May 2016 marks the tri-centenary of the organization of the permanent force of artillery in Britain. On 26 May 1716, two companies of artillery were formed, that in April 1722, became known as the Royal Regiment of Artillery. Originally subordinate to the Board of Ordnance, a technical branch of the government responsible for the provision of all weaponry for the British land forces and the Royal Navy, the 1855 abolishment of the Board of Ordnance placed the Royal Artillery and Royal Engineers under the Commander-in-Chief of the British Army.

In 1833, King William IV granted the Regiment the motto ‘UBIQUE,’ or ‘Everywhere,’ to signify its employment anywhere Britain held interest, followed by ‘QUO FAS ET GLORIA DUCUNT,’ ‘Whither Right and Glory Lead.’

The artillery branches of the Commonwealth enjoy close affiliation with the Royal Regiment of Artillery, as their titles of Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery, Royal Regiment of New Zealand Artillery and so forth reveal. The reigning monarch, Her Excellency Queen Elizabeth II, holds the honorary appointment of Captain General of these corps. The professional head of the Royal Regiment of Artillery is known as the Master Gunner.

The organization and composition of the Royal Artillery has changed dramatically over the years, and by 1812 it comprised ten battalions—an administrative and not tactical unit—each of ten companies, identified by the name of its commander; and the Royal Artillery Drivers, controlling the teams that moved the guns. A fully mounted component, known as the Royal Horse Artillery had been formed in 1793. Weaponry consisted of guns of various calibres and eventually rockets. Unlike their brethren officers in the cavalry and infantry, officers of the Royal Artillery received specialized education at the Royal Military Academy, and thereafter seniority and competence determined promotion. The NCOs and men also received technical training.

During the War of the 1812, Gunner’s served in the defence of the Canadas and the Maritime Provinces, and on American soil, including the Old Northwest (Ohio, Michigan and the Illinois Territories), New York State, the Chesapeake and Atlantic coast, Maine and Louisiana. The majority of the Gunners to serve in North America were employed in artillery companies,
while Captain Lane’s Troop of the Rocket Brigade, was the sole unit from the Royal Horse Artillery to participate in the Anglo-American War.

Details regarding tri-centenary activities, including an expedition around the globe comprising a contingent of Gunners carrying the Baton of the Captain General, can be found at the following sites and on Facebook and Twitter:

http://www.army.mod.uk/artillery/35659.aspx

http://www.ubique300.com/