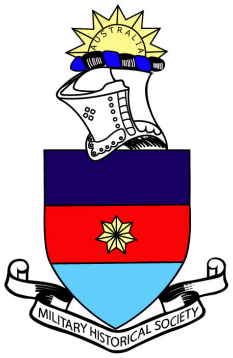
Military Historical Society of Australia
Sabretache



Sabretache policy is that the submission of material gives the Society permission to print your material, to allow the material to be included in digital databases such as the MHSA website, Australian Public Affairs-Full Text, INFORMIT and EBSCO. Reprints to non-profit historical and other societies will be approved provided suitable attribution is included and a copy of the reprint is sent to the author. Copyright remains with the author who may reprint his or her article or material from the article without seeking permission from the Society.

The Society encourages the download and distribution of *Sabretache* for personal use only and *Sabretache* can not be reproduced without the written consent of the Society.

www.mhsa.org.au

Military Historical Society of Australia
PO Box 5030, Garran, ACT 2605.
email: webmaster@mhsa.org.au

THE *BATAVIA* MUTINY: Australia's first military conflict in 1629

Rupert Gerritsen[1]

Most Australians presume that the first military conflict in Australian history, one involving regular soldiers on both sides, occurred sometime after 1788. But that is not so. In fact the first military conflict on Australian soil actually occurred in 1629. It arose in rather unusual circumstances and was itself a most curious little 'war'.

At about 5 a.m. on 4 June 1629, the Dutch Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC) ship, the *Batavia*, on its way to Java with 316 people on board, struck Morning Reef in the Wallabi Group of the Abrolhos Islands, about 60 km off the central west coast of Western Australia.[2] Approximately 275 people survived the initial disaster, most finding their way by various means to the nearest island, Beacon Island. But they were still in great peril as they had almost no food or water. The most senior officer, Commandeur Francisco Pelsaert,[3] immediately began to search for water on nearby islands in the ship's yawl, without success. He then decided to make for the mainland in the yawl, accompanied by 50 of the crew. On 9 June, as they approached the coast to land, they were struck by a severe winter storm, and were nearly swamped. They hovered off the coast for almost two days, battling to stay afloat in the stormy seas, before heading north in the hope of finding calmer conditions and water, but were unable to land for a further 550 kilometres. When they did, they found little water and so the decision was made to make for Java, over 2000 kilometres away, to get help. They reached the Sunda Strait on 7 July and were picked up by a passing ship, the *Sardam*. The alarm was raised in the Dutch port of Batavia (modern day Djakarta) and the *Sardam* was quickly readied to return, with Pelsaert in command, to effect a rescue. The *Sardam* departed on 15 July and by the last week in August had returned to the Abrolhos Islands but, because of inaccuracies in determining latitudes, then spent over three weeks trying to locate the wreck and those who had been left behind. Finally, on 17 September, they re-located the passengers and crew, only to be confronted by the horror of the infamous *Batavia* mutiny. In their absence the mutineers had callously murdered about 125 men, women and children, in many cases with horrific savagery and cruelty.

---

1 Rupert Gerritsen is a scholar whose work on the Dutch contact with Western Australia is well known. His major published works include: And their ghosts may be heard, 1994; An historical analysis of wrecks in the vicinity of the Deadwater, Wonnerup, Western Australia, 1995; Early records of the Wardandi language, 1998; The traditional settlement pattern in South West Victoria reconsidered, 2000; Nhanda villages of the Victoria district, Western Australia, 2002; The Batavia legacy : the first European settlement in Australia, Hutt River 1629, 2003; Historical problems and methodological issues regarding Nhanda, an Aboriginal language of Western Australia, 2004; and, Australia and the origins of agriculture, 2008.

2 Graeme Henderson, *Unfinished Voyages, Western Australian Shipwrecks, 1622-1850*, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, 1963, p.17. There are numerous accounts of the *Batavia* Mutiny, see for example Henrietta Drake-Brockman, *Voyage to Disaster*, Angus & Robertson, London, 1982 and Mike Dash, Batavia's Graveyard, Weidenfeld & Nicholson, London, 2003.

3 The rank of Commandeur applied because Pelsaert was in command of a fleet of three ships (which had become separated). Skipper Ariaen Jacobsz was technically in command of the *Batavia*.

1647 illustration of the mutiny

The mutiny had been fomenting even before the *Batavia* was wrecked, the ringleaders being the Skipper Ariaen Jacobsz and the Undermerchant Jeronimus Cornelisz.[4] It was Jacobsz's negligence that had allowed the *Batavia* to be wrecked,[5] and as he went with Pelsaert in the yawl back to Java, Cornelisz became the highest ranking officer remaining at the wreck site. Cornelisz in fact was one of the last to leave the wreck, after about 10 days, drifting ashore on the bowsprit.[6] Once ashore, Cornelisz assumed command of an elected council of the survivors.[7] But almost immediately he began to lay the groundwork for the mutiny.

One of Cornelisz's first actions, on 19 June, was to send a complement of unarmed soldiers and others who volunteered to accompany them, to West Wallabi Island, or the High Island as they called it, to search for water. He seems to have suspected some of the soldiers might oppose his plans, so arranged for them to be left there in the expectation they would die of thirst.[8] He then gathered around him his co-conspirators. By about 3 July they were secretly murdering people.[9]

---

4 Examination of Jeronimus Cornelisz, in Drake-Brockman, pp.162-4,170; Summary of Evidence, Jeronimus Cornelisz, in ibid, p.172; Examination of Jan Hendricxsz, in ibid, pp.181-2; Declaration in Short, Journals of Francisco Pelsaert, in ibid, pp.248-51 [Referred to henceforth as "Journals"]; et seq. The Undermerchant was in charge of cargo and trade. Cornelisz was also the apothecary on board. His name appears Pelsaert's Journals as "Cornelisz", but his name should properly be written as "Corneliszoon". It was common practice to abbreviate patronymical names in Dutch records of the period.

5 Journals, p.123; Letter from A. van Diemen to Pieter de Carpentier, 30 November - 10 December 1629, in Drake-Brockman, p.43.

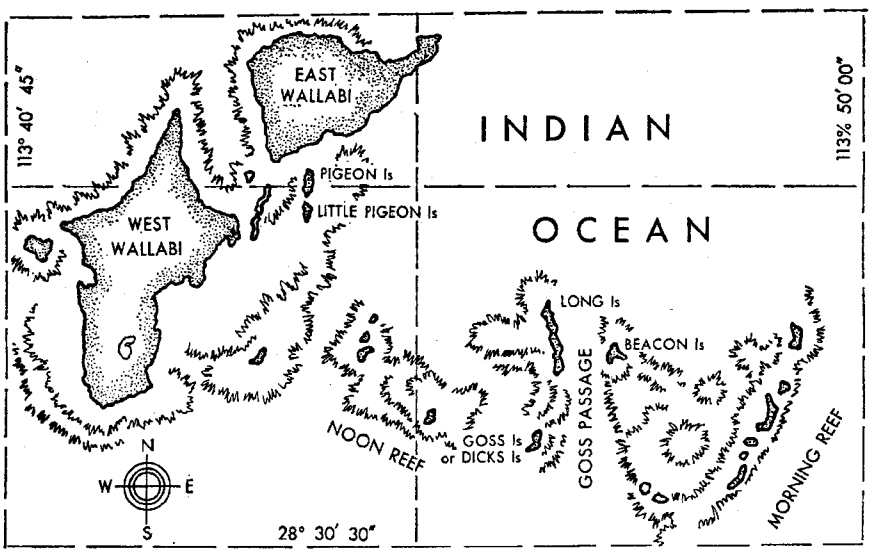
6 Examination of Jeronimus Cornelisz, in ibid, p.158.

7 Journals, p. 251.

8 Journals, p.252; Anonymous a. Letter written at sea from *Batavia*, the 11th Decemb. 1629 in Leyden Ferry-Boat Gossip (trans. R. Stow), in Westerly April, 1972, pp.8-9; Anonymous b. Second Letter, in ibid, p.10.

9 Summary of Crimes of Jeronimus Cornelisz, in Drake-Brockman, p.173; Journals, pp.251-2

On 5 July, Cornelisz, on a pretext, dismissed the council and appointed his own, made up of his cronies. Shortly after (9 July), the soldiers and others on the High Island lit fire beacons to signal that they had found water in a couple of natural wells.[10] They were puzzled by the fact no-one responded.[11] The same day 12 people who had been sent to Traitors Island were massacred.[12] On 14 July, for the first time someone was murdered in broad daylight by the mutineers. The following day, 18 of the people who had been sent to Long Island were massacred, but others managed to escape on a home-made raft and make their way to the High Island.[13] Here they and other stragglers alerted the soldiers and their companions there as to what horrors were unfolding.



Wallabi Group - Abrolhos Islands

Having disposed of most of the unwanted crew and passengers, the mutineers now numbered around 45 individuals, made up of some VOC officials, 10 soldiers, 6 cadets, 2 gunners, various crew members and a number of hostages, such as the Predikant (minister) Gijsbert Bastiaensz, his sole surviving daughter, and a few women kept as concubines.[14] The people on the High Island, West Wallabi Island, who became known as the defenders, numbered 47, about half of whom were soldiers and cadets.[15] The mutineers' plan now was to seize any rescue vessel and become pirates. However, they were concerned that the people on the High Island would warn any would-be rescuers, and so they too had to be eliminated.[16] And so the conflict began.

---

10 These were made up of slabs of limestone and can still be found on West Wallabi Is.
11 Journals, p.252.
12 Summary of Crimes of Jeronimus Cornelisz, in Drake-Brockman, p.173
13 Summary of Crimes of Jeronimus Cornleisz, p.173; Journals, p.252; Anon. a., pp.8-9; The Letter of Gijsbert Bastiaensz, Predikant, no date, in Drake-Brockman, p.265.
14 Examination of Jeronimus Cornelisz; Copy of Oath, 16 July; Copy of Oath, 20 August, in ibid, pp.163-7.
15 Resolution of the Ship's Council [Sardam], 28 September 1629, in ibid, p.152.
16 Journals, pp.143-4.

There were four engagements between the mutineers and the defenders between 27 July and 17 September. But initially Cornelisz, who came to style himself as "Captain General",[17] tried to drive a wedge between the six French soldiers who were part of the defenders complement, and the other defenders.[18] On 23 July, he sent Cadet Daniel Cornelisz to the High Island with a letter written in French for them, but the defenders were alert to Corneslisz's treachery and simply took the cadet prisoner.[19] Having failed to overcome the defenders by subterfuge, Cornelisz then ordered an attack four days later.

On the surface the odds appeared to be in favour of the mutineers. The defenders were unarmed, having been relieved of "all weapons" before being sent to the High Island.[20] For their part, the mutineers had swords, muskets and pikes.[21] But the defenders had three things in their favour - plenty of water, a reliable food supply in the form of birds, eggs, fish and the tammar wallabies found on West Wallabi Island,[22] and an able leader in soldier Webbie Hayes. And to defend themselves, they made their own weapons. According to an anonymous defender,[23]

> we set about resistance, making Pikes from Prussian [pine] planks, which we split, and stuck in them spikes fourteen or sixteen inches big, which came drifting from the wreck.[24]

Anticipating the attack by the mutineers, the defenders built a small fortification, known as "The Fort", at Slaughter Point on the edge of their island, overlooking the shallows the mutineers would have to cross to reach them. This structure still exists, the oldest European built structure in Australia.[25] Little is known of the first encounter other than the mutineers sent 22 combatants to attack the defenders but they were repulsed.[26] However, the reason for the defenders' success may have been the tactics they employed, as revealed in a comment on the second attack on 5 August. This time the mutineers came with 37 men in three yawls, and again were repulsed. As Cornelisz later recounted, "they went straight at them but the others [defenders] guarded the beach and stood up to their knees in water."[27] It seems that by confronting their attackers by standing in the shallows the defenders had a sure footing, while keeping the mutineers unsteady in their yawls.

---

17 Examination of Jeronimus Cornelisz, in Drake-Brockman, p.166.

18 There was also an English soldier, John Pinten, in the complement aboard the *Batavia*, but he became ill and had his throat cut by the Mutineers.

19 Letter by Jeronimus Cornelsiz, 23 July 1629, in Drake-Brockman, p.148-9; Summary of Evidence and Sentence of Daniel Cornelissen, in ibid, p.240.

20 Journals, p.252.

21 Anon. a., p.9.

22 Ibid; Letter of Gijsbert Bastiaensz, in Drake-Brockman, p. 267.

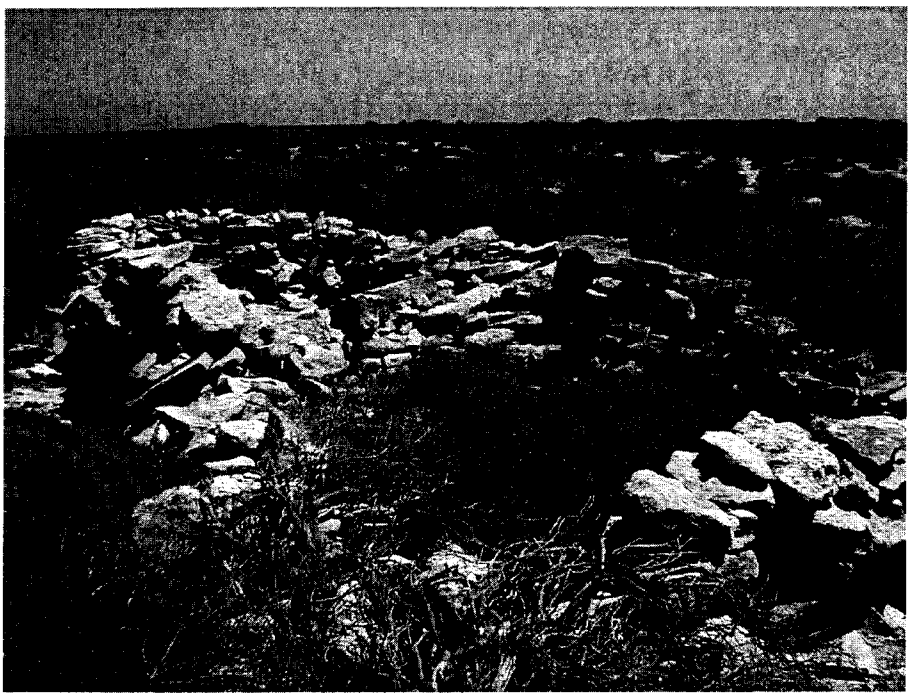
23 It is not possible to specifically identify this individual, who appears to have been a VOC official who had escaped the massacre on Long Island.

24 Anon. a., p.9. According to Bastiaensz in his Letter (p..267) they also made guns but this seems very unlikely, they may have been captured weapons.

25 Robert Bevacqua, Archaeological Survey of Sites Relating to the *Batavia* Shipwreck, WA Museum, Perth, Report No. 81, 1974, pp.9-13.

26 Examination of Jeronimus Cornelisz, in Drake-Brockman, p.159-60.

27 Ibid, p.159.



The Fort - West Wallabi Island

Next the mutineers tried to ambush the defenders. On 1 September, on a pretext of negotiating with them, the mutineers drew some of the defenders out into the open. Two of the mutineers in a yawl nearby then tried to shoot them with their muskets.[28] However, they misfired, their powder was not dry. "Had we shot immediately with the musket then we should certainly have got them, but the gunpowder burned away 3 or 4 times from the pan," soldier Jan Hendricxsz was later heard to say.[29]

The following day signalled another change of tactics, with the mutineers resorting to bribery. Cornelisz arrived on West Wallabi with five of his most trusted henchmen while a number of the other mutineers waited on a nearby islet, Tattler Island. While pretending to negotiate, they surreptitiously offered wine, fine woollen cloth, jewels and 6,000 guilders[30] each to some of the soldiers.[31] But the defenders were not deceived, and sprang their own trap. They seized all six mutineers and began to tie them up. But soldier Wouter Loos managed to break free and make his escape. As the anonymous Defender described it, "by a ruse we took five of the principal murderers prisoner. Seeing this, the others resorted to their weapons. When we saw this, that our enemies wanted to come upon us, we struck four of them dead."[32] This was done to "avoid being hampered by the prisoners."[33] Consequently Lance-Corporal Cornelis Pietersz, Cadets Conraat van Huyssens and Gysbrecht van Welderen, and Assistant Davidt Zevanck were killed

28 Journals, p.142,160; Letter of Gijsbert Bastiaensz, in Drake-Brockman, p. 266.
29 Journals, p.160. Presumably a matchlock musket was being used.
30 Equivalent to about 50 years pay for an ordinary soldier
31 Ibid, pp.142,253; Letter of Gijsbert Bastiaensz, p.267.
32 Anon a., p.9.
33 Journals, p.253.

on the spot.[34] With their leader Cornelisz captured and four of their number killed, the mutineers retired in confusion.

The mutineers now regrouped and elected 24 year-old Wouter Loos as their "Captain".[35] Being a soldier, Loos was far more adept in his tactics. On the morning of 17 September the mutineers attacked again, this time using their muskets to telling effect. Four defenders were wounded, one, Gunner Jan Dircxsz from Emden, later dying of his wounds.[36] But as the two hour battle reached its climax, the *Sardam* miraculously appeared.[37] Hayes immediately jumped in a small boat they had captured from the mutineers and raced to warn Pelsaert of the terrible events that had unfolded in his absence.[38] Shortly after a yawl carrying 11 armed mutineers approached the *Sardam*. Forewarned, Pelsaert "mustered his People, the guns being loaded with Musket balls,"[39] and demanded, "Wherefore you come aboard armed?"[40] He then "ordered them to throw their guns in the sea before they came over which at last they did."[41] They were then taken prisoner and the mutiny was over.

The following day Pelsaert and the skipper of the *Sardam* recruited and armed 10 soldiers from the High Island and rounded up the rest of the mutineers on Beacon Island.[42] Over the next two weeks the leaders of mutiny were interrogated and tried. On 2 October, Cornelisz and six others, after having hands chopped off, were hanged.[43] Webbie Hayes, because he had "faithfully protected and defended" his troop, was immediately promoted to sergeant, with a substantial pay rise, and two of the cadets, Otto Smit and Allert Jansz, were made corporals.[44] Upon returning to Batavia, Hayes was promoted again, with a further pay rise, to Vaendrager, the lowest rank of commissioned officer.[45] Wouter Loos managed to conceal the extent of his crimes until the executions were over. Instead, he and 18 year-old cabin boy Jan Pelgrom de Bye were sentenced to be marooned on the Australian mainland.[46] And so on 16 November 1629, as the *Sardam* headed back for Java, Loos and de Bye, "provided with everything"[47] and instructed to "make themselves known to the folk of this land,"[48] were abandoned on the WA coast, probably at the mouth of the Hutt River,[49] becoming Australia's first European residents.

--oOo--

---

34 Ibid, p.159.
35 Examination of Wouter Loos, 24 September 1629, in Drake-Brockman, p.224.
36 Summary of Crimes of Wouter Loos, in ibid, p.227.
37 Journals, p.227,253.
38 Ibid, p.142.
39 Anon. a., p.9.
40 Journals, p.143.
41 Ibid
42 Ibid, pp.144-5.
43 Ibid, p.213. The condemned included 3 soldiers, a cadet and a gunner.
44 Resolution of Ship's Council, 28 September 1629, in Drake-Brockman, p.157.
45 Final Sentence of Men Already Examined ... 28 January 1630, in ibid, p.271.
46 Resolution of Ship's Council, 13 November 1629, in ibid, p.221-2.
47 Journals, p.237.
48 Instructions for Wouter Loos and Jan Pelgrom de By van Bemel, in Drake-Brockman, p.230.
49 Gerritsen, Rupert 2007 'The debate over where Australia's first European residents were marooned in 1629 – Part 1', Hydrographic Journal, vol. 126, pp.20-25; 2009 'The debate over where Australia's first European residents were marooned in 1629 – Part 2', Hydrographic Journal, vols. 128-129, pp.35-41.

A RELUCTANT HERO: L-CPL PATRICK GOGGIN MM: The story of one man's war on the Western Front 1916-1918

Peter Dean[1]

For Patrick (Paddy) Goggin there was no rush for glory. There was no thirst to enlist for King or country. In fact, it could be argued that he had no interest in the business of war at all. August 1914 came and went, so did the first Anzac day and later the Australian withdrawal from Gallipoli. Still Paddy did not stir from his life in Yass in the New South Wales countryside.

We will never really know what persuaded Paddy to join up. Given his strong Irish bloodlines, loyalty to the crown was unlikely to dig at his conscience. More than likely he enlisted for the same reasons that motivated thousands of young Australians; because it seemed the right thing to do at the time, a bit of adventure in a lacklustre time.[2]

A labourer by profession Paddy was by no means an imposing figure. He was slim, stood at 5 ft 9 inches and still considered a mere boy at the time of his enlistment in January 1916.[3] With all his youthful enthusiasm he presented himself to the recruiting officer and soon found himself in D Company, 4th Training Battalion in Bathurst. From Bathurst, Paddy was posted to the 53rd Australian Infantry Battalion, Australian Imperial Force (AIF).[4]

Paddy, with the rest of 2nd reinforcements for the battalion, embarked aboard HMS *Ceramic* on 14 April 1916, and arrived at Port Said. Egypt, on 16 May. At the time the 53rd Battalion was a relatively new unit, created after the doubling of the AIF in Egypt and originally populated with cadres from the 1st Battalion. Paddy, however, was not yet destined to cement his union with the battalion. After some preliminary training and a quick gaze at the local delights Paddy came down with pneumonia, a common affliction amongst the men, that landed him in the 2nd Australian Shore Hospital at Tel el Kidis after only six weeks in Egypt. From there Paddy was sent to the 3rd Australian General Hospital in Abbassia. In a telegram to his mother, Paddy's case was described as 'mild', but nevertheless he was to remain in hospital in Egypt and England for nearly three months. In the meantime the 53rd Battalion and its parent formation, the 5th Australian Division, had left for France and were receiving its baptism of fire on the Western Front.

The fickle fortunes of war may well have been smiling on Patrick Goggin. While Paddy was sent to England on the HMT *Kamwona*, the 5th Division was fighting for its life at Fromelles. Here, in a

---

1 Dr Peter J Dean is a military historian at the University of Notre Dame Australia (Sydney Campus) and the great nephew of Lance Corporal Patrick Goggin MM.

2 See Richard White, 'Motives for joining up: self-sacrifice and social class, 1914-1918', Journals of the Australian War Memorial, No. 9, 1983, p. 3. White argues that working class motives were less concerned with duty, honour and middle class morality and more as a result of 'judicious self interest'.

3 Paddy's enlistment in January 1916 coincided with a surge in AIF recruitment at the end of the Gallipoli campaign. January 1916 was the third highest month in the war for enlistment. See K. H. Obson, 'First AIF enlistment patterns and reasons for their variation', Australian Defence Force Journal, no.132, Sept/ Oct 1998, p.61-66

4 The majority of the source material for this article has is from: Australian Army Service Record, National Archives of Australia, B2455 Goggin Patrick, SERN 1662, & AWM4, 23 /70, War Diary 53rd Infantry Battalion AIF.

battle that has been referred to recently as the 'lowest point of military incompetence in the Great War'5, the 53rd Battalion lost 24 officers and 601 other ranks.6

Paddy's absence was also to keep him from the disastrous battlefields of the Somme in 1916. He was to remain bed ridden until 16 September 1916. By now Paddy had been laid up, through no fault of his own, and useless to the army for nearly three months. His health would to continue to plague him, and the Army, throughout the course of the next few months. However the cause would prove to be much more of a taboo affliction than pneumonia.

After his discharge from the hospital he was sent to the 1st Australia Base Depot at Pershaw Downs. With some accrued leave on hand Paddy wasted no time in employing his Australian charm (and undoubtable his back pay) in recreational pursuits which heralded his return to hospital, on 26 September 1916, this time with venereal disease (VD). Unfortunately for both Paddy and the Army alike, VD was to be a recurring health problem for the AIF throughout the war.7

Paddy's first bout of VD kept him in Buford hospital until 15 December 1916, a stay of some 54 days. Soon after, the relapse of his condition, again landed him back in hospital, this time for only a month, and he was released back to his unit on 25 February 1917. The Army attempted to solve the problem by transferring Private Patrick Goggin to a third training depot in England, this time at Hurdcott. Within a short space of time however Paddy was to foil the good intensions of the Army and by 18 March 1917 he was caught in Wilton, after disobeying a routine order (to stay out of town), and promptly marched into hospital. This time the army got tough and in an effort to mend the mischievous Private Patrick Goggin he was charged by a military court, fined and placed on restricted duty.

The AIF, thinking that it had at last administered the justice and rehabilitation that Paddy needed, sent him on his release on the 25 March 1917 back to Hurdcott. Paddy initially seemed to have reformed and got on with the arduous task of training for the Western Front. The distraction of military training however proved only temporary and when Paddy was allowed leave he went straight back into Wilton, which necessitated his fourth dose of VD in the space of seven months. Paddy's second charge resulted not only in a loss in pay and restriction to barracks, but also a prompt transfer, this time far from Wilton or Pershaw Downs. The Army obviously regarded France and the front line as a distinctly harder place for Paddy to try and enhance his infamous and painfully won reputation.

Private Patrick Goggin had done his utmost during his time in England to help cement the AIF reputation for larrikinism and a lack of discipline. As Ashley Ekins has noted, the discipline problems of the AIF were widespread. By 1918, the AIF prison rate of 17 per cent was nine times higher than that of the rest of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF). The AIF had the highest rate of court martials amongst the BEF and the highest rate of VD infection.8 Now after some time with the 14th Training Battalion at Folkstone Patrick Goggin was given his chance to help live up to the other AIF stereotype; as a member of one of the best fighting formations on the Western Front. So

---

5 Ashley Ekins, 'The battle of Fromelles', *Wartime*, Issue 44, 2008, p. 21.
6 C.E.W. Bean, The A.I.F. n France 1916, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1934, p. 442.
7 Venereal disease was a major problem for the AIF and it was generally considered that the AIF had the highest infection rate amongst the Allied Army's on the Western Front. During the last 2 years for the war over 235,000 soldiers went on sick leave due to VD. See Peter Dennis et al (ed), 'Venereal Disease', Oxford Companion to Australian Military History, Oxford, Melbourne, 1999, p. 608.
8 Ashley Ekins, 'Fighting to exhaustion: morale, discipline and combat effectiveness in the armies of 1918', 1918 Year of Victory: Australian War Memorial International Conference, 27-28 November 2008.

on 1 July 1917, he was released from the confines of the tiny British Isles and unleashed on the European mainland.

* * * *

By the time Paddy made it to France the war and the army that he had left behind in Egypt had changed dramatically. The fresh faced Australian troops of 1916 that had arrived in France, full of spirit and eager to get at the 'Hun', were long gone, destroyed by the realities of modern trench warfare. The 'Hun' proved a more resilient and professional soldier than 'Johnny Turk' and the AIF had to adapt to, and learn new methods of warfare. The Australians' introduction to war on the Western Front in 1916 had been bathed in blood. Names such as the Somme and Fromelles became synonymous with Australian casualties. In July and August the Australians had fought at Pozieres and Mouquet Farm on the Somme, a place that C.E.W. Bean regarded as 'more densely sewn with Australian sacrifice than any other place on earth'.9 From Pozieres the Australians had soldiered on throughout the winter and into the meat grinder at locations like Bullecourt, Messines and Passchendaele. By mid 1917, the Australian soldiers had thrown off the shackles of 'colonial amateurs' and had emerged as consummate professionals.10

Paddy spent the month of July moving around France before arriving at the 53rd Battalion on the 4 August. The 53rd (NSW) Battalion belonged to the 14th Infantry Brigade of the 5th Australian Division, 1st Anzac Corps. During July the corps had enjoyed what Bean called 'the finest rest ever given to British Empire troops in France.'11 It was during this time that the AIF was thoroughly trained on the old Somme battlefields, and the soldiers first began to refer to themselves as 'diggers'.12

Paddy was not the only member of his family to have an association with the 53rd Battalion. He had been preceded by his two cousins, Tom Goggin and Richard Callaghan. Tom's association was brief, only about a few weeks, but Richard had a much more long term relationship with the battalion. He had arrived in the unit while it was still forming in Egypt and had been with it virtually ever since. By the time that Paddy arrived he was already an accomplished veteran corporal in D Company. Unfortunately for Paddy, he was not able to re-equate this relationship with Richard as he was seconded to the 14th Training Battalion as an instructor in July and would not return until May 1918.13

The 53rd had been 'blooded' at Fromelles in 1916 where it suffered heavily but with the rest of the 5th Division joined the other Australian divisions in the Somme Valley for the freezing winter of 1916–17. In the first half of 1917, the 53rd participated in the advance following the German retreat to the Hindenburg Line and in defending ground captured by Australians in the Second Battle of Bullecourt. Paddy arrived at the battalion on 1 August 1917 in the vicinity of Lynde. The unit was in billets and Paddy formed one of 65 men, led by Major Percy Higgins, who came up as reinforcements. Upon arrival he was posted to C Company.14

August and the first half of September were relatively quiet for the 53rd. During this time the unit was occupied by brigade manoeuvres, a sports day, concerts, and training. At the beginning of

---

9 C.E.W Bean, *Anzac to Amiens*, Penguin Books, Victoria, 1993 (1st edition, 1946). p.?
10 Eric Andrews, *The Anzac Illusion*, Cambridge, Melbourne, 1993, pp. 93-117.
11 Ibid, p. 363.
12 Patsy Adam-Smith, *The Anzacs*, Sphere, Melbourne, 1981, p. 376. According the Adam-Smith the word 'digger' actually came from the New Zealanders who took it from their gum-diggers.
13 AWM4 Roll 90, War Diary 53rd Infantry Battalion AIF
14 Ibid

September, Lieutenant-Colonel Croshaw resumed commanded from Lieutenant-Colonel Norris. On 17 September, the battalion moved up to Steenwoorde and five days later they made their way to 'Half Way House'.15 The 53rd was moving up with the 1st Anzac Corps to take part in Field Marshal's Haig's Third Ypres or Passchendaele offensive.

* * *

The 1st Anzac Corps moved up to support the British offensive on 20 September. The 1st and 2nd Divisions were the first to be involved, forming the centre of an eleven division assault. The Battle of Menin Road was undertaken in one of the first periods of fine weather during the campaign and was successful, but at the cost of 5,000 Australian casualties. Fighting at Menin Road was another of Paddy's cousins, John Carnel Goggin, whose 20th Battalion had fought and won the ground over which the 53rd Battalion now advanced. Prior to this period the Australian troops had time to rest and train in their new tactics. These tactics developed out of the experiences gleamed from the battle of the Somme and also as a reaction to the German's construction of concrete blockhouses. Every Australian infantry platoon now consisted of rifle-grenadiers and a Lewis gun to support the riflemen and bombers.16 This reorganisation was to go hand in hand with new British strategy of controlled advances. Each attack would never go beyond the range of the Allied artillery and as soon as possible the assault troops would be relieved by fresh reserves to handle the inevitable German counter attacks. Once the artillery had moved up, the advance would leap frog forward 'step by step' again. These attacks would be like "blows from a sledge hammer" that would each wear the Germans down.

As planned, the 4th and 5th Australian Divisions were moved into the line to replace the 1st and 2nd Divisions. As a result Paddy was about to take his part in his first major offensive. The 53rd had spent the period of 20 to 22 September in support in the vicinity of Chateau Segard before moving up to 'Half Way House'. The battalion strength stood at 21 officers and 676 ranks. The 23rd September was a day of delight and regret for Paddy Goggin, his self assurance and adaptability, along with his grasp of basic infantry minor tactics led to an interesting crossroad in his career. Paddy was a self-styled individualist and larrikin. His exploits in England had left him with a hard won reputation to live up to amongst his mates and the other privates in the battalion, but it also left him with a hard reputation to live down amongst the battalion's officers and senior NCOs. Despite this, Paddy had proven on his arrival in France his newfound maturity. The high casualty rates amongst the battalions as well as the desolate and destructive sight of the Western Front had been a sobering experience. It had done much to put pay to Paddy's mischievous ways. On the eve of the offensive, an apprehensive Private Patrick Goggin of C Company 53rd Battalion was ordered to report to company headquarters. Paddy's heart was in his mouth, his mind churning as to which one of his latest indiscretions had come to the notice of those in authority. However, Paddy was to be pleasantly surprised. Instead of the tongue lashing Paddy expected he was received warmly and with correct military etiquette. In fact, Private Goggin was there to be told he was now Lance-Corporal Goggin. This news was received with delight and apprehension. Despite his enlistment in 1916 he was still fairly 'new' to the unit and would the men accept his promotion? The other factor weighing on Paddy's mind was that did he want to become a NCO? No longer a humble digger, but a man of responsibility. Paddy walked out of the headquarters tent resolved to do two things, be the

---

15 Ibid

16 For a detailed discussion of the changes in tactics used by the British Army at this time see Paddy Griffiths, Battle Tactics of the Western Front: The British Army's Arts of Attack, 1916-1918, Yale University Press, 1994, chapters 4 & 5 and Peter Liddle (ed) Passchendaele in Perspective: the Third battle of Ypres, Leo Copper, London, 1997.

best lance-corporal that he could and avoid just as vigorously any and all attempts for more promotions and responsibly.

The battalion remained at 'Half Way House' until the night of the 24-25 September when they moved forward to Glencourse Wood. The nights were cool and clear with the sounds of the battle ahead clear in the moonlight. They moved in artillery formation to avoid casualties, but this was no sure-fire safeguard. Almost as soon as setting out the German artillery opened fire. 77 mm and 5.9 inch shells screamed across no man's land and drove themselves deep into the soft ground around the 53rd. They came in continuous barrages. The German 77's sent over 'whiz-bangs' which arrived with the noise of giant firecrackers and the 5.9's shells screamed and wined as they approached before ending their lives 'with vicious, ill-tempered crashes.'17 All of this noise and confusing was only punctuated by the sounds of the heavy German guns bombarding the support areas far behind the area where Paddy sheltered from the storm. Their shells drove over the Australians head like express trains and crashed into the earth with a terrible dull thud. As the battalion settled into position there was a brief pause in the shelling. Then as they took position another huge barrage hit the battalion position. As the shells screamed into the lines the dim cries of the wounded could be heard. Paddy looked up to see the shells impacting right on top of the company to his left. When the smoke and the dust settled Lieutenant Jennings and two diggers had been killed.18 The bombardment caused not just physical injuries, but mental scars as well. The tremendous and constant barrage that the battalion had suffered was having adverse effects on the men's moral and shortly after the assembly was complete Lieutenant Pain, the Lewis gun officer, was evacuated with shell shock.

By now, midnight on the 25th, the battalion was in position and waiting for the signal to attack. The shelling became internment and most of the artillery landed behind the 53rd in the positions they had moved out of shortly before. They formed up on a two company front. A company occupied the front left section of the line with B Company in immediate support behind their position and D Company occupied the front right with Paddy and C Company in support. The companies had their sections set out in single file and where possible the men crawled into shell holes for protection and laid down to await the advance.

Punctually at 5:50 am the barrage opened. Again two Australian divisions (4th and 5th) formed the centre of the advance, along a seven division front of six miles. The shells screamed down in front of the men and the order was given to advance. The men doubled across no man's land to a point 60 yards behind the artillery screen where they knelt down and waited for it to creep forward. As the barrage lifted the company officers ordered the scouts forward and the lines of sections and platoons advanced. The rear companies, amongst them Paddy's C Company advanced in columns of platoons. As the men moved out a heavy mist enveloped them and kept them hidden from the enemy machine guns. The men emerged out of the wood and into the flat expanse towards the edge of Polygon Wood and the butte of the old rifle range that formed their objective.

As the artillery lifted over the German lines their machine guns opened a deadly chatter. Despite the screaming shells and the fire of the enemy machine guns the Australians maintained their order and carried out their tasks. As the pillboxes were approached the platoons closed in. Officers directed the Lewis guns into positions. They soon 'opened up' sending .303 rounds from the light machine guns and rifles into the slits and firing ports of the concrete boxes. As they laid down covering fire the rifle sections moved around the flanks keeping low and out of sight. As the enveloping parties

---

17 Bean, *Anzac to Amiens*, p.327

18 AWM4 Roll 90, War Diary 53rd Infantry Battalion AIF, Appendix 4, September 1917, Account of operations taken part in by the 53rd Battalion between 22nd and 30th September 1917.

moved in they threw grenades at the pillboxes that exploded with a tremendous crash. All around the confusion of the battle reigned.

Artillery pounded both the German and Australian lines, machine guns spat deadly fire at their adversaries while NCOs and officers tried to maintain control and keep the momentum of the advance. As they approached the pillboxes the men lobbed their last mills bombs at the bunkers and as they exploded the officers screamed to charge. The men drove forward with the bayonet pushing up to the walls of the boxes and throwing bombs and firing through the slits in their sides. As the men advanced the Lewis gun section and their NCOs 'switched fire' catching the Germans as they emerged from the rear of the boxes or as reserves moved up to counter-attack the Australians. As the men took the pillboxes and pilled into the enemy trenches sentries were placed at all of the entrances. Bombing parties were then organised and with bags of grenades they made their way down into the dugouts. Many of these parties were met with fire as they advanced and the Australians retaliated with rifle fire and grenades forcing the Germans down into the last dugouts, destroying any of the enemy who refused to surrender.

As the men advanced onto the position, enemy artillery and machine guns in concealed positions opened a deathly fire. The shells and bullets fell amongst the reserve companies and battalion headquarters that were now being pushed forward to take the trench line. As the men piled into the trenches a notable absence was discovered. A large part of battalion headquarters was absent as was the commanding officer. As the men pushed back into no man's land the commanding officer's body was soon discover riddled by machine gun fire and command of the battalion passed to Captain Johnson. The death of Lieutenant Colonel Croshaw DSO soon impressed upon all the men the disregard that the machine gun held for rank and status.

The objective was secured by 6:25 am and the men began to dig in, consolidate and prepare for the inevitable German counter-attack that follows every offensive. As the artillery advanced to the next phase line a new threat developed. The men ducked, weaved and crawled for cover as enemy aircraft came in flying low, strafing the battalion area. Soon after the supporting brigade machine guns came up to strengthen the line. Patrols were sent out in the battalion area to deal with the incessant snipers and the guns were set up on the buttes to give plenty of observation and good fields of fire. The 53rd Battalion had captured two officers and 56 ranks as well as capturing or destroying nine machine guns.

Within minutes of the successful assault the enemy launched a counter attack with their slender reserves. This was easily repulsed and 20 more prisoners taken. Not long after the German artillery again began to fall. This shelling fell mainly in the battalion rear areas and forced these rear service troops to push forward to the mainline to avoid the hail of shrapnel. The first heavy counter-attack fell on the Australians at 7 pm, but these attacks were easily beaten back with the support of machine guns and artillery. From the 26–30 September the men were occupied by strengthening their newly won position until they moved back to Half Way House on the night of the 29 September. The only break to this routine had been on the morning of 27 September when a German heavy bomber attacked the battalion area but was brought down by Lewis and machine gun fire to the rear of the battalion near its right flank.[19]

Yet again the sacrifice of the Australians had been great. 'Mates I have played with last night & joked with are now lying cold', a sapper wrote after Polygon Wood. 'My God it was terrible. Just slaughter. The 5th Div. was almost annihilated. We certainly gained our objectives but what a cost[?]', an infantry private confided, 'The reaction is still to come and I'm rather frightened of it - I

19 Ibid.

feel about eighty years old now.'[20] By the time the 53rd was withdrawn from the line, three officers and 63 ranks had been killed in action, four officers and 222 men wounded, including those missing and sent to hospital the total causalities came to eight officers and 342 men or around fifty percent of the battalion. Despite the enormous casualty figures the objective had been secured and the men's morale remained firm. The AIF suffered 38,093 casualties in the Third Ypres offensives and during 1917 the infantry of the Australian divisions in proportion to their strength suffered 97 per cent casualties.[21]

On 9 October, the battalion move up into the line in the vicinity of Zillebeke relieving the 60th Battalion. They remained here until the 16 October carrying out routine work parties before moving into the support line behind Anzac Ridge relieving the 57th and providing support to the 56th. They remained for another day under constant enemy aerial activity. On 21 October, they withdrew back to Dickerbusch for a rest which lasted until the end of the month. The good news for the men was they received a fresh change of clothing.[22]

The beginning of November saw Paddy issued with a new box respirator and had a refresher course in bayonet training before the battalion moved on 10 November into the Kemmel area. Paddy had performed well in the attack in the previous assault and as a result of his action and losses within the battalion he was given command of his own section. On the 12 November 1917 the CO issued Operational Order No. 5. This was the outline of the relief by the 14th Infantry Brigade, including the 53rd, of the British 21st Brigade on the 13/14 November. The 53rd was tasked with taking over part of the line occupied by the 2nd Battalion, Wiltshire Regiment in the reserve line on the 12 November and the 2nd Battalion, Yorkshire Regiment in the front line on the 13 November. As they moved into the front line C Company was given the right front section on the line. Their responsibilities included 'tying in' with the 55th Battalion on the extreme right of the battalion frontage.

The battalion came into the line in front of the town of Wytschaete in a section of the line named after the town. Wytschaete lay to the north of Messines in Belgium and had been taken by the IX British Corps in June. The southern or right flank on the battalion, sat on the road that ran east out of Wytschaete and through the little village Wambeek, here C Coy, formed the right flank of the 53rd Battalion however the position was difficult to judge as the road had all but ceased to exist as a result of the fighting. Within the brigade the 54th Battalion was on the northern or left flank and the 55th on the southern or right flank. As the men advanced into position they did so in the harshest conditions. The fine weather that the battalion attack had been made in September had abandoned the Allies and Flanders was once more under water. On the night that the unit moved up the battalion war diary recorded the conditions as "mud as bad as that experienced on the Somme." So much so that the front-line companies, C and D, were all issued with gumboots.

As the company filed into position Paddy was called into company headquarters for a briefing. He was informed that he was to move into no man's land and occupy the company's advance post. This was to be Paddy's first test of independent command and furthermore he was to occupy the most important and dangerous section of the company's line. Advanced posts were an essential part of trench warfare. They were normally situated in shell holes or specially constructed dugouts in no man's land. Their purpose was to provide early warning to the main firing line in case of enemy

---

20 Gammage, B., *The Broken Years*: Australian Soldiers in the Great War, Penguin, Australia, 1985. p. 189-190. These words were written by Sapper McKay, 15th Field Coy, Fibro plaster of Fitzroy, Victoria, on 26/9/1917.

21 C.E.W. Bean, *The A.I.F. n France 1917*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1943, pp. 936 & 948.

22 AWM4 Roll 90, War Diary 53rd Infantry Battalion AIF

raids or attacks. The catch was that they were usually more exposed to enemy fire and if they weren't properly 'dug in' or camouflaged, the enemy often capitalised on their vulnerability by send parties into no man's land with the specific objective of destroying these small posts. This could be easily achieved if the men in the posts were not vigilant and alert.

Paddy and his six men filed off into no man's land on the night of the 13th to occupy the post. There they relieved the men of the 2nd York's. Much to Paddy's chagrin he found the position in a pitiful state. The York's had done virtually nothing in the weather to improve the post's comfort, protection or its fields of fire. The post was almost completely unsatisfactory. It lacked both drainage and cover, which meant that in the atrocious weather it was awash with mud. As Paddy and his men settled down they took no comfort from the cold wet mud in which they were forced to lie. The mud stuck to everything; skin, clothes and equipment and it became a major struggle just to keep their weapons clean.[23] Once in position the word was passed down the line. C Company had been the last of the battalion to move into the line and shortly after "Rum Jar" the code word for relief complete was given to battalion headquarters.

Unknown to Paddy the advance posts of the York's had been under meticulous observation from the Germans for sometime and their exact position and strength was catalogued with great detail. The Germans had noticed the activity to their front and would have quite easily recognised that a relief was taking place. The German battalion commander in the area opposite the Australians would have noticed that opposite his left flank was where the relief had proceeded the longest. Assuming that his new comers would be tired after their march to the line, and confused by not having seen this part of the front in daylight he planned a nasty little welcome. The German commander knew that he must also discover the identity of the new unit across from him as undoubtedly his regimental commander would request it on the following day. This piece of intelligence was vital in keeping track of all Allied units along the Western Front. The battalion commander walked back clumsily through the mud to his headquarters. There he sat down and issued his night orders. Calling for the company commander of his left flank company he informed him that he wanted a dozen of his men to go out into no man's land discover the identity of the newcomers, hopefully capture a prisoner for interrogation and destroy that advance post before dawn.

The German company commander would have most likely anticipated the order that he received to destroy the post and had already selected his men. He brought the dozen selected men in for a briefing and outlined his plan. The men were to advance into no man's land under the cover of darkness making full use of the shell holes and any cover available. They were then to wait for first light, make certain of the objective and assault it during dawn. Once the position was taken they were to retrieve whatever intelligence they could find and bring back any of he surviving "Tommy's" before the full light of dawn exposed them to any enemy retaliatory fire. It was all routine procedures, just one of thousands of such raids carried out all along the Western Front by both sides.

Paddy had had an uncomfortable night. The cold, mud, wet and his apprehension had meant that he got only the briefest amount of sleep. After the relief had taken place sentries were posted while the others rested. He surveyed the ground towards the German lines straining in the dark to see any pieces of dead ground or cover that the Germans could use to sneak up on his post. After he had made up the picket roster he settled down to try and catch a few hours sleep. He woke several times during the night and checked the sentries were awake and reminded them to wake him for the last

---

23 The poor state of the advanced post is clearly outlined in the battalion war diary, Appendix 7, November 1917. By the time that the battalion had left the front three of the five posts had been abandoned and rebuilt elsewhere with proper protection, drainage and fields of fire.

shift. It was always best for the NCO to do the first and last picket duty. Firstly to make sure that everyone settle down all right and to get a good look around and view of the ground. Secondly, in the morning it allowed him be alert and awake before first light and to make sure that all of his diggers were up for stand to before first light. As dawn approached Paddy struggled to get his wits in the cold morning air. By November, the winter was fast approaching, the dawns were getting later and the snow would fall in about a month.

On the other side of the line the German NCO in charge of the raiding partly would almost have certainly not relished his task. It would, of cause, not be difficult as jobs go. He knew the precise location of the post and he knew that he would outnumber the enemy by about two to one. However, any job was dangerous and sneaking across no man's land was no one's favourite pastime. A few hours before first light he briefed his men and pushed out into no man's land stopping short of his objective, checked his men were right and waited for the light to attack.

Both Paddy and his fellow digger on sentry strained their eyes and their ears trying to catch and sound or movement to their front. First light was fast approaching. Both men suddenly went very still as over the sounds of the far away artillery and in the fading light of a far off flare they heard a new sound. The sudden clank of equipment and the soft squelch of boots. Paddy was going to take no chances. He quickly woke the rest of his men, informing them in dull whispers to 'stand to'. Paddy then gently and quietly raised his head over the parapet and looking into the blackness. With his heart pounding, hands sweating despite the cold and nervous tension he glimpsed movement to his front. First one, then two, three and more of the enemy came into sight all silently creeping up on his position.

Paddy turned back to his men and using hand signals informed the men of the direction of the attack and their approximate numbers. The men, most of them now veterans of many long nights on the Western Front, carefully collected their Mills bombs, primed the detonators and waited for Paddy's signal. Paddy took one more glimpse over the top and saw the Germans advancing fast. He turned and nodded to his men. With all of their strength they hurled the grenades in the Germans direction, reached for their rifles and 'opened up'. The Germans stunned by the crack of rapid rifle fire charged only to be met by the hail of more bullets and the muffled explosions of the grenades in the soft mud. The sudden noise caused the Australian main line to 'stand to' while Paddy battled for fire supremacy over his adversaries.

The initial fire and grenades had done their job well and Paddy could hear the cry of the German wounded as they continued to battle it out. The German's were aware that their little surprise had gone wayward and after a brief but vivacious fight they decided the prudent course of action would be to retire. As the Germans moved back Paddy and his men continually harassed their withdrawal. The German's left two men dead and several made their way back to their lines with obvious wounds.

Paddy and his men's skirmish in no man's land did not go unnoticed by either side. The Germans recognised that they were up against a skilled and determined foe, while Paddy's plight also gave an insight to the Australian commanders on the nature of their outpost line and started immediately on rebuilding them in more appropriate positions. Paddy's effort and dedication to duty did not go unnoticed. The battalion War Diary on the day recorded that:

> At 6 am an enemy patrol of 10-12 men attempted to raid C Company's advance post. They succeeded in crawling up to our wire and then commenced throwing bombs. Our men easily repulsed the enemy with rifle fire and bombs, who retired leaving 2 killed. Several were obviously wounded and carried off with difficulty.

Paddy's recommendation for the Military Medal read:

> 1662 Lance Corporal Patrick Goggin.
>
> For conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty. On 14th November, 1917, when the Battalion was occupying the front line in the Wytschaete Sector, Lance Corporal Goggin was in charge of a shell hole post with six men. An enemy raiding party of 12 attempted to raid the post, and a lively fight ensued for about five minutes, Lance Corporal Goggin set a splendid example of bravery and determination, and the enemy party was driven off, leaving two killed. Several of the enemy were wounded.

The award was quiet an accomplishment. The Military Medal was the third highest award that Australian soldiers could receive for bravery behind the Victoria Cross and Distinguished Conduct Medal. There were only 9,926 Military Medals awarded to the AIF which constituted only 3% of the 330,000 who enlisted.

After the excitement of the 14th the men settled down to the ordinary and deadly boring routine of the Western Front. The battalion remained in the line until the 28th, a stay of 17 days. From there they moved to a rest area during December, where they spent Christmas out of the line in reserve. Here Paddy fresh from his own triumph put his best skills to work and secured himself a job as a coal guard for 5th Division HQ's, far removed from front line duty. Paddy remained in this pleasant little occupation until the 21 February 1918 when he returned to the front at the familiar Wytschaete sector. Here things remained quiet until the start of the German spring offensive on 21 March when the battalion received heavy artillery fire.

With the start of the German offensive came a change for the battalion. At first things along the British front look bleak and Haig issued his infamous "Backs to the Wall" bulletin. The battalion moved around continuously throughout the rest of March, before settling outside of Villers-Bretonneux after relieving the 17th (British) Lancers on the 5 and 6 April. During this time they were told to expect major attacks and any time. Artillery fell continuously and the position was so exposed that no movement during the daytime was possible. During the early morning of the 8th, the battalion went over the offensive and advanced 500 yards. A and B companies advanced against the German 48th Infantry Regiment.

The battalion was relieved on the 9th but back in the line on the 13th where a trench raid revealed the enemy to the elite Prussian "storm troopers" who spearheaded Lundendorff's offensives. On the 17th the area around Villers-Bretonneux was pounded by German gas. This gas attack took a very heavy toll of the Battalion with 12 officers and 155 ordinary ranks having to be evacuated.[24] In fact the attack was so sever that some areas that the battalion occupied were evacuated and the battalion was transferred to take over the lines in the 56th Battalions positions. During this period of March and April 1918 out of strength of 14 officers and 321 Ores who became casualties gas accounted for 11 officers and 195 ORs. Only five men were killed or died of wounds sustained in combat.

Gas was again used on the 23 April and at dawn on the 24th the Germans attacked and broke through the British lines. The 13th, 14th (Paddy's) and 15th Brigades were hurried into the fight. At 10 pm the Australians launched one of the most successful pincer movements of the war and the town of Villers-Bretonneux was retaken and at dawn it was cleared by British and Australian troops. After the war Paddy told his sister Gladys, that his battalion occupied basements in the town of Villers-Bretonneux, where much of the gas remained. It was in this action that he received the gassing that was to plague him for the rest of his life.

---

24 Although Paddy was not evacuated this is quiet possible where he received the gassing that was to plague him for the rest of his life on his return to Australia.

During May, the battalion and Paddy were sent to reserve and Lieutenant-Colonel Holland from the 55th took command. During the rest of May and June the battalion oscillated between frontline and reserve duty in the vicinity of Hamel and Querrieu. On 9 July, Paddy along with one other soldier was sent to the 14th Brigade Infantry School and returned to the battalion on 3 August.[25] A few days later on the 13th, Paddy was sent to hospital from the field were he remained for 13 days. Although it is not recorded as to why Paddy was evacuated the medical report for August states that "We had a few cases of influenza, but in nearly all cases they have not had to be evacuated". Of course it is entirely possible that Paddy was one of the exceptions to this rule. The Regimental Medical Officer Captain Butt, did comment in his report that "Early in the month the Battalion were out in billets, but as I was not with the battalion then I do not know what prophylaxis measures were taken for venereal disease ... they all had to be evacuated". It remains open to speculation as to why Paddy was evacuated. To his credit Paddy was not with the battalion during the early part of the month, but he was at the training depot far to the rear of the frontline and close to many leisure venues. Despite this Paddy was not charged on release from hospital and given his prior record this would in all likelihood mean that he had succumb to influenza, most likely affected by his exposure to gas at Villers-Bretonneux on Anzac Day 1918.

This hospital stay lead to another crossroad in Paddy's life and military career. On release from hospital he was not sent back to the 53rd but to the Australian Infantry Base Depot (AIBD) on the 25 August. He remained at AIBD until 19 September when he was transferred to the Australian Veterinary Hospital with a class B1 medical listing (not fit for frontline duty). It is not recorded as to why Paddy was reclassified but given his turbulent medical history and recent exposure, on numerous occasions, to gas it is entirely understandable.

Paddy spent only a month at the unit before receiving leave to Great Britain in October. He remained with the Veterinary Corps through the armistice and Christmas 1918 before transfer to England in February 1919 for the journey home. He remained in England at various training battalions until 19 April when he finally boarded HMT *Sardinia* in Devonport for the journey back to Australia.

On return to Australia Paddy spent time rehabilitating at the Lady Davidson Hospital for veterans at Turramurra. After being demobilized he was granted a soldier settlement allotment at Yass which he later sold. In 1920, he married Ida Caroline Giddens at Annandale and he spent his time indulging his love of horse and trying to forget about the nightmare experiences of the war.

Despite having escaped death or injury on the battlefield during the war Paddy paid his dues on his service for the rest of his life. Ill health plagued him until at the premature age of only 43 he passed away at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital of pulmonary tuberculosis, the result of gas poisoning. To the end he remained a larrikin, faithful to the ideals of mischief and mateship that personified the 1st AIF. An Irish Australian rouge and a humble war hero he, like all of his fellow 'diggers', was a man who had devote his youth and ultimately his life to the 'war to end all wars'.

--oOo--

25 It is not recorded why Paddy was sent but he most likely scenario would be as an instructor or for a junior NCO's course on infantry tactics.

VICTORIA CROSS AND BAR MEDAL GROUP SOLD

Anthony Staunton

One of the only three Victoria Cross and bar groups has been bought in the United Kingdom for a reputed £1.5 million pounds. Captain Noel Chavasse VC MC, Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) attached to the 1/10th Battalion, King's (Liverpool Scottish) Regiment was the recipient of the only posthumous bar ever awarded. It was the only double Victoria Cross awarded in the First World War and the only double Victoria Cross awarded to the British Army. It was the second bar awarded. The first bar was awarded was to Captain Arthur Martin Leake, also RAMC, in 1914, but his original award was with the South African Constabulary in South Africa in 1902. The third and only other bar was to New Zealand Army Captain Charles Upham in the Second World War.

Chavasse was awarded the Victoria Cross for his actions on 9 August 1916, at Guillemont, France when he attended to the wounded all day under heavy fire. The bar or second award was for the period 31 July to 2 August 1917, at Wieltje, Belgium in the opening days of the Third Battle of Ypres. He was severely wounded early in the action whilst carrying a wounded soldier to the dressing station but refused to leave his post and for two days not only continued to perform his duties, but in addition went out repeatedly under heavy fire to search for and attend to the wounded lying in no man's land. Captain Chavasse died of his wounds and is buried at Brandhoek New Military Cemetery, Vlamertinge, Belgium.

Captain Chavasse was one of twins and he graduated from Trinity College, Oxford with a first in philosophy. At university, he earned his blue in both athletics and lacrosse. He qualified with a medical degree and joined the Royal Southern Hospital, Liverpool. In the 1908 Olympic Games. he and his twin Christopher represented Great Britain In the 400 metres. Christopher served as a chaplain in the First World War, and was later Bishop of Rochester.

Captain Chavasse's medal group had been left by his family to St Peter's College, Oxford. St Peter's College had been founded in 1929 by Captain Chavasse's father who had been Bishop of Liverpool before moving to Oxford. The college has sold the medals to Lord Ashcroft, the billionaire Conservative peer. Lord Ashcroft is a self-made businessman, a philanthropist and deputy chairman of the Conservative Party. The Chavasse medals will be displayed at the Imperial War Museum in the new Lord Ashcroft Gallery which will open next year. The gallery will house Lord Ashcroft's collection of 160 VCs, the largest VC collection in the world. The collection is estimated to be worth at least £30 million. Lord Ashcroft donated £5 million towards the new gallery. Lord Ashcroft was reported thrilled to purchase the medals but would not confirm how much he paid for the medals.

Lord Ashcroft

--oOo--

FAMOUS AND WELL-DOCUMENTED DONKEY TRIP
Billy Lowes of the Royal Naval Division and Simpson

Graham Wilson

In December 2008 Mr Tom Curran, author of *Across the bar: the story of Simpson, The man with the donkey: Australia and Tyneside's great military hero,* wrote a rebuttal to my December 2006 paper calling into question the historical accuracy of the Simpson myth.[1]

One of the aspects of the Simpson myth addressed in my paper is the question of whether or not Simpson could have evacuated severely wounded men on a donkey. My contention was that he could not have. This contention was challenged by Mr Curran quoting the 'famous' case of 'Billy' Lowes, a man from Simpson's home town of South Shields who was reportedly badly wounded at Gallipoli. Mr Curran wrote:

> (O)ne of the most famous, and well-documented of all Simpson's donkey trips involved just such a case, when Simpson brought a young Englishman down the valley after the fighting at the Bloody Angle on 2-3 May. The man had a severe thigh wound and was semi-conscious throughout the journey, with Simpson holding on to him tightly to prevent him falling off the donkey's back. Simpson never discovered the identity of his passenger, whose life he had very likely saved. The man's name was Billy Lowes, born and bred in South Shields and he had been a childhood friend of Simpson. Lowes was medically invalided out of the army a few months later and returned to South Shields. He subsequently wrote a letter to Simpson's mother Sarah describing how he had been brought down Monash Valley on Jack's donkey, though passing in and out of consciousness all the way. He concluded: "I tell people about your son saving me and losing his own life after doing such good work, and if ever anybody was worthy of a VC it was Jack".[2]

There is no question that the rescue of the badly wounded and semi-conscious Billy Lowes is one of the most famous of Simpson's 'donkey trips'. However, just how 'well documented' is the story? Documented by whom? Who witnessed the event? Who recorded the event contemporaneously? Who noted the event in their diary? Who made a note of the event in a unit war diary? Who mentioned the event in a letter home to family? Answer – no one. The story of 'Billy' Lowes is a myth.

The story of 'Billy' Lowes and Simpson comes to us verbatim from Sir Irvine Benson who states that he was told the tale first hand by an elderly Billy Lowes while Benson was in the UK 'in search of Simpson'. According to Benson, Lowes told him that he had been severely wounded at Gallipoli and remembered being rescued by an Australian stretcher bearer with a donkey who he recognized as his childhood friend Jack (Simpson). Benson tells us:

> I met William Lowes ... He walked with a heavy limp, the legacy of war days. He ... had been a school mate of Jack Simpson ... In the 1914-18 War he was an Able-bodied Seaman who served with the Royal Naval Division. He had been at Gallipoli! ... With the Royal Naval Division[3] he went to the Dardanelles ... and

---

1 Wilson, Graham, 2006 'The Donkey Vote. A VC for Simpson – the Case Against', *Sabretache The Journal and Proceedings of the Military Historical Society of Australia*, Vol. XLVII, No.4, December, MHSA, Canberra (hereafter referred to as Wilson ST), pp.25-37.

2 Curran ST, p.25.

3 The Royal Naval Division (RND) had been the pre-war brainchild of the fertile imagination of the First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Spencer Churchill. When working out plans for the wartime mobilization of the Royal Navy and Marines, Churchill had realised that upwards of 30,000 trained reservists would be left over once all Fleet units were manned. Since all of these men would have been trained in landing party weapons and tactics, with some actually having combat experience pre-war in various obscure corners of the world, it made sense to Churchill to form them into an infantry division, specifically for use in effecting amphibious landings. The new division began forming in early September 1914 and very quickly fielded three brigades (two naval and one of marines), each of four battalions. The battalions of the two naval brigades (1st and 2nd Royal Naval) were named after famous British admirals: Benbow, Collingwood, Drake and Hake in 1st Brigade; Anson, Hood, Howe

> landed from a barge at Gaba Tepe at 4 a.m. on 29th April 1915 ... On 3rd May he was wounded by shrapnel in the thigh. He was unconscious but remembered being taken down to the beach on a donkey. He produced the little linen tag signed by the Medical Officer. From the dressing-station Lowes was quickly taken to a hospital ship and on to Alexandria. So these two men, from far-away Shields, who had been school mates and ridden donkeys together, went down Shrapnel Gully without recognizing each other.4

However, given that Lowes states that he was severely wounded in the thigh, then how did he manage to sit on a donkey? Given also that according to his own testimony he was 'unconscious', then how did he know it was Simpson who 'rescued' him, whereas the fully conscious and fully aware Simpson – his supposed childhood bosom friend – did not recognise Lowes? Once again, this is unsubstantiated personal anecdote. We have no one's word for this except Billy Lowes. Who was Billy Lowes? The service record of TZ/64 Able Seaman W. Lowes, of the Royal Naval Division (RND) reveals that Billy Lowes was never wounded.

Lowes' record shows that he served with Nelson Battalion of the RND with the Mediterranean Expeditionary Forces (i.e. Lemnos and Gallipoli) between 1 March and 30 October 1915, at which point he returned to the United Kingdom and was drafted to the 1st Reserve Battalion at the RND depot at HMS 'Crystal Palace', later moving to the 2nd Reserve Battalion and then demobilised (not discharged – he was not formally discharged until 1918) on 6 June 1916 specifically to return to work with his former civil employer.5 The reason for Lowes' early return from Gallipoli and his early demobilisation was not wounds or illness as he is not recorded as being invalided for either of these reasons, which would have been noted on his record had either been the case; nor does he appear on pension records as receiving disability payments for wounds or illness resulting from war service. The reason for Lowes' return and early demobilisation is stated on his record, namely for return to his prior civil employment. Lowes' employer was John Redhead and Sons, a well known South Shields shipyard that was employed on war related ship building and ship repair tasks. Lowes was obviously identified as being of more use to the war effort working in the shipyard than carrying a rifle in the ranks.

Billy Lowes was never wounded and therefore could never have ridden on Simpson's donkey. I am confident that AB W. Lowes is the 'Billy Lowes' of the story and I am confident that all the official records have been examined. The preconditions for a man to be the Billy Lowes of the story are as follows:

- His surname must be 'Lowes'.

---

and Nelson in 2nd Brigade. The third brigade of the division was titled the Royal Marine Brigade, with the battalions styled 9th (Chatham), 10th (Portsmouth), 11th (Plymouth) and 12th (Deal) Battalions. Originally deployed to Belgium for the Defence of Antwerp, the RND lost several thousand men, including 1,500 members of the 1st RN Brigade who were forced to retreat across the border into neutral Holland, where they were interned for the rest of the war. Following withdrawal to England, reorganization, reinforcement and re-equipment, the RND was allotted to the Dardanelles Campaign where it, along with the British Army's 29th Division, took part in the initial landings on the Dardanelles Peninsula on 25 April 1915. Badly depleted during the Gallipoli fighting, the last members of the RND were withdrawn from Gallipoli on the night of 16 January 1916, amongst the very last troops to leave. The division served out the war on the Western Front, fighting in a number of major battles and by the time it was disbanded in April 1919 had suffered over 47,900 casualties.

4 Benson, Sir Irving C., 1965 *The Man With the Donkey : John Simpson Kirkpatrick, the Good Samaritan of Gallipoli*, Hodder and Stoughton, London (hereafter referred to as Benson), pp. 55-56.

5 UK National Archives ADM/339/1/0/8076 Tyneside Z/64 Able Seaman William LOWES. This is undoubtedly the 'Billy' Lowes of the myth as he is the only 'William Lowes' listed for the RND; there is no 'Billy Lowes' listed for the RND; his birth date range is correct; his NOK address is 7 John Williamson Street, South Shields; and his civil employer is listed as John Redhead and Sons Ltd., West Docks, South Shields.

- His given name must be 'Billy' or 'Bill' or a name that lends itself to the diminutive 'Billy' – this mean his given name must be 'William' or, less likely, another name similar to this, such as 'Wilber', 'Wilbert', Wilfred', 'Willis', etc.
- He must be the right age to have been serving in 1915, i.e. he must have been between the ages of 18 and 38 in the 10 months between August 1914 and May 1915.
- He must have served at Gallipoli with the Royal Naval Division.
- He must have come from South Shields.

The record of TZ/64 AB William Lowes states that his birth date range is in the decade 1890-1900, which matches almost perfectly, Billy Lowes, according to the UK Census for 1911, having been born in 1889. His home address on his service record is given as 7 John Williamson Street, South Shields, County Durham; and his civilian employer, as noted above, is listed as a shipyard in South Shields.[6] The UK Census for 1911 lists a total of 2,525 persons in the UK with the surname 'Lowes'. This is out of a population of 43 million, meaning that people with the surname Lowes represented an improbably low 0.00587% (or 0.006% in round numbers) of the national population – not an exactly common surname and thus one incredibly easy to research.

The records for the RND are held by the National Archives of the UK, and those records tell us that seven men with the surname Lowes served with the division:

No Number	No Rank	Clarence	Lowes
Z/9140	Ordinary Seaman	James	Lowes
Z/2111	No Rank	John	Lowes
Z/2252	Able Seaman	John	Lowes
Z/2410	Able Seaman	Mark	Lowes
Z/1391	Able Seaman	Matthew	Lowes
Z/64	Able Seaman	William	Lowes

That's it – the UK Archives do not hold a record for anyone else with the surname Lowes who served with the Royal Naval Division. As only one of these has a given name that lends itself to the diminutive 'Billy', and since that man came from South Shields, I think it's a pretty safe bet that this man, T/Z64 AB W. Lowes, RNVR, is Simpson's supposed boyhood chum 'Billy' Lowes. Furthermore:

- Clarence Lowes was born in 1870, which made him far too old to have been a childhood friend of Simpson's, and in addition he was not mobilized until 12 June 1917 and was discharged a month later, as being 'mentally deficient', without ever leaving the UK;
- Z/9140 James Lowes did not enlist until January 1916 and was discharged underage two months later, again without ever leaving the UK;
- Z/2111 John Lowes was from Carlisle, enlisted into the RND on 28 November 1914 but was discharged on 13 January 1915 to enlist in the Royal Marines;
- Z/2252 AB John Lowes came from Newcastle-on-Tyne, was born in 1896, which made him four years younger than Simpson and highly unlikely to have been a close boyhood chum (even if they had lived in the same town) and served with Benbow and Howe Battalions of the RND, not Nelson;
- Z/2410 Mark Lowes, a miner from Urpeth near Birtley in Durham and a veteran of the Durham Light Infantry, enlisted into the RND on 28 December 1914 but was released from the division in May 1915 in Portsmouth for sea service; and finally,
- Z/1391 Matthew Lowes, a miner from Wrekenton, County Durham, served at Gallipoli with Hawke Battalion of the RND, was evacuated from Gallipoli on 14 October 1915 suffering from jaundice, and went on to serve in France where he was admitted to the 3rd Canadian Stationary Hospital severely wounded on 6 April 1918, dying the next day and is buried in the Doullens Communal Extension Commonwealth War Graves Commission Cemetery.[7]

---

6 UKTNA ADM/339/1/0/8076, ibid.

7 See UKTNA ADM/339/1/0/8070 Tyndeside (no number) Clarence Lowes; ADM/339/1/0/8071 Tyneside Z/9140 Ordinary Seaman James Lowes; ADM/339/1/0/8072 Tyneside Z/2111 Able Seaman

TZ/64 AB William Lowes, a man who was never wounded, is the 'Billy' Lowes of the myth. The chances of another person with the surname 'Lowes' having served with the RND, perhaps one that I have missed and who might be the 'Billy' Lowes of the myth, is so remote, approaching on impossible, as to ensure that the gap between improbable and impossible is so narrow as to be invisible. Why do I say this? Simple demographics - the last national census conducted in the UK prior to the outbreak of the war was carried out in 1911. At this census, which accounted for every person in the UK, including ships at sea and British military forces serving overseas on census day, it is recorded that a total of just 2525 people, from centenarians living their last moments on earth to new born babes in arms, lived in the UK on that day who had the surname 'Lowes'.8 This out of a population of 42,082,000.9 People with the surname 'Lowes' thus represented, as I have noted above, 0.006% of the UK population. In 1915, the British Army had expanded to 70 infantry divisions (including the RND, which must be counted as it was employed as a front line army formation), each with an establishment strength of 18,000, giving a total of 1,260,000, and this without taking into account all of the other formations and units that were fighting the war. Bearing in mind that the male to female ratio of the 2525 people with the surname 'Lowes' at the 1911 census was roughly 50/50, then about 1,263 males are represented. Of these, about 30%, or 379 in round numbers, would have been available for military service. That number of men, 379, divided into 1,260,000 (for infantry divisions alone) gives a number that is a fraction of 1% so low as to not even be worth recording. The surprising thing then is not that more men with the surname 'Lowes' did not serve with the RND, but that in fact so many of them actually did.

Assuming that the 'Billy' Lowes of the myth is TZ/64 Able Seaman William Lowes then there is another issue that the 1911 census brings up. This is the probability that 'Billy' Lowes was never in fact a childhood chum of Simpson. The UK Census for 1911 tells us that Billy Lowes, son of Christopher and Jane Lowes of 7 John Williamson Street, South Shields, was 22 years of age on the night of 2 April 1911. This means, simply put, that Billy Lowes had been born sometime between 3 April 1889 and 3 April 1890. Simpson was born on 6 July 1892, meaning that Billy Lowes was a minimum of two years and three months older than Simpson, almost certainly older than that, as the census that preceded the 1911 Census, the 1901 Census, lists Billy Lowes (then living at 290 John Williamson Street) as being 12 years old, while Simpson (then living at 141 South Frederick Street) is listed as 8 years old.10 From my own memories, and I am sure from the memories of most readers, until they reach their late teens or early twenties, people rarely, if ever, make friends outside their own age group. There can be little doubt that Lowes probably at least knew of the Kirkpatrick family, and thus their son John, as John Williamson Street and South Frederick Street are just one street apart. Nevertheless, I doubt very, very much if Lowes and Simpson were close childhood friends.

Who is responsible for this long-lived myth. While it is possible that Lowes told Benson the story, it is just as possible that Benson embroidered the tale Lowes recounted to him.

John Lowes; ADM/339/1/0/8073 Tyneside Z/2252 Able Seaman John Lowes; ADM/339/1/0/8074 Tyneside Z/24410 Able Seaman Mark Lowes; and ADM/339/1/0/8075 Tyneside Z/1391 Able Seaman Matthew Lowes.

8 '1911 census.co.uk', www.1911census.co.uk.

9 Ibid.

10 'The UK 1901 Census', http://www.1901ukcensus.com

THE MAN IN THE BATH: the tragic story of Trooper Samuel Rolfe

Peter Hopper

On 12 January 1916, Samuel Earl Rolfe (1237) enlisted in the AIF at Inverell in northern New South Wales. He was nearly 26 years old at the time, single, living with his parents on their family property, Woodall, at Cherry Tree Hill.[1] It would appear he was encouraged to enlist as a result of a state wide recruiting campaign. In Inverell, the group involved in recruiting was *The Kurrajongs*, taking the name of the hardy evergreen Australian tree. Those who enlisted joined a march that headed towards Sydney. Along the way additional recruits joined the contingent. There were ten such marches in NSW. *The Kurrajongs* march, however, was actually a train journey. It left Inverell on 12 January 1916 and stopped at Warialda and Moree. There were 114 men in the initial group. By the time they reached Narrabri they numbered 150.[2] Most of the men, including Samuel, enlisted in the 33rd Battalion, AIF that was being raised at Armidale.

right - Trooper Samuel Earl Rolfe

Samuel had two younger brothers who also enlisted in the AIF. His youngest brother, Francis Lawrence Rolfe (3587), had enlisted four months earlier than Samuel. He was 20 years old when he enlisted as a single farm labourer. He did his initial training at Casula and embarked for overseas with the 18th Battalion on 20 December 1915.[3] This was the same day that Samuel began attempting to enlist in Inverell. The youngest of the three brothers was therefore the first to join the AIF.

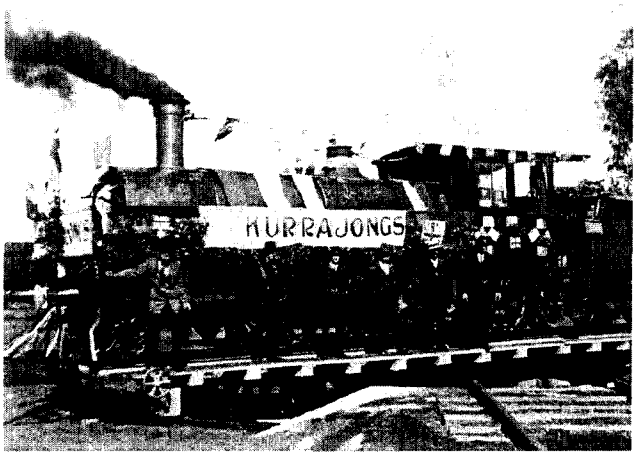
The other brother, Clarence Rolber Rolfe (6127), was 23 years old when he enlisted on 10 January 1916, two days earlier than Samuel. It is almost certain, therefore, that he was with Samuel on same train with *The Kurrajongs*. However, he didn't last long before he was discharged as medically unfit at the Armidale AIF Camp on 8 March. This was possibly due to bronchitis that had affected him previously. He would have been devastated by this but it may have determined his resolve to try again once his health had improved. Indeed, five months later he passed a medical examination in Sydney and enlisted in the AIF on 17 August 1916.[4] By then both Francis and Samuel were in France.

Samuel had embarked from Australia with D Company, 33rd Battalion on HMAT *Marathon* on 4 May 1916. He disembarked at Devonport in the UK on 9 July 1916 and moved to France as a private on 16 September 1916 to join the 3rd Battalion. Twelve days later he was sent into the front lines around Ypres in Belgium. He served there for the next two months before being admitted to 9th General Hospital at Rouen with Trench Fever. This was a disease that affected thousands of soldiers from all armies during the war. Its symptoms were headaches, skin rashes,

---

1 See service records for Samuel at National Archives of Australia website.
2 See http://www.thekurrajongs.com.au/aboutthebook.htm
3 See service records of Francis at National Archives of Australia website.
4 See service records for Clarence at National Archives of Australia website.

inflamed eyes and leg pains. It was caused by the excretions from lice and was transmitted via the bites of body lice.5 Recovery was generally quite rapid but in Samuel's case he required hospitalization for several months. He complained of pains in his back and on his skin. This was the first of many such hospital visits for Samuel throughout the war. It also highlighted problems he was to have with his skin in the years to follow.



The Kurrajongs get ready to depart Inverell, 1916.

Samuel was sent back to the UK on HS *Lanfranc* on 8 November 1916 due to his poor health. From here he was admitted to the Duchess of Connaught Canadian Red Cross Hospital for observation. Further hospital movements followed, first to the 1st Auxiliary Hospital on 11 December. However, by Christmas 1916 he had recovered his health and was granted furlough (leave) for 2 weeks on 3 January 1917.

By this time Samuel's two other brothers had also had their share of problems. Clarence had been in trouble aboard the troopship HMAT *Ascanius* that was bringing him to Devonport. He was charged with a Crime at Sea for Disobedience of Orders on 16 December 1916, and was awarded 48 hours detention for this offence. While in the UK with the 5th Training Battalion he then sustained a foot injury that was to plague him for the remainder of the war.

Francis, the youngest brother, had also been very sick. During 1916 he had his tonsils removed in May 1916. In September he was then sent back to the UK from France suffering from erysipelas cellulitis on his right arm. This was a bacterial infection affecting the most superficial layers of the skin.6 To make matters worse for the family, Samuel's father, Josiah, lost two fingers on his right hand in an accident on the farm in October 1916. Let us now return to Samuel. On 17 April 1917, he was transferred to the 61st Battalion which was part of the 6th Division forming in England. When the 6th Division was disbanded he was transferred to the 18th Battalion which he joined in France in November. He remained with this unit for the rest of the war. It was the fourth unit he had served with.

1917 proved to be yet another bad year for the Rolfe family. The youngest brother, Francis, contracted pneumonia in April and then measles in September, finishing up in the Military Hospital in Wareham. In May, Clarence was accidentally wounded in France by an exploding

5 http://www.firstworldwar.com/atoz/trenchfever.htm
6 http://www.hpathy.com/diseases/erysipelas-symptoms-treatment.asp

bomb. He was not to blame for the incident but he sustained wounds to his left side and right thigh. To add to his discomfort he sprained his ankle in December.

It is quite remarkable how the three brothers survived 1918 and returned home safely after the war. For instance, while Samuel was recovering from Trench Fever he was hospitalized once again in January 1918 in Belgium with haemorrhoids (piles). On 29 May, he then received his worst injury after being badly wounded in the trenches in France near Morlancourt as a result of an attack of mustard gas launched by the Germans. He was taken to a hospital in Etaples, on the coast, south of Boulogne. Unfortunately it was bombed by the Germans resulting in 300 casualties.7 The ward adjoining to the one in which Samuel was lying was blown to pieces.8 Remarkably he was unscathed and was sent back to the UK once again on 4 June. This time he went to Graylingwell War Hospital, Chichester with other gassed cases. He complained of being short of breath, coughing and running a high temperature. A few weeks later his father was notified of his condition.

At the same time that Samuel was gassed, Francis received a gunshot wound to his left arm while in the trenches in France. He was invalided to England on 23 May and sent back to Australia on 6 November 1918, five days before the Armistice was signed. Clarence never fully recovered from the bombing incident and was also sent back to Australia. He was the first of the Rolfe brothers to arrive home on 9 October 1918 and was discharged as medically unfit on 1 November 1918.

Meanwhile Samuel was still in the UK recovering from the gassing episode. In August 1918, he spent some time in hospital with herpes reputialis and in December he was back in hospital for a further 38 days recovering from VD (gonorrhoea). By this time he must have given up counting the number of hospitals he had been admitted to since arriving in the UK in July 1916. Samuel eventually arrived back in Australia aboard HMAT *Karmala* on 15 February 1919. He was the last of the Rolfe brothers to return home. On 19 April 1919, he was discharged as medically unfit. It must have been a great relief to the family to have the three brothers back home once again, despite their war injuries.

Samuel returned to the family farm in 1919 and it appeared that he was fully recovered from the effects of the gas poisoning. However, in 1920 ghastly developments began to manifest themselves regarding his skin. It was beginning to peel off in places. As a result, on 10 February 1920 he was admitted to the Prince of Wales Hospital in Randwick, Sydney, for treatment. Medical experts were called in to devise ways to stop his condition from deteriorating. Despite this his skin continued to peel off and every movement he made caused him great pain. In the end they decided to place him in a bath of tepid olive oil to ease the pain. Later Dr Chisholm Ross invented and had made a bed in a water bath on which Samuel was placed. The water was heated by a gas jet, the temperature of which Samuel himself was able to adjust to suit his own comfort.9 He remained in this bath for the next four years before passing away on 8 December 1924. He was known as "The Man in the Bath" by the hospital staff at Randwick. This title then transferred to the broader community.

Throughout his ordeal Samuel had shown remarkable fortitude. He surprised visitors to his bedside with his bright and cheerful nature. He would laugh and chat with friends as if his experience was nothing out of the ordinary. The Reverend Peter Smith who gave an address at Samuel's graveside said that he had visited Samuel in hospital and always found him astonishingly cheerful.

---

7 *The Age*, "Bombs on Hospital", 30 May 1918.
8 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 December 1924.
9 *Inverell Times*, 6 January 1965.

His body was transferred from Sydney to Inverell for the funeral and burial on 10 December 1924. At the Inverell Railway Station a crowd of several hundred assembled to pay their last respects. The hearse then moved to the Methodist cemetery where a graveside service was conducted by representatives of the Methodist, Church of England, and Presbyterian churches. His father, Josiah, and his two brothers, Francis and Clarence, who had also fought in the First World War were at his graveside during the funeral.

The funeral for "The Man in the Bath" was widely reported throughout Australia. All the leading papers carried the news of his demise, reflecting a genuine sense of grief.[10] This was mixed with a sense of relief knowing that he would not have to suffer any more. The Reverend Peter Smith likened Trooper Rolfe to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in that he had focussed on himself the suffering of many, and was a vivid reminder of the price of victory.[11] To others his death highlighted the horrific impact science had made on the battlefield with the use of poisonous gas.

Mustard Gas is an alkylating agent, meaning, its chemicals destroy DNA and cells and liquefy tissue i.e. it kills tissue and membranes. It attacks many different parts of the body but in Samuel's case it was its impact on his skin that was of paramount importance. After impact the skin turns an itchy redness that is replaced with yellow blisters.[12] These blisters eventually remove the outer layers of the skin. Samuel may also have contracted a bacterial infection while back on the family farm in 1919. This, combined with the effects of mustard gas on his skin, developed into a shocking condition that was incurable at the time. He had amazed doctors at the time who found it hard to believe that he could survive for so long with such a widespread loss of skin.

Samuel's name, together with all the other young men from the district around Inverell who enlisted in the Great War, is kept alive by a Kurrajong memorial comprising trees that were planted in the 1920s for each local man who lost his life in the Great War whether they were part of *The Kurrajongs* recruiting march or not. These trees line Glen Innes Road in Inverell.[13] A historian, Ian Small, has also written a historical fictional account called *The Kurrajongs*, outlining the story of ten of the original Kurrajongs.[14] In the book Trooper Samuel Rolfe goes by the name of Archie Moon. The story of Samuel has also been captured by Naomi Burley, a singer-songwriter from Inverell. Samuel is her great-great uncle. In 2005, she produced a single dedicated to his exploits.[15] Clearly his story has captured the imagination of many people since his death in 1924. His story needs to be told to Australians today and the people of Inverell must be commended for their efforts to keep alive the story of this remarkable Australian.

--oOo--

10 *The Argus*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, *West Australian*, *The Age*
11 *Inverell Times*, 12 February 1924.
12 http://science.howstuffworks.com/mustard-gas3.htm
13 http://users.nsw.chariot.net.au/_familyhistory/the kurrajongs.htm
14 Small, Ian. *The Kurrajongs*, Asquith, 2007.
15 *Inverell Times*, 3 May 2005.

THE USE OF ULTRA BY COMMANDERS

Keith Richmond

Special intelligence arising from the interception and decoding of enemy radio communications by the Allies during World War II was known by many names but eventually came to be called Ultra. The term was given by the British from 1940 for the decoding of German and some Italian signals (from the German Enigma device), while in the Pacific the term Ultra (from the Japanese Purple device) did not gather currency until March 1944. For the most part we leave aside the valuable contribution made by the reading of diplomatic codes that went under the name of Magic.[1]

This paper seeks to arrive at some understanding on the extent to which various Allied land commanders in the West both used the information derived from Ultra intercepts, and acknowledged this contribution. (Ultra decrypts issued to the commanders were destroyed after reading so there is no paper trail.) Under the fastidious care of FW Winterbotham from MI-6, a system was devised so as to distribute Ultra to selected commanders via Special Liaison units: many senior officers had no clue as to the existence of Ultra until years after the war ended.[2]

As Ultra did not gain any public acknowledgement until the 1970s and a more widespread awareness until possibly 1980, the revealed view of our greatest commanders and politicians of the day as published in their memoirs post-war was nil – Eisenhower, Churchill, Mark Clark, Slim, Eichelberger, Bradley[3], Montgomery and the rest who penned works (including Morison's series on the US Navy and most official war histories) were necessarily mute on the topic. Books written about the commanders since the 1980s sometimes contain approving references to the use of Ultra.[4]

Background

Acceptance of Ultra as a major intelligence source took some time. Not only did the codes have to be read but commanders had to be indoctrinated into its use and a culture of reading the enemy's mail had to become established. To begin, Ultra was but one of a series of intelligence sources. It played little part in the war in the early years (so commanders such as Wavell received little information from Ultra) and it took some time before it emerged as a genuine intelligence force, with significant differences in the various theatres. It was not until about mid-1942 that the quantity of codes being broken and the quality of the decrypts allowed Ultra to be considered a timely and reliable adjunct to battlefield considerations. Then Ultra became sufficiently regarded so that it was considered desirable to be distributed across a limited number of battlefronts. The number of codes to be tackled was enormous – around 50 Japanese codes and nearly 200 Enigma variations alone, covering the different services as in air, naval and army plus submarine, diplomatic, railway, weather and shipping information, to name some.[5] Equally, it took

---

1 Edward Drea, *MacArthur's Ultra: Codebreaking and the War Against Japan, 1942-1945*, University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, 1992, page xi. Note that the use of the term Ultra by authors is not universal, with some using the term special intelligence and others using sigint – see for example, Michael Howard, *Strategic Deception in the Second World War*, Pimlico, London, 1992, footnote at page 13. Also, there is much written over the distinction between codes and ciphers but for the purposes of this paper the more common term code is used.

2 See FW Winterbotham, *The Ultra Secret*, Futura Publications, London, 1975, Chapter 3 for a discussion on the Special Liaison Units

3 Bradley wrote his memoirs, *A Soldier's Story*, in 1951, but collaborated on a later book published in 1983, *A General's Life*, where he made some comments on Ultra

4 Not always – Carlo D'Este, *Decision in Normandy: The Unwritten Story of Montgomery and the Allied Campaign*, Penguin Books, London, 2001, page 122 says that the Ultra material received at the time of the Normandy landings was "low-level and fragmentary" and jokingly referred to as "BBR – Burn Before Reading"

5 Ralph Bennett, "Ultra - UK", in ICB Dear (ed) *The Oxford Companion to the Second World War*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995, page 1165

time for the commanders to accept the reliability of that information provided and to make decisions with confidence. In the Pacific with its competing and volatile personalities, collection and distribution of Ultra was not a simple operation. But MacArthur and naval commanders certainly saw Ultra arising from Japanese naval sources from 1942 while in the 1943-44 period they were able to receive Ultra emanating from army sources in some quantity. It appears that solely in Europe, the final step in the process evolved gradually as Ultra became to be seen as infallible with unwary intelligence officers paying little attention to other intelligence sources.

But the secret to Ultra lay in the sheer persistence of very gifted people in units devoted to code-breaking including Bletchley Park, Arlington Hall and Australia's Central Bureau. Messages arrived from intercepts at the rate of hundreds per day. Many messages were never intercepted, and of course many messages were sent in a form that defied interception. The methods used to unravel the coded messages were as varied as the different codes themselves, and depended on the circumstances. Certainly the key in many breakthroughs came through the laziness of those transmitting the messages who incorrectly used old codes or repeated easily translatable phrases. Some messages were able to be decrypted using linguists, some were assisted by the use of traffic analysis, some were decrypted by the use of an analog device that mirrored the Japanese Purple machine, while some were broken through detection of common phrasing using electro-mechanical devices or bombes linked with primitive computers. Some signals were able to be read in their entirety while in many cases there were sections that had to be left unread. At times messages could be solved within a few hours but given the sheer volume, many were consigned to the increasing piles of messages that were simply too hard to resolve. Thus at the time of the Coral Sea battle, only about 12-15% of messages were being decrypted.6 Later when some breakthrough was made such as the finding of enemy code books, these same messages were again subjected to analysis, sometimes supplying useful information albeit weeks or months after their original transmission. Of course some material defied decryption throughout but eventually most coded Axis messages were sufficiently broken down so as to reveal some if not all of their content.

The Axis partners, especially the Germans and Japanese, became were too complacent and believed their ciphers defied decryption. This meant they failed to analyse why they were being out-guessed on the battlefield, often assuming that it was bad luck. So for the most part they simply kept changing codes and ramping up the level of difficulty needed to crack them. By that time, the Allied code-breakers were at such a level of understanding that any changes usually only caused limited setbacks. It must be stressed, however, that Enigma and Purple were always formidable and were only beaten through an incredible level of persistence from some rare and talented code-breakers.7 Of course the Axis partners spent a great deal of time on trying to crack Allied codes too and had a fair amount of success especially in lower level information, but they could not achieve the same and unremitting access to messages as enjoyed by the Allies (Soviet material was considered hard to crack).8 Certainly the Sigaba and Typex machines as used by the Allies defied decryption.

Ultra was used in every theatre where Allied forces other than the Soviets were in command and was of the utmost importance in providing an insight into the views of 'the other side'.9 While debate may rage

---

6 Waldo Heinrichs, "Ultra - US", in *The Oxford Companion*, ibid, page 1172

7 While many books provide the layman with some idea of the difficulty of the code-breaking process, Hugh Sebag-Montefiore, *Enigma: The Battle for the Code*, Phoenix, London, 2000, spells out the challenges well.

8 Ken Kotani, *Japanese Intelligence in World War II*, Osprey, Oxford, 2009, page 5, says that the Japanese were able to break the "UK, US, Soviet, Chinese and French diplomatic ciphers in addition to several Allied military ciphers before the Pacific War" with the latter ciphers being largely those such as weather and aircraft codes. Note also that the Finns and the Japanese broke a number of the Soviet codes particularly the Air Force four and five digit codes, merchant ship, diplomatic and other versions – pages 22-25

9 The extent to which the Soviets had access to Ultra decrypts is not known with any certainty. We need to remember the privileged positions held by the well-entrenched spies such as Philby who passed on

over the impact Ultra had on the war and its level of success, certainly some claimed that Ultra's insights shortened the war by years. Winston Churchill was an inveterate reader of Ultra decrypts ("this precious secret of Ultra"10) and said in a post-war meeting with King George VI and Stewart Menzies of MI-6 that "it was thanks to Ultra that we won the war".11 Similarly General Eisenhower declared in a letter to Menzies in July 1945, "The intelligence which has emanated from you ... has been of priceless value to me ... It has saved thousands of British and American lives and, in no small way, contributed to the speed with which the enemy was routed and eventually forced to surrender".12 (On the other hand, Franklin Roosevelt was constantly frustrated by Ultra and wanted to insert spies into Japan.13)

Commanders and Ultra

But enthusiasm for Ultra by commanders other than Eisenhower was much more circumspect. Ultra decrypts were relayed directly to Churchill and Roosevelt, so every judgement the generals made was able to be assessed very clearly by a politician far away from the rigours of battle conditions. Churchill was quick to advise his commanders of their best course of action, criticising Auchinleck's, Wavell's and Montgomery's tactics in the desert campaign, 14 and once remarked caustically of Admiral Cunningham, "I wish I knew what he did when he received these messages".15 Some generals including Mark Clark, MacArthur and Montgomery, were conscious that any revelation of Ultra would undermine their inflated sense of importance and they hated to be judged on every decision by someone looking over their shoulder. So they were quick to distance themselves from Ultra and declare it only one aspect of intelligence among many. To the commanders in the field therefore, Ultra could represent a cross as well as salvation.

Yet even with commanders who were reluctant to admit to any reliance on Ultra we can still appreciate a willingness to consume Ultra by the actions of their intelligence staff. That is, while a commander might dismiss publicly the usefulness of Ultra, he was probably briefed on a daily basis by Ultra specialists, and his intelligence staff was also aware of the outcome of these briefings and incorporated the information in battlefield decision-making. All this is clearly a subject for some very deft analysis – it is likely that it is beyond our capacity today to make a clear decision as to whether a general actually used Ultra, especially if he refused to admit it. What we are forced to fall back on is often second-hand comments about commanders by those who worked closely with them.

On this theme, Ralph Bennett makes the point that "no statesman and no general is ever likely to take an important decision solely in the light of intelligence about the enemy" 16 while John Keegan says that "Foreknowledge is no protection against disaster. Even real-time intelligence is never real enough. Only

---

whatever secrets he had, and that some information was passed on to Stalin with the sanction of Allied leaders.

10 John Winton, *Ultra at Sea*, Leo Cooper, London, 1988, page 1

11 Desmond Ball and David Horner, *Breaking the Codes: Australia's KGB Network, 1944-1950*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1998, page 3

12 Winterbotham, *The Ultra Secret*, op cit, page 18.

13 Christopher Andrew, *For the President's Eyes Only: Secret Intelligence and the American Presidency from Washington to Bush*, HarperCollins, New York, 1995, page 139

14 Ralph Bennett, *Ultra and Mediterranean Strategy*, William Morrow and Co, New York, 1989, pages 103, 178 and 415-416; Winterbotham, *The Ultra Secret*, op cit, page 93; and Ronald Lewin, *Ultra Goes to War: The Secret Story*, Hutchinson, London, 1978, page 167 which says of Auchinleck that Churchill "was using Ultra in his favourite way – as a means of urging on his commanders with unimpeachable evidence"

15 Winton, *Ultra at Sea*, op cit, page 182

16 Bennett, *Ultra and Mediterranean Strategy*, op cit, pages 354-355

force finally counts".17 And Admiral Layton said after the near-run victory at Midway, "radio intelligence, which had provided us with the key to victory, could just as easily have been our undoing".18

Another well known writer on intelligence matters, FH Hinsley, said that "there is practically no record of how and to what extent intelligence influenced the individual decisions of the operational commands. It has usually been possible to construct what intelligence they had at their disposal at any time. What they made of it under operational conditions, and the circumstances in which it was inevitably incomplete, is on all but a few occasions a matter for surmise...."19 This "matter for surmise" is in effect, the focus of this article.

To really be sure of the use of Ultra one would need to know that the information was received in good time, that the knowledge was obtained in an unfettered form so that it was clearly understood, that the information was provided to the commander and from him passed to his planning staff, that a decision to act was made because of the Ultra knowledge, that a plan was made and implemented, that the result was achieved and later the general and possibly the intelligence chief acknowledged the source of the information to be Ultra. Achieving this chain of events is almost to defy logic. It completely underestimates the challenges of any battleground decision conducted in the fog of war. And as Bennett points out, it is important to know the actual sequence of events as well as the weighting of each item of intelligence and the reason why decisions were made at every point in the sequence – all of which makes for an unlikely scenario.20

On the positive side, a few books have been written to assist in making any assessment. The best known are the impressive *Ultra in the West* by Ralph Bennett along with his work in a different style, *Ultra and Mediterranean Strategy*, while for the Pacific War, Edward Drea's *MacArthur's Ultra* is a fine example of examining battleground decision-making. Two other works, John Winton's *Ultra at Sea* and *Ultra in the Pacific*, also add to our understanding of when Ultra decrypts were received during naval battles in the Atlantic, Pacific and Mediterranean.21 A number of articles have been written by Harold Deutsch, and these try to unravel some of the questions posed in this paper.

So these and similar sources, (or alternatively, a review of the actual Ultra signals), can instruct what message was sent and when it was received by the various commanders. And yet, even if the information was received, in most cases we are unsure whether they acted on this information. But we need to remember that we are not dealing with a blank tablet – the commander has an appreciation of the battle and intuitively understands what should be done, even if he knows it cannot be realised. There is a description applied to General Alexander that might well apply to many other commanders. Alexander readily read and appreciated Ultra: it is said "that it sharpened his instinctive 'feel' for the battle and, by frequently knowing the orders under which his opposite number ... was operating, enabled him to turn to even greater advantage [his] insight into the [enemy] military mind ..."22

Ultra was responsible for providing some very significant information. Possibly the most outstanding events in the Pacific war to gain from Ultra information were the battles of Midway, the Coral Sea, the

---

17 John Keegan, *Intelligence in War: Knowledge of the Enemy from Napoleon to Al-Qaeda*, Hutchinson, London, 2003, page 399

18 Bennett, *Ultra and Mediterranean Strategy*, op cit, page 364

19 FH Hinsley, *British Intelligence in the Second World War: Its Influence on Strategy and Operations*, Volume 1, HMSO, London, 1979, page x

20 See Bennett, *Ultra and Mediterranean Strategy*, op cit, page 356. A good general discussion on how Ultra was used and the extent to which commanders depended on it is to be found in Bennett's book at Chapter 12, and this article is indebted to Bennett's assessment.

21 See John Winton, *Ultra in the Pacific: How Breaking Japanese Codes and Cyphers Affected Naval Operations Against Japan*, Leo Cooper, London, 1993 and Ralph Bennett, *Ultra in the West: The Normandy Campaign 1944-45*, Scribners, New York, 1980

22 Bennett, *Ultra and Mediterranean Strategy*, op cit, page 361

leapfrogging of MacArthur to Hollandia[23], and the battle of the Bismarck Sea. In Europe we might include the attack on Crete, Rommel's attack on Alam Halfa, and the Mortain offensive in August 1944. There was also weather information, knowledge about the air war and especially, the battle against German and Japanese submarines. In addition, as Deutsch points out, major victories in the discovery of Knickbein and the battle of the beams, all stemmed from the correct reading of an Ultra intercept and countermeasures implemented by Dr RV Jones.[24]

The key to Ultra rested not so much in items of tactical importance because of the lead time in making the necessary decrypts, but rather in providing cumulative information that allowed strategic initiatives to be formulated. One is impressed when reading through the works by Bennett and Drea in particular, of the plethora of fragments of information that came to light on every possible topic, all of which could be used to form a picture of the enemy. Such items included tank dispositions, locations of enemy merchant vessels, knowledge of the damage wrought by the Allied air offensive, enemy supply difficulties and so on. Ultra failed the commanders at times such as when radio silence was observed or the necessary signals were not detected (the attack on Pearl Harbour, the battle of the Bulge) or when insufficient signals were intercepted and a full picture was not able to be determined (Kasserine Pass[25]). Equally, Ultra provided information which was rejected (to take some examples, thrice by Mark Clark, at Anzio, after the fall of Cassino, and north of Rome, and by Montgomery in his failure to demolish Rommel's Panzers in the desert in late 1942, the decision not to take the Scheldt estuary and the decision not to believe that German armour was present at Arnhem).[26]

Each example indicates that intelligence is useless in isolation - a commander might take the risk as MacArthur did at Hollandia, and sometimes the commander decided that despite the intelligence there were other factors at play and hence caution was required, as Montgomery did on occasions in the desert. Similarly, if an intelligence analyst took the Ultra decrypts and drew incorrect conclusions from them as Charles Willoughby did frequently, then Ultra was of little value.

A continuing problem with Ultra was that the enemy had to be prevented from thinking that his signals were being read[27] – there had to be some form of cover so attacks on enemy convoys could only happen if a spotter aircraft happened to be in the vicinity, for example. This fear of Ultra being exposed led to some significant disasters when it was impossible to offer a believable stratagem – some conspiracy theorists claim the bombing of Coventry and the attack on Pearl Harbour fall into this category.[28] A few substantiated examples are Bernard Freyberg's defence of Crete when serious losses were inflicted on positions despite Freyberg knowing where the attack would come, [29] knowledge of an air attack on Cairo

---

23 Drea, *MacArthur's Ultra*, op cit, page 144, quotes from a report that says "never has a commander gone into battle knowing so much about the enemy as did the Allied commander at Aitape on 10-11 July 1944".

24 Harold Deutsch, 'The Influence of Ultra on World War II', *Parameters, The Journal of the US Army War College*, Vol VIII, No 4, 1978, pages 12 and 13

25 Stephen Ambrose, *Ike's Spies: Eisenhower and the Espionage Establishment*, University Press of Mississippi, Jackson, 1981, page 61

26 See Edward van der Rhoer, *Deadly Magic: A Personal Account of Communications Intelligence in World War II in the Pacific*, Scribners, New York, 1978, page 186 which cites examples of admirals rejecting Ultra. Also see Edwin Layton, *And I Was There: Pearl Harbour and Midway – Breaking the Secrets*, William Morrow, New York, 1985, page 115 for more examples of mistakes over the handling of Ultra.

27 See Ronald Lewin, *The Other Ultra: Codes, Ciphers and the Defeat of Japan*, Hutchinson, London, 1982, pages 266 and 270 for some egregious errors

28 Lewin, *The Other Ultra*, ibid, page 50 for the Pearl Harbour case. For Coventry, see Peter Colvocoressi, *Top Secret Ultra*, Cassell, London, 1980, pages 75-76 and Hinsley, *British Intelligence in the Second World War*, Volume 1, op cit, Appendix 9

29 Critics have examined this episode from all angles although it seems to be agreed that Freyberg misread the Ultra evidence and failed to position his forces adequately

that could not be advised to the general public, 30 and General Gavin's paratroopers dropping in Sicily without adequate anti-tank weapons that Ultra revealed would be needed.31

How Much Did the Commanders use Ultra? A Review of Sources

Sadly we have little information on the way that commanders used Ultra so we are forced to assess some odd scraps of material relating to a few of the better known men.

Winterbotham is perhaps the most appropriate albeit self-interested source as he was responsible for the distribution of Ultra. He conveyed Ultra directly to the commanders and sought their comments on whether the receipt of Ultra messages could be improved. Montgomery was irked by the realisation that Churchill and the Chiefs of Staff had access to the same material, and demanded that he be the only recipient – this was refused by Churchill himself. From that time onward Montgomery remained distant from any association with Ultra. (However, Brigadier Williams as Montgomery's head of intelligence, was an avid consumer so the material was fed through to Montgomery regardless.) Alexander, on the other hand, relished Ultra, saying that it "brought a new dimension into the prosecution of the war" and he frequently quizzed Winterbotham for any further morsels that might be added to the mix; according to Winterbotham, "Alexander was a supreme user of Ultra". When Winterbotham briefed Mark Clark on Ultra, Clark showed no interest and soon walked out of the briefing. (It is said that Clark grew to believe in Ultra only after the revelation of Kesselring's planned counter-attack at Anzio.32 Later, he said he dug in at Anzio and supported the inaction of General Lucas in taking the Alban Hills because of Ultra decrypts, although this was shown to be nonsensical by some later scholars.33) Another to show no initial interest in being briefed was Patton who said that such matters were for his intelligence staff – "You see, I just like fighting". However, Patton was an avid user of Ultra despite his brave words to the contrary. Tooey Spaatz and his team were most enthusiastic and in the North African campaign, "they made maximum use of it".34 Other keen supporters were Louis Mountbatten, Miles Dempsey, Bill Slim, Arthur Tedder, General Kenneth Anderson and Air Marshal William Welsh, while Lord Gort was most grateful for the limited assistance Ultra had provided in the dark days of the campaign in France prior to Dunkirk. The US Air Force was seen as one of "the most practical users of Ultra". Monk Dickson, intelligence chief to Bradley, said to Winterbotham that "never did I expect to get such concise information about my opponents.." According to Winterbotham, the supreme triumph of Ultra in Europe was the "trapping of the German armies in Normandy at Falaise".35

We find some substantiation of the use of Ultra in papers written by Harold Deutsch from the 1970s. He considered that Wavell welcomed intelligence, but was not in a position to benefit much from Ultra; Auchinleck demonstrated "a mastery of the use of intelligence in the operational sphere" in the First Battle of Alamein; Montgomery arrived in the desert at the time when intelligence gathering was reaching a peak with the use of Ultra and the demise of Rommel's intelligence operations36 but Montgomery's attitude to Ultra "betokened a certain distrust that at times verged on hostility" – Deutsch also described Montgomery as "positively stand-offish" to this intelligence source. Not only did he want to have Ultra all to himself but

---

30 Lewin, *Ultra Goes to War*, op cit, page 144
31 Ambrose, *Ike's Spies*, op cit, page 64
32 Bennett, *Ultra and Mediterranean Strategy*, op cit, page 362
33 Deutsch, 'The Influence of Ultra on World War II', op cit, page 8
34 Also see Lewin, *Ultra Goes to War*, op cit, page 151 which has a nice commendation on Ultra from Spaatz
35 Winterbotham, *The Ultra Secret*, op cit, passim. Note that D'Este, *Decision in Normandy*, op cit, page 416, believes that Winterbotham is incorrect in some of his judgements made from memory, and the comments about the Mortain attack rank among these mistakes. Also see Bennett, *Ultra in the West*, op cit, page 119
36 For a review see Anthony Cave Brown, *Bodyguard of Lies*, Star Books, London, 1977, Chapter 5, Alam Halfa, which looks at Ultra, the demise of Seebohm's listening unit, and the saga of the Kondor spying mission in Cairo

he forced the Special Liaison Officers to set up camp half a mile from Montgomery's caravan – although Deutsch believes that this may have been because Montgomery felt the SLUs were spying on him. He did not use Ultra well, even in the Battle of Second Alamein where sigint picked up the conversations of the German tank commanders, and hence the victory came at a higher price than it might. Alexander was very keen on Ultra and used it wisely although he did misread it at Anzio; Clark was concerned that others think that he had some assistance in his decisions so he did not welcome Ultra and seems to have used it wrongly on numerous occasions (such as at Salerno, Anzio, and in Operation Diadem where Clark missed opportunities to trap German troops). However, by 1980 Clark admitted in a letter that he "sought" out Ultra and "anyone who did not accept it would have been crazy, for it was like reading the enemy's mail." He went on to say "When we were in trouble at Anzio the intercepts helped us tremendously."[37] Eisenhower embraced Ultra warmly; Bradley was cautious in its use, applying it "somewhat gingerly" although his victory at Mortain was due to Ultra; while Patton "ranks among the most enthusiastic and successful users of intelligence among the Allied leaders". In an earlier paper, Deutsch wrote on MacArthur saying that he belonged in the Clark and Montgomery school of refusing to acknowledge Ultra's assistance, believing in his own talents. This habit was not helped by having General Willoughby as his intelligence chief for Willoughby failed to confront MacArthur on decisions thus allowing MacArthur to make serious mistakes. Moreover, MacArthur made life difficult for the SLUs in his theatre. One of MacArthur's staff, General Chamberlain, suggested that the use of Ultra shortened the Pacific War by three years.[38] Perhaps surprisingly, few of these judgements from Deutsch advance much on Winterbotham's comments, written just after the war ended in 1945.[39]

In Drea's analysis of MacArthur in the Southwest Pacific, he suggests that air chief General Kenney became "one of the most receptive clients of Ultra". Willoughby, as noted earlier, often mis-read Ultra and issued contradictory intelligence assessments: according to MacArthur there were three great intelligence officers through history "and mine is not one of them".[40] However, Willoughby's estimations of enemy forces at Hollandia, Leyte, the Driniumor River and in the Admiralties were very good, even if at other times he was horribly wrong.[41] MacArthur's senior commanders, while largely in the shadow of their superior, varied in their appreciation of Ultra, although this may have been caused by the inconsistency of Ultra decrypts at various stages of the Pacific war. General Krueger is one example of a commander who used Ultra but was never enthusiastic. Drea suggests that MacArthur had a belief in the way he wanted to run the war and if Ultra fitted in with that, then Ultra was used, or what Drea described as a situational use of Ultra: "a sense of destiny, not revelations from Ultra, propelled MacArthur through his Southwest Pacific campaigns".[42] Thus MacArthur used Ultra where appropriate and where it fitted into his plans, and when its findings were not seen as appropriate then Ultra was disregarded.[43] Layton claims, however,

---

37 Harold Deutsch, 'Clients of Ultra: American Captains', *Parameters, Journal of the US Army War College*, Vol XV, No 2, 1985, pp 55-62 at page 62

38 Deutsch, 'Clients of Ultra', ibid, pages 59-61

39 Harold Deutsch, 'Commanding Generals and the Uses of Intelligence', *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol 3, No 3, July 1988, pp 194-260, passim.

40 Drea, *MacArthur's Ultra*, op cit, page 187

41 Richard Aldrich, *Intelligence and the War Against Japan: Britain, America and the Politics of Secret Service*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000, page 241 says of Ultra that Willoughby "remained a doubter to the end" which could explain some of his intelligence estimates

42 Drea, *MacArthur's Ultra*, op cit, passim

43 Lewin, *The Other Ultra*, op cit, page 268 terms MacArthur's capricious use of Ultra on Leyte as "an astonishing degree of negligent indifference", although Drea might ask in return whether MacArthur needed to use the information. There was another and unpleasant side, however, and one of MacArthur's intelligence officers noted that "more than one intelligence officer's career was blighted by writing accurate but unpalatable reports" – David Horner, *High Command: Australia's Struggle for an Independent War Strategy, 1939-45*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1982, page 228

that "Even General MacArthur was to concede that radio intelligence 'saved us many thousands of lives and shortened the war by no less than two years'".44

Ambrose has written widely on Eisenhower but much of his work was done well prior to significant research being done on Ultra (thus *Ike's Spies,* to take his best work on intelligence matters, is deficient in hard data on Ultra). However, we still read of the enthusiastic acceptance by Eisenhower and the commitment of General Kenneth Strong as Eisenhower's G-2, to Ultra's use.45 And Eisenhower's comments to the head of MI-6 are frequently quoted by Winterbotham, who uses as the last words in his book "I believe that most of the senior commanders, both in Britain and America, would, together with Winston Churchill and President Roosevelt, have endorsed the views expressed by General Eisenhower that 'Ultra was decisive'".46

Montgomery distanced himself from Ultra, at least in public. As Bennett has said about the Alam Halfa battle, "he never openly admitted that his victory was due to Ultra as well as to his own genius".47 However, Montgomery's intelligence staff freely acknowledged Ultra's value. It is apparent that Montgomery was aware of what Ultra disclosed but he chose to pursue his own path, sometimes correctly and sometimes not. But his intelligence chief, Bill Williams, believed that for Montgomery, Ultra fell more into the category of intelligence as understood of General Alexander above, that as a seasoned commander with an instinct for battle, he used Ultra to help inform his instincts about what an enemy would do in those circumstances.48 After Montgomery's death, Williams wrote of a meeting in August 1942 when Montgomery listened to the intelligence picture and was rewarded with victory at Alam Halfa: "It meant too, because the intelligence had proved adequate then, he believed it afterwards".49 Deutsch's version of the Williams' comments post-Alam Halfa is "From then on, no matter what his distaste for Ultra, he was sold on it as a battle-winner".50 And Bennett said, "Montgomery listened to Ultra as willingly after Alam Halfa as before".51

While Patton admitted to a lack of interest when being briefed by Winterbotham, he clearly used Ultra when he could. One biographer says of Patton that his cavalier dismissal of his flanks was not as casual as it appeared, as he took information from the Resistance, Ultra and aerial reconnaissance to ensure his rampaging divisions would not be molested.52 D'Este quotes Robert Allen who said "Patton never made a move without first consulting G-2 (Oscar Koch). In planning, G-2 always had the first say...and then acted on it. That explains why Third Army was never surprised and why it always smashed through vulnerable sectors in the enemy's lines".53 From August 1944 Patton was briefed daily by an Ultra team54 and according to Eisenhower's G-2, General Strong, Patton was an enthusiastic consumer of Ultra

---

44 Layton, *And I Was There*, op cit, page 471

45 For Eisenhower's dependence on Ultra, see Stephen Ambrose, *Eisenhower, Volume 1, 1890-1952*, Allen and Unwin, London, 1984, passim; David Eisenhower, *Eisenhower: At War 1939-1945*, Vintage Books, New York, 1987, page 167; and Merle Miller, *Ike the Soldier: As They Knew Him*, GP Putnam's Sons, New York, 1987, page 415. Also see Ambrose, *Ike's Spies*, op cit, page 87 for comments on Strong. Other critics have mentioned Strong's failure when he depended on Ultra, such as the Ardennes offensive and his belief in the German redoubt

46 Winterbotham, *The Ultra Secret*, op cit, page 229

47 Bennett, "Ultra – UK", in *The Oxford Companion*, op cit, page 1168

48 Nigel Hamilton, *Monty: The Battles of Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery*, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1994, pages 54-55

49 Lewin, *Ultra Goes to War*, op cit, page 265. To be fair to Montgomery, Ralph Bennett, *Intelligence Investigations: How Ultra Changed History*, Frank Cass, London, 1996, page 90, claims that Montgomery had already made his decisions hours before being shown the intelligence, illustrating that a good general only needed Ultra as confirmation, if that.

50 Deutsch, 'Commanding Generals and the Uses of Intelligence', op cit, page 214

51 Bennett, *Ultra and Mediterranean Strategy*, op cit, page 354

52 Note that Patton's intelligence staff for Third Army numbered 41, with 16 officers and 25 enlisted men - Oscar Koch, *G-2: Intelligence for Patton*, Whitmore, Philadelphia PA, 1971, page 123

53 Carlo D'Este, *A Genius For War: A Life of George S Patton*, HarperCollins, London, 1996, page 637

54 D'Este, *A Genius For War*, ibid, page 653

and often quizzed Strong on any extra intelligence he could provide, "usually to satisfy himself that the risks he intended to take were justified".55

Slim also used Ultra when it was available to him. In his autobiography, *Defeat Into Victory*, he made a stinging attack on intelligence analysts in the 14th Army and insisted their reports were almost useless.56 (As Slim wrote in 1956, he did not mention Ultra by name, although some have taken his comments to assume criticism of Ultra decrypts.) Yet despite any shortcomings in the timeliness or availability of Ultra, he was a most supportive user.57 As Slim said to Winterbotham, "The real triumph had been the information which led up to the final attack by the Japanese at Imphal and Kohima. It had become very evident from Ultra that the Japanese supply situation was desperate...and that the Japanese air force in the area had dwindled so as to be practically useless."58

Bradley, always a cautious commander, was equally cautious about Ultra. Some of Bradley's later comments on Ultra appear self-serving or at least confused. Many of the negative comments on Ultra attributed to him were published in 1983 and he had only proofed part of the manuscript of his book when he died in 1981. He seemed more casual than enthusiastic about Ultra during the war, although Deutsch attributes this in part to less than brilliant staff work and a basic indifference to the fruits of intelligence.59 While one source says that Bradley was a "complete convert" to Ultra after D-Day, another source says that Bradley's criticisms of Ultra were "somewhat over simplified" and that Bennett has shown his comments to be not well-founded.60 So we are left with some confusion over what he actually thought. According to D'Este, Bradley had reservations about the timeliness of Ultra, and was critical when it was received too late to be useful as in the closing of the Falaise Gap. Bradley's concerns were initially crystallised by the incident over Brigadier Mockler-Ferryman at Kasserine Pass. There a judgement was made on the basis of Ultra decrypts, and when Eisenhower found that Mockler-Ferryman had neglected other forms of intelligence, Mockler-Ferryman was sacked.61 As Bradley said in the 1983 publication, "I did not then or later embrace Ultra as the Oracle of Delphi, but rather as a marvellous source of intelligence to be evaluated and used tactically with some care". In the ETO, Bradley came to believe that there was far too much dependence on the presumed infallibility of Ultra.62 In the 1983 publication Bradley also remarked of the Ardennes offensive, "A fallacy that crept into our thinking was that since Ultra had not specifically forecast or suggested a major strategic counter-attack, there was no possibility of one".63

This spectre of Ultra being infallible is found in the comment of a high-ranking if unnamed intelligence officer cited by Winton. In the early days of the war the officer said Ultra was treated with "over-timidity" but as the war drew on, "if there had been a turning-off of the tap of Special Intelligence, before the end of the war, and before the result was in reasonable doubt, the intelligence directorates would have been hard

---

55 Kenneth Strong, *Intelligence at the Top: the Recollections of an Intelligence Officer*, Cassell, London, 1969, page 90; D'Este, *A Genius For War*, op cit, pages 675-676; and Koch, *G-2*, op cit, passim which, written before the prohibition on Ultra was lifted, reveals little about anything.

56 William Slim, *Defeat Into Victory*, Cassell, London, 1956, page 221

57 Winterbotham, *The Ultra Secret*, op cit, page 228 lists Slim's Ultra sources

58 Alan Stripp, *Codebreaker in the Far East*, Frank Cass, London, 1989, page 167

59 Deutsch, 'Commanding Generals and the Uses of Intelligence', op cit, page 196

60 Deutsch, 'Clients of Ultra', op cit, page 56, says that Bradley was a "complete convert" after D-Day. But D'Este, *Decision in Normandy*, op cit, page 421 says Bradley's views were "somewhat over simplified" and his criticisms were not well-founded

61 It is appreciated that there are other versions of the Mockler-Ferryman sacking, but Bradley officially believed the version set out here and acted on that. For the version that Mockler-Ferryman was sacked as part of a deal to dump a failed American commander after Kasserine, see Ambrose, *Ike's Spies*, op cit, page 326 and also Bennett, *Ultra and Mediterranean Strategy*, op cit, Appendix VI

62 D'Este, *Decision in Normandy*, op cit, pages 420-421

63 D'Este, *Decision in Normandy*, ibid, page 421. Also see Omar Bradley and Clay Blair, *A General's Life: An Autobiography by General of the Army*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1983, pages 351-352

put to find those capable, by a keen analytic examination of the lesser grades of intelligence, of producing an accurate forecast or estimate of the enemy's dispositions and intentions".64 This coincides with the comments of Bennett who remarked on the "if it is not in Ultra it cannot be true" school of intelligence analysts,65 and of Calvocorossi who suggested that "Ultra created in senior staffs and at the political summit a state of mind which transformed the making of decisions".66 This blind obedience to Ultra echoed strongly the irritations of Bradley's words published in 1983. Sadly these few gleanings are typical of what has been written about well known commanders. True, there may be other gems from other sources but they all have the same fault – they are usually second-hand and published years after the event, and indeed, we do not know whether the comments have been transcribed correctly.

This article set out to assess whether commanders had access to intelligence through Ultra, how Ultra was used, and whether the contribution was acknowledged. As to the latter query, acknowledgement came only in retrospect or from those who remembered comments of the commanders years later – of these many were generous in their praise while a few other egotists with an eye to future history books were reluctant to admit to any outside assistance.

At first blush Ultra provided the silver bullet to a commander – it allowed him information about the thinking processes of his opposite number, often in the first 24 hours after the message was sent. This insight had to be an enormous advantage. But the material might have been incomplete or received too late to be useful, and the enemy commander might not comply with his own signalled intentions – Rommel is a good example of this.67 And if an Allied commander had all the intelligence before him, there was no obligation to follow Ultra's lead because of a host of reasons that might have seemed compelling at the time (such as a disbelief in a particular Ultra message or a lack of reserves to take advantage of the opportunity). Determining the use of Ultra may well be impossible.68 The clearest examples of sound scholarship on examining this question are that of Bennett and Drea. And yet neither of these works provide us with the necessary level of dissection to enable us to be absolutely certain of Ultra's applicability.

Perhaps the challenge of looking at decision-making is too difficult. Even a fully briefed observer in the room when a decision is made will never be in complete possession of all facts, as no observer is omniscient. And a leader will often obfuscate on his reasons for making a decision, or be unable to articulate why he actually ended up with decision X rather than Y. As Bennett expresses it, circumstantial evidence is "a notoriously untrustworthy guide", and that "Post hoc is not necessarily prompter hoc: the murder may not have been committed by the obvious suspect".69 It must remain a matter for speculation as to the extent to which a commander used intelligence such as Ultra. Some commanders accepted it, some rejected it, while others juggled Ultra and other forms of intelligence available to them. To understand decision-making under battle conditions we need to be far more aware of the conditions under which the final decisions were made, and that must include knowledge of the way that Ultra was applied.

---

64 Winton, *Ultra at Sea*, op cit, page 2. Another intelligence officer who claimed in later years to have clear reservations was Adolph Rosengarten, 'With Ultra from Omaha Beach to Weimar, Germany – A Personal View', *Military Affairs*, Volume XLII, No 3, October 1978, pp 127-132

65 Bennett, *Ultra in the Mediterranean*, op cit, page 415

66 Calvocorossi, *Top Secret Ultra*, op cit, page 110. Not surprisingly, Drea in his *MacArthur's Ultra*, op cit, page 229, says that there was no Ultra 'state of mind' under MacArthur!

67 See Deutsch, 'The Influences of Ultra on World War II', op cit, page 2; Philip Warner, *The Secret Forces of World War II*, Granada, London, 1985, page 20; Bennett, *Ultra and Mediterranean Strategy*, op cit, pages 107, 173, 208, et al; and Alexander McKee, *El Alamein: Ultra and Three Battles*, Souvenir Press, London, 1991, page 34.

68 In the case of some writers they see a coincidence and assume blindly that Ultra was the cause – Mike Whitley, 'Victim of Ultra? The Loss of the Bremse', *Warship*, Vol 41, January 1987, pp 20-27 inserts a few paragraphs then queries whether Ultra caused the German and English ships in question to meet in mid-ocean, which is stretching coincidence too far on the flimsy evidence he provides

69 Bennett, *Ultra and Mediterranean Strategy*, op cit, page 357

BALLALE ISLAND

Ken Wright[1]

Port Moresby (Bomana) War Cemetery is the resting place of 3820 Australian and allied service personnel. Of the 3118 identified burials, all but 12 are Australians. However, of the 702 unidentified soldiers, 460 are British soldiers, all from the Royal Artillery, captured by the Japanese at the fall of Singapore and died in captivity on the island of Ballale in the Solomon Islands. Ballale is part of the Shortland Islands which are the northernmost group of the Solomon Islands just south the southern tip of Bougainville.

On 18 January 1946, an arrest warrant was issued by the Allied Supreme Headquarters in Tokyo for the former Lieutenant Commander, Norihiko Ozaki of 18 Naval Construction Unit.[2] This unit was stationed on Ballale Island which was part of the Shortland Islands south of Bougainville in the South Pacific. Ozaki was to be interrogated and possibly tried as a war criminal in connection with the deaths of 517 POWs from the British Royal Artillery who were sent to work as slave labour on Ballale Island. Other persons of interest to be interrogated were Vice Admiral Jin'ichi Kusaka formerly Commander in Chief South Eastern Area Fleet, Lieutenant Commander Isamu Miyake of the anti aircraft unit and Captain Senda, Commander of the army battalion and POW labour. As the following events will show, there was no trial, no charges laid and the accused were released to continue their normal lives.

Lieutenant Commander Ozaki, on learning of the order for his arrest decided the time had come to take matters into his own hands. He wrote a note to whoever found his body:

> Upon finding my body and this letter, please report the fact to the nearest police station or to the Military Police of the Occupation Forces. My name is Norihiko Ozaki, and I was formerly a Lieutenant-Commander. On 18 January 1946, my arrest as a war criminal suspect was ordered by the Supreme Headquarters. No matter how I ponder the matter, I cannot bring myself to feel like surrendering to the authorities. Therefore, I have finally decided to kill myself without saying a word to anyone. My mental state is not explainable, but please try to understand. My relatives and friends do not know about this intention. Please regard everything solved by my suicide, and I appeal to your tolerance in this affair. I ask your pardon for all the trouble I will cause by this act. I'll be satisfied with any kind of treatment, but if possible, I should like my close relatives to conduct the burial service. Again asking for your kindness.

In a extract from a letter to his family, Ozaki describes his military service:

> For approximately three years, from the time of my induction in August 42 until my discharge in May 45, I did my utmost in the service of my country. Looking back on my service in the South Seas and in China, I am certain I did my best. Please believe that my conscience bears no guilt, because I swore by heaven and earth, and to the gods, to do my duty as a soldier, and I have fulfilled that pledge. Nevertheless, the war was of no advantage and Japan today is a pitiful, defeated nation. I don't know for what reason, but I am going to be tried by our former enemies as a suspected war criminal. The question of justice is beside the point, but as for myself, I do not think I will be able to bear it.[3]

Ozaki decided not to go through with his planned death and was arrested in the morning of 19 January and detained in Sugamo Prison in Tokyo. He would later, during questioning about the

---

1 The author wishes to thank Dr Narrelle Morris, Research Fellow, Asia Pacific Centre for Military Law, Melbourne University, Victoria, Australia, for her kind assistance.

2 As the Japanese put their surname first and given name last, for the sake of clarity and to save confusion, the English method of surname last and given name first has been used.

3 National Archives of Australia, MP742/1 336/1/1460. All statements made by Lieutenant Commander Ozaki and Captain Miyake are reproduced with permission. Trial information is also from the same document source.

fate of the POWs on Ballale Island, make a 10 page confession on 8 August 1946 and on the last page, explain why he decided to face a trial instead of committing suicide. A summary is that after much soul searching, he decided not to die for a Japan that had lost its honour and integrity during the war and sought the opportunity to divulge the complete truth, to expose the whole matter to the public and hopefully to get a fair trial.

The circumstances leading to Lieutenant-Commander Ozaki's arrest began on 15 February 1942 with the fall of Singapore. The surrender of Singapore and the capture of over 120,000 men was the greatest and most humiliating defeat in British history and the highpoint of Japanese expansion in South-East Asia. Amongst the thousands of Allied prisoners, many nationalities were represented. Gurkhas, Scotsmen, Australians, British, and Indian Sikhs, Muslims and Hindus. Included with the British prisoners were men from assorted Royal Artillery [RA] units. In early October, the Japanese announced 600 men of the RA units under the command of Lieutenant Colonel John Bassett, 35th LAA Regiment RA, would be transferred to camps in Japan. Departing Singapore aboard one of the 'Hell Ships' possibly the *Masta Maru* the prisoners suffered appalling conditions and many became sick. One died of dysentery. Unknown to the British prisoners, the ship was not enroute to Japan but to Rabaul in the then Australian Mandated Territory of New Guinea. It was here they were put to work as slave labour and subjected to vicious beatings by the Japanese. In November, 517 of the fittest Royal Artillery men were selected to be transported by ship to Ballale Island. After a two day trip they arrived to begin work with Chinese prisoners and natives recruited from near by islands to construct an airstrip.4 Officially, the Japanese reported the ship carrying the 517 POWs was 'missing at sea-presumed lost' and this version was accepted by the British Government during the war and for many years afterwards. With the benefit of hindsight, this can only be viewed as an attempt by the Japanese to cover up the following events.

Ballale Island is pear-shaped with dimensions of approximately 2000 meters east-west and 1800 meters north-south, and has sufficient land for a single wide strip and taxiways on either side. A fringing reef surrounds the island. Four Japanese Naval units and an Army unit initially occupied the island. Engineer Lieutenant Commander Ozaki and 18 Naval Construction Unit [Kensetsu-tai] arrived on the island 26/27 November just prior to the prisoners' arrival Ozaki took up the position of Commander on the island until early January 1943 when Commanding Officer Lieutenant Reichi Kimbara arrived. Both men took their orders from the South East Area Fleet Commander in Chief, Vice Admiral Jinichi Kusaka based in Rabaul.

Lieutenant Commander Ozaki in his confession of 8 August 1946 said:

> It was probably several days later after landing on the island that we saw a comparatively large-sized transport, anchored off the coast of the island starting to unload several hundred persons, who appeared to be prisoners. In the meantime, a Second Lieutenant [if my memory is correct] acting as the commanding officer, came to me and said, I have brought you 527 army prisoners from Rabaul according to orders. You may set them to work on the construction of the airfield.

Captain Isamu Miyake, in charge of an anti-aircraft battery, who would be arrested on 17 June 1947 in connection with the events on Ballale Island, recalled one British officer who had recaptured after an attempt to swim away from the island the same day the POWs disembarked from the ship. A discussion between Ozaki and another officer as to the fate of the prisoner

4 Eighty two men were considered too sick to go with the others to Ballale Island and remained in Rabaul. Of these, only 18 survived to return to the UK.

resulted in an agreement that in wartime, in front of the enemy, desertion means the death penalty.5

Lieutenant Commander Ozaki said

> From the standpoint of strict observance of military law, there was no alternative. Without thinking deeply we decided a summary justice. The execution was carried out by an army guard, who used a pistol, in the deserted jungle at the east beach of the island. I thought that I would execute him with a Nihonto [Japanese sword] however I became frightened and could not do that.'

The prisoners were housed in tents between an Army unit and the shore on the western tip of the island and were set to work on the airstrip constructed of crushed coral. When the men arrived they were already in poor shape and it was not long before men began to physically deteriorate due to the lack of medical supplies, malnutrition and the effects of exhaustion. An unknown but small number of Chinese also suffered, a few had been executed if they could not or would not work but they were fortunate to have left the island before the atrocity was to occur. They were only on the island for about three months and lived in the same area as the POWs which were strictly out of bounds except to those Japanese who were on duty. The airstrip was finished towards the end of March 1943 and quickly became operational.

The Japanese, POWs and presumably Chinese died from sickness, disease and Allied bombing attacks. Initially, the Japanese cremated their dead and the prisoners who died of disease were tied in sacks and were taken out to sea and thrown overboard. As air raids increased, all bodies were buried instead. Sadly, the vast majority of the British POWs were killed in Allied air raids and strafing attacks which began in mid-January 1943 and continued consistently over the next 12 months. Although a number of air raid shelters were built through out the island, it seems the POWs were not even allowed to dig their own slit trenches let alone use available shelters. With the result, they simply continued working during the air raids. During the month of March, the island was bombed at least ten times and one air raid by B24 aircraft on the night of 12/13 resulted in the deaths of approximately 300 POWs. Lieutenant Commander Ozaki;:

> I believe it was during the night in the middle of March that there was a sudden air raid in the area of the army and the prisoners. In this raid, the place where the prisoners were quartered was directly hit by 3 large bombs. These areas had practically been free from damage until this occasion. The reason for the heavy casualty was that the area was far from the air approach to the airfield so that the occupants felt secure and did not take shelter.

Early in the following month, Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, the architect of the attack on the American fleet in Pearl Harbor on 7 December, 1941, decided to make an inspection tour of the Japanese bases in the South Pacific area. It was an attempt to bolster the morale of the Japanese forces which had reached a low point since their defeat at Guadalcanal in early February at the hands of the American forces after six months of bloody fighting. One of the places on his moral boosting tour was a short stop on Ballale Island. Unfortunately for the Admiral, the United States Naval Intelligence in Hawaii had already broken the Japanese codes and had intercepted, decoded and translated the message concerning his proposed movements. Part of the communiqué read:

> 0600 depart Rabaul by medium attack plane [accompanied by 6 fighters] 0800 arrive Ballale. Depart immediately for Shortland by Sub chaser [1ST Base Force will prepare one boat] arriving Shortland 0840.

---

5 The right to escape and not be punished unduly was enshrined in the Geneva Convention but the Japanese were not signatories to the convention. With their attitude that surrender was a disgrace, they generally treated Allied prisoners who surrendered with utter contempt.

With the full authority of President Franklin D Roosevelt, 'Operation Vengeance,' the plan to kill Admiral Yamamoto swung into action. At approximately 9.35 am on 18 April, two Mitsubishi 'Betty' bombers carrying Admiral Yamamoto and his staff began the initial approach toward the newly constructed airfield on Ballale Island. The fighter escort of six [some records say nine] Mitsubishi Zero's possibly from the 205 Kokutai Naval Air Unit formed a protective screen above the two bombers.

It was all over in minutes. Four United States Army Air Force P 38 Lightning's from Henderson Field on Guadalcanal attacked the two bombers while ten more P38's gave top cover engaging the Admirals escorting Zeros. Both bombers went down in flames, one into the sea, and the other with the Admiral onboard crashed into the island's jungle. A search party later found his body and the news of his death was a severe blow to the already low Japanese morale. Why additional aircraft from Ballale Island which could possibly have prevented the Admiral's death were not in the air as a guard of honour for such an important man is unknown.6

On 27 June, 13 aircraft carried out another of their usual air raids and during the night of 29 June, the United States Navy Task Group 36.2 on a mission to bombard Japanese positions in the Shortlands and carry out mining operations took up position off Ballale Island's coast. At 0155 on the following morning, selected targets on island were shelled from a range of 16,400 yards with the bombardment ceasing at 0212. It's more than likely the air raid two days previous so closely followed by the shelling of the island led the Japanese to assume an invasion was about to take place. The contingency plans which had already been drawn up for this possibility was activated which included the disposal of the prisoners. The Ozaki and Senda units were to be responsible for carrying out the executions. There are no accurate figures but it is thought that 70 to 100 POWs were lined up and were killed by bayonets or swords [the original plan had been to use hand grenades] sometime on 30 June and the bodies buried in a large pit.

Lieutenant Commander Ozaki said:

> Every regiment was making arrangements for the eventual enemies surprise landing and attack and were working hard all night, but the enemy did not attack our island. After all, because of vigorous changes and disadvantages in the war situation, everybody's morale was strained by extreme excitement. Under this pressure the provisions of the defence plan, including the execution of the prisoners was carried out automatically. It can also be said that faced with a crisis, this action was unavoidable.

The cold blooded killing of the POWs was premature as the Japanese were unaware the Americans had no intention of invading the tiny island. Having carried out the assigned mission, the American Task Group moved on to their next objective.

The callous premeditated murder of the defenceless prisoners on Ballale Island under the circumstances was not an isolated incident. Massacres of POWs sometimes occurred after an Allied air attack or threat of an enemy landing. In order to get the POWs out of the way or to prevent them from being liberated, they were simply disposed of. In October 1942, on Tarawa before the American invasion, 22 prisoners were beheaded after American aircraft had attacked Japanese ships in the area. On the island of Nauru the Japanese killed all their prisoners after the first air attack and in the first week October 1943, 96 POWs were blindfolded, had their hands tied and were machine gunned after American ships bombarded Wake Island. On Palawan Island, where 151 American prisoners of war had been slaving to build an airstrip for the Japanese, an American plane appeared overhead. The garrison commander ordered all the

---

6 Yamamoto's remains were cremated at Buin on Bougainville and his ashes returned to Japan on his last flagship, the battleship *Musashi*. He was replaced by Admiral Mineichi Koga as Commander in Chief of the combined fleet.

prisoners into their air raid shelters and then ordered his troops to pour petrol over the shelters and ignite them. Most of the trapped Americans were burned to death. Those who managed to escape outside were machine-gunned. Nine men survived by jumping into the sea and swimming to another island where they eluded the Japanese.7

When the war in the Pacific ended 15 August 1945, the fate of the 517 POWs sent to Ballale Island could have possibly remained as the Japanese would have preferred it; 'missing at sea, presumed lost.' However, information about a possible war crime was supplied to Australian Military authorities in Rabaul by some Chinese who were part of forced labour on Ballale Island. As a result, 19 War Graves Unit, Australian Imperial Forces arrived on Ballale Island on 6 November 1945. With some Chinese guides the unit spent the remainder of November and most of December exhuming 436 'European' [English] and 14 Asiatic bodies, the latter later proved to be Japanese. Unfortunately individual remains were unable to be identified as there was only one identification tag found in the burial site belonging to an American pilot. It's not known how many American pilots survived being shot down over the island nor their ultimate fate. They may have been executed and buried along with the other POWs or sent elsewhere for questioning. There were however, clues as to whom at least some if not all; the remains belonged to as a group. The remnants of black leather boots, a few NAFFI spoons, a teaspoon with an RA crest, a water bottle stamped Rosebery Metal Works Coy 1940, a British penny and an artillery arm badge with the motto; Ubique Quo Fas Et Gloria Ducunt. Additional items unearthed included a key stamped A Brown and Co Birmingham and a copper badge from the Southern Suburban League April 1930/31 October 1931.8

On 10 March 1946, Major E C Millikin of B Squadron, Royal Australian Armoured Regiment wrote a report of his intensive interrogations of 108 Japanese and two Koreans carried out by at 11 Compound at Kokopo and in the Witness Compound Rabaul regarding the events on Ballale Island. His conclusion was that all the Japanese who were interrogated either had been ordered to conceal the truth or each individual decided he knew and saw nothing regarding the ultimate fate of the English prisoners. Major Millikin concluded that the only person who could be held responsible is the commander of the Ozaki unit, Lieutenant Commander Ozaki.9

Former Captain Isamu Miyake of the anti aircraft battery after his arrest in 1947 made a lengthy statement to Major Harold Stannett Williams, Australian Military Forces attached to 2 War Crimes Section SCAP at Tokyo on 16 March the following year. He stated in part:

> that the plan for the defence of the island and for the disposal of the prisoners would have I think, been submitted to Buin for approval so when the battle order came from Buin, the intention of 1 Base Force Headquarters was that the prisoners should be disposed of. After the cessation of hostilities at about the end of August 1945 so far as I can recall, I received an order from 8 Fleet Headquarters in Buin through a staff signals officer to the effect that in the event of any enquiries being made into the happenings on Ballale Island, I was to state my unit arrived on Ballale Island early in June 1943 and that I knew nothing concerning the POWs on the island. On receipt of that order I appropriately instructed my subordinates.

Lieutenant Commander Ozaki's 18 Naval Construction Unit was comprised of approximately 324 naval personnel including two Koreans, Kanehara Kanshyo and Kanshiro Fukukan. It is unclear as to their function within the unit. Apart from some Chinese witnesses who were able to give statements about some of the events on the island, the two Koreans were prepared to tell everything they knew. However, a legal problem existed as to their evidence was based on

---

7 Gruhl. Werner. *Imperial Japan's World War Two 1931-1945*. Transaction Publishers, New Jersey, USA, p. 136.
8 Ubique Quo Fas Et Gloria Ducunt-Everywhere-Where [or whither] right and glory lead.
9 Interrogations took place at No 11 Compound Kokopo and at the witness Compound Rabaul.

hearsay overheard from groups of Japanese discussing various matters. One clue as to the identity of the prisoners and again only hearsay is that they heard the prisoners were Englishmen from Singapore. The two Korean witnesses also made statements that they heard rumours from the Japanese that the officer that was recaptured after the prisoners were disembarked from the ship was beheaded by Ozaki who claimed he couldn't carry out the beheading and the prisoner was shot instead. One Chinese witness said when the 300 prisoners were killed in a night bombing raid they [the prisoners] were forced to remain in the target area by the Japanese with machine guns.

The lengthy statement by Miyake and the confession by Ozaki whilst possibly only self-serving, did at least give a greater insight in the possible fate of the 517 members of the Royal Artillery who were reported as lost at sea. Although the best sources of information were the two Koreans, Kanehara and Fukukan, no charges were able to be laid against any of the accused as the evidence presented was only hearsay and circumstantial. Once it became obvious that the investigations were floundering without positive proof that a war crime was committed, Ozaki and his co-accused had to be released. It is interesting to note all Vice Admiral Jin'ichi Kusaka did was submit a statement admitting responsibility for any actions of those under his command but denied any knowledge of the events. He was never required to make an appearance nor was he personally interrogated.

Based on available evidence, it can be safely assumed the 517 members of the British Royal Artillery prisoners arrived on Ballale Island from Rabaul. Apart from the identification disc found on one American pilot, and because the other 435 remains exhumed were unable to be identified, it's a possibility there may be a small number of American airmen amongst them. There are many who are still missing and in all likelihood, will remain that way. Assuming the American forces retrieved the remains of the airman; the others were eventually re-interred in graves at Bomana Commonwealth War Cemetery in Port Moresby and are tended by the Office of Australian War Graves .

It's unclear if the charges against the defendants were made public, but certainly the circumstances surrounding some, if not all, the missing Royal Artillery prisoners who left Rabaul in early October 1942 did emerge. It would be fair to assume that if the many relatives and friends of the men who never returned from Ballale Island who sought closure had been aware of Ozaki's decision in January 1946 to kill himself, would have wished, in retrospect, he had carried it out.

--oOo--

GRANTS SCHEME IGNITES PASSION TO RESTORE MEMORIALS

Charlotte Sarossy

On the night of 3/4 September 1943 the eight crew members, including four Australians, of the Lancaster EE138 AR-E2 were returning to England from a raid over Berlin. As they flew home to Binbrook, the Lancaster was intercepted over the tiny Danish town of Stadil. Shot down in the early morning of 4 September, the pilot of the Lancaster swerved to miss the tiny village and its sleeping residents. The village was unharmed but the crew perished. So grateful were the residents that they marked the spot with a simple wooden cross.

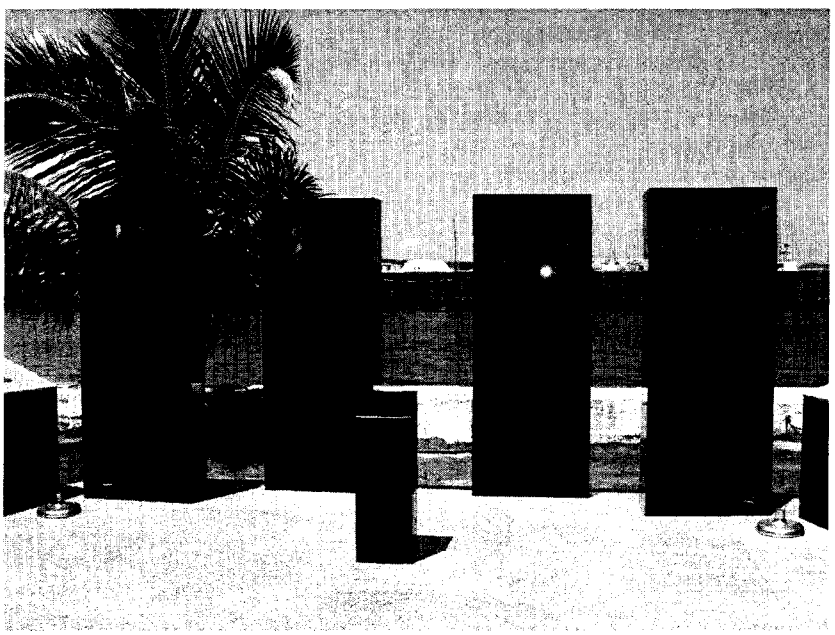
Stadil Memorial, Denmark

Sixty five years later, on the 4 September 2008, more than 130 people including relatives of the airmen, Danish and Australian officials gathered at the town of Stadil to dedicate a restored memorial. Additional interpretive material tells the story of the airmen and the grateful town.

The funding for this restoration, organised by a relative of one of the crew members, was supplied through the Department of Veterans' Affairs Overseas Privately Constructed Memorial Program (OPCMRP). Initiated in 2007, the OPCMRP is a grant program administered to help ensure that the legacy of those who served the nation is remembered, and encourages anyone with an interest in restoring an existing memorial overseas to apply.

The program recognises the contribution communities and organizations around the world make in honouring Australia's wartime heritage, and provides funding to help such organizations restore their memorial. Earlier this year a grant was provided to the Kokoda Memorial Foundation to restore and preserve a number of privately-constructed memorials at the southern end of the Kokoda Track. The work included restoring and repainting the Memorial Archway and the nearby 25-Pounder gun at Owers' Corner. Each year thousands of trekkers, retracing the steps of Australian soldiers, pass through this archway as they begin their journey.

There are many small privately constructed memorial around the world that mark the heroic efforts of Australians in time of war. The restoration, improved access and addition of interpretation at memorial sites using OPCMRP funds has had positive results, from increased interest and visitor numbers to inclusion on tourist guide maps and tours. Increased media awareness has also brought the stories of the memorials to the public attention, increasing public education regarding the stories behind them.



Hellships Memorial, Subic Bay, Philippines

In June this year the Angeles City RSL Sub-Branch received a grant for the Hellships Memorial located in Subic Bay in the Philippines. The grant covered the placement of plaques at the memorial in honour of Australian POWs who perished in Australia's worst maritime incident, the sinking of the *Montevideo Maru*. The grant also covered interpretive material at the nearby museum.

Another benefit of the OPCMRP is that it allows for the restoration of memorials before significant anniversary events. In August, funding was provided to the Defence Section at the Australian Embassy in Seoul for the refurbishment of two plaques commemorating the Battles of Kapyong and Maryong San during the Korean War. 2010 will see the 60th Anniversary of the commencement of the start of Korean War and the refurbishments have now taken place in advance of the up coming commemorations. It is expected that many Australian and Korean veterans will visit the sites as part of the Republic of Korea re-visit program.

For more information about the Overseas Memorial Grants Program or to apply for the grant please visit: http://www.dva.gov.au/ex-service_organisations/grants/Pages/index.aspx or contact the Office of Australian War Graves on 02 6225 4657.

--oOo--