

Military Historical Society of Australia
Sabretache



Copyright © 1957-2019 Military Historical Society of Australia on behalf of the Society and its authors who retain copyright of all their published material and articles. All Rights Reserved.

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

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

www.mhsa.org.au

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

EDITORIAL

The information on the Australian Great War Association which appears in the Society Notices column of this issue reminds us that an interest in, and more to the point, an involvement with military history can take many forms. I think I've already mentioned in another editorial how my own fascination with the field over the (many!) years has led me into wargaming, model-making, reenacting, and even plinking away at the occasional target, as well as the writing and research that occupy much of my time now. And while I no longer take part in what might be regarded as the more physical aspects of military history, I'm well aware of how experiences with the actuality of dress, drill and equipment can lead to insights often unavailable through more sedentary methods of study. It's similar to the particularly acute understanding that theatre and film practitioners can acquire about dramatic texts that scholars sometimes lack.

This is not to imply that the Society's members are 'bookish' to the exclusion of other pursuits – far from it, in fact. In my case, collecting militaria is a passion which is likely to go with me to the grave (if not actually send me there), and I know from what I hear in meetings and in casual conversation that most members have more than one means of immersing themselves in the field. This is why it is important for the Society to develop and foster connections with other like-minded groups and institutions, which in turn may be one way of preserving the Society from decline and eventual extinction. Given the plethora of interests within the membership itself, there should be no real difficulty in creating and maintaining such links.

There is certainly plenty of interest in the wider community that merits tapping into; the trick is finding how. At a recent meeting of the South Australian branch there arose the usual, if understandable, concerns about the group's ageing membership and lack of new blood. This in turn gave rise to the standard knee-jerk comments about how unwilling younger people seem to be to get involved in and contribute to organisations. The response – from a regular contributor to this journal, it should be noted – was that on the contrary, the younger generations have their own ways of seeking and sharing knowledge, and that much of it involves online forums and blogs which are for the most part well subscribed to and very vibrant 'communities' in their own right. So perhaps the future of the Society and even of the journal lies in how we employ these media to maintain and broaden the very special community that the Society represents.

In the meantime, however, let's make the most of the means at our disposal to showcase the capabilities and expertise of our membership. In this issue you can enjoy some very meaty articles indeed, not least of which is the winner of this year's *Sabretache* Writer's Prize by one of our stalwarts, Kristen Alexander – you can read more about her award in the Society Notices. At the same time, and as always, I encourage you to make your own contribution, large or small; if you're only at the ideas stage, feel free to contact me for advice about how they might form the basis of an article. Happy writing!

Paul Skrebels

A BURNING LEGACY: THE 'BROKEN' 8TH DIVISION

Joseph Morgan¹

Introduction

The story of the 8th Division's campaigns in Malaya, Singapore and the islands to Australia's north remains largely forgotten today. Because the 8th never fought as a single entity, there is a lack of cohesive scholarship on the topic, and other events have captured the nation's imagination. But the division should form a significant part of the narrative of Australia's involvement in the Second World War, and its campaigns, although unsuccessful, should be considered alongside those fought in North Africa, New Guinea, Bougainville and Borneo. The Anzac legend is built upon the contraries of triumph and adversity; the men of 8th earned their place within it. Although history has condemned the 8th to a broken and unhappy existence, the light of their legacy continues to burn, beckoning Australians to remember.

Formation and training

The 8th Division was formed on 4 July 1940 at Victoria Barracks, Sydney. On 1 August, it relocated to the Roseberry Racecourse, and Maj Gen Vernon Sturdee, a regular officer, assumed command. With a strength of 20,000, its principle elements were three brigades – the 22nd, 23rd and 24th – each of three infantry battalions. These were supported by the 2/4th Machine Gun Battalion, the 2/4th Pioneer Battalion and the 2/4th Anti-Tank Regiment, and various engineer, signals and logistics units, and a divisional cavalry regiment that was later transferred to the 9th Division.²

The 22nd Brigade, under Brig Harold Taylor, consisted of the 2/18th, 2/19th and 2/20th Battalions and the 18-pounders of the 2/10th Field Regiment, and was formed at Wallgrove and Ingleburn from New South Welshmen. Brig Edmund Lind's 23rd Brigade was raised at Seymour and Bonegilla; supported by the 2/14th Field Regiment, the 2/21st and 2/22nd Battalions comprised Victorians, while the 2/40th was drawn from Tasmania. The division's third brigade, the 24th, was formed from Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia, which each provided a battalion. Under Brig Eric Plant, its infantry battalions – the 2/25th, 2/28th and 2/43rd – completed their training at Enoggera.³ In late 1940, they were transferred to the 9th Division and replaced by the 27th Brigade. Consisting of the 2/26th, the 2/29th and the 2/30th Battalions, and the mortar-equipped 2/15th Field Regiment,⁴ the 27th was drawn from Queensland, Victoria and New South Wales, and despite being headquartered in Sydney, it did not concentrate until February 1941.⁵

In September 1940, Maj Gen Gordon Bennett, an outspoken Militia officer with an antipathy towards professional soldiers, replaced Sturdee as divisional commander.⁶ A Gallipoli and Western Front veteran, he had been the youngest brigadier general in the AIF.⁷ Although

¹ Joseph Morgan is an Army officer currently posted to Adelaide. He holds a Bachelor of Justice and a Graduate Diploma of Education, and a Masters in International Relations. His interest in researching military history developed from a desire to learn more about his grandfather's service during the Second World War. He hopes to one day write a full history of the 8th Division.

² Wigmore 1957, pp. 28-29 & 86

³ Wigmore 1957, pp. 29-31

⁴ Cody 1997, p. 3; Legg 1965, p. 178

⁵ Wigmore 1957, pp. 33-35 & 83; Christie 1983, p. 20

⁶ Wigmore 1957, pp. 32-34

⁷ Legg 1965, p. 140

Bennett's appointment made sense given his seniority, many questioned his fitness and tactical proficiency.⁸ But Bennett had a way of polarising people and there were many who lionised him, especially his soldiers.⁹

Like Bennett, all of the division's brigade commanders were part-time soldiers, and only one of its infantry battalions, the 2/26th,¹⁰ was commanded by a regular. Nevertheless, the 8th Division actually had more regular officers than the 6th,¹¹ and it had a considerable amount of experience; all but one battalion commander had seen combat before. In raising their battalions, each commander was given the authority to select his own senior officers. The majority of NCOs also came from the Militia, although their numbers were bolstered by new recruits identified as suitable during basic training.¹²

The 8th had stricter age limits than the 6th or 7th Divisions and, officially, the new recruits were between 20 and 35, although many lied about their age, including one as young as 14 and another, a veteran of Sudan, who was at least 70.¹³ About a third were married,¹⁴ and all elements of society were represented with appointments made on ability rather than station.¹⁵ Although most had never served before, there were notable exceptions: Walter Brown, serving in the 2/15th Field Regiment, was a Victoria Cross recipient,¹⁶ while his commanding officer, John Wright, had served in the Australian Flying Corps.¹⁷ Some joined for employment, but mainly they were drawn by a sense of duty, and a desire to be a part of the Anzac legend.¹⁸ Some, like the 2/18th Bn's Lt Iven Mackey, son of the GOC 6th Division, had a lot to live up to. So too Lt Jack Varley of the 2/19th, whose father commanded the 2/18th; there were many other examples of fathers and sons, as well as brothers and cousins.¹⁹

Following enlistment, the 22nd Bde's recruits concentrated at Wallgrove where they were drilled by Militia NCOs. Training was rudimentary initially, but eventually weapons arrived and individual 'bull ring' training was undertaken. Later, the brigade moved to Ingleburn where collective training under AIF NCOs began, progressing from route marches to field training and live fire exercises, including a manoeuvre that was supported by a small number of armoured vehicles. Another move followed, this time to Bathurst, where the battalions received Bren machine-guns and motor transport, including carriers, and took part in brigade-level exercises.²⁰

The 23rd Bde underwent a similar evolution at Seymour and Bonegilla, but it marched a different road to war than the 22nd. In April 1941, the brigade was sent to Darwin to bolster the garrison there. A microcosm of the 8th Division's experience, it was destined to be split up when it was deployed with elements being dispatched to defend three different locations –

⁸ Thompson 2008, p. 221

⁹ Legg 1965, p. 276

¹⁰ Wigmore 1957, p. 35

¹¹ Grey 2008, p. 152

¹² Wigmore 1957, pp. 29-36; Uhr 1998, p. 19

¹³ Grey 2008, p. 147; Mant 1944, p. 58; Uhr 1998, p. 23

¹⁴ Cody 1997, p. 4; Uhr 1998, p. 18

¹⁵ Uhr 1998, pp. 2 & 19; Mant 1944, pp. 8, 38 & 53

¹⁶ White 1979, pp. 446-447

¹⁷ Wigmore 1957, p. 322

¹⁸ Mant 1944, p. 53; Cody 1997, p. 4; Johnston 1996.

¹⁹ Ramsey 2007, p. 29; Uhr 1998, p. 19

²⁰ Mant 1944, pp. 34-65; Wigmore 1957, p. 52

Rabaul, Ambon and Timor – as the tide of Japanese conquest swept south.²¹

Garrison duties in Malaya

Throughout their formation, the 22nd had trained to fight in the Middle East,²² but high-level strategic decisions ultimately changed this.²³ In mid-1940, tension with Japan was simmering and Britain asked Australia to contribute to Singapore's garrison.²⁴ In December the Australian government agreed to dispatch the 8th Division's headquarters and the 5,850-strong partly-trained 22nd Bde Group – three battalions of infantry plus artillery, engineers and other support units – after receiving assurances they would be relieved after a couple of months.²⁵ Arriving in mid-February 1941, the troops moved to Malacca and Port Dickson, where they began a year of grinding garrison duty.²⁶

It was a role to which Australian troops were unaccustomed and frustrations ran high.²⁷ Bennett set up his headquarters in Kuala Lumpur and the division assumed a mobile command reserve role. Although under the command of Lt Gen Arthur Percival, GOC Malaya, Bennett liaised directly with Army Headquarters in Melbourne, and he exercised this on a number of occasions to protect his troops. It was an unhappy situation and caused considerable tension between Bennett and Percival; Bennett's relationship with his brigade commander, Taylor, was also strained by the arrangement. Taylor was as outspoken as Bennett and with only one brigade in country, Bennett became involved more directly in Taylor's command than normal.²⁸

The promised relief did not eventuate and, as fears of Japanese designs grew, in mid-August Brig Duncan Maxwell's 27th Bde Group was sent to reinforce the 22nd.²⁹ After concentrating at Bathurst in February 1941, the 27th had endured a Central Tablelands winter and was ill-prepared for service in the tropics.³⁰ His force having doubled, Bennett moved his headquarters to Johore Bahru as the 8th was transferred east: the 27th Bde concentrated around Jemaluang, while the 22nd constructed coastal defences around Endau and Mersing.³¹

With the help of Major Charles Anderson, a veteran of Africa in the First World War, Bennett devised his own training. Focusing upon acclimatisation, he brought in Sakai tribesmen to teach the troops how to live in the jungle.³² Bennett drilled his men hard and although training was hampered by heat illness, skin diseases and other tropical ailments, these were overcome by divisional medical staff. By the time the 8th went into action they were arguably the best trained troops in Malaya and those 'most feared and respected by the Japanese'.³³

Bennett pressed for his third brigade to be dispatched, but the government denied his request.

²¹ Wigmore 1957, pp. 31, 83 & 394; Thompson 2008, p. 71

²² Mant 1944, p. 55

²³ Keogh 1965, p. 64

²⁴ Thompson 2008, p. 61

²⁵ Wigmore 1957, p. 52; Uhr 1998, p. xii

²⁶ Mant 1944, p. 74

²⁷ Hall 1983, p. 34; Uhr 1998, p. 3

²⁸ Hall 1983, pp. 28-31

²⁹ Thompson 2005, p. 92; Thompson 2008, p. 220

³⁰ Christie 1983, pp. 20-27

³¹ Legg 1965, p. 183; Uhr 1998, pp. 8-15

³² Uhr 1998, pp. 15-16

³³ Hall 1983, pp. 30-32; Legg 1965, p. 172

Nevertheless, by October the AIF in Malaya had grown to 15,000 personnel and an administrative headquarters was set up. Blamey, the Australian Commander-in-Chief, pushed for the division to be sent to the Middle East, and in December, Bennett undertook a quick tour there, although he remained insistent that the 8th Division would soon be in action.³⁴

The Malayan Campaign

Early on 8 December, while Bennett was en route, the Japanese landed at Kota Bahru, on the north-eastern coast of Malaya near the Thai border, and forced their way inland towards the nearby airfield. Further landings were made at Singora and Patani in Thailand.³⁵ The Australians, in Johore, were initially out of the fighting, as the Japanese struck south in two main drives, pushing the defending Indian and British troops back along the east coast towards Endau, and along the west coast towards Gemas. Although some Australians saw action in late December with 'Roseforce', the 8th Division did not undertake its first major action until mid-January. Bennett planned a series of ambushes to regain the initiative, but when the opportunity came, he had lost the 22nd Bde to III Indian Corps, although the 27th remained under his command forming 'Westforce' with several Indian brigades.³⁶

With the Japanese streaming into Johore, Lt Col Frederick Galleghan's 2/30th Bn was tasked with drawing first blood, supported by the 2/4th Anti-Tank Regt, the 25-pdrs from the newly re-equipped 2/15th Field Regt, and a small force of engineers from the 2/12th Field Coy.³⁷ On 13 January 1942, they set up near the Gemencheh Bridge, 11 kilometres west of Gemas. One company established an ambush in a cutting, while the rest of the battalion formed a blocking position further south.³⁸ After the battered remains of III Indian Corps' had withdrawn across the bridge,³⁹ the following afternoon the Japanese 5th Division's advanced elements, about 700-800 men mounted on bicycles, entered the ambush site and the trap was sprung. While engineers blew up the bridge, infantry threw grenades and fired machine-guns into the mass of enemy in the 300-metre 'killing zone'. It had been planned to deliver the coup-de-grace with artillery, but communications failed, and the Japanese brought up reinforcements. After 20 minutes the hard-pressed Australian company withdrew in contact. Finding themselves amidst the Japanese advanced elements, sporadic fighting continued throughout the night as the ambushers moved back by platoons.⁴⁰

This lasted until mid-morning the following day when the Japanese – reinforced with tanks, artillery and air support – having repaired the bridge, reached the 2/30th's main defensive position. Five Japanese tanks were knocked out and another damaged before an Australian counterattack forced them back. The respite was only temporary, as further pressure came that afternoon. This was beaten off and, after a determined but ultimately futile local counterattack,⁴¹ Galleghan ordered the battalion to fall back under the cover of a joint Dutch-Australian air attack. In this action, the 2/30th suffered around 80 casualties, including 17 killed. A number of artillery pieces were also lost to Japanese counter-battery fire, as the gunners covered the infantry's withdrawal, firing over 'open sights'. Against this, the Australians inflicted around 800 casualties and in the words of one of their opponents, they

³⁴ Legg 1965, pp. 183-185

³⁵ Legg 1965, p. 185; Uhr 1998, pp. 29-30

³⁶ Moremon 2002, pp. 33, 53 & 60; Thompson 2008, p. 225

³⁷ Wigmore 1957, pp. 101 & 210; Moremon 2002, pp. 60-61 & 66

³⁸ Coulthard-Clark 1998, p. 197

³⁹ Thompson 2005, p. 216

⁴⁰ Moremon 2002, p. 64

⁴¹ Hall 1983, p. 99

‘fought with a bravery ... not previously seen’.⁴²

The 2/30th withdrew towards the Fort Rose Estate, linking up with the 2/26th. Throughout 16 January clashes continued around Gemas Road, but with the Japanese advance temporarily slowed, the fighting during this time was limited to section-level and platoon actions. After establishing patrols around the estate, the 2/26th found their lines being infiltrated by Japanese who were heavily supported by aircraft and artillery. Threatened with encirclement, they conducted an orderly withdrawal in contact south towards Segamat.⁴³

The action at Gemas forced the Japanese into a flanking manoeuvre west towards Muar, where they found a weakness in the line, as Bennett had positioned his force to defend the Gemas-Yong Peng Road. The Japanese Imperial Guards forced their way across the river – the last major obstacle in their path to Johore – pushing the 45th Indian Bde back in disarray and threatening to cut off Westforce.⁴⁴ Bennett attempted to restore the situation, detaching the 2/29th Bn from the 27th Bde, and transferring the 2/19th from its position in the east with the rest of the 22nd Bde. The 2/29th arrived at Bakri late on 17 January and, with an anti-tank battery in support, moved in beside the Indians. Fighting throughout the night pushed the Indians back, but the following day, the line was restored to the west. The Japanese brought up armour, and in the ensuing fight, the Australians knocked out up to 11 tanks.⁴⁵

The 2/19th, having fought briefly around Endau earlier in the week,⁴⁶ left Jemaluang before dawn, and after a four-and-a-half hour march, arrived at the crossroads behind Bakri, establishing a defensive position. While the 2/29th had been holding off the main enemy thrust, other Japanese troops had worked their way around behind them, cutting them off from the 2/19th. They eventually fought their way through, arriving late in the evening, having suffered heavy casualties. Upon arrival, the commander of the 2/19th, Anderson, took command of all Australian troops in the area.⁴⁷

In an effort to regain contact with the Indians, on 19 January the 2/19th advanced up the Muar road, which had been cut by the Japanese. A heavy rout followed as the Australians outflanked the Japanese positions allowing them to link up with the 45th Bde, but they were in turn cut off when the Japanese crossed the road behind them.⁴⁸ Heavy Japanese air attacks occurred during the day, with the heaviest being focused on the Indian brigade headquarters; the commander, Brig Herbert Duncan, was among those wounded, leaving Anderson in command. He directed them to fight their way out back through to the 2/29th and then south towards the bridge at Parit Sulong, unaware it had been captured by a further Japanese landing. As they waited for one of the Indian battalions to regain contact, both Australian battalions – on either side of the Japanese cordon – came under heavy attack, holding up the withdrawal until dawn on 20 January.⁴⁹

After reorganising, Anderson led the composite force, now called ‘Muar Force’, forward. Three companies of Australians led the way singing *Waltzing Matilda*. The Indians followed,

⁴² Tsuji 1991, p. 193; Legg 1965, pp. 209-210; Coulthard-Clark 1998, p. 197; Moremon 2002, p. 65

⁴³ Uhr 1998, p. 108; Moremon 2002, p. 67; Magarry 2002, pp. 74-82

⁴⁴ Moremon 2002, p. 64; Legg 1965, p. 211; Thompson 2008, p. 225

⁴⁵ Coulthard-Clark 1998, p. 198; Thompson 2008, p. 228; Legg 1965, p. 211

⁴⁶ Moremon 2002, pp. 62-63

⁴⁷ Legg 1965, p. 212; Tsuji 1991, p. 203

⁴⁸ Moremon 2002, pp. 70-71; Coulthard-Clark 1998, p. 199

⁴⁹ Legg 1965, pp. 212-213

with an Australian company as rearguard and another in reserve; a convoy of 50 trucks, cars and artillery tractors was interspersed amongst them.⁵⁰ Japanese planes strafed the road, and by early morning Muar Force came up against several roadblocks. With dense jungle and marshland either side of the road preventing flanking moves, Anderson led a frontal assault on the first roadblock, personally destroying two machine-gun pits with grenades during a two-hour fight. Rolling over the position, Muar Force then found itself under attack from the rear by the Japanese that had pursued them from Bakri. The wounded Duncan led one of the Indian companies in a counterattack. He was killed, but Muar Force disengaged and continued up the road. By midday they encountered three more roadblocks. Amidst heavy fighting, all weapons, ranging from axes and small arms to mortars, Bren carriers and 25-pdrs, were used to break through while small groups fended off attacks on their flanks and to the rear. By late afternoon they had penetrated the final roadblock; after a short pause to place the wounded in trucks, they moved through the night towards Parit Sulong.⁵¹

Fording a dangerously flooded causeway, at midnight Muar Force reached a rubber estate three kilometres short of their objective and established a night harbour.⁵² The next morning, scouts were sent out towards the bridge. It was found to be in Japanese hands, confirming that Muar Force had been cut off. With the vehicle column coming under further air attack there was only one viable option, and throughout 21 January four desperate bayonet charges were put in to gain control of the bridge. Unable to break through, that night Anderson's force held the northern side of the river as they came under attack again from their pursuers from Bakri who assaulted them with artillery, armour and mortars.⁵³

Fending off these attacks, the following morning a further attempt was made to gain the other side of the bridge, but again it failed. From the south, attempts by the British 53rd Bde to fight their way through were also unsuccessful. With food and ammunition running low despite an aerial resupply by the RAF, and the likelihood of complete destruction if they remained, Anderson made a heart-wrenching decision. Passing the order for all the vehicles and heavy equipment to be destroyed, all those that could walk were told to break into small groups and make their way overland through the Japanese lines to Yong Peng, 25 km away.⁵⁴ Those who were too wounded to walk were left in the care of volunteers to await medical attention from the Japanese. In the end, a total of about 550 Australians, and over 400 Indians, made it through after a three-day trek. Others got lost and were picked up by British warships, or joined up with guerrillas. These were the lucky ones, though, for many of the wounded simply died in the jungle or were captured.⁵⁵

Of the 135 that were left behind, only two survived. The Japanese murdered the rest in retribution for the heavy losses the Australians had inflicted around Muar. It was a sad epitaph to a fine feat of soldiering. The actions of the 2/19th and 2/29th Bns, in concert with their Indian allies, held up the Japanese advance by a week and helped save Westforce from encirclement, destroying the equivalent of a company of tanks and a battalion of men from the Japanese Imperial Guards. For his leadership, Anderson later received the Victoria Cross.⁵⁶

⁵⁰ Moreman 2002, p. 71; Thompson 2008, pp. 229-230

⁵¹ Wigmore 1957, pp. 239-240; Thompson 2008, pp. 230-231; Moremon 2002, p. 71

⁵² Thompson 2008, p. 231

⁵³ Moremon 2002, p. 73

⁵⁴ Coulthard-Clark 1998, p. 199

⁵⁵ Uhr 1998, p. 138; Moremon 2002, p. 79; Nelson 2001, p. 20

⁵⁶ Thompson 2005, p. 227; Thompson 2008, pp. 231-232; Uhr 1998, p. 138; Moremon 2002, pp. 75-78

Meanwhile, in the east, on 18 January the two remaining battalions of the 22nd Bde, the 2/18th and 2/20th Bns, had been organised into 'Eastforce' along with a British battalion, under Maxwell's command. As the Japanese began moving down the coast, the Australians began patrols around Jemaluang and Kota Tinggi.⁵⁷ A number of minor clashes followed, before a significant action came north of the Mersing River on 21 January. Advancing towards the bridge, a Japanese company came up against a series of well-established Australian outposts. In the ensuing fighting, the defending platoon from the 2/20th Bn lost two men killed, but inflicted heavy casualties on the attackers, before calling down artillery and withdrawing to the battalion main defensive position. Further patrol clashes occurred in front of the bridge before the Japanese attempted to capture it. A seesawing action followed in which the Japanese took the Australian trenches on the northern side of the river, before losing them to a determined company-level counterattack. Short on ammunition, the Australian company was forced to fall back, while the Japanese regrouped. As the Japanese felt for the flanks to the west, throughout the rest of the day, Australian patrols maintained contact with the enemy, working closely with their supporting artillery to call down indirect fire to blunt the Japanese advance.⁵⁸

Despite holding the Japanese in their area, late on 22 January, Taylor's brigade was ordered to withdraw and move 16 km south towards Jamaluang. Having spent the past six months building a strong defensive zone, the men were bitterly disappointed; nevertheless, actions elsewhere had changed the situation and necessitated a withdrawal to maintain a contiguous defensive line across the peninsula. As preparations were made to break contact around the bridge, Varley proposed to leave it intact and spring an ambush south of the river with infantry, artillery and anti-tank guns. In the end the decision was made to blow up the bridge, and this was completed on 24 January. Meanwhile, the 2/20th Bn maintained patrols in the area, while the artillery engaged the enemy until the following day when they re-established themselves further south.⁵⁹

On 26 January a large Japanese force landed at Endau and as aerial reconnaissance reported a battalion-sized force advancing towards the 22nd Bde's position, Taylor resolved to launch a limited offensive before complying with orders to fall back to Kota Tinggi. While the 2/20th Bn withdrew, the 2/18th would mount an ambush along the Mersing–Jemaluang road before conducting its own move south.⁶⁰ Varley chose an area around the Nithsdale and Joo Lye rubber estates as his killing zone. Supported by two batteries of artillery from the 2/10th Field Regt, two companies set themselves up either side of the road near a narrow defile to await the Japanese advance, while another was positioned further back in a blocking position across the road. The fourth company was placed in reserve and co-located with the artillery.⁶¹

Having been told that the Japanese did not move at night, Varley expected a daylight action and believed he had until dawn on 27 January to prepare;⁶² but the Japanese force advanced faster than expected. Careful preparation had been made by the artillery, which had staked out the area and pre-laid their guns, and late in the evening, the Japanese advanced elements entered the ambush site. Their numbers grew and early the following morning they came up

⁵⁷ Thompson 2005, p. 226

⁵⁸ Uhr 1998, pp. 144-156

⁵⁹ Moremon 2002, p. 79; Uhr 1998, pp. 156-158

⁶⁰ Uhr 1998, p. 166; Wigmore 1957, pp. 262 & 266

⁶¹ Coulthard-Clark 1998, pp. 200-201; Thompson 2005, pp. 245-246

⁶² Uhr 1998, p. 167

against the blocking position astride the road. As they began probing the position, at 3:00 am the ambush was sprung. Coming in under a devastating creeping barrage, the Australian infantry closed in around the Japanese and attacked with machine-guns, mortars and bayonets.⁶³ Japanese resistance was stronger than expected and D Coy found themselves isolated by a force that had dug-in on a high feature north of B Coy's position. The battle raged into the morning as B Coy attempted to regain contact with the cut-off company. In an effort to restore the situation, Varley prepared to launch a counterattack with A Coy but brigade headquarters ordered a withdrawal. With the reserve company providing cover, A Coy was able to make a clean break, but D and B were forced to fight their way out.⁶⁴ Losses were heavy and by the time the 2/18th Bn reorganised, D Coy was only able to muster a platoon. The action cost the 2/18th six officers and 77 men killed. The Japanese also suffered heavily – between 600 and 1,000 – and they withdrew back to Mersing, delaying their advance in the east by three days and diverting some of their force west.⁶⁵

Throughout 28 January the 22nd Bde fell back towards the Kota Tinggi Crossroads, while engineers destroyed bridges and damaged roads as Allied forces prepared a bridgehead around Johore Bahru. Meanwhile, in the west the Bakri survivors withdrew through the 2/26th and 2/30th Bns, which then fought a series of rearguard actions as they withdrew back to Yong Peng. From there, the bridge was destroyed and then, in concert with British troops, the two battalions attempted to hold the Ayer Hitam trunk road before being pushed back to Simpang Rengam. After fighting a sharp action, they withdrew to the Namazie rubber estate where, early on 28 January, the 2/26th dug-in with the 2/30th behind them in reserve. Further fighting followed with armoured cars being brought up to provide fire support, and although the 2/26th managed to resist these attempts, it simply forced the Japanese to reach for the flanks. As they threatened to split the 2/26th and 2/30th, the decision was made to fall back again before the Japanese broke through a defile to the west, denying the use of the road.⁶⁶

After this, the campaign followed a similar pattern on both coasts as the withdrawal continued back to Johore Bahru. In the west, the 27th Bde moved through Ayer Bemban and Kulai; on the east the 22nd fell back along the Kota Tinggi road towards Ulu Tiram. While the withdrawal was orderly and the battalions were generally able to maintain cohesion despite the physical and mental hardships the troops were enduring, Japanese infiltration techniques and constant withdrawals cut off small groups of troops. Sometimes they were able to regain their lines hours or days later, but many succumbed to the jungle, were captured, or killed by the Japanese, either in combat or by execution.⁶⁷

Finally, on 30 January, the Allied forces reached the Johore Strait. The following day they withdrew across the Causeway to Singapore. The 22nd Bde was the last Australian unit to cross, completing the march around dawn on 1 February; engineers later blew a 70-metre gap in the structure.⁶⁸

Singapore, Ambon, Timor and Rabaul

Unfortunately for the 8th Division their ordeal was only just beginning. Despite being spent by the exertions of the previous fortnight, there was little respite. Upon arrival on Singapore,

⁶³ Thompson 2005, pp. 245-246

⁶⁴ Smith 2011, pp. 59-65

⁶⁵ Uhr 1998, pp. 193-202; Coulthard-Clark 1998, p. 201; Thompson 2005, p. 246

⁶⁶ Uhr 1998, pp. 158, 202-206; Magarry 1994, pp. 104-107; Moremon 2002, p. 83

⁶⁷ Uhr 1998 pp. 205-207; Moremon 2002 p. 85

⁶⁸ Hall 1983, p. 103; Moremon 2002, p. 90

the 8th Division was bolstered with the 2/4th Machine Gun Bn and a draft of 1,900 reinforcements. Barely trained, these men were sent mainly to the shattered 2/19th and 2/29th Bns,⁶⁹ their commitment a cruel result of hasty decision-making.⁷⁰

While the two Australian brigades were reunited under Bennett, that was the only good fortune they experienced. As the unit ‘most likely to give a good account’, the 8th Division was assigned the ‘position of greatest danger’ in the north-west sector;⁷¹ nevertheless, separated by the Kranji River, their placement proved problematic. Stretched across larger-than-normal frontages, they were expected to cover ground that was ill-suited to defence, dotted with inlets, coves and tidal flats which made it impossible to maintain a contiguous line. Worse, on arrival they found almost no work had been done to develop defences in their sector. Bennett could have rectified some of these issues, particularly the frontages, but politics seemingly got in the way and he refused to reallocate part of the 27th Bde to help the 22nd, favouring Maxwell due to his earlier clashes with Taylor.⁷²

On the night of 8/9 February, two Japanese divisions crossed the Johore Strait, landing in the 22nd Bde’s area of responsibility. The forward positions put up a strong defence and inflicted heavy casualties, but they were out-manoeuvered as the Japanese exploited the gaps in their lines. Bypassed, many men found themselves cut off; small groups fought isolated actions as they tried to regain contact while the brigade fell back towards the airfield at Tengah.⁷³

In the north, the 27th Bde held the initial landing despite some flanking moves around the Kranji, but on 10 February a further landing along their front pushed them back towards the island’s centre. Heavy fighting followed between Mandai Road and Bukit Panjang, and the higher ground around Bukit Timah. Over a week, Allied forces were pushed into a small perimeter around Singapore’s outer suburbs.⁷⁴ The 8th Division established itself around Tanglin Barracks and held its ground, but the Japanese broke through units to their north and south, and the 8th was threatened with isolation. Finally, late on 15 February, Percival ordered a surrender to save the civilian population from unnecessary suffering.⁷⁵ As the order came into effect, small numbers of Australians attempted to get away. Many were captured or killed, but a few, including Bennett, were successful.⁷⁶

Elsewhere, the men of the 23rd Bde were also fighting for their lives on Rabaul, Ambon, and Timor. Throughout early 1942, the small garrisons of each of these outposts – the 2/22nd Bn on Rabaul, the 2/21st on Ambon, and the 2/40th on Timor – came up against massive Japanese forces: 10,000; 6,000 and 5,000-strong respectively. Lacking air and artillery support, they were quickly overwhelmed, and suffered heavy casualties. Some were able to escape or be rescued, while others fought on as guerrillas, but many were captured.⁷⁷

In the aftermath, 14,972 Australians were taken prisoner in Singapore. A further 1,137 were captured on Timor, 1,075 on Ambon and 1,049 on New Britain. These numbers are

⁶⁹ Legg 1965, pp. 219-220; Thompson 2008, p. 236

⁷⁰ Cody 1997, pp. 69-70

⁷¹ Legg 1965, p. 228

⁷² Thompson 2008, pp. 238-239

⁷³ Legg 1965, pp. 235-236

⁷⁴ Coulthard-Clark 1998, pp. 202-204

⁷⁵ Wigmore 1957, pp. 374 & 377-380

⁷⁶ Legg 1965, pp. 249 & 255

⁷⁷ Cody 1997, pp. 184-185; Coulthard-Clark 1998, p. 208

staggering when compared to the 4,044 lost during the entire First World War.⁷⁸ Added to the men the 7th Division lost on Java, this represented around a quarter of the 2nd AIF's strength; the loss stunned Australia, and Bennett's escape caused a controversy.⁷⁹ The men of the 8th who became POWs subsequently endured years of starvation, disease, and brutality as they were used as slave labourers in Singapore, Burma, Thailand, and Japan. One in three did not survive and while many attempted to escape, only eight of those taken in Malaya were successful; those that tried but failed were often executed.⁸⁰

Legacy

Among 8th Division veterans, there is a feeling that Australians know little of their deeds; even while the war still raged, one lamented that they had been forgotten, amidst a stigma of having 'let down' the rest of the 2nd AIF.⁸¹ This seemingly remains today. In 2003, when the Australian Hyde Park War Memorial was opened in London, Malaya was not among the 47 battles commemorated. There is considerable resentment among veterans that their service is characterised more by their experiences as prisoners, than the battles they fought. Arguably, this is the result of limited scholarship and narratives that have sought to lay the blame for the early defeats against the Japanese on the quality of the soldiers rather than political complacency and poor strategy.⁸²

The reality, though, is that the 8th were, initially, among the best trained troops that Australia possessed, and in Malaya it was one of the only formations to experience any tactical successes. Despite making up only 13 percent of the Allied garrison, they suffered 73 percent of its casualties, demonstrating how hard the 8th fought. The division lost over 10,000 men, including 2,500 killed in action; this represented two thirds of all Army deaths in the Pacific.⁸³ The 2/19th Bn alone lost more men killed than any other 2nd AIF unit.⁸⁴

Following their capture, despite the many hardships that they suffered, the men of the 8th continued to fight; staying together wherever possible, they maintained the battalion structure, fighting to keep their identity as soldiers and as men of the 8th.⁸⁵ This identity was strong. The 2/14th Field Regt, one of the 8th Division units not captured or destroyed, refused to change their colour patch after reassignment. Loyal to the last, at war's end, every man volunteered to go to Singapore to bring their comrades home.⁸⁶

Although ultimately defeated, the courage and sacrifice of the 8th deserves to be remembered by today's Australians with the same fidelity. Equally so, the mistakes that led to their defeat. Their legacy continues to burn silently in the recesses of Australia's collective memory, flickering like a candle. With the passing of each year the wick grows shorter, despite the resurgence in Australians' interest in their military history. It behoves us to remember that the Anzac legend is built upon the juxtaposition of victory and defeat and the contraries of triumph and adversity.

⁷⁸ Wigmore 1957, p. 511

⁷⁹ Hasluck 1970, p. 71; Legg 1965, p. 1

⁸⁰ Ramsey 2007, p. 29

⁸¹ Mant 1944, p. 7

⁸² Ramsay 2007, p. 29; Nelson 2001, p. 18; Coulthard-Clark 1998, p. 204

⁸³ Cody 1997, p. 351

⁸⁴ Uhr 1998, p. xii

⁸⁵ Burfitt 1991, p. 218; Nelson 2001, p. 34

⁸⁶ Dennis et al 1995, p. 168; Kingswell 1986, pp. 112-128

References

- Burfitt, James (1991). *Against All Odds: The History of the 2/18th Battalion, AIF*. Frenchs Forest, New South Wales: 2/18th Battalion AIF Association.
- Christie, R.W. (1983). *A History of the 2/29th Battalion – 8th Australian Division*. Sale, Victoria: 2/29 Battalion AIF Association.
- Cody, Les (1997). *Ghosts in Khaki: The History of the 2/4th Machine Gun Battalion, 8th Australian Division AIF*. Carlisle, Western Australia: Hesperian Press.
- Coulthard-Clark, Chris (1998). *Where Australians Fought: The Encyclopaedia of Australia's Battles*. 1st edition. St Leonards, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin.
- Dennis, Peter; Grey, Jeffery; Morris, Ewan and Prior, Robin. (1995). *The Oxford Companion to Australian Military History*. 1st edition. Melbourne: Oxford University Press.
- Grey, Jeffrey (2008). *A Military History of Australia*. 3rd edition. Port Melbourne, Victoria: Cambridge University Press.
- Hall, Timothy (1983). *The Fall of Singapore 1942*. North Ryde, New South Wales: Methuen Australia.
- Hasluck, Paul (1970). *The Government and the People 1942–1945*. Australia in the War of 1939–1945, Series Four – Civil, Volume II. Canberra: Australian War Memorial.
- Johnston, Mark (1996). 'The civilians who joined up, 1939–45', *Journal of the Australian War Memorial*. November 1996, Issue 29. <http://www.awm.gov.au/journal/j29/civils.asp>. Retrieved 30 October 2012.
- Keogh, Eustace (1965). *The South West Pacific 1941–45*. Melbourne: Grayflower Productions.
- Kingswell, S.G. (1986). '2/14th Australian Field Regiment AIF', in Brook, David. *Roundshot to Rapier: Artillery in South Australia 1840–1984*. Hawthornedene, South Australia: Royal Australian Artillery Association of South Australia, pp. 112–128.
- Legg, Frank (1965). *The Gordon Bennett Story: From Gallipoli to Singapore*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson.
- Magarry, Ron (2002). *The Battalion Story: 2/26th Infantry Battalion, 8th Australian Division – AIF*. Coopers Plains, Queensland: 2/26th Infantry Battalion Association.
- Mant, Gilbert (1944). *You'll Be Sorry: The Tragedy of the Eighth Division in Malaya*. Sydney: Frank Johnson.
- Moremon, John (2002). *A Bitter Fate: Australians in Malaya & Singapore December 1941–February 1942*. Canberra: Department of Veterans' Affairs.
- Nelson, Hank (2001). *Prisoners of War: Australians Under Nippon*. Sydney, New South Wales: ABC Books.
- Ramsey, Alan (2007). 'Savaged in battle, blotted from history'. *The Sydney Morning Herald*. 21 April, p. 29.
- Smith, Kevin (2011). *Stories From Sandakan: 2/18th Bn*. Armidale, New South Wales: K.R. and H. Smith.
- Thompson, Peter (2005). *The Battle for Singapore: The True Story of the Greatest Catastrophe of World War II*. London: Portrait.
- Thompson, Peter (2008). *Pacific Fury: How Australia and Her Allies Defeated the Japanese Scourge*. North Sydney, New South Wales: William Heinemann.
- Tsuji, Masanobu (1991). *Singapore 1941–1942: The Japanese Version of the Malayan Campaign of World War II*. Singapore: Oxford University Press.
- Uhr, Janet (1998). *Against the Sun: The AIF in Malaya, 1941–42*. Army Military History Series: Issues. St Leonards, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin.
- White, K.R. (1979). 'Brown, Walter Ernest (1885–1942)'. *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. Volume 7. Melbourne University Press, pp. 446–447.
- Wigmore, Lionel (1957). *The Japanese Thrust*. 1st edition. Australia in the War of 1939–1945, Series One – Army, Volume IV. Canberra: Australian War Memorial.

MISS CELIA MACDONALD OF THE ISLES ‘WHO HAS BEEN A PARTICULARLY GOOD FRIEND’

Kristen Alexander

In April 2009, the great nephew of one of Australia’s Battle of Britain pilots contacted me. He had heard I was researching the Battle and wondered if I would be interested in William Henry ‘Bill’ Millington Jr’s diaries and letters. Would I, ever! In the parcel was a ‘last letter’, given to Miss Celia Macdonald of the Isles to pass onto the Millington family in the event of Bill’s death. It was accompanied by Miss Macdonald’s condolence note to Bill’s mother, Elizabeth. These had been offered to a major collecting institution which had knocked them back.

Lady Frances Ryder and Miss Macdonald ran the Dominion and Allied Services Hospitality Scheme, an important social organisation for Australian and other Allied servicemen and women. The Scheme was well recognised and appreciated by those who enjoyed ‘wonderful leaves while serving in the United Kingdom’ so I wondered why the letters had been declined. I recalled an article published in *Wings* in 2007 in which the author had unsuccessfully sought information about it so thought perhaps it and its significance to Australians had faded from contemporary memory.¹ But it was not that.

According to Bill’s great nephew, the institution’s representative told him that ‘Miss Macdonald was a euphemism and not a real person’.² A quick internet check indicated that Miss Celia Macdonald of the Isles appears in *The Peerage* and had been awarded an OBE and later advanced to CBE for her work with the organisation.³ So, not a euphemism, and very real. Someone had got it wrong. That, then, was my cue to discover more about the Dominion and Allied Services Hospitality Scheme as well as Miss Celia Macdonald – junrecognised by a major military archive – and her role in the life and death of one of Australia’s Battle of Britain pilots.

Although non-British servicemen during the Great War received hospitality from the War Chest Club, the Anzac Buffet and the Red Cross, Lady Frances Ryder’s father, the 5th Earl of Harrowby, and his wife, believed Australian mothers would be ‘suffering agonies’ at the thought of being separated from their sons and so they decided to do what they could to alleviate their anxieties.⁴ This concern was based on strong connections with Australia. Lord Harrowby first visited in 1886 and admired Australia and her ‘sturdy sons’, making a special study of Australian affairs. In addition, his brother, Captain the Hon Robert Ryder, who was aide-de-camp to George Ruthven Le Hunte, governor of South Australia from 1 July 1903 until 18 February 1909, had married an Australian.⁵ The Dominion Officers’ Hospitality Scheme was launched in May 1917 when Lord and Lady Harrowby opened the doors of their London residence to visiting officers and convalescents.⁶

Lady Harrowby and her daughter considered it ‘a privilege to do something to brighten the lives of officers and men on leave and in hospital’ and threw themselves wholeheartedly into

¹ Jubbs, ‘Lady Frances Ryder’, *Wings, Official Publication of the RAAF Association*, Volume 59, No. 4, Summer 2007

² Email Simon Robinson/Kristen Alexander 5 January 2011

³ <http://thepeerage.com/p4345.htm#i43443>; <http://www.london-gazette.co.uk/issues/31422/pages/8092>;
<http://www.london-gazette.co.uk/issues/34396/supplements/3095>

⁴ *The Age*, 19 January 1924

⁵ *The Register*, 13 June 1918 and 21 August 1919. Major Ryder, who served with the 8th (King’s Royal Irish) Hussars, was killed in action on 30 November 1917.

⁶ *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 January and 16 August 1918; *The Register*, 21 August 1919; *The West Australian*, 20 March 1924

what became ‘a very personal work’⁷. They were assisted by Helen Wallis who took on the role of organising secretary. Joyce Fry, who hailed from Queensland, joined them at a later date.⁸ In addition, Lady Frances invited Miss Celia Macdonald, the only daughter of Sir Alexander and Lady Bosville Macdonald of the Isles, to join her in welcoming visitors and developing a network of hosts and hostesses.⁹ And they were successful. The Harrowbys alone received 13,000 officers while 600 hostesses throughout England and Scotland entertained over 8200 officers, including 2000 Australians.¹⁰

Lady Frances and Miss Macdonald had much in common. They were of similar ages – born on 7 August 1888 and 28 January 1889 respectively – background, character and interests. Both lived a life of privilege; they were educated at home by governesses and enjoyed comfortable childhoods. As was usual with young ladies of their class, they were presented at court; Lady Frances in June 1906 and Miss Macdonald in 1908. After their presentations, their paths continually crossed as they made the usual round of dances, house parties and country weekends.¹¹

Both were staunch churchwomen – Lady Frances, in particular, was strongly against divorce and, in later years, divorcées were excluded from her hostess list – and devoted to their charities.¹² They were kind, thoughtful, genuinely concerned for the welfare of their military friends and had the knack of putting people at their ease, keeping the conversation flowing with little effort, with Miss Macdonald in particular, often maintaining half a dozen at a time, all while pouring the tea and passing sandwiches.¹³

Miss Macdonald was warm, never failing in gaiety and had an infectious laugh. She was musical and played the piano and violin. She was a talented soprano and passionate member of the Bach Choir. After she came out, she took over the running of the scout troop in the village of Rudston and was, in the words of her nephew, constantly ‘up to some good works as it was not in her nature to sit and do nothing’.¹⁴

The efforts of Lady Harrowby, Lady Frances and Miss Macdonald were publically recognised on 27 June 1919 when they were appointed to the Civil Division of the Most Excellent Order: Lady Harrowby was made a Dame Commander; her daughter a Commander; and Miss Macdonald an Officer.¹⁵ The Scheme had fostered such great international relations that, rather than allow it to lapse after the war, ‘prominent politicians’ who recognised its ‘imperial value’ suggested working with the young people of the Empire. Accordingly, the new Dominion Students’ Hospitality Scheme catered to students taking up

⁷ *The Times*, 30 December 1965; *The Argus*, 23 January 1924

⁸ *The West Australian*, 10 January 1936; *Queensland Figaro*, 28 April 1928

⁹ *The Times*, 25 March 1960

¹⁰ *The Register*, 21 August 1919

¹¹ Their social connection was strengthened in January 1917 when Miss Macdonald’s brother, Godfrey, married Lady Frances’s cousin, the Hon. Rachel Campbell. Email Nicola Finlay, Personal Assistant to The Earl of Harrowby/Alexander 8 December 2011; letter Major Nigel Chamberlayne-Macdonald/Alexander 12 January 2012

¹² *The Courier Mail*, 10 August 1942; Funeral Oration: *In Memoriam—Celia MacDonald 1889–1976* by Ronald William Mein Atkin MBE, courtesy of Major Nigel Chamberlayne-Macdonald (hereafter Atkin: Funeral Oration)

¹³ *The Australian Women’s Weekly*, 13 April 1940; *The Times*, 30 December 1965; email Nicola Finlay, Personal Assistant to The Earl of Harrowby/Alexander 8 December 2011; and letter Major Nigel Chamberlayne-Macdonald/Alexander 12 January 2012

¹⁴ In 1935, Miss Macdonald was one of the choir honoured to sing at King George V’s Silver Jubilee concert. Letter Major Nigel Chamberlayne-Macdonald/Alexander 12 January 2012; Atkin: Funeral Oration; *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 January 1937

¹⁵ <http://www.london-gazette.co.uk/issues/31422/pages/8092>

places in Britain's universities.¹⁶

Lord Harrowby's London residence proved inadequate and so a new base was required. Lord Cadogan offered a favourable rent at 21B Cadogan Gardens.¹⁷ It wasn't long before a regular stream of male and female undergraduates, Rhodes Scholars, military cadets and anyone else who had arrived in England without friends but with an appropriate letter of introduction, made 21B their second home.¹⁸ Miss Macdonald left in 1919 but rejoined Lady Frances in 1922 and they continued to work together until Lady Frances was forced to retire in 1933 because of ill health.¹⁹ Miss Macdonald then took over the running and her contribution was again recognised when she was advanced to CBE in 1937.²⁰

With war imminent, Air Ministry adopted the Scheme for the benefit of Commonwealth personnel, renaming it the Dominion and Allied Services Hospitality Scheme. Lady Frances came out of retirement and resumed her position beside Miss Macdonald at the tea table. They expanded their card files, increased the hostess network and appointed regional coordinators. They recruited new helpers who typed welcoming letters to new arrivals – which Miss Macdonald signed – and sent out invitations complete with host addresses, details of the nearest train station, a discrete slip of paper outlining appropriate tips for household staff, and an exhortation to send a wire to advise their arrival time.²¹

Lady Frances and Miss Macdonald did their utmost to match their military clients with suitable hosts. They asked where they would like to spend their leaves, what sports they played, and whether they wanted a quiet break or a busy time.²² For the most part, they were successful. When Wade Rogers arrived at Cadogan Gardens, he longed for a country family and home cooking. He was sent to the Pillings in East Yorkshire. Dick Pilling pressed Wade to call him 'Uncle Dick' and the young Australian felt so comfortable he returned many times.²³ Referrals were not always as successful, however. Yorkshire hospitality had little to offer someone as lively as Pat Hughes.

He soon discovered that 'the local families are either terribly county or else strict church goers'. The highlights were 'an occasional game of tennis with several of the fair widows of the district', but the lowlights were 'evenings at home which consist of my slowly sipping a glass of muck after struggling through an incredibly indigestible dinner'. Then, recounted Pat, the hostess would 'spring to her feet, clap her hands and after gazing around for several minutes' have 'a brain wave' and 'exclaim, "I know let's play sardines" – Ye gods, our existence is limited'.²⁴

Northumbrian-born Bill Millington, who had arrived in Adelaide, South Australia on his 9th birthday, had a much better experience of British hospitality. Miss Macdonald wrote to him after he was notified of his short service commission, welcoming him to England and inviting him to come along 'to have tea with us' at any time 'as you will always find somebody

¹⁶ Email Nicola Finlay, Personal Assistant to The Earl of Harrowby/Alexander 5 December 2011; *The West Australian*, 10 June 1936

¹⁷ Letter Major Nigel Chamberlayne-Macdonald/Alexander 12 January 2012

¹⁸ *The Age*, 19 January 1924; *The Argus*, 23 January 1924; *The Times*, 30 December 1965

¹⁹ *The Times*, 25 March 1960; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 January 1937

²⁰ <http://www.london-gazette.co.uk/issues/34396/supplements/3095>

²¹ Letter Miss Celia Macdonald of the Isles /John Crossman 18 March 1940, courtesy of Bowden Family Archive

²² *The West Australian*, 23 November 1946

²³ Nelson, *Chased by the Sun. Courageous Australians in Bomber Command in World War II*, ABC Books, Sydney, 2001, p. 68

²⁴ Letter Pat Hughes/Charles and Heather Hughes July [1939], courtesy of the late Greg Hughes

here'.²⁵

Bill was drawn almost immediately to Miss Macdonald. Perhaps her comfortable demeanour reminded him of his mother, perhaps he delighted in accounts of her stay in Adelaide during her world tour in 1936-37.²⁶ Perhaps it was their shared adherence to the strong moral principles of scout law: whenever he wasn't dreaming of flying, Bill had channelled all his energies into the scouting movement, graduating from cub, to scout and rover, winning many achievement badges on the way.²⁷ Whatever the basis, they developed a warm empathy.²⁸

The opportunities offered to young airmen were vastly different from anything they had experienced before. Geoff Cornish enjoyed his host's priceless collection of etchings of Heath Robinson inventions.²⁹ David Scholes, guest of Tom Maclean, the Earl of Ancum's gamekeeper, went fishing and hunting on the Monteviot Estate.³⁰ Bill Millington accepted 'numerous invitations to dinners etc. Last night I went with a party to the open air theatre in Regent's Park ... I'm going to a garden party on Saturday.' He had a 'very pleasant evening' with Lady Douglas Smith and her daughters, joined Sir Stuart and Lady Sankey for lunch, and chatted with Lord Athlone, 'brother to Queen Mary and former governor-general to South Africa'. He lunched at the Café Anglais, followed by an afternoon at Boodle's, a gentlemen's club.³¹ Amusing as all that was, he liked nothing better than being with family and friends, and when he visited Ruckley Grange he had both. He was embraced by the Reid Walkers, a welcoming family who did not stand on ceremony. His first Christmas in England since he was a lad of eight was a warm, happy affair *en famille*. He had 'a very enjoyable time', full of 'hunting, felling trees, shooting, skating and tobogganing' and trimming the Christmas tree.³²

Bill accepted the Reid Walkers' prosperity as a matter of course but John Crossman was dazzled by his hosts' 'big Buick and three Standards and ... staff of servants. It must cost 40 pounds a week to run that house.' In addition, 'we sit at dinner and drink champagne and look absolutely it. There's no doubt how these people do live well.'³³

As war progressed, Lady Frances and Miss Macdonald entertained Polish, Czech, Norwegian and Dutch servicemen and the free French forces. After Dunkirk, they welcomed Australian and New Zealand nurses who had fled France and received a royal imprimatur when Queen Elizabeth joined them at the tea table to meet those brave women.³⁴

On 17 June 1940, Bill Millington was posted to 79 Squadron which had two pilots killed in France, one taken prisoner and two wounded.³⁵ He knew it would not be long before he

²⁵ Bill's welcoming letter is no longer extant but would have been similar to John Crossman's. Letter Miss Celia Macdonald of the Isles/John Crossman 26 October 1939, courtesy of Bowden Family Archive

²⁶ *The West Australian*, 8 December 1936

²⁷ Handwritten biographical notes by Eileen Robinson née Millington, courtesy of Robinson Family Archive

²⁸ Bill Millington's 'last letter' June 1940, courtesy of Robinson Family Archive

²⁹ Hayes, *Beyond the Great Escape. Geoff Cornish: The One Who Got Away*, Possum Publishing, Elanora, 2004, p. 41

³⁰ Scholes, DFC, *Air War Diary. An Australian in Bomber Command*, Kangaroo Press, Kenthurst, 1997, pp. 68 and 53

³¹ Letter Bill Millington/Eileen Robinson née Millington 7 July 1939; and entries for 28 June, 2 July, 21 July and 8 December 1939, Bill Millington's diary, courtesy of Robinson Family Archive

³² Letter Bill Millington/Eileen Robinson née Millington 31 December 1939, courtesy of Robinson Family Archive

³³ Entries for 24 December and 23 December 1939, John Crossman's diary, courtesy of Bowden Family Archive

³⁴ *The West Australian*, 5 April 1941

³⁵ Bill Millington's RAF Service record, RAF Disclosures, via Robinson Family Archive; Cull, Lander and Weiss, *Twelve Days in May. The Air Battle for Northern France and the Low Countries, 10-21 May 1940*, Grub Street, London, 1995, pp. 2-5

joined his new friends on operations. He recognised that ‘the possibility of a hasty departure from this life is ever present’. He had no fear of dying; he accepted that possibility and was ‘light of heart’ as he prepared for his first sortie.³⁶ Knowing he might not return, he decided to write a ‘last letter’ to his parents, to be delivered only in the event of his death. ‘Please do not grieve over my passing. I would not have it otherwise’, he told them. ‘Flying has meant more to me than just a career or means of livelihood’, he explained. ‘The intoxication of speed, the rush of air and the pulsating beat of the motor, awakes some answering chord deep down which is indescribable.’ He posted the letter to Miss Celia Macdonald, ‘who has been a particularly good friend to me’ for safe keeping. Despite having close family in England he asked Miss Macdonald to act as his next of kin, entrusting to her the task of gathering up ‘any of my personal effects ... in the event of some untoward incident’.³⁷

By 31 August, Bill had been in action a number of times and had already achieved a string of victories. He was in the air twice that day, again adding to his personal and squadron ‘bag’. During his first outing, ‘we engaged about twenty Me 109s and slapped quite a few down’. He was ‘badly shot up and made a forced landing near Folkestone and returned to my station per police car’.³⁸ Later that day, he and his section were tasked with aerodrome guard duties when fifteen Dornier Do 215s escorted by large numbers of Messerschmitt Me 109s and 110s were sighted. Bill attacked, setting alight the port engine of one of the Do 215s. Three Me 109s targeted him. He fired, damaging one as he shook off the other two. By then he was alone; his confrères were engaged in their own battles. He again attacked the bombers but was beset by more Me 109s.³⁹ He ‘shot down a Messerschmitt 109 after a dogfight with three of them’. He was hit ‘badly by cannon fire and wounded in the thigh. However I crash-landed in flames and managed to scramble out before the machine exploded’.⁴⁰

He walked, with assistance, to a nearby farm house, then ‘eventually finished up in hospital for about ten days, where most of the shrapnel in my thigh was removed.’⁴¹ When Miss Macdonald visited the convalescent she asked why he had been so foolish to attack a bomber on his own. ‘Isn’t that awfully dangerous, Bill?’ He replied, ‘What is one fighter compared with a German bomber?’⁴² And that on top of his decision not to bale out, ‘as my machine would probably have crashed into a small village’.⁴³ Miss Macdonald recognised a ‘complete unselfishness’ of ‘outlook [that] is magnificent and most inspiring’.⁴⁴ So too did the Air Officer Commanding 11 Group, Air Vice-Marshal Keith Park who considered ‘this young Australian officer ... worthy of reward and strongly recommend him for the Immediate Award of the Distinguished Flying Cross’ for showing ‘great courage’ in avoiding the small township, ‘despite the fact he was wounded’ and for exhibiting ‘dash and courage in attacking superior numbers’.⁴⁵

³⁶ Bill Millington’s ‘last letter’ June 1940, courtesy of Robinson Family Archive. This letter is dated simply ‘June 1940’ but it is clear from the content that Bill penned it just before his first operation.

³⁷ Bill Millington’s ‘last letter’ June 1940, courtesy of Robinson Family Archive

³⁸ Letter Bill Millington/Eileen Robinson née Millington 14 September 1940, courtesy of Robinson Family Archive

³⁹ Bill Millington’s DFC Recommendation National Archives United Kingdom AIR 2/9398

⁴⁰ Letter Bill Millington/Eileen Robinson née Millington 14 September 1940, courtesy of Robinson Family Archive

⁴¹ Undated letter Victoria Wells, Hawkhurst History Society/Alexander (received 9 March 2011); letter Bill Millington/Eileen Robinson née Millington 14 September 1940, courtesy of Robinson Family Archive

⁴² *The West Australian*, 5 April 1941

⁴³ Austin, *Fighter Command*, Victor Gollancz Ltd, London, 1941, p. 193; Bill Millington’s DFC Recommendation National Archives United Kingdom AIR 2/9398

⁴⁴ *The West Australian*, 5 April 1941

⁴⁵ Bill Millington’s DFC Recommendation National Archive United Kingdom AIR 2/9398



Fig.1: Pilot Officer Bill Millington with Pipsqueak, one of the mascots he introduced to 249 Squadron, 1940. (Courtesy of the Robinson Family)

Bill was posted to 249 Squadron on 19 September. Over the next few weeks he continued to add to his score against the Luftwaffe. On 30 October 1940, the squadron was patrolling North Weald aerodrome when they encountered some Messerschmitt Me 109s. They gave chase and Bill was last seen trying to intercept one over the English Channel.⁴⁶

Within hours, telegrams advising that he was missing in action were sent off.⁴⁷ Even though Miss Macdonald had ‘always felt it a great responsibility’ as custodian of Bill’s ‘last letter’, she did not post it immediately because she knew his parents ‘had such a strong feeling that he would still turn up and, like you, I hoped and hoped.’⁴⁸ Instead, she wrote to Bill’s mother, who charged her

with ‘the sad job of unpacking the Christmas parcels which had come to him from Australia and sending them off again to be divided among his friends’.⁴⁹

Despite their hopes, Bill did not ‘turn up’. Nor was his body found. In September 1941, Miss Macdonald and the Millingtons received official notification of presumption of death.⁵⁰ Bill’s friend then posted his ‘last letter’. Although she accepted that ‘we must presume that he was killed’, she admitted that she could hardly ‘bear to write the words’. She took comfort – and hoped Elizabeth Millington would as well – knowing that ‘Bill would want us to be brave and face facts, with as much courage as possible’.⁵¹

Just as Bill had tried to assuage his parents’ grief, so too did Miss Macdonald. She was no stranger to death in conflict. During the Great War, she had been close to a young man who was killed; if he had survived, it is likely they would have married. ‘This’, according to her nephew, ‘caused great sadness to Celia but although she got over it, like all of these tragedies, one never forgets’.⁵² With genuine compassion and a deep seated belief in its truth, she told Bill’s mother that:

⁴⁶ 79 Squadron Operational Record Book National Archives United Kingdom AIR 27/664/17; letter Flight Lieutenant M. Hudson, Air Historical Branch, Ministry of Defence/Alexander 21 November 2012

⁴⁷ National Archives of Australia Barcode number: 3330251, Series number: A705, Control symbol: 106/6/115, Item title: RAAF—Directorate of Personnel Services—Casualty Section—Pilot Officer W.H. Millington DFC DP Air Operations—RAF (NAA Casualty file)

⁴⁸ Undated letter Miss Celia Macdonald of the Isles/Mrs W.H. Millington September 1941. The original of this letter is no longer extant but it was hand copied and distributed throughout the family. Eileen Robinson’s copy courtesy of Robinson Family Archive

⁴⁹ *The West Australian*, 5 April 1941

⁵⁰ NAA Casualty file

⁵¹ Undated letter Miss Celia Macdonald of the Isles September 1941/Mrs W H Millington, courtesy of Robinson Family Archive

⁵² Letter Major Nigel Chamberlayne-Macdonald/Alexander 12 January 2012

We know that he died gloriously. ‘Greater love hath no man than this that he lay down his life for his friends.’⁵³ And he was happy. I can assure you of that. You, his mother can indeed be proud of him and I, one of his many friends, can be grateful for his trust and affection and for the inspiration and help I gained from his great unselfish spirit.⁵⁴

Miss Macdonald lost many more young friends during the war.⁵⁵ As she had in the past, she put aside her grief and continued to work tirelessly at 21B Cadogan Gardens. It wasn’t always easy to keep the rooms open, however. Bombs were an occupational hazard in London during the Blitz. They fell all around and, at one point, Miss Macdonald slept for nearly three-and-a-half months on a deck chair in the lift hall of her block of flats.⁵⁶

As the Royal Australian Air Force’s Empire Air Training Scheme gained momentum, more and more Australian trainees visited Lady Frances and Miss Macdonald or their regional branches. In 1942 alone, more than 10,000 visits were arranged.⁵⁷ Leslie Jubbs recalled that ‘on every occasion my wonderful hosts made my stay so varied and their generosity was quite overwhelming by kindness’.⁵⁸ Bob Nielsen regarded return trips to the Goads, his host family in Bournemouth, as ‘another homecoming’ where he was ‘treated like a very special member of the family’ and Mrs Goad ‘lavished on him love and concern’.⁵⁹ David Scholes relished his visits with the Macleans and regretted the inevitable departure: ‘It is with great sorrow that I leave Tom and Euph. They ... have given me a wonderful time making me feel as much at home as possible.’⁶⁰

Mary Adams, née Hill, lived in Bournemouth. She recalled that ‘we had our first “boys” for Christmas 1941’, six months after her brother Sydney was fatally wounded in combat.⁶¹ ‘Throughout the remainder of the war, we had over 200 stay with us. In fact I married one!’ The Hills hosted ‘Australians, Canadians, New Zealanders and the odd American and South African. Many of them spent all of their leaves with us. They all called my mother, “mum”.’ Mrs Hill’s new, extended family ‘was a great happiness’ and comfort in her grief.⁶²

Inevitably, remembered Mary Adams, ‘we lost many of them in action’.⁶³ As did other host families, they were moved to write to parents after their guests were reported missing or dead.⁶⁴ For some, the opportunity to condole came years later. Geoff Clark’s parents once threw an impromptu belated 21st birthday party – ‘complete with cake’ – for Joe Leary, who

⁵³ John 15:13

⁵⁴ Undated letter Miss Celia Macdonald of the Isles September 1941/Mrs W.H. Millington, courtesy of Robinson Family Archive

⁵⁵ Letter Major Nigel Chamberlayne-Macdonald/Alexander 12 January 2012

⁵⁶ *The West Australian*, 5 April 1941

⁵⁷ Nelson, *Chased by the Sun. Courageous Australians in Bomber Command in World War II*, ABC Books, Sydney, 2001, p. 63

⁵⁸ Jubbs, ‘Lady Frances Ryder’, *Wings, Official Publication of the RAAF Association*, Volume 59, No. 4, Summer 2007; <http://www.futurepd.org/les/Documents/Unwanted%20Pilot.pdf>

⁵⁹ Nelson, *Chased by the Sun. Courageous Australians in Bomber Command in World War II*, ABC Books, Sydney, 2001, p. 63

⁶⁰ Scholes, DFC, *Air War Diary. An Australian in Bomber Command*, Kangaroo Press, Kenthurst, 1997, p. 54

⁶¹ Sydney Jenkyn Hill flew in the Battle of Britain with 609 Squadron. On 21 October 1940, he shared in the destruction of 609 Spitfire Squadron’s 100th victory with Flight Lieutenant Frank Howell. He was the ‘bosom buddy’ of Melbourne born Battle of Britain pilot John Curchin; the pair were so close they were referred to as the ‘Heavenly Twins’. John was killed in action on 18 June 1941, two weeks before Sydney’s death.

Email Mary Adams née Hill/Alexander 2 December 2011; <http://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/2361173/HILL,%20SYDNEY%20JENKYN>; <http://www.bbm.org.uk/Curchin.htm>

⁶² Email Mary Adams née Hill /Alexander 2 December 2011

⁶³ *ibid.*

⁶⁴ Nelson, *Chased by the Sun. Courageous Australians in Bomber Command in World War II*, ABC Books, Sydney, 2001, pp. 63–64

had been in hospital on the big day. Ten days later, Joe, a pilot with 460 Squadron, was lost on a raid to Friedrichshafen. In 1990, Geoff's 88-year-old father visited Joe's 93-year-old Aunt in Auckland. The Clarks' *in loco parentis* role extended to their guests' families. Don Walker was one of the first Australians to stay with them. His brother Bill was taken prisoner of war when Crete fell and so, to relieve Don of the worry of organising Red Cross parcels, the Clarks offered to do it. Even after Don died on operations with 235 Squadron, they continued to send Bill parcels until his release.⁶⁵

With peace came the gradual wind-down of the Scheme. It returned to its pre-war character and was renamed the Dominion Services and Students Hospitality Scheme.⁶⁶ Lady Frances and Miss Macdonald continued to welcome visitors to Cadogan Gardens, and Miss Macdonald maintained an exhaustive correspondence with her many friends throughout the world, including Elizabeth Millington.⁶⁷ But her duty to Bill and his family was not yet complete.

Cadogan Gardens escaped the bombing during the Blitz but much of London was destroyed or damaged. Westminster Abbey's Lady Chapel, built by King Henry VII and now more commonly known as the Henry VII Chapel, was one casualty. When the Dean of Westminster was approached about a memorial to those who fought and died in the Battle of Britain, he suggested the Lady Chapel. Lord Trenchard, the Marshal of the RAF, and Lord Dowding, who led Fighter Command during the Battle, headed the committee to raise funds to restore the chapel and to commission a commemorative window to replace the stained glass that was shattered during the Blitz.⁶⁸



Fig.2: Battle of Britain Day 15 September 1947. William and Elizabeth Millington showing Group Captain A.G. Carr, the resident Air Force Officer, their brochure of the Battle of Britain Window. (Courtesy of the Robinson Family)

On 10 July 1947, King George VI unveiled the Battle of Britain Memorial Window in honour of 'The Few' at Westminster Abbey. The next-of-kin of airmen killed in the battle were invited to the ceremony at their own expense. Australian-based families who

could not be present were permitted to invite in their stead a relative or friend living in Britain or, if that were not possible, an officer from the RAAF's London headquarters would attend on their behalf. When William Millington Sr learned that Sir Willoughby Norrie, the governor of South Australia, would be attending, he asked him to stand in for himself and his

⁶⁵ http://www.theoddbods.org/2012_10/oddsnends04.htm. Bill Walker visited the Clarks before returning to Australia.

⁶⁶ Atkin: Funeral Oration; *The Times*, 9 July 1947

⁶⁷ At one time it was estimated that Miss Macdonald was in continuous contact with 1700 to 1800 former guests from the Dominions. *The Australian Women's Weekly*, 14 November 1936; Eileen Robinson's annotation on her copy of Miss Macdonald's September 1941 letter, courtesy of Robinson Family Archive

⁶⁸ <http://www.westminster-abbey.org/visit-us/highlights/the-royal-air-force-chapel>; Perkins, *Westminster Abbey. The Royal Air Force Chapel with the Battle of Britain Window in The Chapel of King Henry VII*, H.B. Skinner & Co Ltd, London, no date, p. 25

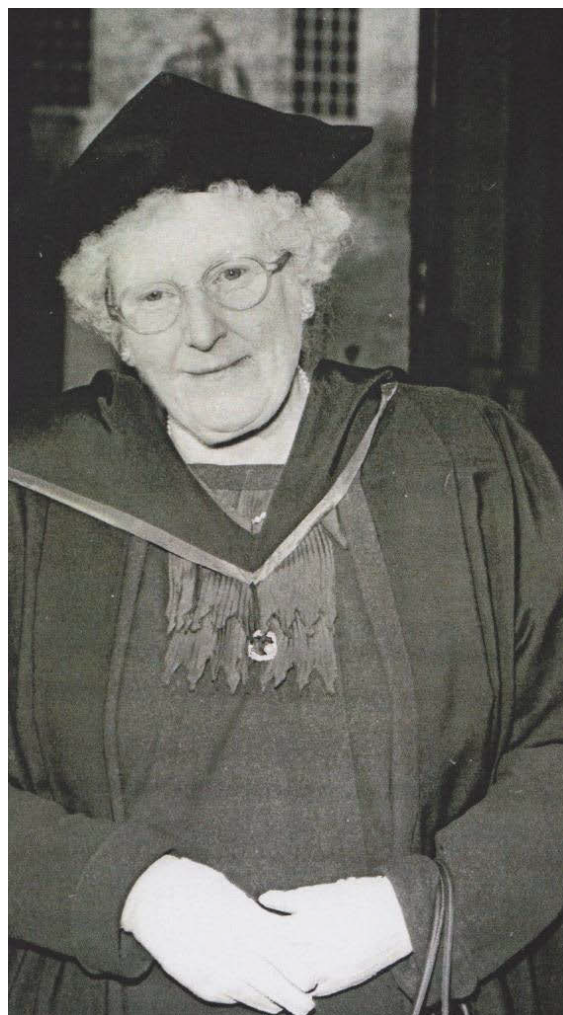
wife.⁶⁹ Sir Willoughby agreed but on the day when ‘every seat in nave, choir and Henry VII’s Chapel was filled – the greater number with more than 2500 near relatives of the men named in the roll of honour’ – Miss Macdonald was among them, officially representing the Millingtons.⁷⁰ She later sent Bill’s parents a memento of the dedication.

In ceremonies throughout Australia on 15 September 1947 – Battle of Britain Day – the Royal Australian Air Force Association inaugurated Air Force Day to annually commemorate the RAAF’s war dead.⁷¹ Bill Millington had been rejected when he applied for a RAAF cadetship. It may have been as simple as too many had applied that year and, with limited cadetships available, many good candidates missed out but his family believed he had missed out because of lack of money and influence.⁷² Even so, his parents attended Adelaide’s service. Holding the brochure for the Battle of Britain Window in Westminster Abbey that Miss Macdonald had sent them, they remembered their son and his sacrifice (Fig.2).

Fig.3: Miss Celia Macdonald in 1959 when Oxford University conferred an honorary Master of Arts for her work with Rhodes Scholars. (Courtesy of Major Nigel Chamberlayne-Macdonald)

Later that year, Lady Frances once again stepped back from the hospitality scheme.⁷³ The ill health that had brought about her retirement in 1933 reclaimed her and she returned to her childhood home. She suffered breathing problems and was unwell for a long time before her death on 24 December 1965.⁷⁴ She was mourned by many friends, all around the world.⁷⁵

In 1948, Miss Macdonald formed the Dominion Fellowship Trust to take over the hospitality work. As well as running the Trust, she maintained her maternal role to the many young people in her life. She was a wise, caring and knowledgeable counsellor to guests of the Trust and a broad-minded confidante to her own family’s younger generation. She was ‘a much loved aunt’ to her nephew and ‘her visits were much looked forward to. You could tell Aunt Celia things that you could not tell other people.’⁷⁶ In 1959, Oxford University conferred an honorary Master of Arts for her work with Rhodes Scholars over the years.⁷⁷ In March 1960, she reluctantly announced that the



⁶⁹ *The Advertiser*, 7 June 1947

⁷⁰ *The Times*, 11 July 1947; *The Mercury*, 11 July 1947

⁷¹ *The Advertiser*, 16 September 1947

⁷² Unpublished biographical essay by Simon Robinson, courtesy of Robinson Family Archive

⁷³ Atkin: Funeral Oration

⁷⁴ Email Nicola Finlay, Personal Assistant to The Earl of Harrowby/Alexander 6 December 2011

⁷⁵ *The Times*, 30 December 1965

⁷⁶ Atkin: Funeral Oration; letter Major Nigel Chamberlayne-Macdonald/Alexander 12 January 2012

⁷⁷ Letter Major Nigel Chamberlayne-Macdonald/Alexander 12 January 2012; *The Times*, 28 January 1959

Dominions Fellowship Trust would fold in early 1961. Its work would be continued by the Victoria League.⁷⁸

Miss Macdonald died on 4 January 1976. Her memorial service was crowded with family, friends, and representatives from the Victoria League, other akin service organisations and Commonwealth countries, including Australia, who had benefited from her ‘span of over forty years of self dedication to a most worthy cause’. In his oration, her friend Ronald Atkin, a one-time host and ‘honorary office-boy-come-door-boy’ at 21B with whom she used to play Beethoven symphonies scored for two pianos, told of the shock of her death, so sudden that family and friends alike were still reeling from it: ‘We will miss her sorely ... and sharing with us in our loss ... will be that vast world-wide “adopted family” overseas, who have never ceased to bless her name and that of Frances Ryder.’⁷⁹

Perhaps knowledge of Miss Celia Macdonald’s great contribution to the comfort of Australians has faded somewhat from the collective consciousness – but ‘a euphemism and not a real person’? I think not. She was very real.

*

PRIMARY SOURCES

National Archives of Australia

Barcode number: 3330251, Series number: A705, Control symbol: 106/6/115, Item title: RAAF—Directorate of Personnel Services—Casualty Section—Pilot Officer W.H. Millington DFC DP Air Operations—RAF

National Archives United Kingdom

AIR 2/9398 Bill Millington’s DFC Recommendation
AIR 27/664/17 79 Squadron Operational Record Book

Author’s Records

Email Simon Robinson/Kristen Alexander 5 January 2011
Undated letter Victoria Wells, Hawkhurst History Society/Alexander (received 9 March 2011)
Email Mary Adams née Hill/Alexander 2 December 2011
Email Nicola Finlay, Personal Assistant to The Earl of Harrowby/Alexander 8 December 2011
Letter Major Nigel Chamberlayne-Macdonald/Alexander 12 January 2012
Letter Flight Lieutenant M. Hudson, Air Historical Branch, Ministry of Defence/Alexander 21 November 2012

Robinson Family Archive

Bill Millington’s 1939 diary
Letter Bill Millington/Eileen Robinson née Millington 7 July 1939
Letter Bill Millington/Eileen Robinson née Millington 31 December 1939
Bill Millington’s ‘last letter’ June 1940
Letter Bill Millington/Eileen Robinson née Millington 14 September 1940
Undated letter Miss Celia Macdonald/Mrs W.H. Millington September 1941
Handwritten biographical notes by Eileen Robinson née Millington
Unpublished biographical essay by Simon Robinson
Bill Millington’s RAF Service record, RAF Disclosures

⁷⁸ *The Times*, 25 March 1960

⁷⁹ *The Times*, 14 January 1976; Atkin: Funeral Oration; letter Major Nigel Chamberlayne-Macdonald/Alexander 12 January 2012; *The Times*, 28 January 1959

Bowden Family Archive

John Crossman's 1939 diary

Letter Miss Celia Macdonald of the Isles/John Crossman 26 October 1939

Letter Miss Celia Macdonald of the Isles/John Crossman 18 March 1940

Major Nigel Chamberlayne-Macdonald

Funeral Oration: *In Memoriam—Celia MacDonald 1889–1976* by Ronald William Mein Atkin MBE

The Late Greg Hughes

Letter Pat Hughes/ Charles and Heather Hughes July [1939]

SECONDARY SOURCES**Newspapers**

The Advertiser, 7 June and 16 September 1947

The Age, 19 January 1924

The Argus, 23 January 1924

The Australian Women's Weekly, 14 November 1936 and 13 April 1940

The Courier Mail, 10 August 1942

The Mercury, 11 July 1947

Queensland Figaro, 28 April 1928

The Register, 13 June 1918 and 21 August 1919

The Sydney Morning Herald, 5 January 1918, 16 August 1918, and 2 January 1937

The Times, 9 and 11 July 1947, 28 January 1959, 25 March 1960, 30 December 1965, and 14 January 1976

The West Australian, 20 March 1924, 10 January, 10 June and 8 December 1936, 5 April 1941, and 23 November 1946

Books and Articles

Austin, A.B., *Fighter Command*, Victor Gollancz Ltd, London, 1941

Cull, B., Lander, B., and Weiss, H., *Twelve Days in May. The Air Battle for Northern France and the Low Countries, 10–21 May 1940*, Grub Street, London, 1995

Hayes, H., *Beyond the Great Escape. Geoff Cornish: The One Who Got Away*, Possum Publishing, Elanora, 2004

Jubbs, L., 'Lady Frances Ryder', *Wings, Official Publication of the RAAF Association*, vol.59, no.4, Summer 2007

Nelson, H., *Chased by the Sun. Courageous Australians in Bomber Command in World War II*, ABC Books, Sydney, 2001

Perkins, J., *Westminster Abbey. The Royal Air Force Chapel with the Battle of Britain Window in The Chapel of King Henry VII*, H.B. Skinner & Co Ltd, London, no date

Scholes, DFC, D., *Air War Diary. An Australian in Bomber Command*, Kangaroo Press, Kenthurst, 1997

Websites

<http://thepeerage.com/p4345.htm#i43443>

<http://www.london-gazette.co.uk/issues/31422/pages/8092>

<http://www.london-gazette.co.uk/issues/34396/supplements/3095>

<http://www.westminster-abbey.org/visit-us/highlights/the-royal-air-force-chapel>

http://www.theoddbods.org/2012_10/oddsnends04.htm

<http://www.futurepd.org/les/Documents/Unwanted%20Pilot.pdf>

<http://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/2361173/HILL,%20SYDNEY%20JENKYN>

<http://www.bbm.org.uk/Curchin.htm>

A SPECIAL PATTERN 80 PR RML GUN FOR VICTORIA

Frank Garie¹

Introduction

One of the unfortunate things about the study of English seacoast and naval ordnance is that few authors have bothered to tackle the subject of the guns which were developed between the cast-iron smoothbore and the modern steel gun of the post 1880 period. In this author's opinion the main reasons for this sad situation are because the forgotten guns played only a minor role in warfare, and that their history is largely one of a technology in transition, together with virtually no change in gunnery. This situation also applies to the development of modern navies, the authors in most cases generally avoiding the subtle developments in the technology of the ships, guns, and so forth during this period. There is certainly a plethora of official information on the subject surviving from the 19th century, and which continues to be largely ignored in favour of the recycling of popular histories of both the sailing navy and the steel navy of the 20th century.

My research into the British 'built-up' gun (meaning the barrel of a cannon composed of either a steel or wrought-iron inner A-tube enclosed within wrought-iron jackets) has left me a little uncertain as to a simple time-line of technological improvement in this ordnance. This is mainly because most of the changes were made experimentally by several innovators, which overlapped, and were prompted by an arms race for bigger-and-better weapons, but with little practical or war-time experience. In any case the period was one of rapid invention and trials, and many of the guns became obsolete almost before they were finally accepted into service. There were exceptions of course, such as the Armstrong Rifled Breech-Loader (RBL) and the Whitworth Gun, the latter of which was one of the first all-steel guns, but for the purposes of this story there was an element of uniqueness about the Victorian RML, namely, that it was made in appreciable numbers (25) and *only* for Victoria. This gun was similar in its construction to the Mark II versions of medium Service ordnance in that it had a 'safer' wrought iron (WI) A-tube (the inner most tube) instead of one made of harder but uncertain steel. It was manufactured by the Royal Gun Factory (RGF) at Woolwich, England, and was designed to fire a 70-pr shell (an explosive projectile), but which as trials progressed accepted an 80-pr shell. It was known in Australia as the '80-pr 4 ton (80 or 81 cwt) RML Colonial (or Victoria) Pattern', and in England as the '6.3 inch Wrought Iron Woolwich RML 80 cwt for Victoria'. It has been confused with the British Service Pattern 80-pr 5 ton RML Mk1, which was a conversion from the 68-pr 95 cwt Smooth Bore (Dundas 1846 Pattern) to the Palliser system.² Several of these 5 ton guns exist in NSW on both wood and metal carriages. Both RMLs had 6.3 inch, i.e., 6.29 inch, calibre A-tubes of wrought iron.³

History of Victoria's indent

In the period following the end of the Crimean War of 1854-1856, the government of Victoria strived to bring their coastal defences up to date. This war was the first major 'Russian Scare' for the British Empire's Australian colonies. Until 1872 (the year Australia

¹ Frank Garie's interest in 19th century (mostly British) Ordnance, fortifications, warships, etc, began in 1969 with his involvement in Fort Glanville in Adelaide, SA, and which in turn arose from a long and continuing and active involvement with gunpowder small arms; all of which includes a massive amount of searching and research not yet complete.

² The British Service Mk 1 gun was approved per *List of Changes* §2220 on 15 Mar 1872. Its ammunition and ballistics undoubtedly drew upon the trials for the Victorian 80-pr and other RMLs.

³ See the Glossary at the end of this article for an explanation of the measurements and acronyms used.

was connected with the international submarine telegraph cable) Victoria was isolated from England by all means of communication other than by ship. Although Bombay was telegraphically connected with England in 1870, it still took six weeks to three months for cablegram messages to ultimately reach Australia by ship, hence timely official advice of war scares and their cessation was always very inconvenient or late for defence preparations in the Australian colonies.

A Defence Commission was formed in late 1858 to ascertain the steps which should be taken. It was decided to employ a Royal Engineer not only to advise on the choice of the new rifled ordnance and design of fortifications but to expedite the purchase of modern coast defence ordnance from England. However, once the war scare died away no funds were voted for the purchase of the new British rifled guns, that is, Armstrong Rifled Breechloaders, and moreover, no ad hoc RE officer was engaged.

In July 1859 the Australian colonies were hit with the news of a French war scare – several months old. Consequently another defences report was laid before the Victorian parliament as to the status quo on local defences. It was at this point in time that Capt Charles Pasley RE,⁴ the Colonial Engineer, entered upon the scene as an engineering member and Vice-President of the local defence committee. A new ad hoc RE officer, Capt Peter Henry Scratchley, drawn from England, was employed to carry on from Pasley and oversee the design and construction of Victoria's fortifications. His hands-on and up-to-date experience with ordnance was to expedite the 80-pr's progress. Subsequently an indent was sent to England for 24 (later changed to 25) Armstrong RMLs of the latest pattern, but as none were available, several 68-pr 95 cwt SB (smooth-bore) guns and wooden mountings were sent instead.

In September 1860 Capt Scratchley submitted his opinions on Victoria's, i.e. Melbourne's, defences to the government. This report, together with another parliamentary progress report, again advocated the need for the latest in rifled ordnance. As if to prop up these reports a letter was received from Capt Andrew Clarke RE (late Surveyor General and Commissioner of Crown Lands, Victoria), which apprised Victoria of the need to defend itself against the emergence of the ironclad ship, in effect reinforcing the fears of invasion by French ironclads. As the arms race took hold, Victoria was left wanting rifled ordnance.

By the end of 1863 the 68-pr SB guns were being mounted in refurbished batteries around Hobson's Bay (Melbourne's foreshore). These guns were additional to several 32-pr SB guns already in Victoria. In view of the advent of the ironclad, funds were arranged under the guidance of the Hon George Verdon, the Treasurer and defence minister. He subsequently left for England for various purposes, among which was the purchase of an ironclad floating battery, eventuating as the coastal defence turret ship (or breastwork monitor) HMVS *Cerberus* (1869), but things were delayed because of the state of transition in the construction of ordnance and floating defences. More 68-pr SB guns were funded together with steel round shot and guns of position – 40-pr RBL Armstrongs – but the extra 68-pr guns were cancelled because in the meantime Pasley, now a major, had good news on the RML front.

The Pasley Choice

The person directly responsible for the choice of the specially developed RML for Victoria

⁴ Charles Pasley. Capt RE (1824-1890) was the eldest son of the more famous Sir Charles Pasley KCB RE. A long obituary appears in the *Journal of the Institution of Civil Engineers* vol.103, pp.388-392.

was Maj Pasley. In late 1864 Pasley, as acting Agent-General for Victoria in London, received instructions from Treasurer Verdon to choose, among other warlike stores, the most up-to-date and appropriate coast defence gun. On 25 April 1865, after a period of enquiry, Pasley supplied a progress report and reasons for action about to be taken – based in part upon Scratchley's technical input – to Col W.A.D Anderson, Secretary for Military Affairs, and Military Commandant, Victoria.⁵ Pasley advised that the 70-pr RML shunt-gun⁶ was likely to prove suitable for the defence of Melbourne, and that there was a large number of the guns at Woolwich, some of which might be available for purchase, but this did not prove to be the case. It was believed that in Hobson's Bay a 70-pr would be highly effective against the strongest built wooden vessel at a range considerably exceeding 2,000 yards.⁷ It was known from experiment that the weight required of a 70-pr RML gun to bear a charge of 14 lbs of RLG (Rifle Large Grain gunpowder) was about 80 cwt. The results of 70-pr experiments by Armstrongs, as regards both range and accuracy, had hitherto been unequalled, so advised Maj Pasley. He was in no doubt that these guns could sweep the bay from shore to shore and effectively defend Melbourne on the expectation that enemy ships would not be armoured (ironclads) nor more heavily armed than Victoria.

Brig-Gen J.H Lefroy RA, President of the OSC, recommended the choice. This decision was taken at a time when British RML ordnance was being developed in a new age of technological progress, empirical trials and an arms race for the best and most powerful guns. Steel was still in its infancy as a reliable or safe metal for ordnance. The RGF were constructing and experimenting with variations of the Service 64-pr, 7 inch, 8 inch and 9 inch RMLs, some with WI A-tubes and some with steel A-tubes, the latter metal of which was soon to be adopted into the British service. Capt William J. Palliser (late 18th Hussars) had supported the use of steel for the A-tube in his converted cast iron guns because it was hard enough to resist deformation caused by the pressure of shunted studded projectiles, especially near the muzzle; but steel A-tubes were prone to splitting (due it was thought to bubbles in the metal and inadequate forging), and so the more reliable and cheaper WI was chosen for the A-tube of the Victorian gun.⁸ The choice for Victoria was in effect a step or stage in the uncertain art of gun-making, a hybrid gun which contained elements of the inventions of Palliser, Beaulieu, Parsons, Blakely, Armstrong, Krupp, several others of lesser importance but of influence, and most recently Fraser of the RGF.

⁵ Victorian Parliamentary Paper 33/64-65: 2nd Report from the Select Committee upon the National Defences.

⁶ A shunt gun was an RML with double rifling grooves (in 3 sets), whereby a studded projectile was loaded via wider and deeper grooves, but upon firing the copper alloy studs of the projectile would be shunted by centrifugal force up onto the adjoining shallower and closer fitting grooves, thus effecting a centralising of the projectile in the bore with resulting greater accuracy. The plain or Woolwich groove replaced the shunt groove after it was found that shunt guns had a high failure rate.

⁷ 2,000 yards was the *effective* range (approximately) of the largest smooth bores at this time, i.e. the furthest range at which it was certain that tolerable effects could be produced. For example, an average of the deviation of shots fired (shot and shell) at one mile was between 16 and 28 yards, and in range about 150 yards. (Boxer: 1860, 171-2; Owen: 1863, 234-45; and Griffiths: 1856). RMLs reduced these errors to just yards (petit metres), the studless automatic gascheck projectiles even less.

⁸ The terms 'steel' and 'wrought iron' as used in this article are contemporary with the 1860s. WI was in fact softer than cast iron. WI was a very ancient and common metal because it could be easily manufactured, worked and welded. It was the precursor to steel. Forged WI was a mechanical mixture of nearly pure iron and multiple particles of slag, the size and number of which particles depended upon the skill of the founder and forger. It was formed as a spongy agglutination in two types of furnace, it could not be poured like steel or cast iron, and therefore had to be hammered to expel most of the slag. The production of WI ceased in the early 20th century, earlier in some countries. It is rarely made today. It was and is easy to weld by forging, but not by oxy and arc-welding without difficulty.

There was another factor which affected the choice, that imperfectly trained gunners (such as volunteer artillerymen) required a gun which could be easily and rapidly worked, that is, a muzzle-loader. At this time British breech-loaders were relatively unsafe, more complicated mechanically, were weaker in the breech than muzzle-loaders of the same calibre, and hence they were unsuitable for the piercing of armour.

Further to the thinking of the time, the Admiralty preferred a calibre of 6.3 inches so as to allow the use of 32-pr SB shot for close quarters use or in an emergency. Knowing that guns on the Fraser system of construction were far cheaper than those made by private manufacturers,⁹ Pasley's preference was for the RGF to make them, provided he could obtain the sanction of the Secretary of State for War. Pasley further advised that considerable savings could be made by adapting the 70-pr to the 68-pr SB carriages and platforms already in Victoria. This was a rather attractive idea, especially as new iron sliding carriages and traversing platforms were not to be adopted for 6.3 inch medium ordnance for another decade, at least by the RGF.

Design and manufacture

Prior to early 1865, and with the approval of the War Office to have Victoria's guns made at the RGF, Scratchley (now a major and working on construction projects for the War Office) was authorised by Pasley to consult the experts about a 70-pr gun – a rifled shell gun – which could accurately hit wooden ships at ranges between 2,500 and 5,000 yards with an explosive shell. This the 68-pr (8.12 inch calibre) SB guns already mounted in Victoria could not do. Following an early decision on what was required, the construction of the RMLs proceeded without evident hitch, except with regard to projectiles. The problems in the development and testing of these were to cause a long delay in the release of Gun No.1, which was used as a test piece.

During this time the OSC officially approved the Woolwich form of rifling, and the findings of the committee on the competition between the Armstrong and Whitworth guns were reported, all of great moment for the evolution of British ordnance. Some months prior to the proving of the 70-pr guns the OSC requested drawings of the projectiles from the Royal Laboratory at Woolwich. These were subsequently approved by the OSC but with some reservations; trials were needed. The OSC also sought the proviso from Pasley that the sanction of the War Department would be obtained before proceeding with the trials. This approval was received in short time.

In mid-October 1865 the OSC suggested to Scratchley that the ordinary projectiles should be 80 lbs and fired with 12 lbs of RLG – as this would give better results beyond 800 yards, and that a 70 lb steel shell would be effective against ironclads up to 800 yards, but it was decided to ascertain by actual trials whether good results could be obtained with 70 lb projectiles and 14 lb charges. In late November the drawings were received from the Royal Laboratory for both 70 lb and 80 lb common (explosive) shells, having three rows of copper studs, two in a row, set to the rifling twist of one turn in 35 calibres (220 inches) and a depth of 0.14 inches.

The design and manufacture of the guns was carried out at the RGF under the direction of Col F.A Campbell RA, Superintendent, Mr J.Anderson CE, and Mr R.S Fraser CE, Manager.

⁹ Fraser was the inventor of the 'cheap construction' (simpler) method of using fewer built-up coils for B and C-tubes (jackets); it was still an evolving system in 1867 but nevertheless was in some considerable use at that time. Armstrong guns generally featured many coils and were consequently about twice the price.

The design as settled upon comprised the following specifications:

Weight	80 cwt (nominal)	Preponderance about 4 cwt
Calibre	6.3 inches, same as the service 64 pr RMLs and 32 pr SB	
Length	Nominal	113.75 inches
	Overall	120.75 inches
	Of bore	98 inches

Outer diameter of gun and shoulder width at trunnions 25.25 inches¹⁰

Gap between rimbases and carriage 0.04 inches¹¹

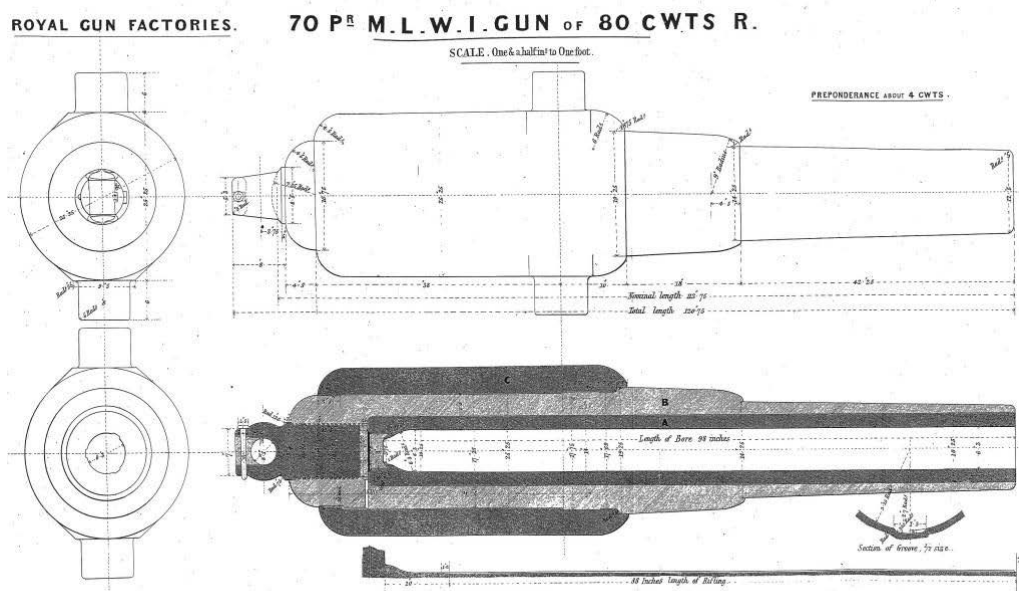
Position of Vent 6.2 inches from the bottom of bore

Rifling Woolwich system: 3 grooves, RH uniform twist
One turn in 35 calibres (220 inches), length 88 inches
Grooves: width 1.3 inches, depth 0.14 inches

(RGF Drawing No.467 (Tracings 1695 & 1704))

Under Fraser's system the gun was built up in six parts (Fig.1 below; source: *Victorian PP 25/67 Report of Mr. Verdon's Proceedings...*):

1. A-tube: Marshall's 'charcoal iron' double coils, for guns Nos 1, 2, 4 and 8, single coils for the remaining 21 guns. In these double coils the outer coil was of Shakespear's iron. Marshall's Iron was top quality, this name being engraved on the A-tube at the muzzle.
 2. B-tube: Muzzle end single coil of Shakespear's iron. Trunnion end double coil of Thorneycroft's iron.
 3. Breechpiece: Forged from scrap iron. (This was the breech end of the B-tube).¹² Scrap iron was considered to be purer than new WI.
 4. Cascable: Forged from scrap iron.
 5. C-coil: Double coil of Thorneycroft's iron.
 6. Trunnions: Forged from scrap iron and welded onto C-coil.
- 'There was copper cup at the bottom of the bore'. (See next paragraph).



¹⁰ The width of the 68 pr at this point was 23.68 inches, while that of the 64 pr was 22.75 inches.

¹¹ State Records SA (SRSA): GRG 55/1/1883, AG 1242.

¹² The WI breech-piece was 'different' from the WI breech-coil of the period in that the former was 'forged' of cross-laid (referring to its slag-inclusion fibrous structure) bars, as opposed to the latter whose 'fibrous' bars were coiled around a mandrel and pressure 'welded', a subtle difference in metallurgical strength perhaps, and an indication of the unsound state of technological theory and practice as it applied to WI at that time. The bored-out breech part was subsequently forge-welded to the B-tube.

Fig.1 does not show a locking hook (J. Anderson's step or shoulder)¹³ on the A-tube because it was held in solely by the B-tube being heat-shrunk upon it, prior to which both tubes had been machined to the necessary thousandths of an inch tolerance. This was the method used with the 7 inch and 8 inch Service Pattern No.2 RMLs – as too the method of staking in the WI plug (the Elswick 'loose end') and a copper disc (gas-check or packing piece). Fig.1 also shows what appears to be a WI disc with surrounding gas escape groove between the copper disc and the cascable screw, not a copper cup. The gas escape groove vented at the bottom rear of the B-tube. According to Capt Molony RA, assistant superintendent of the RGF (1868), WI A-tubes could not be made with solid ends (Palliser: 1867, 184). The C-coil and B-tube were machined, including two 'hooks', prior to being heat-shrunk together. The 'hooking' together of tubes was meant to provide both longitudinal strength and fixation, to prevent the inner tubes from recoiling out of the outer tubes/coils. Two muzzle-studs (not shown on drawing) were used to support a shot-bearer when loading in the horizontal position. These may have been added in Victoria.

Proof

Between late 1865 and early 1866 the 25 guns were rifled, and then proved (proofed) on the OSC Range, Royal Arsenal, Woolwich. At this point in time the vent (the hole for the igniter or friction tube) was not formed prior to proving, so ignition was effected by electric wires inserted from the muzzle. This was a precaution in case the unhooked A-tube moved during proving.¹⁴ The standard proof charge comprised 15 lbs (1¼ times the service charge of 12 lbs) of RLG powder and an 80 lb studded cylindrical proof shot. Maj Pasley witnessed the proving by one blank and two proof shots per gun. Pasley's report, as printed in Victorian Parliamentary Paper 25/1867, '*Report of Mr Verdon's Proceedings as the delegate of Victoria to Her Majesty's Government upon the subject of the Colonial Defences...*', read: 'Examination after proof –Guns received new A-tubes after proof, and were again proved and passed; the remainder passed first proof.' The Memorandum of Examination was not published with the paper, which leaves me puzzled as to the correctness of the reprint. Perhaps the number of guns is missing from the reprint, which would otherwise confirm that some A-tubes had failed first proof and were hydraulically replaced with new A-tubes. Gun No.1 was to endure many more tests.

One of the routine tests after proofing was to fill the finished barrel with water and apply hydraulic pressure to it. This tested the breech end of the A-tube for flaws. The guns were subsequently engraved with the royal monogram, and on the left trunnion face with the letters 'R – G – F', gun register number '1' to '25', year '1866', RGF marks in customary locations, and threaded holes for carriage fittings. The location and inclination of the sight-sockets now awaited the final choice of projectiles and charges.

At this stage in the proceedings (8 January 1866) the OSC realised that they were being asked by the colonial agent of a self-governing colony to support a diversion not only from Service pattern ordnance but ammunition and fuzes as well, so before they got into deeper water they advised the Secretary of State for War and HRH the Field Marshal Commanding in Chief, whether they should continue with the experiments. On 30 January the OSC was advised that in future the War Department would not undertake the manufacture of any warlike stores for

¹³ Anderson's method of hooking the coils by means of stepped diameters (Stoney:1872, 17).

¹⁴ The Treatise on the Construction and Manufacture of Ordnance in the British Service (various dates) gives ample contemporary descriptions of metals and the involved process of manufacturing RML ordnance, except that this article gives additional info on the sources of wrought irons used.

the colonies except of Service patterns. In the case of the Victorian guns the War Department could still provide free advice, but accepted no responsibility. This was a problem which would endure for the next 20-odd years in circumstances where the self-governing Australian colonies sought guns from the RGF in a panic over war scares, and were consequently obliged to either seek armaments from the private sector,¹⁵ or settle for older and/or obsolete patterns.

Range, accuracy and endurance trials

Since the 70-pr 4 ton gun was not a Service pattern, it was decided to carry out experiments to ascertain a) Range, accuracy and endurance; b) Sighting; c) The best form of Common shell, Chilled shot or shell, Shrapnel shell. Shortly thereafter gun register No.1 with ammunition arrived at the Shoeburyness proof-range (at the mouth of the Thames) for the trials. This was carried out with both 70 lb and 80 lb shells from 9 to 17 January 1866. 200 rounds were fired. The gun was mounted on a wood garrison sliding carriage surmounted upon a wood dwarf traversing platform, i.e. a modified 68-pr SB mounting. Twenty rounds were fired each day at angles of elevation from 1° 20' to 10° 5', giving mean ranges from 981 yards to 4,362 yards with the 70 lb projectile and 14 lbs LG; and mean ranges from 866 yards to 4,221 yards with the 80 lb projectile and 12 lbs RLG.¹⁶ From the results it was observed that the 80 lb shell shot more accurately than the 70 lb shell, and the studs of the 80 lb shell were less worn than those on the 70 lb shell, resulting in a preference by the OSC for the 80-pr, hence a now updated nomenclature for the gun.

At the 32nd round the front transom of the carriage split through, but was supported for the remainder of the practice by wedges. During the test at the lowest angle of elevation the gun was run up violently to ascertain how far the unfired shell would start forward (from its inertia). The average distance of nine tests was 6.1 inches. If this occurred during practice the shell would require reseating before it was fired, otherwise it would fall short of its target, or worse still the A-tube could be damaged, or the gun disabled. Wedge wads (of wood) were one remedy. Earlier that month Major Scratchley had given notice of his intentions for the guns, and had posed some questions for the advice of the OSC. He requested range tables; the quantities of powder for Full and Reduced charges; whether it would be advisable to have a small proportion of chilled solid shot in addition to the steel shell; what charge was appropriate when firing 32-pr SB projectiles; and whether red-hot shot (32-pr spherical) could be fired. He also asked if wooden garrison sliding carriages for the 68-pr of 95 cwt gun, when converted in Victoria, would be strong enough for the guns.

On 2 February the OSC replied to Scratchley's questions as follows:

¹⁵ The suppliers were Armstrong and also Whitworth, but not Krupp (who did supply railway steel to Australia). Private purchasing had the added effect of inducing the colonies into obtaining non-service patterns. Victoria, however, purchased some 9 inch 12 ton RMLs of Service pattern in 1867 from Armstrongs, but then for the remainder of the century the Australian colonies purchased various ordnance, including Armstrong Protected Barrette RMLs (the barrels were longer in the chase than the equivalent Woolwich guns) and numerous hydro-pneumatic disappearing breechloaders, most of which were not Service patterns, but which nevertheless were the latest in technology, protected the gunners, and were supposedly superior. The cheaper and standard Service patterns were purchased when available. Although the Colonies set the pace on new weapon purchases, this really only happened in a short window of time before the new steel technologies swept the old guns aside or to reserve status.

¹⁶ LG (Large Grain) was the British Service gunpowder for smoothbore ordnance. RLG (Rifle Large Grain) had larger and denser granules and was therefore a slower burning powder for the Armstrong breech-loader, and so for a short period of time both were used in the new RML guns.

- a. Range tables would be prepared for 80-pr projectiles with 12 lb RLG Full charges.
 - b. Reduced charge is 8 lbs (= the blank charge). Range table to be supplied.
 - c. Charge for shrapnel and case shot is 12 lbs.
 - e. There is no objection to the use of 32-pr SB shot with SB Service charges.
 - f. Red-hot 32-pr SB shot should not be used as it is attended with some risk to the gun, and elongated shells with large bursting charges are much more effective.
- The OSC will decide upon the pattern of each kind of projectile. The OSC is of the opinion that the converted 68-pr wood garrison sliding carriages will be found sufficiently strong for these guns. (Selected extract)

Pasley subsequently ordered metal parts for the conversions in Victoria.

All of these and later trials caused an extended delay in the delivery of the guns to Victoria. It would be reasonable to presume that at this time the sights were calibrated (in degrees only) and all of the guns machined for them. The guns were drilled for Right-Hand side (tangent) sights only, i.e. no centre nor Left-Hand sights. The rear tangent sight socket was drilled at an inclination (permanent deflection) of 2° to the left to offset the drift induced by the RH twist of the rifling to projectiles. These were open or simple metallic sights, not optical, but suited the ranges of those times.

During August 1866 No.1 gun suffered another forty 80-pr shells being fired from it with 12 lb charges, this time to test Boxer's wood time fuze to ascertain their time of burning. Also tested was Pettman's General Service fuze against an oak target 9 inches thick at 500 yards. The charge was reduced to 5.6 lbs to correspond with a distance of 1,500 yards, but this weak charge negated the function of the fuze, with the result that only one shell exploded. Recovered shells were reused after landing in wet sand – well perhaps not all of them! Later in the same month another 30 shots were fired, this time with full charges and with positive result. Another 10 full charge shots were fired to see if they would resist impact on water; most did. Then followed 30 rounds of Palliser's solid chilled cast iron shot (armour piercing) with 14 lb charges at various angles of elevation. This trial identified the shot as being noisy and 'snaking' in flight. The studs showed some abnormal wear which was attributed to the shortness of the shot. Further trials were carried out, one of which was to try Palliser shot with a reduced charge against a target representing wooden ships. Mr G.Verdon, the Victorian treasurer, noted in his report to the Victorian parliament in 1867 that the 80-pr guns 'have been thoroughly and satisfactorily tested.'¹⁷

On 26 February 1867 a trial was carried out at Shoeburyness to see if an 80-pr Palliser shell and 12 lbs RLG would perforate the 'Warrior' target (4½ inches WI plus wood backing) at 70 yards. Four shots were fired, of which three penetrated and broke up, the last stuck in the plate. A few months later this shell was tested for range and accuracy at four different ranges. From the noise made by the shells in flight doubts were now expressed about the centre of gravity of the shells.

Except for the 'super-charge' of 1884 (described under Gunpowder and Projectiles), I have been unable to discover the results of further trials of projectiles for the 80-pr Victoria gun, but undoubtedly the projectiles for the 64-pr and 80-pr Service RMLs (different patterns made at the RGF but of the same calibre as the Victoria gun) had an influence upon the patterns eventually accepted into the British service, leading eventually to studless projectiles and automatic gas-checks, the latter of which virtually solved the scoring or erosion problem associated with studded projectiles without gas-checks. The Palliser shell also made the

¹⁷ Victorian PP25/1867 *Report of Mr Verdon's Proceedings ... on Colonial Defences.*

earlier steel shell obsolete because it was cheaper to make. There was an exception to this in that the later Shrapnel shell for Victoria was made of steel, thus enabling an extra 42 shrapnel balls to be carried for the pleasure of recipients.¹⁸ High Explosive fillers were excluded because at this time they were unsafe for use in artillery. This period and beyond was certainly one of escalating trials and technical innovation, even more so after the new generation of steel breech-loaders, explosives and propellants appeared.

The mounting and use of the Victoria Guns in the Australian Colonies

On 1 November 1866 24 of the 80-pr 80cwt 'Armstrong' guns together with 360 shot, 3,500 shell, and an RCD converted 68-pr SB wooden carriage and platform (or slide) (to guide the manufacture of mountings in Victoria), were shipped from Gravesend per the ship *Holmsdale*, and were landed at Williamstown dockyard, Port Melbourne in mid-February 1867,¹⁹ – where most of them remained unmounted until the next war scare!

On 17 May 1869 the Melbourne *Argus* reported that the 80-prs were fired for the first time in the colony on 15 May by the East Melbourne Artillery Corps at the Emerald Hill Central Battery (South Melbourne). Three 80-prs on converted 68-pr SB mountings were used. Apparently the military authorities were more concerned with the suitability of the guns for firing 32-pr shot (of which there were stacks in store) with a reduced charge of 8 lbs of LG for volunteer practice, than for the guns' primary purpose. Practice was then carried on with two rounds of studded common shell per gun. The reason for this approach may have been because the last practice of the volunteers had been with 68-pr SBs back in November 1867, and I gather that they did not feel confident enough to commence practice with the new-fangled rifled projectiles. What these gunners did not appreciate was the fact that firing a 'loose' or unstabilised Cast Iron cannon ball through a WI barrel had consequences; the harder CI ball could bruise the rifling, so much so, that a damaged gun could result, and this did occur with some of the guns over time,²⁰ thus lending towards their demise.

In late August 1870 the Victorian parliament was moved to look to Victoria's defences because of England's possible involvement in the Franco-Prussian War. This was at a time when British troops, who had been in Australia virtually since settlement, had recently departed, and Victoria's ironclad (*Cerberus*) was still fitting out in England, thus leaving Melbourne defended by SB guns, a handful of 80-prs and newer 9 inch RMLs, restless gunners and decaying SB gun emplacements. The Military Commandant took immediate action and ordered the manufacture of mountings for the unmounted 80-pr RMLs. The quickest way to make them was to use the government employees at the Williamstown railway workshops (near where the guns lay) and convicts from the Pentridge Gaol. Jarrah, a Western Australian hardwood, was selected piece by piece, and used for an unknown number of mountings, budgeted at £2,600.²¹ Although England had declared her neutrality from the war, progress on the now updated batteries around Hobson's Bay continued, so that by April 1871 sixteen 80-prs had been mounted on carriages upon dwarf platforms of teak or jarrah. In the same month Gun No.1 arrived aboard HMCS (HMVS) *Cerberus*, thus completing the

¹⁸ *The Defence News or Militia, Naval and Rifle Club Chronicle* no.3, July 1886, p.6.

¹⁹ Melbourne *Argus* (and *Age*) 12 Feb 1867. The press called the guns 'Armstrongs' because of the use of the so-called Armstrong coil in their construction.

²⁰ The Handbook for the 80-pr RML Converted gun of 5 tons MK I for 1883, which used most of the same projectiles as the Victorian gun, noted that 'Spherical projectiles are not in future to be fired from rifled guns'. On a scale of relative hardness CI rated as 19. WI as 11, Steel as 40 and gunmetal as 5.

²¹ *Argus* 6, 7 and 9 Sep 1870.

order of six years before (Billett: 1994, 12).²²

The 80-prs were fired with blanks at the annual Easter sham-fights and on other occasions with shot and shell as funds permitted, a saga which I will avoid, except for the following instances. In January 1872 another practice was carried out at the Sandridge Lagoon Battery at ranges of 1,800 and 3,000 yards at a small flag just visible above the crest of the waves.²³ Over a period of several months in 1871-2, Mr Henri W. Menere (a Melbourne inventor) constructed a wooden disappearing carriage for one of the 80-prs. This mounting was still in situ, but was fast decaying in November 1875 (Garie: 2004).²⁴ The *Argus* reported on 11 July 1874 that an 80-pr had been run up too violently, with follow-up ramming of the projectile being necessary. The gunnery instructor said that ‘accuracy of aim must on no account give way to rapid firing’.

In 1886 it was reported that an 80-pr at Point Gellibrand (Williamstown) had been trialled on a new WI depression mounting fitted with a hydraulic buffer (see Fig.2).²⁵ This mounting for ‘depression loading’ was designed to protect the gun detachment while loading was carried out under the cover of a six-foot-high parapet as protection from enemy projectiles. The guns were also loaded horizontally because it was quicker, and the risk of casualties from incoming missiles was little different. Several of these equipments have been preserved *en batterie* at the Western ports of Port Fairy (Belfast), Portland and Warrnambool.

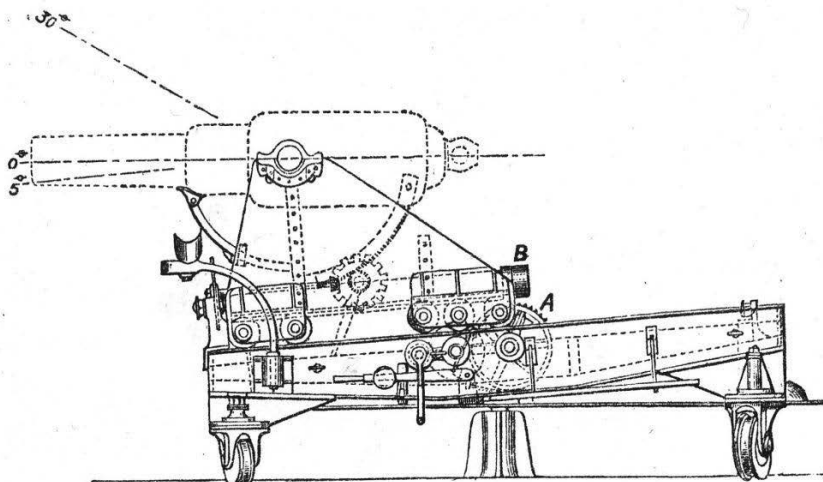


Fig.2: Wrought Iron Carriage and Platform Mk1 for 80-pr 80 cwt RML Gun for Victoria and South Australia. Source: British List of Changes No. 4326 of 14 Sept 1882. ‘A’ is the running-back gear. ‘B’ is the hydraulic recoil buffer cylinder.

Within a year or so of the remounting of the 80-pr guns the erection

of new generation Armstrong (Elswick) breech-loading guns on hydro-pneumatic (HP) disappearing carriages caused many of the 80-prs to be relegated to secondary and reserve status. In 1887 an 80-pr RML was mounted on one of the new Elswick HP carriages in the Flagstaff reserve at Fort Queenscliff for trials.²⁶ It was first fired on 12 February, but without any details for historians. When it was fired in August 1889 during the visit of Maj Gen J. Bevan Edwards the discharge broke the windows of the old lighthouse. This possibly unique mounting was still extant on 9 January 1892.²⁷

²² Billett, original source not quoted.

²³ *Argus* 23 Jan 1872. With non-optical sights the practice of shooting at small objects (instead of at ships) like a flag on a raft meant that ‘short’ ranges continued to be the standard gunnery practice.

²⁴ Photos of the Menere gun carriage and other 80-prs can be seen on www.cerberus.com.au.

²⁵ *Argus* 24 June 1886, p.5.

²⁶ *Argus* 14 Feb 1887 and 8 Aug 1889. This gun emplacement still exists, and is represented as ‘G11’ in the ‘Conservation Management Plan for the Command and Staff College, Fort Queenscliff 1982’, Allom Lovell & Associates P/L. Sadly, no drawings or photos of the mounting have come to light.

²⁷ National Archives Victoria B 3756 1892/113 *List of guns allotted to Military Forces ... 9 Jan 1892.*

In January 1888, in answer to a question from the Victorian Government, the Director of Artillery in England advised that the 80-pr could be utilised as a high-angle howitzer (against ships passing in the channels of Port Phillip Bay) if bored out and rifled to fire a 160 lb shell with a smaller charge, but it was considered the guns were not worth spending money on.²⁸



Fig.3: 80-pr at Port Fairy, Victoria (author's photo).

South Australia's 80-pr 4 ton RMLs

In July 1878 at the time of another Russian war scare the SA Government learnt that Victoria had offered to sell two of its 80-prs.²⁹ Scratchley described the guns as excellent, very long-ranging and had been tested at Fort Queenscliff up to 2¼ miles at a small rock with perfect results. He also advised that a converted 68-pr SB carriage and platform were available for use as patterns. The guns, common shell and all stores were shipped in September 1878 and cost £286.12.5 each, plus 20% for British War Department costs, etc.³⁰ Per OSC Minute No.17468 of 7 December 1865 the completed RGF price was £62.10.0 per ton or £250 per gun.³¹ Armstrong's price was almost double for a similar RML, but it is interesting to note that when originally approached by Pasley back in March 1865, Armstrong projected that the delivery of all 25 guns and mountings, including shot and shell, could be made in six months from date of order.³² *The Engineer* magazine for 11 January 1867 reported that the RGF were churning out thirty 7 inch and 9 inch RMLs a week, making one wonder how long it took them to make the 25 80-prs for Victoria.

²⁸ *Argus* 15 Mar 1887, and WO33/48, §44510 (National Archives of Great Britain)

²⁹ *Argus* 16 Oct 1877. Queensland also applied to Victoria for RML's, but opted for 64-prs.

³⁰ State Records SA (SRSA), GRG24/4/1878/619 & GRG24/6/1878 1171, 1197, 2070.

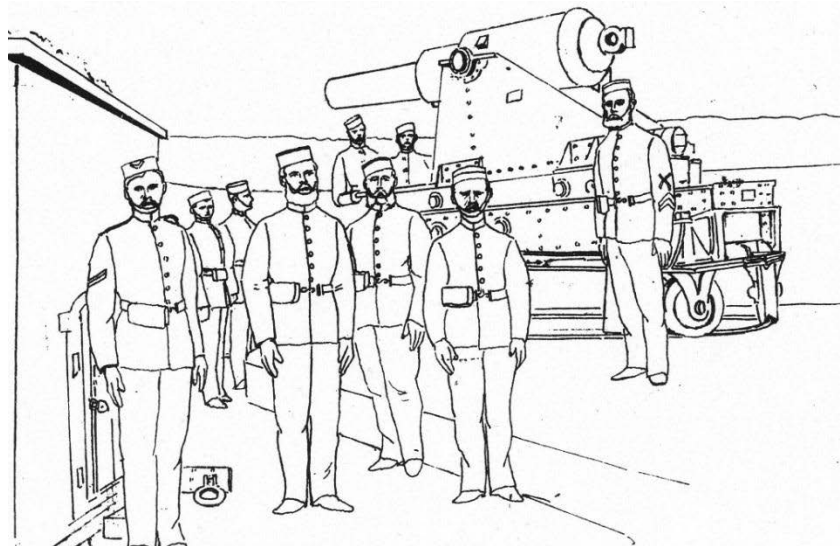
³¹ Cost of guns per ton at the RGF in April 1867: 'Cast Iron £21, Gunmetal £190, WI and steel A-tube Armstrong method £100, WI and steel A-tube Fraser method £65. Fraser method with WI A-tube... a pinch less' (Stoney: 1872, 35).

³² Victorian Parliamentary Paper No.33/64-65.

The two guns, a wood carriage and platform, 300 projectiles, etc, were shipped by the *Victorian* on 14 September 1878.³³ The 80-prs were not mounted at Largs Bay Fort, (Fort Largs, Taperoo, Adelaide) until September 1884 after new WI carriages and slides (traversing platforms) arrived,³⁴ just in time for the next Russian war scare of 1885 and a new military commandant of relatively recent connection with the RGF, Col J.F Owen RA.

In August 1888 one of the 80-prs suffered a premature burst of a common shell just forward of the trunnions in the A-tube, thus disabling it.³⁵ A gutta-percha impression showed a double crack extending three parts round the A and B tubes. The reported cause was unknown at the time, but it was thought by an experienced gunnery instructor that either the shell and wedge-wad had slipped forward before firing, or the local wedge-wad used was one-sided and had caused the studded shell to have finally hammered the soft WI rifling to the point of fracture, or the new jointed rammer had not been used properly, or the fuze had been faulty or incorrectly bored. If this was gun No.1 then in view of its having been fired over 300 times at Shoeburyness it may well have suffered too much stress or wear in its life, and that SA had been sold a worn gun. Perhaps it had simply exceeded its service life – but this depends upon whether in fact its A-tube had been replaced after the completion of ammunition trials in England (this fact is unknown but is very likely), plus use at Fort Queenscliff.

Fig.4: No.1 Gun at Largs Bay Fort, South Australia. Pictorial Australian June 1884, p.104. NB: This image is back to front (taken from a negative).



In July 1894 the SA Government requested their military adviser in England, Lt Col J.F Harman RA, to find out if the 80-prs could be re-tubed. The reply was in the negative because the RML repairing shop at

Woolwich was about to be dismantled.³⁶ Within the same letter the Director of Artillery advised that two guns could be supplied at ‘produce’ (scrap) prices.³⁷ It was also advised that ‘although steel tubes were suggested for these guns some years ago, none had been repaired or converted.’

Fate of the Guns

The Victorian 80-prs soldiered on as reserve guns until the late 1890s and were finally taken out of service with the advent of the Federation of the Australian Colonies after 1901, but

³³ SRSA GRG 24/6/1878/2070.

³⁴ These carriages and slides had been ordered in March 1883 (GRG 55/1, AG1242), possibly simultaneous with Victoria’s and were shipped on 19 January 1884 (*SA Register* newspaper 2 June 1884).

³⁵ *South Australian Register* 13 Aug 1888 and 17 Aug 1888.

³⁶ SRSA GRG 55/1/1894, AG10044.

³⁷ Probably converted 5 ton guns or 64-prs.

were possibly in use at the outposts for several years after that as stocks of ammunition lasted.³⁸ An 80-pr at Geelong, and undoubtedly several others, was unserviceable because of excessive scoring (erosion) of the bore at the base of the projectile, a common fault of non-gaschecked studded projectile RMLs and SBs. As far as I know, only ten guns survive, several complete with their wood or metal mountings. In 1904 most of Australia's muzzleloading ordnance remaining in Defence Department storage, forts and batteries were donated to local councils, provided the councils paid the cartage. This included some of the 80-prs.³⁹ Further guns were offered in 1911. South Australia's were sold as scrap but survived, it is believed, until the Great War, when scrap metal was more eagerly sought. Two 4 ton guns left Victoria Dock, Melbourne for Japan via the *Seisho Maru* in 1933, but these could have been 6 inch BL guns.⁴⁰ All of the other 80-pr RML guns were apparently scrapped, but rumours tell of guns buried beneath industrial sites. Very few projectiles survive because of government policy on old ammunition. Recovery from the sea is certainly a touchy subject, but salvaged copper gas-checks upon mantelpieces make good conversation pieces.

Mountings

(a) The converted 68-pr 95 cwt carriage and platform

Originally the 80-pr RMLs for Victoria were mounted upon teak or jarrah carriages and platforms. The type of mounting was officially described as 'Wood Sliding Carriage on New Pattern wood dwarf 'C' traversing platform', where 'C' meant Central Pivot, and dwarf referred to a low parapet of 4'3". Unlike the WI slide there was no actual Central Pivot. The initial recoil of the gun and carriage was absorbed by the friction between the carriage's flat bottom being forced back up an incline of 5° on the platform, plus the friction of an internal wooden compressor, acting like early Holden brakes. Residual recoil was transmitted via the rims of the platform trucks to the circular iron racer, thence to the concrete gun block and ground. There were no breeching ropes nor platform buffers, the object being to stop the gun *before* the recoiling carriage hit the fixed metal stops. Re-loading could be done at any point of recoil, preferably with the muzzle behind the parapet.

(b) The new WI carriage and slide for the 80-pr RML Victoria pattern gun

This mounting was developed to cope with the larger recoil forces of the heavier projectiles and charge, especially the 'super-charge', i.e. the 90-pr Palliser with 20 lbs P charge. The recoil mechanism comprised a cylindrical hydraulic buffer, and together with the 4° incline of the slide (the carriage ran on rollers) and rimmed slide trucks (just like the wooden platform), enabled the recoil to be controlled, the desired object being to stop the gun after its muzzle had just passed the loading position next to the derrick loading tray, or to clear a relatively safe space for the loading numbers. Full recoil could extend to 6 feet, but a shorter distance was the safer norm.

Gunpowder and Projectiles

Throughout the trials of the Victoria gun, RLG gunpowder was used as the main propellant, and was of mesh sizes 4 to 8 per inch.⁴¹ RLG² superseded this 'powder' with larger granules of mesh sizes of 3 to 6. With the passage of time it was found that an earlier P (pebble)

³⁸ The 80-pr 5 ton converted guns of NSW were still being used for practice as late as November 1905. *Evening News* 6 Nov 1905 p.2g, 'With the Artillery'.

³⁹ National Archives of Australia, Victoria. B168, 1902/1344 Distribution of Obsolete guns, 1904.

⁴⁰ Launceston *Examiner* 4 Apr 1933, p.9f.

⁴¹ Density of P and other gunpowders of this era were at least 1.76 gms/cc (110 lbs/cu.ft).

powder of mesh sizes $\frac{3}{4}$ inch to $\frac{3}{8}$ inch was especially useful when 20 lbs of it were used behind a new 90 lb studless Palliser shell fitted with automatic gascheck.⁴² This combination raised the muzzle velocity from 1,300 feet per second at 12.9 tons/sq.inch pressure to 1,553 fps at 14.3 tons/sq.inch. (Gordon: 1892, 47). It was said that the accuracy at 1,500 yards was doubled by its use, and that it could penetrate a 6 inch compound armour plate (2 inch steel facing), equivalent to 8 to 9 inches of WI at point blank range. This ‘super-charge’ was approved of by the OSC in 1885, with a caution that if it was used in Service guns (the 80-pr 5 ton converted gun) they would be rapidly worn out. The *List of Changes* for 1891/2, §6645 confirmed that this heavy charge was for the Victoria guns only, and was undoubtedly expected to annoy any future enemy armoured cruisers attempting to pass the minefields. Projectiles thus comprised Palliser, Common shell, Shrapnel shell and Case shot.

80-pr RMLs mounted in July 1877⁴³

Fort Queenscliff	1
Hobson’s Bay (Sandridge)	9 +3 dismantled
Hobson’s Bay (Williamstown)	8
Presumedly the remaining 4 were in drill halls or in store at Williamstown.	

Distribution of 80-pr RMLs in Victoria on 9 Jan 1892⁴⁴

Fort Queenscliff	1 (HP) + 1 dismantled
Swan Island	2 + 1 dismantled
Fort Gellibrand (Williamstown)	3
Port Fairy	2
Warrnambool	2
Portland	2
In Store	8
At Victoria Barracks	1

Distribution of the 25 Victoria pattern RMLs in Australia in 1901⁴⁵

NB: the numbers are the Register Numbers of the guns

Fort Queenscliff	5, 12 (HP carriage)
Fort Gellibrand	2, 4, 9, 16, 18, 19, 24
Franklin Fort	10, 20
Victoria Barracks	7
North Melbourne Orderly Room	6
Ordnance Store, Williamstown	8, 11*, 15*, 21 (*11 and 15 were once at Geelong)
Warrnambool	13, 23
Port Fairy	17, 22
Portland	3, 25
Fort Largs, South Australia	1, 14

⁴² *List of Changes in Artillery Matériel, Small Arms and Other Military Stores*, §4723- Shell RML gun Palliser studless 80 pr Mk1, dated 12.2.1885. A 90 pr Palliser shell was also sealed for the 64 pr 64 cwt MkIII gun in early 1878, and although obsolete by 1884 it was still in Colonial drill manuals after this date. The reason for mentioning this point is that the main difference between the shot and shell for 64 prs and 80 prs was in the stud sizes, to prevent interchangeability. Only the case shot was common.

⁴³ Victorian PP 46/1877-78 Defences: Preliminary Report by His Exc Col Sir W.F.D Jervis RE, KCMG, CB.

⁴⁴ National Archives of Australia, Victoria. B3756, 1892/113 *ibid*.

⁴⁵ Report of the Military Committee of Inquiry, Part IV Inspection of the Armament and Works of the Commonwealth, 1901. Report dated 4 Apr 1902.

Distribution of the ten surviving Victoria pattern 80-pr RMLs in 2013

Fort Queenscliff	3, 5
Swan Island	6 (ex Fort Queenscliff in 1958)
Warrnambool	13, 23
Port Fairy	17, 22
Portland	25
Elsternwick park	18, 24

Glossary

1 pound (lb) avoirdupois = 0.454 kilograms

‘pr’ = pounder, for pounds or lb

Cwt = hundred weight or 112 lbs Avoirdupois

RML = Rifled Muzzle Loading or Rifled Muzzle-Loader

OSC = Ordnance Select Committee (of the Directorate of Artillery, UK)

RA = Royal Artillery

RE = Royal Engineers

RGF = Royal Gun Factory, Woolwich Arsenal, London

Bibliography (selected)

Anderson, John, 1866. ‘On the Materials and Structure of Rifled Cannon’, *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution* vol.9.

Billett, Bill, 1994. *Victoria’s Guns: A Field Guide*. Science Works, Vic.

Boxer, E.M., 1860. *Treatise on Artillery*. London.

Fishbourne, E.G., 1865. ‘Naval Ordnance’, *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution* vol.8.

Garie, Frank, 2004. ‘The Menere Disappearing Gun Carriage’. *The Redan* (PFS) no.60, Feb. 2004.

Gordon, J.M., 1892. *Manual of the South Australian Artillery Brigade*.

Griffiths, F.A., 1856. *The Artillerists Manual and British Soldier’s Compendium*.

Holley, A.L., 1865. *A Treatise on Ordnance and Armour*. New York.

Gordon, R.B. and Malone, P.M., 1997. *The Texture of Industry*.

Jose, A.W. and Carter, H.J., 1925. *The Illustrated Australian Encyclopaedia*.

National Archives of Great Britain SUPP 6, 8 and 14., *OSC Minutes* 16199, 16772, 16825, 16863, 16929, 16980, 16984, 17086, 17310, 17468, 17704, 17799, 17827, 17958, 17988, 18179, 18807, 19490, 21542, 21644, 42146 and 44510.

Owen, C.H., 1863. ‘The motion of projectiles fired from rifled ordnance, and the advantages obtained by the employment of such pieces’, *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution* vol.6.

Owen, C.H., 1866. ‘The present state of the artillery question’, *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution* vol.9.

Palliser, William, 1867. ‘On the Construction and Rifling of Cast-iron Ordnance, &c’, *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution* vol.11.

Palliser, William, 1868. ‘The Construction of Heavy Rifled Ordnance’, *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution* vol.12.

Scott, R.A.E., 1865. ‘Progress of Ordnance Abroad compared with that at Home’, *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution* vol.8.

Stoney, F.C., and Jones, C., 1872. *A Textbook of the Construction and Manufacture of Rifled Ordnance in the British Service*.

Victorian Parliamentary Papers 18/59-60, 2/60-61, 3/60-61, 8/60-61, 33/64-65, 25/1867, 46/77, 83/85. *Warrnambool Battery Garrison Artillery: Handbook for 80-pr R.M.L. GUN*. (1892)

My thanks are in order to Peter Webster (VIC) who assisted with some points.

DIGGER UNREST IN BRISBANE, 21 JULY 1915

Peter Hopper¹

On the night of Wednesday 21 July 1915 a group of about 150 servicemen and civilians attempted to make a forcible entrance into the Victoria Barracks in Brisbane. In doing so rocks were thrown and government property was damaged. It was the climax to a noisy and violent disturbance by the men in response to the arrest for drunkenness of one of their fellow recruits who had been arrested by Military Police and confined in the Victoria Barracks. The men were also incensed by a certain number of their own number who were acting temporarily in the capacity of the Military Police. The men participating in this disturbance were from the Enoggera Camp about 6km NW of Brisbane. Alcohol also played a major part in the unrest. The large military camp at Enoggera was too close to a big city where some of the men could spend their time on leave in a state of intemperance. Similar problems had existed in Sydney emanating from the Liverpool Training Camp. A Royal Commission into the administration of this camp was in progress at the time of this disturbance in Brisbane.

The leaders of the Brisbane disturbance were Private Cullen of C Coy Unallotted Infantry and Private De Roadt of 2nd Reinforcements, 2nd Light Horse Regiment. There were no NCOs or officers involved. The Senior Officer in charge at Victoria Barracks on the night of the demonstration was Lt H.W. MacBride, Royal Australian Garrison Artillery. He sought help from the Enoggera Camp and from the civil police. Unfortunately when the men from Enoggera arrived the police mistook them for the demonstrators and scattered them in all directions. Order was eventually restored by the Camp Commandant, Maj A.E. Aitken.

A Court of Inquiry into the disturbance was held the following week and the findings were published in the press on 30 July 1915. A number of recommendations were made. It was critical of the lack of cooperation between the city Military Police and the pickets from Enoggera. It maintained that the sale of alcohol to servicemen in Brisbane was too easy. While it acknowledged that the Military Police performed their duty well, it made a number of recommendations regarding the lack of discipline among the troops.

Similar clashes between members of the AIF and the Military Police occurred throughout Australia during the war years. In Melbourne on Saturday 21 August 1915 two military policemen arrested an intoxicated soldier in Swanston Street, near the Melbourne Town Hall. A successful attempt was made by soldiers in the vicinity to forcibly seek his release. This led to an escalation of violence and the arrest of 26 soldiers.

The sight of uniformed soldiers being arrested by the Military Police incensed many onlookers who objected to seeing these volunteers being restrained by figures of authority (MPs) who were 'avoiding' the front line. There is also the element of 'mateship' behind the efforts to seek the release of their fellow soldiers. Sticking up for your mates despite their misdemeanours was a common trait in all these disturbances. The uniformed soldier was also shielded to some extent against the interference of the civilian law. Then there is the influence of alcohol. A cartoon published in *The Bulletin* on 25 February 1916 showed a barmaid bidding farewell to her boyfriend as he departs for the front. She leaves him with the words, 'Good luck, Charlie! If you fight as hard as you drink, God help the enemy!' Be that as it may, it would be the element of mateship evident in Brisbane in July 1915 that would drive these troops through the battles of the Western Front in the years to come.

¹ Peter Hopper is a retired History Honours graduate from the University of WA. He specialises in researching Digger discontent during and after the First World War.

References

The Brisbane Courier, 30 July 1915, p.8

‘The Swanston Street Riot, August 1915’, unpublished paper by P.S. Hopper (2005)

The Bulletin, 25 February 1916

-o0o-

AS YOU WERE ...

Feedback from Readers and Contributors

Alan Buckley makes a comment and poses a question arising from Trevor Turner’s article ‘George Patterson: NSW Sudan Contingent and Transvaal Conspirator’ (March 2013):

- Trevor Turner notes that he was unable to find Patterson’s Attestation and Enrolment form for the NSW Sudan Contingent at the Australian War Memorial (AWM). This is consistent with the information provided by the AWM that it holds the Attestation Papers for B and C Companies of that NSW Contingent (Official Record AWM2 2) and Squad Book for A Company (Official Record AWM2 1D), whereas George Patterson was in D Company. The question is whether the D Company Attestation Papers are unavailable, lost, or known to have been destroyed. Can a *Sabretache* reader provide a definitive answer to this question? The Army Museum of NSW (Victoria Barracks), NSW State Records and the Mitchell Library do not appear to hold the D Company papers.

Further to the article in the June 2013 issue dealing with remembering the RAAF/RAF ‘Special Duties’ squadrons’ activities in WW2, John Williamson, convenor of the squadrons’ veterans organisation, sends the following:

- Here is a picture of the new RAAF ‘Special Duties’ Squadrons Plaque, now set in place permanently in the reserve area of the Melbourne Shrine of Remembrance. It will form part of our Annual Commemoration of these airmen and airwomen of RAF Tempsford each 14 July at the Shrine. You are of course welcome to join us if you happen to be in Melbourne on that day next year.



-o0o-

ERIC LOESER'S SWORD, 1913-1921 AND 1985-2011

Paul A Rosenzweig¹

Recently Eric Loeser's sprightly son-in-law, a veteran of service with Bomber Command, celebrated his 90th birthday in Adelaide. A little earlier, the current bearer of Eric Loeser's sword retired from the Australian Army after 32 years in uniform – 26 of those as a commissioned officer carrying Loeser's sword in four states of Australia and overseas. Although Eric Loeser was South Australian-born, his father hailed from the Upper Lusatian Mountains of the Kingdom of Saxony. It was this heritage, family legend states, which denied Eric Loeser the opportunity to enlist in the AIF. Yet surviving Eric Loeser were his commissions and an old sword, creating somewhat of a paradox: if he had been allowed to serve as a pre-war militia officer, why would his application for the AIF be refused?

Eric Arno Loeser (1895-1971)

Eric Loeser was born in Adelaide on 27 May 1895, the first son of Alfred Woldemar Loeser and Marie Louise (nee Habicht).² Alfred had been born in about 1870 in Löbau in Saxony, and emigrated to the Province of South Australia in about February 1894. On his 'Memorial by an Alien for Naturalization' in 1898 he gave his age as 27 years and used the spelling 'Loeser' rather than 'Löser'; he stated that he had resided in South Australia for 4½ years and gave his occupation as tobacconist; he took the Oath of Allegiance on 12 August 1898.³ Alfred and Marie lived in Malvern Street, Parkside and had nine children born in Adelaide:

- Eric Arno Loeser: born 27 May 1895.
- George Waldemar Loeser: born 18 March 1897.
- Edward Ernest Levi Loeser: one of a pair of twins, born 27 June 1898; the other twin, Ellen, died aged 7 months.
- Gordon Baden Powell Loeser: born 28 May 1900.
- Alfred Roy Loeser: born 12 December 1903, but died two weeks after his first birthday.
- Alfred Edward Loeser: born 10 February 1906.
- Violet Jessie Loeser: born in July 1908 but died aged 11 months.
- Hedley Edmond Loeser: born 28 November 1912.

Universal Service Scheme

From 1911, Eric and George Loeser undertook compulsory military training with the Australian Commonwealth Cadet Corps. To administer this scheme, the volunteer forces had been disbanded and the Commonwealth was divided into 93 geographically-based battalion areas, the title 'Citizens' Forces' being applied for the first time.⁴ South Australia was designated the 4th Military District, commanded by Colonel Haviland Le Mesurier, responsible for the 19th and 20th Infantry Brigades.

The South Australian volunteer forces were redesignated to coincide with battalion areas numbered from 74 to 82. Eric (aged 16) and George (14) began their service with the Senior

¹ Paul Rosenzweig is a medal collector and non-professional military historian and biographer, who has contributed to various Australian historical journals and Defence publications over the last thirty years.

² 'Digger Index to South Australian Births Registrations, 1842-1906', South Australian Library Service.

³ National Archives of Australia: A711, 3747 'Loeser, Alfred Woldemar - Memorial of Naturalisation', item barcode 3187251.

⁴ Palazzo (2001), p.49. The title 'Citizens' Forces' remained in use until the government abandoned conscription in 1930, after which the designation 'Militia' was revived to describe Australia's volunteer non-permanent forces.

Cadets attached to the 74th Infantry Regiment, 19th Infantry Brigade: Cadet District '74A'. The 19th Infantry Bde was commanded by Lt Col Stanley Price Weir from Norwood, SA, who later gained fame as commander of the 10th Bn AIF at Gallipoli and in France (Pozières and Mouquet Farm).

Lt Col Walter Dollman was the first Commanding Officer of the 74th Infantry. He was a Councillor for Parkside Ward in the Town of Unley (1904-07), an Alderman for the City of Unley (1908-09 and 1911-12) and Mayor of Unley (1913-14). Dollman ensured that the 74th Infantry took responsibility for the King's Colour of the South Australian Volunteer Military Forces (with the Battle Honour 'South Africa, 1901-1902'). The 74th Infantry was responsible for the entire south-east of South Australia as far as the Victorian border, ranging from Unley to Oakbank, Stirling, Murray Bridge, Millicent, Naracoorte and Mount Gambier. Its headquarters was in the de-licensed Unley Inn at 158-160 Unley Road, which dated back to 1848. At this time, Eric Loeser served at Unley with A Company, 74th Infantry Regiment (Senior Cadets).

On 28 May 1912, the regiment became known as the '74th Infantry (Boothby Battalion)': drawing its territorial title from the Federal seat of Boothby which encompassed most of the southern and eastern suburbs of Adelaide, including Unley, named for William Boothby the Electoral Commissioner for South Australia. The battalion comprised a headquarters, a machine-gun section, and four rifle companies. By this time Eric Loeser had attained the rank of Colour-Sergeant with C Company (Senior Cadets) and was undertaking his examinations for commissioning.⁵

On 30 June 1912, at the age of 17, Eric Loeser was commissioned as an officer of the Commonwealth Cadet Corps with the rank of Second Lieutenant,⁶ to serve with the 74th Infantry (Boothby Battalion). Eric Loeser was one of just 146 Cadet Second Lieutenants throughout Australia at this time who played a prominent role in the development of Australia's emerging military capability; a history of the Cadet Corps observed: 'The importance of cadet 2nd Lieutenants during this period should not be understated'.⁷ In 1914, Army Headquarters released a circular reminding members of the Administrative and Instructional Staff Corps and the Citizens' Forces that cadet officers were entitled under the Defence Act to all the marks of respect due to officers holding corresponding ranks in the full-time and part-time Army. Indeed, Eric Loeser's commission was issued by the Governor-General on 28 April 1914, appointing him as an officer with effect from 30 June 1912, 'By virtue of the provisions of the Defence Act 1913-1910'. The commission bears the original signature of the Governor-General, the Right Honourable Sir Thomas Denman KCMG KCVO PC, and the Minister for Defence, the Hon Edward Millen (Fig.1).

Late in 1912, 2nd Lt Eric Loeser was appointed temporary commander of C Company (Senior Cadets).⁸ The following March, the battalion participated in the first camp in South Australia held under compulsory training conditions, held at Gawler in 'more pleasing surroundings' than were previously enjoyed at Smithfield.

⁵ *The Advertiser* (Adelaide) 7 September 1912, p16.

⁶ *The Mail* (Adelaide) 31 August 1912, p.4S; *The Register* (Adelaide) 2 September 1912, p.6; *Daily Herald* (Adelaide) 4 September 1912, p.2.

⁷ Stockings (2007), pp.72-73.

⁸ *The Advertiser* (Adelaide) 19 October 1912, p.8; *Daily Herald* (Adelaide) 24 October 1912, p.3.

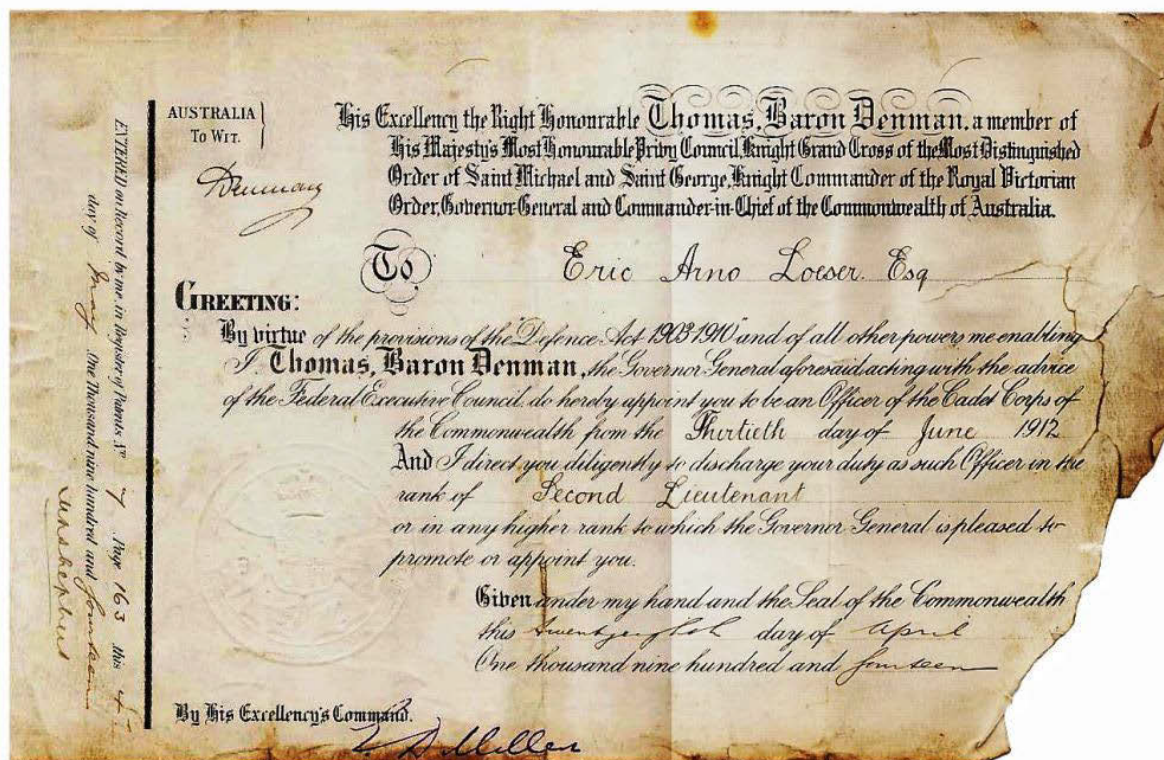


Fig. 1: Eric Loeser's commission dated 28 April 1914, appointing him as an officer in the Commonwealth Military Cadet Corps with the rank of 2nd Lieutenant with effect from 30 June 1912.

In a re-organisation of the Citizens' Forces in June 1913,⁹ the battalion was redesignated '74th (Boothby) Infantry', comprising a HQ, Machine Gun Section and six rifle companies. On 1 July 1913, 2nd Lt Eric Loeser was appointed to command A Company, 74th (Boothby) Infantry (Senior Cadets),¹⁰ and he was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant on 1 September 1913.¹¹ The Militia Area Officer assigned in support of 'Unley Training Area, 74A District of Senior Cadets' was Captain Miles Francis Beavor, a noted shooter who had won the Simpson Trophy for marksmanship: the large silver trophy bearing his name under the year of '1908' is on display at Keswick Barracks in Adelaide.¹²

After the death of Col Haviland Le Mesurier on 25 November 1913 it was noted:

There has never been a more popular military commandant in this State than Colonel Le Mesurier, who combined a particularly high sense of duty with those gentlemanly qualities which made him esteemed by all who knew him. A feature of his service in this State was his work in inaugurating the system of universal training, and in no part of the Commonwealth has there been less friction between the trainees and the military authorities than in South Australia.¹³

Col Le Mesurier was accorded a military funeral on 26 November 1913, involving members of the Citizens Forces and Senior Cadets from metropolitan and suburban areas. Lt Eric Loeser marched in this parade, with the Senior Cadets of the 74th (Boothby) Inf.

⁹ Military Order 403 of June 1913; *The Advertiser* (Adelaide) 23 August 1913, p.5.

¹⁰ *The Mail* (Adelaide) 19 July 1913, p.3S; *The Advertiser* (Adelaide) 26 July 1913, p.8.

¹¹ *Daily Herald* (Adelaide) 22 September 1913, p.3; *The Register* (Adelaide) 27 September 1913, p.6.

¹² Exactly a century later, the author had the privilege of competing for the same trophy.

¹³ *The Advertiser* (Adelaide) 26 November 1913, p.15.

On 16 February 1914, Unley City Council hosted a function for about a thousand citizens of the southern municipality to show their regret at the pending departure for England of his Excellency the Governor Admiral Sir Day Hort Bosanquet GCMG, Lady Bosanquet, and their daughters:

A smart guard of honor was furnished by the 74th Infantry, under Captain Brittain and Lieutenants Cullen and Wibley, and the 74th Battalion of Senior Cadets, under Captain Beevor and Lieutenants Loeser and Briggs, lined the roadway in front of the hall.¹⁴

Lt Eric Loeser certainly had his sword by this time, for this parade in honour of the 16th Governor of South Australia; almost a hundred years later that same sword was carried by the author at both Government House Adelaide and Parliament House on official duties with the 34th Governor of South Australia.

On the outbreak of war, the 74th (Boothby) Infantry was mobilised for duty in connection with the Port Adelaide defences; country detachments were brought in by train and were billeted in the Unley City Hall. Many officers such as Beevor immediately applied for commissions and were accepted for the 10th Bn AIF, and left for war service before the end of the year. Eric Loeser had already passed his subjects for promotion to Captain and, with so many Citizens Force officers having already volunteered for the AIF, he attained his Captaincy later in the year.¹⁵

Among various building works and improvements within the City of Adelaide in 1914-15 there were several Defence contracts for the erection of drill halls, including one at Unley (£1,349).¹⁶ On 13 March 1915, the new headquarters and drill hall of the 74th (Boothby) Infantry was established in Thomas Street, Unley. A portrait of uniformed officials attending this opening shows Col Walter Dollman VD wearing his Colonial Auxiliary Forces Officers' Decoration, and his officers wearing '74' numerals on their caps.

In March 1915, the 27th Bn AIF was raised and over 300 officers and men from the 74th Infantry immediately volunteered for service under Col Dollman, embarking at Port Adelaide on 31 May 1915. The link between Col Walter Dollman VD as Mayor of Unley and commander of the 27th Bn AIF ('Dollman's Dinkums'), and the Thomas St drill hall, began a long association between the military and the City of Unley. A Roll of Honour in the Town Hall commemorates 1,189 men and 16 nurses from Unley who enlisted, of which 308 died and 790 were wounded. Today, the modern descendant of the 74th Infantry Regiment, the 10th/27th Bn, Royal South Australia Regiment, is known as 'Unley's Own'.

With so many officers departing, Capt Eric Loeser was appointed Assistant Adjutant of the Citizen Forces in South Australia.¹⁷ Meanwhile, his younger brothers Edward and Gordon had been serving in the school-based Junior Cadets, and joined George in the Seniors after their fourteenth birthdays in 1912 and 1914 respectively.

¹⁴ *The Advertiser* (Adelaide) 17 February 1914, p.10.

¹⁵ *The Mail* (Adelaide) 6 June 1914, p.5; 21 November 1914, p.5S; *Daily Herald* (Adelaide) 5 May 1915, p.6.

¹⁶ *The Register* (Adelaide) 31 December 1915, p.8: building work and improvements within the City of Adelaide for the year ended 30 September 1915 included Defence Department contracts for the erection of a number of drill halls, including Gawler (£724), Crystal Brook (£735), Burra (£654), Clare (£679), Unley (£1,349), Magill (£717), Prospect (£760), Petersburg (£797) and Moonta (£800), and for soldiers' cottages at O'Halloran Hill (£1,465).

¹⁷ *The Advertiser* (Adelaide) 14 July 1915, p.8.

Citizens' Forces

From 1915 to 1921, Eric Loeser served as an officer of the Citizens' Forces in South Australia, appointed as a Provisional Lieutenant with seniority dating from 16 August 1915.¹⁸ Loeser's commission as an officer in the Commonwealth Military Forces was issued retrospectively on 12 September 1921, with an expiry date of 30 March 1921. The commission bears the original signature of the Governor-General, the Right Hon Sir Henry Forster KCMG PC, and the stamped signature of the Minister of Defence, Senator George Foster Pearce. The British *Quarterly Army List* for the second quarter of 1916¹⁹ shows Eric Loeser as a Lieutenant with B Company of the 74th (Boothby) Infantry, based at Thomas St. This drill hall continued to be used through the voluntary enlistment period of the 1930s, and by the CMF and Army Reserve until it was demolished in the early 1990s.

A reorganisation in 1918 gave the infantry regiments at home numerical designations which reflected the AIF units which had been drawn from them – so the 74th (Boothby) Infantry was redesignated as the 27th Regiment, with five battalions.²⁰ Eric Loeser became a member of A Coy of the 2nd Bn, 27th Regiment. His company commander was Maj Miles Beevor VD, who had been Area Officer when Eric had been a cadet officer. Of note, Beevor had commanded A Coy, 10th Bn AIF in the Gallipoli landing on 25 April 1915;²¹ a framed display of his medals hangs in the Keswick Barracks Officers Mess in Adelaide.

On 21 May 1919, at the age of 24, Eric married 22-year-old Else Agnes Caroline Elise Jacobs from Tanunda, at the Lutheran Church in Flinders Street.²² Under the post-war voluntary system, Eric Loeser continued to parade with A Coy, 2/27th Regiment at Unley. By this time, Eric was a sign-writer and poster maker; later he would be a noted theatre decorative specialist with a store in Gilbert Place, Adelaide.

Eric Loeser resigned from the Commonwealth Military Forces on 30 March 1921. Just a month later the 2nd and 5th Bns of the 27th Regiment amalgamated to re-raise the 27th Bn as a Citizens' Military Force unit, to be the custodian of the Colours and Battle Honours of the South Australian Volunteer Military Forces and the 27th Bn AIF.²³ Eric and Else's only child was a daughter, Ronda Erica, born on 8 August 1922. Ronda attended Immanuel College in North Adelaide in 1937-39;²⁴ she was later awarded the Elder Scholarship for the violin in 1941 whilst studying for a Bachelor of Music at the University of Adelaide but the war prevented her from going to the United Kingdom to complete her studies. She kept up her playing and changed to the viola, and was a founding member of the Burnside Symphony Orchestra until her death in 1977.

Eric's brothers Edward and Gordon had registered with the home defence militia after their

¹⁸ *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette* No. 99, dated 28 Aug 1915; *The Register* (Adelaide), 2 Sept 1912 p.6.

¹⁹ *British Quarterly Army List Volume 3, for the quarter ending 30 June 1916*. J J Keliher & Co, p.1783a

²⁰ Within these regiments up to five battalions were raised (the 1st Bn was an inactive reserve battalion formed from ex-AIF personnel; the 2nd Bn was the Citizens' Force battalion; the 3rd Bn was formed from Senior Cadets, etc).

²¹ Lock (1936), pp.158-160.

²² SA Marriages Registrations, 1917-1937: book number 279; p.593.

²³ The Citizens' Force units were reorganised on 1 May 1921 to adopt the numerical designations of their related AIF units: the 27th Bn AIF had mainly comprised personnel from the pre-war 74th (Boothby) Infantry so its successor units – the 2nd and 5th Bns, 27th Australian Inf Bn – were amalgamated to re-raise the 27th Bn. It was designated 'South Australian Scottish Regiment' in 1938.

²⁴ *The Echo* (Immanuel College), XIV (December 1937) pp.31, 32; XV (November 1938) pp.10, 28, 31; XVI (10 October 1939) pp.28, 31.

eighteenth birthdays in June 1916 and May 1918 respectively, but they did not enlist in the AIF. Gordon was commissioned as an officer of the Commonwealth Cadet Corps with the rank of Second Lieutenant.²⁵ Alfred had turned 12 in 1918 and enrolled with the Junior Cadets; he then transferred to the Senior Cadets in May 1920 and had to register for compulsory military training in February 1924. The sixth surviving son Hedley turned 12 in 1924 – but Junior Cadets had already been abolished two years earlier; he enrolled with the Senior Cadets for compulsory military training after turning fourteen in November 1926. Hedley Loeser did not have to register after his eighteenth birthday in 1930 however, as compulsory military training was suspended from 1 November 1929.

Great War

Upon the outbreak of war, Alfred and Marie Loeser had been living with their six children at Robert Street in North Unley, SA, the youngest four boys too young for service: Edward (16), Gordon (14), Alfred (8) and Hedley (1). Eric was aged 19, and continued to serve through the war years with the Cadet Corps and the Citizens' Forces as detailed above. Third-hand family history relates that Eric had attempted to join the AIF but was rejected 'because his parents had been born in Germany'.

While the war became a military crusade against the Kaiser, a very personal campaign was also vigorously pursued at home against anyone thought to be eligible to wear a *pickelhaube*. Supposed German nationals were refused service or summarily dismissed from jobs, and 'enemy aliens' were interned (ironically, many of them had sons in the AIF). One doctor with German-born parents was closely investigated in 1915: despite being Australian-born and a Citizens' Force officer of seven years' standing, the Royal Commission accepted the recommendation for his dismissal.²⁶

Perhaps the greatest number of German settlers had come to the Province of South Australia in the 19th century: ten of them served in the pre-war South Australian parliament, and seven of them were in parliament when war was declared: 'All seven (five Liberal and two Labor) came under scrutiny, especially the most visible, Attorney-General in the Liberal Government of the time, Herman Homburg'.²⁷ By the war's end, only one of the seven was still in parliament. The Attorney-General's office was raided by soldiers with fixed bayonets, and he was decisively rejected at the March 1915 state election (he suffered a similar fate in 1940) – despite him being born in Norwood and educated at Prince Alfred College and the University of Adelaide (his German-born father had also served as Attorney-General, and as a justice of the Supreme Court of South Australia).²⁸ Similarly, the German-born Friedrich Pflaum had represented the seat of Murray continuously from 1902 until 1914, but was also rejected in the March 1915 state election because his name was 'politically unacceptable'. Of note, he had no living children but all five of his nephews volunteered for the AIF, and two were killed on active service.²⁹

In 1916, a 'Nomenclature Committee' was established in South Australia to change names of 'foreign enemy origin' to more acceptable names: their findings were enshrined in legislation

²⁵ *Daily Herald* (Adelaide) 26 April 1918, p.3.

²⁶ Gammage (2010), p.18.

²⁷ www.sahistorians.org.au/175/bm.doc/germans-in-parliament-final.doc – 'South Australia's 'German' MPs in World War I – the limits of tolerance', Jenny Tilby Stock.

²⁸ Harmstorf, I (1983) 'Homburg, Hermann Robert (1874 - 1964)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 9, Melbourne University Press, pp 355–356

²⁹ *The South Australian*, 6 January 1927, p.7.

by the *Nomenclature Act* (No 1284 of 1917), although the term ‘German’ is not once mentioned. A final list of 69 name changes was gazetted in January 1918.³⁰ Some names were simply anglicised (Bethanien became Bethany, for example); others were given an Aboriginal name (Berlin Rock off Eyre Peninsula became Panpandie Rock), while others received more patriotic names (Blumberg became Birdwood; Germantown Hill became Vimy Ridge; Kaiserstuhl became Mount Kitchener; Klemzig became Gaza).³¹

Some names though, widely believed to be of German origin, were left unchanged. Eric’s wife Else had been born at Tanunda on 30 August 1896 – Tanunda, 70 km from Adelaide, is often stated to be a German-named town but it is not. The original settlement which grew to become Tanunda had been established in 1842 by Lutheran emigrants from Silesia in the Kingdom of Prussia, and its name was actually drawn from a local indigenous Ngadjuri word meaning ‘water-hole’. The famed Barossa Valley, the site of most of South Australia’s German settlements, is also widely assumed to have a teutonic origin. The range and valley were given their names in 1837 by the surveyor-general Colonel William Light, who had laid out the town of Adelaide – named after a battle he fought in near Barrosa at Cadiz, Spain during the Peninsular War. However, the first known mention of the ranges with the incorrect spelling, which has been perpetuated to the modern day, is found in an 1839 notice referring to the ‘*Barossa Ranges*’.³² A decade later the *South Australian* reported this matter under the heading ‘A Vulgar Error’: ‘A strange mistake has crept into the geography of the province, which we fear is now irretrievable’.³³ Similarly Lyndoch Valley does not have a German name: it should have been spelt ‘Lynedoch’, because it was named by Governor Gawler, who had served in Spain in 1811 under General Thomas Graham (afterwards Lord Lynedoch).

The irony though is that some names with an undeniable German connection were left unchanged. Sedan, on the Murray flats area between the Barossa ranges and the River Murray, is not German but rather the name of a French town. However, it had been named by one of South Australia’s German settlers in honour of the Prussian victory at Sedan during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, which signalled the defeat of the French army. While the name was left intact, the local anti-German sentiment led to the Lutheran School being forced to close in 1917. And of course, the South Australian capital itself, Adelaide, had been named after the Queen Consort of Great Britain, the wife of King William IV of Britain – the German-born Princess Adelaide of Saxe-Meiningen.

This anti-German sentiment became the theatrical backdrop to the ongoing performance of life on the home front, so it is not surprising that families came to assume that ‘Germans’ were prohibited from enlisting. Many young men perhaps tried to enlist under their Germanic family name but were turned away, so they re-applied with an anglicised version of their name (Schmidt became Smith, Zander became Sander) or a pseudonym (Kaiser became Conrad, Zoch became Foster).³⁴ However there are numerous teutonic surnames in the AIF Nominal Roll (of note, five men served under the name ‘Kaiser’) and many of these, particularly from South Australia, were second or third generation Australians. Even Sir John Monash was ethnically of Germanic descent, born in West Melbourne to Jewish parents from

³⁰ *South Australian Government Gazette*, 10 January 1918. The *Nomenclature Act 1935* restored many of the former German names.

³¹ <http://www.ach.familyhistorysa.info/germanplacenames.html> – ‘German Place Names, South Australia — World War I’, Maureen M Leadbeater.

³² *South Australian Gazette and Colonial Register* dated 27 April 1839.

³³ *The South Australian*, 3 March 1848.

³⁴ Smith (1995).

the Province of Posen, Kingdom of Prussia.

That the Loeser family was ‘loyal and patriotic’ is not in doubt. As early as 1900, Alfred Loeser had protested regarding Boer sympathisers. He responded strongly to a letter in the newspaper which had advocated driving the British in South Africa ‘into the sea’:

It is a wonder how Germans can show such disloyalty, and if they are disloyal, why do they open their mouths and cause other Germans who are loyal, and who try with heart and soul to be true Britons, to be persecuted? We come out here to a free country; come to make a living; become British subjects; obtain the same rights that Englishmen have; get protected by the English flag; and, last of all, make an oath of allegiance to be true to our Queen and flag. Is it not absolute perjury to side with the Boers ...³⁵

Alfred recommended that those ‘disloyal people’ should catch the first boat back to Germany, and concluded, ‘I was born a German, but will die an Englishman to the backbone’. In May he named his fourth son Gordon Baden Powell Loeser in tribute to the General who had liberated Mafeking ten days earlier. In 1902 he proposed that the government, ‘grant our girls and boys and all educational establishments in our state a week’s holiday in honour of His Majesty the King’s coronation. God save the King’.³⁶ Late in 1914 he spoke of the anguish those of German descent were feeling – despite being naturalised, having lived many years in South Australia, and with sons serving in uniform:

I am a mighty small atom in this beautiful country, but, nevertheless, one of thousands, who either were born in Germany or here, hailing from German parents. At this time what a crime, what a terrible misfortune it is to be a human mortal of German descent! The Germans here are among the best colonists, as is admitted by our greatest statesman here. Why punish them?

He spoke of the inter-marriages of the children and grand-children of the pioneer settlers:

The result is not too bad, judging by some of the fine strapping lads going to the front now, Australian born, but with German-Australian, German-English, German-Irish, and German-Scottish blood in their veins! I am a naturalised British subject (of 18 years standing) over twenty years in the colony. Three of my sons are wearing uniforms of the King. Two of them are officers.³⁷

Within this potent atmosphere, it was surprising then to find that Alfred and Marie’s second son, George Waldemar Loeser, saw active service in the AIF. He stated that he was a painter and had undertaken three years’ service with the Senior Cadets when he enlisted on 1 November 1915 at the age of 18 (Service no.16123).³⁸ George served in France as a Gunner with the 53rd Battery, 14th Field Artillery Bde (5th Divisional Artillery). On 1 October 1917 he suffered a shrapnel wound to his face, and burns to his face and right arm,³⁹ and he was ultimately discharged in South Australia on 14 October 1918 as ‘Medically Unfit (not due to misconduct)’.

³⁵ *The Advertiser* (Adelaide) 12 January 1900, p.6: A W Loeser, ‘Boer Sympathisers’, Letter to the Editor dated 11 January 1900.

³⁶ *The Register* (Adelaide) 22 May 1902, p.7.

³⁷ *The Advertiser* (Adelaide) 12 November 1914, p.11: A W Loeser, ‘German-Australians’, Letter to the Editor dated 10 November 1914.

³⁸ NAA: B2455, ‘LOESER George Waldemar’, item barcode 8204295.

³⁹ *The Advertiser* (Adelaide) 1 November 1917, p.6: ‘The Roll of Honour’.

Interestingly, George had sworn his oath of allegiance in Maribyrnong, Victoria on 25 May 1916. This raises the suggestion that Eric and George could have been rejected in Adelaide, or that Eric's 'rejection' in Adelaide had prompted George to forego any attempts to enlist in South Australia and try interstate. Eric Loeser has a continuous record in the Army Officer Lists from 30 June 1912 until his retirement on 30 March 1921 (Cadets and Citizens' Forces). He is not listed however in the Army Master Name Index, there is no AIF personnel file held by the National Archives, and neither is there an application file held.⁴⁰ It can be safely concluded that Eric Loeser served as a Senior Cadet and then Citizens' Force officer throughout the war years and did not attempt to enlist in the AIF.

The discovery that George served in the AIF puts to rest the family legend that Eric was 'prohibited' because of his ancestry. It is possible that he may have considered enlisting, but was dissuaded because he was needed with the Citizens' Force in Adelaide. Or, more likely, he was warned against it by his parents who did not want to see their first-born son die on a foreign field. Alfred had already portrayed the pathos of war, pleading for peace in a letter to the newspaper:

Blood is shed, day after day, and hour after hour. Noble lives of good and brave men are sacrificed on the altar of honour and glory, to gain what friend and foe claim 'a victory.' Alas! at what cost! ... Soon our hearts will soften with the approach of the festive holy season. What will it mean to those who, brokenhearted, mourn the loss of father, brother, husband, sweetheart, or friend, buried away from home, although covered with glory – he who nobly died for his country!⁴¹

Apart from community and peer pressure, there was no legal compulsion to volunteer for the AIF: the Defence Act specifically had a covenant against compelling anyone to serve overseas.⁴² Many Citizens' Force and Cadet officers like Eric Loeser instead played a valuable role at home by both training future volunteers and keeping the 'skeleton force' alive so it could be readily reconstituted at war's end. While the Inspector-General of the AIF and the Adjutant-General may have wanted to force Citizens' Force officers to volunteer or else relinquish their commission, the Minister for Defence did not:

The government would not compel officers to serve overseas and it would not ... sanction the forced resignation of anyone who refused to join the AIF.⁴³

If Alfred and Marie Loeser did not want Eric to go to war, quite likely they did not want George to go either – so he went to Victoria to enlist. George returned to Adelaide in August 1918, not a decorated hero but a survivor nonetheless of being wounded-in-action, which may have made him enough of a hero to be accepted back by the family. After his group was officially welcomed,⁴⁴ Alfred and Marie hosted a 'Welcome Home' on 17 August at their home, 'Ericstane' in Robert Street, North Unley: 'The evening was filled in with musical treats, singing, piano, cornet, flute, violin, and piccolo'⁴⁵.

World War 2

Eric Loeser was aged 44 years old in 1939 and did not enlist, but he had three relatives who

⁴⁰ NAA: B4747 (AIF personnel files); MT1384/1 (those who attempted enlistment in the AIF and/or Home Service but were rejected).

⁴¹ *The Register* (Adelaide) 30 October 1914, p.8: A W Loeser, 'Christmas and War'.

⁴² Palazzo (2001), p.73.

⁴³ Palazzo (2001), pp.73-74.

⁴⁴ *The Mail* (Adelaide) 3 August 1918, p.3.

⁴⁵ *The Adelaide Chronicle* (Adelaide) 24 August 1918, p.38.

did:

- *Gordon Baden Powell Loeser*: Eric's younger brother was a dentist and enlisted at Wayville, Adelaide on 14 September 1942 aged 42 (SX18833); he served as a Dental Officer with the 73rd Australian Dental Unit AIF, and was discharged on 1 February 1946 with the rank of Captain. His daughter Shirley was a nursing sister at the Royal Adelaide Hospital during the war; she went to the United States in 1947 and then nursed in Canada for four years before joining the Royal Canadian Army Nursing Service as a Lieutenant.⁴⁶
- *Hedley Edmond Loeser*: first served as a Militia signaller (S42307) with A Coy, 27th Aust Inf Bn; enlisted in the AIF at East Parklands, Adelaide on 16 November 1942 aged 29 (SX26963), and was discharged with the rank of Sergeant on 30 August 1945.
- *Raymond George Loeser* (Eric's nephew, the son of George Loeser): enlisted at Melbourne Town Hall on 4 October 1941 at the age of 21 (VX64292) and served in the Northern Territory and the South West Pacific Area as a Gunner with the 2/14th Aust Field Regiment AIF, and then in 1945 with 52 Transport Platoon AIF in Rabaul.

The early war years were not kind to Eric's family. His mother Marie passed away at home in Wayville on 10 November 1940 at the age of 65,⁴⁷ and was buried in West Terrace Cemetery. Alfred passed away on 24 June 1941, also aged 65, and was buried beside his wife.⁴⁸ Then in the same year Eric's wife Else passed away on 26 December 1941, aged 45, and she was also buried in West Terrace Cemetery.⁴⁹ Eric himself lived to the age of 76: he died on 2 August 1971 and was buried with his wife.⁵⁰

In June 1944, Eric's daughter Ronda became engaged to Douglas Raymond Leak, then a Flight-Sergeant with the RAAF serving in the United Kingdom.⁵¹ Doug Leak was born at Medindie, SA on 17 June 1923, the second of four sons to Allan and Ruby Leak – Allan Leak was for many years the Postmaster at Tailem Bend, retiring from the Postmaster General's Office (PMG) at Port Adelaide in 1965. Doug was a Wireless Operator/Air Gunner, trained on Wellington bombers and flying in missions over Europe in Lancaster II and III bombers; he ended the war as a Warrant Officer. When Doug has related his wartime experiences to St John Ambulance cadets undertaking a course to gain the Anzac Heritage Proficiency Badge, they are simply amazed at the time it took letters between Doug and Ronda to make their way between South Australia and England. Doug notes that very early on they devised a system of numbering, so that when a batch of several letters were received at once they could be read sequentially ('Why didn't you just use Facebook, didn't you have wi-fi access over there?' the cadets would innocently ask). The missions he takes the most pride in were the humanitarian aid missions over Europe with A Flight, No.149 ('East India') Squadron RAF from 1 May 1945: supply drop missions over The Netherlands (Operation 'Manna') and to former Allied Prisoners-of-War (Operation 'Dodge') with 3rd Group, RAF Bomber Command.

⁴⁶ *The Advertiser* (Adelaide) 16 March 1954, p.14.

⁴⁷ SA Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages (SA-BDM): book 630; folio 5184; *The Advertiser* (Adelaide), 11 November 1940 p.8.

⁴⁸ SA-BDM: book 637; folio 2744; *The Adelaide Chronicle*, 3 July 1941 p.17; Adelaide Cemeteries Authority – <http://www.aca.sa.gov.au/RecordsSearch.aspx>

⁴⁹ SA-BDM: book 644; folio 6196.

⁵⁰ SA-BDM: book 133A; folio 5497.

⁵¹ *The Adelaide Chronicle* (Adelaide) 22 June 1944, p.10.

Ronda and Doug married in Adelaide on 18 August 1945.⁵² They then moved to Saddleworth, and gave Eric Loeser twin grandchildren on 22 August 1946. Doug was later a noted taxation accountant in Adelaide.

Fig.2: Eric Loeser (far right) in 1948, standing beside his daughter Ronda Leak, with his twin grandchildren Nina and Ronald.



Eric Loeser's sword

During his commissioned service, Eric Loeser had carried a sword – the standard 1897 pattern British Army Infantry Officer's Sword, manufactured by Wilkinson Sword of Pall Mall, London and procured by the Australian Department of

Defence in September 1913. This sword bears the Royal Cipher and Tudor Crown of King George V on the hilt, which is pierced with a honeysuckle scroll pattern. It has a 32-inch fullered blade (as introduced in 1891), and a three-quarter pierced steel basket hilt (adopted in 1895) with the guard's inner edge turned down (as modified in 1897) to prevent fraying of the bearer's uniform.

On the right the ricasso is etched with the Wilkinson Sword symbol of two interlocking triangles (an ancient symbol of armourers) and a gold seal bearing the initials 'HW' (for Henry Wilkinson, who managed the company from 1824 until his death in 1858). On the left of the ricasso is the Warrant title and the crest of the Prince of Wales. The original grip of genuine shark skin is still intact, as is the original plaited brown leather sword knot. The spine of the blade near the hilt bears the manufacturer's markings including a broad-arrow (indicating a sword made specifically for the military) and a crown; further along are the deeply stamped markings '9/13' and the broad-arrow within a 'D' (Fig.3). The scabbard bears matching markings on the leather near the mouth. The end of the blade tang visible within the pommel bears a broad-arrow above the initials 'SA', denoting the South Australian military forces.

This author received this sword from Doug and Ronda Leak on the occasion of his 21st birthday, and it was first officially used at the time of being commissioned in 1985. It has been a privilege to carry this sword as a member of both the Active Army Reserve and the Australian Regular Army on many ceremonial occasions between 1985 and 2011, including:

- The Granting of the Freedom of Entry to the North West Mobile Force (Katherine, Wyndham), and Exercising the Right of Freedom of Entry (Darwin, Tennant Creek, Katherine).
- The Granting of the Freedom of Entry to 42 RQR (Sarina), and Exercising the Right of Freedom of Entry (Mackay).
- Ceremonial parades such as the annual Komiatum Day Parade (Mackay); Reformation of

⁵² *The Advertiser* (Adelaide) 9 August 1945, p.3.

11th Brigade (Townsville); as Guard Commander for a Pacific Islands ‘nostalgia tour’ by US military veterans; and as Guard Commander for the Vietnam Veterans’ Welcome Home Parade in Mackay in 1987.

- On duty as ADC to the Administrator of the Northern Territory (1991-97), including investitures in the presence of the Governor-General and visits by foreign royalty and heads of state.
- On duty as ADC to the Honorary Colonel of the North West Mobile Force (1991-97).
- Escorting His Excellency the Governor of South Australia for the opening of the Third Session of the 51st Parliament of South Australia (2008).



Figs.3&4: Markings on Capt Loeser’s regulation 1897-pattern Infantry Officer’s Sword: date and Defence Dept marks on the spine of the blade; broad-arrow above the initials ‘SA’ on the end of the blade tang, denoting the South Australian military forces.

Acknowledgments

I am very grateful for the assistance of Mr Doug Leak and his daughter Nina Leak. Research assistance was kindly provided by Ms Tonia Eldridge of the State Library of SA; Mr Greg Slattery, Archivist and Old Scholars Officer at Immanuel College; and Mr Mike Taylor of the Military Historical Society (UK).

References

- Gammage, B (2010) *The Broken Years. Australian soldiers in the Great War*. Melbourne UP.
- Gray, R (1972) ‘27th Battalion, Royal South Australia Regiment’. *Bulletin* (the Military Historical Society, Great Britain), 23 (89).
- Lock, C B L (1936) *The Fighting 10th*. Webb & Son, Adelaide.
- Palazzo, A (2001) *The Australian Army. A history of its organisation 1901-2001*. Oxford UP.
- Smith, N (1995) ‘Aliases of the Australian Military Forces 1914-1919’. *Sabretache* vol.37 no.4, pp. 14-19.
- Stockings, C A J (2007) *The Torch and the Sword*. UNSW Press, Sydney.
- ‘Citizen Forces Unit Histories, No.1 – 27th Battalion’, *The Advertiser* (Adelaide) 1 February 1930, p.13.
- ‘The 27th Battalion Centenary. The historical records of the 27th Battalions 13th August 1877-1977 and Programme of Centenary Celebrations’, 1977.

SOCIETY NOTICES

Australian Great War Association (AGWA) – possible synergies

Federal President Rohan Goyne and John Potter, NSW/ACT Coordinator for the Australian Great War Association, a serving officer in the RAN and past member of the Society, met to discuss the possible opportunities for cooperation between the Society and the Association, and the many possible synergies -- such as dual memberships – which might result. John has provided a summary of the AGWA and its activities for the information of Society members:

Outline

AGWA is a living history group dedicated to preservation, education, re-enactment and research into the First World War. Its members assist community groups, veteran organisations, schools, museums and the Australian Defence Force on days of remembrance, at historical events, parades, talks and displays showcasing our military heritage. Through such events we hope to give the general public a better understanding of the important role Australia played in the Great War.

Aims

AGWA is not a battle re-enactment society. It is not its intention to glorify war but to remember the bravery and deeds of ordinary men in an extraordinary time. AGWA is a non-profit making organisation. Members purchase their own uniform and equipment and are instructed in their use from the original training manuals. Many of members are current serving or ex-service personnel, or have relatives who fought in the Great War. While the focus is on the AIF on the Western front, the units and corps which can be represented are many and varied.

Structure

AGWA operates as an incorporated association with public liability insurance through the Australian Living History Federation Inc. It currently has members in Victoria, New South Wales, and the Australian Capital Territory region. Each of its state groups operates as a section with rank appointed on the basis of numbers and experience as required and ratified by the national committee.

Past Events

Seymour Military History weekends
Rededication of the Ataturk Memorial, Canberra
Regular closing ceremonies for the AWM
Pozières anniversary commemorations – AWM
Fromelles anniversary commemorations – AWM
Anzac Day marches in Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne
Victorian RSL Remembrance Service – Springvale
National Reserve Forces Day Parades in Sydney
Anzac Day Services in Melbourne, Canberra and Sydney
Etc, etc

Other

Volunteer work for the RSL and Legacy including Anzac badge sales and poppy drives in Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra as well as educational talks to local schools and youth groups.

Projects

Over the next four years AGWA plans to commemorate the 100th anniversaries of campaigns and battles in PNG, Gallipoli, on the Western Front, at sea in various theatres and in the air.

Members will also be available to provide professional honour guards in accurate period uniforms for ceremonies and memorial services marking these events. For this purpose it plans to work in close association with veteran organisations, the current Australian Defence Force, the AWM and the Dept of Veterans Affairs (Centenary of Anzac).

Referees

Lt Col John Moore, OAM, Rtd, Deputy Chairman, Reserve Forces Day National Council
Maj John Gallagher, Rtd, Manager, North Head Artillery Museum

Contacts for enquiries

Secretary and VIC coordinator:

David Howell, mob. 0405 007 700, email kokodahistorical@yahoo.com.au

NSW / ACT coordinator:

John Potter, tel. 02 6255 9030, email potts4259@yahoo.com.au

Centenary of Anzac and the Society

Federal President Rohan Goyne met with the new Minister for Anzac Centenary Warren Snowdon's Chief of Staff and Veterans' Affairs Advisor, introducing the Society to the new Minister's Office on 1 August 2013. He informed the Minister's staff of progress with the special Gallipoli Edition of *Sabretache* which has been supported by Andrew Leigh, Federal member for Fraser, with support for an Anzac Centenary Grant, and provided several copies of *Sabretache* for the Office. The Minister's staff gave an update on the activities of the Federal Government towards the Anzac Centenary with \$150 million in funding allocated towards the centenary. Rohan indicated the willingness of the Society to partner with other stakeholders towards centenary events, and indicated that the grant for the special edition of *Sabretache* should be viewed as a benchmark for value for money with respect to other projects considered under the grants scheme.

MHSA Conference 2014

Dr Bob Doneley, the conference convenor, provides this information and call for papers:

Date: 18-21 April 2014 (Easter Long Weekend)

Venue: Maryborough, Queensland

Theme: 1914-1915: Australia and the first years of the Great War

Sub-themes: Recruiting the AIF; German New Guinea; Egypt 1914-1915; the *Sydney-Emden* battle; the *AE1* and *AE2*; Gallipoli

We are now calling for papers to be presented at the Conference. While the above theme and sub-themes are the main topics for which we are seeking papers and presentations, other topics will, of course, be considered.

Abstracts (of no more than 50 words) should be sent to:

Bob Doneley

3 Oelkers Crt

Hodgsonvale QLD 4352

r.doneley@uq.edu.au

- Abstracts should be submitted no later than 30 November 2013
- Full papers (written using author's guidelines for *Sabretache*) to be submitted no later than 28 February 2014

Venue and conference attractions:

- The Maryborough Military and Colonial Museum. Maryborough is approximately three hours' drive north of Brisbane. Regular bus and train services run between the two cities. Interstate members can fly direct from Sydney to Hervey Bay where they will be met by a local member who will transport them to Maryborough and return after the conference.

Details of accommodation venues will be published at a later date.

***Sabretache* Writer's Prize 2013**

The winner of the *Sabretache* Writers Prize for 2013 is Kristen Alexander, a corresponding member based in the ACT. Kristen's essay is published in this issue of *Sabretache*. Runner-up entries will appear in due course. The Federal Council wishes to acknowledge the generous support of the judging panel Dr Peter Stanley and Mr Anthony Staunton (Qld Branch) for their time in judging this year's entries. The *Sabretache* Writer's Prize is awarded annually and the details of the 2014 Prize will be announced in the December issue.

Rohan Goyne, Federal President

University of South Australia Narratives of War Research Group Biennial Symposium

The University of South Australia invites members of the Society to its Narratives of War (NOW) Research Group Biennial Symposium, to be held at the Magill campus, Adelaide on 20-22 November 2013. The title of this year's symposium is 'Traces of War', and deals with the theme of the way artefacts, diaries, media, art, music, memorabilia – letters, objects, the trappings of previous existence – indeed all manner of things, might be reflections and evidence of the traces left by war and conflict.

The NOW Biennial Symposium is open to the community and aims to offer interested groups the chance to participate in current research and writing by scholars and researchers who will offer a broad range of papers and presentations. A full program for the symposium is available on the NOW website and will have continuing updates: www.unisa.edu.au/now.

This year's Principal Guest Speaker is a name well-known to the Society, Dr Peter Stanley, University of New South Wales, Canberra; former head of the Research Centre at the National Museum of Australia and former Principal Historian at the Australian War Memorial. Prof Stanley is Research Professor in UNSW, Canberra's Australian Centre for the Study of Armed Conflict and Society.

If you would like to register your interest in attending please contact: **Julie.white@unisa.edu.au**.

John Meyers OAM – correction and apology

In the June 2013 issue the notice regarding the award of the OAM to Mr John Meyers, his name was incorrectly shown. The editor apologises to Mr Meyers for the error, and reiterates the Society's congratulations to him on being given the award.

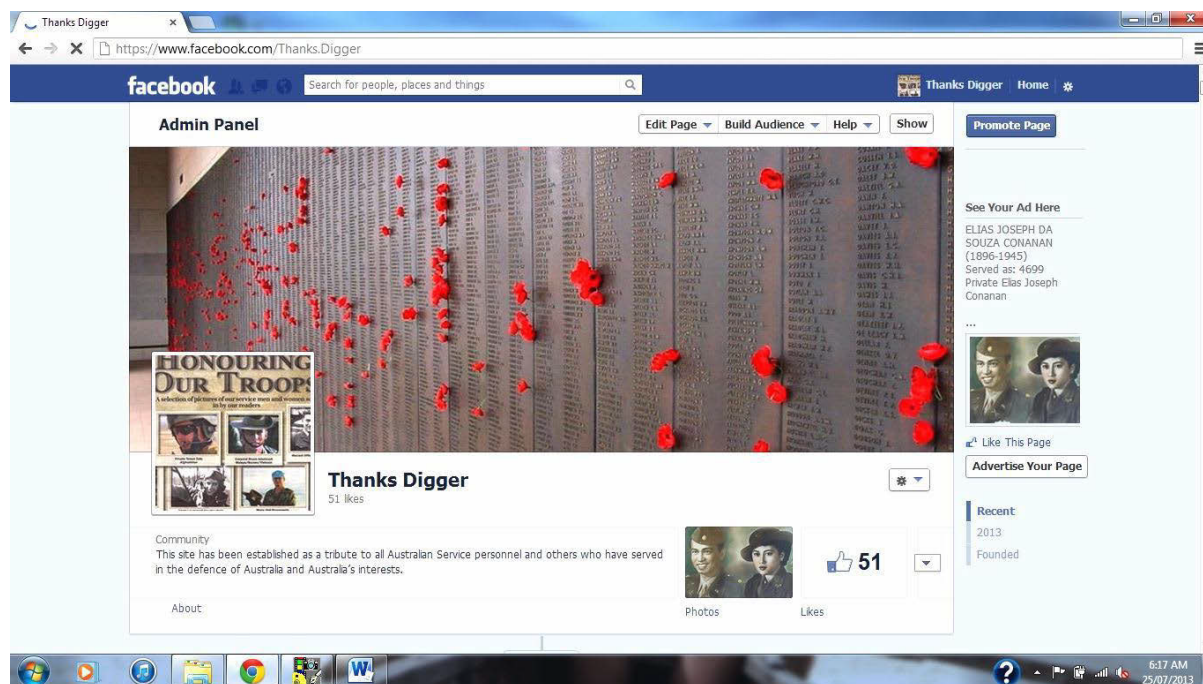
PAGE AND SCREEN

Resources for the Researcher and Collector

Anyone looking for military trivia, that is to say, the odd paragraph or two on matters military, to fill in a vacant space in a magazine or newsletter would find Nicholas Hobbes' hardcover booklet *Essential Militaria* an invaluable aid. It was published by Atlantic Books, London in 2003. As to where I bought it – I suspect it may have been the local Trash & Treasure Market some years ago.

Jean Main

*



Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/Thanks.Digger>: 'Thanks Digger'. This site has been established as a tribute to all Australian Service personnel and others who have served in the defence of Australia and Australia's interests.

Paul Rosenzweig

*

If you need information on the pre-First World War British Army – titles, battle honours, facing colours, etc – here are a couple of very useful contemporary resources which have been re-issued more recently:

- J.S. Farmer, *Regimental Records of the British Army*, originally Grant Richards, London, 1901; republished with coloured plates by Crecy Books, 1984 – a favourite 'ready reference' of mine, with around 240 pages of well organised information
- H.M. Chichester and G. Burges-Short, *The Records and Badges of Every Regiment and Corps in the British Army*, original 2nd revised edn Gale and Polden, 1900; republished by Frederick Muller, 1970 – a mighty tome of some 940 pages with coloured plates

Of course if you're an antique book collector you could always chase up the original editions!

Paul Skrebels