

Message from the Chairman Brigadier (Ret'd) Mark Pountain CBE

Dear Members

I write having just attended the St Barbara's Day service and celebrations at Larkhill (St Barbara's Day 4th December), keenly aware that others have done similarly throughout the UK and more widely. As our Honorary Chaplain said, from the newest Gunner to the Master Gunner St James's Park, from the youngest to oldest veteran, we all share a common and unique bond as members of the Gunner family.

That bond is reflected in the work of the RA Association to support comradeship and welfare, and I pay tribute and give thanks to all for their work this year – our new Regimental Secretary Colonel Paul Bates and the RAA team in Regimental Headquarters, the Controller and our charities' trustees, the Regimental Colonel and RASM, the RAA National Executive Committee, all our regional and local volunteers – serving and retired - and more widely all the other groupings who provide a network of support and fellowship, whether formally part of the RAA, affiliated or connected.

As we approach the end of 2026, we remember those we have lost over the last year, and we reach out to those who may be in need, trusting in our common and enduring bond. We think particularly of those families separated over the coming celebrations through operational commitments.

As I reported at our AGM in May at Blackpool, the Association grew by over 1,000 members since the previous year, and while the membership in our 78 branches throughout the UK remains largely constant, we have extended our virtual 'offer' in a continuing effort to reach all our family and be as relevant to all as we can be. In conversation with BC 5 Bty RA after the service at Larkhill, he spoke of the sharing of stories with the Swedish Artillery about what St Barbara's Day means, which reminded me that our international network was the subject of our latest workshop (Number 6) to understand the potential benefits of stronger RAA ties and closer links with our Commonwealth and key NATO allies' equivalent organisations. We shall be taking that work forward over the coming year.

On behalf of the membership, I take this opportunity to welcome our new Master Gunner and his wife, Lieutenant General and Mrs Elviss, and to thank Lieutenant General Sir Andrew and Lady Gregory most sincerely for their outstanding support to the Association over the last eight years, and to send them our warmest best wishes for the future.

A very happy Christmas to all, a peaceful and joyful New Year, and all the best for 2026!

Mark