

*From Lieutenant General Sir Andrew Gregory KBE CB DL*



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*Master Gunner St James's Park*

*To the Royal Regiment of Artillery*

10<sup>th</sup> July 2025

It was the greatest honour of my professional career when I took over as the 32nd Master Gunner St James's Park on the 1<sup>st</sup> May 2017. The role has clearly evolved since it was first established in 1678 to site the cannons to protect the Palaces of Westminster, Whitehall and St James's! Now, as the representative of the Regiment's Captain General, my responsibility is to provide overall guidance and direction across the Royal Regiment; this includes growing our operational effectiveness, sustaining the Regimental family, enhancing our reputation and operationalising our history and heritage.

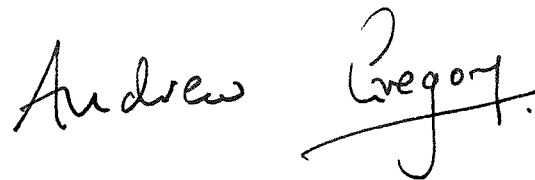
While, inevitably, there are challenges - a shortage of young men and women joining the Army and a lack of equipment, especially 155mm guns, being the most immediate ones, I am clear that the Royal Regiment is now in a very strong position and well placed to seize future opportunities.

After two decades of counter-insurgency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the return to warfighting and the direction from the Chief of the General Staff to double and triple the Army's lethality will require the totality of the artillery 'system of systems'. To make this a reality, the investment in and the growth of Air Defence, neglected since the end of the Cold War, is overdue and very welcome. The re-energising and re-balancing of Deep Recce Strike capabilities to both divisions also reflect the importance of fighting at range. Though we have not yet fully filled the gap left by rightly gifting our AS90s to Ukraine and training hundreds of their people, we are learning a great deal as we make ARCHER a capability and we look forward to the arrival of the Mobile Fires Platform in the next couple of years. All this fits within our new strap line of 'Find and Strike', something that emerged from the Operational Purpose and Distinctive Competencies work of 2018/2019. It is also very good news that we have formed the King's Gurkha Artillery; these fine officers and soldiers will add a great deal to our professionalism and operational capability. When discussing operations, I also pay real tribute to the families of our officers and soldiers who live with a great deal of separation, worry and stress; without their support, the Regiment would be non-effective.

The Royal Artillery Association, after a lengthy period of waning numbers, is now growing and with new Branches forming. This includes a Commonwealth, a female Gunners', a bikers', battery and other 'novel' branches alongside the more traditional geographic communities. Ensuring everybody who is serving or has served as a Gunner - and their families, remain part of the Regiment is essential for welfare, camaraderie and a sense of belonging. The Regiment's charities continue to provide invaluable support to serving and retired personnel in many different ways – welfare, sport, grants to the serving regiments, Royal Artillery events and more, and, due to good management, their resources have grown in recent years. I would urge all to come and join one or more of the main Regimental gatherings: the Remembrance commemoration at Hyde Park Corner; the Royal Artillery Association Assembly in Blackpool; the RA Gold Cup at Sandown Park; the annual service at the National Memorial Arboretum; St Barbara's Day at Larkhill and many others. As part of this and to enhance our reputation, a good deal of work continues to make the Regiment's communications to all audiences more effective; Gunner magazine is in a new format, our website has been revamped and we are raising our profile on social media, not least to assist with recruiting.

I am delighted His Majesty King Charles III agreed to become the Regiment's Captain General and we were greatly honoured by his visit to Larkhill in June; if we find ourselves short of a Light Gun layer, we know who to ask! I am also delighted that we have finally signed an agreement to lease with the Ministry of Defence for ground next to Larkhill for the Regiment's museum where we can, once again, put our magnificent collection on public display. While I am aware that there is some scepticism about whether the Museum will ever materialise, I would make three points: firstly, while there have been some 'false starts', I am confident we now have a viable plan and realistic business case; secondly, our Collection is important and dispersing it, which has been explored, is not an option; and thirdly, we will not 'bankrupt' the Regiment in bringing this to fruition. Celebrating and using our heritage is of fundamental importance to a Regiment of our size, stature and history.

I am very proud of this wonderful Regiment and all that has been achieved over the years and during my time as the Master Gunner St James's Park. However, I have decided now is the right time to hand the baton over to the next generation. I am therefore delighted to announce that Lieutenant General Mike Elviss, currently the Regimental Colonel Commandant, will take over from me on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2025; I know he will continue to nurture all aspects of the Royal Regiment of Artillery and that you will give him the very warm and committed support that you have given to me and Sally.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Andrew Gregory". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The first name "Andrew" is written in a simple, slightly slanted cursive. The second name "Gregory" is more elaborate, with a large, looping 'G' and a long, sweeping underline that extends under the 'Gregory' and slightly under the 'Andrew'.