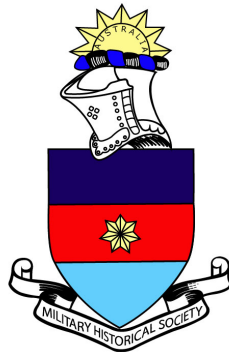


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## EDITORIAL

It's bewildering how events can sometimes overtake you. The original version of this Editorial began with a mild rant against a recent situation here in South Australia affecting collectors of bayonets. The issue arose out of a recent court case and subsequent appeal in relation to the Summary Offences (Dangerous Articles and Prohibited Weapons) Regulations, 2000. To quote a source more knowledgeable about the situation than I am: 'In relation to the bayonets, the appellant was convicted of offences under ... the Summary Offences Act, namely possession without lawful excuse of a dangerous article. Subsequently, some of the convictions were upheld by [a judge], and these included the two counts in relation to the bayonets. This has placed the matter of collecting bayonets into an awkward position due to the judgment by the magistrate and the subsequent unsuccessful appeal as a result of ... the judgement that the bayonet convictions be upheld.' The ink had barely dried on my page, so to speak, when news arrived of the shootings at the primary school in Connecticut. As a fairly new grandparent, I can scarcely bring myself to imagine how families caught up in such a horrendous turn of events must be trying to cope. Eventually, one's thoughts turn to the question of accessibility to firearms and the laws governing that accessibility. There is absolutely no question that the public has the right to be protected, and that it is the duty of the law to provide that protection. Nevertheless, clear heads are called for, and certain distinctions need to be maintained.

Bayonets are not firearms, nor should they be classed with other 'dangerous articles' such as crossbows and flick-knives. My own experience of bayonets suggests that almost any bread knife in any kitchen is sharper and potentially more dangerous than most of the bayonets ever manufactured. The immediate result of the judgement was a police ban on the sale and display of bayonets at the Adelaide militaria show held that very week. The longer term sees legitimate collectors turned overnight into de facto criminals. There is also not a little of the double standard at play in such decisions. Around the time of the show we heard the distressing report about a newly-arrived British tourist in WA whose taxi was rammed by someone in a stolen four-wheel drive vehicle, killing both the tourist and the taxi-driver. I don't recall seeing any debate or demands regarding the banning of such vehicles from urban areas. And although negotiations are currently underway with the authorities to sort out the position of bayonet collectors in South Australia, it's difficult to shake the nagging sensation that once again collectors have served as a soft target for politicians and law-makers eager to be seen to be 'doing something about things'.

All that aside, the current issue of the journal contains a very interesting mix of articles which I have no doubt will appeal to a wide range of readers. Among these is the winning entry of the *Sabretache* Writers' Prize, 'Australian Knights of the Air and Their Little Touches of Chivalry' by Kristen Alexander (whom I mistakenly referred to in the last issue as an ACT member; she is actually a corresponding member). There are also a couple of follow-up articles which complete the stories of the RAAF at Manila Bay and the enlistment of Chinese-Australians into the early armed forces. Of particular note is this issue's fulsome 'As You Were ...' column; it's wonderful to receive readers' responses and reactions to items they've read in the journal, and I would encourage you all to participate. I'm also very keen to receive book reviews; don't wait to be invited, either. A few hundred words on a recent publication in whatever field of military study, Australian or otherwise, will be most welcome and as promptly published as I can manage. I look forward to your contributions!

**Paul Skrebels**

## AUSTRALIAN KNIGHTS OF THE AIR AND THEIR LITTLE TOUCHES OF CHIVALRY

Kristen Alexander<sup>1</sup>

The earliest knights were simply young men trained in cavalry techniques but, as time passed, those warriors became part of literature – for example the heroic romances of Sir Thomas Malory – imbued with classic virtues: *prouesse* (skill-at-arms); *loyauté* (loyalty); *largesse* (generosity); *courtoisie* (courtesy); and *franchise* (an open and frank manner).<sup>2</sup> The literary knights influenced the real and soon cults of honour evolved and chivalric orders were founded. By the 14<sup>th</sup> century, knighthood embraced the courtly and ceremonial and knights were known for acts of valour, gallantry and self-sacrifice.<sup>3</sup>

At the heart of knighthood lies a paradox: chivalry has two faces.<sup>4</sup> The knight was both warrior and gentleman, ruthless and decent. He was chivalrous, but not during combat. As Sir Ector put it when paying tribute to the dead Lancelot in Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*,<sup>5</sup> 'thou wert the meekest<sup>6</sup> man that ever ate in hall among ladies; and thou wert the sternest knight to thy mortal foe that ever put spear in the rest'.<sup>7</sup> As medievalist and Great War trench survivor C.S. Lewis explained, a knight 'is fierce to the nth and meek to the nth'.<sup>8</sup>

The age of chivalry existed from the time of the first crusade to the opening of the Renaissance,<sup>9</sup> but the Great War appeared to herald a resurgence of knighthood. During their first aerial encounters during unarmed reconnaissance operations, enemy pilots would wave and smile at each other.<sup>10</sup> Soon British pilots were described as 'knights of the air' and journalists recorded that the 'battle of the air [was] enlivened by some of those little touches of chivalry...which belonged to old fashioned warfare.'<sup>11</sup> In October 1917, British Prime Minister David Lloyd George praised the new knighthood: 'the heavens are their battlefields; they are the cavalry of the clouds ... They are the knight-errants [sic] of this war, without fear and without reproach.'<sup>12</sup> They recall the old legends of chivalry'.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kristen Alexander is the author of *Clive Caldwell Air Ace* and *Jack Davenport Beaufighter Leader*. She has been researching Australians in the Battle of Britain since 2008. In July 2013, Barrallier Books will publish *Australian Eagles*, a collection of her Battle of Britain articles. She is currently working on a detailed account of nine Australians in the Battle of Britain for the 75th anniversary in 2015

<sup>2</sup> M. Keen, *Chivalry*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2005, pp. 1–2

<sup>3</sup> *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007

<sup>4</sup> G. Shiras, 'The Two Faces of Chivalry in the Air War', *Cross & Cockade*, Society of WWI Aero Historians USA, vol. 5, no. 4, Winter 1964

<sup>5</sup> *Le Morte d'Arthur* was a romantic compilation of the tales of Arthur, Lancelot and the Knights of the Round Table

<sup>6</sup> In this context, 'meekest' has no taint of the submissive. 'Meek' derives from the old Norse and a meek person in the 15th century was courteous, kind and merciful. *Oxford Dictionary on Historical Principles*

<sup>7</sup> Sir Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur* [original spelling from the middle French] (1485), XXI, xii, cited in C.S. Lewis (ed. W. Hooper), 'The Necessity of Chivalry', in *Present Concerns*, Harcourt, Florida, [nd], p. 13

<sup>8</sup> Lewis 'The Necessity of Chivalry', p. 13

<sup>9</sup> Keen, *Chivalry*, p. 1

<sup>10</sup> I. Mackersey, *No Empty Chairs. The Short and Heroic Lives of the Young Aviators who Fought and Died in the First World War*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 2012, p. 22

<sup>11</sup> See for example *The Queenslander*, 10 April 1915, 'Knights of the Air'; *The Times*, 7 March 1916, 'A Knight-Errant of the Air. The Story of a Duel'; and *Warrnambool Standard*, 28 November 1917, 'Knights of the Air. Daring Feats Recorded'. *The Examiner* [Launceston], 30 December 1915

<sup>12</sup> The phrase refers to Pierre du Terrail, Chevalier de Bayard, exemplar of chivalry, who won his reputation as a 'knight without fear and without reproach' during the Italian wars of the 16th century. Keen, *Chivalry*, p. 207

<sup>13</sup> *The Times*, 30 October 1917. F.M. Cutlack borrowed the words for the epigram in his official history, *The*

It is not hard to see why the Great War pilot was hailed as an aerial knight. His helmet and goggles mirrored a visored helmet. The aircraft was his steed, the machine-gun his lance. The wings presentation equated to the dubbing ceremony. The lone reconnaissance flights recalled the wandering knights-errant of old. The dogfight was the duel.

Medieval knights had their orders of chivalry and so too did the knights of the air – or at least something similar. The Victoria Cross (VC), which recognised signal acts of valour in the face of the enemy, was not a formal chivalric order but it had originally been proposed as such and was considered by the Prince of Wales as ‘the most democratic and at the same time the most exclusive of all orders of chivalry’.<sup>14</sup> Nineteen Great War aviators were awarded the VC.<sup>15</sup> The sole Australian was Frank McNamara of 1 Squadron, Australian Flying Corps (AFC), who, while dazed, bleeding and in pain from bomb fragments in his buttocks, rescued Doug Rutherford who had been forced down behind Turkish lines. Although McNamara was publicised as a gallant hero, Rutherford’s rescue was not branded as chivalrous at the time. It was, however, recognised as such when Septimus Power’s 1924 painting, ‘How the Victoria Cross was won in Palestine’, was included in the 1933 publication *Australian Chivalry*.<sup>16</sup>

The VC was not specific to airmen. Their formal recognition came in June 1918 when the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) and Distinguished Flying Medal were established to recognise acts of valour, courage or devotion to duty during flying operations against the enemy. A number of Australian Great War pilots were awarded the DFC, including McNamara’s friend, Arthur ‘Harry’ Cobby of 4 Sqn AFC,<sup>17</sup> who was awarded two bars to the DFC as well as the Distinguished Service Order, all within ten weeks of action.<sup>18</sup>

The new chivalry was not solely a public perception. Some pilots saw themselves as knights. British pilot Cecil Lewis, for one, wrote of ‘my breed, the pilots, whose war has been more chivalrous and clean-handed than any other’, operating in ‘the only sphere where there was still chivalry and honour’.<sup>19</sup> Other pilots saw themselves as members of an international brotherhood of the air,<sup>20</sup> with both sides of the Great War observing a ‘special chivalry.’<sup>21</sup>

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*Australian Flying Corps in the Western and Eastern Theatres of War 1914–1918*, first published in 1923

<sup>14</sup> Michael Crook demonstrates that much of the early discussion about the institution of the VC envisioned an order and cites an early proposal to establish The Military Order of Victoria, with the queen at its head. M. Crook, *The Evolution of the Victoria Cross*, Midas Books, Tunbridge Wells, 1975. Unlike the Prince of Wales, Queen Victoria was clear that the VC was a decoration, not an order. C. Bowyer, *For Valour. The Air V.C.s*, William Kimber, London, 1978, p. 19

<sup>15</sup> Airmen awarded the Victoria Cross served with the Royal Flying Corps, the Royal Naval Air Service, Royal Air Force and the Australian Flying Corps. [http://www.rafweb.org/VC\\_holders1.htm](http://www.rafweb.org/VC_holders1.htm)

<sup>16</sup> C. Coulthard-Clark, *McNamara, VC. A Hero’s Dilemma*, Air Power Studies Centre, Fairbairn, 1997, p. 51; *The Examiner* [Launceston], 9 June 1917; Treloar, (editor), *Australian Chivalry. Reproductions in colour and duo-tone of Official War Paintings*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1933

<sup>17</sup> McNamara and Cobby served together in the Brighton Rifles. A. Cobby, *High Adventure*, Robertson & Mullens, Melbourne, 1943, p. 16

<sup>18</sup> Noted by Field Marshal Lord Birdwood, who personally congratulated Cobby for his many ‘gallant performances’, in Cobby, *High Adventure*, pp. 203–204

<sup>19</sup> C. Lewis, *Sagittarius Rising*, The Folio Society, London, 1998, pp. 84 and 31

<sup>20</sup> P.H. Meijering, *Signed with Their Honour. The Story of Chivalry in Air Warfare 1914–45*, Mainstream Publishing, Edinburgh, 1987, p. 161. One of the earliest uses of the phrase ‘brotherhood of the air’ was recorded in 1913. The Imperial Air Fleet Committee, which, among other things had been established to draw attention to the urgent need for aerial defence, had gone to Cologne and ‘were welcomed by airmen not as citizens of a foreign country but as fellow members of the brotherhood of the air’. *The Times*, 6 June 1913

<sup>21</sup> Cutlack, *The Australian Flying Corps in the Western and Eastern Theatres of War 1914–1918*, Uni of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1984, p. xl

The majority of those aerial chivalries occurred after battle and examples abound. When German pilot Oswald Boelcke crashed to his death on 28 October 1916 he had achieved 40 victories, formulated a set of flying rules to maximise success in battle and was regarded by the British as much for his courtesy to prisoners as for his aerial achievements. Members of the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) made up wreaths ‘to our brave and chivalrous foe’ and dropped them over the German air field.<sup>22</sup> They regularly toasted Manfred von Richthofen who had erected a gravestone in memory of the victims of his first credited victory, his ‘honourably fallen enemies’.<sup>23</sup> When the ‘Red Baron’ died on 21 April 1918, 3 Sqn AFC gave him a full military funeral and the 5<sup>th</sup> Australian Division sent a wreath ‘to our worthy and gallant foe’.<sup>24</sup> The Germans allowed 1 Sqn AFC to fly over their aerodromes to drop kit to those who had been captured and both 1 Sqn and their German counterparts gave airmen prisoners the freedom of the mess before sending them to a prison camp.<sup>25</sup> Acknowledging German chivalry is a courtesy in itself. In his *Aces and Kings*, 1 Sqn ace Leslie Sutherland described German post-battle gallantry in a chapter entitled ‘Kings of Men’.<sup>26</sup> In July 1936, Göring’s secretary wrote to him advising that Göring had read *Aces and Kings* and had ‘been so pleased with your descriptions of German chivalry that he instructed me to send you his photograph, autographed with his own hand’.<sup>27</sup>

74 Sqn RFC were co-located with 4 Sqn AFC at Clairmarais, France and the Australians were inspired by their British friends. Some of his aerial colleagues considered British ace Ira ‘Taffy’ Jones ‘unsportsmanlike’ for pushing ruthlessness too far with his ‘habit of attacking Huns dangling from their parachutes’<sup>28</sup> but 4 Sqn’s Herbert ‘Gil’ Watson, for one, seemed to have adopted Jones’s practice when he shot away the rope from a man jumping from a balloon fired upon by Harry Cobby.<sup>29</sup> Jones shrugged off criticism of his actions as there was ‘a bloody war on’ and he intended to ‘avenge my pals’.<sup>30</sup> Like the medieval knights, he knew the battleground was no place for courtesy. He thought much of what had been written about chivalry was ‘balderdash ... I doubt if any genuine chivalry was ever shown by rival airmen during combat.’<sup>31</sup> It certainly wasn’t by his comrade British ace Edward ‘Mick’ Mannock who believed that ‘to fight is not enough. You must kill.’<sup>32</sup> Mannock expressed sympathy for ‘a brave Hun’ who ‘deserved to get away’ but did not stay his guns.<sup>33</sup> His chivalry, too, occurred outside the aerial arena when he wrote to the parents of Fritz Frech, who he had shot down on 4 September 1917, to tell them of their son’s fate.<sup>34</sup>

Harry Cobby thought 74 Sqn a ‘good team of chaps’ and was particularly inspired by

<sup>22</sup> I. Jones, *King of Air Fighters. Biography of Major ‘Mick’ Mannock VC, DSO MC*, Thackwell Publishing, London, 1986, p. 151; Shiras, ‘The Two Faces of Chivalry in the Air War’

<sup>23</sup> Cutlack, *The Australian Flying Corps in the Western and Eastern Theatres of War 1914–1918*, p. xl; cited in Mackersey, *No Empty Chairs*, p. 132. Richthofen’s honourable enemies were 2nd Lieutenant Lionel Morris and Captain Tom Rees of 11 Squadron RFC.

<sup>24</sup> M. Molkentin, *Fire in the Sky. The Australian Flying Corps in the First World War*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2010, p. 257

<sup>25</sup> L.W. Sutherland, *Aces and Kings*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1935, pp. 144–145

<sup>26</sup> The title refers to the specific chivalries of two Germans

<sup>27</sup> The Sutherland Collection, Office of Air Force History

<sup>28</sup> I. Jones, *Tiger Squadron. The Story of 74 Squadron, RAF in Two World Wars*, Allen, London, 1954, p. 24

<sup>29</sup> Cutlack, *The Australian Flying Corps in the Western and Eastern Theatres of War 1914–1918*, p. 286

<sup>30</sup> Jones, *Tiger Squadron*, p. 24

<sup>31</sup> Jones, *King of Air Fighters*, p. 151

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, p. 180

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, p. 149

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 150–151

Mannock and his one-eyed combat ruthlessness.<sup>35</sup> Cobby analysed, practised and inculcated Mannock's tactics in 4 Sqn. He also adopted the best ones of William Bishop, James McCudden, Albert Ball and Richthofen.<sup>36</sup> These included decoy operations to lure out the enemy; lone reconnaissances over the lines; the odd 'little independent war of our own'; attacking from above and behind then plunging and coming up and firing underneath the enemy's tail or cockpit; and shooting at a stricken aircraft to ensure its pilot was dead.<sup>37</sup>



Fig.1: Arthur 'Harry' Cobby. (Office of Air Force History)

4 Sqn's tactics exemplified the martial imperative of knighthood and highlighted that the aerial arena was for battle not courtesy. The results spoke for themselves: with 29 victories involving balloons and aircraft, Cobby became Australia's third highest scoring ace of the Great War and 4 Sqn claimed more victories than any other AFC unit. Like Lancelot, Cobby was stern and meek – in the correct arenas. He gained a reputation as the 'most loved and most gallant of our airmen' and his 'personal courage' and 'readiness for sacrifice' were held as examples for young airmen and soldiers of the Second World War.<sup>38</sup>

Sometimes lack of gallantry masked an essential protective mechanism. Before Richthofen's honourable funeral, the dead airman's pockets were picked and his clothes ratted for souvenirs. His body was stripped, even his monogrammed handkerchief went. Someone swapped his boots for their own. Fragments of his aircraft were filched; by the time the scavengers had finished it barely looked like an aeroplane.<sup>39</sup> Another took his photo; he was denied the small courtesy of closing his eyes beforehand.<sup>40</sup> Despite the apparent callousness of it, trophy hunting was a common enough practice. Mick Mannock did it and Richthofen too collected souvenirs from his victims' aeroplanes.<sup>41</sup> Clive Caldwell, Australia's highest scoring fighter ace of the Second World War, also ransacked bodies for souvenirs – in his case stamps for a friend's collection: 'there were a goodish number of bodies strewn about the place which yielded a fair assortment for you and I enclose them'.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Cobby, *High Adventure*, p. 102

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 100, 147, 122, 129 and 137, and 119

<sup>38</sup> General Sir Thomas Blamey in his introduction to *ibid.*, pp. 13 and 14. Cobby's reputation was somewhat battered by 1945 when he was removed from command of 1st Tactical Air Force but we were reminded of his legacy as an 'exemplary warrior' and inspired leader at the inaugural Cobby Oration in June 2010. I.B. Gration, 'Cobby – An Exemplary Warrior', in *Sabretache*, vol. LI, no. 3, September 2010. Air Marshal Gration AO AFC (Retd) presented this assessment of Cobby at the MHSA Victorian Branch's inaugural Cobby Oration, 24 June 2010

<sup>39</sup> The scavenger hunt was filmed. Mackersey, *No Empty Chairs*, p. 256; Molkentin, *Fire in the Sky*, pp. 254–255. See for example *Sunday Times* [Perth], 30 May 1943 for souvenired fragments

<sup>40</sup> The Australian War Memorial holds one in its collection (A03158). One of the photos was dropped on the German airfield as proof of death. Mackersey, *No Empty Chairs*, p. 256

<sup>41</sup> Mackersey, *No Empty Chairs*, pp. 276–277 and 132. Joanna Bourke argues that trophy hunting: proved the collector had been in on the kill or at least somewhere in the vicinity; was a sign of combat effectiveness; or enabled men to link the death of the enemy with love of themselves. J. Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, Granta Books, London, 1999 pp. 37–43. I believe it is as much a distancing mechanism as referring to the enemy as 'the Hun' or 'Jerry', and shooting at targets instead of men

<sup>42</sup> Letter Clive Caldwell/Ernest Richardson Slade-Slade, 28 December 1941, author's collection

There were occasions when chivalry was set aside, and the line between effective combat and inhumanity was crossed, such as during the 21 September 1918 attack on a retreating Turkish column in Palestine.<sup>43</sup> 1 Sqn AFC dropped six tons of bombs and fired nearly 24,000 machine-gun rounds and the British squadrons expended a similar amount. Some of the Turks waved white flags but to Francis Conrick, ‘it was quite impossible for us to accept the surrender of the enemy, so we kept on destroying them’.<sup>44</sup> Maybe so, but it was recognised at the time as ‘butchery’.<sup>45</sup> Leslie Sutherland could ‘think of no word to convey the dreadfulness of the action’ but the official historian of the AFC could.<sup>46</sup> He called it ‘a massacre’.<sup>47</sup> British airman Louis Strange, who commanded 80 Wing, Royal Air Force (RAF) which included 2 and 4 Sqns AFC, gave testament to the ultimate bastardry, taking up arms after ceasefire. He recollected that some pilots resented the unexpected armistice and took off regardless, claiming after the fact that they had been searching for Frank Smith, one of 2 Sqn’s flight commanders.<sup>48</sup> Perhaps so, but they landed with empty bomb racks.<sup>49</sup>

Inhumanity taints effective combat actions but so too can misplaced chivalry. At his death in September 1917, French ace George Guynemer had 53 aerial victories to his credit. It would have been 54 if he had shot down Ernst Udet three months earlier. But, when Udet’s guns failed during their dogfight, Guynemer raised his arm, waved and flew away.<sup>50</sup> The man considered by some to be the greatest fighting pilot of the time had downed his lance, so to speak, refusing to harm his defenceless opponent.<sup>51</sup> Guynemer was accorded a place in the cavalry of the clouds and his biography was entitled *Knight of the Air* but was his action sensible?<sup>52</sup> By war’s end, with 62 victories to his credit – the majority occurring after his encounter with Guynemer – Udet was Germany’s highest scoring surviving ace. Post-war he contributed to the early development of the Luftwaffe and was influential in the adoption of the Stuka dive bomber. Perhaps not militarily sensible, but Guynemer’s misplaced chivalry was inspirational and provided a hopeful counterpoint to the harsh realities of effective combat and a salve to the ache of knowing that lines are crossed in warfare.

With bastardries unpublicised and heroes vaunted, the new knights maintained their place in the aerial canon in the years following the Great War. Many took on new roles. No longer warriors, they became explorers, pioneers and racers but were still accorded the ‘knights of the air’ appellation.<sup>53</sup> Films such as *Knights of the Air* and *Dawn Patrol* were made and

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<sup>43</sup> Mol Kentin, *Fire in the Sky*, pp. 161–164

<sup>44</sup> Conrick’s diary, 21 September 1918, cited in *ibid.*, p. 163

<sup>45</sup> Sutherland, *Aces and Kings*, p. 254

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*, p. 254

<sup>47</sup> Cutlack, *The Australian Flying Corps in the Western and Eastern Theatres of War 1914–1918*, p. 159

<sup>48</sup> Smith became the AFC’s last battle casualty when he was brought down by ground fire. He turned up safely a few days after the armistice. Mol Kentin, *Fire in the Sky. The Australian Flying Corps in the First World War*, 2010, pp. 323–325

<sup>49</sup> Strange, *Recollections of an Airman*, pp. 204–205 cited in Mol Kentin, *Fire in the Sky*, p. 325

<sup>50</sup> Meijering, *Signed with Their Honour*, pp. 17–19 and 165

<sup>51</sup> Cutlack, *The Australian Flying Corps in the Western and Eastern Theatres of War 1914–1918*, p. xxxix. Guynemer did not return from combat on 11 September 1917. Udet linked Guynemer’s action to the ‘knightly heroism of olden times’ in his memoir, and wanted to ‘lay this belated wreath on Guynemer’s unknown grave’. Udet discounted speculation that Guynemer had flown away because his guns had also jammed or had feared that Udet might ram him. ‘I do not believe them. I think that even today there is still alive something of the knightly heroism of olden times.’ Quotes translated from *Mein Fliegerleben* by Meijering in, *Signed with Their Honour*, p. 19

<sup>52</sup> G. Bordeaux, *Guynemer. Knight of the Air*, Chatto & Windus, London, 1918

<sup>53</sup> See for example *The Advertiser*, 23 March 1920 ‘Our Knights of the Air’ which reports the conclusion of Sir Ross Smith’s ‘great air flight from London to Adelaide’

memoirs and biographies were published, all influencing the next generation. For instance, English-born and Adelaide-raised William ‘Bill’ Millington thought *Dawn Patrol* was a ‘very good show’.<sup>54</sup> Perth lad Richard ‘Dick’ Glyde was a fan of McCudden and his copy of *Flying Fury* was a well-thumbed possession.<sup>55</sup> Clive Caldwell was impressed by VC winners Bishop, McCudden and Ball and German aces Udet and Richthofen.<sup>56</sup>

The Second World War’s fighter pilots were considered the legitimate heirs of the Great War aviators and those of the Battle of Britain, in particular, were presented as scions of chivalry. Film images, newsreel commentary and iconographic photos of helmeted pilots looking skywards did as much as the print media to promote the Battle of Britain pilots as the latest incarnation of the aerial knight.<sup>57</sup>

Those knights included Dick Glyde, who was granted a short service commission with the RAF on 24 May 1937. He was posted to 87 Sqn RAF after training and, when war was declared, went to France with the Air Component of the British Expeditionary Force. He was involved in the Air Component’s first victory and ‘had the satisfaction of using my guns on a German aircraft and scoring a few hits on it’.<sup>58</sup> Glyde was one of the first airmen interned in Belgium and later received a commendation from the Air Ministry for his part in



planning and carrying out a successful escape.<sup>59</sup> He was awarded a DFC during the Battle of France for ‘great dash and offensive spirit’. He flew in the Battle of Britain and, at his death, his officially acknowledged victories totalled 3¼ plus another 1/3 destroyed, 1/3 probably destroyed and one damaged. His squadron, however, recognised nine confirmed victories and the destruction of at least five other enemy aircraft.<sup>60</sup>

Fig.2: Dick Glyde’s medals.  
(RAAFWA Aviation Heritage Museum)

<sup>54</sup> 18 July 1939, Bill Millington’s 1939 diary, courtesy Robinson Family Archive

<sup>55</sup> <http://forum.keypublishing.com/showthread.php?t=105533>

<sup>56</sup> Kristen Alexander, *Clive Caldwell Air Ace*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2006, p. 2

<sup>57</sup> See for example Pathé Gazette’s *Hot Moments at a Fighter Station* (Newsreel dated 17 October 1940) where ‘the job done and the enemy on the run, the tough young pilots return, like valiant knights of old. But the steeds of our modern knights have wings and, my word, what a kick!’ G. Campion, *The Good Fight. Battle of Britain Propaganda and the Few*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2010, pp. 144 and 223

<sup>58</sup> Glyde’s small part in downing the Heinkel was not officially acknowledged but he indicated no rancour about his flight commander’s sole claim. Letter Dick Glyde/Phillis Glyde 22 November 1939, courtesy Robert Glyde

<sup>59</sup> Undated letter, Phillis Glyde, AWM 76 (R. L. Glyde)

<sup>60</sup> Next of kin letter, Flight Lieutenant Ian R. Gleed/Frank Glyde 18 August 1940. National Archives of Australia (NAA) Casualty file Glyde Richard Lindsay [sic] – (Flying Officer) Series A705 Item 163/34/110



Glyde was lost on 13 August 1940 during an early morning operation.<sup>61</sup> He had fought well and hard but still found a place for small chivalries in his war.<sup>62</sup> His quarter share came about because, as section leader on the day, he fairly acknowledged the contribution of his pilots, crediting them in his combat report.<sup>63</sup> He also offered the larger courtesy of not shooting at enemy parachutists such as the wounded Hans-Christian Schäfer who baled from an aircraft Glyde had brought down on 19 May 1940.<sup>64</sup>



Fig.3: *Bill Millington. (Courtesy of Simon Robinson)*

Bill Millington returned to England in May 1939. He was proud to do his ‘bit for the noble cause for which my country is fighting’ and was granted a short service commission in the RAF.<sup>65</sup> After training he was posted to 79 Sqn RAF. In June 1940, he wrote a farewell letter in case he failed to return from combat. ‘Please do not grieve over my passing’, he told his parents. ‘I ... regard it a privilege to fight for all those things that make life worth living: freedom, honour and fair play ... Since leaving home I have endeavoured to live up to those standards dictated by honour and chivalry, and am sure that I have not failed you.’<sup>66</sup>

Millington went ‘forth into battle, light of heart’ but discovered it was not easy to be chivalrous during wartime.<sup>67</sup> He had no personal hatred of Germans, discovering that some of the captured airmen who were entertained in the officers’ mess before they were dispatched to internment camps were ‘quite good types.’<sup>68</sup> But after his first few combats, including his first victory when he ‘avenged the loss’ of one of his comrades, Millington realised battle was no place for honour and chivalry: ‘fighting in the air has to be a cold matter of business routine, no longer sportive.’<sup>69</sup> He was ‘sorry in a way but the war has to be won and how—!’<sup>70</sup> Even so, he found a way to uphold his ideals.

<sup>61</sup> For more details of Dick Glyde’s background and experiences in the battles of France and Britain, see Kristen Alexander, ‘Australian Eagle: Flying Officer Richard Lindsay Glyde DFC Pilot of the Battles of France and Britain’ parts one and two, *Wings. Official Publication of the RAAF Association*, vol. 62, no. 3, Spring 2010 and vol. 62, no. 4, Summer 2010

<sup>62</sup> Next of kin letter, Flight Lieutenant Ian R. Gleed/Frank Glyde 18 August 1940. NAA Casualty file Glyde Richard Lindsay [sic]—(Flying Officer) Series A705 Item 163/34/110

<sup>63</sup> Flying Officer Glyde, Fighter Combat Report 19 May 1940 (5.30 a.m.), National Archives UK (NAUK) AIR 50/37

<sup>64</sup> After France’s fall Schäfer, along with all French-held prisoners of war, was released. He would later be responsible for a number of deaths. See posts in response to my enquiry about the fate of Schäfer on <http://forum.12oclockhigh.net/showthread.php?t=22608> October 2010

<sup>65</sup> Bill Millington’s farewell letter, June 1940, courtesy Robinson Family Archive

<sup>66</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> Letter from Bill Millington published in *The Advertiser*, 18 October 1940

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*

On 31 August 1940, Millington's Hurricane was attacked and he was wounded. His engine started to burn. As the flames licked his skin, he had two choices but his decision was obvious: 'I considered it unwise to bail out', he later explained, 'as my machine would probably have crashed into a small village'.<sup>71</sup> Millington's Hurricane came down in a field, away from any houses. 'Covered in blood and grease', Millington 'managed to scramble out before the machine exploded'.<sup>72</sup> He was awarded an immediate DFC. Two months later, with nine victories, two shared destroyed, four probables and three damaged, Bill Millington was missing in action.

Fig.4: John Cock. (Courtesy of The Spitfire Association)

As in the Great War, the pilots of the Second World War realised there was no place for chivalry in battle. Like Dick Glyde, John Cock, born in Renmark, South Australia, was posted to 87 Sqn after receiving a short service commission with the RAF. During battle on 11 August 1940 he was fired upon and had to bale out. He was shot at as he swayed helplessly in his harness; some of his parachute cords had been cut through. Protected from above by fellow squadron member Denis David – himself a potential target while observing his own touch of chivalry towards his comrade – Cock landed in the sea and swam safely to shore.<sup>73</sup> When Clive Caldwell witnessed a German firing at a friend who had bailed out he steeled himself to shoot at enemy parachutists. He later admitted 'I killed only of necessity and with regret' and came to accept that 'there's no such thing as civilised warfare'.<sup>74</sup>



Reinforcing that chivalry had no place in battle, the head of Fighter Command, Air Chief Marshal Hugh Dowding, believed 'Germans descending over England are prospective prisoners of war, and, as such, should be immune. On the other hand, British pilots descending over England are still potential combatants' and the Luftwaffe were 'perfectly entitled' to fire on them.<sup>75</sup> Dowding also believed it was acceptable to attack German air-sea rescue aircraft operating in the channel, even if marked with a red cross, as those saved would return to fight again.<sup>76</sup>

Those attitudes, along with the strafing of Japanese survivors by Australian and American squadrons after the Battle of the Bismarck Sea, area bombing of civilian and military targets, and the use of atomic bombs in the latter stages of the war were inimical to a popular conception of chivalry. For example, Alan Righetti of 3 Sqn RAAF, who was taken prisoner after baling out of a burning aircraft in the desert, believes that chivalry 'is hard to find today, and very difficult to find then'.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>71</sup> A.B. Austin, *Fighter Command*, Gollancz, London, 1941, p. 193

<sup>72</sup> Letter Bill Millington/Eileen Robinson, 14 September 1940, courtesy Robinson Family Archive

<sup>73</sup> 87 Squadron RAF operations record book, NAUK Air 27/712; N. Gelb, *Scramble. A Narrative History of the Battle of Britain*, Michael Joseph, London, 1986, p. 120

<sup>74</sup> Alexander, *Clive Caldwell Air Ace*, p. 69

<sup>75</sup> Despatch on the conduct of the Battle of Britain submitted by Air Chief Marshal Dowding to the Air Ministry in August 1941.' *London Gazette* issue 37719, 10 September 1946 <http://www.london-gazette.co.uk/issues/37719/supplements/4553>

<sup>76</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> Email Alan Righetti/Alexander 6 April 2012

Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw believed ‘wars cease to be wars when chivalry is altogether excluded, as now, and become mass murder’,<sup>78</sup> and even Churchill acknowledged that ‘in the sombre wars of modern democracy chivalry finds no place’.<sup>79</sup> Indeed, the remotely operated weapons systems of recent conflicts, the increasing reliance on technology, and recent strident claims that it is foolish to go into battle with too many constraints, that war has its own rules so society’s laws and values should not be applied, and that current rules of warfare have shortcomings so they need to be refigured, reinforce Churchill’s belief.<sup>80</sup> But not everyone saw it this way. That the absence of chivalry was noticed and lamented, and pilots such as Bill Millington and Clive Caldwell regretted that war was no longer sportive or that they had to kill at all, highlights a desire for chivalric values. Indeed, in August 1940, C.S. Lewis argued that chivalry in warfare was necessary; that ‘Lancelot is not yet irrecoverable’ and the ‘old tradition is practical and vital’.<sup>81</sup>



Glyde and Millington were not the only pilots of the Second World War to carry out ‘little touches of chivalry’. As in the Great War, examples abound. Despite encountering few instances of it himself, Alan Righetti displayed an intimate chivalry when he fulfilled his promise to George Wiley – a fellow prisoner of war in Stalag Luft III who was executed for his part in the Great Escape – to take his watch and photos to the Wiley family in Canada.<sup>82</sup>

Fig.5: Alan Righetti. (Courtesy of Alan Righetti)

There was the selfless bravery of Jack Davenport of 455 Squadron RAAF who rescued William ‘Bill’ Stanley from a burning Beaufighter, and that of the injured Harry Cobby who, despite the presence of unexploded mines aboard a crashed Catalina, saved two fellow passengers. Both were awarded the George Medal which recognises valour of the highest order outside combat.<sup>83</sup>

There was the larger chivalry of self-sacrifice such as that of Rawdon Middleton of 149 Squadron RAF who was determined, despite his own injuries, not to let his crew fall into enemy hands, for which he was posthumously awarded the VC.<sup>84</sup> There were the small gallantries towards the enemy such as Clive Caldwell’s vigil over a possible Japanese survivor on 17 August 1943 before the appearance of sharks and a rough engine signalled a hasty departure.<sup>85</sup> There was the larger humanitarianism of the Allied food drops to Holland which included aircrew from 460 Sqn RAAF.

<sup>78</sup> Recorded by James Lees-Milne in M. Bloch (abridged and introduced by), *James Lees-Milne Diaries, 1942-1954*, John Murray, London, 2007, p. 137

<sup>79</sup> Winston Churchill, *The Grand Alliance*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1950, p. 200

<sup>80</sup> See Tom Lewis, *Lethality in Combat. A Study of the True Nature of Battle*, Big Sky, Newport NSW, 2012

<sup>81</sup> Lewis, ‘The Necessity of Chivalry’, p. 16

<sup>82</sup> Email Alan Righetti/Alexander 24 April 2008

<sup>83</sup> Kristen Alexander, *Jack Davenport Beaufighter Leader*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2009, pp. 154–157; <http://www.london-gazette.co.uk/issues/36418/supplements/1165>

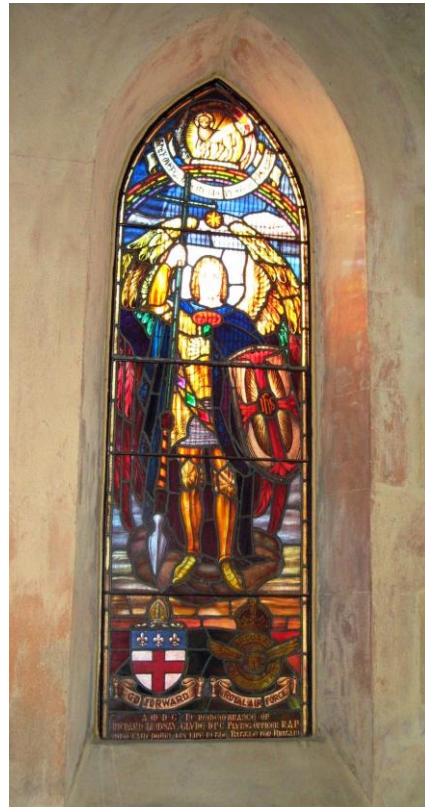
<sup>84</sup> S. Bill, *Middleton VC*, S. & L. Bill, East Bentleigh, 1991, pp. 132–145

<sup>85</sup> Alexander, *Clive Caldwell Air Ace*, p. 150

The chivalric deeds of aerial knights are not forgotten. Bill Millington's farewell letter was published in *The Advertiser* and *Children's Hour*.<sup>86</sup> Along with a photo of Millington in uniform and a newspaper clipping of his DFC citation, the letter was framed and presented to Edwardstown Primary School, Millington's old school in Adelaide. They are still displayed in the entrance foyer.<sup>87</sup>

Dick Glyde's parents commissioned a stained glass window at Christ Church, Claremont, in Perth.<sup>88</sup> The central image is the archangel Michael, one of the patron saints of chivalry. Also included is the badge of Glyde's school, Guildford Grammar, which incorporates the cross of St George – another patron saint of chivalry – denoting generosity to a vanquished foe such as Glyde offered Schäfer.<sup>89</sup>

Fig.6: Glyde Window, Christ Church, Claremont, Perth. (Courtesy of Peter Shaw)



The fifteen stained glass windows in the Australian War Memorial's Hall of Memory represent the defining qualities of Australian servicemen and women. Chivalry is represented by an airman accompanied by the rose of chivalry and the cross of St George.<sup>90</sup>

As chivalry evolved during the Middle Ages, so too does it continue to change. Humanitarianism is the new chivalry. Its manifestations are formal rules of war such as the Geneva conventions, war crimes trials, conscious adherence to the 'just war' tradition, and international scrutiny and oversight of military operations. Combat continues to be ruthless but the new incarnation of chivalry will do much to ensure the rules of warfare are not set aside and the line from humanity to bastardry is not crossed without consequence.

The men and women of the RAAF are the 21st century's knights of the air; they are exemplars of the new chivalry. The RAAF participates in international conflicts: it sent a contingent to Kyrgyzstan in response to the September 11 terrorist attacks; it assisted in obtaining sea control in the Gulf ahead of the invasion of Iraq; it sent a force to assist with the overthrow of Saddam Hussein; and it is involved in the war in Afghanistan – but it has a strong peacekeeping and humanitarian role. The RAAF provided emergency relief after the

<sup>86</sup> *The Advertiser*, 13 December 1941; 'He was a Schoolboy', in *The Children's Hour*, vol. LIV, no. 605, Grade VII, June 1942

<sup>87</sup> Letter Tony Sullivan, Principal, Edwardstown Primary School/Alexander 16 October 2009; email Glenys de Wit, Finance Officer, Edwardstown Primary School/Alexander 3 May 2012. The framed tribute was presented on 10 April 1942.

<sup>88</sup> For more information about the Glyde Window see Kristen Alexander, 'The Glyde Window' in *Crossroads* [the magazine of Christ Church, Claremont], vol. 7, no. 1, Winter 2010

<sup>89</sup> The Glyde Window is not alone in its chivalric iconography. St Michael was a popular subject for soldier and airmen memorials and Mathieson & Gibson, who created the Glyde Window, used the archangel, with variations, in a number of windows, including a Scotch College commission. Emails Dr Bronwyn Hughes, Stained Glass Historian and Consultant/Alexander 18 and 25 June 2010

<sup>90</sup> *The Hall of Memory*, The Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1984, [p.13]

Bali bombings; flew in medical and humanitarian supplies after the December 2003 earthquake in Iran and the December 2004 tsunami; and assisted in the 2010 Pakistan flood relief.<sup>91</sup>

The RAAF has provided a representative of the new chivalry, proving the ‘little touches’ have a place in the modern air force. Angus Houston, former Chief of Air Force and Chief of the Defence Force, was awarded the Air Force Cross for winching three shipwrecked sailors to safety. He is recognised for integrity, commitment and for the great humanity and sympathy he expressed at the loss of Australians on active service. Now retired, this modern day ‘officer and gentleman’ is a public role model as 2011 Father of the Year and ACT Australian of the Year 2012.<sup>92</sup>



Fig.7: RAAF Operation Pakistan Assist II, August 2010. (Office of Air Force History)

C.S. Lewis was right. There is a need of and place for chivalry outside combat; it is still practical and vital. The RAAF will continue to forge its role as an agent of humanitarianism and the aerial scions of Harry Cobby, Frank McNamara, Dick Glyde, Bill Millington, Clive Caldwell, Jack Davenport, Rawdon Middleton, Alan Righetti and Angus Houston will carry out the ‘little touches of chivalry’ that ensure wars are fought fairly and with decency.

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I carried out research for this essay over a number of months and some of it arises from my broader work on the Australian fighter pilots in the Battle of Britain. I confirmed all online

resources on 10 May 2012. I wish to extend my thanks to all who provided me with photos for this article, in particular Gregory Gilbert and Steve Allan of the Office of Air Force History

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<sup>91</sup> Above examples taken from C. Clark, *90 Years of the RAAF. A Snapshot History*, Air Power Development Centre, Canberra, 2011, pp. 285–325

<sup>92</sup> <http://news.smh.com.au/breaking-news-national/exadf-chief-houston-is-father-of-the-year-20110826-1jd85.html>; <http://www.australianoftheyear.org.au/recipient/?m=angus-houston-2012>

## OUTWITTING BILLY HUGHES AND THE WHITE AUSTRALIA POLICY: CHINESE-AUSTRALIANS AND THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Alastair Kennedy<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

In my first article (*Sabretache* June 2012) I described the way in which Australia was defended in the period between the landing of the First Fleet and Federation, together with the part played by Australia-domiciled Chinese in the Volunteers and the Militia units of the pre-Federation Colonies. This article discusses the situation in which Australian-born Chinese found themselves at the outbreak of war in August 1914 and the tactics they used to circumvent the racially exclusive White Australia policies which, on the one hand, excluded them from enlisting in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) but, on the other, required them to explain to the Courts why they should not be enlisted for compulsory military home service under Billy Hughes' *Call to Arms* measures in December 1915.

### Chinese-Australia in 1914: Population

Over the last five decades of the nineteenth century the number of those of Chinese origin living in Australia fell sharply. The probable maximum of some 45,000 was reached at the height of the first Gold Rush in the 1850s, but they had never represented more than 4% of the total population and the figures available for this period are incomplete and unreliable. From the more precise results of the 1901 and 1911 censuses, it became clear that the number of both full-Chinese and part-Chinese ancestry was still in decline, mostly due to the restrictive Commonwealth legislation aimed at preventing further Asian immigration (particularly from China), and refusing Chinese already living in Australia the opportunity to obtain naturalisation as an Australian citizen. There was also the denial of rights to state pensions, of re-entry to Australia if they went back to visit their families in China; and they were no longer allowed to bring to Australia their Chinese fiancées, wives or children. In consequence, the 1901 census shows only 29,627 full-Chinese and 3,090 part-Chinese; by 1911 this had fallen to 22,653 and 3,019 respectively. If allowance is then made for females, older persons and young children, the number of young men of military service age (say 18 to 40, born in Australia and thus British Subjects) would have been very small, probably less than 1,000.<sup>2</sup>

### Discriminatory Legislation

The Commonwealth Immigration Restriction Act of 1901 (one of the first acts of the new Federation) was based on the outcome of an earlier Commonwealth Premiers Conference in London, which adopted the Natal Immigration Restriction Act (first drafted in 1894) as its model and which had been adopted by Western Australia in 1897, New South Wales in 1898 and Tasmania in 1899. Queensland had its own version modified to accord with an agreement between the state and Japan. The 1901 Act defined a 'prohibited immigrant' as someone who, when asked to do so by an Immigration Officer, failed to write out at dictation a passage of 50 words in a European language (to be chosen by the Immigration Officer).<sup>3</sup> If shipping

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<sup>1</sup> Lt Col (Retd) Alastair Kennedy MBE is a former British Army officer now a citizen of Australia. He is a member of the MHSA Canberra Branch and a volunteer guide at the Australian War Memorial.

<sup>2</sup> Morag Loh suggests about 750; 'Fighting Uphill', in Jan Ryan (ed.), *Chinese in Australia and New Zealand*, New Age International, New Delhi 1995, p.62.

<sup>3</sup> The Dictation Test was administered 805 times in 1902-1903 with 46 people passing; between 1904 and 1909 it was administered 554 times with only 6 people being successful. After 1909 no one passed. The Act was

lines unwittingly landed a prohibited immigrant they were responsible for the cost of returning him/her to their port of embarkation. Certain exemptions from the Dictation Test were later permitted; students were allowed temporary exemption from 1901; merchants were allowed to bring in assistants and 'special clerks'; those of good character and five years' residence in Australia were exempted in 1905.

### **Naturalisation**

The NSW Chinese Restriction and Regulation Act of 1888 effectively ended the possibility of newly arrived Chinese becoming naturalised. The Commonwealth Nationality Act of 1903 stopped Chinese already resident in Australia from obtaining naturalisation as Australian citizens and therefore eligible to purchase land in NSW (Crown's Land Consolidation Act 1913) and Queensland. This latter law was repealed in 1920 but nothing actually changed until 1956 for non-Europeans.

### **Education**

For the most part, Chinese Australians attended two schools; the local government school provided by the state and the Chinese community's supplementary schools which, after normal school hours, taught them the basics of the Chinese language, history and culture. Before the introduction of the Immigration Restriction Act and the Certificates of Exemption from the Dictation Test (CEDT), wealthy Chinese had sent their children back to relatives in China to study, but the new immigration controls made them fearful that their children, although Australian-born, would not be allowed to return after completing their studies.<sup>4</sup> The Chinese community school system was designed to meet this new need but was slow to develop outside Sydney (Chung Wah School 1909-1914; Quong Wah School 1913-1915) and Melbourne (Chinese Evening School 1909-1914). In 1910 the first Chinese Consul-General to Australia, Liang Lan-hsun, exhorted the Chinese residents of Ballarat and Bendigo to build schools for their children as he hoped 'the Australian-born Chinese, with their knowledge of Chinese and English, would serve China'.<sup>5</sup> However, even in the major cities, the life of these community schools was short and most had closed by the outbreak of the First World War. In the 1920s attempts were made to reopen the schools, particularly by the pro-republican Chinese Nationalist League, but again they were short-lived due to factional disputes within the Chinese community, a lack of permanent teaching staff and parents' increasing preference for giving their children an Australian education.

### **Employment/Profession**

The 1911 census gives a detailed breakdown of the professions and employments of the Chinese Australians. While the details vary from state to state, the main occupations were, for 'full-blooded' Chinese, agriculture, laundries, furniture-making (although Victoria and New South Wales had passed a Factories & Shops Acts in 1896 to prevent Chinese from carrying out this trade, as they threatened the jobs of white Australians), merchants, food-sellers and publicans, mining, domestic service, pastoral, seamen and boarding houses; for so-called 'half-castes', industry, agriculture, commerce, mining and pastoral. Most of those whose

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frequently amended but remained in force until 1958.

<sup>4</sup> And some Chinese fathers sent their children back to China virtually as family prisoners. See Kate Bagnall's article 'I am nearly heartbroken about him' in the Australian History Association's journal *History Australia* 1,1, (2003) pp 30-40, in which she relates the story of Charles Albert Allen, sent by his father to China in 1909 and kept there until 1915 until his European mother had petitioned the Prime Minister Billy Hughes. On his return, Charles Allen enlisted in the AIF and served in Europe.

<sup>5</sup> *The Chinese Times*, 2 April 1910.

occupation was listed as ‘agriculture’ were actually market gardeners and few Australian towns were without their Chinese ‘vegetable man’.

### **Racial Purity and Intermarriage**

All but a handful of the Chinese immigrants who arrived before, during and after the Gold Rush were male and regarded themselves as ‘sojourners’ who would make their fortune in the goldfields and return to their families in China as wealthy men. A few who brought their wives before the restrictions were imposed had children but there were never sufficient girl children to enable the vast majority of Chinese men to select a Chinese bride in Australia. After the introduction of the immigration controls in the 1903 Immigration Restriction Act many went back to China to marry and then commuted to and fro to take money home and father more children. The original version of the act allowed wives from China to join their husbands already resident in Australia. This was suspended in 1902 and repealed in 1905. After 1905 only wives of established merchants were admitted and for then only for short periods, normally 6-12 months once every 3-5 years.

But some Australian-Chinese found local partners, either indigenous or of European descent, and, by all accounts were relatively good husbands, neither drinking to excess nor beating their wives. So, almost by accident, Australia found it had a growing number of ‘half-castes’, many with the advantage of a European mother’s maiden name and an ability to read and write English beyond the capacity of the full Chinese. These two factors proved to be of significant advantage after September 1914 when trying to enlist in the AIF.

### **Military Service and the Cadet Movement**

Shortly after Federation, the Defence Acts of 1903 and 1904 were passed to provide for the defence of Australia and to set out the responsibilities of the individual with regard to military service in time of war. Lord Kitchener had visited Australia in 1909 at the invitation of the Commonwealth Government to inspect and give advice on the defences of the country. His report’s recommendations were introduced between 1910 and 1912. These included proposals that all males between 18 and 60 years of age should be liable to serve in the Defence Forces in time of war but only within the Commonwealth of Australia; and cadet corps should be established for all school boys over 12 and for youths (‘senior cadets’) between the ages of 14 and 16 (this was popularly known as ‘The Boys Conscription Act’). However, exemptions were made for those who were not British Subjects or lived more than five miles from the nearest training facility.

The first Defence Acts had made no racial distinction about who was eligible to serve but an amendment passed in 1909 stated that ‘Those who are not substantially of European origin or descent, of which the medical authorities appointed in that behalf under the regulations shall be the judges’, were to be exempt from combat duties but could be enlisted for ‘duties of a non-combatant nature’.<sup>6</sup> The same act introduced a *Universal Obligation in respect of Naval and Military Training* for all males who had resided in Australia for 6 months and who were British Subjects: cadet service was extended to 18 and young persons (18-20) were required to serve in the Citizen Forces until the age of 20 followed by six years in the Reserve. The racial bar to enlistment by non-Europeans became even more difficult to surmount after General Bridges, the first Commandant of the Royal Military College, Duntroon,

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<sup>6</sup> Commonwealth Act No.15 of 1909 - Defence –Part XIII – *Exemptions from Personal Service* – para 138 (1) (b).



heard in March 1914 that the son of an Afghan and an Englishwoman had applied for entry to the College. Bridges wrote a hurried letter to the Secretary of the Defence Department, stating that as a matter of policy only persons of pure European descent should be admitted as cadets and that the regulation should be altered to read 'substantially of European origin or descent'. The regulation was amended to comply with General Bridges' wishes.<sup>7</sup>

As a result of these policies, by the end of June 1912 more than 35,000 young men born in 1894 or earlier had been registered for training after their compulsory senior cadet service. However, only some 17,000 (less than half) were declared fit, of substantially European descent and living within 5 miles of a training facility; these men were allocated to the newly formed Militia units.<sup>8</sup>

### Frank Chinn's Experiences



Fig.1: *Frank Chinn in 1912. (Courtesy of the State Library of Victoria)*

Frank Chinn, an Australian-born full-blooded Chinese from Tasmania, worked in Melbourne as an interpreter for a Chinese herbalist. He was in his early teens when he was called up to report for duty with the cadets at the local drill hall. He had heard that Asiatics were exempt from military training but reported for duty. When the others were told to strip for the medical inspection he was told to wait to one side. Eventually he asked the officer in charge why he had been singled out, and was told, 'Oh, we'll tell you later on. There are non-combatant duties that you might be assigned to'.<sup>9</sup> So he went home. In later weeks he was sent notices requiring him to report for duty and threatened with fines or prison for not obeying orders, but he ignored them and the matter was dropped.

### After August 1914: Billy Hughes and the *Call to Arms*

In World War 1 the Australian Imperial Force, which went overseas, was, unlike the British and other Allies, a purely volunteer army. However, heavy casualties and falling recruitment figures persuaded the Prime Minister, Billy Hughes, to hold referenda in both 1916 and 1917 to attempt to introduce universal conscription for overseas service. He also attempted to 'jump the gun' in August 1915 by commissioning a census of all men of military age and then in December, well before the 1916 referendum, by issuing a written 'Call to Arms' to each man identified to be within this category and thus liable for home service; such men could not be sent overseas unless they volunteered to do so. The addressee was required to reply with his reasons for not enlisting for home service.

<sup>7</sup> David Huggonson, 'The dark diggers of the AIF', *The Australian Quarterly* (Spring 1989). It is itself attributed to C. Coulthard-Clark's *A Heritage of Spirit*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1979, p.96.

<sup>8</sup> Craig Wilcox, *Australia's Citizen Army 1889-1914*, unpublished ANU Thesis 1993.

<sup>9</sup> Frank Chinn's story is told in Morag Loh & Judith Winternitz's *Dinky-Di* (op cit), pp. 20-21. This is the only time I have seen a reference to non-combatant duties even being considered as an alternative for military service for any Australian of Chinese parentage, although there is such provision in the 1909 Defence Act.

### Avoiding Enlistment

Those whose replies were thought to be without basis were summoned before Exemption Courts where their reasons for claiming exemption from military service were heard in public by a panel comprising a Police Magistrate and a serving military officer. The best records of this period seem to be in Victoria and these files show that at least 24 Chinese living in Victoria were summoned to show reason why they should not ‘volunteer’.<sup>10</sup> The reasons they gave varied widely: ‘I am Chinese and wish to remain neutral’; ‘I am a Chinese national. Therefore I am a subject of a Neutral Country’; ‘I am a Chinese and being a subject of a Neutral Country, I cannot enlist’; ‘I am a Chinese. I am Chinese origins. I am Chinese Parentage’; ‘I have a sick wife and 1 little boy’; ‘51 last birthday. Can’t go’; ‘Old and Bad Eyes’; ‘Owing no one can take over my business’; and so on.

However, it appears that while not one of these 24 was ever enlisted, one, Francis Eugene Pan Look, a hop grower of Eurobin in the Ovens Valley, decided to attend Court. He appeared before Police Magistrate Pennefather and Capt Taverner at Myrtleford Exemption Court on Thursday 2 November 1916.<sup>11</sup> He claimed exemption on the grounds that he was of alien origin; however, he had been born in Australia and was thus a British citizen and liable for military service – if he was ‘substantially of European descent’. I gather from his descendants that he looked ‘very Chinese’. Faced with this conflict between race and birth, the Court decided to withdraw the case and he was declared exempt. It is interesting that he was one of the very few that day to obtain this verdict; all the other appellants were of European descent. Yet in World War 2 two of his sons served in the Australian Defence Forces.

### Trying to Enlist in the AIF

Equally humiliating was the experience of Samuel Tongway, elder son of a naturalised but Chinese-born Presbyterian minister in Ballarat and his Chinese-born wife. Although he had earlier been refused entry into the cadets because of his full Chinese parentage, he enlisted in early 1916 and went with his draft to Melbourne Town Hall for a medical test. They were then marched to the Broadmeadow Camp to start their recruit training. A few days later he was paraded before the Camp Commandant and told that he had been rejected because he did not have European blood.



Fig.2: Samuel Tongway in 1917.  
(Courtesy of the State Library of Victoria)

Another experience was that of Oscar Sing of Ballarat. He went with a group of his mates to enlist. His mates were accepted but Oscar was told by the Recruiting Sergeant in insulting terms, ‘We don’t want any yellow Chows fighting for us’. Oscar, justifiably, was furious and would have attacked the sergeant if his mates had not restrained him. After this rebuff he never again attempted to enlist.

<sup>10</sup> NAA Series B6525, Title -Call to Arms returns –subjects of China reasons for not enlisting, Control Symbol – SUBJECT/CHINA-B, Item Barcode 5994025 (held at NAA Office, Melbourne).

<sup>11</sup> *Myrtleford Mail and Whorouly Witness*, November 9 1916.

Later, in response to the heavy casualties on the Somme, falling recruitment figures, and the failure of both attempts by Prime Minister Hughes to introduce conscription, Military Order No. 200 of 1917 directed Australian Army Medical Officers to allow the recruitment of volunteers 'one of whose parents was of European origin'. China had also joined the Allies in the war against Germany in mid-1917, which may also have made enlistment easier thereafter for those who were Australian by birth but whose parents were both full Chinese. It was only then that Samuel Tongway was accepted as suitable for Army service, as his younger brother Hedley had been a fortnight earlier.<sup>12</sup> But the decision to enlist or not still remained with the Recruiting or Medical Officers; John William Sam was turned down by the Recruiting Officer in Toowoomba in June 1917 as not being 'substantially of European descent'.

As an aside, a recent analysis of enlistment during the First World War has shown that only half of the 18 to 45 year olds eligible to enlist did so; and of the other 50%, half again were failed on health grounds.<sup>13</sup> And, in the early months of the war, rural Australia accounted for the majority of the recruits, which may have contributed to the relative failure of the much-publicised recruiting marches in country areas later in the war. It is interesting to note that as late as November 1940 the Commonwealth Minister of State for Army, when writing formally to a Member of Parliament to explain national policy on the recruitment of Australian-born Chinese, used the exact phrase 'not substantially of European descent' to exempt such men from enlistment.<sup>14</sup>

### Some Statistics

To date I have identified 196 men of Chinese ancestry who managed to enlist in the AIF in WW1. As mentioned earlier, John William Sam of Toowoomba was turned down in 1917 as having 'insufficient European parentage'; in July 1916 William Thomas Wong, born in Moorina, Tasmania, was rejected at the Recruiting Office in Tatura, Victoria as 'not substantially of European descent'; his brother Richard was accepted at Cootamundra in New South Wales a month later. And George Kong-Meng, despite his pre-war service in the Victorian Mounted Rifles and the 8<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Regiment, went on 14 January 1916 to enlist at Melbourne Town Hall only to be rejected as being 'not substantially of European descent', despite having a brother already serving on the Western Front: he then conducted an open attack on the absurdities of the system on the pages of the Melbourne *Argus*.

Of these 196, 34 were killed in action or died of their wounds or sickness and were buried or commemorated on memorials overseas. Twenty-two men never served overseas, either because of their bad physical condition or because the war had ended while they were on the troopships sailing to Europe (which were turned round and returned to Australia) or were still in training. Sixty-eight of the 140 or so survivors who returned to Australia had been wounded, many more than once. By comparison with their European Australian colleagues the Chinese Australians were awarded a significant number of decorations for bravery:

- DCM: 2,080 awarded – 4 to Chinese Australians
- Bar to DCM: 30 awarded – 1 to a Chinese Australian
- MM: 11,082 awarded – 14 to Chinese Australians
- Bar to MM: 497 awarded – 1 to a Chinese Australian
- Belgian Croix De Guerre: 415 awarded – 1 to a Chinese Australian

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<sup>12</sup> Samuel Tongway's story is told in Morag Loh & Judith Winternitz's *Dinky-Di* (op cit), pp.49-56.

<sup>13</sup> Stephen Garton, *The Cost of War: Australians Return*, Oxford UP, Melbourne, 1996, p. 13.

<sup>14</sup> National Archives of Australia Series MP508/1, Item 115/701/55, *Exemption from Military Duty of Australian-born Chinese*.

After the Armistice in November 1918 some 15,400 European war brides sailed for Australia at Government expense to join their husbands or fiancés.<sup>15</sup> At least 14 Australian Diggers of confirmed Chinese descent had either married or become engaged to British girls while in the United Kingdom. Of these, one wife refused to go to Australia;<sup>16</sup> one husband was killed in action in France a few weeks before the Armistice but his wife remarried and came out to Australia with their child and a new husband;<sup>17</sup> one soldier took a local discharge in England and settled with his bride in Bristol; eight sailed with their husbands to Australia after the war; one bride came out on a later ship than her husband; one girl who had become officially engaged to a Chinese-Australian when he was in England, was given a free passage to Australia as a fiancée and married her soldier in Sydney;<sup>18</sup> and one Chinese Digger returned to England in 1924 to marry his fiancée and take her back to Queensland.

During the Second World War at least 15 Chinese Anzacs re-enlisted, mostly in Volunteer Defence Force (VDF) home service units, but two lied about their age and were posted overseas, one to the Middle East the other to Papua New Guinea. Forty-four children (including three daughters) of Chinese Anzacs volunteered for overseas service in the Australian Defence Forces.

### Epilogue

Not until well after the Second World War did these anti-Chinese restrictions begin to lift: in Australia the most oppressive measure, the Commonwealth Immigration Restriction Act of 1901, was not repealed until 1968. In February 2002 the New Zealand Government made a public apology for the racially discriminatory policies it had used over the previous 150 years against Chinese immigrants and established a Chinese Heritage Trust Fund. In June 2006 the Canadian Government made a similar apology and paid compensation to survivors and their spouses. Yet Australia has never adopted this approach. But, despite the official policies of racial intolerance, persecution and social exclusion, the Australian-born children of the Chinese settlers volunteered in increasing numbers to defend Australia by joining its Defence Forces before, during and after the two World Wars.

My research to date, based on the pioneering work of Morag Loh and Judith Winternitz, Gilbert Chan and the Nomchong family, Mary Boland and the La Trobe Chinese Heritage at Australian Federation (CHAF) project at La Trobe University, plus many other family historians and academic researchers, has enabled me to identify to date 196 members of the AIF who had Chinese ancestry. All but a very few had mothers of European descent. Many enlisted under an anglicised version of either their mother's maiden name or of the family name, so much so that there will be many I have missed. Should any reader wish to check a family name against my database I would be very happy to oblige – contact me at [alastairken@gmail.com](mailto:alastairken@gmail.com). The full story of what happened to these men will be told in my forthcoming book *Chinese Anzacs*.

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<sup>15</sup> Their story will be told in Chapter 5, 'The British War Brides' of my forthcoming book *Chinese Anzacs*.

<sup>16</sup> Elizabeth, the wife of Billy Sing from Queensland. He is best known as *The Assassin of Gallipoli*. See John Hamilton, *Gallipoli Sniper*, Pan Australia, 2008.

<sup>17</sup> Ada Jane Sing (later Marshall), wife of Nelson James Sing of Launceston, Tasmania. She moved to Sydney with her new husband and family while Muriel, the daughter of Nelson and Ada, married an Australian soldier in 1943. Their story lies in the National Archives of Australia's files in series B2455 (his Service Record) and P1868 (her application for a War Gratuity).

<sup>18</sup> Harriet Hill, fiancée of James Francis Sam of West Wyalong NSW. Her trousseau was left behind on the dockside in London and she had to borrow a wedding dress for her marriage!

## RAAF CATALINAS MINE MANILA BAY: DECEMBER 1944 -- PART 2

**Peter Hill<sup>1</sup>**

At about 4.30 pm the Catalinas began taking off in turn.<sup>2</sup> Each mine-laying Catalina carried its maximum permissible mine and fuel loads,<sup>3</sup> and this made for ‘another hair-raising take-off’ which was not helped when an in-coming flight of US P-38’s ‘made an unwelcome pass at us ... as we staggered away on our climb’.<sup>4</sup> Once aloft the Catalinas formed up in a loose formation moving in a wide circle around Jinamoc. It was the only time that so many Catalinas had been seen circling in the one place. Once all the planes were in the air, the US radar-jamming Catalina fired a Verey pistol and set course for the five-hour flight to the target, followed by the RAAF window-equipped Catalina and by the 23 mine-laying Catalinas at roughly two minute intervals.

The Catalina crews, well practised at long and slow flights in the dark over enemy territory, made their way up the western side of the Philippines chain of islands towards the north-western tip of Mindoro Island without incident. The US radar-jamming Catalina reached this point about 8.30 in the evening and about five minutes before the lead mine-laying Catalina, and immediately commenced flying a carefully pre-determined flight track at about 10,000 feet that took it past the western side of Lubang Island, towards the entrance to Manila Bay, before flying along Bataan Peninsula to Subic Bay and then back to the entrance to Manila Bay, where it circled for about an hour before returning to base. At certain sections of the flight track, the plane dropped bundles of ‘rope’ at initially 12-second intervals and then six-second intervals in an effort to attract the attention of enemy radar.<sup>5</sup>

At the same time, the window-equipped RAAF Catalina flew its own carefully pre-determined flight path at about 5,000 feet that took it around the radar station on Lubang island, up along the Bataan Peninsula to Subic Bay and back and forwards across the entrance area to Manila Bay. As it did so, it also attracted some rifle fire from the southern tip of Mindoro Island.<sup>6</sup> The reserve RAAF Catalina, which was liberally loaded with 600 bundles of ‘rope’ and ‘window’, dropped units at a rate of four to five bundles per minute throughout its 90-minute flight.<sup>7</sup>

As enemy radar was attracted by the confused and misleading images given off by the ‘window’ and ‘rope’, the radar-jamming equipment on the US Catalina was used to jam the frequency and temporarily put it off-line. Radar signals on at least six different frequencies were jammed during the duration of the mission with some frequencies jammed on a number

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Hill is a Tasmanian member of the MHSA with a particular interest in the history of the RAAF. He studied history at the University of Queensland.

<sup>2</sup> One Catalina from No 20 Sqn failed to take off because of unserviceable radar equipment. National Archives Australia (NAA), A9186, 41 RAAF Unit History Sheets No 20 Sqn

<sup>3</sup> NAA: A11093, 373/21A5, RAAF Command Headquarters – 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet reports on RAAF mine-laying operations; Air Commodore R.B. Burrage, ‘The Mine Laying of Manila Bay,’ in A.E. Minty (ed.), *Black Cats: The Real Story of Australia’s Long Range Catalina Strike Force in the Pacific War*, RAAF Museum, Point Cook, 1994, p. 209

<sup>4</sup> B. Eneberg, *As I Saw It: The wartime Career of Bernard (Bill) Eneberg with his Experiences with 20 & 42 Sqn Catalinas & 113 ASR Flight*, self-published, 2003, p. 17

<sup>5</sup> NAA: A11280, 7/35/AIR, Report on Radar Countermeasures Support for the RAAF Minelaying Operations on 14/15 December 1944

<sup>6</sup> Office of Air Force History (OAFH), No 42 Sqn Narrative Report, December 1944

<sup>7</sup> NAA: A11280, 7/35/AIR, Report on Radar Countermeasures Support for the RAAF Minelaying Operations on 14/15 December 1944

of occasions. All were known Japanese radar frequencies in the area. The radar jamming proved so effective that all seventeen radar stations encountered along the route ceased transmitting as the mine-laying Catalinas neared Manila Bay.<sup>8</sup>

As the radar jamming and ‘window’ dropping Catalinas occupied the attention of the Japanese radar defences, the larger flight of 14 mine-laying Catalinas responsible for laying the primary field flew north past Mindoro Island at about 2,000 feet, before turning to cross the Bataan Peninsula via the narrow saddle between the approximately 4,500 foot volcanic Mt Natib and Mariveles Mountains, to position itself for an attack from the northern side to the entrance to Manila Bay. While visibility was generally good, navigating through unfamiliar volcanic mountains at night was dangerous and nerve wracking. The pilot of A24-96 almost did a stall turn to starboard when a dark cloud illusion below his Catalina was mistaken for unexpected terrain. A24-96’s navigator, Bill Eneberg, recorded in his diary: ‘it had taken 8 minutes to cross Bataan Peninsula, it seemed like 8 hours.’<sup>9</sup> Two other planes almost came to grief in the mountains with one plane touching treetops with its hull after wandering slightly off course.<sup>10</sup>

All planes, though, survived the mountains. Once across the inner coast line of Manila Bay, they turned south and began to lose height as they followed the coastline on timed runs at 110 knots until they reached the mine dropping zone on the inner side of Corregidor. As they did so some crews from 42 and 43 Sqns encountered inaccurate machine gun and rifle fire from the eastern coast of Bataan Peninsula.<sup>11</sup> At this stage, though, crews were intent on locating their datum point as quickly as possible and positioning themselves to commence their carefully timed mining runs. They had to plant their mines in the designated positions necessary to build up the minefield planned for blocking the two shipping channels through the entrance to Manila Bay.

In the meantime the smaller flight of nine mine-laying Catalinas drawn from Nos 11 and 20 Sqns rounded the north-west corner of Mindoro Island, flew roughly to the north-east across the volcanic area around Lake Taal and Laguna De Bay before turning and approaching Manila Bay from the southeast. The one incident in the approach was when No 20 Sqn almost lost its squadron leader and his crew when A24-83, piloted by the redoubtable Athol Wearne, short cut the top end of Mindoro Island and brushed trees on the top of a mountain.<sup>12</sup> Although shaken, the crew of A24-83 flew on and all aircraft on the southern flight successfully navigated their way through more mountainous terrain.

The southern approach also took the flight near a Japanese fighter base about 40 miles from Manila City and, as the Catalinas neared their final turning point, some pilots saw rockets fired up into the dark in the vicinity of Lake Taal. The tail-end Catalina in the flight also encountered small arms and machine gun fire near Lake Taal and further small arms and

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<sup>8</sup> NAA: A11093, 373/21A5, RAAF Command Headquarters – 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet reports on RAAF mine-laying operations

<sup>9</sup> Eneberg, *op.cit.*, p. 18

<sup>10</sup> See Minute by Sqn Ldr Norm Robertson in NAA: A705, 166/5/852, FO Barbour R.C., Casualty; NAA: A11093, 373/21A5, RAAF Command Headquarters – 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet reports on RAAF mine-laying operations

<sup>11</sup> OAFH, No 43 Sqn Narrative Report, December 1944; NAA: A9186, 87 RAAF Unit History Sheets No. 42 Sqn; NAA: A11093, 373/21A5, RAAF Command Headquarters – 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet reports on RAAF mine-laying operations

<sup>12</sup> Australian War Memorial, The Keith Murdoch Sound Archive of Australia in the war of 1939-45, S00755 Transcript of Oral History Recording with Wing Commander Athol Galway Hope Wearne, p. 27

machine gun fire over its datum point.<sup>13</sup> A Japanese night fighter was also observed by a Catalina on the southern flight but it did not attempt to intercept.<sup>14</sup> It may have been otherwise distracted because two US B24 Liberator aircraft were busy making nuisance attacks on the airfields in the vicinity of Manila Bay as the Catalinas lined up to ‘plant’ their mines.<sup>15</sup>

It was assumed by the crews on the southern flight that the rockets fired near Lake Taal were a warning to the Japanese in Manila proper and the Catalina crews, as they began to lose height for their approach to Manila Bay, ‘looked forward to a pretty hot reception’.<sup>16</sup> However, as the planes from both flights swung in very low over the harbour, the crews found to their surprise that Manila City was ablaze with lights and numerous lights from fishing boats were visible on the water. Although some cars in the main streets were seen by crews on the southern flight to stop and put out their lights, and some frenzied activity was seen amongst pedestrians, no attempt was made to black out the streets or buildings in Manila or other townships such as Cavite, Corregidor or Bataan. Crews expected ack ack to open up at any second as the Catalinas skidded over the top of fishing craft in the harbour,<sup>17</sup> but actual opposition over the target areas was virtually non-existent.

Planes from No 43 Sqn encountered some inaccurate machine gun and rifle fire as they headed towards their southern exit,<sup>18</sup> and the tail-end plane in No 11 Sqn encountered machine gun fire coming from a ship close inshore as it headed for its northern exit.<sup>19</sup> Some crews from 42 and 43 Sqns reported flashes of heavy AA coming from Manila and Corregidor and crews from 20 Sqn also reported flashes of heavy AA over Manila as they were leaving, but none was directed at the mine-laying Catalinas.<sup>20</sup> The extra RAAF Catalina tasked with dropping ‘window’ observed search lights to the north of Manila,<sup>21</sup> but again no searchlights interfered with the mine-laying.

The lack of organised AA and searchlights over the target area was almost certainly due to the radar countermeasures undertaken in support of the operation. In addition to blinding the network of enemy radar stations, it is also most likely that the radar jamming substantially disrupted Japanese searchlight and anti-aircraft systems that were radar directed. Japanese controllers would certainly have known by this stage that an attack was underway but did not know the nature of the attack or where to look for it. The very low-level nature of the attack would have added to the difficulty. It is likely that Japanese defenders, confused by the radar jamming activities accompanying the mission, had begun to search for attacking planes but at the wrong height and in the wrong direction.

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<sup>13</sup> NAA: A9186, 30, RAAF Unit History Sheets No 11 Sqn; NAA: A11093, 373/21A5, RAAF Command Headquarters – 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet reports on RAAF mine-laying operations

<sup>14</sup> NAA: A8681, 1945/4928, Public Relations Bulletin, ‘Catalinas from Australia mine Manila Bay – prelude to invasion’

<sup>15</sup> NAA: A11093, 373/21A5, RAAF Command Headquarters – 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet reports on RAAF mine-laying operations

<sup>16</sup> NAA: A8681, 1945/4928, Public Relations Bulletin, ‘Catalinas from Australia mine Manila Bay – prelude to invasion’

<sup>17</sup> NAA: A8681, 1945/4928, Public Relations Bulletin, ‘Catalinas from Australia mine Manila Bay – prelude to invasion’

<sup>18</sup> OAFH, No 43 Sqn Narrative Report, December 1944

<sup>19</sup> NAA: A11280, 13/1/AIR, No 11 Sqn Operation Record Book 1941-46

<sup>20</sup> OAFH, No 20 & 43 Sqn Narrative Reports, December 1944; NAA: A9186, 87, RAAF Unit History Sheets No 42 Sqn; NAA: A11093, 373/21A5, RAAF Command Headquarters – 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet reports on RAAF mine-laying operations

<sup>21</sup> NAA: A9186, 87, RAAF Unit History Sheets No 42 Sqn

The entire mine dropping operation took less than an hour and most aircraft that returned completed their mine runs successfully with only minor difficulties experienced. The difficulties that did occur were primarily in the laying of the secondary field. Due to failure of the electrical release system, a Catalina from 42 Sqn laid its four mines in pairs instead of singly,<sup>22</sup> and a Catalina from 11 Sqn could only release three of its mines and returned the fourth to Leyte Gulf. A Catalina from 11 Sqn missed its datum point and jettisoned its four small mines, and a Catalina from 20 Sqn also missed the datum point and jettisoned two large mines.<sup>23</sup> Despite these minor difficulties, the overall mission was an outstanding success with 20 of the original 24 planes successfully completing their sorties and 54 of the intended 60 mines being laid in good position.

For many pilots, tensed up for a dangerous and uncertain mission, the actual mine-laying was, as Wing Cdr Burrage later put it, almost an anti-climax;<sup>24</sup> although, as Flt Lt Whitworth from 11 Sqn put it, 'It was rather a thrill to sneak into the enemy's strong hold'.<sup>25</sup> Enemy fire, though, was not the only danger Catalina crews faced on their marathon flights. Unknown terrain and violent tropical weather were also formidable enemies and on this mission the most dangerous element proved to be the terrain. Crews attacking from the south-east retired without difficulty between the volcanic Mt Natib and Mt Pinatubo on the Bataan Peninsula but a number of Catalinas on the northern flight reported difficulty in regaining sufficient power and height to lift over the Luzon Hills on the southern side of the entrance to Manila Bay and a few planes arrived back at Jinamoc with tree foliage caught in their underside.<sup>26</sup>

Unfortunately one plane, A24-64 of No 43 Sqn,<sup>27</sup> piloted by Flt Lt Herbert Roberts, failed to return and all crew were later officially presumed to have lost their lives. A Catalina from No 11 Sqn piloted by Flt Lieut Strath reported sighting 'a flash or explosion' in the approximate position of the target and thought this might 'have some relation' to the missing plane.<sup>28</sup> Another No 43 Sqn Catalina, on its upward journey, also reported 'an unusual fire' on the north-western tip of Mindoro Island and wondered if it might have been from the missing plane.<sup>29</sup> A No 11 Sqn Catalina piloted by Flt Lt Crewes recorded that the missing Catalina had reported earlier that it was in difficulties and believed to have engine trouble,<sup>30</sup> although whether it completed its mining drop is unknown.<sup>31</sup> The most likely fate of A24-64 and its crew is that it crashed into the southern hills due either to earlier engine difficulties or perhaps radar malfunction. Searches undertaken by US authorities after the end of conflict to locate the remains of missing servicemen, though, did not locate the remains of the Catalina and a post war letter from the Department of Air to the navigator's father concluded that the

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<sup>22</sup> NAA: A11093, 373/21A5, RAAF Command Headquarters – 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet reports on RAAF mine-laying operations

<sup>23</sup> Details are provided in OAFH, December 1944 Narrative Reports for 11, 20, 42 & 43 Sqns; also NAA: A11093, 373/21A5, RAAF Command Headquarters – 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet reports on RAAF mine-laying operations

<sup>24</sup> Burrage, *op.cit.*, p. 209

<sup>25</sup> NAA: A8681, 1945/4928, Public Relations Bulletin, 'Catalinas from Australia mine Manila Bay – prelude to invasion'

<sup>26</sup> NAA: A705, 166/5/852, FO Barbour R.C., Casualty

<sup>27</sup> The crew members were H.C. Roberts, J.H. Cox, R.C. Barbour, R.H. Bradstreet, F.W. Silvester, D.J. Albert, H.C. Goodchild, J.C. MacDonald and J.R. Robinson.

<sup>28</sup> NAA: A9186, 30, RAAF Unit History Sheets No 11 Sqn

<sup>29</sup> Eneberg, *op.cit.*, p. 19

<sup>30</sup> NAA: A8681, 1945/4928, Public Relations Bulletin, 'Catalinas from Australia mine Manila Bay – prelude to invasion'

<sup>31</sup> NAA: A9186, 88, RAAF Unit History Sheets No 43 Sqn



plane may have been lost at sea.<sup>32</sup> All that can be concluded with certainty is that A24-64 and its crew shared the fate of seven Catalina crews that disappeared without trace on their marathon flights over unknown territory and through hostile tropical weather.<sup>33</sup>

The remaining aircraft returned by the same outward route without incident but had to circle until first light, as Jinamoc was not equipped for night alighting. As the Catalinas had been in the air for approximately 14 hours, most were very low on fuel reserves and some had to make emergency landings in the dark.<sup>34</sup> Unfortunately already tired crews had to wait in their aircraft for up to a further three hours as the USS *Heron* had difficulty taking off so many crews.<sup>35</sup>

All crews were debriefed by intelligence personnel at Jinamoc. The first flight of Catalinas that had arrived two days before the mission then departed the same day with most planes (now minus their mine loads) choosing to forego the option of landing at Woendi and taking the approximately 15-hour flight direct to Darwin. The flight of Catalinas that had flown in on the morning of the mission rested at Jinamoc with the expectation of departing the next day. The USS *Heron*, though, again struggled to refuel this number of aircraft and the last Catalina did not depart until the morning of Sunday the 17<sup>th</sup>.<sup>36</sup> Rain drenched crews occupied themselves by taking in the sights of nearby Tacloban, the provincial capital of Leyte, and drinking beer and whisky in tents as they yarned with American colleagues. For some, too, it was also easier to sleep on their aircraft.<sup>37</sup> Once finally refuelled, most pilots again by-passed the base at Woendi for the long haul flight direct to Darwin or Melville Bay. By this stage the Catalinas that had departed from and returned direct to Darwin or Melville Bay had recorded about 50 hours of flying time.

All Catalinas arrived safely back at their northern bases but the six Catalinas from No 11 Sqn still had the long flight from Darwin to their base at Rathmines on Lake Macquarie near Newcastle. Depending on their exact route of return to Rathmines, most No 11 Sqn captains recorded flying times of about 90 hours or more.<sup>38</sup> By making a flight of approximately 9,000 miles for one mission, the No 11 Sqn Catalinas quite likely set an all time record for a single mission for all combatants during the war.<sup>39</sup>

It is unknown whether the mission resulted in any direct damage to Japanese shipping although planting mines in the entrance areas to Manila Bay and the main approach to Manila City may certainly have resulted in victims when attacks by US carrier planes on the following day stirred up the shipping in Manila Bay.<sup>40</sup> However, it would have been a bonus

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<sup>32</sup> NAA: A705, 166/5/852, FO Barbour R.C., Casualty

<sup>33</sup> A summary fate of each operational Catalina is given in D. Vincent, *Catalina Chronicle: A History of RAAF Operations*, Paradise, SA, 1978, pp. 107-119

<sup>34</sup> NAA: A11093, 373/21A5, RAAF Command Headquarters – 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet reports on RAAF mine-laying operations

<sup>35</sup> OAFH, No 11 Sqn Narrative Report, December 1944: WK Bolitho, ‘Sea Mining Operations – Manila Bay – Luzon – 14 December 1944’

<sup>36</sup> OAFH, No 11 Sqn Narrative Report, December 1944: WK Bolitho, ‘Sea Mining Operations – Manila Bay – Luzon – 14 December 1944’

<sup>37</sup> Eneberg, *op.cit.*, p. 20

<sup>38</sup> NAA: A9186, 30, RAAF Unit History Sheets No 11 Sqn

<sup>39</sup> NAA: A11093, 373/21A5, RAAF Command Headquarters – 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet reports on RAAF mine-laying operations

<sup>40</sup> The available record is unclear on how much Japanese shipping was in Manila Harbour at the time of the operation. US naval personnel could not provide this information prior to the mission and, while mine-laying Catalinas always reported on shipping observed, Manila Bay was an unusually large target to report on and

if the mines did cause any direct damage because the main objective was to ensure that enemy naval units in Manila Bay were bottled up throughout the days immediately before and during the successful invasion of Mindoro Island by US forces on 15-16 December – and by effectively blockading Manila Bay during this period the mission was highly successful. Control of Mindoro Island, in turn, allowed the US to extend its land based air power over the planned beachheads for the invasion of Luzon and ultimate capture of Manila City. The operation to mine Manila Bay (and the earlier operation to mine Balabac Strait) was also perhaps indicative of a growing acceptance in the Southwest Pacific Theatre of aerial mining as a potentially valuable element in support of other Allied forces and wider strategic aims. It was, as a post operation report put it, ‘a new and important use of aerial minelaying in the Southwest Pacific area.’<sup>41</sup>

In the history of RAAF mine-laying operations, the mining of Manila Bay was easily the largest, the longest and the most ambitious operation undertaken by its Catalinas. The loss of one crew was very unfortunate but given the nature of the mission the RAAF could easily have lost a significant proportion of its Catalinas in one operation. The success of the operation was an obvious source of pride to the Catalina service in general. The successful conduct of the mission undoubtedly owed much to the scrupulous planning of the operation and the crucial radar jamming support provided by staff from the US Seventh Fleet’s Office of the Chief Signal Officer. This assistance, in turn, indicates the importance that US planners placed on the mission.

However, it also owed much to the low-flying and exceptional navigation skills of Catalina crews and to their pure determination and endurance over ultra-long flights. Such skills had been built up during numerous mine-laying missions over the previous two years and the same skills and attitudes would see mine-laying Catalinas range along the south China coast during the last year of the war. The successful conduct of the mission also reflects well on a training system capable of taking school teachers, accountants and stock hands and training them in night flying deep into enemy territory and navigating with precision over enormous distances.

The mission also reflects well on an aeroplane that was obsolete in terms of performance by the middle of the war but which recorded an outstanding record in the Southwest Pacific Theatre of conflict due to its versatility and great reliability. Even veteran Catalina pilots were impressed with its performance on this operation. Hector Bolitho, 11 Sqn’s leader, commented that one of the ‘outstanding points’ of the operation was ‘the amazingly good serviceability’ of the Catalina. Only one aircraft failed to participate in the operation due to unserviceable radar and the remainder completed the mission with ‘practically no mechanical problem’.<sup>42</sup>

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crews were preoccupied with the mission itself. Nevertheless, No 11 Sqn reported that ‘comparatively little shipping’ had been observed either visually or on radar and crews from 20 and 42 Sqs also only reported a handful of vessels. No 43 Sqn reported eight vessels ranging from 2,000 to 6,000 tonnes and several small unidentified vessels. The largest single concentration of 10 to 15 vessels was sighted in Subic Bay outside the entrance to Manila Bay. OAFH, Narrative Reports, December 1944, for 11, 20, 42 & 43 Sqs

<sup>41</sup> NAA: A11093, 373/21A5, RAAF Command Headquarters – 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet reports on RAAF mine-laying operations

<sup>42</sup> OAFH, No 11 Sqn Narrative Report, December 1944: WK Bolitho, ‘Sea Mining Operations – Manila Bay – Luzon – 14 December 1944.’ Although No 11 Sqn’s Catalinas required four engine changes during January 1945 – the first engine changes the Sqn had required in almost two years. NAA: A11280, 13/1/AIR, No 11 Sqn Operation Record Book 1941-46

The operation is also a reminder of the devastation of the Pacific conflict. The very low-level nature of the attack and good visibility over Manila Bay gave attacking pilots on the southern flight an excellent view of old colonial Manila and, as Flt Lt Crewes from 11 Sqn observed after the mission, ‘it looked a beautiful place.’<sup>43</sup> The battle to capture Manila during February and early March 1945 reduced much of old Manila to a ruin.

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## AS YOU WERE ...

### Feedback from Readers and Contributors

Don Wright sent in this response to J.K. Haken’s article ‘World War 1 Volunteer Badges’, which appeared in the September 2012 *Collectors’ Corner*:

- The author certainly went to a lot of trouble to produce the article, and while I thought it was most interesting, I wanted to point out where there might be some errors. Besides the Badge, Volunteer, Home Service woven version shown in Fig.1 of the article, there was a metal badge (gold colour) with the words ‘Required for Home Service’. This is in the same style as the Medically Unfit badge (silver colour) as shown in Fig.2. However, the Badge, Volunteer, Munition Worker illustrated in Fig.3 might not be correct. To my way of thinking the badge illustrated was a lapel badge issued to munitions workers going to Britain for munitions work. The badge for munitions workers retained in Australia is a bronze badge in the same style as the Retained for Home Service and Medically Unfit badges (see the attached photograph).



*Right: Don Wright’s photograph, showing the three badges he refers to in his response. Top left is the bronze-coloured Munitions Worker badge; top right is the silver-coloured Medically Unfit badge; bottom is the gold-coloured Required for Home Service badge.*

Tony Walker also enjoyed J.K. Haken’s article, which prompted him to dig out some items belonging to a family member who served in the Great War:

- There is another badge worthy of mention, which is not Government issue. It is a miniature ‘Returned from Active Service’ badge made by a very respectable jeweller, Angus and Coote, whose name appears on the back. A soldier needed to show his discharge certificate, which was stamped to show that the miniature had been purchased.

Michael Firth writes regarding Bill Appleton’s article ‘A Thorn in the Foot of the “Would-Be” Japanese Empire: A Summary of Air Raids on the Australian Mainland’, published in the September 2012 issue:

<sup>43</sup> NAA: A8681, 1945/4928, Public Relations Bulletin, ‘Catalinas from Australia mine Manila Bay – prelude to invasion’

- I have just read the article by Bill Appleton about the Japanese air raids on the Australian mainland and have compared this to the information in *Darwin's Air War 1942-1945: an illustrated history* by the Aviation Historical Society of the Northern Territory. There appears to be a slight discrepancy in the number of air raids in the Darwin area and the number of planes available for defence of the area. Mr Appleton lists 72 raids on Darwin and the surrounding area while the historical society only lists 64 official raids. In regards to the planes defending the area, Mr Appleton lists only the P-40 of Major Pell being destroyed in the second raid; the society's book indicates there were between 10 to 12 P-40s of which one aircraft survived both of the raids on 19 February.

In relation to the raid on Wyndham, 3 March 1943, Mr Appleton claims the air raid sank a vessel in the harbour. I gather he is referring to the WA state ship MV *Koolama* which was in the harbour at the time. According to the book *The Koolama Incident* by Bill Loane, the raid occurred between 7.00am and 9.30am and the *Koolama* was only fired on by the planes' guns with no apparent damage. The *Koolama* had been severely damaged in an air raid on 20 February, causing it to beach in Rulhieres Bay (later renamed Koolama Bay) at the mouth of the King George River in northern Western Australia. The vessel was re-floated by the ship's captain, with the help of a small dedicated crew, who sailed it into Wyndham on 2 March. It appears the shocks from the air raid caused damage to the temporary hull repairs, causing the ship to roll over at about 5.00pm the same day and pulling the Wyndham jetty slightly out of alignment.

Geraldine Pratt has sent in this contribution arising out of Ken Wright's article 'The "Digger Prince" and Corporal Sullivan' in the September 2012 issue:

- When my husband showed me the article on the 'Digger Prince', it brought back the story my mother recounted of her meeting with the Prince of Wales during his visit to Melbourne in 1920. Although the visit attracted the Melbourne press for every detail of his program, he paid a visit to the Dandenongs on the Monday for what was announced as a private engagement. Her story follows.

#### THE PRINCE AND I – Joan Dunkerley

I remember in 1920, when I was 12 years old; I received a note from Mr Billy Hughes, the Prime Minister, who was a neighbour of ours, when we had a holiday house at Ferny Creek in the Dandenongs outside Melbourne. The note was an invitation for me to join a riding party with Mr Hughes' guest, the Prince of Wales, Prince Edward, then visiting Victoria. His aide was Lieut Lord Louis Mountbatten. I was greatly excited. My father polished my gear and prepared my horse. My mother laughed and said: 'What's all the fuss? She'll never get anywhere near the Prince!'

I trotted my horse down to the meeting place, and there they all were, a large party including members of the crew of the Prince's ship, HMS *Renown*, as well as police security on police horses. We started off, with Mr Hughes and Lord Mountbatten leading, followed by the Prince. My horse started to play up and before I knew it, we had galloped to the front. A security man told me to keep out of the Prince's way. The prince saw this and called me over, asking me what the security man had said to me. When I told him, he said: 'We'll show them. Let's ride together and lead the way!' With this, we galloped off! It was a beautiful morning; the forest was sparkling in dappled light. I asked the Prince if he had ever heard our birds, telling him they were very different to English birds. A kookaburra laughed; he had never heard of it before. We also heard Whipbirds and magpies, and I took him down to the creek to where the Bellbirds could be heard. He was

very surprised to see palm trees growing there, but I explained to him that they were not palm trees but tree ferns. He was most interested at this information.

As we rode through the forest – Sherbrook Forest – the Prince told me that in England there was a Sherwood Forest. ‘Yes,’ I said, ‘that’s where Robin Hood and his merry men robbed the rich and gave to the poor.’ He laughed and answered, ‘That’s what they said!’ As our party turned into Sassafras Road, we saw just off the road in a paddock a welcoming sight – a setting for a billy tea that Mr Hughes has arranged for us. Three men had a camp fire going and the billy boiling and we all dismounted and enjoyed a real bush tea. Nothing fancy, just tea in tin mugs and a big dish of damper! Later, when we left the forest, the news must have got out, because waiting at the crossroads there were big crowds of people who cheered the Prince. There was also a press photographer from a Dandenong local newspaper, who took photos of me on my horse alongside the Prince on his mount. As my father walked me home afterwards, he said, ‘You know, there’s one thing for sure, that young man you rode with today will one day be the King of England!’

Leigh Ryan offers the following discovery in response to the review of the book *Wellington’s Wars: The Making of a Military Genius*, in the September 2012 issue:

- Your comments about the Duke in the book review were interesting in that I had been looking at the Regimental Journal of the Duke of Wellington’s Regiment at the AWM, searching for details of a tank squadron manned by ‘Dukies’ that was part of the 52<sup>nd</sup> Reconnaissance Regiment of the 52<sup>nd</sup> (Lowland) Mountain Division. The squadron eventually went to the Med (Italy?) and became an APC squadron. I found nothing, but I did find an obituary to the sixth Duke of Wellington, KIA with No.2 Commando in Italy in September 1943. Now I had seen the original Duke’s collection of Field Marshal’s batons at Apsley House, London, but the obituary lists the hereditary titles held by the line of Dukes. The sixth duke was The Most Noble Henry Valerian George Wellesley,
  - sixth Duke of Wellington, Marquess Douro, Marquess and Earl of Wellington, Somerset, Viscount Wellington of Talavera, and Baron Douro, of Wellesley, Somerset, in the Peerage of the United Kingdom,
  - Earl of Mornington, Viscount Wellesley, of Dangan Castle, County Meath, and Baron of Mornington, County of Meath, in the Peerage of Ireland,
  - Conde do Vimeiro, Marquez de Torres Vedras and Duque da Victoria in Portugal,
  - Duque de Ciudad Rodrigo in Spain,
  - and a Grandee of the First Class, and Prince of Waterloo in the Netherlands.

The party would be over by the time he was announced. Imagine his business card! The sixth Duke was ‘without issue’ and his uncle, Lt Col Lord Gerald Wellesley, Grenadier Guards, succeeded to the title.

Prompted by Leigh Ryan, contributor Peter Hill makes the following correction to his article ‘RAAF Catalinas Mine Manila Bay: December 1944 – Part 1’ in the September 2012 issue:

- The mention of ‘RAN Commander E H Carr’ (page 15, para 3) should read ‘Lieutenant Commander P E Carr’. Peter adds: ‘I suspect the error is self-inflicted and results from having read E H Carr’s classic study *What is History?* as part of my UQ History Honours course. This was back in the early 1970s, so clearly the book made an impression!’

Peter Hill’s article elicited the following observations from Tim Lyon:

- I read the article on RAAF Catalinas with a great deal of interest (well done Peter). However, I was surprised to read footnote 1, which stated that ‘In mid-1940 the Catalina’s

manufacturer, Consolidated Aircraft, was considering discontinuing production.’ I do not know where this rumour originated from but it is in no way true. It was, in fact, in mid-1939 (that is, before the outbreak of WW2) that the production program for the Catalina was not looking rosy (but not because the Catalina ‘was considered to be largely obsolete in terms of performance’). By 1940, the latest US Navy type was the PBV-1 with 1200-hp (895-kW) R-1830-92 engines, an order for 200 of which had been placed on 20 December 1939. No flying-boat – in fact no large US Navy aircraft – had ever been ordered in such quantities. A Model 28-5 (PBV-4) was bought by the British Air Ministry and tested at Felixstowe from July 1939 to February 1940, proving so outstanding that it was adopted as a standard boat for Coastal Command. Named Catalina Mk I – a name later adopted by the US Navy – the first RAF variant was similar to the latest US Navy type, the PBV-1 and 59 were ordered. 40 similar aircraft had been ordered (in early 1940) by France but not delivered before the surrender in June 1940. At about the same time 18 aircraft were ordered for the RAAF, and 48 ordered by the Dutch government for use in the Netherlands East Indies. This was followed by vast open-ended British orders calling for massive extra capacity. British officials helped arrange for licence production by Canadian Vickers at Cartierville (Montreal) and Boeing of Canada at Vancouver. Consolidated Aircraft’s San Diego plant also much more than doubled in size. So, far from considering discontinuing production, Consolidated, in mid-1940, had orders for as many Catalinas as it could build and was in the midst of a massive expansion in Catalina production capacity. Far from obsolete, the Catalina was a modern aircraft still in its development phase. It is worth noting that the first production Catalinas only reached the US Navy in October 1936 (one year earlier than the Hurricane entered service with the RAF). The prototype amphibious Catalina with retractable tricycle landing gear first flew on 22 November 1939. It is probably clear from all of this that I am a bit of a fan of the Catalina (I built a model of one as a boy, which alas has disappeared in the mists of time).

Tim adds:

- The intelligence report about Japanese naval shipping likely to be encountered in Manila Bay obtained by BurrIDGE and Robertson on 13 December 1944 ‘that a Japanese aircraft carrier had been sighted alongside a wharf some two or three days before’ is interesting. The only five Japanese aircraft carriers left afloat in December 1944 were *Hosho*, *Ryuho*, *Junyo*, *Kaiyo* and *Unryu*. *Hosho*, *Ryuho* and *Kaiyo* were in Kure. *Junyo* had been torpedoed by a US submarine on 9 December and was in drydock in Sasebo. *Unryu* was in Kure on 17 December and did set sail for Manila but was sunk by a US submarine in the East China Sea on 19 December. So, there could not have been a Japanese aircraft carrier sighted in Manila two or three days before 13 December. This sort of error was not uncommon in reconnaissance and intelligence reports of all participants in the Second World War. There were, in fact, no heavy units (aircraft carriers, battleships or heavy cruisers) of the Japanese Navy in Manila Bay or anywhere in the Philippines at this time.

Don Pedler writes regarding Alastair Kennedy’s article ‘Chinese Australians in the Australian Defence Forces before 1914’ which appeared in the June 2012 issue:

- It was a good story of little-known bits of our history. Only one quibble: in the epilogue the author implies that Morant made his way unaided to South Africa from Australia, when he really should mean his return to Africa from the UK after his leave. It really does not help the already messy saga of the Breaker to have a further complication added!

## ZHUKOV AND MANSTEIN: GREAT CAPTAINS OF THE EASTERN FRONT

Keith Richmond<sup>1</sup>

The World War 2 theatre known as the Eastern Front was massive. Stretching from the Arctic to the Black Sea, it covered some 1.55 million square kms.<sup>2</sup> With the opening of Operation Barbarossa on 22 June 1941, it began a confrontation that would catch in its maw at least 650 divisions: Soviet deaths amounted to about 8.7 million in the forces and 18 million civilians.<sup>3</sup>

Commanders who excelled in that difficult theatre have the potential to be recognised as leading practitioners of the military art – and indeed, in the pantheon of modern military achievement, they might justifiably be characterised as Great Captains of that war.<sup>4</sup> Two men have been chosen to assess this proposition – Marshal Georgi Zhukov of the Soviet Union and Fieldmarshal Erich von Manstein of Germany. Both have well-deserved reputations for greatness and attract supporters in large numbers. Max Hastings has said that ‘Zhukov was the most effective military commander of the Second World War’<sup>5</sup> while Antony Beevor said of Manstein that he was ‘admired as the most brilliant strategist of the Second World War’.<sup>6</sup>

This article sets out the major successes of both men, as well as their failings, the tactics and resources available to them, and their relationship with their dictator, and superior. Finally, some assessment will be made of their capacity as military leaders.

First we look at the two men and their roles. From 29 July 1941 until the end of the war Zhukov headed Stavka, the Supreme Council responsible for planning all military activities and in August 1942 he was named Deputy Supreme Commander under Stalin. While Zhukov spent some time as army group commander (known in Soviet parlance as a Front), he usually acted as a Stavka representative, planning and coordinating battles as directed.<sup>7</sup> Manstein, on the other hand, advanced through the upper ranks as the war progressed. He began the war as chief of staff to von Runstedt, then served as an infantry Corps Commander in the battle of France, as Commander of a Panzer Corps in the advance on Leningrad, gained command of an Army in the Crimean campaign, then became Army Group Commander only in November

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<sup>1</sup> Keith Richmond has previously published articles in *Sabretache* on a broad range of topics relating to World War 2. He thanks his brother, Russell Richmond, for goading him to produce an article on the Eastern Front.

<sup>2</sup> David Glantz, *Colossus Reborn: The Red Army at War, 1941-1943*, University Press of Kansas, Lawrence KS, 2005, p. xv

<sup>3</sup> Accurate figures are difficult to state with certainty. See Albert Seaton, *The Russo-German War 1941-45*, Arthur Barker Limited, London, 1971, p. 394; US Department of the Army, *Russian Combat Methods in World War II*, Pamphlet 20-230, Washington DC, 1950, p. 16; John Erickson, *The Road to Berlin: Stalin's War with Germany*, Volume 2, Cassell, London, 2004, p. 123; and Max Hastings, *Armageddon: The Battle for Germany 1944-45*, Pan Books, London, 2004, p. 112

<sup>4</sup> Discussion on who makes a Great Captain has captured the imagination of many from Napoleon through Theodore Dodge to Liddell Hart to Trevor Dupuy and many others. While the ancient Great Captains are perhaps generally agreed upon, there is much less acceptance of the modern listings

<sup>5</sup> Hastings, *Armageddon*, *ibid*, pp. 128 and 275

<sup>6</sup> Antony Beevor, *Stalingrad*, Penguin Books, London, 1999, p. 16. Also see Richard Brett-Smith, *Hitler's Generals*, Presidio Press, San Rafael CA, 1977, p. 221

<sup>7</sup> Otto Preston Chaney, *Zhukov*, David and Charles, Newton Abbot, 1972, pp. ix (in Foreword by M McIntosh) 192, 213, 245; Otto Preston Chaney, *Zhukov: Marshal of the Soviet Union*, Ballantine, New York, 1974, p. 49; William Spahr, *Zhukov: The Rise and Fall of a Great Captain*, Presidio, Novato CA, 1993, p. 60; John Colvin, *Zhukov: The Conqueror of Berlin*, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London, 2004, p. 17; and Viktor Anfilov, 'Zhukov' in Harold Shukman (ed) *Stalin's Generals*, Grove Press, New York, 1993, p. 347

1942 – and was sacked by Hitler in March 1944 and played no further part in the war.<sup>8</sup>

The differences between the two were significant. Zhukov was a member of the supreme planning body while Manstein could only appeal to Hitler to have somebody appointed as a supremo – possibly himself – to take over the planning and formulation of strategy. Zhukov often acted as the chief fire extinguisher in trouble spots while Manstein had limited exposure in this way, excepting his brief transfer to Leningrad in August 1942. Both were confident and arrogant men, cool under pressure, able to read the mind of the enemy and control the destinies of many thousands of men on the battlefield. If Zhukov was a terrifying superior to his colleagues and his subordinates, Manstein was a highly irritating subordinate and a demanding superior. Yet the two only occasionally met in battle (such as at Kursk), and given the disparities in resources there is little indication as to how they would have emerged from an even, head-to-head clash.

Both men had to cope with a dictator cum ultimate strategist and battlefield coordinator. Stalin was a master of the smallest detail,<sup>9</sup> and while he made massive mistakes he was fortunate to have men like Zhukov and Vasilevsky to organise the Soviet path to victory.<sup>10</sup> Zhukov was closely aligned with Stalin ('some thought at times he was too subservient to the centre'<sup>11</sup>) although after the war he fell out with Stalin and later Krushchev. In contrast, Manstein and Hitler never became close. Not a Nazi but highly pragmatic, Manstein was constantly at odds with Hitler. Hitler rarely condescended to listen to Manstein's entreaties on making war, saying that Manstein was only interested in 'playing at grand tactics'.<sup>12</sup> Manstein occasionally defied Hitler's directives,<sup>13</sup> and they conducted long and heated exchanges.<sup>14</sup>

For Zhukov his most noteworthy achievements include the battles of Khalkin-Gol, Moscow, Stalingrad, Leningrad, the Vistula-Oder, Kursk, and Berlin. Since he was involved in most of the important battles from June 1941 onward, we could add a succession of minor engagements such as Yelna in August 1941 where he performed well.<sup>15</sup> In June 1939 Zhukov was sent to Mongolia to fight the Japanese at Khalkin-Gol. These battles demonstrated Zhukov's style – he waited until he amassed vast superiority over the enemy in terms of men and resources (a superiority of 5:1 in infantry, 7:1 in machine guns, 4:1 in tanks and 2:1 in artillery and aircraft), he conducted a brilliantly realised campaign of deception, and then attempted to envelop the Japanese troops.<sup>16</sup> His rejection of the old approach of grinding

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<sup>8</sup> Michael Carver, 'Manstein' in Correlli Barnett (ed) *Hitler's Generals*, Phoenix Giants, London, 1997, p. 246; BH Liddell Hart, *The Other Side of the Hill: Germany's Generals; their rise and fall, with their own account of military events 1939-1945*, Pan Books, London, 1978, pp. 94-98; and C Chant et al, *Hitler's Generals and Their Battles*, Salamander, London, 1977, p. 166

<sup>9</sup> See S Bialer, *Stalin and His Generals: Soviet Military Memoirs of World War II*, Pegasus, New York, 1969, p. 34

<sup>10</sup> Georgi Zhukov, *The Memoirs of Marshal Zhukov*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1971, pp. 285, 288. Also W Spahr, *Stalin's Lieutenants: A Study of Command Under Stress*, Presidio, Novato CA, 1997, p. 288, and J Erickson, *The Road to Stalingrad: Stalin's War with Germany*, Volume 1, Harper and Row, New York, 1975, p. 375

<sup>11</sup> Erickson, *The Road to Stalingrad*, op cit, p. 375

<sup>12</sup> Erich von Manstein, *Lost Victories*, Methuen, London, 1958, pp. 275 and 541

<sup>13</sup> Manstein, *Lost Victories*, ibid, pp. 273, 287, 362, 374, 541, 544; and Carver, 'Manstein' in *Hitler's Generals*, op cit, pp. 239, 241, 242

<sup>14</sup> M Stein, *Field Marshal von Manstein, A Portrait: The Janus Head*, Helion and Company, Solihull UK, 2007, p. 383. RT P.t, *Manstein: His Campaigns and Trial*, Natraj Publishers, Dehradun India, 1970, p. 50

<sup>15</sup> B Fugate and L Dvoretzky, *Thunder on the Dnepr: Zhukov-Stalin and the Defeat of Hitler's Blitzkrieg*, Presidio, Novato CA, 1985, pp. 303-306

<sup>16</sup> Chaney, *Zhukov*, op cit, p. 51 and Chaney, *Zhukov: Marshal of the Soviet Union*, op cit, p. 21



attrition for little purpose was recognised by his peers and this style of warfare was subsequently approved for the Soviet forces.

The battles of Moscow, Stalingrad and Leningrad are sufficiently well known to avoid a re-telling. In essence the Germans at the end of a long supply line attacked these pivotal cities and faced the formidable task of facing well dug-in forces at a time when atrocious weather conditions made life for the attacking forces very difficult. In each case Zhukov was sent in by Stavka to fortify the defences. With his overweening personality Zhukov began by studying every aspect of the problem.<sup>17</sup> Then he moved with ruthless efficiency; he began by rapid demotion, replacement or execution of any seen not to be coping,<sup>18</sup> the judicious allocation of forces including reserves, consolidating supply lines, re-evaluating the existing artillery and gun placements, co-option of the civilian population to dig tank traps and make deeply echeloned defensive fortifications, and by enthusing the defenders to never give in despite awful odds.<sup>19</sup> Fortuitously, Soviet industry was beginning to produce better quality materiel and at Moscow, for example, there was greater availability of the impressive T-34 and KV tanks, the Il-2 Sturmovik aircraft, and the Katyusha rocket launchers.<sup>20</sup> These Zhukov was able to incorporate into his defences and later into counteroffensives.<sup>21</sup> The leitmotif for Zhukov was always the same: ‘Attack. Attack. The commanders could carry out his orders. They could die in the attempt. Or be shot.’<sup>22</sup> With his capacity to read the battlefield, Zhukov was a most formidable organiser.<sup>23</sup>

### Greatest Achievements

The decisive battle of Kursk in the summer of 1943 with its massive tank engagements is a monument to the dilatory style of Hitler.<sup>24</sup> It also formed part of the continuing counter-offensives masterminded by Zhukov after the success of Stalingrad. The Kursk salient was vast, from Belgorod in the south to Orel in the north, and it was recognised as an opportunity by both sides but especially the Soviets.<sup>25</sup> Operation Citadel was launched by the Germans on 4 July 1943. The Soviets were ready with two armies, two air armies, echeloned defences to a total depth of 300km (‘far beyond the German’s imagination’<sup>26</sup>), with 20,000 guns and mortars and 1000 Katyusha rocket launchers, as well as hoarded reserves that were part of every Zhukov plan.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, the German battle plan had been disclosed to Soviet planners by a well-placed spy.<sup>28</sup> Zhukov waited until the German offensive had exhausted itself on the Soviet defences, then he attacked.<sup>29</sup> The win was attributed to more men and equipment and the widespread use of mobile, armoured formations, but equally relevant is the time that the

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<sup>17</sup> John Erickson, ‘Marshal Georgi Zhukov’ in Michael Carver (ed) *The War Lords: Military Commanders of the Twentieth Century*, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London, 1976, pp. 250, 252

<sup>18</sup> Beevor, *Stalingrad*, op cit, pp. 166-167, and 431

<sup>19</sup> Erickson, *The Road to Stalingrad*, op cit, p. 193 and Spahr, *Stalin’s Lieutenants*, op cit, p. 264

<sup>20</sup> Fugate and Dvoretzky, *Thunder on the Dnepr*, op cit, p. 290. Also see Zhukov, *The Memoirs of Marshal Zhukov*, op cit, p. 397 and passim for references on the rise of Soviet industry

<sup>21</sup> Hastings, *Armageddon*, op cit, p. 273

<sup>22</sup> Harrison Salisbury, *The 900 Days: The Siege of Leningrad*, Macmillan, London, 1986, p. 345

<sup>23</sup> Hastings, *Armageddon*, op cit, p. 273

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, David Downing, *The Devil’s Virtuosos: German Generals at War, 1940-45*, New English Library, London, 1978, pp. 155-177

<sup>25</sup> John Ellis, *Brute Force: Allied Strategy and Tactics in the Second World War*, Viking, London, 1990, p. 102

<sup>26</sup> Mungo Melvin, *Manstein: Hitler’s Greatest General*, Phoenix, London, 2010, p. 363

<sup>27</sup> Colvin, *Zhukov*, op cit, chap 10

<sup>28</sup> Chant, *Hitler’s Generals and their Battles*, op cit, p. 198

<sup>29</sup> Chaney, *Zhukov*, op cit, pp. 251 and 256

Germans allowed the Soviets to prepare.<sup>30</sup> Hitler formally cancelled Citadel on 17 July as he needed to transfer divisions to the Italian theatre.<sup>31</sup> But the Soviet offensives rolled on until 23 August – the Germans lost 2000 tanks and 500,000 men over the 50-day period of the battle.<sup>32</sup>

The aim of the Vistula-Oder campaign was to make a series of heavily armoured thrusts (toward the Baltic, Prague, Vienna and Berlin) from Warsaw on the Vistula to the Oder River in Germany. Pausing to regroup after battles in the Baltic in October 1944,<sup>33</sup> the Red Army moved off in mid-January 1945. In what has been called ‘one of the greatest strategic operations of the war’, the Soviet forces swept all before them. This is hardly surprising when it is appreciated that together the Zhukov/Konev fronts were over 480km in width.<sup>34</sup> The havoc wreaked was massive and Zhukov said they crushed some 60 German divisions, all at the rate of almost 32km per day thanks to close air/ground cooperation and the increasing sophistication of the Soviet army.<sup>35</sup> The Soviet dominance in materiel in Konev’s and Zhukov’s fronts ‘was staggering: 163 divisions, 32,143 guns and mortars, 6460 tanks and self-propelled guns, 4772 planes and 2,200,000 men’; which gave a superiority of ‘5.5:1 in manpower, 7.8:1 in guns and mortars, 5.7:1 in tanks, and 17.6:1 in aircraft.’<sup>36</sup>

It is the battle for Berlin where Zhukov is enshrined in the public memory. Stalin engineered a competition between Zhukov and Konev, to race some 50km from the Oder to the German capital: Konev was told to stop his attack 140 metres from the Reichstag building. Berlin covered some 580 square km and while the German defences were weak and manpower slim, the Soviets expected a torrid time. By this stage the Soviet forces were monumental – two and a half million men, 6200 tanks, 41,000 guns and mortars and 7500 aircraft in three fronts headed by Zhukov, Konev and Rokossovsky.<sup>37</sup> To begin, 32 detachments were sent out to conduct reconnaissance in force and to pinpoint German defences.<sup>38</sup> The battle commenced on 16 April and resulted in an intense and bitter contest with both sides suffering terribly, leaving aside the travails of the starving and cowed civilian population. Zhukov was constantly frustrated by heavy German defences such as around the Seelow Heights and the Haupt canal, and he responded by throwing more men into the cauldron. He experienced a number of unpleasant exchanges with a nervous Stalin who wanted victory, and quickly.<sup>39</sup> Eventually the Berlin garrison surrendered on 2 May. It was Zhukov’s men who took the Reichstag and the central section of Berlin, and with it the accolades.

For Manstein, his reputation rests on his advocacy of the Sickle Cut (*Sichelschnitt*) plan, the siege of Sebastopol and the battles in the Kerch peninsula, the counter-offensive at Kharkov, and the redoubtable retreat from near Stalingrad back to the Dnieper River. Lesser victories might include the impressive engagement at Krivoi Rog,<sup>40</sup> and the extrication of General Hube and 10,000 of his men in 1<sup>st</sup> Panzer Army from the Bug River, against Hitler’s orders.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Zhukov, *The Memoirs of Marshal Zhukov*, op cit, pp. 465-467

<sup>31</sup> Paul Carell, *Scorched Earth: Hitler’s War on Russia*, vol. 2, George Harrap and Co, London, 1970, p. 5

<sup>32</sup> Colvin, *Zhukov*, op cit, p. 127

<sup>33</sup> Seaton, *The Russo-German War*, op cit, p. 522

<sup>34</sup> Seaton, *ibid*, pp. 530, 532, and Erickson, *The Road to Berlin*, op cit, chap. 7 and p. 447

<sup>35</sup> Colvin, *Zhukov*, op cit, pp. 153-157

<sup>36</sup> Chaney, *Zhukov*, op cit, pp. 293-294

<sup>37</sup> Seaton, *The Russo-German War*, op cit, p. 566

<sup>38</sup> Zhukov, *The Memoirs of Marshal Zhukov*, op cit, p. 601

<sup>39</sup> Erickson, *The Road to Berlin*, op cit, pp. 565, 571

<sup>40</sup> Seaton, *The Russo-German War*, op cit, p. 386

<sup>41</sup> Samuel Mitcham, *Hitler’s Field Marshals and Their Battles*, Guild Publishing, London, 1988, p. 253

We also might add Manstein's heroics in January 1943 when he brooked no interference from the Fuehrer – this only lasted a matter of weeks.<sup>42</sup>

Manstein was deeply critical of schemes for the invasion of France including one from General von Brauchitsch of OKW (Army High Command) that was seen by Manstein to be a poor imitation of the 1914 Schlieffen plan. Manstein then offered his own Sickle Cut strategy, a slashing version that proposed destruction of the French and British forces in 'two scythe-like sweeps', including movement through the Ardennes. Summoned before Hitler after assuming command of a corps, Manstein propounded the virtues of the strategy and had his version accepted, although this victory earned him the antipathy of many of his colleagues.<sup>43</sup>

Manstein's first conventional victories that accorded him a level of renown (and the rank of Fieldmarshal) came through the grinding campaign in the Crimea from September 1941. This area was vital for Germany because of oil holdings in nearby Rumania. The battle for the Kerch peninsula, conducted in an area only eight km wide and without the benefit of tanks for much of the time, allowed little room to manoeuvre. With some 20 divisions, the Soviets enjoyed great materiel superiority. Through clever deception by using fake wireless transmissions and artillery barrages on the logical target (a bulge in the lines to the north), the Soviets were misled. Manstein attacked to the south with his six divisions where the defences were weaker, and won a notable victory.<sup>44</sup> Then he began the siege of Sebastopol, a difficult mission as the city was 'ringed by three concentric defence lines, having a total depth of about ten miles [16km].'<sup>45</sup> Manstein began with an assault using 1300 guns from 208 artillery batteries including siege guns: the barrage persisted for five days, then a record. Late in the campaign Manstein utilised an attack from the sea and by July 1942 Sebastopol had fallen, along with 90,000 prisoners.<sup>46</sup> The victory was memorable against Russia's strongest fortress and is seen by Seaton as Manstein's zenith.<sup>47</sup>

Manstein is perhaps best known for the extrication of the depleted Army Group Don (later Army Group South) from the Don River west of Stalingrad to west of the Dnieper River from January 1943 to March 1944. Arguably this withdrawal may have slowed the ending of the war by as much as a year.<sup>48</sup> Manstein withdrew 1280km in the 15-month period, while protecting a front that averaged about 800km in width yet lost no major formation in that period.<sup>49</sup> Facing invigorated Soviet armies post-Stalingrad, Manstein fought constantly with Hitler, demanding the freedom to manoeuvre.<sup>50</sup> But as any withdrawal meant retreat from the

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<sup>42</sup> Timothy Wray, *Standing Fast: German Defensive Doctrine on the Russian Front During World War II: Prior to March 1943*, US Army, Fort Leavenworth KS, 1986, p. 155. Also see Alan Clark, *Barbarossa: The Russian-German Conflict 1941-1945*, Phoenix, London, 1997, p. 292

<sup>43</sup> Carver, 'Manstein' in *Hitler's Generals*, op cit, pp. 226-228 and Robert Citino, *The Path to Blitzkrieg: Doctrine and Training in the German Army, 1920-1939*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder CO, 1999, pp. 2 and 249. Also see Melvin, *Manstein*, op cit, chap 5

<sup>44</sup> Manstein, *Lost Victories*, op cit, pp. 236-238

<sup>45</sup> Seaton, *The Russo-German War*, op cit, p. 251

<sup>46</sup> Brett-Smith, *Hitler's Generals*, op cit, pp. 223-225

<sup>47</sup> Albert Seaton, 'Von Manstein' in *The War Lords*, op cit, p. 236. Also see Stein, *Field Marshal von Manstein*, op cit, p. 37

<sup>48</sup> See D Sadarananda, *Beyond Stalingrad: Manstein and the Operations of Army Group Don*, Praeger, New York, 1990, pp. viii, ix and xi

<sup>49</sup> P.t, *Manstein*, op cit, p. 65. Earle Ziemke, *Stalingrad to Berlin: The German Defeat in the East*, US Army, Washington DC, 1968, p. 171 has Manstein as of September 1943 having retreated 240km in two and a half months, while protecting a front 1040km wide

<sup>50</sup> Ellis, *Brute Force*, op cit, pp. 95-96, 112-115 and Table 29 on p. 544

natural resources of the Caucasus and the Donetz basin, Hitler was obdurate in opposition.<sup>51</sup> (As Manstein said of his relationship with Hitler, ‘We lived, it seemed, in two essentially different worlds.’<sup>52</sup>) The ratio of Soviet forces against Don Group was overwhelming at 8:1 while in Central and Northern Army Groups the ratio was 4:1, so Manstein demanded men from these areas where the fighting was not as fierce.<sup>53</sup>

Manstein had to avoid encirclement or destruction, to shorten his lines and transfer any surplus forces into reserves, to protect his flanks, and prevent the Soviets from pinning his men against the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea. Manstein agonised over Hitler’s seeming indifference to the fate of Don Group.<sup>54</sup> And as Melvin says, ‘His army bled in the process.’<sup>55</sup> Manstein counter-attacked where possible, giving up territory as he went, sometimes achieving minor tactical successes.<sup>56</sup> A significant goal was to retreat to the Dnieper river and there rest and re-group. His troops were then spread over a 700km front and had to fall back some 320km then proceed across one of five crossing points over the third biggest river in Europe, then redeploy at speed to cover once again the same frontage. Some 54 under-strength divisions and 200,000 wounded went across in late September 1943.<sup>57</sup> Carver described this as a ‘feat of military skill and resolution at all levels...which it is doubtful if any other Army could have equalled.’<sup>58</sup> Of course the river did not hinder the Soviets and Manstein had to resume his slow passage westwards into Poland. This epic of achievement succeeded in maintaining a force in being.

Manstein’s counter-offensive known as the third battle of Kharkov in early 1943 showed superb confidence and skill. Liddell Hart said that after the Stalingrad debacle there was pressure on the southern front, ‘but Manstein saved the situation by a brilliant flank counterstroke which recaptured Kharkov...That counterstroke was the most brilliant operational performance of Manstein’s career, and one of the most masterly in the whole course of military history.’<sup>59</sup> Faced with the loss of Kharkov by the SS Panzer Corps in mid February 1943, Hitler sacked the SS General and flew to Manstein’s headquarters at Zaporozhe on 17 February to sack Manstein, but Hitler held his hand. Then Manstein demonstrated his famed castling move. The Soviets believed the Germans were in full retreat and were surprised when General Hollidt’s 6<sup>th</sup> Army established a defensive screen on the Mius in the south against six armies of Soviet troops. On 19 February Manstein sent 4<sup>th</sup> Panzer Army and 2 Panzer Corps on his left flank along with Army Detachment Kempf, northward to join with SS Panzer Corps attacking from the south. This cut off Soviet elements including parts of Soviet 1<sup>st</sup> Guards Army and 6<sup>th</sup> Army who were some 112km to the west. Then 4<sup>th</sup> Panzer and the SS Panzer joined and moved north to Kharkov. By the time the Soviets decided to attack Hollidt’s and 1<sup>st</sup> Panzer in the south, 4<sup>th</sup> Panzer Army was

<sup>51</sup> Ellis, *Brute Force*, *ibid*, p. 95 offers a neat summation of Hitler’s views

<sup>52</sup> Manstein, *Lost Victories*, *op cit*, p. 427

<sup>53</sup> Manstein, *Lost Victories*, *ibid*, p. 419

<sup>54</sup> General von Kluge told Manstein that ‘You will find it impossible to move any formation larger than a battalion without referring back to the Fuehrer.’ Kluge’s words were prophetic – Sadarananda, *Beyond Stalingrad*, *op cit*, p. 17, and pp. 101-102. Also Melvin, *Manstein*, *op cit*, chap. 12

<sup>55</sup> Melvin, *Manstein*, *ibid*, p. 383

<sup>56</sup> Seaton, *The Russo-German War*, *op cit*, p. 384 says that ‘Experienced German formations, although tired and under strength and inferior in equipment to Red Army troops, were still tactically their superior’ although this rarely resulted in much except ‘minor tactical reverses’

<sup>57</sup> Seaton, *The Russo-German War*, *op cit*, pp. 330, 376-379. Also Manstein, *Lost Victories*, *op cit*, p. 471, says that it took ‘about 2500 trains’ to carry the German equipment and requisitioned Soviet property

<sup>58</sup> Carver, ‘Manstein’, in *Hitler’s Generals*, *op cit*, p. 239

<sup>59</sup> Liddell Hart, ‘Introduction’ in Manstein, *Lost Victories*, *op cit*, p.15 while Sadarananda, *Beyond Stalingrad*, *op cit*, p. 152 has a similar comment

240km away from its starting point and beginning to attack the Voronezh front. As the Soviets thinned out their lines against Detachment Kempf, this allowed the German unit to attack.<sup>60</sup> This was successful, and Belgorod was taken. German units entered Kharkov on 12 March, and all Soviet units retreated to the east.<sup>61</sup> In essence Manstein had ensured his line in the south was safe, then withdrew Panzer units from the south and switched them to the northwest, thus shifting the German defensive line. As the Soviets thinned their lines, they were destroyed.<sup>62</sup> The Soviet First Guards Army and other units were shattered and some 615 tanks were lost.<sup>63</sup> Manstein had achieved a remarkable victory and one that went against the trend of Soviet successes.<sup>64</sup>

### Greatest Failures and Limitations

Operation Mars ranks as Zhukov's worst defeat. According to Glantz, Zhukov developed an obsession with destroying the German Army Group Centre. At the time of the battle of Stalingrad, Stalin approved a series of offensives to occur in late November 1942 – Operation Uranus and Operation Saturn in the south to relieve Stalingrad and force the Germans back onto the Sea of Azov, while in the north Operation Mars and Operation Jupiter were to be staged in the salient to the west of Moscow on the Kalanin Front, and to the south of Rzhev on the Viazma axis.<sup>65</sup> Mars was under the command of Zhukov and he directed a number of thrusts at varying points around the salient. The Soviets began with an intensive artillery barrage, and penal battalions led the infantry into battle<sup>66</sup> – some 667,000 Soviet troops were involved. Following an all-too-predictable artillery barrage the Soviets made good penetrations and one German unit was even encircled for a time. But the Soviet attack was too ambitious, badly coordinated, and lacked flair. By 11 December Zhukov sent Rybalko's Tank Army south and this effectively ended Operation Mars. The costs for the Soviets were high – over 100,000 dead and 250,000 wounded or missing, and about 1600-1800 tanks destroyed.<sup>67</sup> Zhukov blamed difficult terrain, strong German defences, shortage of armour, artillery and aircraft, but Glantz says we need to add Zhukov's poor planning and poor generalship. Soviet records did not disclose information on Mars for many years.<sup>68</sup>

Zhukov was brutal in achieving his objectives: he used penal battalions in the front line;<sup>69</sup> he executed soldiers who were disobedient or who ran away,<sup>70</sup> and he forced soldiers to fight even when the battle was lost, allowing more men to be killed and to teach the regiment a

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<sup>60</sup> Manstein, *Lost Victories*, op cit, p. 436

<sup>61</sup> Seaton, *The Russo-German War*, op cit, pp. 347-349

<sup>62</sup> Wray, *Standing Fast*, op cit, pp. 155-162. See Manstein, *Lost Victories*, op cit, pp. 433-436. Also FW von Mellenthin, *Panzer Battles: A Study of the Employment of Armour in the Second World War*, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman OK, 1968, pp. 207-208

<sup>63</sup> Wray, *Standing Fast*, op cit, p. 162 and E Rauss, 'German Defence Tactics Against Russian Break-Throughs', in P Tsouras (ed) *The Anvil of War: German Generalship in Defence on the Eastern Front*, Greenhill Books, London, 1994, p. 136

<sup>64</sup> Clark, *Barbarossa*, op cit, p. 306 describes it as a 'complete and dramatic reversal of fortune'

<sup>65</sup> One of the reasons for Mars/Jupiter was to prevent any reinforcements from the north being sent to assist at Stalingrad

<sup>66</sup> Spahr, *Zhukov*, op cit, p. 147 says each army could form 5 to 10 penal companies based on prisoners – also Hastings, *Armageddon*, op cit, p. 149

<sup>67</sup> S Newton, *Hitler's Commander: Field Marshal Walther Model – Hitler's Favourite General*, Da Capo Press, Cambridge MA, 2005, pp. 208-209

<sup>68</sup> David Glantz, *Zhukov's Greatest Defeat: The Red Army's Epic Disaster in Operation Mars, 1942*, University Press of Kansas, Lawrence KS, 1999, passim

<sup>69</sup> Hastings, *Armageddon*, op cit, p. 149. But according to Anfilyov, 'Zhukov' in *Stalin's Generals*, op cit, p. 350, 'Zhukov took no part in drafting Order No 227 of 28 July 1942'

<sup>70</sup> Erickson, *The Road to Berlin*, op cit, p. 222, and *The Road to Stalingrad*, op cit, p. 427.

lesson.<sup>71</sup> As with other Soviet generals, he cleared minefields by the simple expedient of marching men across.<sup>72</sup> He can also be criticised for showing poor judgement and wasting men and materiel.<sup>73</sup> Faced with solid German defences he simply poured more men into the vortex: ‘in his desperation to satisfy Stalin, [he] battered the enemy into submission through human sacrifice, not manoeuvre’<sup>74</sup>. He was guilty of this cavalier attitude from the battle for Moscow through to the battle for Berlin (‘There was no tactical subtlety here, no signs of a great captain manoeuvring forces with imagination. This was merely a clumsy battering ram’<sup>75</sup>). Zhukov is perhaps best known for his ferocious temper and brutality to those around him. He brooked no interference and demanded the impossible.<sup>76</sup> Men quaked when Zhukov appeared – he has been described as ‘severe and ruthless’,<sup>77</sup> a martinet in peacetime as well as in war. He was unforgiving – as Max Hastings notes, ‘a harsh taskmaster ... utterly ruthless ... There was no warmth there, but a steely, uncompromising professionalism of the highest order.’<sup>78</sup>

For Manstein, and as one who was on the losing side, his failures are all the more apparent. Some critics blame him for trying to delay the inevitable by preventing the onrush of the Soviet forces while others visit injustices of the Nazi regime on him.<sup>79</sup> Certainly the war crimes trials of Manstein focused on his presumed collusion in the extermination of Jews (Stein blames Manstein for *Einsatzgruppen D*’s killing of 14,500 Jews in Simferopol in the Crimea in December 1941<sup>80</sup>) and allowing Russian prisoners to be used to construct defences or clear minefields. Many critics see Manstein as a deeply flawed genius whose faults became glaringly obvious when he abided by Hitler’s orders and did not force Paulus to blast his way out at Stalingrad.<sup>81</sup> The truth about Manstein’s character is muddied by his being a conscientious German officer who swore an oath of allegiance to the State, and then found himself serving under a Nazi leader waging war against a foe that sought the annihilation of the German nation. As Manstein and other German generals found, their decision lay between the objectionable Hitler and supporting the plotters. Manstein said in 1945, ‘The principle of obedience to highest authority has to prevail.’<sup>82</sup>

True, Manstein circulated material that associated the Jews with being subhuman, but he vehemently supported Jews within the German Army ranks,<sup>83</sup> he refused to follow the notorious Commissar directive that required all Soviet Commissars or political advisers to be executed, and he did not condone mass murders by the Nazis.<sup>84</sup> He adopted the scorched earth policy such as when he was attempting to secure his troops beyond the Dnieper. He was

<sup>71</sup> Glantz, *Zhukov’s Greatest Defeat*, op cit, pp. 190 and 224

<sup>72</sup> Harrison Salisbury, *Marshal Zhukov’s Greatest Battles*, Macdonald, London, 1969, pp. 8-9

<sup>73</sup> Ellis, *Brute Force*, op cit, pp. 122-130 for a disturbing picture of the waste of men and machines

<sup>74</sup> Hastings, *Armageddon*, op cit, p. 548

<sup>75</sup> Hastings, *Armageddon*, op cit, p. 539. Among the examples see Erickson, ‘Marshal Georgi Zhukov’ in *The War Lords*, op cit, p. 254 and Salisbury, *The 900 Days*, op cit, p. 324

<sup>76</sup> Salisbury, *The 900 Days*, *ibid*, p. 324, and Bialer, *Stalin and his Generals*, op cit, p. 436

<sup>77</sup> Chaney, *Zhukov*, op cit, foreword by McIntosh, p. vii

<sup>78</sup> Hastings, *Armageddon*, op cit, pp. 273 and 274

<sup>79</sup> Hastings, *Armageddon*, *ibid*, pp. 198 and 199

<sup>80</sup> Stein, *Field Marshal von Manstein*, op cit, p. 386

<sup>81</sup> Beevor, *Stalingrad*, op cit, pp. 299, 308-310 offers a sustained attack on Manstein as do Stein at Chapter 3 of *Field Marshal von Manstein*, op cit, and others. However, P Carell, *Hitler’s War on Russia: The Story of the German Defeat in the East*, George Harrap and Co, London, 1964, p. 616 justifies Manstein’s decision on Paulus

<sup>82</sup> Stein, *Field Marshal von Manstein*, op cit, p. 389

<sup>83</sup> Mitcham, *Hitler’s Field Marshals and their Battles*, op cit, pp. 242 and 251

<sup>84</sup> Beevor, *Stalingrad*, op cit, p. 16 claims that Manstein said he was part Jewish

also guilty of blaming others for setbacks, so Count von Sponeck was sacked for his role in the Kerch campaign in December 1941 and General Franz von Kempf was blamed for the loss of Kharkov in August 1943. Manstein was highly ambitious with the hope of becoming commander in chief of the Eastern Front and it appears he made statements and condoned acts which represent ‘a compromise for the sake of his own advancement.’ When he failed to force Paulus to break out, he was prepared to follow Hitler’s orders and act as a loyal subordinate so as to pursue national military objectives.<sup>85</sup>

### Tactics

From 22 June 1941 until the Germans lost momentum that Christmas and lay exhausted in the icy wastes of the Soviet Union, most battles went with the attackers. The Soviets defended doggedly and learned much from the Germans.<sup>86</sup> They also accumulated more and better quality materiel through the efforts of Soviet industry and Allied aid, thereby acquiring a far more mobile force. Vast disparities in manpower and resources governed the tactics used by both sides although the application of tactics was sometimes prescribed by Stalin and Hitler.<sup>87</sup> Different battlefield doctrines were also important. But the key to success for both sides lay in coming to terms with the environment, the dreadful winter conditions along with the mud and the thaw, and the sheer size of Russia which allowed invaders to be drawn into the country and destroyed at leisure.<sup>88</sup>

As to doctrine, the Soviets had long depended on mass attack, a continuation of their ‘Russian steamroller’ tactics of the Great War.<sup>89</sup> Especially from 1943/1944, Zhukov ably orchestrated the combined arms armies – the integration of tanks, artillery, mechanised infantry, aircraft and supporting weapons, along with mobile forces to achieve rapid penetration.<sup>90</sup> A Zhukov engagement involved up to 230 guns to the kilometre conducted over a wide front, with air support where possible. Following an artillery barrage came a round of Katyusha fire.<sup>91</sup> Waves of men emerged, often led by the penal battalions. Zhukov described his four-stage strategy: ‘three waves of attacks level the ground and the fourth goes over it.’<sup>92</sup> After 1944 when massed tanks were more often used, the battle would begin with artillery, followed by tanks then the infantry in deep wedges.<sup>93</sup> At this stage of the war Zhukov tried to have up to 70 tanks to the kilometre.<sup>94</sup> Zhukov waited for the Germans to overextend themselves then at the last moment he hoped to throw in his carefully husbanded

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<sup>85</sup> Seaton, *The Russo-German War*, op cit, pp. 253, 254, 264, 339; Mitcham, *Hitler’s Field Marshals and their Battles*, op cit, p. 251; and Melvin, *Manstein*, op cit, chap. 11

<sup>86</sup> The Soviets learned to apply German tactics – E Rauss, ‘Russian Combat Methods in World War II’, in P Tsouras (ed) *Fighting in Hell: The German Ordeal on the Eastern Front*, Greenhill Books, London, 1995, p. 29 and Melvin, *Manstein*, op cit, p. 347

<sup>87</sup> Stein, *Field Marshal von Manstein*, op cit, p. 142 says ‘Hitler...would often intervene in actions down to battalion level’

<sup>88</sup> Fugate and Dvoretzky, *Thunder on the Dnepr*, op cit, passim, but especially pp. 60-67. Also see US Department of the Army, *Russian Combat Methods*, op cit, p. 9

<sup>89</sup> M Broekmeyer, *Stalin, the Russians, and Their War*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison WI, 1999, p. 216

<sup>90</sup> E Rauss, ‘Russian Combat Methods in World War II’, in *Fighting in Hell*, op cit, p. 41 says that after 1944 the Russians were less wasteful of men. Zhukov’s style of warfare altered from the beginning of war to the end. From 1944 especially he was a master of manoeuvre warfare. In the early period he depended on defence and attrition – but was prepared to move rapidly to encirclements or other tactics as circumstances decreed

<sup>91</sup> E Rauss, ‘Military Improvisations During the Russian Campaign’ in *The Anvil of War*, op cit, p. 54

<sup>92</sup> Broekmeyer, *Stalin, the Russians and their War*, op cit, p. 216. There is a nice quote in Ellis, *Brute Force*, op cit, p. 122: ‘In Russian eyes the cracking of nuts is clearly what sledgehammers are designed for’

<sup>93</sup> US Department of the Army, *Russian Combat Methods*, op cit, p. 46

<sup>94</sup> Erickson, *The Road to Berlin*, op cit, p. 118

reserves, and attempt envelopments.<sup>95</sup> On the defensive side he demanded deep, echeloned defences using interconnected trenches, and heavy artillery cover.<sup>96</sup> Measures often included anti-tank ditches,<sup>97</sup> bunkers, barbed wire, mined villages, abatis,<sup>98</sup> and guns in subterranean emplacements.<sup>99</sup> Mines were distributed liberally: 400,000 anti-tank mines were laid on one front at Kursk.<sup>100</sup>

Once the Soviets achieved overwhelming superiority they excelled at rapid tactical and operational manoeuvre, as in the race for Berlin, at Kursk, toward the Dnieper, and especially, in the Vistula-Oder campaign when the blitzkrieg-like rate of advance encouraged use of far-ranging detachments.<sup>101</sup> Other tactics included night attacks, infiltration, deception and camouflage, and reconnaissance using offensive patrols,<sup>102</sup> while Zhukov tried to destroy German materiel to restrict the use of German armour.<sup>103</sup> Partisan activity greatly assisted the Soviet cause, with some 374,000 partisans in the Belorussian area alone.<sup>104</sup>

In contrast, doctrines followed by Manstein advocated mobile operations and a willingness to use flexibility, deception and improvisation.<sup>105</sup> In retreat the poorly-resourced Manstein resorted to combined manoeuvre and positional defence. Indeed, as Wray stresses, Manstein used a 'potpourri' of techniques such as static defence, counterattacks, spoiling attacks, delaying actions, and allowing units to make 'deliberate plans for their withdrawals'.<sup>106</sup> There was no place for frontal attacks unless forced on him, and all operations needed to be conducted for tactical and strategic ends.<sup>107</sup> The classic *Kiel und Kessel* approach which called for rapid envelopment of enemy forces was a tactic reserved for times when superiority of manoeuvre was possible.<sup>108</sup> Manstein also refined the elastic defence concept whereby the front line would give way (in effect, feinting retreat) and the Soviets would be lulled into a false sense of security, over-extend their lines, and be rolled up by the waiting armour. Manstein often used chess terms for his tactical battles, with his 'castling' or Rochade move the best known (as at Kharkov), and Stein said of him that 'Manstein operated like a chess grandmaster'.<sup>109</sup>

Hitler was infuriated by Manstein's constant request to concede ground – Hitler described Manstein as a 'pisspot strategist'<sup>110</sup> and Hitler's staff called Manstein 'Field Marshal

<sup>95</sup> Salisbury, *Marshal Zhukov's Greatest Battles*, op cit, pp. 13, 14 and 199

<sup>96</sup> Anfilov, 'Zhukov', in *Stalin's Generals*, op cit, p. 350

<sup>97</sup> US Department of the Army, *Russian Combat Methods*, op cit, p. 60

<sup>98</sup> Sharpened tree trunks and poles facing the attacker

<sup>99</sup> E Rauss, 'Russian Combat Methods in World War II' in *Fighting in Hell*, op cit, p. 76

<sup>100</sup> Seaton, *The Russo-German War*, op cit, p. 360 and Ellis, *Brute Force*, op cit, p. 106

<sup>101</sup> David Glantz, *The Soviet Conduct of Tactical Manoeuvre: Spearhead of the Offensive*, Frank Cass, London, 1991, passim

<sup>102</sup> Zhukov, *The Memoirs of Marshal Zhukov*, op cit, p. 156-157 for Khalkin-Gol. David Glantz, *Soviet Military Deception in the Second World War*, Frank Cass, London, 1989, pp. 278-288. Williamson Murray, *German Military Effectiveness*, Nautical and Aviation Publishing Company of America, Baltimore MD, 1992, p. 25 and D Glantz and J House, *When Titans Clashed: How the Red Army Stopped Hitler*, University Press of Kansas, Lawrence KS, 1995, p. 174

<sup>103</sup> S Newton (ed), *German Battle Tactics on the Russian Front 1941-1945*, Schiffer Military, Artglen PA, 1994, p. 83

<sup>104</sup> Zhukov, *The Memoirs of Marshal Zhukov*, op cit, p. 521

<sup>105</sup> Wray, *Standing Fast*, op cit, pp. 3,5,23 for elastic defence

<sup>106</sup> Wray, *Standing Fast*, *ibid*, pp. 160-161

<sup>107</sup> Carver, 'Manstein' in *Hitler's Generals*, op cit, pp. 224-225

<sup>108</sup> Wray, *Standing Fast*, op cit, p. 26

<sup>109</sup> Stein, *Field Marshal von Manstein*, op cit, p. 56

<sup>110</sup> Chant, *Hitler's Generals and their Battles*, op cit, p. 166



Backwards.’<sup>111</sup> But to Manstein a well-planned withdrawal was of considerable tactical value<sup>112</sup> – he once remarked that ‘I would rather lose a city than an Army’.<sup>113</sup> Some of the intricate withdrawal tactics under Manstein’s direction are impressive.<sup>114</sup> Martin van Creveld expressed it this way: ‘In Russia a strongly outnumbered Wehrmacht needed only five months to reach the gates of Moscow: to drive it back to its starting line took an (by then immeasurably superior) opponent fully two-and-a-half years.’<sup>115</sup>

## Conclusion

It is difficult to make a meaningful comparison between two men as talented (and possibly as flawed) as Zhukov and Manstein. Both commanded massive forces under the most trying conditions. Zhukov made his name with his capacity for implementing complex plans and utilising massed troop movements as few others have done. Manstein came from a different doctrinal view that stressed mobility and the importance of keeping a force in being. His reputation is built more on finesse and manoeuvre.

We could criticise both men for their excesses during the war, such as Manstein’s links with injustices against Soviet prisoners, *Einsatzgruppen* activities, and scorched earth policies,<sup>116</sup> or Zhukov’s capricious use of men in battle and turning a blind eye to the 100,000 or so rapes committed in Berlin.<sup>117</sup>

But in fairness both men should be judged on their contribution to the war effort.<sup>118</sup> If we look at what makes a great commander, there is much in the literature to guide us. We read of the organisers, their decisiveness, aggressiveness, their ability to understand the needs of their men as well as inspire them to great deeds, and the capacity to make a decision and have it implemented. There is also the importance of style, of their resilience and imperturbability under pressure, and what Montgomery would call their ‘grip’ of the battlefield. We should also include the facility to juggle competing demands.

With their grasp of the complexities of the theatre, surely Manstein and Zhukov qualify as men of great distinction. As masters of the battlefield, they not only rank at the peak of any front-line leaders of the Second World War but must also be among the first candidates for elevation into Great Captains of the modern era.

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<sup>111</sup> Melvin, *Manstein*, op cit, p. 56

<sup>112</sup> Stein, *Field Marshal von Manstein*, op cit, p. 56

<sup>113</sup> Brett-Smith, *Hitler’s Generals*, op cit, p. 234

<sup>114</sup> E Rauss, ‘German Defence Tactics Against Russian Break-Throughs’, in *Anvil of War*, op cit, pp. 190, 222-223, and Wray, *Standing Fast*, op cit, p. 161

<sup>115</sup> Martin van Creveld, *Fighting Power: German and US Army Performance, 1939-1945*, Greenwood Press, Westport CT, 1982, p. 5

<sup>116</sup> Ziemke, *Stalingrad to Berlin*, op cit, pp. 171-172

<sup>117</sup> See Erich Kubly, *The Russians and Berlin, 1945*, Heinemann, London, 1965, pp. 268-269 for Zhukov’s response to questions on fraternisation. For Stalin’s dismissive reaction to rapes by Soviet troops, see Cornelius Ryan, *The Last Battle*, Fontana, London, 1973, footnote p. 367

<sup>118</sup> It is worth recording that Hastings suggested the ‘formidable commanders’ in Zhukov and Manstein could only demand extraordinary sacrifices under a totalitarian regime – in a democracy commanders had to be conscious of the importance of minimising casualties. Under democratic rule Zhukov and Manstein would have been ‘apparently pedestrian fellows’: Hastings, *Armageddon*, op cit, pp. 584-591 and especially p. 587

## COLLECTORS' CORNER

Ann Bryan of Nambour, Queensland, has sent in this photo and writes: *'While undertaking research into my family history, I was given some old photographs by my last remaining Aunt. My family was English (my husband and I migrated to Australia in 1969) and my great-uncle was Albert William Jones whose regimental no. was 524643 (in the British Army) and who served with the 2nd E.A. Field Co. R.E. (which I believe is the 2nd East Anglian Field Company, Royal Engineers) in the First World War. With some photographs of my Great Uncle Albert, there was one photograph of two Australian soldiers; there is nothing on the photo itself, nor on the back of the photo, to reveal the identity of the two soldiers shown. I was so pleased to receive the photos of my own Great Uncle that it makes me think that there could be someone here in Australia who would love to receive the photo of the two Australian soldiers.'*



Anne's photo shows the soldier on the right wearing the colour patch of an unidentified infantry battalion of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Australian Division, with three wound stripes also on his sleeve. The man on the left has two wound stripes and a bandage or glove on his hand. The evidence of wounds would point to the photo being taken later in their service careers, possibly even after the war, rather than during their training, which Anne quite correctly notes the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division undertook in England in 1915-16.

She continues: *'I did wonder if perhaps the two young men might have been billeted or visited with my Great Uncle's family for some reason. His address at the time of his service was firstly 28 Alfred Street and then 48 Grange Street, Luton, Beds. The Jones family had lived in Luton for many years prior to the war. My Great Uncle joined the British Army in September 1914 but in August 1915 he was (according to his service record) "Released to Civil Employ with Vauxhall Motors" (he was an engineer). He was discharged in December 1918.'*

Very generously, Anne wonders if there are any *Sabretache* readers who might recognise some family connection to the men in the photograph, and who would like to have it: *'It just seems a shame to have a photograph and no one to pass it onto here in Australia,'* she concludes. [Please contact the editor if you can make such a claim.]

## RAF SERVICEMEN WHO DIED DURING WW2 AND ARE BURIED IN AUSTRALIA

David Vincent<sup>1</sup>

During the Second World War the part played by the nations of the then British Empire in supporting the war against the Axis nations, particularly Germany, is well known. For the war in the air, from Australia came tens of thousands of young airmen, most of them recently graduated from RAAF training schools to complete their training and fight the enemy. In the process thousands were killed or posted missing, believed killed. These men are commemorated in war cemeteries and memorials far from home, sacred sites such as the Memorial for the Missing at Runnymede, not far from London, where the names of more than 20,000 members of the Empire air forces appear, men who have no known graves.

Australia has its own war cemeteries and memorials to the missing spread around the country. Air force casualties in Australia, including those as a result of air operations from Australian bases during the Second World War, were around 2,500 personnel, but of this number it may surprise readers to learn that more than 40 were members of the Royal Air Force. They were mostly personnel serving in units sent to Australia in connection with the war against Japan and who died as a result of aircraft accidents, in one case an instructor already here in connection with aircrew training in the early days of the Empire Air Training Scheme. One RAF unit, Spitfire-equipped No. 54 Squadron, was sent to Australia in 1943 to aid in the defence of this country against Japanese air attacks and its casualties included the only losses in combat against the enemy by an Australian-based RAF unit; more will be said of them in a moment. An extra group of seven RAF personnel can be found in the Sydney War Cemetery who all died due to food restrictions imposed on them whilst prisoners-of-war in the Ohama POW camp in Japan in 1942. While their bodies were cremated following death, their ashes were collected by remaining prisoners before they left the camp in 1945 and later brought to Sydney where they were interred.

Returning to the losses of 54 Squadron RAF: of the ten men from this squadron who were killed and are buried in the Adelaide River War Cemetery in the Northern Territory, while most deaths were due to aircraft accidents, four pilots were lost in action in the course of or following air raids/reconnaissance flights by the enemy on northern Australia. Two occurred during/after Raid No. 53 (15 March 1943), one during/after Raid No. 57 (30 June 1943), the last during/after an encounter with Japanese fighters defending a reconnaissance flight on 7 September 1943. Altogether there were 64 bombing raids on northern Australia by Japanese forces, but only three occurred after the last-mentioned date.

These RAF war dead and the Australian cemeteries in which they are buried are as follows (all units listed are of the RAF unless otherwise stated):

### **New South Wales (24 personnel)**

#### *Camden General Cemetery*

BIGGS WO F. S. 25/11/45 (unit not known)

MULLEN LAC A. 12/10/45 (243 Squadron)

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<sup>1</sup> David Vincent has been interested in WW2 aviation history, particularly military aviation history, for decades. His special interest is in the wartime history of the RAAF. He is presently working on his fifth book, a largely photographic volume detailing RAAF and US 5<sup>th</sup> Air Force aircraft nose art in the Pacific 1942-1945.

*Cowra General Cemetery*

CARTER Cpl R. C. 2/12/45 (243 Squadron)

*Narromine General Cemetery*

FRENCH Flt Lt F. J. 27/7/45 (618 Squadron)

*Richmond War Cemetery*

ASHURST PO G. 5/1/45 (unit not known)

BIGGS PO K. A. H. 5/1/45 (unit not known)

DONALDSON FO G. 23/6/45 (unit not known)

POWELL WO I. C. 5/1/45 (unit not known)

*Sydney War Cemetery*

BARNLEY Sqn Ldr J. R. 30/11/42 (34 Squadron) – died Ohama, Japan

BUBB Cpl F. L. 6/12/42 (unit not known) – died Ohama, Japan

COOPER AC1 L. H. 9/12/42 (242 Squadron) – died Ohama, Japan

CRITCHLEY LAC W. 17/12/42 (unit not known) – died Ohama, Japan

FROW Wg Cdr F. G. 1/12/42 (unit not known) – died Ohama, Japan

KENT AC2 A. W. 14/12/45 (unit not known)

McNEE FO D. 19/7/45 (243 Squadron)

MILNE Cpl D. 19/12/42 (100 Squadron) – died Ohama, Japan

MOULDEN Sqn Ldr D. 21/11/44 (unit not known)

RAYNER Sqn Ldr I. S. J. 19/7/45 (243 Squadron)

READ Sgt W. K. 25/11/42 (54 Squadron)

ROCHFORD Flt Lt D. G. 2/5/45 (618 Squadron)

SIMMONS LAC C. 3/3/45 (54 Squadron)

STEVENSON Flt Sgt A. F. 19/7/45 (unit not known)

TILL FO J. L. 19/7/45 (243 Squadron)

VOCE AC1 S. H. 9/12/42 (unit not known) – died Ohama, Japan

**Victoria** (5 personnel)

*Benalla War Cemetery*

BELL FO E. G. 19/6/45 (618 Squadron)

Flt Lt SILLITO E. B. DFC 19/6/45 (618 Squadron)

*Fawkner Memorial Park Cemetery Melbourne*

BOND LAC R. 4/5/42 (unit not known)

*Springvale War Cemetery*

BROWN Cpl W. 31/12/42 (unit not known)

CANNON Sqn Ldr D. H. P. 24/1/44 (unit not known)

**South Australia** (2 personnel)

*Centennial Park Cemetery Adelaide*

DUXBURY Flt Lt F. 22/12/45 (238 Squadron)

*Mount Gambier General Cemetery*

PEACOCK Flt Lt G. K. 12/7/41 (No. 2 Air Observers School RAAF)

**Queensland** (4 personnel)

*Charleville Cemetery*

BROOK FO A. K. 29/1/44 (unit not known)

*Lutwyche Cemetery Brisbane*

CHANDLER Flt Sgt A. V. 19/4/44 (unit not known)  
 WRIGHT Sqn Ldr W. H. A. 19/4/44 (unit not known)

*Rockhampton Cemetery*

PORTAS FO R. G. 22/9/45 (unit not known)

**Northern Territory** (14 personnel)*Adelaide River War Cemetery*

BROWN FO N. C. 1/7/44 (548 Squadron)  
 BROWN Flt Lt P. G. F. 18/4/44 (54 Squadron)  
 COOPER Flt Sgt A. E. 15/3/43 (54 Squadron)  
 GIBBS Flt Sgt J. B. 13/1/44 (54 Squadron)  
 GRIFFITHS FO F. T. 15/6/44 (548 Squadron)  
 HADLEY FO K. J. 6/8/44 (549 Squadron)  
 HINDS FO W. T. 7/9/43 (54 Squadron)  
 McCARTHY Flt Sgt P. F. 5/2/43 (54 Squadron)  
 MEAKIN Flt Lt F. 28/7/44 (54 Squadron)  
 POSSE WO R. W. 16/11/44 (549 Squadron)  
 THOMAS FO F. F. 17/6/45 (54 Squadron)  
 VARNEY PO F. L. 16/3/43 (54 Squadron)  
 WELLSMAN PO J. C. 30/6/43 (54 Squadron)  
 WHALLEY PO J. H. 13/1/44 (54 Squadron)

**Western Australia** (1 person)*Perth War Cemetery*

THOMPSON Flt Lt J. C. 30/10/45 (unit not known)

Also worthy of note is the fact there are other RAF personnel, three at least, perhaps more, who lost their lives in Australia but who have no known graves. As a result their names are commemorated on a Commonwealth War Graves Commission memorial, but that memorial is not in Australia but in the grounds of the Kranji War Cemetery, Singapore. Adding their



names to the above list takes the number of RAF casualties in Australia during the Second World War to 46 (not including the Ohama deaths), still a small group, but part of overall British losses in Australia and Australian waters during the War in excess of 230.

Much is said about the contribution and sacrifices made by the American forces in the defence of Australia, but the part played by British forces and the British Merchant Navy in and around Australia is another aspect of our wartime history which should not be forgotten.

*Left: The grave of Flt Lt F. Duxbury, RAF, Centennial Park, Adelaide. He died in 105<sup>th</sup> Australian Military Hospital (now the Repatriation Hospital, Daw Park) from multiple injuries received as a result of a jeep accident at Pooraka on 17 December 1945. (Author's photo.)*

*References:* Commonwealth War Graves Commission War Cemetery Registers for Australia, London, 1961-1962; Memorial Register 16 for the Singapore Memorial, London, 1957; Les and Pam Stubbs, *Unsung Heroes of the Royal Air Force: The Far East Prisoners of War*, Grantham 2002; Fred Woodgate, *Lion and Swans*, Collaroy Beach, 1992.

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## **SOCIETY NOTICES**

### **Society Conference, 7-8 September 2012, Canberra**

Queensland Branch President John Meyers sent this informal report on the Conference:

About 30 members attended the two-day conference, the representation being four from Queensland, one from WA, none from SA, none from Geelong, none from Tasmania, a couple from Victoria and most of the remainder from Canberra. These figures are only approximate. The conference was run by ACT President Ian Stagoll, and a vote of thanks goes to him for his efforts in making it all happen.

The conference was opened by the Society's Patron, Air Marshal Barry Gration AO AFC (retd). Over the two days there were a number of very good papers presented. Dale Kerwin presented one on black trackers who served in the Boer War 1899-1902. Aaron Pegram, who works at the AWM, presented one on German Intelligence interrogating POWs during WW1. One of the papers that created a lot of interest was by John Hunt on two wartime tragedies on Christmas Island. How many of us knew that Christmas Island was held by the Japanese during WW2? All in all there were about 16 papers presented on various subjects.

A short meeting was held by Federal President Rohan Goyne supported by Nigel Webster after the finish of presentations on the Saturday afternoon. The Federal Council still does not have a Secretary and the Treasurer is outgoing; nor is there a membership officer. Rohan advises that he is looking after all these portfolios. Nigel Webster (the Qld rep on Fed Council) is currently putting together a discussion paper on the possibility of the Council being formed using State Presidents or representatives as members and possibly having a meeting every two months using a phone linkup. This method is being used by many organisations nowadays and is worthy of consideration.

*[The editor extends his thanks to John for this report, and looks forward to receiving conference papers for publication in future issues of the Journal.]*

### **Victorian Branch**

Members are advised that there have been changes to the office-bearers in the Victorian Branch, and to consult page 64 of the Journal for details.

### **Request for Information on Mrs 'Lores' Bonney's Flights**

Corresponding member Kristen Alexander has been asked by the National Library of Australia to write an account of Mrs Harry 'Lores' Bonney for their Collection Highlights series. It will focus on items held in the Library's collection, particularly Mrs Bonney's 1933 and 1937 flight diaries. It is scheduled for publication in early 2015. If members have any memories of Mrs Bonney, Kristen would be very interested in hearing from them. Contact details: alexfax@alexanderfaxbooksellers.com.au, PO Box 746, Mawson, ACT 2607.

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## OPERATION OPOSSUM: THE RAIDING PARTY TO RESCUE THE SULTAN OF TERNATE, 1945

Kevin Smith<sup>1</sup>

The obscurely named Australian Services Reconnaissance Department (SRD) was asked in February 1945 by the Netherlands Indies Civil Administration (NICA) to conduct an operation to extract the Sultan of Ternate, his family and a group of close supporters from Japanese detention. The operation was developed upon the basis of planning already under way for the rescue of an Australian Spitfire pilot reported to be held in historic Fort Oranje on the east coast of the island of Ternate. He had been shot down south of Ternate, rescued by friendly natives, but a neighbouring pro-Japanese kampong betrayed his presence. After his capture he was incarcerated in the fort and was said to be well treated at first. However, he was later reported by NICA agents to have been tortured and removed from Ternate. However, the operation was not mounted to rescue this pilot.

The Z Special Unit operatives of SRD chosen for this incursion were assembled on Raou Island close to Morotai, with a company of Dutch East Indies troops camped nearby. Morotai was the newly established base for First Australian Corps AIF. According to Gordon Philpott who was one of those chosen for the operation, ‘There were still thousands of well-armed Japanese troops in the vicinity, just beyond the perimeter of the Morotai base. It was not uncommon for the Australians to find starving enemy soldiers scavenging around our mess hut in the dead of night.’<sup>2</sup> Members of a Z Special operation were always carefully selected for their special skills and experience appropriate to their mission, and for their ability to work smoothly together. Philpott stated, ‘We were sifted out pretty well and were returned to our units if we didn’t show clear signs of being compatible and competent. We had to be compatible with each other if chosen for a raiding party.’

Sultan Iskander Mohd. Jabir Syah, under Japanese domination on his island of Ternate since 1942,<sup>3</sup> had become fearful for his personal safety and that of his family. He had secretly sent several intensely loyal Ternatans by prahu to the AIF headquarters on Morotai,<sup>4</sup> about 200 kilometres north of Ternate, to appeal for rescue. This appeal was strongly supported by the Dutch who were the pre-war colonial rulers of the Netherlands East Indies (now Indonesia). Confidential negotiations for an armed raid were conducted with the Chief of Hiri Island, a man utterly devoted to his Sultan. Hiri is a smaller island no more than two kilometres north of Ternate.

The Australian commandoes of Z Special Unit and the Dutch officers designated to carry out the armed rescue constituted SRD’s Operation Opossum. The commander of the operation was Capt Kroll who was accompanied by Maj Hardwick, Lieut Brunnings and a competent

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<sup>1</sup> Dr Kevin Smith OAM has published three books and several articles about Australian prisoners of war in Borneo. He enlisted in the Australian Regular Army in 1951 and trained with Queenslanders at Ennogera.

<sup>2</sup> Much of this essay is based upon an interview on 8 February 2012 with former Z Special commando Gordon Philpott, the only member of the operation still alive, and upon the autobiography of Z Special commando Walter O’Donnell.

<sup>3</sup> Ternate just off the west coast of Halmahera is one of the Maluku Islands (formerly known as the Moluccas) of Indonesia.

<sup>4</sup> *Prahu* is a basically generic term used for small native sea-going craft, usually paddled although quite frequently fitted with a small sail. *Parang* is a short-handled, sharp-bladed personal weapon of natives of the islands in the Philippines/Indonesian archipelagos.

Timorese corporal of the Netherlands East Indies Army.<sup>5</sup> The commando operatives of Z Unit, led by Lieut Bosworth, were WO2 Perry, Sgt Bennett, Sgt Coghlan, Cpl Philpott, Cpl Kearns, Signaller O'Donnell and Pte Higginbotham. When Bosworth conducted an aerial recce of the area on 22 March, the aircraft was fired on north of Ternate town, probably by a concealed light machine gun. In the week before Operation Opossum a US Naval Air Patrol had bombed and strafed two large luggers on the beach south of Ternate town. The area into which the raiding party was venturing was certainly no quiet tropical backwater.

This raiding party left Morotai by two American-crewed fast and comfortable PT boats at 1730hrs on the evening of 8 April 1945 and landed that night at 2345hrs on the north coast of Hiri Island. Gordon Philpott recalls that they were wearing jungle greens and American fatigue caps, but that contrary to what many in Z Special were wearing in those days, his group wore tan Australian army boots rather than American boots and gaiters.<sup>6</sup> The party was carrying twenty half-sovereigns, fifty 100-cent pieces and fifty 50-cent pieces to use as emergency escape money. They had been advised during briefing that the capture of documents would be considered far more useful than the taking of prisoners. Overnight they camped in the Kampong Saki Mahada, and a messenger had immediately left with a letter to the Sultan on Ternate Island.

Next morning there was fine weather as most members of the party, including Philpott, walked across steep coastal hills to Togolobe, a kampong on the southern coast of Hiri, and then proceeded on to Kampong Tafraka which was notably disloyal to their Sultan. There they met armed natives holding nine pro-Japanese traitors. An Ambonese policeman had to be shot when he resisted arrest, while another escaped to Ternate. It is probable that this native was the collaborator who warned the enemy of the raiding party's presence on Hiri Island, and who accompanied the enemy troops who came across to Hiri from Ternate two days later. The raiding party arrested the others and returned to Togolobe. Meanwhile Bennett, Coghlan and O'Donnell, travelling from Saki by prahu, had arrived at Togolobe at 1230hrs.

Brief personal details of each member of Opossum give an impression of the backgrounds and some later activities showing the calibre of members of this raiding party.

**Capt Kroll**, a member of the Netherlands East Indies Field Intelligence Service, was designated as commander of the mission. He was authorised to commence a guerilla-protected intelligence system in the Sangihe Islands with assistance from SRD.<sup>7</sup>

**Lieut George Bosworth** (AK52),<sup>8</sup> WX16007, leader of the members of Z, was a West Australian born in 1917, who had enlisted in the AIF in Perth on 8 August 1941. He had been recruited into Z Special from the 2/10<sup>th</sup> Armoured Regiment in November 1944, following the disbandment of that unit.

**Maj Richard Hardwick**, VX151550. Although he worked closely with Z Special his records show that he was not enlisted into that Unit until 14 July 1945. Born in England in 1880, he had been a planter who had spent many years in Borneo. He was the oldest member of the Opossum party, fluent in Dutch and an intelligence officer working with the Netherlands East Indies Field Intelligence Service (NEFIS). Philpott described him as 'A Pommy Colonel who

<sup>5</sup> N. Smith, *They Came Unseen*, Mostly Unsung, Gardenvale Vic, 2010, p. 78

<sup>6</sup> Gordon Philpott, interview with author, 8 February 2012.

<sup>7</sup> National Archives of Australia, Series A3269, Item B5/B, p.21

<sup>8</sup> AK numbers were usually allocated to members of Z Special for their coded communications, for example: AK: Operatives; AKV: Camp Instructional Staff; AKS: Signallers; AKO: Ordnance Personnel



wasn't in charge of any of the Z Unit blokes.'<sup>9</sup> O'Donnell further explained, 'He wore no badges of rank while with us and I don't recall us giving him the extra respect that the rank would demand.'<sup>10</sup> Previous to Opossum Hardwick had served on Operation Giraffe 1 to recruit local boat-builders from Tahoelandang Island near Sulawesi in mid-March 1945. After the Opossum mission he was attached in early June 1945 to HQ 9<sup>th</sup> Division AIF on Labuan Island for short-term sorties as a member of a Special Tasks Detachment for SRD liaison and interpreter duties. He had further service in June with the two-day Operation Colt to capture a *Kempeitai* officer at Sipitang on Brunei Bay. This was immediately followed a week later by Operation Foal, to contact an Indian informant at Membakut near Bongawan on Kimanis Bay on the west coast of Borneo, and to capture enemy soldiers.

**Lieut J. Brunnings**, an Intelligence Officer with NICA, had previous service with Operations Giraffe 1 alongside Maj Hardwick, and in late March on Giraffe 2, gathering intelligence on Majoe Island. He carried carbines to arm seventy guerillas on Hiri Island during Opossum. After Opossum he was on Operation Finch 1 in July 1945 to gather intelligence on small islands west of Halmahera Island, travelling by American PT boat. Then he was on Operation Swift, essentially a NICA operation to gather intelligence in the Loloda Islands, which involved several Z Special men including Gordon Philpott.

**WO 2 Dick Perry** (AK 169), VX4918, had enlisted in the AIF at Ballarat in Victoria. He had previous service in the Middle East with the 2/8<sup>th</sup> Bn and in Darwin during the 1942 Japanese air attacks. His later Z Special service following Opossum included Operation Giraffe 3, inserted by HMAS *Black Snake* in late April 1945 onto Majoe and Tidore islands,<sup>11</sup> where they gave medical assistance to the islanders and collected a prahu. Tidore is somewhat larger than Ternate but similar in its conical profile. This was followed immediately by Operation Stork, also from HMAS *Black Snake*, to Majoe Island to further encourage local rapport and to examine native vessels. On Semut 3 in late May 1945 he was part of a large party to develop local resistance activities among Iban tribesmen in the Rajang River basin of Sarawak.

**Sgt Ray Bennett** (AKS 69), SX23876, was a South Australian from Norwood. He was recruited into Z Special in early 1944 as a greatly experienced signaller from 2/1<sup>st</sup> Air Support Control. He had been in Darwin during the 1942 bombing raids, and his Pacific area service included the Admiralty Islands and Hollandia prior to his Z Special service. Following Opossum he went into Belawit in Sarawak on Semut 1 in June 1945.

**Sgt D.T. Coghlan** (AKV 276), VX8981, was a Victorian who had served with 2/8<sup>th</sup> Field Company Engineers in the Middle East and in the South-West Pacific Area. On Operation Opossum, Philpott explained that Coghlan's special duty was as a mechanic for their outboard motors.

**Cpl Gordon Philpott** (AKO 394), NX144227, from Parramatta and born in 1923, was the youngest Australian on Opossum. He enlisted in the AIF on 16 September 1942 and had served 21 months in Papua New Guinea with the 4<sup>th</sup> Advanced Ordnance Depot prior to joining Z Special Unit. At Milne Bay, Lae and Buna he had responsibility for supplies of spare parts for weapons. Following his service on Opossum, Philpott was selected for several other operations, becoming a very widely-experienced operative: Swift, a NICA mission aboard HMAS *Black Snake* to the Loloda Islands in May 1945 to gather general intelligence;

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<sup>9</sup> Correspondence to the author from Craig Brown (Zed Media), citing his January 2011 interview with Gordon Philpott.

<sup>10</sup> Walter O'Donnell, *My Autobiography*, 2000 (a memoir for his family made available to the author), p.58.

<sup>11</sup> HMAS *Black Snake* was one of several Snake Class boats constructed in Australia to look like vessels commonly seen in South-East Asian waters. *Black Snake* was 20 metres in length.

Raven in early June to discover the fate of US aircrew forced down in the Rando area of western Sulawesi; Magpie 1 in early July to develop an intelligence network on several islands including Tidore and Majoe; Finch 1 immediately following Magpie 1, travelling by American PT boats to gather intelligence from several of the smaller islands west of Halmahera Island; Semut 3 on which Ray Bennett was also serving, for which he was a reinforcement in the Rajang River area of Sarawak, being inserted by Catalina aircraft. 'We had to make a perilous landing as we manoeuvred to avoid large pieces of flood debris floating down the river,' recalled Philpott.<sup>12</sup>

**Cpl John Kearns** (AK 131), NX109144, was born in Glasgow, Scotland in 1921. He was living in Bankstown NSW when he enlisted in the AIF on 7 August 1942. He later served on in the postwar Australian Regular Army.

**Signaller Walter O'Donnell** (AKS 72), WX28651, was born in 1915 and enlisted in the AIF as a qualified signaller on 10 August 1942 at Rottnest Island WA while serving in a militia fortress company. Later, in the 10<sup>th</sup> Field Regiment he handled radio communications for his commanding officer. That unit then travelled to its home state, Victoria, to be based at Bonegilla. From there O'Donnell was selected into Z Special. On Fraser Island, 'The radio equipment was new to me and we had to learn ciphers, train with arms we had never used, language, colloquial Malay ... and some things I have no doubt forgotten'.<sup>13</sup> On Morotai he was known to locals as 'Tuan Radio' because of his language skills. After Opossum he served on Operations Crane 1 on 14/15 May 1945 gathering intelligence about downed airmen on Togian Island, and a similar mission Crane 2 ten days later on Oena Oena.

**Pte Robert Higginbotham** (AK 189), NX36783, from Northcote, Victoria, born in 1919, had enlisted in the AIF on 15 July 1940. He was recruited into Z Special Unit from the Jungle Warfare Training Centre at Canungra in August 1944.

Hiri is a well-populated small volcanic island about three kilometres wide. Its solitary volcano 630 metres high and rising steeply from its shoreline is not particularly active. This island was not occupied by any Japanese troops. On Ternate Island, Ternate town on the east coast was the capital of the Molucca Islands, as well as being an administrative and commercial centre for the Halmahera group of islands. The Sultan's palace, close to the mosque, was an imposing building.<sup>14</sup> The estimated population was 9,000, but intelligence to NICA from the Sultan indicated that virtually the entire native population had left the town.<sup>15</sup> There were many villages and separate farmhouses on the well-watered island, with its annual rainfall of 80 to 100 inches. The garrison on Ternate at the time of the Opossum operation was reported to be about 88, mainly Japanese marines with a few army.<sup>16</sup> Ternate's single volcano, Mount Gamalama, is about 1,715m high, its slopes especially on the south and south east sides bright green with the cultivation of spices. Prior to Operation Opossum, Mt Gamalama had most recently erupted in 1938.<sup>17</sup> The island was densely wooded.

The Sultan was being detained under house arrest high on the upper slopes of Mt Gamalama, watched closely by natives in the pay of the Japanese. Two small pre-war colonies of Japanese on Ternate probably accounted for noticeable pro-Japanese sympathies among

<sup>12</sup> Philpott, interview with author, 8 February 2012.

<sup>13</sup> O'Donnell, op.cit, p.54.

<sup>14</sup> NAA Series A3269, Item B5/A, p.93.

<sup>15</sup> NAA Series A3269, Item B5/A, p.83.

<sup>16</sup> NAA Series A3269, Item B5/A, p.63, Signal 23/3/45.

<sup>17</sup> Its next eruption would be in 1962, and its most recent was in December 2011. Mt Gamalama is recognised as one of Indonesia's more active volcanoes, but it was noticeably quiet during the World War 2 years.

many of the Ternate islanders. Upon receiving the anticipated note written in Dutch,<sup>18</sup> sent clandestinely by Capt Kroll, the Sultan sent back a message that he would try to come out but was surrounded by traitors. The messenger arrived back on Hiri at about 1930hrs on 9 April, and five large prahus with carefully chosen native crews then set out overnight from Togolobe for the south-east coast of Ternate.<sup>19</sup>

Sultan Jabir and his party eluded their watchers to descend for six hours during the night of 9 April,<sup>20</sup> along well-used trails, down the steep slopes and through sweet-smelling and sometimes quite ancient groves of cloves and nutmeg. The royal family came down to the pre-arranged rendezvous at a coastal kampong named Kulaba. There the prahus from Hiri were awaiting them and they quickly crossed to the smaller island. About 0800hrs on 10 April Hardwick, Perry, Higginbotham and a native went to a house atop the mountain on Hiri where a traitor had lived, in order to search for documents. When they returned to Togolobe they were accompanied by four Sangirese who had been waiting in the house,<sup>21</sup> and they found that the Sultan had already arrived at Togolobe at 1000hrs during a rainstorm. The collected documents were in due course forwarded by Hardwick to NEFIS in Brisbane. Hardwick's other duties during this operation were as interpreter and for the close protection of the Sultan and his family.

Sultan Jabir's landing at Togolobe was described by Maj Hardwick as 'one of the most dramatic scenes I have ever witnessed in these lands'.<sup>22</sup> The Ternate Sultanate provided a line of Islamic island rulers going back for eight centuries, and there was great excitement on Hiri as word spread from one loyal kampong to the next that their Sultan and his family were free. Elders came forward to kiss his feet, and all of his subjects squatted briefly on one knee with hands pressed to their faces in a traditional gesture of loyal homage. Hardwick found the Sultan to be a man of considerable culture, able to speak French, English, Dutch and all of the dialects of the Halmahera Islands. Among the members of Operation Opossum it was the two Dutch officers and Hardwick who were responsible for liaison with the villagers and the Sultan's party. Philpott remarked during his 2012 interview that 'The Aussies tended to have little to do with the Dutch officers'. Hardwick described a local bodyguard of natives dressed in white and armed with parangs which was quickly assembled to provide protection for the Sultan and his party as they rested overnight at Togolobe on 10 April.<sup>23</sup>

At 0200hrs on 11 April Cpl Kearns, serving Opossum as their medical orderly, while on vigilant guard duty saw lights moving on the northern shores of Ternate. Then at dawn a contingent of Japanese soldiers in two prahus pushed off from Ternate to cross to Hiri. At 0700hrs Hiri natives rushed to tell Bosworth's raiding party that nine of the enemy were about to land on the nearby southern tip of Hiri. Lieut Bosworth dashed just over a kilometre

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<sup>18</sup> The note was enclosed in a small glass phial to be swallowed by the native messenger if he was likely to be caught.

<sup>19</sup> NAA Series A3269, Item B5/A.

<sup>20</sup> The group included his ten-year-old son and heir Mudaffer Syah who succeeded to the Sultanate in due course. Sixty-five years after his adventurous escape he told the story to journalist Tom Allard of the *Sydney Morning Herald* and it was published on Anzac Day 2010. The author is grateful to his friend Douglas Herps, who served on the final Z Special operation (AGAS 5) in Sabah, North Borneo, for drawing his attention to Allard's article.

<sup>21</sup> Sangihe Island is part of the Talaud Archipelago north of Halmahera Island.

<sup>22</sup> G.B. Courtney, *Silent Feet*, Slouch Hat Publications, Brunswick Vic, 1993, p.187. Hardwick's article on the operation quoted by Courtney was published in *The Straits Times* on 14 August 1947 and has proved useful for some of the background material of this article.

<sup>23</sup> Courtney, *op cit*, p.187.

down to the beach with his men and commenced firing his Austen sub-machine gun at the Japanese whose first prahu was already on the beach. Some of the natives, newly armed with carbines by Lieut Brunnings, but far from proficient in their use, were starting to engage the Japanese troops not yet ashore, while others wielding their parangs had moved forward to attack the Japanese hand-to-hand at the water's edge. Bosworth was shot in the head and killed by a Japanese he had wounded and whom, having rolled behind the roots of a big tree, he attempted to take prisoner. At this point WO2 Perry assumed command, displaying notable leadership and courage. Two of their enemy were killed on shore by the men of Z Special, while one Japanese dashed off into the bush. The other six, fleeing the parangs, tried to swim back to Ternate and were shot by subjects of the Sultan who pursued them in prahus, the last one as he reached the shallow off-shore waters of Ternate.

Philpott was a little slow initially in reaching the shoreline scene of combat, but acted immediately when Perry ordered the Bren gun to open fire on the second prahu that had arrived.<sup>24</sup> The two paddlers were killed but, while Philpott's fire was effective, a Japanese officer survived to paddle his bullet-riddled prahu the short distance towards Togolobe, watched cautiously by the Australian commandos and the freshly armed locals. Upon being ordered to surrender, this enemy officer stood up with a visible hand grenade and was immediately shot. His kit in the prahu was found to be 'beautifully washed and ironed and marked with the name S. Ohashi. I suspect he was about to give himself up to us'.<sup>25</sup> Higginbotham then stripped off and, despite Perry's warning not to go, impetuously swam out to the first prahu which had drifted off the beach in order to secure it. As he clambered aboard he was shot by an armed native who mistook him for one of the enemy. He died shortly afterwards.

It was found that the enemy marines had been armed with one Nambu light machine gun and many rifles. The officer, a marine sub-lieutenant, from whose body an amount of intelligence material was collected, had a short-barrelled Luger pistol and a small Steyr automatic, both of which were retained by members of the raiding party. During the operation a great deal of intelligence was gathered including details of enemy defences, wireless stations, transport, food supplies and personnel. However, the recently armed locals were considered by O'Donnell to be somewhat trigger-happy and this was one reason no enemy were taken for interrogation. Morale of Japanese officers and the native population was reported to be very low. The Japanese Civil Governor was considered locally to be a very humane gentleman who had sought to have the Australian airman better treated as a prisoner.<sup>26</sup> A local civilian who had come across with the Japanese was meanwhile taken before the Sultan and tried for assisting the enemy. Given the death penalty, he was taken a short distance and shot.<sup>27</sup>

Although a heavy storm and surrounding trees made communication to Morotai difficult with their portable ATR4 transceiver radio,<sup>28</sup> O'Donnell was able to get a message out at 0825hrs requesting a Catalina aircraft and PT boats for urgent evacuation, plus air cover. No Catalina was available. Three Spitfires arrived at 1000hrs and attacked several prahus loaded with

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<sup>24</sup> Philpott was no.1 on the Bren with Higginbotham as his no.2.

<sup>25</sup> O'Donnell, op cit, p.62.

<sup>26</sup> NAA Series A3269, Item B5/A, p.52.

<sup>27</sup> O'Donnell, op. cit, p.62.

<sup>28</sup> Lindsay Cottee who had served for many months on Operation Python south of Sandakan in 1943-44 provided the author with *Notes on Technical Details*: 'The ATR 4A had an output of 2 watts, a crystal-controlled frequency range of 3.5 to 7.0 mcs, and operated from a composite dry battery. It had no variable BFO control and the oscillator tended to drift badly. Field modifications were made to correct this drift and hold the note steady. Each set with spares weighed about 9 kgs carried in four containers.'

Japanese that were leaving Ternate. At 1115hrs two PT boats arrived to evacuate to Morotai the Opossum armed party and its dead, the Sultan and his family and fifteen loyal natives. They arrived back at Morotai at 1650hrs. The unnamed Timorese corporal agreed to remain on Hiri to train guerilla fighters armed with their new carbines and the captured Japanese weapons. These guerillas two months later landed on Ternate and killed many Japanese with no casualties among themselves.

A letter to Col Chapman Walker of SRD written on 15 April 1945, only four days after the operation ended, by Ch. O. van der Plas,<sup>29</sup> expressed on behalf of Dr van Mook, Governor General of the Netherlands East Indies in exile, the appreciation of the Netherlands Indies Government for the liberation of the highly regarded Sultan, and personal appreciation for the joint undertaking which had cost the lives of two good officers.<sup>30</sup> On 21 April Maj Anthony Gluth (AK 16), VX4802, with two other ranks departed from Morotai on a one-day mission in two PT boats, described as a top secret training exercise. They were escorts for a NICA intelligence officer, probably Brunnings, who was going to contact natives on Hiri. The intelligence officer learned that the Japanese had reinforced Ternate with up to 300 troops. They had attempted to attack Hiri, but all attacks had been driven off by the now well-armed natives. Upon departure, Gluth's party had raked the shore of Ternate with their weapons.<sup>31</sup>

The Sultan was brought to Australia with his family where they found refuge for the remaining few months of the war. Living at Wacol in outer Brisbane, the Sultan became involved in postwar planning with the Netherlands Indies Civil Administration which had its wartime headquarters at Wacol's Camp Columbia. Dutch plans for the Sultan to play a major role in the postwar future of the Netherlands East Indies were foiled by revolutionary chaos and the declaration of President Sukarno's Indonesian Republic. The hereditary Sultanate continues to this day as a feature of the cultural and ceremonial life on Ternate Island.<sup>32</sup>

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### The Society's Website <http://www.mhsa.org.au>

The Society's website offers information about Society and Branch activities as well as links to other military organisations. There is a Members' Notices page where members can post military-related notice regarding events or research assistance, or anything military! Please contact the webmaster to add notices or links shaw@iinet.net.au.

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<sup>29</sup> Deputy to the Governor General.

<sup>30</sup> NAA Series A3269, Item B5/B, p.24.

<sup>31</sup> NAA Series A3269, Item B5/B, p.55.

<sup>32</sup> While finishing this essay, the author was fortunate to see on SBS television the second episode of *The Spice Trail with Kate Humble: Nutmeg and Cloves* (Lion TV, Scotland) which devoted perhaps twenty minutes to excellent visual coverage of Ternate Island, including its cloves industry and the trails on Mt Gamalama, giving that impression of terrain which is so important for any writer on military history.

## **A COMMANDER IN THE WEST: LT COL W.B. ROBINSON**

**Michael Firth<sup>1</sup>**

Among the back row of headstones at the Perth War Cemetery there is one dedicated to a member of the Volunteer Defence Corps, a man who commanded the corps in Western Australia but died just before the end of World War Two. The grave belongs to W242801, Col W.B. Robinson DCM, ED, who passed away on 18 May 1945 and was buried with full military honours a few days later. Among the military personnel present at the funeral were representatives from all VDC units in the state with the music provided by a combined Western Command and VDC band.

Born Walter Barnett Robinson on 21 June 1893 in Parramatta, NSW, to Walter Charles and Annie Elizabeth Robinson, he moved with his family to Western Australia later that year. His father initially was the station-master at Bunbury until 1908, moving briefly to Fremantle before obtaining the position of District Superintendent at Geraldton. After World War One, his father returned to Bunbury to be the railways Superintendent, the founding President of the Bunbury RSL and a prominent member of the local community.

Young Walter joined the militia No.8 half-company, Australian Corps of Signallers in 1910 and was later transferred to 86<sup>th</sup> Infantry Signallers, promoted to the rank of sergeant. In 1913 he was commissioned a 2<sup>nd</sup> lieutenant, 86<sup>th</sup> Infantry Bn (West Australian Rifles) but resigned his commission on the outbreak of war in 1914. At the time of his enlistment, Walter was an accountant, listing his address as the Railway Station, Geraldton, Western Australia. Walter was a single man, 21 years of age living in Fremantle, auditor and committee member for the Fremantle branch of the 'Young Liberals Society' which had been formed as a debating society for the young men of the local area.

His enlistment form showed Walter as a sergeant with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Australian Stationary Hospital, with his mother as his next of kin while his father had enlisted as a captain in the 10<sup>th</sup> Light Horse. Capt W.C. Robinson was the quartermaster of the 10<sup>th</sup> ALH and while the unit was fighting at Gallipoli, was made its adjutant before being wounded several times during the fighting at Russell's Top. Owing to his wounds Capt Robinson was returned to Australia in late 1915 before being discharged from service in February 1916 as permanently unfit. In the meantime Walter Barnett left Fremantle on the 14 December 1914 aboard the HMAT *Kyarra*, ship A55, heading to Egypt.

After a bout of measles in March, Sgt Robinson was assigned to one of the ships being used to transfer the wounded off the Gallipoli shores. During his time in Egypt, Walter corresponded with his friends back in Perth describing what he had experienced and seen. In June 1915, his friend W.R. Turner released one of his letters to a local paper which described Walter's experiences before and after the Australian landings at Gallipoli. The letter contained extracts from his diary covering the period 20 April to 6 May 1915 when he arrived

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Firth recently became a member of the WA branch of the MHSWA having a strong interest in military vehicles and Australian military history. He works as a volunteer at the Army Museum of WA and is currently working on a manuscript about the history of the Australian 8th Division, in the process of having printed a series of booklets on armoured vehicles and researching an article on the Australian Sentinel tank.

back in Egypt with the wounded. Walter described the horrifying conditions, the bombardments and the near misses when his ship was shelled, and he thought the Australians had 'made a grand name for themselves', with everyone a hero deserving a Victoria Cross. Later in August he was transferred to the 1<sup>st</sup> ASH at Mundos, Lemnos Island just off the Gallipoli peninsula. In March 1916 he was promoted to warrant officer and transferred to the 12<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance which by mid-1916 was serving in France.

For his good service, gallantry and example to other unit members during the battles of Pozieres, August 1916, WO Robinson was recommended for a Distinguished Conduct Medal, gazetted on 1 January 1917. Previously to this award, he had been Mentioned in Despatches. Six months after receiving the DCM, Walter contracted trench fever and was repatriated to England before returning to Australia in November 1917. He returned to live with his parents who had moved back to Bunbury, where he married his wife, Doris May. The engagement was announced in the local paper on 13 February 1918.

After World War One, Walter returned to being an accountant and re-joined the militia in October 1918 as a lieutenant with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn, 16<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, before being listed with the 44<sup>th</sup> Bn in July 1921. Walter remained the 44<sup>th</sup> Bn until 1932, rising through the ranks and becoming the commanding officer with the rank of lieutenant colonel. During 1927, on the occasion of the 44<sup>th</sup> Bn regimental ball, Sir Talbot Hobbs presented the then Maj W.B. Robinson with the Colonial Auxiliary Forces Long Servicer Medal for 20 years' continuous service. As its commander, Lt Col Robinson led the 44<sup>th</sup> Bn in several annual parades through Fremantle. On handing over command of the battalion, Walter was placed on the unattached list and then the Reserved Officers List.

Walter retained his links with the 44<sup>th</sup> Bn by being a member of the battalion's welfare committee. In 1938 he wrote to the North Fremantle council seeking financial help to provide comforts for the battalions members when they attended the annual camps, as most of its members resided in the council boundaries. Besides his participation in game and clay-pigeon shooting, Robinson attended numerous battalion rifle club shoots, regularly appearing in the top five scorers. During this time he was employed as a senior executive of the jam maker, H. Jones & Co. While on the reserve officers list, Walter was a founding member of the Fremantle Legacy Club serving, at different times, as its Vice-President, President and finally its honorary Auditor. In June 1939, while representing the legacy club, he attended the funeral of the well-respected Perth identity Rabbi D.I. Freedman, who was the Chaplain-Major of the AIF in Western Australia.

With the start of World War Two, the Australian military called up the militia to form the Garrison Battalions, with the 10<sup>th</sup> Gn Bn being formed in Western Australia on the 2 October 1939. Lt Col Walter Robinson was recalled to military service to command this battalion, forming his new unit from the military forces Class B Reserve. The Class B Reserve consisted of volunteers aged 45 to 60 years who had seen active service or served for at least three years in the peacetime military. The age limit was later changed to persons between 48 to 55 years. Recruiting was held at the Subiaco Drill Hall on Nicolson Road, with Robinson interviewing the volunteers before they progressed to their medical examinations. Once the volunteers had passed their examinations, they were sent to the Melville army camp for a fortnight's training. During the last days of the camp, Lt Col Robinson issued an invitation for the troops' relatives and friends to visit the camp on the last Sunday afternoon of training. During the afternoon, he and his wife provided refreshments for the battalion officers and their wives.

After the camp, Robinson led his troops in a march through Perth, with the salute taken by the Lt Governor, Sir James Mitchell. A couple of days later he visited the Swanbourne military camp which would later that year become the home of the 10<sup>th</sup> Gn Bn. About this time he approached the RSL to set up a welfare committee for his battalion, and over the next few months attended several private parties held to raise funds for the welfare committee.

In February 1940 he was awarded the Efficiency Decoration for his conduct and length of service with the Australian Military Forces, but this would not be presented to him by the Lt Governor until a ceremony held at Government House in March 1944. Robinson continued to work for the welfare of his troops by arranging group outings and interviewing all new recruits required to keep the battalion up to strength. In June 1940 he made a public request for the donation or loan of sheet band music as the battalion was forming its own band.

Robinson's command of the battalion had lasted for less than a year when in August 1940 he was made the commander of the newly formed 5<sup>th</sup> Garrison Brigade. The brigade included the 5<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Gn Bns as well as an additional metropolitan Garrison Company. Now with the rank of colonel, he spent the next couple of months touring country centres to recruit officers and personnel for the new garrison battalions. Before commencing this state-wide recruitment tour, Robinson organised a series of refresher courses for VDC units running from September to October 1940.

In his role as commander of the Garrison Brigade, Robinson reviewed garrison troops throughout the state, viewing their training and taking the salute at many local parades. While in Geraldton during May 1941, he made an address commenting on the troops' turnout and thanking the local ladies for organising the day's refreshments and entertainment. He went on to express the need for the community to support and cooperate with the local troops to help defend the local area. A major parade was held in Perth on Remembrance Day, 11 November 1941, with Lt Col Robinson taking the salute of the Garrison Brigade on the reviewing stand located at ANZAC House.

The next change in command occurred in September 1942 when Col Robinson was given command of the Volunteer Defence Corps (VDC) in Western Australia on the retirement of Brig Gen Bessell-Browne. At this time Walter Robinson had turned 49 and as with his previous commands, he made sure the troops under his command were well trained, maintained the high standard they had achieved, and were well looked after. At the start of October there was a retirement function for Brig-Gen Bessell-Browne at which Robinson toasted the retiring commander. He stood by Bessell-Browne's side a couple of weeks later when over 2400 members of the VDC marched through Perth. Also present was Prime Minister John Curtin as well as other members of his cabinet. At Christmas 1942, the engagement was announced between Olwyn Mary Hicks and Reginald Walter Robinson, a member of the Merchant Navy and the son of Col and Mrs Robinson.

By the middle of 1943 the role for some VDC members was changing and Col Robinson continued to stress its importance, requesting up to 2000 more members to help fill the increased number of defence roles being undertaken by the corps. Several metropolitan VDC units began taking over coastal defence roles by operation searchlights and heavy and light anti-aircraft batteries. At the start of July, Robinson took the salute for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary Parade of the VDC when various units marched through Perth. Beside him on the reviewing stand was Lt Gov Sir James Mitchell, the Honorary Colonel of the corps. Later in the same



month Col Robinson played the banjo in the concert band performing in a concert for the AIF held at the Capitol Theatre.

At the end of November 1943, Brig T.E. Weaver, Director of the VDC Land Forces, toured the VDC units in the state accompanied by Robinson, and Weaver commented afterwards he was very happy with the standard of training for all the VDC units in Western Australia. During the middle of the year the question was raised about compensation for injured or deceased members of the Corps, and Robinson was able to assure the Corps members they were covered under the Repatriation Act. Towards the middle of 1944, rumours occurred regarding the possible disbandment of the Corps. In a statement to its members, Col Robinson assured the troops the VDC would not be disbanded and that there was a slight change in the status of the members. The change in status saw 60% of the units remaining on full-time status, being mainly involved in coastal or fortress area defences. The rest would be on part-time status but would retain their arms and equipment. During this time Robinson toured the state reviewing units and finding the attendance at parades to be still at high levels. Regrettably in March 1945, Col Robinson's status was changed from full-time to part-time duty, while remaining as the commander of the VDC. He continued with his legacy work and representing the state on the Army Canteens Board.

Colonel Robinson's military career ended late at night on Friday, 18 May 1945, at the age of 52, when he died suddenly overnight in his East Fremantle home, after appearing to be in good health the day before at VDC headquarters. The funeral was held the next Monday and all members of the VDC who were not on duty were asked to attend but not in uniform. His pall-bearers included Col H.L. Herford (General Staff Western Command), Col I.E. Dunkley and six serving lieutenant colonels. The coffin-bears were all full-time duty NCOs from the VDC with the service conducted by Chaplain A.W. Curtis. Walter Robinson left behind a wife, a daughter and a son. He was succeeded as commander of the VDC in Western Australia by Lt Col R.W. Blair.

Walter Barnet Robinson had led an active life, spending most of it involved in the military service of Australia. He had risen through the ranks to command a brigade in the AMF, actively serving in two world wars. He was well liked and respected by the people he worked for, the men he served with and the men he commanded. Colonel Robinson served his country on the home front to the best of his ability, only to pass away while on active service just months before the end of World War Two.



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Information for this article was taken from Army Service Records, at [www.naa.gov.au](http://www.naa.gov.au), and from newspaper articles located on the *Trove Digitised Newspaper* site, at [www.nla.gov.au](http://www.nla.gov.au).