THE DEMISE OF THE
3 LAA REGIMENT RMA
OFFICERS REUNIONS

A letter from the late Major Alfred F. Marich, RMA, to “The Armed Forces of Malta Journal”, April 1974

Sir, — I seek the hospitality of your columns to write a short account of this year's annual reunion of the officers of 3 LAA Regt RMA.

This Regiment was formed at Fort St. Elmo on the 18th March 1941, when Malta was trying to cope with the onslaught of the all-powerful Luftwaffe, and it was felt that the Light A.A. defences of the Island needed reinforcing to meet the ever-increasing attacks on such vulnerable targets as the airfields, dockyards and harbours.

Originally, the Regiment consisted of three Batteries — 10th LAA Bty. which was taken out of 2nd AA RMA; 22nd LAA Bty. from 11th HAA Regt RMA(T) and a unique set-up known as the Dockyard Defence Battery. This was made up of Dockyard workers who had volunteered to down tools and man the Bofors guns around the Dockyard and the Three Cities every time there was an air-raid. As the war wore on, and

Colonel Edgar Salomone, OBE
these attacks became more frequent and more sustained, the officers and men ceased to perform dockyard duties and became full-time “Soldiers”. The Dockyard Defence Battery was therefore integrated into 3rd LAA Regt and re-designated 30th LAA Bty RMA.

Later, another Battery was added to the Regiment. This was the 15th LAA Bty and consisted almost entirely of conscripts.

Thus it will be seen that 3rd LAA Regt was made up of a motley collection of men from all walks of life:—

10th Bty — a hard core of regulars
15th Bty — conscripts
22nd Bty — Territorials
30th Bty — part-time soldiers, part-time dockyard workers.

It is to the credit of Lt.-Col Edgar Salomone OBE, who commanded the Regiment throughout the war, that he succeeded in moulding this "ad hoc" conglomeration of men into a disciplined and highly efficient military organisation, a Regiment whose contribution to the LAA defence of Malta was more than significant.

Out of the vicissitudes of war, was born an esprit de corps which lasts to the present day.

Just as the officers of the Regiment always stuck together through thick and thin in war, so now in peacetime they get together each year to commemorate that day, 33 years ago, when their Regiment was formed. This annual reunion has been
held uninterruptedly since 1945 when the Regiment was disbanded.

This year's reunion was held at the Metropole Hotel and was attended by 26 officers. The gathering was chaired by our veteran Commanding Officer, Colonel E.J. Salomone, who after an excellent dinner, proposed the toasts to The Queen, and to "Third Light".

It fell upon me, as the organiser of this annual event, to propose a toast to our "Absent Friends". As we stood up to drink this toast, we could not but remember those brother-officers of ours who are with us no more — Manoel Abela, Frank Vella, Joe Samut Tagliaferro and Cecil Borda, or those who have since made their fortunes in distant lands — Edgar Mercieca, Eddie Armes, Harry Bonnici and Stephen Azzopardi and others.

All in all, it was a very happy and a very sad occasion. One could not help noticing how time has taken its toll on those former young and eager officers who plunged into war. Now in their middle-age, they have only the memory of those often tragic, sometimes happy and always hectic days. But the Regimental esprit de corps prevails above all, and the 18th of March shall be commemorated each year until there is no one left to lift his glass to The Queen, The Regiment and Absent Friends.

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Major RMA(Retd)
Reunion of ex-Officers of 3 LAA Regiment, circa 1950. The Reunions were stopped some two or three years after 1974, due mainly to dwindling numbers.
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