



# THE CANADIAN GUNNER

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Captain-General, Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery  
Her Majesty The Queen

Colonel Commandant, Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery  
Major-General AB Matthews, CBE, DSO, ED, CD

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## HISTORY OF SHILO CAMP

*Sgt Fannon CW*

The acquisition of a training area, sufficient in extent to provide for artillery practice and for manoeuvres of all arms, in a central location in Military District No 10 was a burning question for a quarter of a century.

The continued influx of population into the west first directed the attention of the Militia Department in 1909 to the importance of securing areas in the prairie provinces as military reservations.

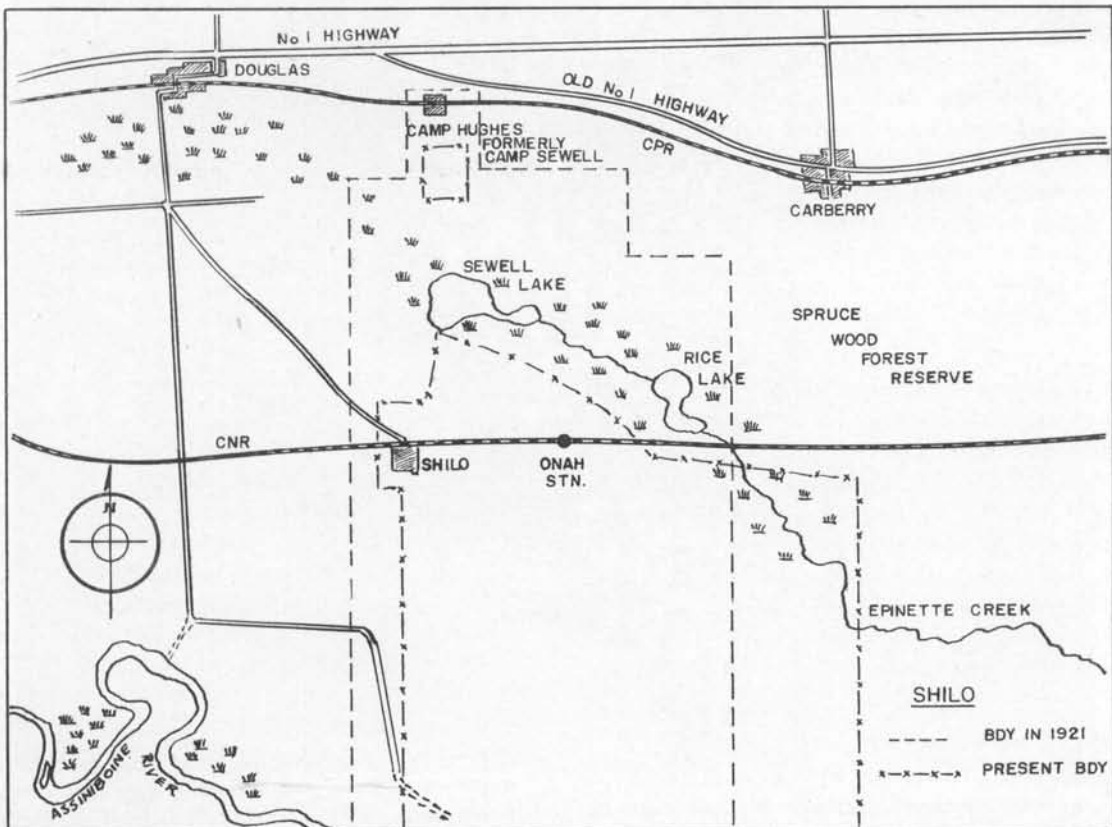
In the fall of that year, Colonel SB Steele (later Major General, CB, MVO) reported that the Dominion Government Spruce Wood Forest Reserve, south of Carberry, was very suitable for training ground purposes. In February 1910, he further reported that this property, some 10 miles square, was suitable in every way for the exercising of troops in field work, and that it was accessible by both the CP and CN railways; he also added that the Hudson's Bay Company owned a section of land immediately north of the Reserve and just south of Sewell station on the CPR, and had offered to permit the actual camp to be pitched on their property.

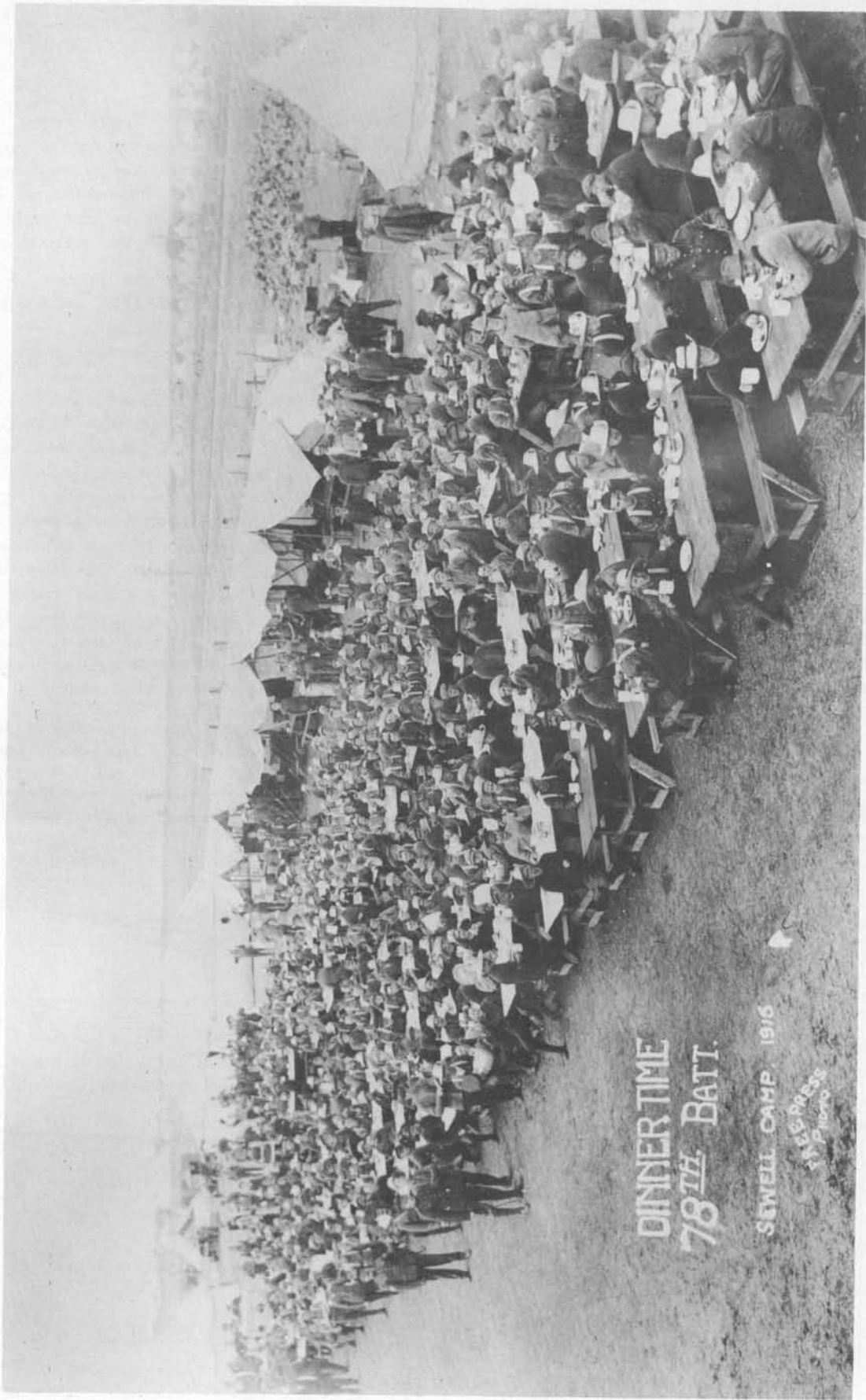
The Department of the Interior, however,

declared that the Spruce Woods Forest Reserve had been erected by parliament for the purpose of protecting the timber there, and of assisting in reforestation, and it (the Department of Interior) felt that making such use of the land would involve a complete departure from the original purpose.

The first camp was opened at Sewell, on CPR property on 21 June 1910, and was attended by 154 officers and 1,315 other ranks. Annual camps, for many years thereafter, were held at Sewell through the courtesy of several property owners. Exchange of lands contiguous to Sewell, in which the CPR, Hudson's Bay Company, University of Manitoba, the Canada North-West Land Company, and the Provincial and Dominion Governments were concerned, was suggested as a compromise, but (it was stated) this could only be accomplished by special Act of Parliament. In September 1911, however, the Department of Interior agreed to reserve certain tracts of land in the vicinity of Sewell, and it was these and other adjacent unoccupied tracts of land that the Militia continued to use in its annual training in subsequent summer camps.

World War 1 broke out, and in July 1915 the University of Manitoba Land Board complained





DINNER TIME  
78<sup>TH</sup> BATT.

SEWELL CAMP. 1916

BY PRESS

that a part of the military encampment was on the University section, and that the greater portion of it was being used by the 44th Battalion, CEF. As the Militia Department had been using it for the past several years, the Board offered to sell the land to the Department.

That same summer, the CPR changed the name of the station to "Camp Hughes" (as a compliment to Lieutenant General Sir Sam Hughes, KCB, Minister of Militia and Defence at the time) and in consequence, authority was given to change the name of the camp to conform. (Militia Order No 436, 27 September 1915).

In 1916, further purchases, extensions and improvements provided for the camping and training facilities of some 30,000 troops, the largest number in any camp in Canada at that time.

In June of 1921, the Department of Interior placed 2½ sections, which were not in the Spruce Woods Forest Reserve, under the complete control of the Department of Militia and Defence, extending Camp Hughes to an area of 88,320 acres or 138 square miles.

During the 1920s, Camp Hughes was used only as a summer camp by the Winnipeg garrison of the Permanent Force and by Western Canada Militia units. Notable among the PF units were C Bty, RCHA, B Coy, PPCLI, and A Sqn LDSH(RC). In 1930-31 Camp Hughes was closed down, and for a short period there were no training facilities in the area.

The change of camp site from Camp Hughes to a new location in the south-western area of Spruce Woods Forest Reserve between Onah Station and Shilo, on the CNR, was first considered in the fall of 1925. The area under consideration comprised about 70 square miles. The nature of the country varied from open plain to park-like lands very adequate for training purposes, especially in the practice of artillery, with suitable camp sites immediately south of the CNR right-of-way in the vicinity of Onah station. An entirely new camp layout at the southern site was estimated to cost \$148,000.00, the old temporary buildings in the northern camp being considered not worth salvaging. As the sum involved was considered to be prohibitive, the possibility of continuing to use the railway facilities at Sewell was examined, but it was found that the construction of a five mile road across the intervening muskeg could be effected only by the driving of piles at an estimated cost of \$1000.00 per mile. It was eventually decided that the northern camp should be completely abandoned, and the development of the southern area proceeded with gradually. To distinguish

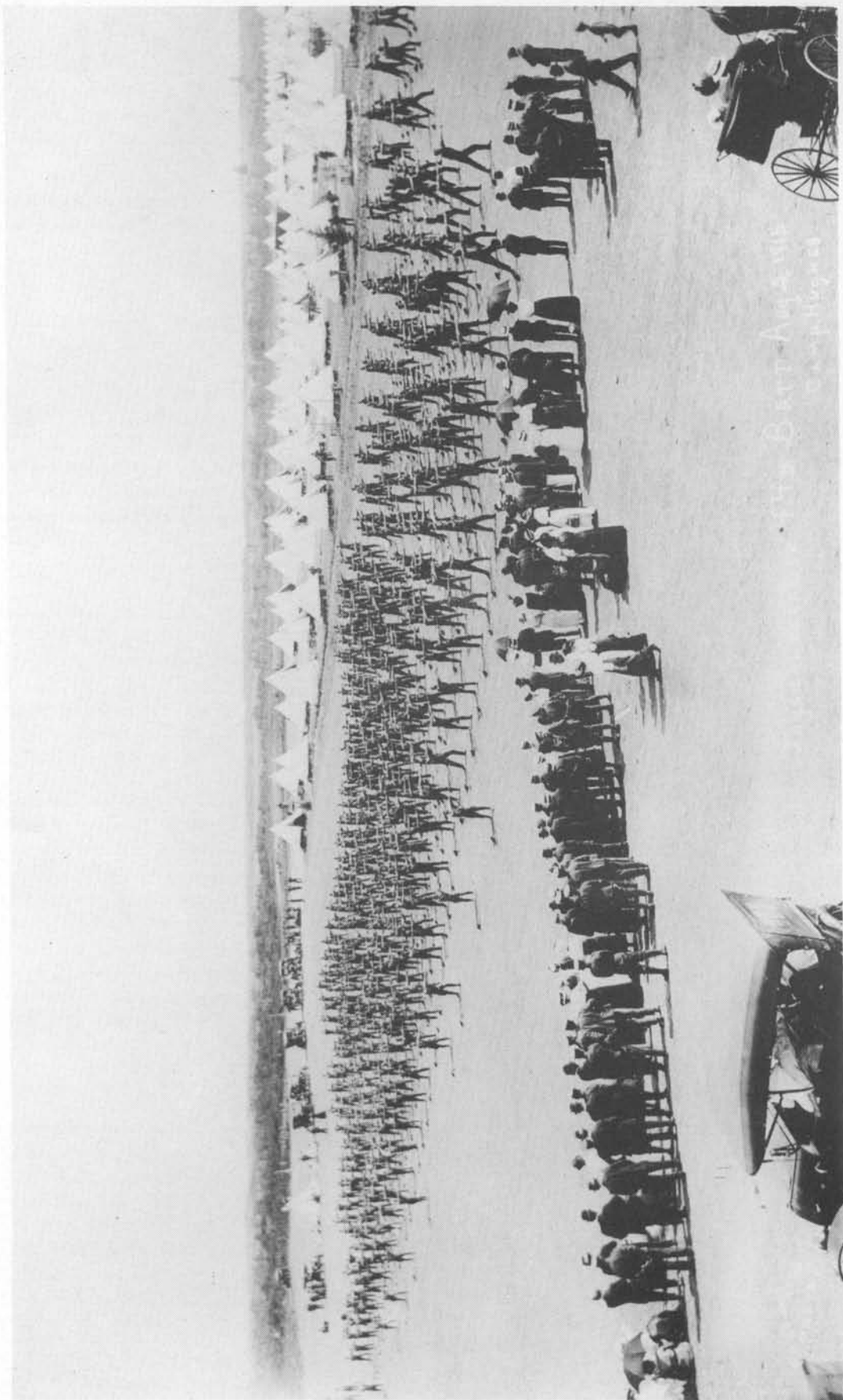
the new camp from the old "Camp Hughes", Major General JH Elmsley proposed the name "Shilo Camp" on 25 July 1928. The designation received ministerial approval in 1936 and was published in Military Order No 486, on 21 November of that year.

There have been numerous stories as to how Shilo got its name. There is a story of a mythical chieftain who died in mortal combat to save his tribe from destruction by the white man; there is the Biblical walled city (some 30 miles south of Samaria, midway between Jordan and the Mediterranean); but the 1933 edition of "Place Names of Manitoba" published by the Geographic Board of Canada, dulls these glamorous stories somewhat with this notation on page 81: "Shilo, - CNR station on 10-17-1 (1905) "Shilo" and the adjoining station "Leon" were named after Jewish peddlers." It has been said that these peddlers were popular camp followers of the construction gangs who worked in the area, and that for lack of any other name by which to refer to the locations, the gangs simply used the names of the peddlers. Possibly "Shilo" maintained a small store or cafe which served the workers and served as something of a community centre. It might be added here that the Shilo railway station at that time was located some 1½ miles west of where it now stands (1965). The first settler and resident of Shilo was an employee of the CNR, Mr W Dalglish.

Late in 1931, the Royal Canadian Engineers carried out the first survey of the area that we know today as Camp Shilo. This survey took place in the area where the rifle ranges are now situated. Further surveys were carried out in 1932, and these included most of what is the present camp area. This survey included the discovery and planning of the camp water supply, a supply which is still in use, emanating from a vast underground lake. The survey expeditions were carried out under the leadership and command of Captain JH Leese, RCE (now retired).

The great financial depression of the 1930s brought Shilo its first inhabitants. They were members of the relief camp established by the Federal Government in late 1932. It was these personnel, under command of military engineers, who carried out the first construction of a permanent nature in the camp area. This was done in late 1932 and early 1933, the first building erected being the *Target Hut*, followed closely by the caretaker's house. The relief camp came to an end in 1936.

In 1934 the last remaining buildings of old Camp Hughes were removed. All that now remains at that site is a small cemetery wherein lie the



Mrs. Burt Andrews  
1915

remains of members of the Army who died there during the war of 1914-18.

The new Camp Shilo had its first introduction to army training in the summer of 1934, and has ever since been in continuous use; first as a summer camp only, and then from 1942 as a permanent year-around establishment.

In 1940, World War 2 having started the previous autumn, Shilo began to assume the form we see today. Not only did a huge tented camp mushroom up overnight, but a major building program got under way. The growth of the camp during World War 2 was nothing short of phenomenal. In 1943, the army became air-minded and A-35 CITC (Parachute) was opened, from which came personnel who distinguished themselves as members of the First Canadian Parachute Battalion.

With the reorganization of the Canadian Army after the war, Shilo became the Home Station of the Royal Canadian Artillery other than for Coast and Anti-Aircraft elements. The Royal Canadian School of Artillery, and one regiment of RCHA, were stationed in the camp. Although responsibility for paratroop training shifted to CJATC, Rivers, Camp Shilo with its jump tower intact, still had a legacy in the form of the parachute packing and maintenance detachment (28 COD) and the jump tower staff.

Artillery training has been carried out continuously since 1946, with an increased tempo starting in August 1950. Since that date, 2 RCHA was trained and proceeded to Korea, 79th Field

Regiment was trained and proceeded to Europe, 1 RCHA trained and in their turn also went to Korea. In addition, Shilo is the scene of summer training of artillery units of the Militia. Also during the period of expansion of the Regular Force in the 1950's, a Winter Indoctrination School, cold weather trials for the Armoured Corps, and trials by the Directorate of Armament Development were conducted in Shilo.

The Canadian Provost Corps School was located in Shilo from February 1954 until September 1960. During the 1950's the permanent married quarters were built, construction being carried out by private contractors, under supervision of the Royal Canadian Engineers, and to specifications set by the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

Coast and Anti-Aircraft Artillery establishments closed (1960) in Esquimalt, Halifax and Picton, and Shilo became the Home Station of the entire Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery.

The Apprentice Training Battery and the Depot, RCA, were established in Shilo, (in September 1954 and August 1956 respectively), and since that time have turned out thousands of trained soldiers, for service in units of the Royal Regiment. The youngest artillery unit in the camp is 2nd Surface to Surface Missile (SSM) Training Battery, which came to Shilo from Picton in 1962.

- References:* 1. *The Canadian Gunner*  
Vol 4 No's 27 and 28 (1951)
2. *Canadian Army Information Booklet*  
(1954)

*Note: The author of the articles in the references mentioned above is Captain JH Leese (RCE retired).*



## THE SCHOOL

### ORIGINS

In January of 1872, a little less than five years after the Fathers of Confederation had completed their task, the first artillery schools were established in Canada, these being at Quebec and Kingston. Over the years, artillery schools (field, seige, coast and anti-aircraft), instructional cadres and artillery training centres have functioned at various sites across the country from Halifax to Esquimalt.

The RCSA as we know it today has been established at Shilo, Manitoba, since 1946. For the first several years of its existence, however, it was one of three schools of artillery operating in Canada, the others being at Esquimalt (Coast and Anti-Aircraft) and Picton (Anti-Aircraft). The schools at Esquimalt and Picton were closed down in 1954 and 1961 respectively.

### THE PLANT

The present site of the RCSA and Home of the Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery could, without too much prevarication, be made to sound like the ideal locale for a dude ranch. It consists of many square miles of diversified western terrain, ranging from thick evergreen bush and swamp in the Northern area, through poplar plains and shifting sand hills, southward to open, rolling country bordering on the meandering curves of the Assiniboine River. Landmarks, some with a deep historical background, such as the Yellow Quill Trail, the Stockton-Carberry Trail, Gibson House and the Bald Head Hills, add a truly authentic Western flavour. Each of the thousands of Gunners who have had occasion to trek across the Shilo ranges will have his own description. Some see a vista of great open skies, vast sunny spaces, far horizons and beautiful sun-sets. Some see a vast, searing wasteland.

The terrain is well suited to artillery training, and nature's contribution has been supplemented by the addition of such aids as permanent range communications, survey stations, heated range huts and observation posts to offset the infamous Shilo winter, an anti-tank range with moving targets, and a miniature village which is shelled by a miniature 14.5mm gun.

This latest acquisition, the 14.5mm Artillery Trainer Range, requires only one thousand square metres of ground, and allows outdoor instruction in observation of fire and the engagement of targets at a great saving in time and money. All dimensions are at 1/10 scale, and the realistic

target layouts can be varied to suit any one of several map layouts in order to always present the students with a fresh challenge. The small explosive projectile which is used, and which is rather less in size than a shotgun shell, follows a high trajectory with a significant time of flight and produces a smoke burst on detonation at the target end.

The Anti-Tank Range, which was originally built during World War 2 by German prisoners-of-war, has suffered many vicissitudes over the years as the primary responsibility for this form of defence has shifted from the artillery to other corps, and as the emphasis of training has shifted within the artillery. This range has recently been refurbished, using local resources entirely, and now consists of a light gauge railway which follows an oval track, over which runs a stripped down, tireless and driverless truck, with gasoline engine, carrying above it a hessian tank. The gun detachments at the firing point see only the moving hessian tank, the truck below it being obscured from view, and from damage, by a protective earthen embankment. A device attached to the motor of the truck automatically varies the speed of the target as it progresses relentlessly and unconcernedly around the track amid geysers of sand and despite an ever increasing number of holes in its midriff.

### ACTIVITIES

Although RCSA activity encompasses equipment trials, demonstrations, the publication of corps doctrine, assistance to field units, and preparation and conduct of officers' promotion examinations, what might be termed its *bread and butter play* is the conduct of artillery courses. A young man who joins the Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery will spend a goodly portion of this career at the Home Station in Shilo taking, or perhaps instructing on, courses. These cover the whole spectrum from recruit training and basic officer training to the Master Gunner Course and Artillery Staff Course. In subject matter the courses range from gunnery to survey, radar and other target acquisition devices, artillery signalling, tactics, missilery and nuclear target analysis.

### RECRUIT TRAINING

Recruit training has been a function of the RCSA since September 1956. The present RCA Depot, (a component of RCSA) has trained over three thousand recruits, including some for the Infantry and the Ordnance Corps.

The recruit undergoes approximately thirty weeks of training at the RCA Depot, being progressively brought up to the level of Group 1 tradesman. As a first step he is taught the basic

skills of soldiering and the use of his rifle. He is then taught the use of infantry weapons, mine warfare, map using, and artillery organization. Much of this instruction is given in the field. Following this, the recruit is given First Aid, NBCW, and driver training, on the conclusion of which he graduates from the Recruits' Course and is assigned to a Group 1 Course.

Depending on his qualifications and aptitudes, the new soldier will now be trained by RCSA to the Group 1 level, either as a Gun Number, a Technical Assistant, an RCA Signaller or a Surveyor. He will then be ready to join a field regiment.

The days of the RCA Depot are numbered however, as present plans call for its closure as soon as the recruits now in this unit complete their training.

In the interest of economy, recruit training is being more centralized and will be carried out at only two or three depots across Canada. In future all RCA recruits are to be trained at the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada Depot, Calgary, Alberta. After finishing their recruit training, they will come to Shilo for driver and Group 1 training.

#### APPRENTICE TRAINING

The training of RCA apprentice soldiers began in 1954. A number of officers and NCOs now

serving with the regiment started their service as 16 year old boys in the Apprentice Battery. The course is of two years duration.

In their first year, the apprentices receive normal recruit training, instruction in National Survival and Physical Training and tuition in High School academic subjects. Extra curricular activities include voluntary service in the Apprentice Trumpet Band, a great variety of sports, and small bore rifle shooting. The apprentices compete against teams in camp and also against teams in the Manitoba Secondary School Athletic Association.

The apprentices take great pride in their appearance and drill, and set a very high standard in every respect. They are not permitted to wear such exotic clothing as *Beatle Boots*, levis, jazzy shirts and windbreakers, nor may they use alcoholic beverages nor purchase cars. During the first six weeks of training they are not granted any passes out of camp, but after this time they may be granted weekend passes to Brandon or Winnipeg. This is partially made up for by a generous leave of ten days at Christmas, four days at Easter and the annual leave of thirty days with up to four days travelling time.

The second year of apprentice training consists of learning a Gunner trade, such as



*Volunteers*





*Basketball tournament at the annual Western Command Apprentice Tournament held in Shilo in March 1965. The competition came from RCSME, Chilliwack, BC*

Surveyor or Technical Assistant, with the academic programme continuing on a stepped-up basis. During this phase, the cadets are allowed more passes, and special social functions are arranged for their entertainment.

### SHILO CADET CORPS

The RCSA is the sponsor unit for the Princess Elizabeth Cadet Corps in Shilo. The RCSA provides instructors, training facilities and technical equipment. Aside from normal military training, the cadets visit points of interest in Shilo and the Canadian Joint Air Training Centre at Rivers, Manitoba. An aircraft ride with 3 RCHA Air OP Troop is arranged for any of the boys so inclined.

### TRIALS

Most of us know the experience of running one's eye along a rack of new golf clubs in a sporting goods store and then picking one out for a few tentative swings. Sometimes the club feels just right, — perfect balance, length, weight, grip, etc. Sometimes it doesn't. If the club does suit us, we then have to decide (a) whether there really is a gap in our bag that this club will fill, (b) whether it will take very long to learn to use it properly and (c) whether we will be able to afford it.

We go through the same process with each

new device that is proposed for use in the regiment. Some of these, such as the CL-89 drone, and the new sound ranging system, get lots of publicity, but the majority are tested and adopted (or rejected) in comparative obscurity. The job of testing and assessing is done by the Trials and Technical Investigation Section of the School with the co-operation of all the other sections and various outside units.

To take some concrete examples: Last month RCSA conducted a meteorological trial designed to provide basic information for the development of the new sound ranging system. The trial took about five weeks altogether, including setting up and clearing away, and involved approximately 120 all ranks.

In addition we have simple trials:

- a. A target computer designed for use with the Navaid System.
- b. TIARA, a chessirluminescent substance, suggested for marking aiming circles for Air OP fixation at night.
- c. A nuclear light source proposed as a night survey aid.
- d. A new apparatus for quick night sight testing.



*Camp Shilo  
Home Station of the Regiment*



During 1965 over 20 formal trials were arranged. Some of these have been completed, others, such as the assessment of the FADAC computer, are of a continuing nature, and still others have been interrupted so that equipment can be modified before the trial is completed.

If a Gunner at CFHQ (or at the school or in a regiment) or one of our liaison officers in a foreign country spots a likely looking gadget that he thinks would be of use to us, in all probability a trial has been conceived.

For a complex device, a formal trial will be arranged. Either RCSA or CFHQ will produce a draft trial directive, circulate it for comments, and then publish an agreed version. Stores, personnel, vehicles, and ranges must be found, and liaison set up with any outside agencies and units involved. However, if a relatively simple piece of equipment is to be tested, the administration is quite often limited to a letter or two, a few phone calls and a brief, informal report.

For instance, the meteorological trial carried out last month was one of a series of trials. In 1963 two sound ranging trials were carried out to assess a new computer recorder designed by NRC. The results of these trials showed that more background information was needed on the effects of meteorological conditions on sound ranging. A lot of work was done to establish just which conditions needed further investigation. As a result, two meteorological trials were initiated, under summer and winter conditions. Phase 1, the summer trial, took place in September 65, and Phase 2 during November/December 65. The Plan of Test for these trials was produced by CFHQ and ran to 10 pages; the Trial Directive issued by the School went into more detail and filled 18 pages. The Plan of Test is a technical document that lays down the aim of the trial, and in general, the way in which the trial is to be carried out. The Trial Directive is more in the nature of an Administrative Order, detailing personnel, ranges, vehicles, stores, timings, etc.

In contrast, the test of the nuclear light source involved five people and took about an hour to carry out. This particular light was a commercial item produced for such uses as signals in mines and emergency signs in aircraft. Compass illumination: illumination of sighting and fire control instruments; map reading lights; aiming post lamps; these are only a few uses for nuclear light sources. Incidentally, they give off less radiation than a wrist watch, so one needn't worry about hanging that new compass on his uniform.

It's impossible to generalize about trials and tests — the only certain aspect is the uncertainty, and the only unchanging part is the

changeability. Seldom is a trial repeated exactly, and that is what makes this part of the game so interesting.

## OFFICERS' PROMOTION EXAMINATIONS

Every autumn, scores of hopeful lieutenants and captains converge on the Home Station. Some coming many thousands of miles, seeking the Holy Grail of acceptability at the next higher rank. This pilgrimage is not without great preparation. The mind is conditioned by hours of meditation and reading of the prescribed tomes, and the nerves are conditioned by cherished potions and words of exhortation and encouragement from the tribe elders. It all comes to a climax on the top of a sand dune in Shilo where the anxious aspirant finds himself gently but firmly inserted into the key position of an unextraordinary tactical problem which he is told to sort out with the aid of a number of howitzers.

The first hurdle on the road to promotion is the Part 1 set of examinations (Common to all Arms) which is set and marked under CFHQ arrangements. Various writing centres are set up across the country for these examinations, the candidate sitting at whichever centre is nearest his station. The Part 2 examinations, however, for Gunner officers, are prepared and conducted at RCSA. The examinations require a thorough preparation. Part 2A is designed to determine whether the candidate has a sound working knowledge of infantry and armour organizations, weapons and tactics; and the testing is done in a tactical situation on the ground. Part 2B is designed to determine whether the candidate can carry out the appropriate duties at the Gunner officer level concerned; again the testing is done on the ground.

When the candidate finally picks himself up off the ground, he is told whether he will return to his unit under the aura of qualification to the next higher level, or whether it is a matter of *better luck next time*. In either situation, the Home Mess enjoys a brief period of exceptional prosperity.

As the school does not normally have the necessary number of officers of field rank to cope with this annual examination commitment, a number of Gunner majors are temporarily brought in to supplement the Directing Staff, giving the candidates an unusual opportunity to study, and be inspired by an exceptional array of regimental veterans.

The School is a busy place. Doctrine is evolved and studied in its offices, classrooms and on its ranges, in an atmosphere of expertise, against a background rumble of gunfire which can be heard rolling across the prairie almost any day of the week. Visitors find much to engage their attention. The staff find their work rewarding.