

The National Artillery Association

An abridged history 1963 to 2023



Objects

The Objects of the NAA have remained basically the same since 1863 and the latest Objects are:

'The Objects of the Charity are to promote the military efficiency and morale of the Royal Artillery Reserve including advancing the science and practice of artillery and fostering the traditions of the Royal Artillery.'

Introduction

This abridged history reviews the pivotal role performed by the NAA, since 1863, in developing not only technical artillery skills but the "Volunteer Ethos". General Sir Harry Tuzo GCB, OBE, MC, MA, the Master Gunner St James's Park from 1977 to 1983, in his foreword to the 1982 NAA History, states

"The very special role of the NAA in fostering competition and enthusiasm is a pearl of great price".

Please read this history in conjunction with the attached historical flowchart. This highlights that the NAA has consistently delivered (whenever political, military and economic circumstances have allowed) upon the above objects no matter what form or shape the Royal Artillery Reserves have taken.

Context - the 1850s in Great Britain

Despite the 1855 consolidation of the then regular soldiers into the **Regular Force** i.e. the British Army. However, the part-time **Reserve Forces** including at various times the **Honourable Artillery Company**, **the Militia Force and the Yeomanry Force** all remained outside this Force. It should also be understood that one third of those regular soldiers were committed to the Crimean War between 1853 and 1856.

At the same time, however, In the 1850s the potential invasion of Great Britain by France was a real threat especially at a time when one third of the Regular Army was committed to the Crimean War between 1853 and 1856 and under the Militia Act 1954 certain units were formed e.g. the Northumberland Militia Artillery which was formed in 1854 with an establishment of only 161 all ranks, including permanent staff, organised in two batteries.

In addition, in 1859 authority was given to County Lords Lieutenant to form Artillery Volunteer Corps (in tandem with the formation of Corps of Rifles) as part of a plan to form a Home Defence Force. The initial role for the Artillery Volunteer Corps was to man coastal defences as auxiliaries to regular units:

'to aid, in the most efficient manner, in the manning of batteries erected for the protection of our coastal towns so that the Royal Artillery and Militia may be, to as great an extent as possible, disposable for other services.

10 separate Corps of Artillery comprising 73 Batteries had been formed in 1859 including the 1st Essex Artillery Volunteer Corps at Harwich and the numbers had swelled to some 26,500 Volunteers by 1862.

However, the term 'Battery' at this time was used to refer to a single gun. A Volunteer Corps itself could be as little as 30 men (the smallest sub-division which was normally commanded by a Lieutenant); a company which would consist of 50 men (commanded by a Captain) and 4 Companies (commanded by a Lt Colonel) would form a Brigade. Commissions were normally granted at this time by the Lords Lieutenants.

The formation of the NAA in 1863

The National Rifle Association (NRA) had been formed in 1859 to develop and improve the small arms shooting skills and standards of the newly formed Volunteer Corps of Rifles. Competitive spirit was used as a key motivator in meeting those objectives.

The NAA (following the initial success of the above NRA model) was formed slightly later in 1863 to advance and promote the practice and science of Artillery within the Artillery Volunteer Corps. Again, the element of competition was used to underpin this objective.

The first NAA Competition in 1865

The first NAA competitive meeting took place in August 1865 at Shoeburyness – at the then School of Gunnery which was located at Shoeburyness – with 25 coastal gun detachments manned by approximately 250 volunteer gunners. The gun detachments competed for prizes presented by HM The Queen, The Prince of Wales, The Commander in Chief and the NAA and, in turn, those prizes were presented in person by the Secretary of State for War, The Marquis of Hartington, further underpinning the importance of this initial competitive meeting to the defence of Great Britain as well as setting an important precedent of having high ranking soldiers, politicians and the Lord Mayor of London to present the NAA trophies and prizes.

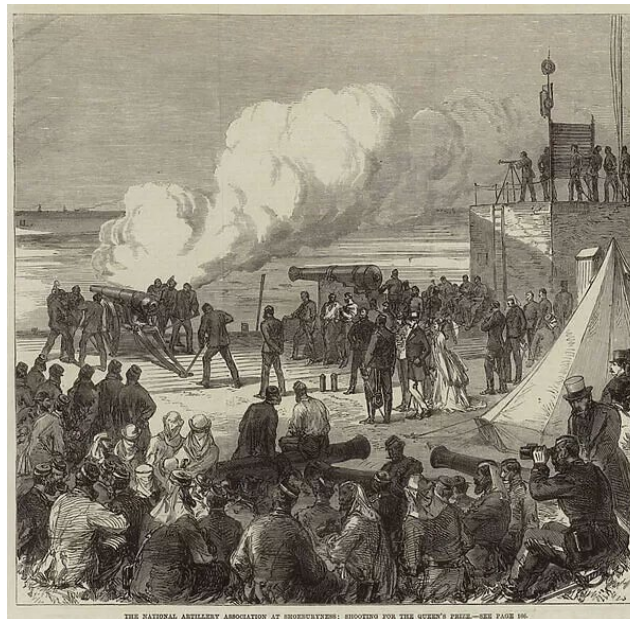
However, on the downside, those first competing volunteer gunners found Shoeburyness somewhat desolate; the weather was very unkind and they missed the support of their wives, families and friends who would normally accompany them at their own training events.

1866 to 1913

Following the first event at Shoeburyness in 1865, the competitions were run annually at Shoeburyness by the NAA (often with up to 1,000 competitors) until the early 20th Century with the introduction of the Haldane Reforms referred to below.

It must be remembered that the NAA was an unofficial and volunteer organisation but it appears that it did receive help and support from many official sources particularly from the School of Gunnery. Ammunition was supplied by the War Office although the scale was small and, on one occasion, accounts relate that the supply ran out during the meeting itself. Administration was initially

undertaken by the permanent staff from the School of Gunnery including messing and the setting up of tented camps but from 1872 advance parties of competing detachments took on more of these administrative chores.



The time taken in travelling to Shoeburyness was a difficulty for some units particularly those some distance away. This was one reason for the formation of a Scottish competition under the direction of two different Associations – the City of Edinburgh and Midlothian Association (for the east of Scotland with competitions held at Musselburgh and Granton on the Firth of Forth) and the West of Scotland Association (for the west of the country with competitions held at Irvine on the west coast). Those Associations combined in 1883 to form the Scottish National Artillery Association and it ran its first combined meeting at Barry Links in 1884 with 113 gun detachments competing for the Scottish Queens Cup and the Waveney Cup. This Association, itself, then merged into the NAA in 1908 and all competitions were, thereafter, organised and run by the NAA.

There was a brief suspension of competitions between 1900 to 1902 for the South African/Second Boer War.

Until 1908 the competitions were still primarily organised for coastal defence, with some units equipped with mobile guns for the landward defence of coastal fortresses. The original detachments had a choice of four guns - 24 or 32 pounders on garrison carriages, 18 pounders on field carriages and 64 pounders on a traversing garrison carriage.

In the early twentieth century the requirement for a field force composed entirely of part-time soldiers, organised in peacetime as they would for war and serving alongside the regular army was clear. The **Haldane Reforms** were a series of far-ranging reforms of the British Army made from 1906 to 1912 named after the then Secretary of State for War and were made in the light of the lessons newly learned in the South African/Boer War.

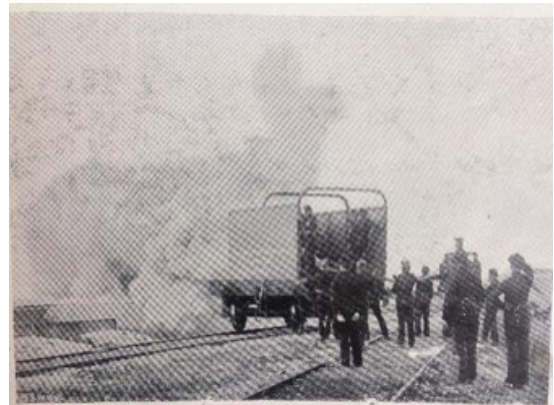
The major element of these reforms was the creation of an expeditionary force, specifically prepared and trained for intervening in a major war. The newly organised force was to have a permanent peacetime organisation and a full complement of supporting troops. At the same time, the reserve forces were restructured and expanded so as to ensure that overseas forces could be expanded, supplied with new recruits as well as making provision for home defence. The Volunteer Force and the Yeomanry were reorganised into a new Territorial Force in 1908 and the Militia was formed into the Special Reserve (these latter two reforms being grouped together into the Territorial and Reserve Forces Act 1907).

These changes brought big changes in role, equipment and expectations for the volunteer gunners. The new Territorial Force, in addition to the retention of the coastal defence role, was now required to find field artillery and mobile heavy artillery for the 14 Divisions which were to be formed by the existing Yeomanry Regiments. The individuality of a single gun was also now subsumed into the collective efforts of a battery of guns firing under the orders of its commander.

With this large increase in the number of units practicality meant that in 1912 and 1913 the NAA competitions for the horse and field batteries were restricted to those selected by Royal Artillery officers commanding Divisions or Districts to attend the official practice camps. These were held at Okehampton for the horse and field batteries and the Isle of Wight for the coast defence companies. Similar competitions were also held for those coastal artillery batteries

Unusual fact - 1895

An unusual visitor to the 1895 competition at Shoeburyness was the armoured train of the 1st Sussex Artillery Volunteers. This was brought into service in 1893 by mounting an Armstrong 40pdr breech loader onto a railway truck suitably modified by employees of the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway who were also volunteers.



<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File>

Competitions were, of course, suspended during the First World War 1914 – 1918.

The results for the competitions in this period can be accessed [here](#).

1919 to 1938

After the end of the First World War, the Territorial Force units were re-organised into the Territorial Army In 1920. Volunteer gunners were required to undertake a diversified number of roles and with a wide range of equipments. This diversification is illustrated below:

Field Gunners

The competitions for field gunners were re-instigated in 1921 and in 1925 the Territorial Army of the Royal Regiment of Artillery consisted of:

- 3 Horse Batteries
- 220 Field Batteries, in 58 Brigades
- 1 Pack Brigade
- 34 Medium Batteries, in 11 Brigades
- 38 Heavy Batteries
- 12 Anti-Aircraft Brigades, in 4 Brigades

In response to the increasing numbers of units entering the competitions, the NAA resorted to an Appeal for Funds in early 1925 to the Corporation of London, the City Livery Companies as well as other sources.

By 1930 there were 3 separate competitions:

- One for the Horse, Field and Medium Artillery (either horse or mechanically drawn);
- One for the 9.2 inch guns of the Heavy (Coast) Artillery; and
- One for the of the Heavy (Coastal) Artillery

Competitions took place during Annual Camp either at Larkhill, Redesdale, Trawsfyndd, West Down, Buddon and Okehampton. In addition, the competitions themselves were gradually re-organised so that the winners of the competitions at each Practice Camp could attend a final competition at Larkhill, normally in September of each year – a *'Best of the Best' competition and award* producing an atmosphere of competition more akin to the earlier competitions at Shoeburyness.

In 1935 the officer presenting the prizes was the Adjutant General – Lieutenant General sir Harry Knox KCB, DSO representing the Chief of the Imperial General Staff. The ceremony took place in the Guildhall in the City of London with the HAC mounting the Guard of Honour and providing the Band.

Coastal Defence Gunners

Similar competitions to those in place pre-World War 1 were remained in place for the coast defence batteries.

Anti-aircraft Artillery

Anti-aircraft artillery has not yet been mentioned but its importance came to the fore during World War I but was then virtually disbanded at the end of that War. However, the folly of this decision was soon realised and in the early 1920s it was quickly decided that Anti-aircraft Batteries were actually needed again and that they should mainly be provided by Territorial Army Batteries. Proposals for NAA Anti-Aircraft artillery competitions were first mooted in 1927 but the only competitions to actually take place were 'unofficial competitions' in 1938 for the Sunday Times Trophy and the Daily Telegraph Cup.

In 1939 competitions were abandoned because of the threat of war and none were to take place during the Second World War itself.

The results for the competitions in this period can be accessed [here](#).

1946 to 1967

After the end of the Second World War, both the Regular and Territorial Armies were in a continual state of retraction and re-organisation and recruitment across the board was proving difficult and it was going to be some years before the Territorial Army was to regain its stability and efficiency. This led the Members of the NAA Council to decide that re-instating the NAA competitions would serve little useful purpose during this period and no formal AGMs or Council Meetings were held from 1938 until the end of the 1950s.

The instigator of the NAA revival was Major General Sir Claude Liardet who formed an executive committee in 1959 to plan for the resumption of competitions with HRH The Duke of Connaught as the Patron of the Association. Capping that revival in 1962 was the gracious acceptance by Queen Elizabeth II of the NAA request for her to become the Patron of the Association. She remained in that role until her sad death in 2022.

1962 saw the revival of the NAA competitions for horse, field and medium artillery batteries with the winners being 359 (4th West Lancashire) Regiment RA (TA). The Prizegiving was held at the Mansion House in the City of London and the trophies and prizes were presented by the Master Gunner St James's Park General Sir Robert Mansergh GCB KBE MC.

One area of gunnery competitions did prosper in this post war period. The unofficial Anti-Aircraft Artillery Competitions (inaugurated and last held in 1938) were re-started in 1954 with units competing for the Sunday Times Trophy. The NAA took over the administration of these competitions in 1968. In reality, a unique (but impracticable) Trophy.

The 'Manorbier Trophy' (named after the location of the School of AA Artillery at Manorbier) was presented in 1966 for the runners up to the above Sunday Times competition. It is an Atmos Clock. Atmos is the brand name of a mechanical torsion pendulum clock made by Jaeger-LeCoultre in Switzerland which does not need to be wound manually getting the energy it needs to run from temperature and atmospheric pressure changes enabling it to run for years without human intervention.



However, this made the clock unfit for purpose as it requires a solid and consistent base in order to work properly and has to be re-set every time it is moved. It was, therefore, replaced by the 1898 Queens Cup as a more practical day-to-day trophy! In the meantime, the clock is currently on display within the Regimental Officers Mess at Larkhill.

The period between 1962 and 1964 saw the NAA become more integrated into and aligned with the Royal Regiment of Artillery and the Military Chain of Command. The Master Gunner assumed the Presidency of the Association with this tradition being followed by all his successors. In addition, it was also agreed that the NAA should be able to share the administrative resources of the Regimental Headquarters at Woolwich resulting in a lesser burden for a voluntary Association. This “coming together” marked the first steps in a change in “modus operandi” for the Association and its chief stakeholder, the Royal Regiment of Artillery.

The 1963 Prizegiving was, of course, the 100th Anniversary of the Association and was graced by the presence of HRH Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone, who presented the trophies at the Mansion House. The Centenary was also celebrated by a Ladies Dinner at Woolwich and Annual Dinners have, since that time, become associated with the Prizegiving Ceremony (as well as being extended to the Regimental WOs and Sergeants Mess since the 1990s).

At this time, most of the NAA's funds came from subscriptions paid by private individuals, the City of London Livery Companies and similar organisations such as the Territorial Army and Volunteer Reserve Associations (funding from their successors, the Reserve Forces and Cadet Associations, is now more difficult). However, the needs of the Association continued to grow and without any income between 1945 to 1962, together with the costs associated with holding Prizegivings in the City of London the Association reverted to further appeals (following the precedent set in 1925) in 1964/5 (followed by further appeals in 1974 and in the 1990s).

The results for the competitions in this period can be accessed [here](#).

1967 to 2008

The 1970s

Having re-established some semblance of normality, all was to change again. As a result of the 1966 'Healey' Defence Review the Territorial Army was disbanded to be replaced by the Territorial and Army Volunteer Reserve (TAVR). The key rationale of this review was to bring defence expenditure into balance with the nation's resources – at that time 7% of GDP.

The resulting reduction in the size of the new force resulted in the disbandment of many units. Of the 44 regiments and 3 independent batteries of the Gunner Territorial Army pre-1966 only 6 regiments (including the HAC) and 4 independent batteries were to remain. These new Regiments were to be tasked and trained to take their place alongside their regular compatriots in 1st British Corps in Germany. However, additional Home Defence Regiments were formed (fourteen of whom were 'Gunner cap badged' and were the successors of former RA (TA) units although these units did not have an artillery role and did not take part in the NAA competitions.

The Queen's Cup competition also had to undergo a major change. Hitherto regiments had been judged on a special exercise during their Annual Camp at either Sennybridge, Larkhill or Otterburn. Each winning regiment produced a battery to compete in a Final Competition which was staged at Larkhill during the month of September. Deployment, fire and movement and fire planning were all now part of the competition. However, from 1966 the battery now had to become the competitive unit. In addition, the BRA UKLF, assisted by the Gunnery Staff, now took over the responsibility for setting and judging the competition but which, in essence, remained very much the same as before.

It is important to clarify this changed relationship. The Chain of Command has since the 1960s set the parameters and requirements for the Annual 'Fitness for Role' and by agreement military exercises to test that fitness for role. The NAA has provided a forum for the recognition of those skills and military preparedness through supporting the provision of formal competitions across different types of equipment e.g. Gun and Air Defence Batteries competing against each other although all participants would compete in the generic skill test areas. To re-iterate, the NAA might visit those competitions but would not run them – that being the responsibility of the Chain of Command.

However, new opportunities arose for extended NAA competitions across the TAVR through:

- The commencement of a University Officer Training Corps competition in 1967 although initially only Oxford and Cambridge UOTCs competed as the other 7 UOTCs with Gunner Sections increased and honed their capacity to take part in the competition. This competition continued until 2008 at which time UOTCs became infantry only units.
- The subsequent decision to enhance air defence cover for the Army in 1969 with the formation of 102 (Ulster & Scottish) Light Air Defence Regiment together with additional batteries for 103 and 104 Air Defence Regiments.

At the beginning of the 1970s, with all the new organisations and roles fully in place, the competitions began again to flourish and expand. There were 3 main Challenge Trophies for Field Gunners – The Queen's Cup, The NAA Cup and the UOTC Challenge Cup together with 2 Trophies for Air Defence – The Sunday Times Trophy and The Manorbier Trophy. Prizegivings still generally took place at the Mansion House or the Guildhall in the City of London with either the Lord Mayor of London (a Vice President of the Association) or the Master Gunner (the President) presiding.

Additional competitions were instigated as follows:

- The **Taurus Trophy** in 1973 was instigated for the Light Air Defence Battery which had achieved the best progress and overall performance during the year in a subject chosen by the Commander 23 Artillery Brigade. The first winner was 207 (Scottish) Light Air Defence Battery RA(V) commanded by Major G J S Baxter.
- A competition for the **best Air Defence Regiment Headquarters Battery** In 1977. The first winner was Headquarters Battery, 103 (Lancashire Artillery Volunteers) Air Defence Regiment RA(V) under the command of Major T A K Wilson.

In 1977 289 Parachute Battery RHA(V) relinquished its parachute role and RHA status becoming the fourth Gun Battery of 29 Commando Regiment RA (a regular regiment) whilst also supplying six Naval Gunfire Support Parties and supporting the Dutch Marines – a unique role for a Reserve Battery.

Lastly at the end of this decade, the TAVR was renamed the Territorial Army again, a title that would remain until 2014.

The 1980s

The 1980s opened with the news that the Sunday Times had reluctantly decided to terminate their sponsorship of the main Air Defence Competition although British Petroleum Company had, in turn, agreed to sponsor the competition moving forward. In addition, they presented to the NAA a new Air Defence trophy in the form of a silver model of a Blowpipe detachment in action (the Air Defence Regiments having already converted to Blowpipe in 1977).

In 1981 an Observation Post (OP) Battery competition was devised for the 3 existing OP Batteries undertaking this role – 266 (Gloucestershire) Battery, 269 (West Riding) Battery and 307 (South Notts Hussars) Battery.

Further military skills assessment areas were also introduced into the existing competitions to cover e.g. driving, NBC (nuclear biological and chemical skills), aircraft and tank recognition, map reading and first aid depending upon the requirements of the chain of command.

During 1986/87 the Territorial Army was again expanded to meet a perceived increase in tasking in support of both 1st (British) Corps and Home Defence with the creation of five new Air Defence Batteries and the formation of 102 (Ulster) Air Defence Regiment.

1988 was the 125th Anniversary of the Association and to mark the occasion a special guest, Field Marshal the Lord Bramall, HM Lord Lieutenant of Greater London was invited to present the prizes at the Guildhall.

In 1989, after a successful tenure of ten years as Chairman of the Council, Colonel David Sime OBE MC TD handed over to Colonel Mike Taylor CBE TD.

The 1990s

The expansion of the Territorial Army in 1986/87 was reversed in 1991 when, under “Options for Change” it was announced that the Territorial Army was to be reduced in size in line with the reductions in the Regular Army. These changes in the Army were a direct result of the lessening of tension in Europe after the collapse of the Eastern Bloc.

The Royal Artillery was required to take its share of the cuts (although the HAC was left intact), as follows:

- 100 (Yeomanry) Field Regiment lost 200 (Sussex Yeomanry) Field Battery at Brighton to the Sappers but took command of 307 (South Notts Hussars Yeomanry RA) Battery which converted from the OP role. At the same time, 100 Regiment converted from the 105mm light gun to the 155mm FH 70 Howitzer.
- The 2 other existing OP Batteries were re-roled to a ‘light gun’ role with 269 (West Riding Artillery) Battery becoming a field battery within 19 Field Regiment RA whilst 266 (Gloucestershire Volunteer Artillery) Battery was placed under command of 7th Parachute Regiment RHA – both following the 289 Commando Battery precedent above.

- 101 (Northumbrian) Field Regiment remained intact but, like 100 Regiment, converted to FH 70.
- The air defence units did not, however, fare so well. Still equipped with Blowpipe, their fourteen batteries were reduced to nine batteries and one of the four air defence regiments – 102 (Ulster) Air Defence Regiment – was disbanded just 4 years after being formed.

The 1992 and 1993 competitions were, therefore, held against a background of major reductions and reorganisation – nothing new to the Territorial Army Gunners!

The mid-1990s “Strategic Defence Review” did, however, establish a new Gunner Regiment – 106 Regiment – which took over the Grove Park Battery (265 Battery) and Drill Hall in South London from 100 Regiment, with 100 Regiment moving its centre of gravity north of London – see above. The formation of this Regiment (equipped with Rapier unlike the other air defence regiments) saw the return of a sub-unit from the Sappers in Southampton – 457 Battery and the formation of 265 battery in Portsmouth.

In January 1998, 101 (Northumbrian) Regiment RA(V) was re-equipped with the Multi-Launch Rocket System (MLRS), a world apart from the ‘towed gun’ culture of their previous 50 years and a radical step forward for the Reserves. Despite a huge learning curve, the Regiment achieved its collective Training Objectives by firing a salvo from all of its 12 launchers six months later at Castlemartin Ranges. Not a mean feat for a volunteer regiment. It also resulted in a new inter-Regiment ‘detachment’ competition being instigated

New and targeted competitions were also put into place for both 101 and 106 Regiments over this period to support their re-training in order to manage the sophistication and complexities of their new equipments. Detachment training again evokes the spirit of Shoeburyness in the nineteenth century.

However, late in 1999, the Reserve Community lost 289 Commando Battery which was disbanded mainly due to funding disputes between the Army and the Navy.

The 2000s

The turn of the twenty first century marked a high point in the activities of the NAA. Having re-vitalised the Association and its support for the Territorial Army in 1962, the NAA had, yet again provided high levels of support and competition opportunities to the TA (and TAVR Regiments) despite the many re-organisations and re-equipments as the world struggled to adapt following the collapse of the Soviet bloc ending the ‘Cold War’.

Working closely with the Chain of Command, the NAA has always been open and proactive in responding to its needs and the individual needs of the Reserve Regiments. The list of the NAA competitions in 2000 (14 in all) on the next page fully illustrates this level of flexibility with:

- The inter-Battery and detachment competitions introduced to support the conversion of 101 Regiment to MLRS;
- The inter-Battery and detachment competitions introduced to promote the element of competition within 100 Regiment – the only gun Regiment at that time;
- The breadth and number of Air Defence trophies from the introduction of an Inter-Regimental competition to the SMS Trophy which recognised the best individual live firer(s) in a particular training year and the Dodds Trophy – the driving competition.
- The continued support for the RA sections within the UOTCs.

NAA Competitions held in 2000

Field and Surface Missile Artillery

- *100 (Yeomanry) Regt RA(V) Inter-Battery Competition*
- *100 (Yeomanry) Regt RA(V) Best Detachment Competition*
- *101 (Northumbrian) Regt RA (V) Inter-Battery Competition*
- *101 (Northumbrian) Regt RA (V) Best Launcher Competition*
- *101 (Northumbrian) Regt RA (V) Best Command Post Competition*

Air Defence Artillery

- *BP Trophy – Best Air Defence Battery*
- *The Manorbier Competition – Runner-up to the Best Air Defence Battery*
- *The Air Defence Headquarters Battery Competition*
- *The SMS Trophy – live detachment firing competition*
- *The Taurus Trophy*
- *The Dodds Trophy – best driving competition*
- *The Air Defence Inter-Regiment Competition – overall Regiment*

The UOTC Competition

- *The Inter-University OTC Competition – The King George V1 Cup*
- *The Runner-up to the Inter-University OTC Competition – The King George V1 Cup*

The Winners of these competitions can be accessed [here](#). No monetary prizes are now given but Units have traditionally been awarded the safe-keeping of the NAA Trophies for a year (before returning them to be re-awarded the next year).

In addition to the competitions themselves, the NAA continued to enhance the formal annual Presentation Ceremonies as a forum for the recognition of the skills and military preparedness tested within the competitions.

The Prize-giving Ceremony acclaims and recognises the time, commitment and skills of the RA Reserve Forces. These Ceremonies during the 1980s until 2007 became increasingly high profile events held at the Guildhall in London in the presence of the Lord Mayor of London (a then Vice President of the Association) and the Sheriffs of the City of London and their Ladies, the Master Gunner and the key Commanders from the Chain of Command as well as the families of the competing officers and soldiers.

This Ceremony would then be followed by an 'All Ranks Reception' in the Crypt at the Guildhall with all Guests attending – a real opportunity for the competing officers and their soldiers to have their contributions to the NAA competitions properly celebrated and fully appreciated in front of their colleagues and families.

Following the Guildhall event, Dinners would then be held in both the Officers and Warrant Officers and Sergeants Messes (the first Dinner in the Warrant Officers and Sergeants Mess took place in 2003 with John Conteh, the boxer, being the Guest Speaker) whilst 'Runs Ashore' in London for the other ranks were always greatly appreciated. There would often be upwards of 500 people involved in the whole weekend especially at the Guildhall – a logistical conundrum in a time of tightening defence budgets.

The pattern of Competitions very much followed the same pattern as above until 2008.

2003 saw the handover as Chairman after 15 years at the helm of Colonel M J E Taylor CBE TD DL to Brigadier J R Thomson QVRM TD, who had recently relinquished his appointment as Deputy Inspector General, Territorial Army at HQ Land Command.

A high level decision had made at the time of the millennium that the Headquarters of the Royal Regiment of Artillery should move from its ancestral home in Woolwich to Larkhill. With increased budgetary constraints upon Regiments, the Chain of Command decided that all NAA associated activities should be undertaken at Larkhill rather than in London. Accordingly, in 2008 the NAA weekend was transferred from London to Larkhill and integrated into a new concept – *Exercise Bustard Challenge* amalgamating the traditional Territorial Army weekends – *Exercises Bull Pup and Bull Terrier with the NAA Prizegiving Weekend* – into one exercise “Ex Bustard Challenge”. The Exercise included live firing, various skills stands as well as experiencing the “Bombard Bunker”.

Dinners were then held in the Messes at Larkhill with other ranks have the opportunity to have a ‘Run Ashore’ in Salisbury. This format was very successfully repeated in 2009.

However, after 2009 the uncertain future for the Reserve Regiments, a lack of man training days as well as travelling restrictions resulted in the enforced hunkering down of the Reserve Regiments and a postponement of the NAA competitions. This marked the end of a halcyon period of NAA Competitions and Awards Ceremonies from the 1960s. It also meant that the NAA was, therefore, effectively closed down for 4 years from 2009 to 2013. Brigadier John Thomson handed over the Chairmanship of the NAA to Colonel Chris Comport in February 2013 but with the knowledge that some competitions were planned in 2013.

A small number of competitions were actually held in 2013 with best Battery Competitions being held for the Gun Regiments and for 104 Regiment then equipped with UAS and best Detachment competitions for 101 and 1056 Regiments. A small Awards Ceremony being held in February 2014 as part of the Reserve Forces Weekend at Larkhill (although no formal Dinners were held due to financial constraints).

The resurrection of the competitions and the Reserve Forces Weekend at Larkhill in February 2014 was very much due to the drive and determination of Col David Middleton in his then capacity as the TA Colonel (and now Vice Chairman of the NAA) working in tandem with the NAA.

A similar format was adopted for the 2014/15 Training Year.

The activities of the Royal Artillery Reserve Units over this period were seriously curtailed by *manning caps, recruiting embargos, reductions of equipment holdings and suspended training programmes - the lifeblood of the Reserve*) all of which had a big impact upon morale levels and the departure of many reservists.

The NAA Dinners at the Reserve Forces Weekends were re-introduced in 2017 although there has only been one Awards Ceremony for the competitions held in the Training Year 2019/20.

However, the Trustees were keen that the immense history of the NAA should not be lost. It was decided in 2017 to re-align the NAA more closely to the Royal Regiment and the Reserve Regiments themselves. This involved many hours of discussions with NAA stakeholders whilst legal advice was also sought upon the existing charitable status of the NAA and its’ Constitution. A new Constitution was adopted at the 2018 AGM and after tortuous discussions with the Charity Commission, the charitable Status of the NAA was finally agreed.