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THE FRENCH *CROIX DE GUERRE* 1914-1918 TO BRITISH UNITS

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The *Croix de guerre*

In 1915, forced by the pressure of a world war to expand its system of honours and awards, the French Government established the *Croix de guerre* or 'War Cross'. This attractive and interesting medal was created to provide a form of wearable and visible recognition of the system of mentions in orders or despatches that had long been a feature of the French military system of rewards and recognition. The *Croix de guerre 1914-1918* was unique amongst world awards at the time in that the same decoration could be used to recognise mentions in orders at various levels of command.

Originally suggested in late 1914, the *Croix de guerre* was created by law on 8 April 1915, as an award to:

commemorate individual citations, since the beginning of the 1914 – 1915 war, for war actions mentioned in Army, Navy, Army corps, divisional, brigade and regimental orders.¹

The design of the new award was announced in a decree of 23 April 1915, which laid down the rules for the application of the law of 8 April. The decree stated that the new decoration would consist of a Maltese cross of Florentine bronze, 37 millimetres in width, with two crossed swords between the branches of the cross; the centre of the obverse was to bear a disc with a representation of the head of the '*République*', wearing a laurel crown and surrounded by the inscription '*République Française*'; the reverse was to bear the dates '1914-1915'.² New dates would be added to the reverse of the medal for each ensuing year of the war, so that by the end of the war versions existed with the dates '1914-1915', '1914-1916', '1914-1917' and '1914-1918' on the reverse.

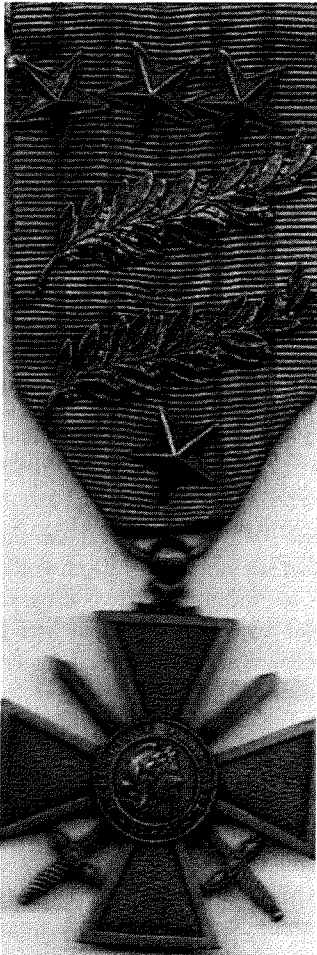


The new medal ranked immediately after the *Médaille militaire* in order of seniority and was to be suspended from a ribbon of dark green with seven thin green stripes.³ Although not stated in either the Law or Decree, the ribbon used is identical to that of the *Médaille de Ste.Hélène* (St.Helena Medal), established by Napoleon III in 1857 for award to surviving members of Napoleon Bonaparte's *Grande Armée* who had served between 1792 and 1815 (illustrated). Again, although not stated, it is apparent that the choice of ribbon was a deliberate move intended to link the new award with the glories of France's military past.

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- 1 'LAW creating a cross, called Croix de Guerre, to commemorate individual citations for war actions mentioned in Army, Navy, Army corps, divisional, brigade and regimental orders, Paris, 8 April 1915', cited in Koundakjian, p.1.
 - 2 'DECREE for the application of the law of 8 April 1915 which has created a Croix de Guerre, Paris, 23 April 1915', cited in Koundakjian, p.2.
 - 3 Ibid.

The command levels and the insignia used consisted of:

Mention in Brigade or Regimental Orders	-bronze star (<i>étoile de bronze</i>)
Mention in Divisional Orders	-silver star (<i>étoile d'argent</i>)
Mention in Corps Orders	-gold (silver gilt) star (<i>étoile de vermeil</i>)
Mention in Army Orders	-bronze palm (<i>palme de bronze</i>)



Equivalent command levels were specified in the Decree for the Navy (*Marine nationale*). A recipient of the *Croix de guerre 1914-1918* was entitled to only a single cross, however, for recipients who received multiple mentions, a new insignia, appropriate to the level of recognition, was added to the ribbon for each mention. Thus, it is not uncommon to encounter examples of the *Croix de guerre 1914-1918* with multiple stars of different metal and multiple palms. As an example of this, a *Croix de guerre 1914-1918* from the author's collection is illustrated (left), displaying three bronze stars, a single silver star and two bronze palms. A recipient who received five mentions at Army level was entitled to replace the five bronze palms with a single silver palm (*palme d'argent*).⁴

It is often stated that an award of either the *Légion d'Honneur* or the *Médaille militaire* automatically qualified for a *Croix de guerre avec palme de bronze*.⁵ However, this is not always the case, and the author actually has a *Médaille militaire* group in his collection, complete with the recipient's records, that does not include a *Croix de guerre* at any level and award of the cross is mentioned nowhere in his papers.

Unit Awards

Besides individuals, the *Croix de guerre 1914-1918* could be awarded to formations, units, ships and communities. During the war, it is estimated that 2,065,000 individual citations for the *Croix de guerre 1914-1918* were made at various levels; 2,951 awards were made to French (and a small number of Belgian) communities; and 449 awards were made to units.⁶ While the vast majority of these units were of course French, a number of awards of the *Croix de guerre 1914-1918* were made to non-French units, including twelve (12) awards to units of the British

⁴ Photographic and physical evidence indicates that the silver palms were not highly thought of, recipients preferring to continue adding bronze palms even after their fifth mention. Thus, it is not uncommon to see a *Croix de guerre 1914-1918* with an astonishing number of palms crowded onto an often ridiculously long piece of ribbon. For example, the tunic of French fighter ace Rene Fonck displayed in the Omaka Aviation Heritage Centre in Blenheim, New Zealand, has a *Croix de guerre 1914-1918* with no less than twenty-six palms! The ribbon extends from just above the left pocket to below the bottom button of the tunic.

⁵ See for example Taprell Dorling, p.196. Even the comprehensive, authoritative and highly regarded French language medals website *FRANCE PHALERISTIQUE* (www.france-phaleristique.com) states, in relation to the *Croix de guerre*:

en même temps que la Légion d'honneur ou la Médaille Militaire, aux militaires ou aux civils, non cités à l'ordre, dont la décoration aura été accompagnée au Journal officiel, de motifs équivalents à une citation à l'ordre de l'armée pour action d'éclat

⁶ Porte, *90^e Anniversaire de la Croix de guerre*, p.42 and p.130.

Army.⁷ These units were:

149th (County Palatine) Brigade, Royal Field Artillery (30th Division, XVIII Corps, 5th Army) – awarded the *Croix de guerre* with silver star for bravery in the defence of Moreuil (part of the defence of Amiens) from 29 March to 4 April 1918.⁸

5th Field Battery Royal Field Artillery – awarded the *Croix de guerre 1914-1918* with bronze palm for actions at Pontavert (Aisne), 27 May 1918.⁹

2nd Battalion the Devonshire Regiment – awarded the *Croix de guerre 1914-1918* with bronze palm for actions at Bois des Buttes, (Aisne) 27th May 1918.¹⁰

56th Infantry Brigade (9th Battalion the Cheshire Regiment; 8th Battalion the North Staffordshire Regiment; 1/4th Battalion the King's Shropshire Light Infantry) of the 19th (Western) Division – awarded the *Croix de guerre 1914-1918* with silver star for the Battle of Bligny, 6 June 1918.¹¹

1st/4th Battalion the King's Shropshire Light Infantry – awarded the *Croix de guerre 1914-1918* with bronze palm for the capture and defence of Bligny Hill, 6 June 1918.¹²

8th Battalion the West Yorkshire Regiment – awarded the *Croix de guerre 1914-1918* with bronze palm for actions at Bois de Petit'Champ and Bligny, 20-30 July 1918.¹³

6th Battalion the Black Watch – awarded the *Croix de guerre 1914-1918* with bronze palm for actions at Chambrecy, 20-30 July 1918.¹⁴

9th Battalion Tank Corps – awarded the *Croix de guerre 1914-1918* with bronze palm for actions at Souvillers/Moreuil, 23 July 1918.¹⁵

12th Battalion the Cheshire Regiment – awarded the *Croix de guerre 1914-1918* with bronze palm for actions at Doiran (Salonika), 18 September 1918.¹⁶

7th Battalion the South Wales Borderers – awarded the *Croix de guerre 1914-1918* with bronze palm for actions at Doiran (Salonika), 18 September 1918.¹⁷

12th Battalion the Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders – awarded the *Croix de guerre 1914-1918* with bronze palm for actions at Doiran (Salonika), 19 September 1918.¹⁸

24th (1/1st Wessex) Field Ambulance, Royal Army Medical Corps – awarded the *Croix de guerre 1914-1918* with gold star for the evacuation and medical treatment under fire of 2000 citizens of St.Amand, 22-25 October 1918.¹⁹

7 There was also an award made to 201 Squadron, Royal Air Force, however, at the time of the award of the award in 1917, the unit that would later become 201 Squadron RAF was a unit of the Royal Navy, No.1 Squadron, Royal Naval Air Service, so is not included in the article.

8 Edmonds, *Military Operations France and Belgium, 1918* (hereafter referred to as Edmonds MOF&B 1918), pp.50, 80 and 81. The unit title should more correctly be written as 'CXLIX (County Palatine) Brigade, RFA', as Roman numerals were used by the British Army at the time for numbering of artillery brigades, however, Arabic numerals have been used for simplicity. The award of the *Croix de guerre 1914-1918* to the brigade was made by General Boichut, Commander of the French 163rd Infantry Division.

9 Edmonds, MOF&B 1918, *May-July*, p.59.

10 Ibid, p.109.

11 Ibid, p.159. 56th Brigade was mentioned in French V Corps Orders.

12 Ibid. 1/4th KSLI was mentioned in French Fifth Army Orders.

13 Wyrall, Everard, *The West Yorkshire Regiment in the war 1914-1918 Vol. II.*, pp. 301 and 305.

14 Wauchope, *Black Watch in the Great War*, p.202.

15 Ibid, p.318. Also *Tank Corps Honours & Awards*, p.v.

16 Falls, *Military Operations Macedonia*, pp.171 and 182. Also Crookenden, *The History of the Cheshire Regiment in the Great War*, p.217.

17 Ibid. Also Atkinson, *The History of the South Wales Borderers 1914-1918*, p.488.

18 Ibid, p.182.

19 MacPherson, *Medical Services General History Vol. III*, p.295.

In addition to these twelve units, I have been advised that 688th Mechanical Transport Company, Army Service Corps was awarded the *Croix de guerre 1914-1918* with bronze palm for good work in the Salonika Campaign, however, to date, I have been unable to find any confirmation of this.

Two things need to be clearly understood here. Firstly, the award of the *Croix de guerre* to a unit did not entitle every member of the unit to wear the medal – for an individual to have entitlement to wear the *Croix*, that person still needed to be individually cited. Secondly, the award of the *Croix de guerre* to a unit must not be confused with the award of a *fourragère*. This originally uniquely French form of recognitions consists of a woven lanyard in the colours of the ribbon of a particular medal. To be entitled to wear the *fourragère* of the *Croix de guerre 1914-1918*, a unit needed to be cited in Army level orders at least twice.²⁰ Since none of the British units listed above was mentioned more than once, none is entitled to the *fourragère* of the *Croix de guerre 1914-1918*. Nor did a single award at Army level entitle a French unit to any external sign to be worn on uniform, recognition consisting simply of the medal pinned to the unit flag or colour. In British use, however, such was the pride felt at being singled out for a very rare form of recognition, that allowance was made for the wearing of the ribbon of the *Croix de guerre 1914-1918* on the sleeves of uniform jackets, as well as in the form of a cockade in the ribbon colours worn on the headdress of some of the units. This was and still is referred to as the *Croix de guerre* ‘flash’.

Bligny 1918: the *Croix de guerre 1914-1918* to 1/4th KSLI

As a single example of the action for which a British unit was recognised with an award of the *Croix de guerre 1914-1918*, the action at Bligny on 6 June 1918, for which 1/4th (Territorial) Battalion, the King’s Shropshire Light Infantry (KSLI) was awarded the *Croix de guerre 1914-1918 avec palme* for its gallantry in seizing and holding the important Bligny Hill, will serve excellently.²¹

The 1/4th KSLI had had an unusual war career by the summer of 1918. Mobilised in August 1914, it spent three years in the Far East on the type of routine imperial garrison duty designed to free Regular battalions for more active war service.²² Its stay in Rangoon, Singapore and

²⁰ The subject of the *fourragère* is itself a complex one, worthy of an article in its own right. In World War One, basically the rule was that 2-3 mentions at Army level entitled a unit to wear a *fourragère* in the colours of the ribbon of the *Croix de guerre*; 4-5 citations entitled the *fourragère* of the *Croix de guerre* to be replaced by one in the colours of the *Médaille militaire*; 6-8 citations entitled the *fourragère* of the *Médaille militaire* to be replaced with one in the colour of the ribbon of the *Légion d'honneur*; 9-11 citations allowed the unit to add the *fourragère* of the *Croix de guerre* to that of the *Légion d'honneur*; 12-14 citations allowed a unit to add the *fourragère* of the *Médaille militaire* to that of the *Légion d'honneur*; finally, 15 or more citations allowed a unit to wear two *fourragères* of the *Légion d'honneur*. This basic system has become even more complex with the creation of the *Croix de guerre des théâtres d'opérations extérieurs*, or *Croix de guerre TOE*, in 1919 and the *Croix de guerre 1939-1945* in 1939, with a confusing multiplication of awards signified by attachments to *fourragère* known as *olives*.

²¹ Formed in 1881 by the linking of the old 53rd and 85th Foot, the new regiment was originally entitled ‘The Shropshire Regiment (King’s Light Infantry)’. The name underwent a number of changes and at the time of the Great War, the actual title of the regiment was ‘The King’s (Shropshire Light Infantry)’, however the final form of the regimental name with the brackets deleted, adopted in 1920, was universally used well before 1920 and certainly during the war – see Edwards, p.233.

²² The unit number ‘1/4th’, probably needs explanation. At the outbreak of World War One, the KSLI, in common with most infantry regiments of the British Army, consisted of two regular battalions, 1st and 2nd, one of which, theoretically was serving overseas, the other at home in the UK performing garrison duties and acting as a reinforcement depot for the overseas battalion; the two battalions would, again theoretically, exchange places and duties at regular intervals. Under the most recent Army reforms, each infantry regiment generally also included a 3rd Battalion, made up of volunteer reservists and a 4th Battalion, made up of members of the recently formed Territorial Army. With the expansion of the Army brought about by the war, the Territorial generally ‘cloned’ themselves, raising additional battalions which had the same TA number, but with an added prefix number to differentiate the units.

Hong Kong was a much more pleasant experience than that of the Regular and War Service battalions of the KSLI.²³

But the reality of the war eventually came to the 1/4th Battalion in the autumn of 1917. Returning from the Far East, they were sent immediately to the Ypres Salient and pitched straight into the 3rd Battle of Ypres. On their first day of 'real' warfare, they lost 130 men – compared with half a dozen lost to illness in the Far East over the past three years.²⁴

In the spring of 1918, the Germans launched what was to be their last great offensive on the Western Front. On 21 March their all-out attack began along the Somme and as this petered out in April, they renewed the offensive towards Kemmel until this too was fought to a standstill. 1/4th KSLI was involved in both these campaigns.²⁵

By May, there was a lull in the fighting on the British front, but the Germans then switched their attentions to the much weaker French sector in the Champagne region – an area where British troops had not previously been involved. Nevertheless, to support the French, it was decided to send to the area two British Corps, in one Division of which (19 Division of IX Corps) the 1/4th KSLI was serving. They moved by train via Paris to Rheims and had a very pleasant few weeks 'behind the lines' whilst receiving drafts of recruits to bring the unit back up to full strength. However, on 28 May, the Germans attacked in strength between the Marne and the Aisne and IX Corps was hurried into action to meet them.²⁶

Over the next few days, 1/4th KSLI (part of the 56th Brigade, along with 8th North Staffordshire Regiment and 9th Cheshire Regiment) was pushed back in a fighting retreat from Chambrey. The battalion was rapidly reduced to only 350 men by 5 June, when it was halted near the Montaigne de Bligny, a prominent hill dominating the area. The 8th North Staffordshire and 9th Cheshires held the hill itself, with 1/4th KSLI in support a mile to their rear at Chaumuzy. Its only officers by now were the temporary CO, Major Warnford (of the Middlesex Regiment), and seven subalterns.²⁷

On the night of 5 June, the Bligny positions were heavily shelled and gassed and it was clear that a major attack was due at dawn, when shelling with HE and shrapnel intensified. At 6.00 a.m., the German attack began and by 8.00, the North Staffordshires and Cheshires were taking heavy casualties on Bligny Hill, their wounded streaming back towards Chaumuzy.²⁸

By 9.30 a.m., the Germans had stormed the hill and the North Staffordshires and Cheshires were fighting their way down its slopes towards the 1/4th KSLI position.

Major Warnford was ordered by Brigade HQ to lead 1/4th KSLI in a counter attack against Bligny Hill at 12.45 p.m., after a brief artillery barrage; its aim was to retake the crest and drive off the German defenders.²⁹ 1/4th KSLI were to advance in three waves, the first led by Lt. G.W. Bright with Lt. Colin and A Company; Lt. Graves led B Company in the second wave and Lt. Derbyshire led C Company in the third. A fourth wave, D Company, under Major Warnford, would follow up as a reserve.

Thus 4th KSLI (TA) spawned a sister 4th Battalion (which saw home service only), the senior battalion taking the number 1/4th and the junior one the number 2/4th. At the end of the war the 2/4th KSLI was disbanded and 1/4th KSLI reverted to its pre-war title.

23 For an account of the Far Eastern service of 1/4th KSLI, see Wood, Major W.De B., 1925 *History of the King's Shropshire Light Infantry in the Great War 1914-1918*, pp.96-105.

24 Wood, *ibid*, pp.107-108.

25 *Ibid*, pp.109-114.

26 *Ibid*, p.115.

27 *Ibid*.

28 *Ibid*, p.116.

29 *Ibid*.

The initial ten-minute barrage never materialised, but the attack went in all the same. From their trench line near Chaumuzy, the battalion had to cross about a mile of open fields, full of standing corn, in clear view of the Germans on Bligny Hill. As soon as the first wave set off, shrapnel was poured down on them and as they neared the base of the hill, machine gun and rifle fire opened up. Of the fewer than 200 men of 1/4th KSLI who attacked across the open fields, 80 were casualties by the time the foot of the hill was reached.³⁰

In the dead ground at the bottom of the hill, Bright met the remnants of the North Staffordshires and the Cheshires under Major Martin. Whilst Martin talked to Bright about launching a counter-attack back up the hill, the Major was wounded by shrapnel, so it fell to Lieutenant George Bright himself to lead the assault right up the slopes of the hill under what he later recalled as 'extremely heavy enemy fire'. Not only heavy fire, but also difficult physical conditions, as the lower slopes of the hill were shrouded with vines; this makes it all the more amazing that so few men could rush up this long, steep slope under heavy fire and reach the top alive, let alone drive off an entrenched enemy.³¹

Bright led the three lines of 1/4th KSLI, with the remains of the North Staffordshires and Cheshires as a fourth wave, straight up the hill and, as he later said:

(It) was soon over ... the first wave was in the enemy trenches within five minutes and as the other waves arrived, "Jerries were rushing out from their slit trenches with their hands up."³²

The Germans fled the hill, leaving 30 prisoners and many dead, although they retained a foothold at its base, leaving Bright still in a dangerous position, with only 150 men left to hold a Brigade frontage extending over half a mile and with both flanks exposed. As expected, a heavy bombardment was directed onto the hill within thirty minutes – though this turned out to be the British barrage which should have preceded the attack!³³

By the time the barrage finished, Bright's total force was down to 100 effectives. Nevertheless, he ordered his men to dig in and sent patrols out to try to contact any other units on his flanks. Eventually, they contacted French troops and 5th Welsh Regiment.³⁴

To Bright's surprise and anger, at 6.00 pm he was ordered by Brigade HQ to retire back down the hill so that a 'full scale' attack on the positions could be launched by the Brigade and the French. He replied to the order saying that it was impossible to move and finally received a message from Divisional HQ asking the Shropshires to 'stick to it' and promising reinforcements.

During the rest of the evening and night, the remnants of 1/4th KSLI on Bligny Hill were subjected to shrapnel shelling and sniping, but continued to send out patrols to 'deal with' German parties probing the defences. Bright's main fear was that as daylight came the Germans would put down a heavy barrage and assault the hill. Fortunately, late at night, as 'a great relief to all of us', a battalion of Northumberland Fusiliers came up as an advanced party of reinforcements, with others following. Around midnight, 1/4th KSLI – reduced to only 100 men – was relieved, and left the hill they had fought over for 12 hours. The exhausted men reached the Brigade Reserve trenches just as day broke.³⁵

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid, p.117.

33 Ibid, p.116.

34 Ibid, p.117.

35 Ibid.

Not surprisingly, Bright was awarded the French *Croix de guerre* for his actions on Bligny Hill (although he received no recognition from the British Army).³⁶

More to the point, the whole attack had been watched by the French General, Berthelot, who was so impressed with the gallantry and dash of the 1/4th KSLI that he secured an immediate award of the *Croix de guerre avec palme* for the whole battalion.³⁷ The citation stated:

On the 6th June 1918, when the right flank of a British Brigade was being seriously threatened by the progress of a heavy enemy attack, the 1-4th Battalion of the King's Shropshire Light Infantry, which had been held in reserve, was called upon to counter-attack an important position from which their comrades had just been ejected.

With magnificent dash, this Battalion rushed the hill on which the enemy had established themselves, inflicting heavy losses on them and in the course of hand-to-hand fighting captured an officer and 28 other ranks.

Thanks to this gallant and spirited recapture of the key to the whole defensive position, the line was completely restored. The dash, energy and intrepidity with which, on this memorable occasion, the 1-4th KSLI carried all before it, was largely responsible for the retrieval of a situation which had temporarily become critical.³⁸

The award of the French medal to a Territorial battalion of the KSLI was deemed a signal honour and greeted with great pleasure.³⁹ *Général* Berthelot himself came to Shrewsbury in June 1922 to personally pin the *Croix de guerre avec palme* to the Regimental Colour of the battalion.

The *Croix de guerre* 'flash' today

'BLIGNY' was conferred as a unique battle-honour on 4th KSLI and 'Bligny Day' was celebrated as a 'Regimental Day' on the nearest Sunday to 6 June until the recent demise of the last vestiges of the KSLI, which is discussed below. In addition to celebration of 'Bligny Day', from the day in 1922 when *Général* Berthelot had decorated the Regimental Colour with the *Croix de guerre avec palme*, all ranks wore a cockade of *Croix de guerre 1914-1918* ribbon in their Service Dress caps and a small 'flash' of the ribbon on their shoulders.

The 4th KSLI ceased to exist in 1967, but its traditions were continued by their TA successors, the Light Infantry Volunteers (formed in 1967 from the Territorial Battalions of four former light regiments, including KSLI), which became 5th Light Infantry in 1972. 5th Light Infantry itself was disbanded in 1999, but the flash continued to be worn by E Company, the West Midlands Regiment (TA), based in Shrewsbury. However, the Light Infantry itself disappeared on 1 February 2007 when, as part of the British Army's 'Future Army Structure' plan, four regiments of the British Army – Devonshire and Dorset Light Infantry, The Light Infantry, the Royal Gloucestershire, Berkshire and Wiltshire Regiment, and the Royal Green Jackets – amalgamated to form a new 'large regiment', The Rifles. The new regiment is the county regiment for the counties of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Durham, Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Oxfordshire, Shropshire, Somerset, South Yorkshire and Wiltshire.

36 Ibid. Also decorated with the *Croix de guerre*, on the recommendation of Lieutenant Bright, were Sergeant Poole and Private Greaves, both of 1/4th KSLI.

37 Ibid, pp.118-119.

38 'General Order No.371 by the General Officer Commanding the 5th French Army, dated 21st August, 1918', quoted in Wood, p.119.

39 During the war, 1/4th KSLI lost a total of 11 officers and 253 other ranks killed; 77 officers and 1,260 other ranks wounded; and 170 members taken prisoner (of whom three died in captivity) – Wood, p.122.



As a result of the 2007 amalgamation, unfortunately the battle honour 'BLIGNY' disappeared – it is no longer displayed by the new regiment. However, the *Croix de guerre 1914-1918* 'flash', previously worn by 2nd Battalion the Devonshire Regiment (see above) and 4th Battalion the King's Shropshire Light Infantry, two of the ancestral regiments of The Rifles, continues to be worn to this day by all rank of The Rifles in appropriate orders of dress (left).

As for the 4th KSLI itself, its successor sub-unit, E (Light Infantry) Company, the West Midlands Regiment, became E (RIFLES) Company, the Mercian Regiment during the February 2007 re-organisation. Although technically a sub-unit of the Mercian Regiment, E Company, based at Bligny House TA Centre, Cophorne Barracks, Shrewsbury, the ancestral home of the KSLI, wears the badges and accoutrements of The Rifles and thus the *Croix de guerre 1914-1918* 'flash' of 4th KSLI lives on.⁴⁰

Finally, as for the other British Army units awarded the *Croix de guerre 1914-1918*:

149th Brigade, Royal Field Artillery – disbanded after the war and never re-raised.⁴¹

5th Field Battery, Royal Field Artillery continues to serve as 5 (GIBRALTAR 1779-1783) Battery, RA, as a constituent battery of 19 Field Regiment (The Highland Gunners) RA; the members of the battery wear the cockade of the *Croix de guerre* on all forms of head-dress and the flash on the sleeve of appropriate uniforms.⁴²

8th Battalion the West Yorkshire Regiment was disbanded at the end of World War One and never re-raised.⁴³

6th Battalion the Black Watch – reconstituted as part of the TA after World War One and served in France in the 1940 campaign, then on home defence duties; following a series of reorganisations over the years, the unit is now A (Black Watch) Company, 7th Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland (7 SCOTS); however, despite the best efforts of the Regimental Secretary, permission to wear the *Croix de guerre 1914-1918* flash earned by 6th Black Watch in 1918 has been denied.⁴⁴

40 Interestingly, and sadly, while The Rifles have adopted the *Croix de guerre 1914-1918* flash earned by 2nd Devons in 1918, the Colonel Commandant of the regiment rejected a strong argument to have the insignia of the United States Army Presidential Unit Citation retained as a uniform embellishment for The Rifles. The US Army PUC was awarded to 1st Battalion the Gloucestershire Regiment for its heroic doomed stand at the Imjin River in Korea in 1951 and was worn by the Glosters and their successors, right up until the time the regiment was rolled into The Rifles – see von Merveldt, p.5.

41 The 149th Brigade RFA was a war raised unit and was disbanded at the end of the war and there was no continuity between it and any unit of the re-organised post-war British Army.

42 Horne, 'History of 5 (GIBRALTAR 1779-1783) Battery'. The original Special Order of 1918 from HQ IX Corps announcing award of the *Croix de guerre avec palmes* to 5th Field Battery was signed by a Staff Officer on Corps HQ, Major Bernard Law Montgomery, Royal Warwickshire Regiment.

43 The 8th West Yorks was a war raised unit and was disbanded at the end of the war and there was no continuity between it and any unit of the re-organised post-war British Army.

44 Personal e-mail to the author from Lieutenant Colonel (Retd) R.M. (Roddy) Riddell, Regimental Secretary, The Black Watch, dated 28 March 2010.

9th Battalion Tank Corps – became the 9th Royal Tank Regiment but disbanded shortly after the end of World War One; re-raised in 1940 and disbanded in 1946, it is not known if the *Croix de guerre* flash was ever worn.⁴⁵

12th Battalion the Cheshire Regiment – disbanded at the end of World War One and never re-raised.⁴⁶

7th Battalion the South Wales Borderers – disbanded at the end of World War One and never re-raised.⁴⁷

12th Battalion the Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders – disbanded at the end of World War One and never re-raised.⁴⁸

24th Field Ambulance, Royal Army Medical Corps – following a history of disbandment, re-raising, re-tasking and re-naming, the unit is now C (24) Squadron, 3rd Close Support Medical Regiment, 3rd Armoured Division, and continues to wear the *Croix de guerre* flash.⁴⁹

All in all, an interesting sidelight on an interesting medal and I hope that readers have enjoyed learning the tale.

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45 The *Croix de guerre* awarded to 9th Battalion, Tank Corps, later 9th Royal Tank Regiment, was at one time held in trust for the unit by 3rd Royal Tank Regiment, however, 3rd RTR amalgamated with 2nd RTR in 1992, so, presumably, the *Croix de guerre* of 9th Battalion, Tank Corps/9th RTR is held by 2nd RTR.

46 The 12th Cheshire was a war raised unit and was disbanded at the end of the war and there was no continuity between it and any unit of the re-organised post-war British Army.

47 The 7th SWB was a war raised unit and was disbanded at the end of the war and there was no continuity between it and any unit of the re-organised post-war British Army.

48 The 12th Argylls was a war raised unit and was disbanded at the end of the war and there was no continuity between it and any unit of the re-organised post-war British Army.

49 British Army, 2010 '3 Medical Regiment', <http://www.army.mod.uk/army-medical-services/10565.aspx>

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THE ANTI-CHINESE RIOTS BY THE AIF IN MELBOURNE, DECEMBER 1914

Peter Hopper

Had a final night with Dorothy and her people.
Bugler killed in Little Bourke Street brawl last evening.
Crowd making reprisals tonight.

Extract from Sapper Hubert Anthony's diary 20/12/1914. 1

It was the above reference in Sapper Anthony's diary that first drew my attention to the unrest that had erupted in Melbourne in late December 1914. Troops from the vast recruiting camp at Broadmeadows had flocked into Melbourne on Saturday 19 December 1914 and it took very little to spark a riot that unfortunately got out of control.

Broadmeadows is located about 16 kilometres north of the Melbourne CBD and was the site of a huge training camp for thousands of newly enlisted AIF volunteers in the early months of the First World War. By December 1914, close to 20,000 men were camped out in vast lines of tents undergoing their final training before embarking for Egypt and ultimately Gallipoli. The camp was connected to Melbourne by rail so it was relatively easy for the men to head south to Melbourne to spend their final days before being taken to Port Melbourne where the troopships awaited them.

The first indications of unrest were seen early on Sunday morning, 20 December. A large crowd of up to 300 soldiers assembled outside the Chinese shop in Little Bourke Street. They asserted that one of their comrades, a young bugler from Western Australia, had been so severely kicked by the proprietor on Friday night that it had been necessary to send him to hospital.² The police arrived and attempted to persuade the men to disperse and go home. It appeared that nothing further would come of the incident but rumours began to be circulated that the injured man had died in hospital. Later that day a crowd of soldiers reappeared in Little Bourke Street, their anger fuelled by the story of the death of one of their comrades. A brick was thrown through the window of Wallach's furniture shop at around 6.30 pm.³ About an hour later a more organised body of soldiers arrived intent on doing greater damage. A bugle call had attracted hundreds to the site. The men spoke openly of running all the Chinese out of Little Bourke Street. It was also rumoured that thousands of troops had broken camp at Broadmeadows and were heading towards Melbourne to join in the action.⁴

The angry crowd now fixed its attention to the breaking of shop windows in Little Bourke Street. Police reinforcements were sent from Russell Street to quell and disperse the rioters. Several arrests were made although this encouraged rescue attempts by the troops. Major MacInerney, provost marshal, arrived on the scene and attempted to get the men to fall in and march away. This was not always successful. On one occasion the marching men came across a pile of stones and bricks and could not resist the temptation to break rank and recommence the stone throwing.⁵

Eventually the police were able to seal off Little Bourke Street, between Swanston and Russell Streets, against all traffic. Constables were stationed at each end of the street and groups of

1 D. & M. Anthony (ed), *Letters Home*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, NSW, 2009, p. 48.

2 *The Age*, 21 December 1914.

3 *The Argus*, 21 December 1914

4 *Ibid.*

5 *The Age*, 21 December 1914.

military police were scattered between these points. This led to a concentration of rioters in Russell Street and Swanston Street.⁶ They threatened to storm the police station itself. Outside the station the crowd was so dense that the tram traffic was temporarily held up. Police had to be stationed outside the police station with batons raised to prevent further action. The unrest continued for the next few hours and fortunately a deputation of the men went to the Melbourne Hospital where they learned that the only soldier who had died that day had been a medical case, admitted some days ago.⁷ Fortunately this news was relayed back to the rioters. Many must have felt somewhat foolish for having taken such action and gradually the area was cleared and peace was restored. Seven men and one constable had been treated for cuts and abrasions at this stage.

On Monday, 22 December, further riotous behaviour erupted in the city. This time gangs of civilians, youths of the hooligan type, according to *The Age*, incited semi-drunken soldiers to attempt to once again break into Little Bourke Street.⁸ The situation was so bad that between 9.00pm and 9.40pm the police stopped pedestrians from proceeding along Swanston Street, north of Bourke St.

As a result of the outbreak the following arrests were made: Arthur Clayton, a soldier, 20 years of age, was charged with having broken a plate-glass window at 244 Little Bourke Street, the property of Ah Hooie, which was valued at £2.5s; Albert Matthews, a soldier, and William Edwards, a soldier, 28 years of age, were charged with similar offences, and Harold Daws, 28 years of age, a soldier, was charged with having used indecent language and having behaved in an offensive manner in Russell Street; Alfred Murphy, 21, a labourer, was charged with having assaulted Constable Fraser. It was alleged that Murphy had thrown a brick which struck the constable on the shoulder; Harold Allison, a laundryman, 18 years of age, was charged with having to answer a count of breaking a pane of glass, and unlawfully carrying a firearm (a loaded revolver); Ah Hooie, who was injured during the affray, was treated at the Melbourne Hospital for a cut eye and other minor injuries.⁹

On Monday morning several of the men who had been arrested were brought before the City Court. William Esdaile, a civilian, was charged with behaving in an offensive manner. He pleaded not guilty but was fined 40s with the alternative of 14 days imprisonment. Arthur Clayton, the soldier, was fined £2 and to pay £2.10s for damages and 10s costs, in default 21 days imprisonment. He admitted to being drunk at the time. Albert Matthews was fined £2, with £1 damages and 10s costs, in default 21 days imprisonment. He admitted he was a fool. Harold Allison, the laundryman, was charged with having broken the window of Quong Loong, 177 Little Bourke Street. He was fined 20s, in default 7 days in respect to the firearm charge; and he was ordered to pay a fine of £2, with £1 damages and 10s costs, for breaking the window, or to go to gaol for 21 days. Harold Daws was fined £3, or 21 days, on the indecent language charge, and £5, or one month's imprisonment for the insulting behaviour. Murphy and Edwards also received severe fines for their misdemeanours. Another soldier, Frank M'Entee, was charged with having assaulted Ah Kee at 2.15am on Monday. He was fined £5, with 10s costs or one month's imprisonment.¹⁰

All the soldiers on trial were members of the AIF and were preparing to leave by ship from Melbourne later that month. This fact worked in their favour to some extent. On 23 December two more soldiers were put on trial for their part in the riot. Leslie Driscoll showed great remorse for his actions. The presiding magistrate, Mr Tanner advised him "As you are going

⁶ *The Argus*, 21 December 1914.

⁷ Driver Charles Hobill (672) Aust Army Service Corps.

⁸ *The Age*, 22 December 1914.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

away to fight, we do not wish to record a conviction against you, but we hope this will be a lesson to you".¹¹ Other soldiers convicted were David Crear and Ian McGregor who were not in uniform at the time of their arrest. They were charged with having used indecent language and resisting arrest. George Willis, Arthur Chaplin and Victor Quinn were the last of the group to face the court. A further batch of civilians also faced the court on Wednesday. Robert Box, Norman Cousins, William Fogarty, James Patterson and Alexander Goodlett, all received fines or terms of imprisonment. Goodlett was sent to gaol for one month without the option of a fine for his part in throwing a broken bottle at a police horse. He claimed he was drunk at the time.¹²

The name of Private Maurice Crotty, B Squadron, Light Horse, was mentioned in the press on Wednesday, 23 December, as having been the mistaken soldier who was treated in Melbourne Hospital on Sunday night.¹³ He was in no way associated with the city disturbance. It was a simple coincidence that he was treated at the hospital for a split lip, which was caused by a fall whilst at work in the camp at Broadmeadows. He was not beaten by a Chinaman. The other soldier in the hospital who died on 20 December was Driver Charles Hobill. He lost a battle with meningitis. His death may also have been used to promote the story of the wounded soldier that created so much anger among the servicemen.

Public reaction to the news of the riot was immediate. Representatives of various religious denominations wrote letters to the press condemning the disturbance. They were particularly upset that the riot took place on a Sunday evening when a divine services was being conducted in Little Bourke Street at an open-air meeting of the Chinese Christian Union.¹⁴ Then there were the calls to have the hotels closed of a night to prevent the soldiers from obtaining alcohol.¹⁵

The Minister of Defence, Senator Pearce, ordered an immediate inquiry into the riot. The report of the inquiry was made public on 30 December, eleven days after the riot. It declared that action has been taken which it is hoped will prevent a recurrence of such foolish conduct.¹⁶ Details of what this action entailed amounted to warnings to the soldiers about further such riots. The following statement was issued by the Minister:

The Federal Government has had under consideration the matter of the disturbance that took place in Melbourne recently when several Chinese were assaulted by soldiers, and considerable damage was done to premises occupied by Chinese, particularly in Little Bourke Street. The Minister for External Affairs (Mr Mahon) has already caused an expression of his regret at the incident to be conveyed to the consul-general for China, and now desires it to be publicly known that the Federal Government views the unruly conduct of a certain number of soldiers on this occasion mentioned with grave displeasure. Warnings have been issued, which will, it is hoped and believed, make impossible any repetition of such misbehaviour. The Government sincerely regrets the incident, and sympathies with the Chinese residents who suffered injury or loss on the occasion mentioned. It has been explained that the whole affair arose out of a misapprehension as to certain facts, and the Government feels confident that its regret is shared by most, if not all, of those who took part in the disturbance.¹⁷

This rioting in Melbourne led to the first of the calls for restrictions on the sale of alcohol. Some sought complete prohibition while others wanted the hotels to close at 6 o'clock.¹⁸ These calls intensified in Sydney in February 1916 when more serious rioting occurred in Liverpool. There were also calls for the military to establish wet canteens in their camps.¹⁹ The improper use of

11 *The Age* 23 December 1914.

12 *Ibid.*

13 *Ibid.*

14 See "Letter to the Editor", *The Age*, 23 December 1914.

15 *The Age*, 30 December 1914.

16 *The Argus* 30 December 1914.

17 *Ibid.*

18 *The Argus*, 5 January 1915

19 *Ibid.*

alcohol, however, was a social problem that remained throughout the war. On 8 January 1915 a city resort was opened alongside St Paul's Cathedral in Flinders Street, Melbourne, in an attempt to provide somewhere other than hotels for the servicemen to frequent while on leave. This resort consisted of a spacious tent that was well-oored and provided with electric light. It had conveniences for writing, reading, music and games. It was free to the soldiers although refreshments (non-alcoholic) could be secured at a small cost.²⁰

Was there a racist element behind the attack on the Chinese community in Little Bourke Street? There had been anti-Chinese demonstrations in many major Australian cities in May 1888, the most serious being in Brisbane.²¹ Robert Box, a labourer, who was arrested for his part in the disturbance, was quoted as having referred to the Chinese as "the yellow dogs" among a list of obscenities he was reported to have used.²² The call by the servicemen to have the Chinese "run out of Bourke Street" also appears to be motivated by race.²³ However perhaps the men would have turned on any other nationality with the same force if they had thought they were responsible for the death of one of their comrades. There were no other anti-Chinese riots in Melbourne during the war. China, in fact, was part of the Allied camp during the war and provided labourers on the Western Front.

Would the riot have taken place with the absence of alcohol? Possibly not! However several hundred inebriated servicemen wandering the streets of Melbourne in the early hours of Sunday morning in December 1914 became a recipe for a disaster. Throughout the war similar disturbances between soldiers and police occurred in Melbourne. The worst of these took place in August 1915 and January 1916.²⁴ Alcohol was a key factor in each of these. Of the eleven servicemen who were arrested and put on trial for their part in the rioting only four finished up serving overseas in the AIF.²⁵ The others were possibly told that their service days were over. Little did they know at the time that this was indeed a blessing?

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²⁰ *The Argus*, 7 January 1915

²¹ "Anti Chinese Riot: Lower Albert Street" in Evans, Raymond & Carloe Ferries with Jeff Rickett (eds) *Radical Brisbane: An unruly history*, Carlton North, Vic., Vulgar Press, 2004.

²² *The Age*, 23rd December 1914

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ See unpublished papers by P. S. Hopper: "Swanston Street Riot, 1915" and "Digger Unrest, Melbourne, 1916".

²⁵ (i) Arthur Clayton ended up embarking from Brisbane on the HMAT *Seang Bee* on 13 February 1915. (ii) Albert Matthews left Melbourne on the same day as his trial (22/12/14). (iii) William Edwards also embarked from Melbourne on HMAT *Ceramic* on the same day as his trial. He was wounded at Gallipoli and was sent home in 1916. (iv) George Willis left Melbourne on 19 February 1915 on HMAT *Runic*.

THE RED DEVIL: CAPTAIN HARRY BUTLER, AFC, PIONEER AVIATOR

Samantha Battams and Leslie Parsons

Although hailing from a tiny farming community, in his time Captain Henry John “Harry” Butler (1889-1924) was a household name and known throughout the commonwealth as ‘Butler of South Australia’. Upon Butler’s death, SA’s *Register* wrote:

No name was better known, no individual more esteemed and beloved than Harry Butler ... Harry Butler as an airman was unrivalled, incomparable, and alone; and although he made many lives happier because he lived, we sincerely regret his early and greater flight aloft.

Butler, also known as ‘The Red Devil’ in contemporary newspapers, after his red Bristol monoplane, belonged to a small group of Australian aviation pioneers who lived in exciting and dangerous times. Many served in the Royal Flying Corps or the Australian Flying Corps during the first World War, where the average life expectancy for a pilot was only 2-6 weeks, or 17 flying hours. Even when they survived the war, they often made the ‘ultimate sacrifice’ in pursuing their passion for flying, dying in their 20s and 30s.

To truly appreciate the exploits of these pioneer aviators calls upon us to imagine the time when over 100 years ago, aviation was in its infancy and thoughts of regular flying were little more than a dream. In 1902 the *Register* newspaper asked ‘Will airships ever be practicable?’

In the early days, aircraft were little developed beyond (Australian) Hargrave’s box kites, made of wood and fabric using small engines, and often made in backyards. Pilots in these aircraft were at the mercy of the unsophisticated machinery as well as unfavourable weather. A great deal of courage was required to intentionally place oneself in such craft and attempt to fly. This is especially true of the WW1 pilots, especially where parachutes were rarely given to pilots as they were in short supply and reserved for ‘observers’ in air balloons. Even the most skilful of aviators had to rely upon not only their ability but also their luck, as was reflected in Butler’s life motto. Despite his undoubted skill as a pilot (often referred to in contemporary reports) and his commitment to safety (he never drunk spirits for this reason), Butler’s motto was ‘Luck, Pluck and Ability’.

From his early days on the farm outside Minlaton, Yorke Peninsula, SA, Harry had a love of all things related to aviation. His obsession with flying was established from a childhood spent experimenting with the wingspans and aeronautics of his mother’s chickens and making model planes with his friends. As a young man, he joined another early SA aviation pioneer in Carl W. Wittber on the plains north of Adelaide, developing homemade aircraft and learning all he could about flying. It took him 9 hours motorcycling from Minlaton to Dry Creek to join these efforts. Although these experiments often only resulted in hopping across rough fields, it was enough to peak his interest and firm up his dream of flying. The government later ordered that all backyard aircraft operations were to be ceased due to WW1: in anger, Wittber burnt his planes.

The First World War was partly seen as an opportunity to realise Harry’s dream of flying. After travelling to Melbourne with his sights set on joining the Australian Flying Corps, he showed his natural aptitude by becoming the only applicant to be accepted (as an aeromechanic) from his group into the recently formed Central Flying School at Point Cook. *The Bulletin* observed that this farm boy (who had only attended primary school) had won a place over other university and college educated applicants (he was later to attend Christchurch College, now part of Cambridge in the UK).

A hiccup occurred when Butler's chronic asthma and lack of formal education caused problems for his flying career with the AFC. There were also limited opportunities for flying due to the small number of aircraft available at the time in Australia. But the strength of Butler's desire to fly and do his bit for the allied war effort led him to beg his father to pay his passage to the UK so he could enter the Royal Flying Corps. He vowed that he would go to the UK 'by hook or by crook'. Once there, he joined the RFC as an engineer and quickly became a pilot and rose up through the ranks, becoming a Flight Instructor in Turnberry and Chief Flight Instructor in Yorkshire.

As a pilot over the Western Front in France and then as an instructor training 2,700 pilots in the UK, Harry Butler's contribution to the allied war effort was enormous. He was also involved in protecting the UK, chasing German planes which were dropping bombs on Ramsgate. He was subsequently mentioned in despatches for his part in the capturing of two German submarines and later decorated with the Air Force Cross. He was also the first 'airman' to land in Turnberry, Scotland, and the first to fly airmail in such parts.

A small number of pioneer aviators who made it through the war, like Butler, used the skills that they had honed in combat in the skies over Europe to bring aviation to the Australian people. Harry's fame and contribution to aviation did not thus end with the armistice in 1918, as he purchased two planes from the RFC, one of which was the Bristol M1c monoplane, 'The Red Devil', the fastest of its kind at the time, reaching a speed of 132 miles per hour, little more than the modern family car. Butler was determined to fulfil his passion for flying and plans for civil aviation, although this would also be financially costly, leading him to sell to his brother his share in farming land, and borrowing money from the family.

Butler was on a path to fulfilling a promise he had made to his mother during the war, to one day return triumphantly to his home town in an aeroplane, the likes of which people had never seen before. True to his word, Harry flew from Adelaide to Minlaton over St Vincent's gulf in stormy weather, and witnessed a homecoming that drew crowds from all over the Yorke Peninsula as well as Adelaide. He put the small farming community on the map as he had conducted the first ever air crossing over a major body of water in the southern hemisphere and the first airmail over water. For the trip he wore a primitive life jacket in the form of plastic tubing under his clothing, and a steam launch was waiting in the gulf in case his mission failed. The 4000 postcards he carried held a message from Butler on one side

Dear Friend,

If ever you feel a bit down the Aeroplane will carry you heavenward where the Sunshine of dear old Aussie shines eternally. So keep on Smiling. The Plane was great in War but it will be greater in Peace. This little souvenir from the Clouds is the beginning of a new era in mail and passenger transport. So keep your eye on the Aeroplane.

Yours, Harry J Butler, Captain R.A.F.

Perhaps he also had posterity in mind when on the way back to Adelaide he dropped a leaflet over his old school at Koolywartie:

To my old school and scholars, I sincerely hope that this little message from the air will bring you the very best of luck.

When he returned to Adelaide, he was met by a large crowd headed by Chief Justice Sir George Murray and Governor Galway who patriotically declared 'you have made South Australia proud'.

In the next few years, Harry Butler was a central figure in Australian aviation. Butler's plan to bring aviation to the people involved purchasing an 'airport' at Northfield and starting the first commercial flying business with his engineering partner Kauper, so everyone could experience the joys they had discovered as aviators. This is where the South Australian Smith brothers

landed after they completed their historic first UK-Australia flight in December 1919: a small memorial currently marks the spot.

Butler's strong belief was that aeroplanes could be used for a number of civilian purposes, but he needed the support of the people to embrace this venture. Butler took the first aerial photographs of Adelaide and surrounds and also sold to the government what became Adelaide's first government airport at Hendon.

Keen to show the great potential of aviation, Butler used every available opportunity to have the Red Devil in the air. As the nickname of his plane suggested, Butler was a daredevil with a love of aerobatics at a time when it was highly dangerous. The local newspapers could not get enough of the cheery, eccentric and debonair Captain Butler, and he became as regular a fixture in their pages as he was in the sky above Adelaide. As a contemporary report said of one demonstration

Opening the performance with a display of looping the loop, Captain Butler included in his remarkable exhibition the spinning nose dive, rolling, half-rolling, the side slip, Immelman turns, spiral descents, and flying upside down. One of his most sensational feats was a spinning nose dive from a very high altitude.

Crowds emerged wherever his little plane went, performing spins, rolls and death defying dives leaving crowds hungry for more. Large crowds flocked to such aerial displays to see the 'flying man' and his aeroplane, for many the first ever sight of an aircraft. As the *Register* reported

People were ranged at every coign of vantage – on housetops, on motor cars, on fences and anywhere and everywhere. And when it was over, everyone had been thrilled by the inspiring demonstration given by this fearless flying man. The admiration of the people knew no bounds.

Butler was also community minded, strongly supporting patriotic and repatriation causes. He used his newfound fame by volunteering his time and aeroplane to promote the first Australian Peace Loan, which raised funds for his fellow Returned soldiers. In Premier Peake's words at the Peace Loan Launch, *'the money was required for repatriation purposes to provide for the future lives of the men who had fought so gloriously to save this country'*. The crowd attending was more than 40,000. Butler also dropped his 'Bombs of Good Luck' pamphlets over the city to promote the Peace Loan. Subsequently, an oil portrait was given to Butler by the Central Traders Association for his contribution to the Peace Loan Day and to honor his 'skill and intrepidity' as 'the pioneer aviator of the state'. Along with other famous returned airmen, Captain Frank McNamara VC and Lt F S Briggs, Harry Butler also engaged in Australia's first aerial race over Adelaide to promote the Peace Loan.

Butler's exploits brought him into contact with the prominent people of his day, including SA Governor Galway, who requested his presence at Government House just after he arrived in Adelaide from the war effort, and Lady Hackett, mining entrepreneur and philanthropist and wife of the City Mayor. He also met Prince Edward VII, the Prince of Wales on his visit to Australia, and in England the French General Foch, who delivered the terms of the armistice on behalf of the allies. Butler also welcomed Prime Minister Hughes into Adelaide after Hughes returned from England, following the train with his low flying aeroplane. He finally dropped Peace Loan literature and performed an aerial display over the Adelaide Railway Station.

Butler also dropped a tree from an aeroplane into Gallipoli Grove, South Parklands which Chief Justice Sir George Murray planted for 'Wattle Day' in memory of the war deed, which was then celebrated as Australia's national day. The tree was

a memorial of the initiation of air navigation in South Australia, and a tribute from a gallant soldier to his comrades who have fallen in the field of battle.

At the time Justice Murray stated that in the future there may be bigger trees dropped from greater heights in the future, but that this tree had the honour of being the first!

Butler had become a figurehead for a community which was trying to get back on its feet after the terrible costs of the war, and where large sections of the community had lost loved ones. He also appeared to be aware of his role not only in aviation, but in terms of serving and building the spirit of the community. Butler would go out of his way to bring pleasure to people through his flying displays, flying over hospitals and children's homes. He even got fan letters from prisoners who could glimpse his departures from Northfield and willed him into the air.

Butler's marriage to a local teacher whom he met at Minlaton prior to the war, Elsa Birch Gibson of Bool Lagoon, was also a public event. The ceremony was held at St Pauls in Pulteney Street and attended by the people of Adelaide in their thousands, with street traffic being suspended. As Elsa said 'My people had to come from [Bool Lagoon] and his people had to come from the Peninsula and the whole of Adelaide would have been disappointed if they hadn't seen him married'. Some of the crowd sat on balconies and rooftops to get a glimpse of the couple, and one excited member of the public pulled off the bride's veil, whilst Butler was encouraged by Priest Bleby to escape through a side door of the church. Elsa had been 'a reluctant bride' of 22 years of age, who had wanted to see 'a bit of the world' before she was married and forced to give up her profession.

Ever aware of the precariousness of his profession, Butler regularly visited fortune tellers, but his luck ran out when tragically, in 1922, he had a serious crash in Minlaton. This led to multiple breakages in his face and a number of operations to have his face reconstructed. The doctors involved in these operations included the distinguished surgeon, Colonel Sir Henry Simpson Newland, and founding member of the Anesthetists Association, Dr Gilbert Brown.

A year and a half later, Captain Harry Butler suddenly died from an abscess of the brain, aged 34, bringing shock to the community. The outpouring of emotion and grief by the public and the many thousands that lined the streets for his military funeral procession (despite just a day's notice), were testament to his popularity and the regard with which the people of South Australia held him. His state funeral was accorded full military honors. Following this, the SA community raised funds for a memorial, through the *Register* newspaper. In the wake of the funeral, *The Pioneer* newspaper asked the local community to remember that

Though short the span of his life, it was filled with honor and achievement— and to what greater ambition can man aspire for truly indeed one crowded hour of glorious life is worth an age without a name.

After Harry's death, Elsa Butler gave up teaching and retrained as a nurse, following a career in the profession she had always desired, and which she was now well prepared for. She would 'see a bit of the world' as she had always wanted, nursing throughout the UK including during the bleak times of WW11 in London, before returning to Australia.

In the 1950s, a UK Doctor and postal historian, Dr Gordon Ward, started to write Butler's biography and collect information about Butler, including many letters from South Australians who had come across him (the collection was later donated to the Mortlock library, SA). In this collection is the letter of one woman who reported writing to Butler to tell him about her cockatoo that squawked '*Hurrah, here's Butler!*' the ever courteous Butler replied back that he'd heard of many cockatoos that emitted '*Here's Butler*', but none that said '*Hurrah*' before it!

Butler's memory is kept alive in Minlaton, where his historic 1919 flight marking the first crossing of a major body of water in the southern hemisphere has been regularly celebrated. The 6th August 2009 marked the 90th anniversary of this crossing, and the event was celebrated in the region, with guests including aviator Dick Smith, AO. There is also a memorial in the town housing Butler's Bristol monoplane, 'the Red Devil'. This is said to be the only original of its kind in the world. Others reminders of Butler include the 150th SA jubilee commemoration plaque on North Terrace and the portrait in the Art Gallery of SA, the memorial funded by the SA community following Butler's death.

“THE BOOZE CRUISE” AN EPISODE IN THE PEACETIME HISTORY OF THE ROYAL NAVY 1923-1924

Rohan Goyne

The “World Cruise” of a special service squadron of the Royal Navy was an inter-war episode of flag waving across the world’s oceans from arguably a declining world power which was struggling to recover from the First World War of 1914-1918. This paper will examine the cruise and in particular how it was received in Australia at the time.

Background

From 27 November 1923 to 28 September 1924, a special service squadron of the Royal Navy composed of the battle cruisers HMS *Hood* and HMS *Repulse* and the First Light Cruiser Squadron, namely: HM Ships *Delhi*, *Danae*, *Dauntless*, *Dragon* and *Dunedin* participated in the “Cruise of the Special Service Squadron”. The cruise was also referred to variously as the “Empire Cruise”, the “World Cruise” and the “World Booze Cruise”.

Note: Picture of Vice Admiral Field.

The squadron was under the overall command of Vice Admiral Sir Frederick L. Field and the Light Cruiser Squadron was under the command of Rear Admiral, the Honourable Sir Hubert G. Brand.

Vital Statistics of the Cruise

The “Cruise of the Special Service Squadron” lasted 307 days in total. The squadron sailed over 38, 152 miles and the ships of the squadron were visited by over one million people in the ports at which it they stopped during the cruise. As the flagship of the squadron, HMS *Hood* was visited by approximately 725,490 people¹.

The Ships of the Squadron

HMS *Hood*

Hood was built at Clydebank, September 1916 to March 1920. She displaced 42,100 tons, with a complement of 75 officers and 1,165 men for a total of 1,240.

Originally one of an intended class of four battle cruisers designed to meet specific German battle cruisers under construction. The *Hood* was the only one of her class completed as intelligence reports confirmed that the German ships would not be completed. She served as the flagship of the Battle Cruiser Squadron of the Atlantic Fleet and prior to the cruise she represented the Royal Navy at the celebrations of Brazilian independence in 1922 in company with *Repulse*.²

HMS *Repulse*

Repulse was built at Clydebank between January 1915 and September 1916. She displaced 32,000 tons, with a complement of 55 officers and 1022 men for a total of 1,077.

¹ www.hmshood.com/history/empirecruise site visited on 31/7/2007.

² McMurtrie, F.E., *Ships of the Royal Navy*, 1940, Sampson Low, Marston and Co, London p25-27.

She was laid down in 1914 as a battleship of the “Royal Sovereign” class but she was re-designed, cut in half and lengthened by about 170 feet and completed in twenty months as a lightly armoured, shallow draught, fast battle cruiser.³

HMS Delhi, Danae, Dauntless, Dragon and Dunedin.

These ships were developments of the “Cardiff Class”. Their hulls were lengthened by 20 feet to accommodate an additional gun. They each displaced 4,850 tons and had a complement of 24 officers and 427 men. The total for the five ships was 2,135 men.⁴

“The Cruise”

Note: Picture of the map of the cruise

27 November 1923

The squadron left Devonport for Sierra Leone. While enroute, the squadron conducted multiple sea boat, collision quarters and action station exercises. By 3 December, the squadron was off the Canary Islands, enroute to the West Coast of Africa. The squadron arrived at Freetown, Sierra Leone on 8 December 1923.

8-13 December 1923

The Squadron remained at Freetown and took on fuel and provisions. The Hood was visited by the Governor of Sierra Leone and leave was granted to the Port Watch. The crews conducted gunnery drills and exercised searchlights. The squadron departed for Cape Town on 13 December 1923.

13-22 December 1923

Enroute to South Africa the ships conducted day and night searchlight exercises and also action station drills. There was a “crossing the line” ceremony on 14 December 1923 and the squadron maintained an average speed of 14-16 knots down the African coast.

22 December 1923 to 2 January 1924

Upon arrival the squadron saluted dignitaries and the flagship HMS Hood was visited by the Acting Governor General. On 24 December the majority of the Hood’s crew participated in the first of many ceremonial marches through Cape Town. Leave was granted to both watches and the squadron received visitors on 23,24,26 and 28-31 December. On the 26 December, the Squadron Ball was held.

6-12 January 1924

The squadron was enroute to Zanzibar. The ships were heavily cleaned and the sea boats crews exercised. Small arms parties and searchlight exercises were also conducted.

12-17 January 1924

The squadron arrived at Zanzibar and the ships were opened for visitors. The Hood was visited by the Sultan, Khalifa Bin Harud, on 16 January 1924. For the crews life went on as usual with cleaning and provisioning duties. The Royal Marines from the Hood also participated in another ceremonial march past.

17-31 January 1924

³ McMurtie, F.E. *ibid*, 1940, London, p20-23.

⁴ McMurtie, F.E. *ibid*, 1940, London, p60-63.

The squadron proceeded to Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) and the port of Trincomalee. The squadron was placed in “At Home” status and the ships received visitors but on a smaller scale than elsewhere. The ships were again cleaned, painted and provisioned. The squadron departed for Port Swettenham, Malaya on 31 January 1924.

4-9 February 1924

The squadron arrived at Port Swettenham, Malaysia on 4 February. The squadron was placed on “At Home” status and the flagship HMS Hood received the majority of the visitors. The Hood also fired individual 17 gun salutes for the Sultan’s of Perak, Pahang and Negri Sembilan. The squadron also experienced its first casualty with the death of Abel Seaman Walter Bengier who died of malaria. A funeral was conducted for him and he was buried in a local cemetery. The squadron departed for Singapore on 9 February 1924.

10-17 February 1924

The squadron arrived at Singapore on 10 February 1924. While in port the ships were provisioned and cleaned. The Royal Marines from the Hood participated in another ceremonial march through the city. Hood also saluted his Excellency the Governor of Singapore with 17 guns and other dignitaries. The squadron departed for Western Australia on 17 February and enroute it paid a brief visit to Christmas Island on 20 February 1924.

The Special Service Squadron in Australia

The Special Service Squadron arrived in Western Australia, Fremantle on 27 February 1924. Hood’s Naval Brigade marched through both Fremantle and Perth.

The squadron also visited the following locations in Australia:

Albany	2 –6 March
Adelaide	10-15 March
Melbourne	17 to 25 March
Hobart	27 March – 3 April
Jervis Bay	5-8 April
Sydney	9-20 April (B.C.)
	9-12 April (L.C.)
Brisbane	14-22 April (L.C.)
Sydney	24-26 April (L.C.)

Whilst in Melbourne, the squadron suffered its second casualty with the death of Signal Boatswain Albert Punshon who suffered a heart attack. The crew also participated in several sporting and social events.⁶

Note: Show Original Photograph of the Squadron at anchor in the Derwent River, Hobart, sometime between 27 March to 3 April 1924.

The Squadron arrived in Sydney on 9 April 1924. The officer and petty officers of the squadron were well catered for with the provision of dinners and other official functions every night during the squadron’s stay in Sydney.

The ordinary seamen who numbered many thousands were given free travel and access to venues such as theatres and sports grounds but were left pretty much to their own devices with few organised functions beyond church services over Easter.

⁵ www.hmshood.com/history/empirecruise site visited on 31/7/2007.

⁶ www.forcez-survivors.org.uk/empirecruise site visited 30/7/2007

The Y.M.C.A was providing membership for seamen during their stay with free light meals, recreation and rest rooms, Gospel talks, and writing rooms. The large manufacturing firms were offering site visits of their factories.

Royal Naval House in Grosvenor Street was providing sleeping accommodation for 800 men each night and the Rawson Institute for Seamen was also offering cheap meals, and some entertainment.

The New South Wales Police Force had been acquainted with all the plans to entertain the Squadron. Every constable was instructed to gladly afford information and assistance, especially as to travelling instructions.

One particular function performed by the squadron whilst in Sydney was saluting the battle cruiser HMAS Australia as she was taken outside the Sydney Heads for scrapping under the Treaty obligations under the 1922 Washington Naval Treaties⁷.

After Australia

The squadron departed Australia for New Zealand on 20 April 1924. It traveled for the next five months across the Pacific stopping in Hawaii and Vancouver before proceeding down the West Coast of the United States and going through the Panama Canal. The Hood's cost to transit the Canal were \$22, 399.50 U.S. The squadron then sailed to Kingston Jamaica and then to Halifax, Nova Scotia and finally Newfoundland before returning to England on 29 September 1924.

In the House of Commons, Nancy Astor, the member for Plymouth, raised questions about why the people of London would not be seeing the men of the squadron performing a ceremonial march through the city on the squadron's return to England. The Government responded that it was more important for morale if the men were allowed to return to their wives sooner and not be delayed by an unnecessary ceremonial function. The Hansard records for the time do not reveal any statements about the success of the cruise.

The cruise had traveled across the globe and some argued it showed that Britannia still ruled the waves. Others have argued that it was an irrelevant piece of flag waving by a dying Empire, an expensive piece of empirical hubris.

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⁷ www.forcez-survivors.org.uk/empirecrise site visited 30/7/2007

THE RAAF, THE LOSS OF HMAS *ARMIDALE* & EVACUATION OF LANCER FORCE

David Vincent¹

Over the three week period from 30 November to 20 December 1942 the RAAF put in hundreds of hours in support of two naval operations to evacuate Allied personnel from Timor and search for survivors from one of the vessels involved in the first operation, HMAS *Armidale*. The RAAF's involvement has been known in general terms but some aspects have been misunderstood and, in any event, have naturally been overshadowed by events at sea. This new assessment looks behind the scenes at the RAAF's role, which extended to an important strike on an enemy-held airfield, during this time.

By November 1942, after almost a year at war against Japan, offensive air operations from the Darwin area were still limited in the main to the activities of two RAAF squadrons equipped with Lockheed Hudson reconnaissance light bombers, assisted more recently by the arrival of one squadron of Bristol Beaufighter attack aircraft. Much of the RAAF's operational effort at this time in this area (known by the RAAF as North Western Area) centred on Timor, where the Japanese were attempting to put an end to the guerrilla warfare of the Timorese-assisted 2/2nd Independent Company AIF by supporting rival factions amongst the Timorese. Having stirred hatred between the Timorese, the Japanese told the remaining Portuguese members of the community that it would be necessary to relocate them in one area for their own protection.

On 10 November, the Australian Army's Darwin-based Northern Territory Force had been advised that the Independent Company was in urgent need of relief. Along with the withdrawal of these men, the last soldiers under Dutch command in Portuguese Timor and a number of Portuguese civilians supportive of the Allied cause was recommended, with 120 women and children suggested as being first to go.

On the 18th the small wooden naval tender HMAS *Kuru* sailed to Betano on Timor's south coast to withdraw the former "Sparrow Force" commander and a small group of other personnel including three war correspondents (one of whom was Damien Parer). Major Bernard Callinan subsequently assumed command of the remaining personnel and he told readers of the post-war account of his time on Timor, *Independent Company*, that "for security reasons" the remaining personnel were now to be called Lancer Force.

Allied Land Forces HQ approved the relief of the 2/2nd Independent Company on 24 November.

The plan was straight forward; for two of three corvettes (known at the time as AMS – Australian Mine Sweeping – vessels) then based at Darwin, HMAS *Castlemaine* and HMAS *Armidale*, together with the *Kuru*, to each make two trips from Darwin to Betano to evacuate all Allied personnel (the number of Lancer Force personnel was now known to be 363 whilst estimates of the numbers of troops under Dutch control and Portuguese civilians had increased to 190 and 150 respectively). In addition, 63 replacement Netherlands East Indies soldiers (two officers and 61 native troops) would be landed during the same operation.

Despite the loss of the destroyer HMAS *Voyager* in September, corvettes had successfully rescued her crew without Japanese attack. In addition, they were the only vessels available then in Darwin with the capacity for such an undertaking and, as the Naval Officer In Charge (NOIC) Darwin, Commodore C. J. Pope, commented in the later Board of Inquiry into *Armidale*'s loss,

¹ This article grew out of research for David Vincent's *The RAAF Hudson Story Book Two*, which will be published later this year., *The RAAF Hudson Story Book One*, ISBN 0 9596052 2 3, was published in 1999.

“I naturally hoped that these small, manoeuvrable and ... fairly well armed vessels would escape serious damage”.² Although the displacement of these vessels was less than 1,000 tonnes they were the largest vessels available to Pope at the time.

Sailing orders firmed up the arrangements; *Kuru* would arrive first and after unloading a small quantity of stores would ferry injured personnel and the civilians to *Castlemaine* then return for the Dutch troops which were to be ferried to *Armidale*. Once these personnel had been returned to Darwin the ships would sail again to evacuate Lancer Force.

Kuru sailed on the night of 28 November whilst the two corvettes left Darwin early next morning. It was known that the Japanese had standard reconnaissance operations but not the timing of them apart from a daily flight along the south coast of Timor at dawn. Unfortunately, the two corvettes were found in the course of one of these aerial patrols by the Japanese at around 9.15 a.m. on the 30th, the search aircraft attacking them for about three quarters of an hour without any success. Air cover for the expedition had been ordered by Pope and, in the first instance, this was to comprise six Beaufighters of No. 31 Squadron. In addition No. 13 Squadron, one of the Hudson squadrons, had been ordered to carry out clearing searches ahead of the vessels, the squadron's operations record book indicating that four of their aircraft rendezvoused with the six Beaufighters at Cape Fourcroy “and led them to the corvettes”. The Beaufighters (one of which had to drop out of the operation early in the piece and return to base) arrived in the vicinity of the corvettes ahead of the Hudsons, fortuitously around the same time as the first follow-up attack was made by the Japanese and quickly scattered the attackers. These aircraft, believed to number only five, then headed back to whence they had come, probably Penfoei near Koepang.

By the time the Hudsons neared the corvettes the Japanese had left, but the gun crews below, taking no chances, mistakenly fired upon the new arrivals, fortunately without scoring any hits.

The clearing search continued, however, neither *Kuru* nor any enemy shipping was seen, although a V formation of three unidentified aircraft was seen about two hours after the enemy bombers had been seen. This was probably the second flight of Beaufighters which had been expected to arrive about 3.15 p.m. By the time they arrived, however, there was no Japanese aircraft present. A third flight of three Beaufighters, which commenced take-off at 4.25 p.m., was expected to reach the corvettes by 6.05 p.m.

This last flight of the day, along with the corvettes, encountered more enemy aircraft. This comprised an attack by fighters then a bombing attack against the ships about half an hour later. These actions have not been well recorded, No. 31 Squadron's operations record book simply stating that “the enemy did not succeed in attacking the corvettes during the patrol”. This did come at a cost, however, one of the aircraft and crews failing to return to base following an engagement with enemy aircraft. Whilst the Beaufighter had the advantage of speed, it did not have the manoeuvrability to match a single seat fighter in air combat.

Meanwhile, the corvettes had altered their course to confuse the enemy as to their destination, and this, together with the air attacks, delayed their arrival at Betano. Originally it was expected that *Kuru* would reach the destination at sunset on the 30th, with the corvettes to follow two hours later. Follow they did, but much later than expected, not arriving until early the following morning. *Kuru* had embarked 77 evacuees and sailed around an hour earlier, but, crucially, neither corvette was aware of this. When *Kuru* could not be found and there was no response to signals directed towards an apparently abandoned shoreline, the corvettes withdrew. This took another hour. Aboard *Armidale* still were the troops under Dutch command.

2 From ‘Commodore Pope's report to the Navy Board, attaching reports by commanding officers of *Castlemaine*, *Kuru* and *Armidale*, dated 14 December 1942’, quoted by Frank B. Walker in *HMAS Armidale: The Ship That Had to Die*, Budgetwoi, 1991 [hereafter Walker], p. 155.

As had occurred the day before, NOIC Darwin again arranged on the 30th for RAAF assistance on the 1st. Pope had signalled *Castlemaine* at 4.50 p.m. on the 30th to advise when departing Betano so “that air support ... may be arranged as early as possible tomorrow Tuesday”, and just over nine hours later he indicated that six Hudsons would undertake clearing searches from around first light “followed by three successive flights [of] Beaufighters to give further support”, i.e., top cover. Pope’s second message was sent well before the two corvettes reached Betano, however, and was clearly based on the expectation that, at that stage, the vessels would be back in Darwin harbour by midday. At this point no top cover had been arranged for the afternoon.

Soon after dawn the two corvettes had sighted and caught up with *Kuru* and arrangements were made for the evacuees to be transferred to *Castlemaine*. After this occurred Lieutenant Commander Sullivan, captain of *Castlemaine*, was informed by Lieutenant Grant, captain of the *Kuru*, that he had received orders to “go back and do the job tonight”. Sullivan was unclear of *Castlemaine*’s role at this time, even though Pope had signalled *Castlemaine* at 5.49 a.m. indicating that the operation may have to be repeated that night. Sullivan, however, had accepted that another attempt to evacuate those waiting on Timor was necessary and, evidently unaware of Pope’s advice, had suggested a new operation to Pope at 8.40 a.m. This was approved by Pope at 9.50 a.m. *Castlemaine* was now to return to Darwin and search for the Beaufighter crew shot down late the previous day en route while *Kuru* and *Armidale* would return to Betano to resume the evacuation attempt.

A Japanese aircraft had already found the corvettes by this time and, despite a bombing attack, there had been no injuries or damage. Three flights of Beaufighters appeared at roughly hourly intervals during the morning, but no enemy aircraft were present at the same time.

The two corvettes parted company at around 11 a.m. shortly after *Castlemaine*, perhaps mindful that top cover was coming to an end, requested further air cover, fighters being specifically mentioned (Pope advised later that afternoon that fighters were expected to be based at Drysdale, in north western Western Australia, from the following day and records of No. 77 Squadron confirm that five of their Kittyhawks were flown to Drysdale by the 2nd. The squadron had been operational in North Western Area since August.) It was arranged for another three Beaufighters to be provided that afternoon, however, and Pope indicated that they could be expected at 2 p.m.

From wireless messages sent by *Armidale* and *Kuru*, however, it was known that there had been air attacks on both vessels after 12.35. Pope’s advice that three Beaufighters were on the way was sent at 1.15 p.m. and he followed that up with another message 45 minutes later indicating further top cover of three Beaufighters had been arranged. This flight was expected to arrive at 3.45 p.m.

Meanwhile further wireless messages sent by *Armidale* and *Kuru* left no doubt that the Japanese were intent on sinking both vessels. *Kuru*, unseen by the enemy at all on the 30th, was the subject of two heavy bombing attacks, the first at 12.30 the second half an hour later. Amazingly there was no serious damage, just a lot of near misses. A little more than an hour and a half later she was being attacked again and, as a consequence, *Kuru* returned to Darwin, coming under further attack en route. In the end Lieutenant Grant believed that his small vessel had dodged some 200 bombs.

Armidale’s experience was, however, completely different. Attacked at first at about 1.15 p.m. this attack was not pressed home and there was no damage. Just before 3 p.m., though, a larger force of enemy aircraft, nine bombers, three fighters and a floatplane, was sighted and at 2.58 p.m. *Armidale* sent out her last message: “My 0307. Nine bombers 4 fighters. Absolutely no

fighter support”.³ Within a few minutes *Armidale* had been sunk after being struck by two torpedoes and possibly one bomb. The radio transmitter was destroyed as a result of one of the explosions and there had been no time to send out a distress message.

As to the Beaufighters sent out, No. 31 Squadron’s operations record book confirms that bad weather conditions prevented the first flight finding *Armidale*. Of the second flight, the same source indicates that one Beaufighter was forced to return due to engine trouble and that the other two crews (one of the aircraft captains was the commanding officer, Squadron Leader Read) “carried out the patrol ordered”, there being no mention of what was seen or not seen. Given the bad weather encountered earlier in the afternoon, though, there is no reason to expect that the situation was any better two hours later. Squadron Leader, later Air Vice-Marshal and now Sir Charles Read has confirmed that “If *Armidale* was not mentioned in [these] flight records it was not sighted, the weather at low level was dreadful at that time of the year.”⁴ There would have been time for another Beaufighter flight that afternoon, but it was not ordered.

Hudsons of No. 13 Squadron were also in the air in the afternoon, orders being for five crews to conduct clearing searches in visibility distance off the southern Timor coast for both corvettes. Only four aircraft were available and they were airborne from 3.25 p.m., the last known positions of all three vessels having been provided (*Armidale* had then been at 10°38’S 126°55’E on a course of 155°). The four split into two pairs, with one to work their way back from the eastern end of Timor’s southern coast, whilst the other pair would head east from the western end. Squadron records indicate that a corvette was sighted by both pairs at different times. No attempt was made to identify the vessel, which appeared to have a small boat in tow, but its course was similar to that known for *Castlemaine*.

Twenty minutes after the second sighting of *Castlemaine*, five-seven unidentified aircraft on a southerly course were seen by the two crews on the eastern leg, whilst those on the western leg saw one near Cape Mali around the same time. A little over an hour later, however, a more important sighting made by the latter crews was of two Japanese three-funnel cruisers at 09°48’S 125°08’E on a course of 50°. The cruisers fired at the Hudsons which then climbed to get out of range. The two crews then remained in the vicinity and shadowed the warships for an hour. At 8.30 p.m. one of the Hudsons made a bombing run on one cruiser, the three bombs dropped missed the ship by about 300 yards (275 metres).

The reported presence of these cruisers relatively close to the last known position of *Armidale* changed everything. *Armidale* and *Kuru*, ordered at 4.31 p.m. to continue with the operation, four hours later, after being warned of the presence of the cruisers, were ordered back to Darwin “forthwith” and notified that the evacuation operation had been cancelled. Shortly after the message to *Armidale* and *Kuru* to return, *Castlemaine*, ordered in the afternoon to steer away from Darwin to take advantage of local storms until dark, was ordered to return “with all despatch”.

There were no searches for *Armidale* on the 2nd, all search activity that day was aimed at finding the Japanese cruisers, but neither vessel, now known to be 5,250 tonne sister ships *Natori* and *Kinu*, was located again.⁵⁴

Six Beaufighters of No. 31 Squadron also raided Penfoei at dawn on the 2nd carrying out what was considered to be a very successful surprise attack against Japanese aircraft on the ground there. To get as close to the target as possible Drysdale was used as a stepping off point. Pope’s

³ From ‘Signal log during operation, 29/11/42 to 1/12/42’ reproduced in Walker, *ibid*, p. 135.

⁴ Sir Charles Read, e-mail to author, 27 February 2009.

⁵ Oddly enough no published accounts have previously identified the two cruisers, although the RAAF was aware by the 2nd December, if not earlier, that they were of the “Natori Class”. For movements of both cruisers see entries under cruisers in www.combinedfleet.com

report of 3 December indicated that the Beaufighters found “about 25 to 30” navy medium bombers, 12 to 15 Zeros and one transport aircraft, of which five bombers were definitely destroyed (set on fire) and 15 to 18 were damaged, whilst two or three Zeros were damaged and it appeared that a fuel dump was set on fire. This operation had been planned after Pope had approved that the evacuation be attempted again on the night of the 1st, the idea being that the attack would provide the return passage with the “best measure”, to quote Pope’s words, of air protection. Whilst the navy operation had been cancelled, however, the Penfoei attack still went ahead.⁶

At this stage, 2 December, it seems that few people based in Darwin suspected that the corvette had been sunk. It was only on the following day that, after no responses had been received to his radio messages, Pope conceded that *Armidale* may have been sunk or was damaged. He ordered that air searches take place and ends his initial report to Navy Board advising that “The whole situation will be discussed [with] the GOC [General Officer Commanding] NT Force, the AOC [Area Officer Commanding] NW Area and myself tomorrow Friday, 4 December, 1942”.⁷

Criticism has been levelled at Pope for not doing more to find *Armidale* or her survivors, but comments stemming from the meeting held on the 4th show that overriding his concern for the crew of the *Armidale*, was his concern over the fate of the men (and women) still awaiting evacuation from Timor. Although full details of the meeting are not available, the expansion of Japanese land activity on Timor and recent landing of additional enemy troops, reportedly 2,000 in number, would have been factors that were brought to Pope’s attention at this time, information that was confirmed in an Army Intelligence Summary issued soon after.⁸ Clearly the lives of the 565 people that made up the evacuation group at that stage, more than half of whom were Australians, were in jeopardy.

Prior to the meeting Bladin, AOC North Western Area, enquired of Bostock, AOC RAAF Command, whether two four-engined ‘Empire’ flying boats could be made available for evacuation flights, but the response was that none could be provided due to “extremely urgent transport work in conjunction with current active operations”.

The planned meeting went ahead on the 4th, and North Western Area’s cipher message to RAAF Command afterwards indicates that Pope had signalled both the Navy Board and MacArthur’s command to provide a destroyer for the Timor evacuations and that a reply was still awaited. If a destroyer could not be provided, North Western Area kept up pressure for a “flying boat [to] be sent immediately to endeavour evacuate urgent sick and wounded”, adding, “but this will leave main problem untouched.”⁹ The “main problem” was, of course, finding the means to evacuate more than 500 people; the number of sick and wounded, 51, being merely the thin edge of the wedge.

6 See Commodore Pope’s initial report to Australian Navy Board dated 3rd December 1942, quoted by Walker, op cit, p. 140; No. 31 Squadron’s records agree with the estimate of three Zeros damaged, but of the bombers makes no mention of aircraft destroyed, only “15 twin-engined bombers” damaged. In the Prime Minister’s Review of the War Situation, made in the House of Representatives on 10 December, the raid was mentioned and the statement made that 21 aircraft were either damaged or destroyed.

7 From Commodore Pope’s initial report to Australian Navy Board dated 3/12/42, quoted by Walker, op cit, p. 141.

8 See extract from Adv HQ Allied Land Forces Weekly Intelligence Summary No. 18 [compiled from information received from 1200 hours 27 November 1942 to 1200 hours 4 December] in ‘Portugese Timor (File No. 2) Following Japanese Occupation February 1942’, NAA CRS A5954, Item 564/2.

9 From Cypher Message, North Western Area to AOR HQ RAAF Command, 4 December 1942, in “Air Assistance to Land Force Timor”, NAA CRS A11093, Item 373.2W.

Adding weight to the argument that a destroyer be provided, North Western Area advised that if one was not available, and it was necessary to continue to use corvettes for these evacuations, air support would be impracticable owing to the corvette's slow speed.

RAAF Command subsequently advised North Western Area that the Navy would provide a destroyer and indicated that it had left Perth for Darwin on the night of the 4th and went on to enquire whether there were sufficient jettisonable fuel tanks for the Kittyhawks which were to supply fighter cover for the "impending operations" (these would be aircraft of No. 77 Squadron previously mentioned). Although the destroyer was not named to begin with, it was found to be the Dutch *Tjerk Hiddes*, a vessel capable of 30 knots, twice that of a corvette.

Meanwhile, in the Timor Sea 83 crew members of *Armidale* and 23 Netherlands East Indies troops had survived the sinking and subsequent strafing in the water by the Japanese, although some of these men were wounded and later died. The ship's motor boat had also survived the sinking and a Carley float and two minesweeping floats had cleared the ship whilst the ship's only other boat, a whaler, had been holed and sunk below water level but was still floating. In addition there was flotsam from the sinking including a gangway and planks. Most of the injured survivors were assisted aboard the motor boat whilst the others took turns in and out of the water, there being insufficient space for all aboard the Carley float. In addition Lieutenant Commander Richards organised for a makeshift raft be lashed together using the other floats and some of the timber released when *Armidale* sank, held together by a small quantity of collected rope which first had to be unravelled to enable sufficient length to be available.

By the 2nd, with no searching aircraft seen, Richards told the survivors that with the only other officer with navigation skills, the First Lieutenant, paralysed from the hips down, he had decided he would attempt to reach Bathurst Island using the ship's motor boat, taking the worst of the wounded with him. Even if they did not reach Bathurst Island, chances of being seen from the air, and, therefore, chances of rescue for all, would be better the closer they got. Given the limited range of the boat using the motor, six fit men were also selected whose job it would be to row when the motor could not be used. Richards also took two others whose help may be needed with the motor; in fact as the motor boat left the main group it was under the power of the rowers. It would not be until 28 hours later after the motor had been first taken apart then re-assembled that it could be started.

Air searches began on the afternoon of the 3rd when four Hudson crews, all of No. 13 Squadron, were sent out on parallel track searches. On this occasion, though, nothing was found.

No searches were flown on the 4th due to bad local weather conditions. Meantime, south of Timor, the main group of *Armidale* survivors was still thinly spread over the raft and Carley float. The whaler had still been floating nearby supported by two empty 44 gallon drums, but on the 3rd *Armidale* crew members managed, despite the massive difficulties involved, to get its stern onto the raft using two steel helmets to bail water out of it. From there, after another day of super-human effort by the crew, the whaler was made to float, although, not surprisingly, constant bailing remained necessary. Using this vessel, Lieutenant Palmer moved off in the same direction as that taken by the motor boat at around 1115 on 4 December. There were 29 men aboard the whaler and, at that stage, according to Palmer, there were 28 men on the raft and 21 in the Carley float.

The break-through in the air searches occurred on the 5th. On that day four Hudsons from No. 13 Squadron were airborne in the morning on more parallel searches and it was in the course of one of these being undertaken by Sergeant Danks-Brown's crew that the motor boat was seen. Of this particular moment Richards wrote in his report of all that had happened:

At 1015 on Saturday, 5th December, we were sighted by one of our reconnaissance planes, which dropped food and water and informed us assistance was on the way. I tried to semaphore the plane that

[the] remainder of [the] ship's company were on [a] raft at [the] scene of [the] sinking. Plane circled close while [the] signal was made, then flew away without acknowledgement. I did not know whether [the] signal had been received or not.¹⁰

The 13 Squadron summary of the morning's operations makes no mention of any signalling seen and it would seem that the efforts of Richards and his signaller were in vain. Nevertheless, the 13 Squadron record noted the position of the sighting (11^o19'S 128^o20'E) and the comment: "Dropped small quantity of supplies which were picked up."

As a result of the sighting Pope ordered another corvette, HMAS *Kalgoorlie*, to sea to rescue the men who had been found.

Richards' *report* continued:

At 1630 two more planes came out and dropped more food, water and Verey lights with a note saying that "Kalgoorlie" should arrive about 2300, advising us to fire Verey lights every half-hour after that time. This was complied with but there was no sign of "Kalgoorlie".¹¹

RAAF unit records confirm that two more Hudsons dropped supplies but, rather than there being two in the afternoon, indicate there was one in the morning whilst the other was in the afternoon, there being no other flights during the afternoon.

Searches by the Hudsons continued on the 7th, Richards stating that at around 11 a.m. those aboard the motor boat saw one of these aircraft, but on this occasion the motor boat was not seen (there was only one crew searching that morning, from No. 2 Squadron, so it must have been their Hudson that was seen). These men were eventually rescued by *Kalgoorlie*, as the dropped note had stated, but not until more than 24 hours after the time first indicated. *Kalgoorlie* had, in fact, been in the area of the boat sighting early on the 7th but, evidently, had not sighted any of the flares Richards had fired off. Later the corvette had been attacked by Japanese aircraft and headed away from the search area and this caused a further delay in the rescue. In fact Richards states in his report that it was only when another aircraft was sighted around 8 p.m. and the flare pistol fired that the "aircraft turned towards us, and signalled that [the] corvette was on its way".

The crew that had relocated the motor boat is not identified in the squadron operations record book, but four, all from No. 2 Squadron, were out searching early that evening. Of the four, No. 2 Squadron's operations summary notes that duty numbers BAT275 and BAT276 both made sightings of a corvette but only one of them sighted the boat-load of survivors (the boat was described as a lifeboat but was the motor boat), that being at 8.10 p.m.

Following the rescue of this first group of survivors news was relayed to Navy Board on the 7th that there were still another 80 men to find, considered by Richards at that time to be all together with the raft (he was not, of course, aware of the situation with the whaler), and Pope requested that a flying boat be made available, not for searching purposes, though, but, "to effect rescue if search is successful".

Again, Pope has been criticised for not requesting a flying boat earlier, but it will be recalled that North Western Area's initial approach had been unsuccessful. Now that survivors had been found, however, Pope made it clear that it was to be used for rescue purposes only and as an alternative to sending another surface vessel. Sending another ship was not considered justified as it would "further draw attention to impending Hamburger operations", that is, the evacuations necessary from Timor.¹² Pope evidently considered that a flying boat could rescue survivors much easier than a surface vessel (it is likely that the additional 24 hours it had taken for

¹⁰ From *Report of Proceedings of HMAS Armidale – 29/11/42 to 1/12/42*, reproduced in Walker, op cit, pp. 164-5.

¹¹ *Ibid*, pp. 165.

¹² From Pope to Navy Board 7 December 1942 in Walker, op cit, p. 93.

Richards and his men to be taken aboard *Kalgoorlie* had been a factor in this consideration), but overlooked the difficulties involved for a flying boat to land and take-off in an open sea, let alone how many survivors could be carried even if a landing was successful.

This problem of a flying boat attempting to land on an open sea had been demonstrated as recently as August when a Short 'Empire', the type Bladin had requested of RAAF Command on 3 December, broke up on landing in what turned out to be a heavy swell whilst its crew were attempting to rescue survivors of a torpedoed merchant vessel off New Guinea.

A Catalina flying boat of No. 11 Squadron, based at Cairns, flown by Flight Lieutenant Atkinson, was promptly provided. It left Cairns at 7.30 p.m. (0830/7Z) on the 7th and arrived in Darwin at 7.10 a.m. (2040/7Z) on the 8th, squadron records confirming that the operation was "urgent sea rescue work".

Had it proved possible for the Catalina to land in the Timor Sea then a rescue of some, if not all, of the remaining personnel would have been possible as the raft and attendant wreckage, and, it was said, 30-40 men, had, in fact, been found by three of four searching Hudson crews of No. 13 Squadron prior to the Catalina leaving Cairns. The Hudson crews are again only identified by their duty numbers but appear to be those of Flying Officer Kavanagh, Pilot Officer Thomson and Sergeant Campbell. Squadron records note the raft's position as 09055'S 126056'E and mention that it was a large patch of oil which drew attention to the area which led to the sighting. Noteworthy is that the numbers of men seen and lack of mention of the Carley float which would suggest that it had separated from the raft by this time.



As indistinct and imperfect as it is, this is the only known photo of any of the *Armidale* survivors who were not able to be rescued. The number of men is difficult to make out but was it 17 or 27? Clearly the two groups of survivors had separated by the time the Catalina found these men. (RAAF Official, Bob Dalkin Collection, courtesy Peter Dalkin)

Next morning a Hudson crew from No. 2 Squadron was dispatched to the raft's last known position, but no sighting was made. The Catalina, airborne in the afternoon, was, however, more successful and chanced upon it, the No. 11 Squadron operations record book indicating that the raft still appeared to be overcrowded, yet the numbers of men was no longer an approximate '30-40' but a very exact 17. "All appeared in fair condition", the same source reports, "but had little clothing". A later report by one of the Catalina's crew members, flight engineer Don Ferme, stated the number of men seen was actually 27, a number more likely given the earlier, higher, but approximate head count of 30-40.¹³

As with the sighting made the previous day, there is no mention of the Carley float on this occasion, and whilst Pope's final report to the Navy Board mentions only "the raft", singular, the subsequent report from the Navy Board to the prime minister states that it was "rafts", plural, that the Catalina crew sighted, which was not the case.

¹³ From North Western Area Brief, "Notes on Interview with No. 11 Squadron Personnel at Rathmines 26th June 1945", Air Force Historical and Records Office; it could have been that 17 was a typographical error.

The No. 11 Squadron operational summary confirms that Atkinson “did not land because service conditions would not permit take-off”. The Navy Board’s report to the prime minister explained this being due “to the rough state of the sea”. Various items were dropped to the men in the water but Ferme explained that as no supplies were carried what was dropped amounted to personal effects belonging to the Catalina crew. This point has not previously been made.¹⁴¹³

The Catalina left the scene of the raft at 5.10 p.m. and, en route to Darwin, an hour and five minutes later, sighted the whaler which was using a blanket as a sail and making perhaps one or two knots. Again a landing was out of the question and all that could be done was for a note to be dropped indicating that a rescue vessel would be directed to them. (Lieutenant Palmer’s report confirms the story, but he was under the impression this occurred on the 7th, the Catalina, however, was not in use until the 8th).

It seems unlikely that the Catalina stayed with the whaler long, but, in any event the initial sighting was followed up by what appears to have been the first co-ordinated RAAF/RAN attempt to rescue the whaler’s crew. Next morning it was organised that *Kalgoorlie* would be in an arranged position at 10 a.m. whilst two Hudsons of No. 13 Squadron should be over the whaler at the same time to direct the rescue “and drop supplies if necessary”. From surviving documents it appears that only Squadron Leader Whyte’s crew found the whaler, Whyte later telling Palmer that the whaler was not where it was expected to be and it was only after extra searching that it was found (it was not found until 10.25 a.m.). A note, which is now in the collection of the Australian War Memorial, was dropped. It reads:

Best of luck boys. Help is on its way. Keep your chins up & above all keep smiling. Our Squadron, no 13, takes there [sic] hats off to you, even thou[gh] you almost shot us down. Sergeant Keith Chote 405542 ...¹⁵

Whyte then located *Kalgoorlie* and gave it a course for the whaler. According to No. 13 Squadron’s operations record book “approximately” eight, a rather exact number, bundles of supplies were dropped but Palmer stated about half were lost.

No. 2 Squadron had three Hudsons airborne around mid-morning looking for the raft, the last reported position of which had been 09°35’S 127°30’E (this must have been the position provided by No. 11 Squadron), but it could not be re-found. The whaler, however, was spotted again a little after 2.30 p.m. in position 10°06’S 128°35’E and more water and food were dropped to those aboard. There was also further contact with *Kalgoorlie*. According to Palmer’s report, the men in the whaler were taken on board the *Kalgoorlie* about 5 p.m.

Searches for any survivors continued next day and every day until the 13th, but neither the raft nor the Carley float was ever seen again. Flying Officer McDouall flew one of the last search flights and described it in his log book as a “square search near Timor for raft”, a daylight flight of 8 hours 20 minutes. The fate of the men on the raft and those on the Carley float has never been determined, but December marks the beginning of the wet season and Ferme, the Catalina flight engineer, believed that there had been “a bad tropical storm” a day or two after the men had been sighted. The Catalina returned to Cairns on 15 December.

Back in Darwin, *Tjerk Hiddes* had arrived on the 9th and made the first of three evacuation voyages the following day. Hudsons were again tasked with providing clearing searches ahead of the destroyer whilst Beaufighters were to provide top cover, whilst Kittyhawks of No. 77 Squadron, perhaps not yet ‘drop’ tank equipped, provided more localised protection. Her captain’s report states that timing and the route taken were “devised to give maximum immunity from Japanese reconnaissance aircraft”. No enemy aircraft were sighted by the destroyer, but a

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ AWM ID Number EXDOC143.

fixed undercarriage fighter was encountered by one of the three No. 13 Squadron Hudson crews involved in the morning. Given the Hudson's considerable lead after it dived to sea level, however, the would-be pursuer broke away.

The first evacuation operation by *Tjerk Hiddes* (Betano was again used as the collection point) rescued approximately 50 sick and wounded, 50 women and children and a mixture of about 300 Dutch and Australian troops. On the second operation, this time to a point east of Betano, about 30 Portuguese nuns and priests and 240 troops of the 2/2nd Independent Company were evacuated, again, without any Japanese intervention, although an unidentified aircraft was seen fleetingly at one point. Just why the Japanese had not been more intent on finding and attacking *Tjerk Hiddes* remains presently unanswered directly from Japanese sources, but, indirectly, it would seem that the combination of the damage caused at Penfoei by No. 31 Squadron's Beaufighters, and diversion of reinforcements by the Japanese further east to assist in the fighting in the Solomons and, to a lesser degree, New Guinea, took the pressure off Northern Australia over the coming weeks. Apart from the minor action involving the *Kalgoorlie* on the 7th already mentioned, there were no further attacks on northern Australian targets (including shipping) involving Japanese land-based aircraft until 20 January 1943.

The last of the evacuations occurred on the night of the 18 December and on this occasion 310 people plus four and a half tons of rubber was embarked, again without incident. The ship arrived back in Darwin mid-afternoon on the 19th. Altogether 535 or 536 non-military personnel were rescued, identified in one report as 105 men, 179 women and 252 children, Pope in a salutary message to Lieutenant Commander Kruys RNN, captain of the vessel, acknowledging the "great military service as well as the humanitarian value" of the three operations carried out. *Tjerk Hiddes* left Darwin for its return voyage to Perth on the 20th. Soon after, on the 26th, Pope followed; reportedly in failing health, he had been appointed to the position of NOIC Fremantle. The RAAF flew him there in one of the Hudsons used earlier in the searches for *Armidale's* survivors.

It can be seen that the RAAF's support of the naval evacuations from Timor programmed for November/December 1942 was, perhaps, greater than previously realised. In particular it is important that the Beaufighter strike against Penfoei air base on 2 December still be considered as related (even though it was carried out after the evacuation planned for the night before had been cancelled). The victory achieved that day undoubtedly paved the way for the trouble-free, successful evacuation operations from Timor by the Dutch destroyer *Tjerk Hiddes* which followed.

TARAWA 1943: LESSONS WRITTEN IN BLOOD

Kevin L Davies¹

The amphibious landing is the most powerful tool we have - Douglas MacArthur²

From 20-23 November 1943, the 2nd Marine Division fought nearly 5,000 Japanese soldiers on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll in the first major test of the United States Marine Corps Amphibious doctrine. The battle produced several lessons that were used to great effect in future amphibious operations during World War II. This paper is an analysis of an amphibious operation.

Tarawa lies some 2500 miles southwest of Pearl Harbour and 1300 miles south east of Truk, the main Japanese bastion in the Central Pacific during the early years of World War II. It was the most important atoll in the Gilbert Islands, headquarters of the Japanese garrison and site of the Island group's only airfield. To the north and west were Japanese bases in the Marshalls and Carolines, to the south and east were Allied-held islands that guarded the lifeline from Hawaii and the US to the South Pacific, New Zealand and Australia.³ It was upon the smallest island in the Tarawa Atoll called Betio,⁴ that the United States Marines Corps first tested their amphibious doctrine against a defended position. It was here, on this tiny speck of sand with a total area of about one square mile, being two and a half miles long and 800 yards wide at its widest point⁵ that around 1,000 United States Marines and Navy personnel, and nearly 5,000 Japanese died in the ferocious fighting that took place from 20-23 November 1943. The mistakes made were several and paid for in blood, but the operational and tactical lessons learned during the attack are what made Operation Galvanize interesting as they have a direct application towards any amphibious operation undertaken since then. It is the lessons learned that make Tarawa so interesting and thus so deserving of further analysis.

While it is true that there were serious reservations about the utility of any operations against the Gilberts, most bluntly put by the overall commander of V Marine Amphibious Corps (which included the 2nd Marine Division that undertook the storming of Betio) Major General Holland M. Smith USMC when, in his autobiography, he states that "Tarawa was a mistake".⁶ It is not the purpose of this paper to look at the strategic issues surrounding Tarawa. It is rather an analysis of the changes in tactics and technologies that developed as a result.

What quickly becomes clear in all research regarding Tarawa is that sources credit one thing with making Tarawa a bloody victory instead of horrific defeat; Amphibious Tractors. Amtracs, as they are popularly known, were originally designed by Donald Reobling as a rescue craft for the Florida everglades. Ordered by the navy's Bureau of Shipping in 1941 to transport supplies from ship to shore, they were soon adopted as an assault craft and were employed in a variety of

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 - 2 Col Robert Debs Heinl Jr, USMC, (Ret.), *Dictionary of Military and Naval Quotations*, <http://books.google.com.au/books?id=tg8xIiEfFLOC&pg=PA11&lpg=PA11&dq=quotes+about+Amphibious+operations&source=bl&ots=pLpN2fI5GI&sig=NlwHcQuDfmCjZIWWEYJKNLfvP0&hl=en&ei=bJ4PSq-TO4vKtAPb-bSJAaw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1#PPP1,M1>
 - 3 Henry I. Shaw, Jr., *Tarawa: a legend is born*, (New York, 1970), Pg. 10.
 - 4 All research indicates that although the battle is referred to as the "The Battle of Tarawa," it was on Betio that the absolute majority of the fighting took place and, thus, entered the public's memory. As a result the two names seem to be interchangeable.
 - 5 Derrick Wright, *A Hell of A Way to Die: Tarawa Atoll 20-23 November 1943*, (Great Britain, 1997), Pg. 19.
 - 6 Often referred to as "Howlin' Mad" Smith due to his temper.
 - 7 Major General Holland M. Smith USMC, *Coral and Brass*, (Washington, 1979), Pg. 134.

roles throughout the Pacific.⁸ The amtrac, due to the tread which gave it the ability to travel over difficult terrain such as coral reefs, was the only vehicle capable of bringing the Marines ashore at Betio on D-Day.⁹ Due to the limited number of amtracs, only the Marines in the first three waves were able to assault the beach in amtracs, the rest were required to use Higgins boats. ¹⁰ At Betio these boats were completely inappropriate due to unusually low water, and a result, got stuck hard on the coral reefs that surround Betio. The result of this was a 500-700 yard slog to the beach under murderous fire that claimed the lives of many Marines. Holland Smith later made it clear that he felt that without the amtrac, the battle would have been lost. ¹¹ After the war Gen. Julian Smith, commander of all ground forces at Tarawa, was asked for the precise moment that the Japanese at Betio lost the initiative, and he replied (perhaps optimistically) that their morale suffered irreparable damage when they saw amphibious tractors belly up over the reef and then head for the beach.¹² After Tarawa never again would the marines be forced to endure 'hell-upon-a-reef' for the amtrac was never in short supply.

In addition to the development of improved amtracs, there was also the realisation of the need to study water features prior to any future invasion. One of the most unforgiveable aspects of the Tarawa was the way the vital intelligence provided by the former Resident Commissioner of the Gilbert Islands, Major Frank Holland, was ignored. As previously mentioned, the coral reefs surrounding Betio provided a natural barrier against attack from the sea in anything other than an amtrac. Because of this, it was vital to get the tides right. If anyone should have known for certain, it was Frank Holland, who had resided on Bairiki Island, right next to Betio, for 15 years. With little else to at hand for relieving the boredom of his duties, Holland spent a great deal of time mastering the tidal cycles. He was not simply sceptical about the chance of having sufficient water over the reef for the lightest landing craft; he *knew* there would not be enough.¹³ Ignoring this kind of intelligence, especially when the issue of the reefs and tides were vital to the invasion, combined with the lack of amtracs able to go over the reefs is on a level of negligence in the extreme. As for the outcome, the forlorn corpses of scores of Marines would bob in the milky waters of Tarawa lagoon in silent condemnation of the intransigence of the planners who ignored Frank Holland's warning.¹⁴

If the shallow reefs made the assault deadly, the lack of communications made it lethal. With the first salvo of the USS *Maryland's* 16 in guns, which was acting both as fire support and command and control, the assaulting Marines were no longer able to communicate with any naval vessel providing fire support for the salvo had destroyed the *Maryland's* antiquated radio and with it any ship-to-shore communications. Indeed the greatest criticism to come from the Marines was the lack of adequate communications¹⁵. It was the loss of the *Maryland's* communications that reduced the time allowed for the carrier borne airstrikes to occur because the pilots were unable be informed that they had been given the wrong timing information. It also caused the Commander of the 2nd Marine, Col. David Shoup to provide battle reports to

⁸ Derrick Wright, *Tarawa 1943 – Turning the Tide*, (United Kingdom, 2000), Pg. 19.

⁹ Amtracs were never part of the original plan for the Operation GALVANIZE as Higgins boats were deemed suitable. It was only due to the personal, and extremely forceful, insistence of Maj. Gen. Smith that the amtrac took part. In the context of this paper, D-Day refers to the 20th of November, 1943, not 6th of June 1944.

¹⁰ There were only 125 amtracs available for use at the Battle of Tarawa. Of these, 100 were used in the main assault, with 25 held in reserve. Furthermore, many of these Amtracs had been in service well above their intended lifespan (200 hours). Wright, *A Hell of A Way*, Pg. 29.

¹¹ Smith, *Coral*, Pg. 120.

¹² Isley and Crowl, *U.S. Marines*. Pg. 210. It must be recognised that there is no extant Japanese account of the battle survives.

¹³ Eric Hammel and John E. Lane, *76 Hours-The Invasion of Tarawa*, (California, 1985), Pg. 22, [Italics Added].

¹⁴ Wright, *A Hell of A Way to Die*, Pg. 37.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, Pg. 126.

Gen. Julian Smith by sending officers back to the Maryland via amtrac; hardly an optimal situation.¹⁶ In the reviews following Tarawa, it quickly identified that the use of warships as communications centres was a measure that had to change. In a bid to rectify this, for future amphibious operations, specially converted transport ships, bristling with antennae, soon became the communications centres for subsequent invasion fleets throughout the Pacific (and even as far away as the Normandy beaches).¹⁷ Compounding the *Maryland* debacle, the Marine regiments were unable to communicate with each other because all of the radio sets used in the first waves became water logged and useless, bar one. This meant that the officers on the ground had only a bare idea of what was going on for most of D-Day and had to rely on runners, many of whom did not return.¹⁸ Improved portable equipment was required; lighter, more mobile, and waterproofed so the once ashore hours of precious time would not be spent drying out instruments and batteries.¹⁹ According to Maj. Gen. H.M Smith “The secret of amphibious warfare is concentration of your forces and meticulous co-ordination of all elements, plus as much gunfire and air bombardment as you can pour into enemy positions.”²⁰ This is a concept that can only be realised if there is good communication between the forces involved.

Prior to and during the battle, Betio endured a hitherto unimaginable preparatory naval bombardment.²¹ Yet it failed to achieve its goal of neutralizing or suppressing the Japanese defences. The combined air and sea attack was supposed to allow the Marines, in the words of one over-optimistic individual, to have it easy because “They’ll go in standing up. There aren’t fifty Japs alive on that island!”²² The nearly 5,000 Japanese in their heavily protected bunkers made sure that that assertion was bloodily found wanting. Many lessons were learned at Tarawa, some of them vital though obscure. According to Hammel and Lane:

The fire directed at Betio was indeed great, but in the clearing light a few men at widely dispersed points noted a serious defect in the Navy’s much vaunted technique of close in fire. In a tractor low in the water, a marine platoon leader counted fewer explosions on shore than shells being fired. Looking more closely, he saw faint shadows fall, then rise from the spit of land dead ahead. A green mortar ammunition carrier on one of the transports noted the same curious effect; each time he expected an explosion at a point on island, it came far beyond that point, over the water on the seaward side. In fact, shells fired close-in caromed off the dunes and harmlessly exploded over the water to seaward. Many shells did find targets, but the effect of the many tons of steel fired at the island was vastly diminished.²³

This was due to the vessels being too close to the shore when firing. While Tarawa proved the feasibility of naval vessels coming close to the shore to provide fire support, the issue was not getting too close as the low trajectory of the shells resulted in them bouncing on the island like a stone skimming across a pond. Given the failure of the “carpet shelling” at Tarawa, in future amphibious operations, naval bombardments no longer simply attempted to rain shells across the entire area of operations, instead targets like bunkers, gun positions and other defensive positions were specifically targeted and remained so until they were confirmed destroyed, and where a blanket barrage was called for, it was delivered from well offshore to achieve plunging fire.²⁴ It was also recognised that the amount of time spent bombarding Tarawa was insufficient and that, although being made out of concrete, coconut logs and coral, the Japanese bunkers

16 Wright, *Tarawa 1943*, Pg 47.

17 Wright, *A Hell of A Way to Die*, Pg 126.

18 Wright, *Tarawa 1943*, Pg. 41.

19 Jeter A. Isley and Philip A. Crowl, *The U.S. Marines and Amphibious War- Its Theory, and Its Practice in the Pacific*, (Quantico, 1988), Pg. 252.

20 Smith, *Coral*, Pg. 133.

21 Wright, *A Hell of A Way*, Pg. 127.

22 Edwin P. Hoyt, *Storm over the Gilberts: War in the Central Pacific: 1943*, (New York, 1973), Pg. 81.

23 Hammel and Lane, *76 Hours*, Pg. 43.

24 Wright, *A Hell of A Way*, Pg. 127.

were extremely resilient to bombardment by air and sea.²⁵ Another lesson was the vital necessity of reducing the time lag between the lifting of fire and the touchdown of the leading wave in order to reduce the opportunity for the defender to recover from the shock of the bombardment.²⁶ This was a lesson that could, and was, applied not just to amphibious landings, but also with the introduction of the helicopters assault.

The chaos that had been afflicted upon the Marines on D-Day also infected those responsible for supplying the troops ashore. ²⁷ According to Wright:

[The] long central pier was the main entry point for all supplies; unfortunately a great deal arrived in anything but the order in which it was needed ... the transports and cargo ships were unloading supplies as fast as they could, *regardless of priorities* ... Colonel Shoup watched in fury as amtracs struggled ashore with unwanted cargoes while his parched Marines fought for their lives, scrabbling in their empty ammo pouches or crawling under fire to snatch bandoliers from dead comrades ²⁸

Given that there was only one Japanese air raid during the battle, which caused minimal damage, and the presence of 3 United States Navy aircraft carriers during the battle, it is clear that the threat of an air strike was overstated, it is, however, understandable in light of the lack of communications that plagued every facet of the battle that the ship drivers wanted to unload their cargo as quickly as possible. As a result of the experience on Tarawa, beach-masters were appointed to control the flow and priority of supplies.²⁹

In any analysis of a combat operation, it is vital to look at the performance of the men who took part. While there is little doubt that the Marines fought extremely hard and displayed excellent adaptation and flexibility when confronted with the chaos surrounding them; there were many lessons learnt. The principal lesson learnt was the need for more thorough training in combining armour, artillery, flamethrowers, demolitions experts, and riflemen in isolating and overrunning strong defensive installations. Regardless of their specialities it was recognised that all Marines had to know something of the use of demolitions, heretofore previously left to combat engineers.³⁰ Furthermore there were many lessons available for the officers leading men into combat. Regarding the 'chaos' factor, an observer at Tarawa, contributed this comment: "Leaders must be trained to adapt themselves quickly to the unexpected an unfamiliar situations when units have become disorganized...This might called training in SNAFU leadership".³¹ A fellow observer from the 4th Division, Lt. Col Walter I. Jordan, who assumed command of the remnants of the 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marine, recommended:

25 According to Smith: Instead of three days, preliminary bombardment, Betio needed at least ten. After that amount of fire, the Marines would have not faced the guns that should have been knocked out before they landed. They would not have had to capture, almost barehanded, positions the Japanese had fortified for 15 months. The strength of the blockhouses was tremendous. Concrete was five feet thick and superimposed with 8-inch coconut palm logs, reinforced with angle iron and railroad spikes. The Japanese then piled ten feet of coral or soil on this structure. Nothing but a direct hit with a 16-inch shell, or a 2,000 pound bomb could cave them in. Smith, *Coral*, Pg. 131.

26 *Ibid*, Pg. 271-2

27 While there were several logistical problems in the lead up to the battle, most notably to do with the amtracs, these are outside the intended scope of this paper. Smith, *Coral*, Pg 111-134.

28 Wright, *A Hell of a Way*, Pg. 72, [Italics Added].

29 *Ibid*, Pg. 130.

30 Isley and Growl, *US Marines*, Pg. 252.

31 Joseph H. Alexander *Storm Landings- Epic Amphibious Landings in the Central Pacific*, (Maryland, 1997), Pg. 61.

Landing teams should practice landings wherein all units are mixed up while in small boats. Then permit only a certain percentage of each company to land. Furthermore, have those units land on the wrong beaches without their officers and NCOs and little or no communications equipment.³²

Such advice would have been useful not only to the Marines who executed the amphibious invasions following Tarawa, but also to the paratroopers from the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions when they took part in the Normandy operations because the conditions described by Carlson and Jordan bear more than a slight resemblance to the situation confronting the two divisions during Operation Overlord.

It is not possible to analyse the Battle of Tarawa without discussing the effect the battle had on the American people at home. Put simply, the images of American Marines rotting on the sands of Betio shocked America. Prior to Tarawa the American people had come to believe, mainly from Hollywood, that the Japanese were “myopic, bandy-legged midgets with buck teeth whose principle occupation was shooting civilians and raping young women, and who fled in terror at the appearance of a Marine uniform;”³³ The news that the Japanese had first class troops, well equipped, skilful, who considered death preferable to capture, capable of inflicting large casualties upon the United States Marine Corps was not what the people wanted to hear.³⁴ The news that over a thousand Marines had died in 76 hours to secure an island two-and-half miles long by half a mile wide appalled them; “You have murdered my son,” wrote one distraught mother to Admiral Nimitz.³⁵ Soon enough, the American people were to learn that the fighting in World War II was far over and the costs were only going to rise.

The knowledge gained at Tarawa led to improvements across the field of amphibious warfare. Many of these were directly related to a more effective delivery of air and naval gunfire support. The experience pointed out the necessity of developing new types of amphibious craft, for improvement in the technique of shore party control. It also resulted in the development of new tactics for offshore, beach, and inshore fighting when storming small objectives surrounded by coral and defended by strong enemy emplacements. Tarawa, in short, was the testing ground for the opposed amphibious assault. Therein lays its true significance. ³⁶ While popularly overshadowed by larger amphibious invasions like Normandy, Iwo Jima and Okinawa, Tarawa, at an operational and tactical level, had the most far reaching consequences. While these lessons may apply at an abstract level to any military, only the United States had, and continues to devote, the necessary resources in order to apply them to the fullest possible extent.

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³² *Ibid.*

³³ Wright, *A Hell of a Way*, Pg. 132.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid*, Pg. 131.

³⁶ Isley and Growl, *US Marines*, Pg. 192.

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HONOURS AND AWARDS – A COMPARISON 6th BN AIF WORLD WAR ONE vs 6RAR LONG TAN: A DIFFERENT VIEW OF THE LONG TAN MYTH

‘Missio’

The recent announcement of the award of the Australian Unit Citation for Gallantry (UCG) to the members of D Company, 6th Battalion the Royal Australian Regiment (D Coy 6 RAR) for the action at Long Tan in South Vietnam on 18 August 1966 (the Battle of Long Tan) raises yet again the question of just how many more awards the Long Tan veterans require to have showered on them before they will stop claiming about being ‘denied recognition and honours’.¹

For years, and especially more so since 2006, the 40th anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan, we have been bombarded with stories of the bravery of the veterans of Long Tan along with a renewal of the claims that they have been ‘denied recognition and honours’. I cannot and would not deny the bravery of the members of the Australian armed forces (not just the members of D Company, 6th Battalion the Royal Australian Regiment) who fought at Long Tan. However, I regard the constant claims of a few former members of the sub-unit that they have been ‘denied recognition and honours’ with the contempt.

The basic thrust of the argument of a few veterans of Long Tan is that they deserve far more recognition than they have already received. However, an examination of the facts leads one to wonder just what more recognition could they receive. Totally ignoring, for the moment, the matter of decorations, being there on the day meant each of the members of D Coy 6 RAR is entitled to:

- Australian Active Service Medal 1945-75 with clasp VIETNAM
- Vietnam Medal
- Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal
- Australian Defence Medal

So each member of the sub-unit has four medals for being there on the day (although it is admitted that adding the Australian Defence Medal to the list might be drawing a slightly long bow). Additionally, a large percentage of the company was National Servicemen and thus entitled to the Anniversary of National Service 1951-1972 Medal, giving these men five medals for being there on the day. When one adds in the United States Presidential Unit Citation awarded to D Coy 6 RAR for Long Tan, a unique award to an Australian unit for service in Vietnam, then the claim that the sub-unit has been ‘neglected’ or ‘unrecognised’ begins to look more than a little spurious.

Turning to the question of decorations for members of D Coy 6 RAR, as can be seen by the accompanying table (Table 1), a total of 22 awards, Imperial and Vietnamese, were made for Long Tan. Coupled with the award of the US Presidential Unit Citation this is an incredibly high level of recognition for one small sub-unit for one single action.

¹ Australian Government, Defence Honours & Awards Tribunal, 2009 *Inquiry into Unresolved Recognition Issues for the Battle of Long Tan*, Department of Defence, Canberra, p.7.

Name	Unit	Award (Imperial)	Award (Vietnamese) Approved 2004
MAJ H.A. SMITH	D Coy 6 RAR	MC*	National Order of Vietnam 5th Class
2LT G.M. KENDALL	D Coy 6 RAR	MID	Gallantry Cross with Palm
2LT D.R. SABBEN	D Coy 6 RAR	MID	Gallantry Cross with Palm
WO2 J.W. KIRBY	D Coy 6 RAR	DCM	-
SGT R.S. BUICK	D Coy 6 RAR	MM	Gallantry Cross with Gold Star
CPL P.N. DOBSON	D Coy 6 RAR	MID	-
CPL W.R. MOORE	D Coy 6 RAR	MID	Gallantry Cross with Gold Star
LCPL B.E. MAGNUSSON	D Coy 6 RAR	-	Gallantry Cross with Silver Star
LCPL W. ROCHE	D Coy 6 RAR	-	Gallantry Cross with Silver Star
PTE W.A. AKELL	D Coy 6 RAR	MID	Gallantry Cross with Silver Star
PTE N. BEXTRAM	D Coy 6 RAR	-	Gallantry Cross with Silver Star
PTE I. CAMPBELL	D Coy 6 RAR	-	Gallantry Cross with Silver Star
PTE R.M. EGLINTON	D Coy 6 RAR	MM	-
PTE N. GRIMES	D Coy 6 RAR	-	Gallantry Cross with Silver Star
PTE A. MAY	D Coy 6 RAR	-	Gallantry Cross with Silver Star
PTE G. PETERS	D Coy 6 RAR	-	Gallantry Cross With Silver Star

Table 1 – Long Tan Awards to D Company 6 RAR

As an aside, other awards for Long Tan were made, in this case to soldiers who were not members of D Coy 6 RAR. Table 2 lists these awards, again including both Imperial and Vietnamese awards. This table, which lists 15 awards, includes two examples of multiple awards. However, it must be noted that the DSO awards to Jackson and Townsend were for their performance as commanders of 1 ATF and 6 RAR respectively, with their involvement in the Battle of Long Tan being recognised as part of the overall recommendation and citation.

Name	Unit	Award (Imperial)	Award (Vietnamese) Approved 2004
BRIG O.D. JACKSON	1 ATF	DSO	National Order of Vietnam 5th Class
LTCOL C.N. TOWNSEND	6 RAR	DSO	Gallantry Cross with Palm
CAPT C. MOLLISON	A COY 6 RAR	-	Gallantry Cross with Palm
CAPT M.D. STANLEY	161 FD BTY RNZA		MBE (Mil) -
LT F.A. ROBERTS	1 APC TP	MID	-
FLTLT C. DOHLE	9 SQN RAAF	MID	-
FLTLT F. RILEY	9 SQN RAAF	DFC	-
SGT R. RICHARDS	1 APC TP	-	Gallantry Cross with Silver Star
CPL J. CARTER	1 APC TP	DCM	
CPL P.E. CLEMENTS	1 APC TP	-	Gallantry Cross with Gold Star (Posthumous)
BDR A. GRAHAM	161 FD BTY RNZA	-	Gallantry Cross with Silver Star
LCPL G. TRUSS	A COY 6 RAR	-	Gallantry Cross with Silver Star
LBDR W.G. WALKER	161 FD BTY RNZA		MID-
TPR P. McNAMARA	1 APC TP	-	Gallantry Cross with Silver Star
GNR P. PROSSER	1 FD REGT RAA	-	Gallantry Cross with Silver Star

Table 2 – Long Tan Awards to other units

Having provided the foregoing facts and figures for D Coy 6 RAR and the Battle of Long Tan, it is instructive to consider the decoration tally for another 6th Battalion, the 6th Battalion AIF.

This unit was raised August 1914 and embarked for overseas service in October 1914. The battalion served throughout the Gallipoli Campaign then moved to the Western Front in May 1916, its first major action there being at Pozières. The battalion served through the battles of the Somme, the assault on the Hindenburg Line, the Ypres offensive and the fighting in 1918 to first stop the German offensive of April and May and then to counterattack. During its four years of war members of the battalion were awarded:

• Victoria Cross	1
• Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George	1
• Distinguished Service Order	5 + 1 bar
• Military Cross	31 + 2 bars
• Distinguished Conduct Medal	34
• Military Medal	127 + 9 bars
• Meritorious Service Medal	9
• Mention in Dispatches	48
• Foreign Awards	13

This is a total of 281 decorations.² On the face of it, this would appear to be vastly more than the level of awards made for Long Tan. However, due consideration must be given to the fact that the awards to D Coy 6 RAR for Long Tan represented awards for a few busy hours, whilst the awards for the 6th Battalion AIF represented the total for four long years of war. Similarly, we must also consider that D Coy 6 RAR had 103 men on the field at Long Tan. For its part, the embarkation rolls for the 6th Battalion AIF list over 7,700 men who served with the battalion from August 1914 to August 1917. The number who served with the battalion was even higher, as the embarkation rolls only go up to the 25th Reinforcements, which departed Australia on 4 August 1917. After that date men enlisting into or appointed to the AIF were listed as 'General Reinforcements' and were allotted to units when they reached either the UK or the Middle East. Thus the number of men who served with the 6th Battalion between August 1914 and November 1918 is unquestionably higher than 7,700, probably in excess of 8,000. So that means a total of 238 decorations shared between at least 7,700 men, which translates to 1:32, or one award for every thirty-two men in the unit. Compare this to the 22 individual awards shared between 103 men of D Coy 6 RAR and attached for the single Battle of Long Tan and we see that their ratio is slightly less than 1:5 (1:4.6 to be precise), i.e. for a single engagement, one man out of every five was decorated.

Let's turn now to the 'award' of the Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross Unit Citation to members of D Coy 6 RAR who were at Long Tan, by the Prime Minister of Australia, the Hon Kevin Rudd, MP, announced on 14 August 2008.³ The first thing that needs to be borne in mind is that this issue, the mythical award of the Gallantry Cross Unit Citation to D Coy 6 RAR, which is based wholly on the word of Mr Harry Smith, was examined in exhaustive detail by the Review of Recognition for the Battle of Long Tan (the Long Tan Review) in 2007. The Long Tan Review concluded:

The Panel has no doubt that Maj Smith sincerely believes that the Vietnamese advised him of a unit award in May 1967, however: Mr Tran Van Lam is not an authority on what the Australian Government's response may have been; there is no evidence that a formal offer of the GCPUC was

2 Austin, Ron, 1992 *As Rough as Bags: The History of the 6th Battalion, 1st AIF, 1914-1919*, Slouch Hat Publications, McCrae, Victoria, pp.309-312.

3 Joint Media Release Senator John Faulkner Cabinet Secretary Special Minister for State, Alan Griffin MP Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Dr Mike Kelly MP Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Support, 14 August 2008.

made (**but there is documentary evidence that an offer was not made**); and the GCPUC Emblem was not authorised for award in May 1967.⁴

In commenting on Mr Smith's 'recollection' of events, the Long Tan Review had this to say:

The only evidence of an offer of the GCPUC is Maj Smith's own recollection, which he invited Mr Tran Van Lam to confirm in 1999, and which appears to be the basis for the belief of others (**the 'common knowledge' appears to be on the basis of Maj Smith's report**). The Panel believes Maj Smith's recollection is sincere, but a private conversation and personal letters cannot sustain a recommendation for the acceptance of an award.⁵

The final finding of a this independent review, therefore, was that the entire basis of the ongoing claim for award of the Gallantry Cross Unit Citation to the members of D Coy 6 RAR who took part in the Battle of Long Tan was the memory of one self-interested person.

A particularly telling point made by the Long Tan Review is:

(the) GCPUC Emblem was not authorised for award in May 1967.⁶

This throws a damning light on the unilateral decision of the Prime Minister of Australia to totally usurp the authority of a no longer existent government and take it upon himself to award one of that (now defunct) nation's awards to Australians. Mr Smith has consistently claimed, that he was personally offered the Gallantry Cross Unit Citation for D Coy 6 RAR in Saigon in 1967. The only problem with this, for both Mr Smith and the Prime Minister, is that the Gallantry Cross Unit Citation was not established until 20 January 1968, 17 months after the Battle of Long Tan and well over six months after Mr Smith and the rest of 6 RAR had departed Vietnam. The proof of this lies in an official Vietnamese Government document entitled *Huy Chương ân Thưởng Trong Quân-Lực Việt-Nam Cộng-Hòa*, which roughly translates as *Decorations and Medals of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces*, published by authority of the Chief of the Joint General Staff, Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) in January 1969. This document, which is published in both Vietnamese and English, makes it quite clear that the concept of a 'unit citation' did not exist in the RVNAF until 1968. Prior to 1968, in the matter of unit recognition, the RVNAF followed French practice (not surprisingly as the RVNAF inherited many traditions and customs from the French forces), namely, a unit cited more than once at a certain level would be awarded a single specimen of the relevant medal, which would be pinned to the unit colour. The relevant medals, depending on the number of citations a unit received, were the Gallantry Cross (*Anh Dũng Bội Tinh*), the Military Merit Medal (*Quân Công Bội Tinh*) and the National Order of Vietnam (*Bảo Quốc Huân Chương*), all established in 1950. Citation at Armed Forces level (but not below) allowed a cited unit to wear a *fouragerre* or lanyard in the ribbon colours of the various awards, depending on the number of citations. A second and third citation at Armed Forces level allowed a unit to wear a *fouragerre* in the colours of the Gallantry Cross.⁷ A fourth and fifth citation allowed the unit to replace the Gallantry Cross *fouragerre* with one in the colours of the Military Merit Medal, while sixth, seventh and eighth citations allowed the unit to wear a *fouragerre* in the colours of the National Order of Vietnam.⁸ A unit that received a ninth citation at the Armed Forces level was entitled to wear a *fouragerre* that

4 *Review of Recognition for the Battle of Long Tan*, p.36

5 *Ibid.*

6 *Ibid.*

7 Government of the Republic of Vietnam, 1969 *Huy Chương ân Thưởng Trong Quân-Lực Việt-Nam Cộng-Hòa (Decorations and Medals of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces)*, published by authority of the Chief of the Joint General Staff, RVNAF, Saigon, p.196.

8 *Ibid.*

combined the colours of the ribbons of all three decorations (Gallantry Cross, Military Merit Medal and National Order).⁹

The *fouragerre* was only available to units that had been cited at the Armed Forces level. While units could be cited at Corps, Division, Brigade and Regiment/Battalion level, there was originally (and, significantly, in 1966) no visible sign that could be worn by unit members to display this. This situation was rectified by Decree No. 58/QP/ND of 20 January 1968, which established the unit citation version of the Gallantry Cross and the Civil Action Medal, each of which included a citation emblem which, in the case of the Gallantry Cross, was accompanied by a device to denote the level of citation (bronze palm for armed forces level, gold star for corps level, silver star for division level and bronze star for regiment/battalion level).¹⁰ The awarding authority for the Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross Unit Citation Emblem was the Chief of Joint General Staff, Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces, not the Prime Minister of Australia.¹¹

While the present Prime Minister, the Hon Kevin Rudd, MP is responsible for the issuing of the Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross Unit Citation Emblem the Hon Mal Brough MP, the then Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence, in the former Howard Government was responsible for 'awarding' various grades of the Gallantry Cross to veterans of the Battle of Long Tan.¹² In stating that 'the Australian Government cannot issue the medals, however, we can complete the role the Australian Government does have and grant permission for those Awards, where available, to be worn' Mr Brough obviously abrogated the rights of the former Republic of Vietnam on his own cognisance.¹³ Had Mr Brough sought the advice of either the Awards Verification Unit of the Awards and National Symbols Branch of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet or of the Directorate of Honours and Awards in the Department of Defence, he would have been advised that not only was what he was doing totally inappropriate and historically unjustified, but also that his decision to 'award' the Gallantry Cross in different grades was totally wrong.

The only conclusions that can be made from the foregoing facts are that, firstly, far from finally being 'recognised and honoured' for its actions at Long Tan in 1966, D Company 6 RAR has already been well recognised. Secondly, the decisions to award individual Vietnamese awards, for which no official evidence exists; the Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross Unit Citation emblem, again for which not a shred of evidence exists and which was solidly repudiated by an independent review; and the contemporary Australian UCG were politically motivated.

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9 Ibid.

10 *Decorations and Medals of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces*, p.208.

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12 The Hon Mal Brough MP Minister for Employment Services Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence, Media Release 26 June 2004.

13 Ibid.

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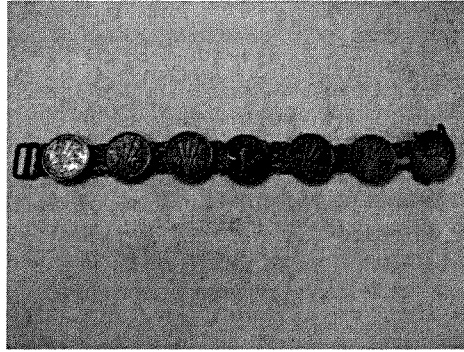
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A PARATROOPER'S LINK WITH AUSTRALIA

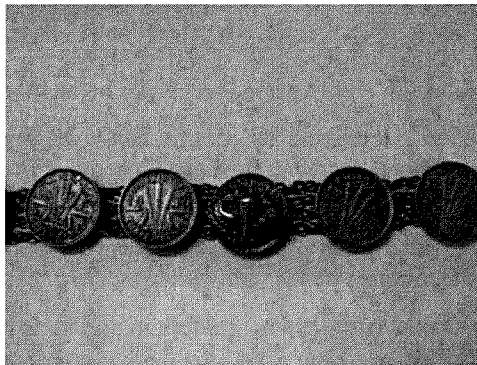
Donald Lawie

The US 503rd Parachute Regiment trained in Far North Queensland for over eight months in 1942 to 1943. They were based in Gordonvale, 25 kilometres south of Cairns and became closely associated with the people of Gordonvale. Local women were employed as parachute packers and in the Red Cross and PX canteens, and numerous romances flourished.



A reminder of those days was donated, some years ago, to the Mulgrave Settlers' Museum in Gordonvale. It is a small bracelet, made by a paratrooper for a local girl before he left. The bracelet consists of seven threepenny pieces dated 1942, soldered onto four pieces of silver chain with a buckled end. The central threepence has a tiny parachute regiment badge soldered onto the face. All threepences are shown with the dated reverse visible.

There is no longer a record of the names of the girl or the paratrooper. Such liaisons were not approved by the matrons of the area, and after 67 years we have to reconstruct the romance for ourselves. The 503rd went directly to battle from Gordonvale, doing a "Hot Drop" onto Nadzab in New Guinea in company with the 2/4th Field Regiment, Royal Australian Artillery. In 1945, the 503rd were instrumental in the recapture of Corregidor in the Philippines. A few veterans have retained links with Gordonvale.



Something that the paratrooper could not have known was that 8 million 1942 Australian threepences were produced in San Francisco and 16 million in Denver. They are identified by a small "S" or "D" beneath the "2" in the date. Surely by chance, a Denver threepence has been placed on either side of the piece with the badge attached. A piece of America, given by an American paratrooper to his Australian sweetheart!