the effect of checking the use of improper and offensive terms on the part of the Non-commissioned Officers towards the privates. If acts of intentional neglect or of insubordination should take place, and the means of correction and punishment authorized by the Regulations of the Service have to be resorted to, these measures will have double effect if not preceded by intemperate language."

One can only hope that these principles still apply!

A Nice Surprise (Neil Leckie)

I received an email from a Ballarat Historical Society member stating that the BHS had been donated a packet of papers that 'were probably your area of interest rather than ours'. The donor's name was not known. On opening the envelope there was found to be almost a 'half an inch' thickness of mostly foolscap pieces of paper, so it was obvious that they were old. Some of the papers related to trying to obtain labourers to work on the Moorabool Reservoir shortly before war had been declared in 1914. Eight men applied for the work, but only five (all shown as 'Labourers') took on the work. Surprisingly, a letter in December 1914 from the Department of Public Works to councils urged the councils to assist in finding work for the unemployed. The department wrote '... to assist it in the alleviating as far as possible the distress necessarily existing at the present time owing to the war and the severe drought ...' One wonders how many men then went on to work on the Moorabool Reservoir after that letter.

Further letters and papers referred to The State Recruiting Committee of Victoria and the Ballaarat City and Town Recruiting Committees. A July 1918 letter gave recruiting statistics for the eighteen months from 1 January 1917 to 30 June 1918. It showed that Ballarat had recruited 372 men in 1917 and a total of 540 in the eighteen months. Wannon had provided 367 (and 525). An August 1918 letter requested the Secretary of 'the Local Recruiting Committee' to provide names of suitable people to supervise the drawing of the local Ballot for the Voluntary Enlistment Ballot. A following letter provided lists of names of those men eligible to participate in the Ballot.

What was the Ballot? The Australian War Memorial records: On 20 December 1917, Commonwealth Government plans for the introduction of Conscription were defeated at Referendum for the second time (the first poll having been taken little more than a year before, on 28 October 1916). This meant that the Australian Imperial Force fighting overseas would remain an all-volunteer Army, but left unresolved the problem of maintaining its strength in the face of a need for 5,400 Recruits every month to replace casualties and other 'wastage'. During 1918 the government, led by Prime Minister W. M. Hughes, devised a novel scheme involving ballots of men who voluntarily submitted their names. This was the little-known 'Voluntary Ballot Enlistment Scheme', or VBES.

Under the proposed scheme, drawing of a ballot was to be carried out every three months in each of the 1,049 Commonwealth electoral subdivisions by committees formed locally for that purpose. Letters and pamphlets exhorting participation in the scheme were to be posted to every man eligible for service -anumber calculated to be 838,121. Cards would then be posted for each to complete and return for use in the drawing of the ballot. At the same time, posters would be displayed throughout the Commonwealth to advertise the scheme and appeal strongly to men eligible to take part. In the event, the scheme had barely come into operation before it was shut down with the signing of the armistice that ended the First World War on 11 November 1918.

Another interesting letter was written on 31 July 1918 on the topic of calling for Home Service Volunteers (a Dad's Army). This force was aimed at men 21 to 50 years who 'must not be fit for service in the AIF, but fit for 'Home Service', along with returned soldiers and men with previous Citizen Forces service. There would be a minimum of sixteen days continuous service and this service would be paid. The final line on eligibility was: 'Men with a history of insanity, epilepsy or consumption ...' will not be accepted! Other lists included every Ballarat man who had enlisted in Lt Col William Bolton's 8th Battalion, 2nd Brigade, Australian Division (later to become the 1st Australian Division), along with those who had enlisted in the four 6th Brigade, 2nd Division battalions (21st to 24th, the 23rd being commanded by Ballarat's Lt Col George Morton) and the 6th Field Ambulance commanded by Ballarat's Lt Col (Dr) C. H. 'William' Hardy (above right)

There were a few other papers and letters, but the 'pièce de ré·sis·tance' were two letters, one to the Ballaarat City Council and the other to the 'City Clerk' (later known as the 'Town Clerk') George Morton (right in his 7th Australian Infantry Regiment uniform, 1904), who by early 1916 had returned 'Medically Unfit' from Egypt. George was a school mate in Ballarat of none other than Brigadier-General Harold 'Pompey' Elliott. The two letters were from 'Pompey'.





It was an amazing feeling for one interested in military history to actually hold these four sheets

of paper knowing that they had come from

the great man himself. Pompey's statue was placed in Sturt Street between Doveton and Dawson Streets) in 2011. Pompey wrote to 'My dear Morton' mentioning a number of men from Ballarat that they both knew.



Left: General Peter Cosgrove (Ret'd) in the centre with Ballarat City Council Councillors and VIPs (including Lambis Englezos of The Lost Diggers of Fromelles fame) after the unveiling of the 'Pompey' Elliott statue in Ballarat in 2011.

A Few Minutes with Peter Dempster
Peter was born on 20 July 1956 in
Shepparton, where he was brought up. He
was educated at St Colman's Shepparton
(now Notre Dame). He joined the Melbourne



University Regiment in 1975 but transferred to 2 RVR, Echuca, from 1976 until 1979 where Sgt John Kerwin was his Platoon Sergeant. Peter commenced officer training on 18 January 1981 and was commissioned into the Army Reserve from the Officer Cadet Training Unit (OCTU) Course 18 on 11 November 1982. He was posted C Coy, 2 RVR (Shepparton/Echuca) as a Platoon Commander. 'Pom' Barry was his Platoon Sergent.

Promoted to Captain in 1987, in 1988 Peter was the Company 2IC in the Gary Wescombe led Company that went to New Zealand on Ex Tasman Exchange. On return he moved to Pyramid Hill where he ran a dairy for a short while before moving to a stud dairy at Katandra West, near where former OC Shepparton Major Les Earl

had an engineering company. From 1991 to 2001 Peter was in Strathmerton.

Peter's service saw him parade at Echuca and Shepparton (C Coy), Bacchus Marsh and Ballarat (B Coy) and return to Shepparton as Officer Commanding (OC), having been promoted to Major in 1992. He resigned from the Reserve in the early 2000s.

While serving in the Reserve in Shepparton, Peter met Barbara, who was Captain Denis Scott's foster daughter. They married on 21 March 1981 in Wangaratta. Over the years 2000/01, in between milking cows, Peter trained as a Remedial Massage Therapist. Not wanting to milk cows for the rest of their days, and hit with the travel bug, Peter and Barbara commenced to work their way around Australia. For six months they took on management of a station at Boulia, near Mount Isa. Then on 22 December 2002 they arrived in Alice Springs where, among other things Peter did Horse Breaking. They remained there for 12 years as Peter said: 'Dry bogged in The Alice!'.

In 2009 Peter and Denis Scott were talking over a couple ports in 'The Alice' about doing a Western Front Battlefield Tour. They knew that Neil Leckie had been asked to take on a Tour Guide role for Belmore Travel in Melbourne, replacing the retiring Ron Austin, a former 6th Battalion, The Royal Melbourne Regiment officer. They asked Neil and in 2010 the pair joined other ex-battalion members Tom Chambers, Ian Nunn, Brian McInnis, George Douglass and Peter Ramm on a Western Front battlefield tour where they stayed with 8/7 RVR's then allied 'Staffordshire Regiment' in Fallingbostel in Germany for three nights and the C Coy, The London Regiment, in London for four nights.

In 2012 Peter had a six-month position at the Harvey Agricultural College, south of Perth. Among the subjects that Peter was involved with was First Aid. With a liking for WA, 2014 saw the couple settle in Esperance on WA's south coast, where Barbara's sister lives. Peter still practices massage.

2024 saw Peter and Barbara caravanning around eastern Australia. They went as for a Mareeba in Queensland, specifically to go to a Rodeo there. They caught up with many of their family members in the first three and a half months and had a short visit to Ballarat in mid-August. They arrived back in Esperance in mid-September. Long term, the couple plans to move back east to somewhere less windy, and warmer, that Esperance!

BALLARAT RANGER MILITARY MUSEUM

The museum expansion project progresses. The two 40' containers are connected into a 'U' shape and the insulation has been fitted into the ceiling of each of the containers. Both containers now have the hessian ceilings covering fitted, giving it a look and feel of being in a underground bunker, and the lighting tracks are in place. The air conditioner has been installed and new display cabinets have arrived. The lining of the walls is virtually complete, with just the 'crossover' between the two containers to finish! The battalion birthday completion was a bit optimistic, but it won't be long before the carpet is laid and the walls lined. Then the big decisions of what to display in it need to be made.



MERCHANDISE:

8/7 Battalion-2 RVR Association Merchandise as at March 2024.



Item:	Price
Polo Top, Black	\$45
Polo Top, Green	\$45
Cap	\$20
Tie	\$30
Lapel Badge	\$10
Association Patch, Green	\$10
Association Patch, Black	\$10
RVR Emblem Patch	\$10
Cold Weather Jacket	\$96 (One Size L only available)

Cold Weather Vest \$55 (ardered as required)

Cold Weather Vest \$55 (ordered as required)

^{*}To order: contact Jason on email (preferred) at j_county@hotmail.com

The North-Western Ranger



8th/7th BATTALION – 2RVR ASSOCIATION Inc. **VICTORIA'S OWN COUNTRY BATTALION**



(Including the Ballarat Ranger Military Museum Newsletter)

If undeliverable, please return to: 8/7 Bn – 2 RVR Association c/- 3/519 Peel St North Ballarat, Vic, 3350 Vol 28, No. 3, September 2024

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We, being financial members of the association, hereby nominatea financial member of the 8th/7th Battalion – Association Inc. for the position marked with a 'X' below: President Vice President Treasure Secretary Committee Member Proposer's Name: Signature Seconder's Name: Signature I hereby accept the nomination (Name): **8/7 Battalion – 2 RVR Association Inc.** A0035094M: APPOINTMENT OF PROXY I (Name):being a financial member of the association, hereby appoint (Name), also a financial member of the association, as my proxy vote at the Annual General Meeting of the 8/7th Battalion – 2 RVR Assoc. Inc. Signature: Date/..../...../ **8/7 Battalion – 2 RVR Association Inc.** A0035094M: NOMINATION FORM We, being financial members of the association, hereby nominatea financial member of the 8th/7th Battalion – Association Inc. for the position marked with a 'X' below: President Vice President Treasure Secretary Committee Member Proposer's Name: Signature Seconder's Name: Signature I hereby accept the nomination (Name): **8/7 Battalion – 2 RVR Association Inc.** A0035094M: APPOINTMENT OF PROXY I (Name):being a financial member of the association, hereby appoint (Name), also a financial member of the association, as my proxy vote at the Annual General Meeting of the 8/7th Battalion – 2 RVR Assoc. Inc. Signature: Date/..../...../

8/7 Battalion – 2 RVR Association Inc. A0035094M:

NOMINATION FORM