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*Sabretache*



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## EDITORIAL

It's time once again to launch the *Sabretache* Writers Prize; details can be found in this issue's Society Notices. Also published in this issue are two of the entries from this year's competition: Katrina Kittel's article on the diary her father kept while a prisoner of war in Italy during the Second World War, and Robert Holden's on band music in the First, inspired by and throwing further light on a famous photographic image from that conflict. The two pieces are good illustrations of the range of approaches a writer can take, both in terms of the subject matter, and the stylistic and structural variations available even within nonfiction.

But before I'm accused of abrogating my editorial duties by failing to put an apostrophe in 'Writers', it's because I've given up trying to decide whether the prize applies to the writer as an individual entrant or to writers collectively. So I've done what many a copywriter does these days, and copped out! Of course, I could justify my decision by saying that I've adopted the dative case ('the prize for writers') rather than the genitive ('the prize belonging to writers') – but that could lead to all sorts of other accusations. An editor's lot can be tough sometimes.

On a far more sombre note, another inclusion in this issue is an article on Japanese war crimes against Australians in WW2, and how many of them have gone unpunished for a number of reasons. It's particularly tragic that these wounds are still open after some seven decades when so much else has healed over. To put that timescale into another perspective, it's as though actions carried out during the Boer War were still felt to be unresolved when our last troops were returning from Vietnam. That's a long time for a problem to last.

I find this situation particularly upsetting because my wife and I have travelled to Japan many times over the past twenty or more years, most recently only a couple of months ago at the time of writing. We never cease to be struck by how civil a society it is, and how genuinely warm and considerate the people are. I'm well aware of the cover-ups that have operated within Japanese culture since WW2, not least of which involve a failure to admit as a nation to responsibility for much that occurred. At the same time, on other levels – as groups and individuals – it's clear that much is being done in Japan to inform succeeding generations of what went on, and to learn from past mistakes.

On this last trip, for example, we visited the Peace Museum – actually a shrine dedicated mainly to Army Kamikaze pilots – located at Chiran in the hills outside of Kagoshima on the island of Kyushu. Far from being a venue for the promotion of rabid nationalism, the tone of the place is very much about contemplating and comprehending the plight of these young men, who were convinced by a militaristic regime to sacrifice themselves so needlessly. The place was full of young Japanese reading the last letters of these men, attending talks and screenings, and wandering around exhibits dealing in considerable detail with the material circumstances of what it meant to be one of these pilots. This focus on humanity rather than on abstractions such as *bushido* seems in keeping with the way I see modern Japan having developed since the war; how sad then that crimes of the past, in being allowed to go unpunished and unrepented, keep returning to haunt us all.

**Paul Skrebels**

## HYMNS AND HINTS: A PRISONER OF WAR'S NOTEBOOK IN ITALY

**Katrina Kittel<sup>1</sup>**

*'By slow degrees souls are moulded and mount higher until they are ready, when the occasion presents itself, to undertake noble deeds'*

Pope Pius XII, 1941<sup>2</sup>

Around Christmas 1942, Pope Pius XII issued a small notebook to prisoners of war held in POW camps in Italy. Compact in its 14cm x 9cm dimensions, the first half of the 48-page notebook comprised a calendar month per page, and blank 'memorandum' pages. On each page of the first half of the booklet were brief quotes taken from speeches by Pope Pius, presumably offered for reflection and inspiration. Christmas and Easter hymns populated the remaining pages. Although its compact size did not provide for extensive diary entries, it offered more than enough for a POW to record key dates, places, and names. It kept track of the welcome issue of Red Cross parcels, and of mail from home. Owing to the source of its distribution, it was considered to be reasonably immune from confiscation by camp authorities. Conveniently, it was a perfect size for an escaped POW to stuff into a kit bag, under a shirt, or into a long sock.

The gift of the notebook came at a time when POWs in Italy were facing either their first or second Christmas as prisoners of war. For many it was their third Christmas spent in overseas war service, a long way from home. For thousands of Allied prisoners of war, Christmas 1942 would fall at Campo PG57 Grupignano, near Udine, Italy. One Australian POW at Campo 57, Col Booth, farm hand from Bundanoon, had travelled from the southern highlands of NSW to serve amongst the sands and dust storms of the North African desert. In his post-war life, he was typical of many former POWs who chose to give only scant detail to family about their events of captivity and evasion.<sup>3</sup> Typical of many former prisoners of war, this was deliberate strategy to 'remember not past years'.<sup>4</sup>

On the cover of his notebook, as a new year of captivity began in 1943, Col wrote:

*Gnr. Colin Booth NX60337 Group III Spec.  
P.G.57 p.m. 3200. 1<sup>st</sup> January 1943 Gruppignano*

As an Anglican and non-churchgoer, Col may have paid little attention to the words of Pope Pius, and to the hymns within the little notebook. As prisoners of war, Col and his fellow POWs would, at times, have needed solace, reflection, and inspiration. The hints embedded within such notebooks are crucial starting points to unravel the wider context of the POW in Europe experience, as well as the people and places that they would encounter. Individual POW memory would carry a kit bag of unique and fascinating stories, amongst the commonality of general experience. Many may not have been cognisant of the wider history during which they endured their stints of captivity, escape and evasion.

To record the lead-up to being taken prisoner of war, Col pencilled in a list of placenames of desert training and service. Many of these places now pepper the history that has since made

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<sup>1</sup> Katrina Kittel is researching the experience of escaped Australian prisoners of war in Italy in 1943-45.

<sup>2</sup> Pope Pius XII, extract from speech, 20 August 1941, p.10 of notebook. Extracts from speeches made by Pope Pius XII are quoted beneath the calendar month pages of the notebook issued to POWs.

<sup>3</sup> NX60337 Col Booth is the father of the author.

<sup>4</sup> J.H. Newman, extract from hymn, *Lead Kindly Light*, in notebook, p.45.

them renowned – Alexandria, Sollum, Hell Fire Pass, Gaza, Derna, Bardia, Barce and Tobruk. A simple, unelaborated list of place names offers welcome hints to Col's time in North Africa. In tandem with details from his service record, the regimental history, and statements by fellow veterans, his hints of the desert service of 1942 take on more shape.

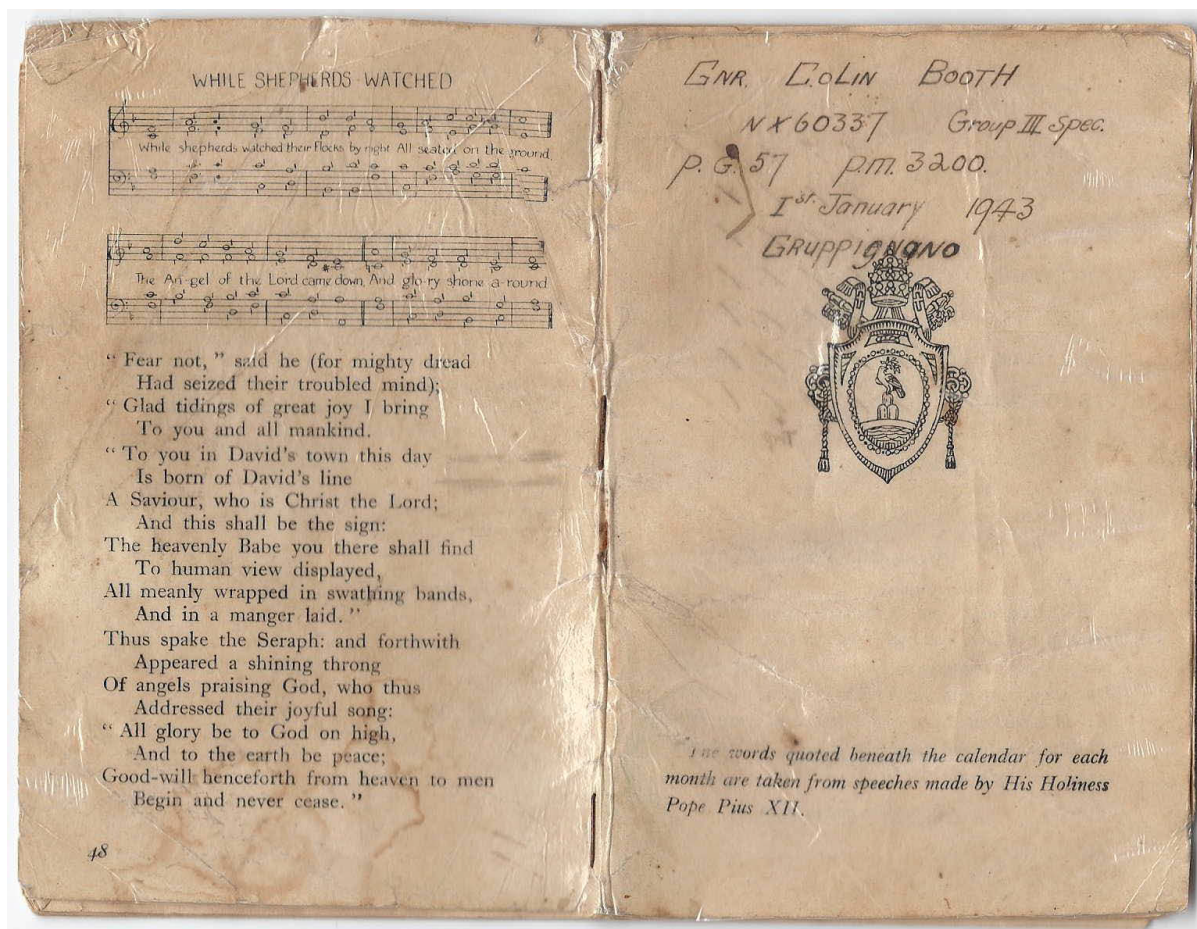


Fig.1: The front and back of Col Booth's diary. Note his misspelling of Grupignano. (Author's photo)

As a gunner and driver with 2/3 Anti-Tank regiment, he came out of heavy battle at El Alamein, 26-27 July 1942, to go 'in the bag'. He began his journey as a POW by being handed to the Italians, in their theatre of war, by German forces. On page 30 of his notebook, in neat print below the musical notation for hymn 'Christmas Night', Col summarised his two-month journey from capture, to Campo P57 Grupignano, the largest Anzac POW camp in Europe WW2:

Captured 27<sup>th</sup> July at Ruin Ridge with 28<sup>th</sup> Battn. Stopped Comp. El. Darba, then Mersa, Bardia, Derna, The Palms, Salt Lakes Benghazi. 8<sup>th</sup> Sept, sailed for Italy past Crete. Landed in Italy on 12<sup>th</sup> Sept at Taranto. Cleaned up, ferried across to train. 5 hours to transit camp 100. Three weeks later took train to Udine and Grupignano.

Col arrived at Grupignano on the last day of September 1942. The numbers had swelled at Campo 57 with the arrival of new prisoners from North African campaigns. As Christmas 1942 approached, and winter deepened, prisoners must have wondered whether they would ever make it home. Conditions at Campo 57 under the command of Colonel Calcaterra would add to the burden and deprivations of captivity. Major Binns reported in 1943, that during

September 1942, 'The increased number of prisoners brought the camp strength to 4,800'.<sup>5</sup> Predictability in camp routine would run parallel with a sense of unpredictability as to what may happen next. 'We had heard how stiffly this camp was run and of 30 days bread and water, chains and the like for petty offences, so no wonder many minds wondered'.<sup>6</sup> Conditions and command at Campo 57 were conducive to both anxiety and ill-health of its prisoners: 'Food was highly prized. Strict discipline. Unfair severe punishment for petty offences. My belongings were searched every week in all weathers'.<sup>7</sup>

Deaths in captivity would be a confronting reminder that not all men would make it home. Two weeks before Christmas 1942, West Australian POW Ted Newbey died in the arms of his brother Joe, at the camp. The Padre who conducted the funeral for Ted observed that over 3000 Allied prisoners of war congregated to follow a hand-drawn hearse that carried Ted to his grave.<sup>8</sup> Numerous recounts testify that Campo 57 was a hell-hole of a camp. It proved to be a 'school of terrible suffering'.<sup>9</sup>

*'And the wind blows stronger; fails my heart, I know not how; I can go no longer'*<sup>10</sup>

Ted and Joe Newbey had served with several hundred other soldiers within the 2/28 Bn, to be captured along with the men of Col's battery at Ruin Ridge, following the night battle of 26-27 July 1942. The July battle of Alamein was disastrous for the Australians: 'We were surrounded and cut off. Ordered to surrender by CO'.<sup>11</sup> Post-battle ruminations would have entered the conversation at camp compounds. In his notebook, Col Booth neatly portrayed the battle scenario at Ruin Ridge in two small diagrams. The diagrams seemingly depict the circumstances of their overwhelming defeat that night, with unlabelled symbols of what appear to be positions of infantry and guns, and advancing enemy forces. Perhaps it was created during reflections with fellow battle veterans about what was thought to have gone wrong that night.

Col's diagrams can give only a hint of the Ruin Ridge experience for these men. For Ted Newbey, it is quite possible that injury was not only sustained during Ruin Ridge battle, but during the trauma of the torpedoed transport ship, *Nino Bixio*, on 17 August 1942. Such a series of events could have cumulative effect on a POW's overall resilience to the harsh conditions of transit and permanent camps.

*'nevertheless, refrain from hating those against whom it is his duty to fight'*<sup>12</sup>

In addition to being recorded as wounded in action in 1941, and that of several hospitalisations, Ted Newbey's service record carries the official cause of death – 'Died of illness whilst POW. Bronchial pneumonia. Severe organic decay'.<sup>13</sup> However, to the understanding of Ted's son, Alan Newbey, Ted was not well enough to be forwarded on from Benghazi. For Ted's brother Joe, who was present with him as he died, his condition made

<sup>5</sup> AWM54, 779/1/22, *Reports and Statements by Major R.J. Binns 2/8 Field Ambulance and Capt E.W. Levings RMO 2/3 Anti-Tank Regiment AIF on Gruppignano P.O.W. Camp Italy 1943*, p.5.

<sup>6</sup> Colin Weekes, unpublished manuscript, Part F. Courtesy of Colin's son, Martin Weekes.

<sup>7</sup> NAA: B883 NX60337 Col Booth, Statement by Repatriated Navy, Army or Air Force Prisoner of War, 22 October 1944.

<sup>8</sup> Ken Fenton, *Alamein to the Alps: war in the Piedmont with Mission Cherokee and the lost Anzacs 1943-45*, Frontier Press NZ, 2011, p.213.

<sup>9</sup> Pope Pius XII, extract from speech, 24 December 1940, p.16 of notebook.

<sup>10</sup> Extract from hymn, *Good King Wenceslas*, p. 35 of notebook.

<sup>11</sup> NAA: B883 NX60337 Col Booth, Statement by Repatriated Navy, Army or Air Force Prisoner of War, 22 October 1944.

<sup>12</sup> Pope Pius XII, extract from speech, 10 July 1940, p.20 of notebook.

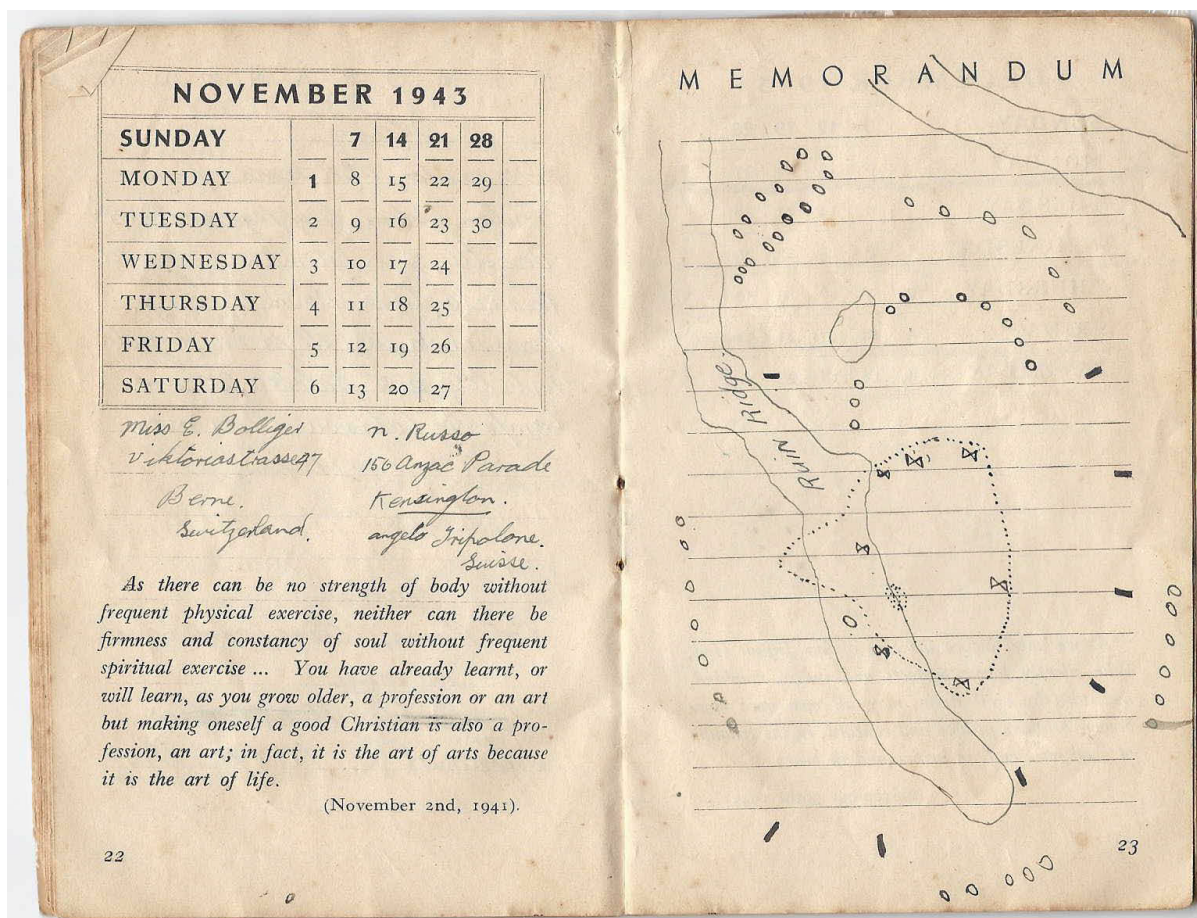
<sup>13</sup> NAA, B883 WX7406 Edward Newbey.

him almost unrecognisable.<sup>14</sup>

*'the night is dark, and I am far from home, lead thou me on'*<sup>15</sup>

As life in captivity at Campo 57 ticked by into early 1943, Col marked off the calendar days in the notebook. He circled 7 February, his 25<sup>th</sup> birthday. For 10 February, he notes the arrival of cables from his mother hospitalised in Sydney, and from the Lewry family of Bundanoon. Letters also are diligently noted. Red Cross parcel issue was another source of psychological and physical nourishment for those in captivity. For eighteen weeks at PG57, Col noted issue of full and shared parcels, and for a number of weeks, he wrote '0' to indicate nil issue. Captain Binns, a medical officer at PG57, expressed 'opinion, and that of other medical officers, that many lives have been saved by Red Cross food parcels'.<sup>16</sup>

*Fig.2: Col Booth's diagram in the diary of the positions on Ruin Ridge, July 1942. (Author's photo)*



*'Bring me flesh, and bring me wine'*<sup>17</sup>

Life at Campo 57 brought together non-commissioned ranked POWs from across Australian states and units. Comradship could fill the gap left by separation from loved ones and friends back home. Col offered his notebook to a number of fellow prisoners, and they jotted

<sup>14</sup> Alan Newbey, personal communication 2011. Alan was son of WX7406 Edward 'Ted' Newbey and nephew to WX5251 Thomas 'Joe' Newbey. Alan Newbey died in 2012, and his wishes were that his remains be interred with that of his father at Udine War Cemetery, Italy.

<sup>15</sup> Newman, op cit.

<sup>16</sup> AWM54, 779/1/22, op cit, p.9.

<sup>17</sup> Extract from hymn, *Good King Wenceslas*, op cit.

in accordingly – B. Lester (Concord), C.W. Weekes (Strathfield), H.H.J. Park (Quairading), ‘Malo’ Norton-Knight (Bowral), Harry R. Richardson (Dept of Agriculture Sydney), D.F. Walter (Merewether) and P. Erickson (Newport). Although it was not indicated in notebook entries, these men were all part of the same 2/3 Anti-Tank regimental battery, except for Havaland Park, who was with the 2/28 Bn. All seven men had been captured, with Col Booth, at Ruin Ridge at the 26-27 July 1942 battle.<sup>18</sup>

P. Erickson from Newport was the most familiar name to Col Booth’s family. Col’s first son was named Peter, in honour of this particular mate. Col had told his family that Peter Erickson, eight years older, had saved his life, somewhere in Italy, by shooting one who was about to shoot him. The location and circumstance of this event was not further elaborated. For the other six Australians listed in the notebook, their names sufficed to locate further information from service records and regiment history. The men behind rank and service number came alive through their enlistment photos and background information in their service files, as well as from families.<sup>19</sup> It came to light that, in addition to Malcolm (‘Malo’), two older Norton-Knight brothers were also captured at Ruin Ridge. One of those brothers, Osborne, known by middle name Peter, was to die 25 August 1942, following arrival in Italy.<sup>20</sup>

The mix of Allied prisoners at Campo 57 was also exemplified through the names in Col’s notebook. New Zealander Vivian Bevan (Taranaki) and J.A.D. Serfontein (Johannesburg) scribed their details. John Shaw (Lancashire) squeezed in his contact information between the calendar for April 1943 and a plea by Pope Pius on p.23: ‘let us pray for a speedy and universal peace ... a peace which, by guaranteeing the honour of all nations, may satisfy their vital needs and their lawful rights’.

In March 1943 the Italians decided to send POW work parties to farms in the Vercelli region. Opportunity came for hundreds of Australian POWs to move on from Campo 57. Col Booth, Peter Erickson, and Havaland ‘Happy’ Park were transported to PG106/1 San Germano, where ‘Happy’ became camp leader.<sup>21</sup> Colin Weekes was held at nearby PG106/19 ‘Sollusola’, PG106/19.<sup>22</sup> POW life was different at Vercelli, as the men worked outdoors for eight-hour days, six days a week, and had interaction with farmers and other Italians who worked the fields. Another Vercelli POW, Ron Crellin, thought that ‘The food was a lot better than in the big camp which helped us to pick up and get back a bit of strength’.<sup>23</sup> A POW-issue postcard was completed and sent by Col on 6 June 1943 to his mother in a Sydney hospital. The tone could be interpreted as one of reassurance to those at home. Perhaps he felt improved in his body weight, but sarcasm also tinges the tone: ‘Well, everything’s going fine. I’m still working the rice farm and as fat as mud’.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> J.N.L. Argent, *Target Tank: The history of the 2/3<sup>rd</sup> Australian Anti-Tank Regiment, 9<sup>th</sup> Division, A.I.F.*, Parramatta, 1957, p.189. NAA, B883, WX14265, Park, Havaland. Service File includes his ‘Statement by Repatriated Navy, Army or Air Force Prisoner of War’ taken at Eastbourne, UK, 8/6/45.

<sup>19</sup> Families of ex-POWs in Italy were located through assistance of Unit Associations, correspondence, and referral through networks.

<sup>20</sup> NAA, B883, NX53868, Osborne Peter Norton-Knight.

<sup>21</sup> NAA, B883, WX14265, Park, Havaland; PW/EX/SWITZ/3701, POW Interrogation Report for NX33357 Peter Erickson, 13/8/1944 Switzerland; and PW/EX/SWITZ/3630, POW Interrogation Report for NX60337 Colin Booth, 13/9/1944, Switzerland.

<sup>22</sup> Colin Weekes, *op cit*, Part H.

<sup>23</sup> Ron Crellin VX48078, *Freedom at last*, Richard Cambridge Printers, Bendigo, 1994, p.40.

<sup>24</sup> Colin Booth, POW standard issue postcard from PG106/1 San Germano Vercelli, 6 June 1943.

The calendar page for September 1943 is unmarked in Col's notebook. However, it was a critical period for the POWs, and for Italy in WW2. Colin Weekes, at a nearby Vercelli sub-camp to Col, was working the fields when the word came in early September of an Armistice signed with the Allies. Prisoners and Italian guards alike were on alert for advancing German forces and in anticipation of imminent changes. It was decision time. Prisoners weighed up the options: stay in camp and take a chance that Allied forces could reach them before German forces; head south and cross German lines to reach Allied lines; or head north to Switzerland.

*'now torn by civil strife, may all men once more become brothers in love and concord, in the triumph of good over evil, in justice and in peace'*<sup>25</sup>

As Italy threw in the towel, and the Armistice with the Allies was promulgated, the country was in turmoil. Into an explosive context of partisan activity, German patrols, and Fascists, thousands of prisoners from Allied nations were thrust. Assistance was found among sympathetic civilians who offered food, shelter and guidance to escaped prisoners, at great risk to themselves:

Things began to fall to pieces in Italy, with much rejoicing on both sides of the wire ... Any minute now Jerry might arrive and cruel our pitch. On Sat 11 September we got hold of BBC news, and found that the Jerries were in Novara, Turin, Milan, Vercelli and Biella, in fact all around us ... so we just spread out over the various farms and villages ... our prison life had really come to an end and we began our trek as free men, escaping from behind the enemy lines.<sup>26</sup>

From their nearby Vercelli camp, Col and Peter made their move on 9 September 1943.<sup>27</sup> Alongside the notebook calendar for October 1943, Col's list of place names appears seemingly disconnected. However, by following these hints on maps, being mindful of phonetic spellings, their route emerges.<sup>28</sup> From Vercelli and Rosavenda, Col listed 'Casa Nova, Creva Courya, Cigula, Mount Barone, Sabbia, Mount Campbello, Bannia'. A route heading north becomes explicit, except for Casa Nova. A tiny place by that name is located south of Vercelli, near the Po River. A newspaper article based on an interview with Col gives some explanation for this anomaly in the route. They had initially gone south. With typical brevity, Col offered: 'Forced back ... German patrols guarding a river they hoped to cross'.<sup>29</sup> A hymn in the notebook resonates with the desperation of evasion in a foreign land:

*'The night is dark, and I am far from home ... I loved to choose and see my path; but now lead Thou me on, ... O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till the night is gone'*<sup>30</sup>

Within Col's lists, came the hint of friendship with the Italian foe, through the mention of Frank Secchia (Rovasenda) and Clementina Zaninetti (Vercelli, Creva Cuore). As reported to the interviewer in 1967, Col and Peter 'got to a little village called Rovasenda and met an Italian who had been in America for 8 years'.<sup>31</sup> It came to light, that Francesco 'Frank' Secchia, his wife and young son Piero, were brave hosts for Col and Peter in Rovasenda. In

<sup>25</sup> Pope Pius XII, extract from speech, 30 November 1941, p.24 of notebook.

<sup>26</sup> Colin Weekes, op cit, Part H.

<sup>27</sup> PW/EX/SWITZ/3630, POW Interrogation Report for NX60337 Colin Booth, 13/9/1944, Switzerland. PW/EX/SWITZ/3701, POW Interrogation Report for NX33357 Peter Erickson, 13/8/1944 Switzerland.

<sup>28</sup> Bernhard Banzhaf, correspondence of 1 March 2012. The scrutiny of local maps and the identification of a possible route from Italy to Switzerland, working from phonetic spellings of place names in the notebook, was assisted by Swiss researcher Bernhard Banzhaf.

<sup>29</sup> Tom Barass, 'Swiss tour for war prisoners', *Newcastle Morning Herald*, 14 October, 1967.

<sup>30</sup> Newman, op cit.

<sup>31</sup> Barass, op cit.



2012, a letter from 80-year-old Piero Secchia, recalled the shelter of two men in their barn under strict silence:

my father loved to tell this experience, and while telling it, his eyes glazed. My father was an American citizen, after reaching New York in 1920, so his good knowledge of the American language helped him in welcoming the Allied soldiers and helping them to flee towards Switzerland.<sup>32</sup>

Piero's mother, at 99 years, apologised for 'the very poor meals she prepared because, during the war, she had to feed these escaped soldiers'.<sup>33</sup> Regardless, it would have been a welcome supplement to the raw potatoes as scrounged by Col and Peter. Without doubt, sustenance and assistance provided by the Secchia family was of immeasurable benefit to Col and Peter:

Frank had directed us to another village where an organisation took us up into the mountains to a hotel where we found more Aussies. But there were spies everywhere and after 12 days we had to get out. It was becoming too dangerous for the woman.<sup>34</sup>

The complex and tumultuous context of 1943 Italy is made clear. The role of Clementina Zaninetti in offering extraordinary assistance, not only to Col and Peter, but to many escaped prisoners, became evident in the men's Interrogation Reports of 1944. Peter summarised: 'Clementina Zaninetti, Crevacouri; food for 12 days; clothes; 87 other soldiers here'. Col added succinctly, '19.9.43 to 31.9.43. Food and shelter'.<sup>35</sup>

The trek towards Switzerland continued:

We went higher to Sabbia ... after Sabbia we met a Tommy and a South African ... We climbed higher in the mountains and then it got hard. In fact, it was a nightmare. We had to demand food and directions. On the sixth day we found a guide who had been running contraband and he took us within close distance of the border.<sup>36</sup>

Col's wartime photographs, glued by the fierceness of 1950s album adhesive, reveal useful captions on the reverse. A photo of five smiling men on skis was annotated accordingly: 'The five of us who got to Switzerland together – myself, Peter Erickson, Ross Wycherley, John Shaw and Dan Serfontein'. Herewith the men from Lancashire and Johannesburg, as named in the notebook. John Shaw, British anti-tank gunner, gave his own indication of paths that crossed: 'Met 2 Aust. on Monte Moro, crossed 4 Oct'.<sup>37</sup> Ross Wycherley, as confirmed on Swiss arrival lists, arrived 4 October 1943.<sup>38</sup> Joe Newbey, brother of Ted, arrived in Switzerland two days earlier. Under his shirt, Joe had kept close the purple funeral ribbon from his brother's casket.<sup>39</sup>

The frontier safely delivered these Allied POWs into the arms of the Swiss. A sense of relief for Col's group may not have been immediate. Peter told his family about a nervous

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<sup>32</sup> Piero Secchia, correspondence of April 2012, as translated by Marco Soggetto. Marco Soggetto, Italian researcher, assisted in locating Piero Secchia, the son of Frank Secchia, and in translating correspondence.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Barass, op cit.

<sup>35</sup> PW/EX/SWITZ/3701, POW Interrogation Report for NX33357 Peter Erickson, op cit. PW/EX/SWITZ/3630, POW Interrogation Report for NX60337 Colin Booth, op cit.

<sup>36</sup> Barass, op cit.

<sup>37</sup> PW/EX/SWITZ/3201, POW Interrogation Report for 950776 John Shaw, 14 August 1944.

<sup>38</sup> The Final Report of the Swiss Commission for the Internment and Hospitalisation of foreign Military Personnel 1940-45 (also known as *Schlussbericht*). Extract of List of AIF Personnel as recorded arriving in Switzerland.

<sup>39</sup> Newbey, op cit.

interrogation on arrival at the border, ‘just north of Monte Moro’, to ascertain whether the men were spies.<sup>40</sup> They had come in via a known smuggler route; the Mondelli Pass, which is north of the more frequently used Mount Moro Pass, was in the vicinity of a popular contraband trail.<sup>41</sup> Col scribbled ‘tea and cigarettes here’ on the reverse of a 1940s postcard of Saas Almagell, where finally they relished their first meal and bed in Switzerland.

*‘your most difficult duties are one of the most sweetest and deepest joys of your life’<sup>42</sup>*

Col’s account of the incident of a life-saving shooting by Peter, was to find further explanation. Peter had told his own family of his ‘troublemaker’ behaviour in camp, and that he was at risk of being shot. He also told them that he needed to kill a guard.<sup>43</sup> Such episodes reflect that the context of Italy in September 1943 was a complex and volatile period. Large numbers of escaped prisoners were to cross paths with Fascists, German and partisans of the Italian Resistance. In this new battlefield, it is easy to see how POWs could be driven to drastic means to evade recapture or death.

During those weeks of evasion and dangerous journey through northern Italy, it may not have been possible think beyond the immediacy of survival. Col and Peter may have wondered as to the whereabouts of the mates who had scribbled details in both of their notebooks. Being a snapshot, and succinct at that, their respective notebook entries do not shed light on the varied outcomes over the coming two years for these fellow prisoners. Other clues are needed. Colin Weekes had experienced a swifter journey to Switzerland, arriving twelve days before Col and Peter.<sup>44</sup> Don Walter, Harry Richardson, Ben Lester, ‘Malo’ Norton-Knight and his brother Gerry, were transported to German controlled camps.<sup>45</sup> Intriguingly, the families of both Don and Gerry were, in 2011 and 2013, to speak about a story of escape from German captivity. The story involved the hiding in haystacks, and dodging of pitchfork searches by patrolling Germans. The ‘requisition’ of a Mercedes transported them to Paris. Both men made it safely to the UK.<sup>46</sup>

*‘bless us ere we go ... bless us more than in past days’<sup>47</sup>*

For Col Booth, Peter Erickson, Colin Weekes, and Joe Newbey, their time in Switzerland had spanned twelve months, until they were moved out of Switzerland, with hundreds of other Australians, in September 1944.<sup>48</sup> Despite ski lessons and employment through Swiss hospitality, it had amounted to many years away from home.

At the end of the 12 months we wanted to get out. We knew the invasion was on for June 5 or 6. We watched the progress of the invasion and in a few weeks we were taken out of Switzerland to a French port and then shipped to Australia.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Pauline Anderson, daughter of Peter Erickson, personal communication 2011.

<sup>41</sup> Banzhaf, op cit.

<sup>42</sup> Pope Pius XII, extract from speech, 13 August 1941, p.12 of notebook.

<sup>43</sup> Ava Erickson, daughter of NX33357 Peter Erickson, personal communication 201; and Anderson, op cit.

<sup>44</sup> The Final Report of the Swiss Commission for the Internment and Hospitalisation of Foreign Military Personnel 1940-45, op cit.

<sup>45</sup> NAA, B883 service files for NX53870 Norton-Knight, Malcolm; NX46346, Walter, Donald; NX30962 Harry Richardson; NX59949 Lester, Benjamin; NX53869 Gerald Norton-Knight. Reference also made to British War Office WO 392 - List of Prisoners of War of Great Britain and the Empire 1939-1945, as corrected generally up to 30 March 1945.

<sup>46</sup> Jill Walter, widow of NX46346 Don Walter, personal communication 2011; and Gerry Norton-Knight, son of NX53869 Gerald Norton-Knight, personal communication, 2012.

<sup>47</sup> F.W Faber, extract from hymn, *Evening Hymn*, p.43 of notebook.

<sup>48</sup> The Final Report of the Swiss Commission for the Internment and Hospitalisation of Foreign Military Personnel 1940-45, op cit.

<sup>49</sup> Barass, op cit.

‘Released from internment’, Col, Peter, Colin, and Joe disembarked in Melbourne on 17 November 1944.<sup>50</sup> As he exchanged letters from Army base with his fiancé at Bundanoon during the early months of 1945, Col was probably unaware that the liberation of several mates had not yet happened. Following liberation from a series of German camps, Ben Lester arrived home 24 July 1945, four days before Col’s wedding at Bundanoon. Don Walter disembarked on home soil on 7 September 1945.<sup>51</sup> Harry Richardson’s experience of escape and evasion involved escape from Germany after eighteen months of captivity, to be recaptured in Czechoslovakia. He was one of a small group of Australian POWs who were interned illegally in an outer work camp of Auschwitz, where they suffered brutal treatment.<sup>52</sup> Harry remained in Germany until his release by American soldiers. On 27 April 1945 he was admitted to a UK hospital, suffering malnutrition. Harry arrived home in December 1945.<sup>53</sup>

Havaland ‘Happy’ Park came out of hiding in Italy in May 1945: ‘From the 8 Sept 1943 till 23 May 45, I was hidden away from the enemy’.<sup>54</sup> Carrying injury, he was unable to escape from Vercelli in early September 1943. Working in the fields near the camp, he responded to an offer from local partisans to join them. Later in the war, as the US Army came through Italy, ‘Happy’ was taken under their wing as an interpreter. On 27 July 1945 he was deplaned in UK as a recovered POW. Following repatriation home to WA, it was difficult to verify his identity. He had been ‘lying doggo’ as a free man in Italy for two years.<sup>55</sup> For services to Italy, Havaland Park may have been eligible for the Italy Star, but neither his service record, nor his family, mention that he made application for it.<sup>56</sup> For assistance given to Allied soldiers, that enabled them to evade recapture from the enemy, Francesco ‘Frank’ Secchia, received Certificate from Field Marshal H.R. Alexander.<sup>57</sup> For being interned in a Nazi concentration camp, Harry Richardson received \$10,000 compensation in 1988.<sup>58</sup> Instead of putting the cheque in the bank, Harry chose to hang it in a frame.<sup>59</sup>

Regardless of a POW’s varying experiences, we can deduce that these men would have come home with hope that, for a world ‘torn by civil strife, may all men once more become brothers in love and concord, in the triumph of good over evil, in justice and in peace’.<sup>60</sup> Individual men would find their own strategies to hide, or to reveal, the experiences of service and captivity. A little notebook, secreted from Italy to Switzerland, had hidden its hints for decades amongst photos, papers and paraphernalia. Following up those hints has pointed a lens at a much wider history.

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<sup>50</sup> NAA, B883 service files for NX60337 Colin Booth; NX33357 Peter Erickson; and WX5251 Thomas ‘Joe’ Newbey

<sup>51</sup> NAA, B883, NX59949, Benjamin Lester. NAA, B883, NX46346, Donald Walter.

<sup>52</sup> Australian Government, CO-X144269, NSW-X119845, Concentration Camp Committee, Determination of 5 April 1990.

<sup>53</sup> NAA, B883, NX30962 Harry Richardson; and Sarah Fowler, daughter of Harry Richardson, personal communication, 2012.

<sup>54</sup> NAA, B883, WX14265, Park, Havaland.

<sup>55</sup> Alan Park, brother to Havaland Park, personal communication, 2011.

<sup>56</sup> Ex-POWs who spent lengthy periods of time with the Italian Resistance needed to provide documentation for consideration of award of the Italy Star. A number of men, post-war, found difficulty in locating persons in Italy who could provide verifying documentation, whereas others may have chosen not to apply.

<sup>57</sup> Secchia, correspondence of April 2012, op cit.

<sup>58</sup> Australian Government, CO-X144269, NSW-X119845, Concentration Camp Committee, Determination of 5 April 1990.

<sup>59</sup> Sarah Fowler, op cit.

<sup>60</sup> Pope Pius XII, extract from speech, 30 November 1941, p.24 of notebook.

## AND THE BAND PLAYED ON: 'MUSIC IS TO A CITY OR NATION'S SPIRIT WHAT AMMUNITION IS TO THEIR ARMY'

**Robert Holden**

War is noise! Noise which can continue for hours and even days at a time. Unremitting, unrelenting noise. In World War 1 an 'orchestra' of men and munitions created the dreadful music of warfare: the booming bass of cannon underscored by the counterpoint staccato of lighter weaponry, by the strident trumpeting of an artillery barrage. The published reminiscences of AIF member Walter Downing, for example, described the tapping and chattering of hundreds of machine-guns in the lull between barrages as sounding 'like a leitmotif in Wagnerian music.'<sup>1</sup>

Yet another Anzac, Pte Joseph Burgess, described the morning of 25 June 1915 at Gallipoli using similar imagery: 'when a shot was fired the sound echoed & re-echoed through the hills ... until it sounded like a peal upon the bass of some mighty bass organ'.<sup>2</sup> And AIF Capt Hugh Knyvett, in even more overwrought prose, described the sound of war as 'the big drums of the devil's orchestra ... booming in accompaniment ... [to] hell's cantata'.<sup>3</sup>

Elsewhere, although more noted as a precise and authoritative Australian war correspondent, Capt C.E.W. Bean was occasionally given to moments of flamboyant journalism, and none were more colourful than his descriptions of the music of war. Throughout 1916, in his *Letters from France*, he wrote of bombardments on the Western Front using an ever-increasing vocabulary of musical analogies. On 1 July 1916, one barrage 'came in with a crash, as an orchestra might enter on its grand finale.' Later still, it played 'up and down the distant skyline, running over it from end to end as a player might run the fingers of one hand lightly over the piano keys.' And all this concluded with 'a constant detonation ... exactly as though the players began ... to use all the keys at once.' Finally, Bean's analogies reached their crescendo on 21 August 1916 when he described the most intense of all bombardments 'like the swift roll of a kettledrum' whose noise was enough to reduce men to tears.<sup>4</sup>

The Germans even coined a new word for their percussive barrage – *trommelfeuer*. To the Allies it became known as Bruchmuller's Orchestra, named after the German colonel's ultimate military onslaught, later described by Les Carlyon: 'Bruchmuller had arranged his barrage like the conductor of a large orchestra. Instead of woodwinds, brass, percussion and strings, he had heavies, mortars, field guns and ... howitzer ... sometimes ... played fortissimo and sometimes diminuendo.'<sup>5</sup>

How often must soldiers have longed for this dreadful noise, for this 'music' of war assaulting their senses, to end? Wondered how many more times the same theme would be repeated before the finale was sounded and the performance ended? Not surprisingly, in their quieter moments, particularly away from the immediate front lines, soldiers displayed an incessant desire for music of a more traditional kind – organised, harmonious sound which would counter this random barrage of explosive noise.

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<sup>1</sup> W.H. Downing, *To the last ridge*, Melbourne: H.H. Champion, 1920, p.88.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Burgess, *Diary*, Mitchell Library manuscript 1596.

<sup>3</sup> R. Hugh Knyvett, *Over There With The Australians*, New York: Charles Scribner, 1918, p.202

<sup>4</sup> C.E.W. Bean, *Letters from France*, London: Cassell, 1917, pp.71-72 & 127.

<sup>5</sup> Les Carlyon, *The Great War*, Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 2006, p.560.

By the First World War the provision of troop entertainment and the need for a repertoire of rousing songs and marching music as vital elements in building morale were well established. To a cadre of popular British songs – *Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag*, *Keep the home fires burning* and *It's a long way to Tipperary* – were added hymns, ragtime music, parodies and even some Australian compositions. Together, they reinforced nostalgia for home, gave hope for a return to peaceful normality, relieved boredom, generated and inspired an outpouring of national pride, and gave a voice to male emotions which were more easily expressed by being performed in unison. Perhaps, most importantly, songs and music established an esprit de corps among the men which helped wield them into a cohesive unit. For the Australians, to wield them into a band of Anzac brothers.

By the time the Anzacs left Egypt after the Gallipoli evacuation they were certainly singing; these uninhibited outbursts had earned them the title of the 'singing soldiers' from their favourite poet, C.J. Dennis. And their chorus only became louder once they arrived in France. Not only were they overjoyed to have left Egypt but, at last, they were setting out to do the job for which they had volunteered. Cpl Walter Harvey, who had been a journalist before the war, contributed a series of articles from the Front back to Victorian newspapers throughout 1915-16. One such lengthy account in June 1916 concluded with the proud assertion that during the three-day train journey from the south of France to the north, at the end of March 1916, the Anzacs were 'always singing.' Furthermore, he wrote that these soldiers 'would sing if the Kaiser himself were their boss and decreed against it'.<sup>6</sup>

But as more Anzacs arrived they eventually had to face a new enemy – a winter more bitter than any that had been experienced for a generation. 1916, in fact, would not be a country idyll. Beyond moments of music-making and mirth there were sounds and sights enough which would only cease their unwelcome onslaught when the Armistice was signed. For the moment, however, these horrors were still in the distance from where they could hear the thunder of the guns and see, at night, a display of flares from No-Man's Land. Eventually, between July and November, the men would meet this barrage when they went into action at the first Battle of the Somme.

The countryside of France and Belgium then became, in Capt Ellis's evocative words, 'chewed and masticated by the teeth of war'.<sup>7</sup> Yet although German firepower was annihilating the Allies, the brigades of the 5<sup>th</sup> Australian Division were determined to overcome their enemy and made the capture of the French town of Bapaume their priority. Eventually, real music would play a significant, if now largely forgotten, part in their campaign. Because strategic value lay in Bapaume's location on the commanding ridges of the Artols Hills and in its access to road and rail networks, the 19 kms of road from Albert to Bapaume became the axis of Allied efforts. All throughout that winter the town lay tantalisingly out of reach with its spire and its roofs just visible through the mists. Yet, although Bapaume had been their objective when they opened this battle on 1 July 1916, it would take the British Expeditionary Force eight and a half months to cover such a short distance.

The renowned Anzac scout Capt Hugh Knyvett, in one of the first published autobiographies celebrating Anzac bravery, described his frustration at laying 'within cooe of a nest of our enemies ... under the shadow of the church-tower of Bapaume.' This frustration was all the

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<sup>6</sup> W.J. Harvey, 'Egypt to France,' *Riverine Herald*, 21 June 1916, p.3.

<sup>7</sup> A.D. Ellis, *The Story of the Fifth Australian Division*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, [1919], p.149.

more keenly felt when Knyvett realised that this church was being subverted for the war effort: ‘every morning as the mist lifted the church-tower would reappear through the trees, and now and again the flash of a glass would show that it was an observation-post of the enemy.’<sup>8</sup> Finally, on 17 March 1917, when the Anzacs began their occupation of the town’s smoking ruins, their long anticipated victory was widely publicised. Like their climactic victory at Pozieres in 1916, in which the Anzacs first met and defeated German infantry, this was an enormous boost to their morale. In the words of C.E.W. Bean, ‘the occupation of Bapaume aroused among them, as throughout the whole army, a glow of elation whose warmth it is difficult to recapture in a written account.’<sup>9</sup>

Sadly, though, the French would hardly have recognised their own landscape. Trees had been felled along most of the roads and mines exploded to form huge craters at strategic crossways. In their withdrawal, the Germans had been intent on creating havoc and destroying anything that might offer billets or advantages to the advancing Allies. This wholesale destruction of towns and villages as the Germans prepared to move back to the Hindenburg Line aroused the world’s rage. In their withdrawal to stronger and better prepared positions, the Germans had wantonly sawed down orchards, smashed farm machinery and polluted or destroyed drinking wells, all in a fury of military excess.

Not that these rolling hills of Picardy had not been trampled over before. Indeed, the dead straight line from Albert to Bapaume followed an old Roman road which soldiers had marched over for more than two millennia. But this German withdrawal was wholesale civil destruction on a previously unimaginable scale and it was deeply shocking. The Allies were now confronted with similar stratagems which they had used at Gallipoli to confuse and hinder the enemy: trip wires and booby-traps to detonate bombs and time-delayed mines which maintained the enemy presence for days after German withdrawal.

Yet although its houses had been systematically destroyed, the arcaded and balconied town hall and many buildings in Bapaume’s main square were left practically intact. Sgt James O’Donnell left a graphic account in his diary: ‘When the writer, in company with 9 others, sneaked (that is the best word to describe our progress) through the streets of the burning town of Bapaume at 6am on the morning of 17<sup>th</sup> March 1917 ... tiles from burning homes were falling fast & thick [but] we’d reached the Mecca for which we’d longed & fought.’<sup>10</sup> The British war correspondent Philip Gibbs added further details: ‘I was with the Australians on that day when they swarmed into Bapaume, and they brought out trophies like men at a country fair ... Next day, though shells were still bursting in the ruins, some Australian boys set up some painted scenery which they had found among the rubbish, and chalked up the name of the “Coo-ee Theatre”.’<sup>11</sup>

By 21 March 1917, Bean could triumphantly boast, in an article in the [London] Times entitled, ‘Australian Troops First in Bapaume’, that ‘no one will grudge the Australians the satisfaction which they feel’. And since only the Australians ‘were within miles of this part of the line,’ he quite rightly thought that ‘they deserved this honour’ of being first into the town.<sup>12</sup> This was an honour acknowledged by Walter Long, the Secretary of State for the

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<sup>8</sup> Knyvett, *op. cit.*, p.259.

<sup>9</sup> C.E.W. Bean, *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918, vol. 4 The AIF in France*, Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1933, p.144.

<sup>10</sup> James F. O’Donnell, *Diary*, Mitchell Library manuscript 2934.

<sup>11</sup> Philip Gibbs, *Now It Can Be Told*, New York & London: Harper, [1920], pp.410-11.

<sup>12</sup> C.E.W. Bean, ‘Australian Troops First In Bapaume,’ *Times*, 21 March 1916, p.8.

Colonies, in a tribute which was widely quoted in the Australian press.

Before the end of March, the Allies had gained possession of over 60 villages and a number of towns and Lt Col William Simmons recorded the liberator's elation in his diary: 'French villages for the past two and a half years under German control have been freed and the excitement is intense.'<sup>13</sup> All this would culminate in a photographic opportunity of great poignancy – on 19<sup>th</sup> March 1917 the band of the 5<sup>th</sup> A.I.F. Brigade marched into Bapaume in formal celebration of its occupation. This, at last, was the music of war which the men longed to hear. News of Bapaume's imminent fall had begun to spread for days before and staff officers, war correspondents and official photographers all begun streaming into the area, on the very heels of the advancing army. On 18 March 1917 it was reported that this tide of eager observers flowed so strongly as to arouse caustic comment from working parties of Australians. They were toiling to bridge or to fill shell-holes which the Germans had blown in the main road, working to make it fit again for light traffic. From there, these observers were greeted by plumes of smoke rising for the gables of Bapaume which had been torched by the Germans in their withdrawal.

A hint of Spring was already in the air and after such an appalling winter this welcome change also served to elate the Anzacs. And, finally, they were able to see the other side of the enemy's line; to witness evidence of German occupation: its dugouts, billets and observation posts, let alone the remaining grandeur of a once fine town. Thus, with all these conflicting emotions, the band of the 5<sup>th</sup> AIF Brigade led by a bandmaster from one of its four battalions, the 19<sup>th</sup>, marched into the town's smoking ruins. The swirling smoke in the famous photograph of this scene could look more like a staged effect than harsh reality. However, a German statement, quoted by Bean, not only acknowledged that the town had been mined but that it 'had been set alight in 400 different places'.<sup>14</sup>

In what was surely a carefully considered and staged event, the significance and power of music in wartime were seldom presented more pointedly or more poignantly. The band played the *Victoria March* and an official photographer was stationed to record this major and morale-boosting occasion. His depiction of smouldering ruins, as a backdrop for music-making, and the band's occupation of the town from out of a cloud of wreathing smoke, celebrated the unique value of AIF army bands and bandsmen. The image, which is thought to have been taken by Lt H.F. Baldwin, a British press photographer, was circulated among British newspapers: in London it was carried by both *The Daily Mail* and *The Sketch*. This was a significant accolade which then received widespread syndicated mention in Australian newspapers throughout June 1917, courtesy of the United Service Cable. Even more notably, at least three Australian papers also reproduced the image: the *Sydney Mail* (20 June 1917), Broken Hill's *Barrier Miner* (24 June 1917) and Bendigo's *Bendigonian* (28 June 1917). And during that same year the work was no.426 among 2,000 official Australian war photographs included in a catalogue published in London.

Furthermore, and attesting to the image's on-going profile, it was reproduced in the programme for a major theatrical event in London in October 1917. This was the Matinee held in aid of funds for the Anzac Club, one of the most lavish of such wartime entertainments, patronised by a galaxy of titled figures. Thereafter, the image also appeared in the Christmas 1917 book for the Australian Soldiers' Patriotic Fund – *From The Australian*

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<sup>13</sup> William F. Simmons, *Diary*, Mitchell Library manuscript 2919, 19 March 1917.

<sup>14</sup> Bean, *Official History*, vol. 4, *op. cit.*, p.130.

*Front* – and a variant image appeared in the *Anzac Bulletin* (2 August 1918). Finally, Bean culled it from thousands of official photographs in 1923 for inclusion in the 12<sup>th</sup> volume of his *Official History of Australia in the War*. But even greater triumphs were to come, all of which I would claim made this photograph the most renowned AIF graphic of the entire war.

The image's greatest apotheosis was surely when it was enlarged to a staggering panorama almost seven metres long, entitled *In Bapaume* and included in two exhibitions. The first, in 1918, was the Imperial War Exhibition held in London under the auspices of the Royal Academy. There, among a host of official Allied photographs, *In Bapaume* created a dominating presence and was illustrated in the souvenir catalogue. This exhibition inspired an all-Australian sequel of nearly 300 official war photographs which toured most Australian states throughout 1921-22.<sup>15</sup> During this exhibition's inaugural showing, which opened in Melbourne on 20 August 1921, music again played a part: the drama was further enhanced by performances from an orchestra of returned soldiers. The *Argus* of 22 August 1921 paid tribute to this musical accompaniment: 'The orchestra ... helps to revive the sentiment by playing "Roses of Picardy" and all the old favourites which were lustily sung as the men marched along the cobbled roads of Flanders in the days of their great adventure.'<sup>16</sup>

To some of the viewing public, deeply moved by this image of bandsmen emerging triumphant from smoking ruins, it would have been a complete revelation that bandsmen could be found in the heat of battle. Indeed, the standard deployment of band members as stretcher-bearers and, sometimes, as ammunition carriers, meant that they had also been killed or wounded on the Somme. Col Butler's official history of the Australian Army Medical Corps specifically noted that during the attack on Pozieres, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion 'lost nearly every one of [its] sixteen stretcher-bearers.' This appalling toll changed military thinking: 'After Pozieres the use of bandsmen [as stretcher-bearers] generally ceased and bearers were specifically selected for their physique and guts.'<sup>17</sup>

As Bean explained in an article on stretcher-bearers, their value lay in their primary role rather than as fighting soldiers and 'the band was too badly needed for cheering up the troops!'<sup>18</sup> The 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade Band that was assembled to march into Bapaume was thus forced to be a mixture of veterans, supplemented with reinforcements drawn from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> Battalions. And the singular honour, that of bandmaster leading the band, was given to a member of the 19<sup>th</sup> Battalion – Albert Peagam (regimental no.716).

Yet men of the 8<sup>th</sup> Brigade, specifically the 30<sup>th</sup> Battalion, had been the first to enter Bapaume: Bean's history noted that Lt Arthur White, 30<sup>th</sup> Battalion, raced one of his NCOs to be the first man to enter the town. It is pertinent to ask why the 30<sup>th</sup> Battalion was not, therefore, chosen to lead the band into Bapaume. The answer is a convincing measure of the respect and value which AIF bands and bandsmen had achieved by this stage of the war. The decision to commemorate the occupation of Bapaume in what was certain to be a widely reproduced photograph by showing bandsmen carrying musical instruments rather than soldiers with weapons was deliberate. The distinction was given to the bandmaster of the 19<sup>th</sup> Battalion as a recognition of a long overdue honour to that battalion. After service at Gallipoli, the 19<sup>th</sup> had fought at Pozieres in two tours of duty throughout 1916. In its second

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<sup>15</sup> See 'War Memories,' *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 March 1922, p.13: 'In Bapaume is 20 ft. in length.'

<sup>16</sup> 'Display Of War Pictures,' *Argus*, 22 August 1921, p.6.

<sup>17</sup> A.G. Butler, *Official History of the Australian Army Medical Services in the War of 1914-1918*, vol. 2: *The Western Front*, Canberra: AWM, 1940, pp.275n and 276.

<sup>18</sup> C.E.W. Bean, 'The Stretcher-bearer Tradition,' *As You Were ... 1947*, Canberra: AWM, 1947, p.118.



tour of duty it had been conspicuously gallant in attacks and sacrifices on the Gird Trench in November 1916: during two days of fighting there over one hundred of its men had been killed in action or died of wounds and almost all of the others had been wounded in action. Yet although individual soldiers were to be mentioned in despatches and receive honours, the battalion's request for its own battle honour was denied.

Against tremendous odds the battalion had seized their objective and stubbornly held on according to orders while repelling numerous counter-attacks and suffering horrendous casualties until they were relieved. The battalion was so decimated in this action and others that it needed an astonishing 21 drafts of reinforcements to augment its ranks between 1915 and 1918. The denial of a battle honour for the whole battalion's outstanding performance on the Gird Trench was another blow to its psyche. This lack of recognition and the men's disappointment was thus somewhat offset on 19 March 1917 when the battalion's bandmaster was chosen to lead the band into the army's official occupation of Bapaume. Almost half of that band was made up of men from the 19<sup>th</sup>; at last singled out for a much publicised honour – to embody a highly vaunted victory to the world's press.

Because of the horrendous losses which the 19<sup>th</sup> Battalion had suffered on the Western Front throughout 1916, the band which marched into Bapaume had few of its original members left. For that reason, troops from all four battalions which made up the 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade (17<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup>) had to be hastily assembled into a 'new' band. The sudden need to 'enlist' new players clearly demonstrates that bandsmen were also fighting soldiers. Yet only one member of the band who marched into Bapaume had enlisted with a note added to his Attestation Form acknowledging musical potential. This was the bandmaster. Although Peagam gave his profession as a Foreman Printer, a handwritten addition recommended him as 'fit for active service as a trumpeter or bugler.' Another bandsman who should also be noted was listed as 'A.M. Stace' (regimental no.5934) who joined the 16<sup>th</sup> Reinforcements over a year after the battalion was formed. Arthur Malcolm Stace (1885-1967) only joined the 19<sup>th</sup> Battalion in the field as late as 5 February 1917. His late arrival as a side-drummer again emphasises the necessity of a constant stream of men to replenish the ranks of bandsmen. After the war, Stace was to find renown by inscribing his message of *Eternity* across Sydney's cityscape.

Now Peagam and Stace and over a dozen more bandsmen made their proud entrance into Bapaume. Instead of a line of troops advancing with rifles, the world was shown an army band striding through the smoking ruins of a once proud town. Now a different pride was evident. To the Diggers standing on the sidelines and to an audience worldwide, this image proclaimed that a band and its music resuscitated civilised values and was another weapon in the Allies' arsenal. The band marched out of a haze of smoke and wanton destruction into an almost theatrical scene. Fire was replaced with polished reflections from the band's brass instruments as they brought light into the darkness. Given the priority of providing stores, ammunition and medical supplies, let alone the state of the roads, HQ must have ensured that securing the band's instruments was also on that priority list. The opportunity, thus, for a significant display of propaganda was not lost.

The immense pride which the 19<sup>th</sup> Battalion felt in leading this musical capture of Bapaume, its acknowledgment by the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the resulting pride aroused in the Australians back on the home front, were all encapsulated in the sustained reporting from the battlelines by Bean. His description of the Australians' entry into the smoking ruins was surely incomparable: he saw it as an insouciant stroll, capturing its essence like no other witness. His words describing the Anzac occupation of Bapaume is surely one of their

greatest tributes. ‘The Australian,’ he wrote, ‘strolled through the streets of that exploding town as if he were walking to catch a Sydney ferry boat ... [or] as he might saunter to the cricket ground’.<sup>19</sup> And so, in Bapaume, as elsewhere on the scattered war front, music became a way to celebrate sacrifice, honour fallen comrades and give a new resolve to failing spirits. In short, the band played on. This whole occasion and its celebration in an official photograph which then went on to achieve such staggering exposure has never before received the attention it deserves.

As a finale to the role of bands and of music in wartime, few words can surpass those of August 1918 from an article on army bandsmen and bands. It declared that there ‘isn’t anything in the world, even letters from home, that will raise a soldier’s spirits like a good, catchy, marching band tune.’ Furthermore, it asserted that it was ‘just as essential that the soldiers know how to sing and play in a band as it is that they who carry rifles know how to shoot them.’ And it was the rationale behind these opinions which provides us with a simple, yet eloquent, and infinitely moving finale: ‘Music,’ it asserted, ‘is to a city or nation’s spirit what ammunition is to their army.’<sup>20</sup>



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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*The Band of the 5th Australian Infantry Brigade, led by Bandmaster Sgt A. Peagam of the 19th Battalion, passing through the Grande Place (Town Square), Bapaume, 19 March 1917 (AWM)*

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<sup>19</sup> C.E.W. Bean, ‘Bapaume,’ *Anzac Bulletin*, new issue no.11, 21 March 1917, p.9.

<sup>20</sup> Tenor Horn, ‘Bandsmen and Bands,’ *Tasmanian Mail*, 22 August 1918, p.21.

## THE CARNIVAL OF BLOOD IN AUSTRALIAN MANDATED TERRITORY

Brenton Brooks<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

On 23 June 1943 Sir William Webb, Chief Justice of Queensland, was appointed to inquire into and whether atrocities or breaches of the rules of warfare had been committed by the Japanese Armed Forces in the Australian Territory of New Guinea or the Territory of Papua. Furthermore, was the creation of a special Commission to conduct continuous inquiry with a view to bringing individual war criminals to justice in co-operation with the United Nations War Crimes Commission (UNWCC). Within a decade, with the combination a formal peace treaty to end both the war and occupation,<sup>2</sup> the dismissal of General Douglas MacArthur as Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP) in Japan on 10 April 1951 and the end of his censorship, the Japanese criticised the Tokyo War Crimes Trials as ‘Victor’s Justice’. In the 21st century there has been a revival in the study of international criminal law with a resurgence of crimes against humanity. However, in post-war reappraisals of the war crimes trials, the voice of those slain in unlawful killings in the Pacific theatre has remained silent.

In the war from 1939-1945 Australia suffered 27,073 fatal casualties. Of those, 17,501 occurred in the Southwest Pacific Area (SWPA) and half, 8,031, died in Japanese captivity.<sup>3</sup> In these figures, massacres of Australians account for deaths at Parit Sulong (110), Tol (160), Laha airfield (over 200), Banka Island (21) and the Sandakan Extermination or Death Marches and camps (1787). Similar atrocities were repeated across the region for Dutch, British, NZ, US, and Indian military personnel, and civilians (natives, Chinese and European). In addition to these high profile mass killings, many isolated cases of murder or execution took place. The most notable cases were the beheadings of F/Lt William Newton VC and Sgt Leonard Siffleet.

In 2010, the Australian Military Honours and Awards Tribunal recommended to award retrospectively 20 posthumous commendations to prisoners of war (PW) who escaped from the Japanese and were murdered whilst escaping or after recapture.<sup>4</sup> The tribunal failed to recognise at least 27 additional cases, making a total of 47 escapers murdered. In addition, my research identifies, excluding massacres, at least 290 cases of the Japanese killing soldiers whilst PW. This compares to previously published figures of 27 executed for attempted escape, 193 known to have been executed for other reasons, and 375 others believed to have been executed, shown in the Australian army official history of WW2.<sup>5</sup> A nominal roll for the basis of these official figures has not been located. Eleven navy personnel were unlawfully killed after being captured performing coastwatching duties in the Pacific. Furthermore, research shows the RAAF lost 76 prisoners executed by Japanese. The official air history reported 48 executed, with a further 14 missing believed died whilst prisoners of war in

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<sup>1</sup> Brenton Brooks has a strong interest in South Australians at war. More recently he has expanded this to investigate gallantry recipients and the bureaucracy of awards, and the identification of Australians executed during World War II.

<sup>2</sup> The San Francisco Peace Treaty signed 8 September 1951. Effective from 28 April 1952.

<sup>3</sup> Long, G. 1963. *Australia in the War of 1939-1945, Series 1 (Army), Volume VII, The Final Campaigns*. Australian War Memorial, Canberra. p.634.

<sup>4</sup> Defence Honours & Awards Tribunal. 2010. Report into the recognition of Far East Prisoners of War who were killed while escaping.

<sup>5</sup> Wigmore, L. 1968. *Australia in the War of 1939-1945, Series 1 (Army), Volume IV, The Japanese Thrust*. Australian War Memorial, Canberra. p.642.

Japanese hands.<sup>6</sup> Concurrently, unlawful killings occurred in the European Theatre, but only to a minor extent. Although this article does not examine their cases, it by no means intends to discriminate against the fate of these PW. Readers are encouraged to consult with Bill Rudd's *ANZAC POW Free Men* for European cases and Tom Robert's *Wingless* for RAAF personnel in captivity.<sup>7</sup>

In many cases grieving Australian families remained unaware of the true fate of these servicemen. Many perpetrators were never brought to justice. In the 310 Australian trials, 644 enemy nationals (i.e. Japanese, Formosans and Koreans) were convicted for a variety of crimes, with 148 death sentences handed down. As some were defendants in more than one trial, and two condemned men died in custody, the total number executed was 137.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, the majority of these trials were for crimes committed against Indian PW brought as labourers by the Japanese into the Australian theatre, than for crimes committed against Australian PW. The figures of Australians unlawfully killed vastly outnumbered the convictions for those crimes. In the ensuing debate of the legality of 'Victor's Justice', the Australian victims have ashamedly been neglected.

### Major and minor Japanese war crimes trials

The four-power London Conference in 1945 provided a conceptual framework for the Nürnberg and Tokyo internationally constituted tribunals. The principle charges laid on Axis leaders were crimes against humanity, crimes against peace and war crimes. War crimes and murder charges partly covered the same ground as crimes against humanity. The International Military Tribunal for the Far East (the Class A trials) held in Tokyo has been negatively appraised by successive reviews by historians and political scientists, and also often deemed a legal failure. The recent revival of international criminal law has seen resurgence in the review of 1940s tribunals. A reappraisal by Boister and Cryer concluded that the prosecuting powers at Tokyo violated the principle of legality by creating the new charge of crimes against peace, treated war crimes charges as almost an afterthought, and breached the undertaking to give the accused a fair trial.<sup>9</sup> Sharp criticism was directed towards conspiracy charges. This emphasis arose because the lack of evidence linking defendants to specific events necessitated an indirect approach: first establishing an individual's connection to the conspiracy, and then using membership of the conspiracy to signal personal responsibility for substantive crimes. The conspiracy-led concept created a problem of setting a pattern even when examining substantive crimes. A shift occurred from assessing individual responsibility to a collective entity.

The American chief prosecutor Joseph Keenan at the Tokyo Tribunal brought the philosophy to use the trial to advance international law in order to prevent further unjust wars. He asserted this aim over the apparent lesser task of administering justice. He declared he had 'no particular interest in any individual or his punishment' because the defendants were mere representatives of a 'class and group'.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Herington, J. 1963. *Australia in the War of 1939-1945, Series 3 (Air), Volume IV, Air Power Over Europe 1944-1945*. Australian War Memorial, Canberra. p.513.

<sup>7</sup> Rudd, W. *ANZAC POW Free Men* <http://www.aifpow.com/>. Roberts, T.V. 2011. *Wingless: A Biographical Index of Australian Airmen Detained in Wartime*. Self published.

<sup>8</sup> Sissons, D.C.S. 1997. 'Sources on Australian investigations into Japanese war crimes in the Pacific'. *Journal of the Australian War Memorial*, Issue 30, April 1997. n.p.

<sup>9</sup> Boister, N., and Cryer, R. 2008. *The Tokyo International Military Tribunal: A Reappraisal*. Oxford University Press.

<sup>10</sup> Keenan, J.B., and Brown, B.F. 1950. *Crimes Against International Law*. P.63.

From August 1945 it was intended lists of the Japanese major war criminals be submitted to the UNWCC for endorsement. Initially in planning the Australian trials it was assumed that each prosecution would require the prior authorisation of the UNWCC. On 12 October 1945, however, the Chairman of the UNWCC advised it was only in the case of the major war criminals to be tried by international tribunals (or war criminals whose extradition was required) that this was necessary; trials of minor (Class B & C, generally referred to as 'BC') war criminals already in Australian custody could proceed without reference to the UNWCC.

Minor war crimes trials were held across the Pacific by Australian, United States, Dutch, British, French, Nationalist Chinese and independent Philippines courts. Each Allied nation ran courts in designated geographical regions, typically covering their major area of hostilities. This article examines some of the cases of Australian victims captured in New Guinea, which at that time included New Britain, and Papua.

### **Tol Massacre**

Rabaul, New Britain, offered a strategic position in the SWPA for the Japanese, offering a deep harbour for her navy and airfields for the air force, to base their offensive to cut the line of supply between Australia and the US, and for the protection of Truk to maintain it as a safe fleet base. The first group to land on 23 January 1942 was Lieutenant-Colonel Tsukamoto Hatsuo's 144 (Kochi) Infantry Regiment, which quickly took control of Lakunai airdrome, one of two primary objectives set by Major-General Horii Tomitaro, commander of the Army South Seas Detachment (Nankai Shitai). By midday the Australian resistance had ceased. Troops withdrew along either the north or south coast. Major-General Horii ordered Lieutenant-Colonel Kuwada Ishiro of 3 Battalion to pursue Australian troops on southern Gazelle Peninsula. Kuwada delegated the task to Lieutenant Noda Tadaichi. Lt Noda led a group of Japanese troops to the Tol Plantation, Wide Bay, on 3 February 1942, and all Australian personnel hiding there were captured. A massacre of prisoners took place the next day and there were only six survivors. Prisoners 'had their hands tied behind their backs, were tied in batches (except in one or two instances) and were then bayoneted or shot or both bayoneted and shot, singly or in groups, in the presence and hearing of others about to be killed'.<sup>11</sup> 147 bodies were subsequently recovered and only 11 were identified. After 144 Regiment's successful campaign in Rabaul in 1942, they embarked for Papua and landed at Buna in July and August.

Colonel Kusunose Masao, Kuwada's immediate superior, was apprehended in Japan during 1946 and interrogated, denying all responsibility for the Tol massacre. Kusunose later disappeared after having been interrogated, and deliberately starved himself to death on 17 December 1946. Direct responsibility of the massacre rests with Lt-Col Kuwada, who was killed in action in New Guinea on 22 November 1942.<sup>12</sup> Lt Noda was stated as being killed in action. All members of 3 Bn, 144 Infantry Regiment interrogated with connection with the crime have denied participation in the Tol operation. The names of participants given were invariably been those personnel no longer alive. Investigators stated the informants were untruthful, and had all been briefed prior to interrogation. This was facilitated by their close residence on the same island.

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<sup>11</sup> NAA: A10943, 1, Report on Japanese atrocities and breaches of the rules of warfare by Sir William Webb.

<sup>12</sup> NAA: MP742/1, 336/1/1086, War crimes - New Britain - Tol massacre.

### Owen Stanley Campaign – Captain Samuel Templeton

To protect fortress Rabaul by extending the defensive perimeter, the Japanese intended to occupy airfields from which the Allies could launch air attacks. To the west the Japanese targeted Port Moresby, Papua, and also began constructing an airfield to the south-east at Guadalcanal in the Solomons in mid July 1942. After the failure of the Japanese invasion fleet to capture Port Moresby due to the Battle of the Coral Sea in early May 1942, they intended to land on the north coast of Papua and invade over the Owen Stanley Range and seize the capital. The Japanese landed in the Buna-Gona area on 21 July 1942. The Yokoyama Advance Force was under the command of Colonel Yokoyama Yosuke of 15 Independent Engineer Regiment, and included Headquarters, 1 Battalion (Tsukamoto Butai), 144 Infantry Regiment and 1 Company, 1 Battalion, 55 Mountain Artillery Regiment. An advanced guard under Lt Ogawa Yukio, from 1 Company, 1/144 Regiment, began moving inland as soon as they disembarked.

On 26 July Captain Samuel Templeton with his 11 and 12 Platoons, B Company, and a section from 16 Platoon D Coy, of 39 Battalion were waiting to intercept the advancing Japanese at Oivi. Shortly after Templeton left by himself to guide the remaining 16 Platoon section in, a shot was heard, and on going to investigate his men were forced back by the approach of superior enemy numbers. Templeton was missing believed killed. Japanese documents captured later, were reported by the Allied Translator and Interpreter Section (ATIS) to reveal Yokoyama advanced groups had captured two prisoners including Captain Templeton, and soon after five more prisoners.<sup>13</sup>

A captured Japanese prisoner, Major Toyofuku Tetsuo, stated he had seen a PW believed to be an officer with a severe wound in the lower portion of the body after the Oivi clash. The prisoner had been captured by 1 Battalion and had been interrogated by interpreter Yaguchi. Later Toyofuku heard a shot from the rear which indicated to him the prisoner had been executed. Toyofuku thought the battalion commander was the only person who could have authorised such disposal of the prisoner.<sup>14</sup>

Only recently Nishimura Kokichi, the ‘Bone Man of Kokoda’, revealed he believed he had buried the remains of Templeton.<sup>15</sup> He discovered the body of the Australian officer, with a large knife sticking out of his side, and buried him where he lay. Nishimura recalled a witness to the interrogation, conducted by 144 Regiment’s Lt-Col Tsukamoto Hatsuo, stating the Japanese commander stabbed a defiant and condescending Templeton in the stomach after he divulged an inflated strength of Australian Forces from Kokoda to Port Moresby. Templeton’s bluff was presumably an effort to slow the Japanese advance in anticipation of overcoming opposition. The demise of a prized captured officer would have sealed the fate of the remaining six Australian prisoners. They would not have survived long in the hands of the Japanese by the time of Templeton’s killing.

It was generally accepted by investigators that those in 144 Regiment responsible for committing atrocities in New Britain and Papua were decimated over the Owen Stanley Range, in the Battle of the Beaches in late 1942 and early 1943, and those fortunate enough

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<sup>13</sup> AWM54, 1010/9/64, War Crimes and Trials - Investigation of Atrocities.

<sup>14</sup> NAA: MP742/1, 336/1/1875, War crimes investigations.

<sup>15</sup> Wetherall, W. <http://www.kokodaspirit.com.au/TrekOptions/HistoryTreks-351/KokichiNishimuraonTempleton-496/>. Johnson, Carl, pers comm. Kokoda mystery solved. *The Australian*, 24 April 2010.

to escape (some 3400 Japanese embarked from Papua) suffered the same fate when the rebuilt unit was sent to Burma in November 1943 and then French Indo-China.<sup>16</sup> This intelligence is somewhat contradicted by the volume of Japanese statements made by members of the unit.<sup>17</sup> This misapprehension was fortuitous for the detained Tsukamoto Hatsuo who was never tried. It is astounding that Tsukamoto was released from imprisonment in December 1946 and never later charged, considering testimony from other captured Japanese would have implicated him as being a battalion commander with authority responsible for executing prisoners.<sup>18</sup>

Major Toyofuku believed most of the prisoners captured in New Guinea were executed on orders from various unit commanders. At a conference of senior officers held at Nankai Shitai Headquarters prior to the landings in New Guinea, Staff Officer Tanaka Toyoshige had stated that officers holding appointments above that of company commander would be authorised to dispose of prisoners, other than those classed as important who would be sent to Nankai Shitai Headquarters and ultimately sent to Japan. From Tanaka's remarks the unit commanders considered they had the authority to execute prisoners and acted accordingly. Major-General Horii was present at this conference but he made no utterance following Tanaka's remarks. He only laughed.<sup>19</sup>

### **Owen Stanley Campaign – Lt-Col Arthur Key**

When A Coy, 39 Bn withdrew from the second battle of Kokoda on 10 August, having retaken the village two days earlier, the next defensive position was made at Isurava. Two 2/AIF battalions, the 2/14th and 2/16th, from 21 Brigade had traversed the track from Port Moresby to take up the fight. The 2/14th, under the command of Lt-Col Arthur Key, deployed at Isurava to reinforce the embattled remnants of the 39th. These Victorian CMF and 2/AIF units were destined to become blood brothers. The 2/16th following later was deployed to Abuari. After four days of intense assaults from the Japanese, the Australians withdrew from Isurava on 29 August.

Late in the afternoon of 30 August Lt-Col Key decided to move his battalion back to Alola. As they moved off, HQ came under fire from opposite sides of the track and was forced to go 'bush'. Lt-Col Key's party was captured after 10 days in the jungle. A captured Japanese unit diary contained the following statement: '10 Sep – We captured four prisoners today. One of those was a Lt-Col Key.'<sup>20</sup> Key was taken to Nankai Shitai HQ and is believed to have been seen under Kempei Tai escort in the Ioribaiwa and Efogi area.<sup>21</sup> Father James Benson, a Gona Missionary interned by the Japanese, referred to a 'tall gaunt Australian with the star and crown of a Lt-Col ... brought in (to the hospital) for the dressing of a nasty leg wound in October or November 1942.' Father Benson heard later the officer had been taken to Rabaul.<sup>22</sup> A preliminary interrogation in the field of 1st Lt Inagaki Riichi, 15 Naval Construction Coy, after capture in January 1943 is alleged to have stated Lt-Col Key and three NCOs were sent to Rabaul.<sup>23</sup> Further statements after the war exist of a single prisoner,

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<sup>16</sup> NAA: MP742/1, 336/1/1086, War crimes - New Britain - Tol massacre.

<sup>17</sup> NAA: MP742/1, 336/1/1875, War crimes investigations.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> NAA: B3856, 145/4/267, War crimes investigations.

<sup>21</sup> NAA: MP742/1, 336/1/1875, War crimes investigations.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid; Russell, W.B. 1948. *The History of the Second Fourteenth Battalion*. Angus & Robertson, Sydney, p.149.

<sup>23</sup> AWM54, 1010/9/64, War Crimes and Trials - Investigation of Atrocities; NAA: MP742/1, 336/1/1875, War

identified as Key, being held at Giruwa in early November 1942 and then evacuated to Rabaul and handed over to 17 Army HQ Kempei Tai in Rabaul.<sup>24</sup>

The bodies of the other three soldiers captured with Lt-Col Key were seen lying beside the track at the rear of Nankai Shitai HQ between Efogi and Ioribaiwa.<sup>25</sup> Without doubt Lt-Col Key did not survive Japanese captivity, and in the likelihood of evidence he was transported to Rabaul, there is a possibility he may be one of the unidentified remains recovered from the Matupi execution grounds.

### **Milne Bay Campaign**

As part of the strategy to add a second front to the advance on Port Moresby, and to reduce the threat against Rabaul of a newly discovered airfield at Milne Bay on 4 August 1942, the Japanese prepared to attack and occupy the base there.<sup>26</sup> Code named 'Fall River' by the Australians, it was garrisoned by 7 Militia Brigade. The US 43rd Engineer Regiment and the reinforcing 2/AIF 18 Brigade arrived during August 1942. Airstrips had been built to allow the RAAF (76 and 75 Squadrons, which arrived on 25 and 26 July 1942, respectively) to attack out to sea towards the north, and to defend eastern approaches to Port Moresby. The original Japanese plan to attack in mid-August was postponed due to the allied counter-attack at Guadalcanal on 7 August.

The Japanese amphibious assault took place on 25 August 1942. They mistakenly landed at Waga Waga, 3km east of their intended disembarkation point at Rabi, simultaneously intercepting the vessel *Bronzewing* carrying members of D Coy, 61 Bn offshore. The unsuspecting Australians were soon overwhelmed in the melee. Onshore, the Japanese superiority overcame resistance from the remaining 61 Bn companies and then 2/10 Bn. The Japanese were finally halted as they attempted to cross the killing ground prepared by the allies at No.3 Airstrip. As the Japanese retreated in their first defeat on land, Australian soldiers soon discovered the barbarous crimes performed on those unfortunate enough to fall into Japanese hands. Webb's report states that 36 Australians were executed. Most were decomposed and all forms of identification removed.<sup>27</sup> Webb added, 'further evidence may prove a few of these cases now differently described were really identical'. By a process of eliminating known battle casualties of 61 Bn and adding the member from 2/10 Bn, the final tally is closer to 22. This concurs with evidence provided by Captain A.M. Benson, from 2/9 Bn, who stated that 21 dead Australian militia soldiers were found with their wrists bound behind their backs. They were tied to coconut trees and bayoneted. No captured Australian soldier was found alive.

Webb found that 'each of these killings constituted an atrocity, as having been savagely brutal. Only fiends could use men for bayonet practice'.<sup>28</sup> The responsibility for these crimes against soldiers rests on the Japanese Armed Forces. The commander of the Force was Rear Admiral Matsuyama Mitsuharu of 18 Cruiser Division.<sup>29</sup> The initial units in the assault were

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crimes investigations.

<sup>24</sup> MP742/1, 336/1/1875, War crimes investigations.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Tanaka, K. 1980. *Operations of the Imperial Japanese Armed Forces in the Papua New Guinea Theater during World War II*. Japan Papua New Guinea Goodwill Society.

<sup>27</sup> NAA: A10943, 1, Report on Japanese atrocities and breaches of the rules of warfare by Sir William Webb.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Tanaka, K. 1980. *Operations of the Imperial Japanese Armed Forces in the Papua New Guinea Theater during World War II*. Japan Papua New Guinea Goodwill Society.



Kure 5 Special Naval Landing Party (SNLP, led by Commander Hayashi Shojiro), part of Sasebo 5 SNLP (under the command of Lt Fujikawa Kaoru), 10 Naval Labour Corps (led by Engineer Nijjima) and Pioneer Unit (commanded by Mechanic Tsutsui). Webb considered 'each of these killings constituted a breach by the Japanese of the rules of warfare to the effect of Article 4 of the Hague Rules and Article 2 of the Prisoners of War Convention of 1929.' Commander Hayashi was killed during the massed Japanese frontal attacks across No.3 Strip. However, the scarcity of post-war investigations into the remainder of those responsible for the atrocities at Milne Bay demonstrates a deficiency in justice.

### **Captured airmen at Salamaua – Newton and Lyon**

The Boston aircraft A28-3 of No. 22 Squadron was one of six aircraft detailed to attack enemy installations near Salamaua on 18 March 1943. After having dropped its bombs and passing over the target was badly hit by anti-aircraft fire, suddenly burst into flames, and forced to ditch offshore. F/Lt William Newton and F/Sgt John Lyon swam ashore and were captured by No. 1 Detachment Sasebo 5 SNLP, while Sgt Basil Eastwood did not survive the crash. Newton and Lyon were taken to Lae for interrogation at 7 Naval Base Force Headquarters. After a week, Lyon was taken to a freshly dug grave, and with his hands tied behind his back, bayoneted to death through the back.

F/Lt William Newton was returned to the capturing unit at Salamaua where he was beheaded on 29 March 1943. A captured diary, owner and unit unknown, detailed the amusement of the event as the 'Blood Carnival':

Tai Commander Komai told us personally that, in accordance with the compassionate sentiments of Japanese Bushido, he was going to kill the prisoner himself with his favourite sword. So we gathered to observe this.

The time has come, so the prisoner, with his arms bound and his long hair now cropped very close, totters forward. He probably suspects what is afoot; but he is more composed than I thought he would be. Without more ado, he is put on the truck and we set out for our destination.

To the pleasant rumble of the engine, we run swiftly along the road in the growing twilight. The glowing sun has set behind the western hills, gigantic clouds rise before us, and the dusk is falling all around. It will not be long now. As I picture the scene we are about to witness, my heart beats faster.

I glance at the prisoner: he has probably resigned himself to his fate. As though saying farewell to the world, as he sits in the truck he looked about, at the hills, at the sea, and seems deep in thought. I feel a surge of pity and turn my eyes away.

We arrived at our destination, and all get off. Tai Commander Komai stands up and says to the prisoner, 'We are now going to kill you'. When he tells the prisoner that in accordance with Japanese Bushido he would be killed with a Japanese sword, he listens with bowed head.

Now the time has come, and the prisoner is made to kneel on the bank of a bomb crater filled with water. He is apparently resigned, but he remains calm. He even stretches out his neck, and is very brave. When I put myself in the prisoner's place, and think that in one more minute it will be goodbye to this world, although the daily bombings have filled me with hate, ordinary human feelings make me pity him.

The Tai Commander has drawn his favourite sword. It is the famous Osamune sword which he showed us at the observation post. It glitters in the light and sends a cold

shiver down my spine. He taps the prisoner's neck lightly with the back of the blade, then raises it above his head with both arms and brings it down with a sweep.

It is amazing – he killed him with one stroke ...

All is over. The head is dead white, like a doll. The savageness which I felt only a little while ago is gone, and I feel nothing but the true compassion of Japanese Bushido. A senior corporal laughs loudly. Then a superior seaman of the medical unit takes the chief medical officer's Japanese sword and, intent on paying off old scores, turns the headless body over on its back, and cuts the abdomen open with one clean stroke.

This will be something to remember all my life. If ever I get back alive it will make a good story to tell, so I have written it down.

A poetic epitaph, ambivalent in its sinister atmosphere. The Japanese buried Newton's body in the bomb crater at Chinatown near Kela Point.

Newton was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross for his 'many examples of conspicuous bravery in New Guinea', promulgated in the London Gazette on 19 October 1943. General MacArthur made a press release on 5 October 1943, and the published account of the execution by decapitation in 'Blood Carnival' of an Allied airman shocked an unsuspecting Australian nation.<sup>30</sup> Censorship was in place at the time to prevent details of atrocities being made public. MacArthur was said to have made the release in an effort to promote the war cause. The RAAF braced itself for an avalanche of enquires from anxious families of aircrew missing in the SWPA.

Newton's body was found by Carl Jacobsen, formerly of the NGVR, in October 1943 and interred in the Salamaua War Cemetery. In January 1946 his remains were moved to the Lae War Cemetery. Lyon's body was discovered, with his identity discs, by natives digging a post hole on the sea front at Lae on 9 July 1948 and was reburied in the Lae War Cemetery with a full military ceremony on 13 August.<sup>23</sup>

Newton was executed by Lt Komai Uichi of the Japanese Navy who was subsequently reported killed in action in the Philippines. The next senior commander implicated was Lt-Commander Tsukioka Toroshige (Sasebo 5 SNLP. Killed about 29 June 1943 at Salamaua).<sup>31</sup> Commander Muchaku Senmei (7 Naval Base Force, who suicided in May 1947) told Captain Ukai Ken, 82 Garrison Unit Lae, Lyon was to be executed. Lyon was executed by naval troops commanded by Lt Sato, OC No.2 Coy of 82 Garrison Unit. The primary official concerned with authorising the executions was Rear Admiral Fujita Ruitaro, the Japanese Naval Commander, 7 HQ Naval Base Force, at Lae. Fujita committed suicide at the end of the war to escape arrest by Australian War Crimes Authorities.<sup>32</sup>

After the US Doolittle raid on Tokyo in April 1942, the Japanese adopted a policy that all Allied airmen who had bombed Japan or such territory were war criminals and were to be summarily executed. No court martial was necessary, and any unit commander could carry out the order. The reason for the execution of the pilots who took part in the Tokyo raid was because they had disturbed the peace in that territory and had also disturbed *Hakko Ichiu* (Sanctity of Empire). To disturb *Hakko Ichiu* was the same as disturbing the Imperial Spirit.

<sup>30</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 Oct 1943, p.9.

<sup>31</sup> NAA: A705, 166/25/26, Lyon, J. – Casualty Section.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*; AWM54, 144/14/103, RAAF, Historical Records Section – Reports.

Since all who disturbed the Imperial Spirit must, without question, suffer the death penalty, those committing this crime were liquidated.<sup>33</sup> A captured diary revealed there was common knowledge of the Japanese Navy policy throughout Imperial Japanese Army; that the Army were more likely to interrogate captured airmen than the Navy, which would execute them straight away.<sup>34</sup>

### **‘M Special’ Unit personnel captured Aitape**

Leonard Siffleet was promoted to sergeant and transferred from Z Special to M Special Unit in May 1943. At that stage he was attached as a signaller to a Dutch coastwatcher party on operative ‘Whiting’, led by Netherlands Forces Intelligence Services (NEFIS) Naval Officer Cadet H.N. Staverman. The patrol trekked from Bena Bena along New Guinea’s mountainous spine en-route to Hollandia to set up a station on the north coast. They were being guided by the ‘Locust’ patrol led by Lt Jack Fryer. On 9 July 1943, the parties separated, and in September the Dutch Party entered the border region between the two New Guineas. On 12 September Staverman and Pattawael left Ainbai to reach Dutch territory but were attacked by Japanese troops. Pattawael managed to escape, but it is believed Staverman was either killed or captured. Pattawael returned to Ainbai on 4 October and warned Siffleet and Reharing. Nothing had been heard of the party by Fryer until Siffleet radioed they had been betrayed by natives. Lt Fryer volunteered to lead a relief party but was instructed from VIG (a coastal wireless station in Pt Moresby) to take no action. Siffleet attempted to retreat across the Bewani mountains to the Yellow River, but he and the two Dutch native troops, Reharing and Pattawael, were captured on 19 October by 50-60 Wapi tribesmen at Wantipi 44km west of Aitape. The prisoners had been taken by surprise, but before being captured Siffleet had shot at and wounded one of the captors. They were brought to 8 Construction Unit at Malol near Aitape and placed in the care of Watanabe’s guard detachment.<sup>35</sup>

The prisoners were interrogated by Hiroe Saburo and Yunome Kunio, and beaten. A report was sent to Rear Admiral Kamada at Wewak. Kamada together with a Staff Officer and a civilian jurist attached to his Headquarters decided that the three prisoners ‘had been operating as spies and were guilty of treason’ and the Rear Admiral sentenced them to death.<sup>36</sup> The Admiral directed Noto to transmit his instructions to Watanabe to execute the prisoners. The prisoners were executed on the beachfront on 24 Oct 1943, under the supervision of Watanabe, by civilians who were members of 8 Naval Construction Unit. Watanabe gave evidence in the war crimes tribunal that he knew the prisoners had not been tried by court martial.

A photo of a Japanese civilian holding a sword over a haggard looking prisoner captured the last seconds of Siffleet’s life. The negative had been captured in Hollandia in a Japanese officer’s bivouac in April 1944.<sup>37</sup> The executioner shown in the photograph, Yasuno

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<sup>33</sup> NAA: A4311, 775/6, Atrocities Commission - Execution of Allied Airmen captured by the Japanese.

<sup>34</sup> NAA: A705, 32/1/151, DPS Casualty Section.

<sup>35</sup> NAA: A471, 81210, War Crimes - Military Tribunal – Noto Kiyohisa (Captain) AWC 2964: Unit - 27th Special Naval Base Force: Watanabe Tenuo (Chief Petty Officer) AWC 2967: Unit - Naval Garrison Troops Guard Company: Date and Place of Tribunal - Rabaul, 9-10 July 1947. NAA: B3856, 145/4/264, M Special Unit Casualties.

<sup>36</sup> NAA: A471, 81210, War Crimes - Military Tribunal – Noto Kiyohisa (Captain) AWC 2964: Unit - 27th Special Naval Base Force: Watanabe Tenuo (Chief Petty Officer) AWC 2967: Unit - Naval Garrison Troops Guard Company: Date and Place of Tribunal - Rabaul, 9-10 July 1947.

<sup>37</sup> NAA: A10952, 3, Atrocities Commission.

Chikao,<sup>38</sup> was presumed not to have survived in Hollandia after the US landing.<sup>39</sup> The photo received wide press publicity and continues to be misrepresented as other victims of Japanese executions. When published, this photo was popularly attributed by the press to depict the execution of Newton, but it was positively identified as Siffleet in 1945.<sup>40</sup>

Captain Noto was the Chief Staff Officer to Rear Admiral Kamada who commanded a force consisting of 2 Special Naval Base Force and 8 Naval Construction Unit. Watanabe was the commander of a guard detachment of 2 Special Naval Base Force at Aitape, where there was also a detachment of the 8 Naval Construction Unit under the administrative control of civilian employee Yanuso.

Rear Admiral Kamada Michiaki was convicted of other war crimes and executed by the Dutch at Pontianak on 18 October 1947.<sup>41</sup> Captain Noto Kiyohisa was sentenced at the Rabaul tribunal to 20 years in prison for the execution of Siffleet.<sup>42</sup> Noto was also convicted of another war crime at Yokohama (Case 329) and sentenced to 20 years for the execution of US pilot O-810434 2/Lt Robert E Thorpe at Kairiru Islands. The previous sentence imposed by the Australian Court was suspended. Noto only served 127 months imprisonment and was released. Watanabe Teruo was imprisoned 18 months.

### Executions at Matupi, near Rabaul

Two Australian coastwatchers and four surviving US crew of a B-17 were taken from the military prison camp at Rabaul on 8 October 1942 and did not return.<sup>43</sup> Their remains were discovered in a mass grave at Matupi in May 1946. Also in the grave were five crew of a B-25, including an Australian RAAF sergeant, six civilians and seven native assistants. This amounted to a total of 24 bodies exhumed. Investigations to the fates of other missing personnel in New Britain revealed that a party of two RAAF and 12 US prisoners left the navy camp in late November or early December 1943, and another group of two Australian aircrew and 15 US prisoners were taken from the prison on 13 January 1944.<sup>44</sup> Australian investigators considered it probable the second PW party embarked on the transport ships *Kenyo Maru* and *Nihonkai Maru* from Rabaul on 13 January 1944 due to the coincidence of dates, and were lost with their sinking. Major Harold Williams, who was sent to Japan at the end of the war to investigate the disappearance of the men from Rabaul, reported that the Japanese Prisoner of War Information Bureau (PWIB) actually reflected the Japanese desire not to provide information about the massive losses of PW under their administration.<sup>45</sup>

Apprehended Japanese reported remaining Allied prisoners were placed on board the *Kokai Maru*, which left Rabaul 20 February 1944, and was subsequently sunk en-route. An examination of the nominal roll of PW said to have embarked on this ship revealed

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<sup>38</sup> NAA: A705, 166/25/26, Lyon, J. – Casualty Section; NAA: B3856, 145/4/264, M Special Unit Casualties.

<sup>39</sup> AWM54, 1010/1/35, War Crimes and Trials – General. The preparation of death certificates for the 8th Naval Construction Unit, 1946.

<sup>40</sup> NAA: A705, 166/25/26, Lyon, J. – Casualty Section.

<sup>41</sup> NAA: A461, AF420/1/1, Enemy breaches of the rules of warfare (including Japanese atrocities).

<sup>42</sup> NAA: A471, 81210, War Crimes - Military Tribunal – Noto Kiyohisa (Captain) AWC 2964: Unit - 27th Special Naval Base Force: Watanabe Tenuo (Chief Petty Officer) AWC 2967: Unit - Naval Garrison Troops Guard Company: Date and Place of Tribunal - Rabaul, 9-10 July 1947.

<sup>43</sup> NAA: A705, 166/1/319, Presumption of death - Casualties in Royal Australian Air Force Units. NAA: A703, 614/1/7, Research for missing RAAF Personnel - New Britain and New Ireland.

<sup>44</sup> NAA: A703, 614/1/7, Research for missing RAAF Personnel - New Britain and New Ireland.

<sup>45</sup> AWM54, 779/1/1, Report on investigations in Manila & Japan regarding prisoners of war by Maj H S Williams.

discrepancies. The captain of the *Kokai Maru* denied any PW were aboard the ship.<sup>46</sup> After the Japanese surrender, a PW compound supervisor, Hayano Itsuo, was informed that a false statement had been sent to the Australian authorities saying all PW had been sent to Japan by ships and aircraft, except the remaining ones in February 1944 who were all killed when Rabaul was bombed and the compound destroyed. Hayano's name was substituted with that of a dead officer, so as to avoid interrogation by Australian authorities.<sup>47</sup>

This all unravelled in June 1950 when Squadron Leader Keith Rundle recovered the remains of 15 RAAF aircrew, 12 US personnel, and one civilian in the Japanese Navy execution ground at Matupi.<sup>48</sup> Search operations in the recovery of these 28 remains conclusively proved in every instance that death was due to decapitation. The discovery identified the remains of nine RAAF victims as the entire crew of Catalina A24-18, which had previously been posted missing presumed dead (as opposed to missing believed PW). ATIS reported a captured Japanese diary referred to picking up a Catalina crew in the Coral Sea in May 1942. They were rescued by the Japanese destroyer *Yubari* and later placed on the transport *Matsue Maru*. There is conflicting information, but either vessel returned and arrived in Rabaul on 9 May 1942.<sup>49</sup> It was generally thought by investigators that this case related to the crew of Catalina A24-20, but S/L Rundle considered both Catalina crews in his enquiries. The fate of Hemsworth and the crew of A24-20 has never been resolved.

Captured aircrew brought to Rabaul were systematically murdered between 1942 and 1944. The Japanese interrogated in 1946 and 1947 denied any involvement in unlawful killings. However, in mid-1947 Warrant Officer Yoshimura Minoru admitted the party of prisoners removed from the prison camp in October 1942 were executed by bayoneting. Yoshimura was in charge of the recruits who did the bayoneting, in the presence of Captain Mizusaki and Lt Nakayama.<sup>50</sup> In June 1949 a Japanese rating testified that he had witnessed the execution of 12 Allied airmen there in November 1943 in the presence of high ranking naval officers whom he named.<sup>51</sup> The executions were carried out by 81 Naval Garrison Unit. This unit was commanded from April 1942 to February 1943 by Captain Mizusaki Shojiro, and after that by Rear Admiral Kiyama Tatsuo. Kiyama committed suicide in 1949 after the announcement that the Australian government intended to go ahead with the war crimes prosecutions.<sup>52</sup>

After the 1950 exhumation none of the Japanese responsible were ever brought to trial. On the basis of these new discoveries the Minister for the Air in October 1950 proposed to Australian Cabinet that the suspects for the executions be re-arrested and brought to trial. Cabinet, however, reaffirmed its previous decision in August 1949 to terminate all war crimes investigations.<sup>53</sup> The exhumation carried out by Rundle coincided with the outbreak of the Korean War, and US foreign policy towards Japan had shifted from treating it as a former enemy to an operational base, industrial supplier, supporter, and partner of a United Nations and US force commanded by MacArthur against Communist imperialism.

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<sup>46</sup> NAA: A703, 614/1/7, Research for missing RAAF Personnel - New Britain and New Ireland.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> NAA: A705, 166/8/719, Coulter, J.R. – Casualty Section.

<sup>50</sup> NAA: A705, 166/27/769, Mason, C.J.T. – Casualty Section.

<sup>51</sup> NAA: A703, 614/1/7, Research for missing RAAF Personnel - New Britain and New Ireland.

<sup>52</sup> NAA: A705, 166/1/400, War Crimes against RAAF personnel.

<sup>53</sup> NAA: A4639, Volume 1 Agendum 2B, Cabinet Submissions - numbers 1-16L.

## Remissions

The US began to press allies to complete their trials in 1948, but Australia continued proceedings until 1951. Despite the US shifting foreign policy from treating Japan as an enemy to a partner, successive Australian governments felt obliged to see the trial process through. However, there was criticism of the Australian Cabinet decision terminating the war crime investigations and trials still in preparation in 1950.<sup>54</sup>

After the Japanese Peace Treaty in 1952, there was a constant stream of requests and petitions from individuals, organisations, and even the Japanese Parliament itself to the Australian Embassy for the repatriation or release of the 206 criminals held at Manus Island. There was no decision by Australia at this time to release war criminals, despite Britain and the US having repatriated all criminals, about 830 of whom were in Sugamo prison in Japan.<sup>55</sup> The Australian government feared a resurgent Japan, but had to revise its own foreign and economic policies to retain US support on broader issues of strategy and security to achieve, for example, the ANZUS Treaty. To strike a balance, those convicted by Australian courts confined at Manus were transferred to Sugamo in July 1953.

In 1951 the Australian Government enacted Statutory Rule No 11 of the peace treaty authorising good conduct remissions of one quarter of the sentence for those serving sentences of 5-25 years and after 30 years for those serving life sentences. The first to gain such remissions were released in early 1955. This was amended in April 1955, following the practice in other Commonwealth nations, to authorise release after serving 10 years or one third of the original sentence – whichever was the less. In 1957 this was further amended and the last prisoners (including those sentenced to life imprisonment in 1951) were released on 4 July 1957.<sup>56</sup>

## Conclusion

The cases presented in this article represent only a fraction of the systematic barbarity and brutality administered by the Japanese during their war of occupation. The antiquity of the Bushido code immunised the Japanese of any morality in their quest for the domination of the Pacific Region – the Co-Prosperity Sphere. The Japanese and scholars of international law may well argue the case of post-war ‘Victor’s Justice’, but equally, the Australian nation and families of executed victims are entitled to ask whether justice was served.

The execution of captured Australian airmen by the Japanese Navy accounted for a significant proportion of Australian War Crimes trials. Conversely and inexplicably, the Matupi execution squads escaped accountability. Despite the number of Japanese that walked to the gallows for crimes against the Allies, few Japanese were tried for atrocities committed during their invasion of Australian mandated territories. No Japanese were prosecuted for the unlawful killings conducted in the Owen Stanley and Milne Bay campaigns in Papua.

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<sup>54</sup> NAA: A705, 166/1/400, War Crimes against RAAF personnel.

<sup>55</sup> *Canberra Times*, 11 December 1952, p.4.

<sup>56</sup> Sissons, D.C.S. *The Australian War Crimes Trials and Investigations (1942-51)*.

## SOCIETY NOTICES

### The *Sabretache* Writers Prize 2014

Now open for entries

The details and conditions of entry of the prize are:

- The prize will be open to Society members;
- \$500 will be awarded to the entry judged the best by a panel;
- Entries must consist of an essay of 3,000 to 4,000 words on a topic of Australian military history, based in part on primary sources.
- Entries close 30 June 2014. The winning entry will be published in *Sabretache*. Entries should be sent in digital format to the Federal President at [fedsec@mhsa.org.au](mailto:fedsec@mhsa.org.au)

**Rohan Goyne, Federal President**

### Society Conference, Easter Weekend 18-21 April 2014 – Update

- While the theme of the conference is the centenary commemoration of the WWI period, speakers are also encouraged to present papers on other subjects/periods. Please contact Bob Doneley at [r.doneley@uq.edu.au](mailto:r.doneley@uq.edu.au) if you wish to propose a paper.
- Guest of honour will be Keith Payne VC OAM, who will open the conference and with Mrs Payne, attend the black tie dinner on the Saturday night. Guest speaker will be Dr Peter Stanley of the University of NSW, Canberra.
- Accommodation: 30 rooms have been reserved at the Arkana Motel. Please book early to ensure a room, at [reception@arkanamotel.com.au](mailto:reception@arkanamotel.com.au) or 07 41212261 / 1800461418.
- Transport: Those people attending from interstate can catch a plane from Sydney to Hervey Bay and a vehicle will collect you for transport to Maryborough which is about a half hour drive away. While in Maryborough a bus will be available to transport attendees from motel to conference venue, dinner and returns. Depending on the number of people arriving on the Friday we will organise a bus for that day and return to airport on the Monday.
- Conference venue: A building owned by the Fraser Coast Regional Council located only about 50 metres from the Maryborough Military & Colonial Museum. Venue is at ground level for attendees with walking disabilities.
- A full itinerary and costings will be issued after the Queensland branch meeting on 11 January 2014.
- Please don't hesitate to contact Bob Doneley or John Meyers if you have any questions at this stage.

**John Meyers OAM, Conference logistics coordinator**

## AS YOU WERE ...

### Feedback from Readers and Contributors

The title of Des Lambley's book *March in the Guilty Bastard*, which was reviewed in the September 2013 issue, sparked a couple of conflicting responses. This one comes from Ken Wright:

- I've done my share of marching in soldiers for summary justice, never under the command of an RSM but certainly at company level. The expression 'March in the prisoner' still rings familiarly in my ears. I was once even a corporal escort when a soldier was stripped of his military insignia in front of his unit. It seems to me that 'March in the guilty bastard' might have been an aberrant order by one RSM somewhere, sometime during WW1. It certainly would not have been at all commonplace, for all sorts of reasons that would inhibit such a command, not least the CO's sense of correctness for the occasion. The book's title is clearly oriented to an unjustified sales pitch by the publisher, and should be condemned by our historical journal.

However, John McCoombe has quite a different story to tell:

- Reading through my *Sabretache*, I had a flashback to the past as I came upon the review of the subject book, and thought I might share it with you. In late 1967 at RAAF Laverton, with the approach of the normal Christmas reduced activity period, I found that I had insufficient leave to be able to take the necessary days off. Consequently I found myself to be the star of a Unit Routine Order (URO) appointing me to the temporary command and every senior appointment of the Unit. This was a normal approach to give the appearance of the Unit operating normally as well as a service legal requirement. I had previously had short spells as the acting Adjutant, away from my normal engineer duties. Thus I found myself again in the Adj's chair dealing with the limited amount of paperwork. As well there were a number of other ranks who were unable to take leave and these were found tasks by the WOD. I was not without advice as the CO had left me with a schedule of his whereabouts and the other senior men had done likewise. However, I was confident that with the WOD's help I could manage.

One day an incident arose where one of the airman, let's call him LAC Bloggs, was absent from his workplace; he later claimed to have slept in. He must have been in the WOD's sights for he was placed on a charge, or 'fizzer' as the troops called it. So as the temporary section commander of Bloggs' workplace I had to hear the charge. The WOD duly set up the 'courtroom' in another building and I made sure that I had all the necessary material including reference books to hand. Being satisfied with my preparations I instructed the WOD to 'march the guilty bastard in'. After hearing all the evidence and the accused's excuses, I deemed him guilty and awarded him an admonition as punishment (about the limit of my powers as a Flg Off).

After the WOD had marched the miscreant out I filled in the appropriate paperwork, only to be interrupted by the WOD returning to say 'we' had a problem. It seemed that Bloggs had heard my remark about marching 'the guilty bastard' in, and wished to proceed with a complaint to the Adj that he had not had a fair trial. I was momentarily taken aback until I realised that I was the Adj. So I told the WOD to wait a few moments until I could get to the Adj's office and then bring Bloggs over. Once settled I called for the WOD to bring Bloggs in. He seemed a little surprised as I asked him what was his complaint. I tut-tutted at this and said that it was a serious matter that I should take to the CO. Telling the WOD and Bloggs to retire out to a passageway, I entered the CO's office through a connecting door. I settled myself in his chair and adopted a feet on the desk pose with



one of the CO's pipes in my hand. In a deep voice I called out for the WOD to bring Bloggs in. When Bloggs saw me the look on his face was priceless as I asked him what the problem was. He realised that he was going nowhere for he said, 'I give up, you've got me beaten.' He then backed out and left while the WOD and I enjoyed a quiet chuckle. A few days later I happened upon Bloggs at his workplace and asked him how things were. He expressed his disbelief that a Flg Off could hold so many posts until shown the URO. Needless to say I learnt from that episode, and during the rest of my career and hearing many charges and being active in courts-martial, I never again uttered those fateful words.

(P.S. Some readers may wonder about the punishment I awarded Bloggs. It was lowest on the scale under the old Air Force Act. If the person behaved himself for 12 months it was deleted from his records. It was often said that it was like a slap over the wrist with a wet tram ticket.)

Don Wright raises a very different issue, concerning the format of the journal itself:

- To change or not to change – that is the question!

Some time ago it was discussed whether to change the format of *Sabretache*, and it was decided to leave it up to the new editor. At the time there were ideas on what new size could be adopted. Many members are against a change, but I would like to see the topic raised again. I realise of course that stocks of printed envelopes would be a factor in any change of size, which would also have to be at the end of one volume and the start of another. [*Don goes on to mention that there have already been two changes of format in the past. Ed.*] I personally would not like to see a reduction in the print size or content. Perhaps in this day and age when the A4 size is more or less standard, this is the size we should be looking at.

Introducing colour should also be looked at, but the cost factor would have to be taken into consideration. Should more paid advertising be introduced to help cover the cost of production? I am sure your colour patch articles published in 1996 and 1997 would have looked a lot better in colour. [*Don is here referring to two of my articles, but the same might be said of any number of others dealing with insignia and related topics. Ed.*] Anyway, these thoughts are submitted for your consideration.

Certainly the topic is still open for discussion, and the editor would be pleased to hear from others about it.

Speaking of colour, here are some photographs submitted by the Australian Great War Association as a follow-up to the information which appeared in the September 2013 issue's Society Notices, and which would look even more striking if we printed in colour!





Readers – want to respond to something you’ve seen in *Sabretache*?

Contributors – need to answer readers’ feedback, or to update information you’ve had published?

The ‘As You Were ...’ column is there for you!

Email the editor at [editor@mhsa.org.au](mailto:editor@mhsa.org.au) and have your comments included in the next issue.

## THE SEA MINE STORY – FROM PRODUCTION TO DEPLOYMENT: AN ENTIRELY AUSTRALIAN AFFAIR?

Rohan Goyne<sup>1</sup>

This article will examine the story of the production and deployment of sea mines in Australia during the Second World War. It involves the exploits of Australian industry gearing up for war production and the efforts of Australia's mine layer HMAS *Bungaree* to deploy defensive minefields in Australian and New Zealand waters.

### The production decision

The British Admiralty suggested the production of sea mines to the Commonwealth Naval Board in 1923.<sup>2</sup> The reasons advanced by the Admiralty included: that the deployment of moored sea mines was one of the most cost effective methods of defending sea lanes and ports; and the development of local industry may also act as a limiter to any possible aggressor. The resulting request merely had the effect of the transfer of the responsibility for the laying of mines to the navy from the army. The open question from the Admiralty remained to one side until 1935 when the Admiralty again renewed its request.

The Munitions Supply Board of the Australian Government asked the Admiralty for design specifications of their contact mines which were received from them in due course. However, the decision was reported to the Admiralty in 1937 that Australia did not have the manufacturing base to support the production of contact sea mines.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, the position was re-examined in the light of global developments in early 1938 and the Federal Government proposed to establish a special factory for the purpose. On the 51 August 1938 the Federal Government asked whether the Ford Motor Company at its Geelong site in Victoria would be interested in manufacturing contact sea mines. This decision was predicated on the confirmation for the Admiralty that it would order 500 contact mines for use in deploying defensive mine fields in Singapore.

The Ford Motor Company was approached because it had: experience in the field of metal pressing; the company possessed equipment which was well suited to produce the components for contact sea mines and it also possessed sufficient spare materials to allow for an early run through the production process.<sup>4</sup>

### The production process

The Mark XIV Contact Mine was chosen for manufacture. The Mark XIV was constructed as a hollow sphere 90 centimetres in diameter containing an amount of TNT and a firing mechanism to detonate it. The firing mechanism consisted of a spike extending out of the surface of the sphere. The mine casing was attached to a sinker, which was a box with a seat on it to rest the mine casing. There were also an anchor and a ball weight to release the depth setting.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Rohan Goyne is Federal President of the MHSA, and describes himself as 'a recreational military historian'.

<sup>2</sup> D Mellor, *The Role of Science and Technology*, p.294.

<sup>3</sup> D Mellor, *The Role of Science and Technology*, p.295.

<sup>4</sup> D Mellor, *The Role of Science and Technology*, p.295.

<sup>5</sup> D Mellor, *The Role of Science and Technology*, p.296.



*Fig.1: Australian produced Mark XIV sea mines from Ford on display in Melbourne to raise money for war bonds (AWM)*

The Commonwealth Government entered into negotiations with the Ford Company about the production of contact mines. As a result, Ford donated land at its Geelong site on which the Commonwealth agreed to build and equip an annexe. The annexe was to be the site for the production of the main components of the Mark XIV mine and its final assembly. The other components were produced by 65 other manufacturing companies such as wire rope and glass tubing for the mine spikes.

The cost to produce a Mark XIV sea mine In Australia was calculated at £220 each mine. By 1941, it was reported to the War Cabinet that the production of sea mines by Ford Australia was capable of producing 3,000 mines per year. The production orders for the Mark XIV contact sea mine placed by the Commonwealth Government from October 1941 to April 1943 are shown in the table below:

Date	RAN	NZ, etc	RN	Total	Estimated Cost
22 Oct 41	3,800	400	-	4,200	£858,000
15 May 42	4,000			4,000	£880,000
11 Jan 43					
14 Apr 43	1,780		1,220	3,000	£660,000
				11,200	£2,398,000 <sup>6</sup>

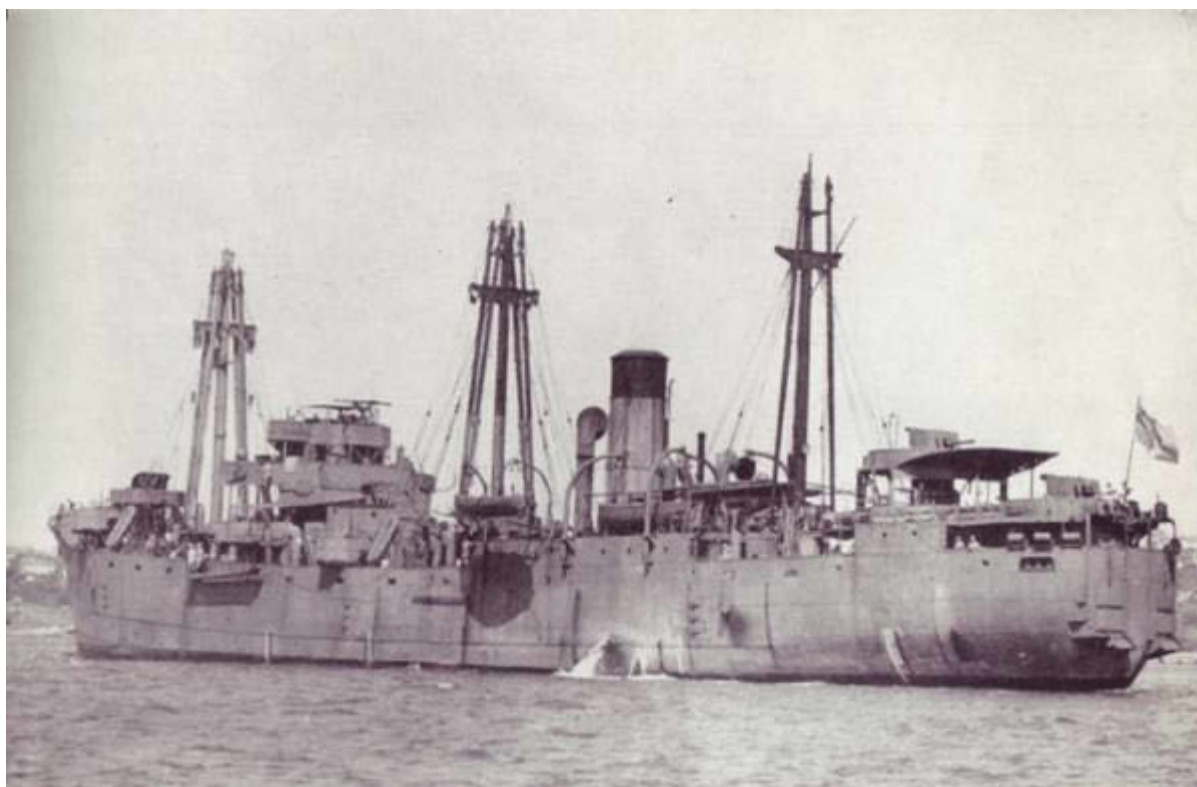
<sup>6</sup> NAA A5954 483/3.

The data in the table highlights that the production capacity was barely keeping pace with the demand for the mines by the RAN, NZ and RN as at 1942. However, in the space of four years Australia was producing a new war material not previously manufactured in the country but that the local production capacity was fully committed in the pivotal year of the war.

### **The Requisition of HMAS *Bungaree***

The press release from the Commonwealth Government announcing the approval for the requisition of a suitable merchant ship as a minelayer is below, later to be HMAS *Bungaree*.<sup>7</sup> On 10 September 1940 the War Cabinet approved the requisitioning of a suitable 3000-ton merchant ship as a minelayer and the provision of the necessary naval crew. The War Cabinet approved an appropriation providing £35,000 non-recurrent funding to cover the fit out and recurrent expenditure of £25,000 per annum to hire the vessel and £39,000 per annum to provide a naval crew of 12 officers and 125 ratings.<sup>8</sup>

HMAS *Bungaree* was requisitioned the Royal Australian Navy in October 1940. Caledon Shipbuilding and Engineering Company at Dundee had built the ship as a cargo vessel for the Adelaide Steamship Company. She was launched in 1937. The ship had a displacement of 3,043 tonnes gross; was 108.86m in length; a beam of 14.83m and a speed of 10.5 knots. She was commissioned into the RAN on 9 June 1941 and had a capacity initially of 423 sea mines.



*Fig.2: HMAS Bungaree on Sydney Harbour (AWM)*

HMAS *Bungaree* laid the first minefield using mines produced by Ford Australia from its Geelong plant off Port Moresby in August 1941. Following on further mine fields were laid

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<sup>7</sup> NAA A5954 483/3.

<sup>8</sup> NAA A5954 483/3.

in the Torres Strait and passages in the Barrier Reef in October and November 1941. Subsequently, she laid over 10,000 sea mines in defensive minefields during the war.

HMAS *Bungaree* was re-tasked as a survey ship from January 1944 and returned to the Adelaide Steamship Company on 5 November 1947. Subsequently, she was sold in 1960 and renamed the *Eastern Mariner*. Ironically, while operating in South Vietnamese waters in May 1966 she struck a mine on the Saigon River and sank.

### **Primary Sources**

NAA A5954 483/3

AWM 128095 & 138589

### **Secondary Sources**

D. Mellor, *The Role of Science and Technology*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1958.

I must also pay due credit to Michele Cook, Archivist at Ford Australia and Mori Falpan, Naval Architect who has researched the wartime production of small boats by Ford Australia, for their assistance in the research journey for this article.

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## **OBITUARY**

### **Colonel Robert Roger Freeman OAM, RFD (Retd)**

Roger Freeman, a highly regarded member of the South Australian Branch of the Society, died on 10 November 2013, not long after his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday.

With a medical degree from the Adelaide University, he worked in general practice and then specialised in radiology. He joined the Army in 1957 and served for nearly 40 years mainly in the Royal Australian Army Medical Corps. He retired in 1995, having been promoted to Colonel (Medical) Director General Army Health Services.

Roger developed a passion for military history and for many years since retirement was a strong supporter of the Army Museum of South Australia, where the Medals Room has been named after him. He made a lasting contribution to the military history of South Australia through his research and the writing of two monumental books, *Hurcombe's Hungry Half Hundred*, a memorial history of the 50<sup>th</sup> Battalion AIF (1991) and *Second to None*, a memorial history of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Battalion AIF (2006).

**Peter Harvey and Tony Harris**

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## FILIPINO AIF VOLUNTEERS FROM THE NORTHERN TERRITORY: PART 1 THE GARR FAMILY

**Major Paul A. Rosenzweig (retd)<sup>1</sup>**

Much research has been done on the various minority groups who volunteered, or could not, for service with the Australian Imperial Force including Chinese,<sup>2</sup> Papuans<sup>3</sup> and indigenous Australians<sup>4</sup> – and at least one Gurkha is known to have served.<sup>5</sup> Current research has identified eight Filipino-Australians from the Northern Territory who volunteered for service with the AIF during the Great War. This article considers the four sons of Carlos and Mary Anne Ga who volunteered; Part 2 discusses the Conanan and Spain families.

### **Filipino diaspora in northern Australia<sup>6</sup>**

Throughout the Spanish colonial era, many residents of the Philippines chose to seek a new life elsewhere. From the 18<sup>th</sup> century their primary destination was Mexico and the Americas, but in the third quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the first wave of Filipino migration to Australia began after commercial quantities of pearlshell began to be taken in Torres Strait from 1870. Filipino seafarers and divers came to the far north of Queensland to dive for pearlshell and *bêche-de-mer* (sea cucumber), also known by the Malay name *trepang*. The Japanese soon came to dominate the pearlshell industry there so many Filipinos went west to join pearling operations out of Palmerston (as Darwin was then known) or on the remote Kimberley coast. Late in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Palmerston was a ‘mestizo town’ of Japanese, Filipino and Torres Strait Island pearl divers, Chinese traders, indigenous Larrakia people and a few European public servants and labourers. ‘Banjo’ Patterson wrote of Palmerston after a visit there in 1898: ‘it is filled with the boilings over of the great cauldron of Oriental humanity’, listing ‘Manilamen’ (Filipinos) among the eastern races to be found there.<sup>7</sup>

The Chinese had been the first to settle in the Northern Territory and from 1878 Palmerston was basically a Chinese enclave – the Chinese outnumbered the European population by more than four to one. Twelve Japanese pearl divers came in 1884: by 1892 there were three Japanese-owned pearl luggers working from Port Darwin, and by 1898 nearly 300 Japanese lived in Palmerston, mostly pearl divers.<sup>8</sup> The pearling trade also attracted Indonesians, Torres Strait Islanders, Malays and Filipinos – the latter group called ‘Manilamen’ by the newspapers of the day even though very few actually came from Manila. The Filipinos were noted as excellent divers, and proved to be a bonus to the pearlshell industry. They first came to Port Darwin as adventurous individuals, while from 1895 there was a more regulated

<sup>1</sup> Major Paul Rosenzweig is a non-professional military historian and biographer. He is a Life Member of the RSL (Angeles City Sub-Branch) and Life Member of the Philippine Australian Defence Scholars Association, and a recipient of the Outstanding Achievement Medal (Republic of the Philippines).

<sup>2</sup> Kennedy, A (2012) ‘Outwitting Billy Hughes and the White Australia Policy: Chinese-Australians and the First World War’. *Sabretache*, *LIII* (4): 15-21.

<sup>3</sup> Meehan, J (1999) “‘To have some tangible record’ – Port Moresby’s First World War Memorial’. *Sabretache*, *XL*(1): 3-8.

<sup>4</sup> For example: Pratt, R (1990) ‘Queensland’s Aborigines in the First AIF’. *Sabretache*, *XXXI*(1): 18-22; *XXXI*(2): 16-19; *XXXI*(3): 26-29 and *XXXI*(4) 36-38.

<sup>5</sup> ‘Charlie the Gurkha’, Court Martial Section, 5<sup>th</sup> Training Battalion, Fovant (John Burr ridge Military Antiques catalogue for February 1987); another Nepalese, 22043 Private William Wickerma Singha, gave his age as 44 but was discharged because he ‘looks older’.

<sup>6</sup> A demographic group of Filipino people who have settled in other parts of the world.

<sup>7</sup> Patterson (1898).

<sup>8</sup> Powell (1982), pp.113-117.

influx of divers and pearlshell processors under the Indentured Labour Scheme. The Cubillo family of Darwin and further afield, for example, are the descendants of the Filipino pearl-diver Antonio Pedro Cubillo (1875-1945) from Calape on Bohol Island, who came to the Northern Territory in 1895 as an indentured labourer at the age of 20.<sup>9</sup>

Three factors at the turn of the century, however, acted in concert to practically end this first wave of Filipino migration: the decline of the pearling industry in Australia, the growth of the industry in the Philippines under American patronage after the conclusion of the Spanish-American War, and the passing of the Immigration Restriction Act following federation in Australia. The Indentured Labour Scheme ended abruptly and Filipino migration went into a hiatus until the 1950s. On 1 January 1911, when the Commonwealth assumed responsibility for the Northern Territory (and Palmerston was officially renamed 'Darwin'), there were 31 pearling boats operating from Port Darwin employing 138 men. It was recorded that there were 52 Filipinos living in Darwin at that time.<sup>10</sup>

### **Volunteers**

By 1914 the Northern Territory's population (excluding Chinese and Aborigines) numbered about 2,400, and this community was highly transient, so no single battalion was raised in Darwin nor was there an official recruiting depot established there. It is now known that some 319 men from the Northern Territory volunteered for war service.

The Top End's Manilamen had followed closely the news of the Philippine uprising and revolution at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, particularly the declaration of independence from Spain on 12 June 1898, which ultimately saw the end of the Spanish colonial era (only to be replaced by an American colonial era). Their sons were mostly in their twenties by 1914, and had grown up hearing of the patriotism of the nationalist José Rizal and the bravery of Andrés Bonifacio, *Supremo* of the Katipunan Revolution. In Palmerston, Carlos Ga even named one of his sons 'Aguinaldo' in honour of their homeland hero, General Emilio Aguinaldo, the first President of the Philippines. With this sense of patriotism, it is not surprising that the Australian-born sons of these Darwin Filipinos would seek their own adventure and volunteer to serve the land of their birth.

The exemptions from service in time of war prescribed by the Defence Act 1903-11 did not apply to these men: their fathers were Filipino by birth but had become naturalised, and these volunteers had all been born either in the Colony of Queensland or the Northern Territory of South Australia – on their attestation papers they identified themselves as 'Natural Born' or 'British Subject'.

### **Carlos and Mary Anne Ga**

Carlos Ga (1854-1931) was one of those young adventurers who came from the Philippines to Thursday Island and Darwin to be a pearlshell diver, and from the eleven children he fathered with his wife Mary Anne, the four sons who lived to adulthood all volunteered for the AIF in 1915.

Carlos was the son of Oulyincis Ga (1820-1880) and Estild Erma from the Dinagat Islands, a small group south of Leyte Gulf, at the very northeastern tip of Mindanao, north of Surigao Del Norte. Carlos would have spoken a local dialect as well as the more widely used

<sup>9</sup> NTTG 25 January 1895, p.2

<sup>10</sup> NAA: A1/15 11/16191 – Census figures for Darwin, 5 mile radius.



Cebuano and probably a little Spanish; remnants of Spanish influence can still be seen in many of the small villages or *barrios* in these islands. Carlos made his way to Thursday Island in about 1870 at the age of 16, and later went to Port Darwin.

He returned to north Queensland at some point, and in Cooktown on 30 April 1883 married Mary Anne Bunyan (1864-1909) aged 19, who had been born in Llanelly, Carmarthenshire, Wales. Carlos was naturalised in 1887 and continued working as a trepang and pearlshell diver, alternating between Thursday Island and Palmerston (Darwin). A total of seven children were born on Thursday Island during these two decades, attending the Catholic School there: Mary Elizabeth (1884-1960), Mary Espanias or 'Josephine' (1888-1947), Nateo Martien (1889-1917), William (1891-1916), Guillermo (1892-1973), Maria (1895-1977) and Nuselma (1897-1957) – all christened with the surname 'Ga'.

Carlos and Mary Anne were in Palmerston in 1893 where another son was born: Paulincho Nulinimko (1893-1917), christened with the surname 'Gah'. They were again back in Palmerston from 1900 where three further children were born: Simplicia (1900-1994), Theresa or 'Tessie' (1902-1971) and Aguinaldo (1904-1905), these last three christened with the surname 'Garr'. In Palmerston, Carlos and Mary Anne were living on the beach overlooking Frances Bay, which became known as Carl's Beach. Mary Anne Garr drowned on 11 February 1909, among the rocks near the Fort Hill Bath House, and was buried the same day in Palmerston Cemetery.<sup>11</sup>

After 1911, the Commonwealth assumed responsibility for the various camps on the fringes of Darwin town;<sup>12</sup> those old camps have today become the suburbs ranging from Stuart Park and Parap out to Nightcliff. The Filipino families of that time such as the Cubillos and Conanans mostly lived in the camp overlooking Frances Bay which was known as the 'Police Paddock' – this is today the suburb of Stuart Park, and Carl's Beach is today known as Dinah Beach. Life in the camp was communal living, with open drains and incinerator latrines. Conditions were tough but they were shared equally by all families, enhancing the community spirit the older Filipinos were already used to from back home. A visitor to a small *barrio* or *barangay* in a province of the Philippines today can readily experience the atmosphere of those camps of old Darwin-town.

### **William Ga (1891-1916) Served as: 3051 Private William Gar**

The first Filipino from Darwin to apply was William, the fourth child and second son of Carlos and Mary Anne Ga. William had been born on Thursday Island on 26 November 1891, christened with the surname 'Ga'; in Darwin he was a labourer with the Public Works Department where he was known as 'Billy Garr'. William volunteered for war service in early 1915, and was a member of the famous 'First Northern Territory Contingent' commanded by Captain Robert Lewis. This was the contingent which was famously marched out of town by a brass band, with the Australian flag carried at the head of the procession and the Japanese Rising Sun ensign at the rear,<sup>13</sup> indicative of the Top End's appreciation of the Japanese naval screen across northern Australia at that time.

<sup>11</sup> NTTG 12 February 1909, p.3; Palmerston Cemetery, Plot 262, Disc 174.

<sup>12</sup> 'Darwin – no place like home: A history of Australia's northern capital in the 1950s through a study of housing'. Public lecture for the National Archives of Australia, Dr Mickey Dewar, 28 October 2008.

<sup>13</sup> NTTG 29 April 1915; *Northern Territory Newsletter*, December 1975 p.17; January 1976 p.15.

William actually departed with a later contingent though, the Fifth Northern Territory Contingent: this group of sixteen men was farewelled at Darwin Town Hall on 16 August 1915. Mr Walter Bell, the instigator of the farewell function, said that he was ‘proud to see the men answering so well’, and the meeting closed with three cheers for the Territorians who were leaving for the front. They departed for Brisbane that evening on the SS *Eastern*.<sup>14</sup> William was enlisted in Brisbane on 27 August 1915, aged 23, giving his surname as ‘Gar’.

Private William Gar<sup>15</sup> embarked in Brisbane on 5 October 1915 with the 10<sup>th</sup> Reinforcements for the 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion AIF on A69 HMAT *Warilda*, and entered the 3<sup>rd</sup> Training Battalion garrison camp in Zeitoun in Egypt. In February 1916, the size of the AIF was doubled to create battalions comprising a mix of Gallipoli veterans and reinforcements from Australia. In consequence, on 29 February 1916 William was allotted to the newly-created 49<sup>th</sup> Battalion AIF.

A fortnight later, though, he was transferred to the 4<sup>th</sup> Pioneer Battalion AIF at Tel-el-Kebir when it was raised on 16 March. William marched with the battalion to Serapeum later that month to establish a camp, and spent the next few months training and working on defences. William Gar joined a draft which entrained at Serapeum on 3 June for Alexandria, and there embarked on the *Scotian* for Marseilles. They arrived in port on 10 June 1916 and disembarked the following day, making their way through a series of camps to join the 4<sup>th</sup> Australian Division at the Front with the 1<sup>st</sup> ANZAC Corps.

William entered the line near Armentieres in June and started working on the defensive line at Bois Grenier; in their first three days (25-27 June) the battalion lost one killed and seven wounded.<sup>16</sup> Under the title ‘Our Boys at the Front’ in July 1916, the Editor of the *Northern Territory Times* wrote:

It is probable that quite a number of our boys are now in France; and in the terrific fighting that is now going on it is only to be expected that some of them are paying the price. All honor to them. They are bringing honor to our Territory, and to Australia.<sup>17</sup>

John Alfred Robert Linde had come to Darwin from Queensland before the war to prospect for tin and wolfram; he enlisted on 10 June 1916 and joined William Gar in the 4<sup>th</sup> Pioneers. Corporal William Mansfield from Darwin was one of the non-commissioned officers in the battalion.

In July the pioneers moved to Fleurbaix where they were engaged in night work, and then training at Canaples. At the end of July they were at Albert, constructing a road through La Boisselle and communications trenches, wire entanglements and a strong-point near Pozières; ten men were wounded during the month.<sup>18</sup> The casualty list grew, running to eight pages in the battalion’s War Diary for August. In October 1916 William wrote to his good friend Miss Pantaleona Ponce in Darwin, the daughter of another Manilaman Mr Rafael Ponce:

[I] was very glad to hear from you. I often wondered if you ever thought of me since I have been away. No one knows how pleased I was when I got your letter . . . Give my best respects to all my old friends and tell them I hope to be back shortly in dear old Sunny Darwin Town. I

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<sup>14</sup> NTTG 19 August 1915, p.7.

<sup>15</sup> NAA: B2455, ‘GAR W’, item barcode 4036731.

<sup>16</sup> AWM: AWM4, 14/16/4 – 4<sup>th</sup> Pioneer Battalion AIF, War Diary for March- June 1916.

<sup>17</sup> NTTG 27 July 1916, p.15.

<sup>18</sup> AWM: AWM4, 14/16/4 – 4<sup>th</sup> Pioneer Battalion AIF, War Diary for July 1916.

must ring off now, with a Happy Xmas to you all, and God bless you. From your old friend William.<sup>19</sup>

By November the battalion was working on the Somme east of Albert on the Decauville Tramlines, establishing cuttings, plate-laying, ballasting and regrading. Corporal Mansfield was in charge of a work party on the tramlines between Brigade Headquarters and Bulls Road, where William Gar was working, and was awarded the Military Medal for bravery.<sup>20</sup>

his coolness under fire has had a marked effect on the moral[e] of the men working under him, and also on the progress of the work.<sup>21</sup>

The 4<sup>th</sup> Pioneer Battalion lost five killed and seven wounded in that month: on 30 November, 3441 Corporal Robert Owen and 3051 Private William Gar were killed when a high explosive shell fell on them. Gar and Owen were buried beside each other in a cemetery which had been established along the Longueval-Maricourt Road, south of the village of Longueval. On the 'Particulars' form for the Australian War Memorial, William's father Carlos morbidly noted: 'One of 4 brothers all volunteered. All dead or disabled'<sup>22</sup> (in actual fact, two were killed and one was wounded; the fourth did not serve overseas).

Carlos Ga and his daughters first publicly mourned the loss of William during a memorial service to the fallen at Christ Church in Darwin on the second anniversary of the Gallipoli landing. William Gar's medal entitlement was the standard trio, despatched to Carlos via the Post Office at Port Darwin, as also were the Memorial Plaque, Scroll and King's Message in 1922.

#### **Martien Nateo Ga (1889-1917) Served as: 428 Private Matthew Garr**



*Fig.1: 428 Private Matthew Garr, circa 1915: born on Thursday Island in 1889 and christened 'Martien Nateo Ga'. [Photo from the family]*

William's older brother Matthew was the next to apply: on 18 September 1915, aged 26, giving his surname as 'Garr'. He too had been born on Thursday Island, on 2 July 1889, the third child and first son of Carlos and Mary Anne Ga. Two days after applying, he took his younger brother Palencio with two fellow Filipinos to a recruiting meeting at Darwin Town Hall on 20 September 1915 presided over by the Chairman of the Palmerston District Council. At 3.30pm on 6 October 1915, a parade was held at Mr Stanley Bailey's office for inspections and swearing-in for this contingent, of which Bailey was to be

<sup>19</sup> NTTG 1 February 1917, p.15: Private William Gar, letter dated 25 October 1916.

<sup>20</sup> 4<sup>th</sup> Pioneer Battalion AIF Routine Orders, 28 December 1916; *London Gazette* dated 16 February 1917, 6<sup>th</sup> Supplement No.29953 dated 19 February 1917, p.1756; *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette* dated 25 July 1917, p.1543.

<sup>21</sup> AWM: Army Form W3121, Recommendation dated 14 December 1916.

<sup>22</sup> AWM: AWM131/AWM131-19-0054.

the Officer Commanding.<sup>23</sup> Matthew and Palencio were enlisted that day.

Matthew and three other Filipino sailors had earlier taken a lugger to Bathurst Island in April 1911, carrying Father Francis Xavier Gsell MSC DD who established a Catholic Mission at Nguiu. Matthew and the other Filipinos stayed and helped build a house and chapel there. In 1913, Matthew married a young part-Aboriginal woman named Fanny who had received some education from the missionaries; she had given birth to a daughter by the time Matthew went to Darwin to volunteer.

Matthew Garr<sup>24</sup> went with the Fourth Northern Territory Contingent to Brisbane, where he was sworn-in on 21 February 1916 at Bell's Paddock Camp and was allotted to B Company, 41<sup>st</sup> Battalion for training. He embarked in Sydney on 18 May with reinforcements for the 41<sup>st</sup> Battalion AIF on A64 HMAT *Demosthenes*. Meanwhile, on Bathurst Island, his wife was involved in a local intrigue. The Chief Inspector of Aborigines reported that, since Matthew's departure for the front, Fanny Garr had become 'very restless and impatient' and wanted unrestricted use of the allotment she was receiving, but this was refused by Father Gsell. He noted that, 'at Bathurst Island his visit quelled a threatened outbreak among the natives'.<sup>25</sup> It was then discovered that Fanny Garr had induced one of the boys to urge the tribe to murder the missionaries: 'There has been a plot to murder the missionaries at Bathurst Island, but it has been frustrated'.<sup>26</sup> Fanny was sent to Darwin and Matthew's older sister Mary Elizabeth Ga, the first child of Carlos and Mary Anne, raised his daughter Mary Garr on Bathurst Island.

At Capetown, the men on the *Demosthenes* became tired of being kept on board without leave: on 19 June several of them broke through the wharf guard and went up to town. Matthew's platoon sergeant Leslie Dummer (subsequently commissioned) wrote in a letter home to Darwin:<sup>27</sup> 'In this connection one old Darwinite (Matthew Garr) especially distinguished himself, and he was ordered to forfeit 28 days' pay'. Garr's charge sheet records that he was charged with 'Breaking out of quarters while on Active Service'. Dummer also noted, 'Except the above outbreak, he was a good soldier and gave little trouble'.

The contingent disembarked at Plymouth in July and joined the 12<sup>th</sup> Training Battalion at Lark Hill camp on Salisbury Plain. When disembarkation leave was offered, Matthew's mates ensured he would have the opportunity to see London, as Dummer recalled:

When we reached England he was still suffering from the penalty contracted at Capetown, so the boys sent round the hat and provided him with the wherewithal to spend his four days' disembarkation leave in London. I cannot attempt to give you an account of London as seen through Matt Garr's eyes. All I will say is, that his novel recitations of his impressions and experiences caused us all endless amusement.

Within a month, Matthew volunteered for a draft to reinforce the 47<sup>th</sup> Battalion which had been raised in Egypt as part of the 'doubling' of the AIF, as Dummer explained:

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<sup>23</sup> NTTG 7 October; 25 October 1915.

<sup>24</sup> NAA: B2455, 'GARR M', item barcode 4026529; NTTG 7 October 1915, pp.6, 15; 14 October 1915, p.24; 1 November 1917, p.7.

<sup>25</sup> Administrator's Annual Report for 1915-16 and 1916-17: report by the Chief Inspector of Aborigines Mr H E Carey dated 20 September 1917.

<sup>26</sup> *The Advertiser* (Adelaide) 15 July 1916, p.9.

<sup>27</sup> NTTG 8 March 1917, p.13: Lieutenant L S Dummer, letter dated 22 November 1916.

His reason was 'that it was twice more better to be killed and push up daisies in France than to sit down in England with no money'.

Matthew Garr proceeded to the 4<sup>th</sup> Australian Division Base Depot at Etaples, and in October joined the 47<sup>th</sup> Battalion AIF on the Hindenburg Line. By the time Matthew joined the battalion it was alternating between duty in the trenches and training and rest behind the lines. William Gar wrote home in October 1916:

I saw my brother Matthew here in France and he has just removed from London; he is a lucky fellow, and I am unlucky, but I hope to see that big city some day. <sup>28</sup>

The battalion switched to the Ypres Salient in Belgium in 1917. Private William Ernest Budgen, previously a fitter and turner at the 2½-mile railway workshops in Darwin, was reported missing-in-action at Bullecourt on 11 April 1917, later determined to have been 'killed-in-action'. He was a member of an old Darwin family, and his mother managed the Terminus Hotel in Cavanagh Street. Private John William Powell, a clerk with the English, Scottish & Australian Bank Limited in Darwin before joining up, was with Matthew Gar in the Battle of Messines (7-14 June 1917) and then the Battle of Passchendaele ('Third Battle of Ypres') where he was killed in action on 12 August 1917. Also with them from Darwin was Corporal Frederick George Webb, previously a tractor driver, standing at 6 feet 4 inches or 193cm, the tallest Territorian to depart for active service and not surprisingly known as 'Long' Webb.

During September, Private Garr and Frederick Webb, by now promoted to sergeant, were undertaking night operations near Fruge. On 25-26 September the battalion was standing-to during the 4<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Brigades' attack on Menin Road, and on 28 September it moved forward to the front line at Garter Point on Anzac Ridge in support of the 46<sup>th</sup> Battalion.<sup>29</sup> Matthew Garr was killed in action here on the Ypres Salient on 29 September 1917, aged 28, and was buried approximately 1,000 yards southwest of Zonnebeke. Sergeant 'Long' Webb was killed the following day.

Matthew's sister Mary Elizabeth Ga on Bathurst Island later married Alfonso Albolero from Manila; they had no children, but instead raised Matthew's daughter at the Bathurst Island Mission. Matthew Garr's medal pair, and the Memorial Plaque, Scroll and King's Message, were despatched to the Mission in 1922 and were received by Pastor Henschke, who presumably passed them on to Mary Albolero for Matthew's daughter. She later married a labourer from the Philippines and became Mrs Mary Cigobia; she died in Darwin in 1939 aged 25, and her six young children were adopted and raised by Mary and Alfonso Albolero.

#### **Paulincho Nulinimko Gah (1893-1946) Served as: Private Palencio Gar**

Carlos and Mary Anne Ga's sixth child, and fourth son, was born in Palmerston on 30 December 1893 and christened 'Paulincho Gah'.<sup>30</sup> Paulincho attended that recruiting meeting in Darwin on 20 September 1915 with his brother and friends Ricardo Conanan and Prudencio Spain; he volunteered under the name 'Palencio Gar' and was enlisted at Mr Stanley Bailey's office on 6 October 1915, aged 21.<sup>31</sup> A farewell smoke social was held in Darwin Town Hall the next evening for this Fourth Contingent of volunteers. A

<sup>28</sup> NTTG 1 February 1917, p.15: Private William Gar, letter dated 25 October 1916.

<sup>29</sup> AWM: AWM 4: 23/64/1-23/64/24 – 47<sup>th</sup> Battalion AIF War Diary for September 1917.

<sup>30</sup> NAA: B2455, 'GAR P', item barcode 4036730; NTTG 7 October 1915, pp. 6, 15; 14 October 1915, p.24.

<sup>31</sup> NTTG 23 September 1915.

commemorative program printed on silk recorded the names of the contingent members, including these four Filipino-Australians.

In Brisbane, Palencio and Ricardo were allocated to A Company, 8<sup>th</sup> Depot Battalion for training. Palencio was back-squadded to the 12<sup>th</sup> Depot Battalion, and then to the Reserve Company at Enoggera. Finally, on 24 May 1916 he was discharged as ‘not being likely to become an efficient soldier’ due to his difficulty in absorbing military training after eight months in camp. He was incorrectly described by the Officer Commanding Reserve Company as, ‘a half-caste Malay’. Family history relates that Palencio Gar was last seen in Forest Hills, Queensland in 1916.

*Fig.2: Private Palencio Gar, circa 1915: born in Palmerston (Darwin) in 1893 and christened ‘Paulincho Nulinimko Gah’. [Photo from the family]*

**Guillermo Gah (1892-1973)** Served as: 4417 Private Glamor Garr MM

Carlos and Mary Anne Ga’s fifth child, and third son, was born in Palmerston on 2 December 1892 and christened ‘Guillermo Gah’; as a boy he was known as ‘Glomo’.<sup>32</sup> He enlisted on 23 November 1915 aged 22, using the name ‘Glamor Garr’.<sup>33</sup> He gave his occupation as ‘Labourer and Diver’, being a pearlshell diver in Darwin, but this was wrongly transcribed by an army clerk as ‘Driver’.

After training in Brisbane, Private Glamor Garr embarked on 30 March 1916 with the 11<sup>th</sup> Reinforcements for the 26<sup>th</sup> Battalion AIF on A16 HMAT *Star of Victoria*. He joined the battalion in bivouac at Tara Hill on 2 August while the battalion was outside Pozières, as part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Australian Division. Four other Territorians are known to have served with the 26<sup>th</sup> Battalion: Neil Stuart Boyle (an engineer before the war), Albert Chalmers Borella (a farmer), James Dalziel Brown Dymock (a joiner with the Public Works Department) and another Filipino-Australian Elias Conanan (see Part 2). Dymock later wrote home that on the night of 28 July they had been in Sausage Gully between La Boisselle and Tara Hill when they were called upon to attack the heights beyond Pozières.<sup>34</sup> Under the deafening noise of the guns, they charged and gained 300 metres before digging in. Dymock noted that they were subjected to a heavy bombardment, including gas shells:



<sup>32</sup> NAA: B2455, ‘GAR P’, item barcode 4036730; NTTG 7 October 1915, pp.6, 15; 14 October 1915, p.24.

<sup>33</sup> NAA: B2455, ‘GARR G’, item barcode 4026528.

<sup>34</sup> NTTG 30 November 1916: Private James Dymock, letter dated 3 September 1916.

As it was between 12 and 1 am we were all asleep, but when the gas alarm sounded every man was quicker than the other in getting his gas helmet on, and falling in ready for further orders. It was a little exciting, with shells bursting overhead.

Glamor Garr participated in the attack on Pozières together with Borella and Dymock, and Lieutenant Neil Boyle was a platoon commander in D Company. On 4 August, after a three-minute artillery barrage, 26<sup>th</sup> Battalion attacked in its sector in five waves, gaining a further 700 metres. They then spent the next 20 minutes fighting through, taking two rows of trenches. A counter-attack on the battalion's right flank the next morning was repulsed by machine-gun fire, but the battalion lost six men. Dymock wrote home to his family:

Although we beat them off we could not have stayed off another attack. In this sort of work there is a lot of uncertainty, but when busily engaged one hasn't much time to think; it's after. Then the continual roar of the shells.

Neil Boyle was wounded on 5 August and evacuated. The 26<sup>th</sup> Battalion began its relief during the night of 5-6 August under yet another extreme artillery bombardment, and that morning another counter-attack was repulsed by effective machine-gun fire. But the bombardment continued all day until the battalion was finally relieved. Among the casualties on 6 August was Private Glamor Garr, who suffered gunshot wounds to the back and chest. He was evacuated through a Casualty Clearing Station to the 23<sup>rd</sup> General Hospital at Etaples, and in October joined No 1 Convalescent Depot at Le Havre. His brother William wrote to Darwin: 'Poor Glomo has been wounded; I don't know how long ago, but I don't think it was a very dangerous wound or I would have heard more about him.'<sup>35</sup>

Meanwhile Bert Borella was promoted to sergeant and was awarded the Military Medal for 'conspicuous bravery in action' during the attack on Malt Trench north of Warlencourt.<sup>36</sup> Glamor Garr rejoined the battalion in April 1917 in the Hindenburg Line defences, and saw action at Bullecourt. The battalion then switched to Belgium, and Glamor fought at Menin Road and Broodseinde Ridge; Neil Boyle was wounded-in-action for the second time. On the night of 17 July 1918, the 26<sup>th</sup> Battalion was involved in operations south of Villers-Bretonneux: there were two major enemy counter-attacks and one of the most vulnerable positions lost telegraphic communication with its company headquarters. Private Garr was recommended by the commander of the 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade for the Military Medal:

During the attack South of VILLERS BRETONNEUX on the night 17/18<sup>th</sup> July 1918, this soldier displayed great coolness and exceptional bravery under very heavy artillery fire. In company with Private HOMAN, he succeeded in carrying messages back under intense artillery and machine gun fire in the face of what seemed certain death. By his action, much needed assistance was secured, and the position saved.<sup>37</sup>

It was in this same action that night that fellow Territorian Bert Borella won the Victoria Cross. Private Garr's Military Medal was gazetted on 11 December 1918:<sup>38</sup> he was one of just twenty decorated Territorians, who received total of 28 decorations for service during the Great War.

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<sup>35</sup> NTTG 1 February 1917, p.15: Private William Gar, letter dated 25 October 1916.

<sup>36</sup> *London Gazette*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Supplement No. 30064 dated 11 May 1917; *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette* No.140 dated 27 August 1917.

<sup>37</sup> AWM: Army Form W3121, Recommendation dated 25 July 1918.

<sup>38</sup> *London Gazette* dated 10 December 1918, 3<sup>rd</sup> Supplement No.31061 dated 11 December 1918, p.14669; *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette* dated 14 March 1919, p.426.

Garr, Dymock and Boyle then participated in the great offensive that began on 8 August 1918. Glamor Garr and James Dymock were in a detachment which proceeded to England on leave from 14 August; Glamor fell sick and was hospitalised, but he rejoined his battalion in November and was with them when the armistice was declared. Lieutenant Neil Boyle meanwhile had been mortally wounded at Mont St Quentin on 30 August (3<sup>rd</sup> occasion), and he died of his wounds three days later. Glamor Garr embarked on HT *Ypiringa* on 15 May 1919 for return to Australia. He arrived in Melbourne on 5 July and proceeded by train to Brisbane where he was discharged on 28 August 1919.

Glamor settled on Thursday Island, and in 1920 married Licowra ('Cissie') Boota (1898-1945) of the Mabygilgal people from Mabuiag Island in the Torres Strait (her father Tom had come from Guadalcanal). By 1926 Glamor Garr was back in Darwin, but by 1942 he was in Cairns, North Queensland where he volunteered again at the age of 48, serving with the 15<sup>th</sup> Garrison Battalion.<sup>39</sup> As well as Glamor Garr MM, two grandsons of Carlos and Mary Anne Ga also enlisted (with the surname See-Kee) – in total, some thirteen Filipino-Australians with a connection to the Northern Territory served in the Australian military forces during World War 2. Glamor Garr died in Cairns on 30 April 1973 at the age of 79.

### Commemoration

As Mary Anne Ga had died in 1909, there was no two-star Mothers and Widows Badge in honour of William and Matthew Garr. Mary Albolero wrote in 1924 to claim a 'war brooch' in memory of her brothers: she would have been entitled to claim the Department of Defence Female Relatives' Badge in recognition of William (who embarked on 5 October 1915), with two silver bars for Glamor (embarked 30 March 1916) and Matthew (embarked 18 May 1916). She was advised, however, that issue of these badges had ceased on 31 March 1922.

The first form of local public commemoration for those from Darwin who had volunteered was a Public Works Department Honour Roll, which was unveiled by the Administrator Dr John Gilruth on 13 May 1916.<sup>40</sup> Among those 'who heard the Empire's Call' were four Filipino-Australians who volunteered at a time when government employees were not being encouraged to enlist: Palencio Garr (labourer) and William Garr (labourer) plus Felix Spain (fireman) and his brother Prudencio 'Percy' Spain (apprentice fitter).

A Soldiers' Monument Committee was formed to establish an appropriate memorial honouring the Northern Territory men who died on war service, and the Soldiers' Monument was erected in 'Liberty Square' opposite Government House.<sup>41</sup> It was unveiled on Sunday 24 April 1921: a polished grey granite column standing upon a polished red granite base. Among the names engraved on the memorial were included three Filipino-Australians: William and Matthew Garr, and Percy Spain.

William Gar was among three Territorians who served with the 4<sup>th</sup> Pioneer Battalion AIF, of whom two were killed in action. Corporal William Mansfield survived the war with a Military Medal for bravery and a commission. Lance-Corporal Alfred Linde was killed in Belgium on 15 October 1917, and was buried in the Menin Road South Military Cemetery. He too was listed on the Soldiers' Monument, and in 1968 'Linde Street' and 'Linde Park' in

<sup>39</sup> NAA: B884, 'Q54723', item barcode 4456211.

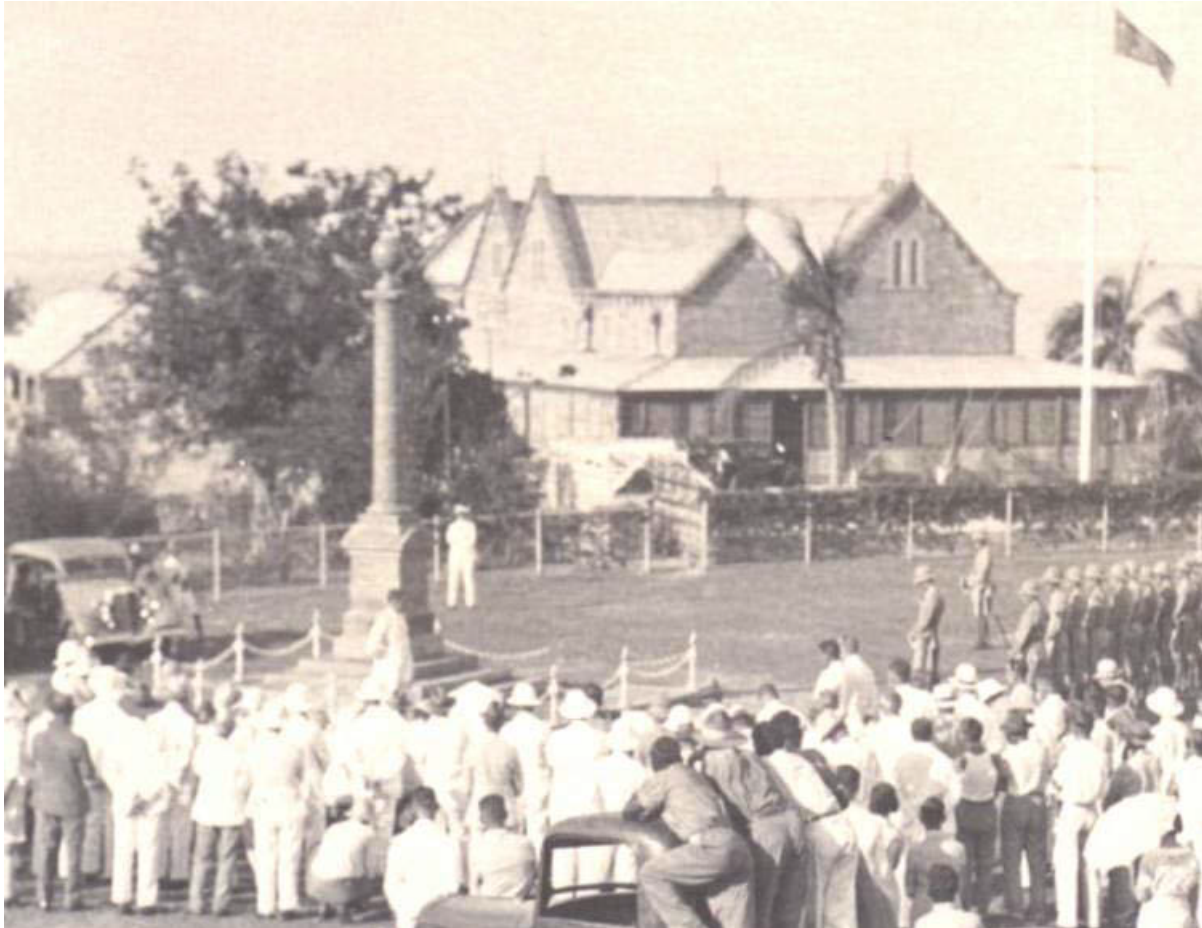
<sup>40</sup> NTTG 25 May 1916, p.16.

<sup>41</sup> The Darwin Cenotaph was relocated to the Civic Centre near the Darwin City Council offices in 1970, and in 1992 it was moved to its present location in Bicentennial Park.



the Darwin suburb of Moil were named in his memory.<sup>42</sup>

Four men from the Northern Territory had served with the 47<sup>th</sup> Battalion AIF, and all four of them were killed: Private William Budgen at Bullecourt, Private John Powell at Passchendaele, and Private Matthew Garr and Sergeant Frederick Webb near Zonnebeke in Belgium. Three are listed on the Darwin Cenotaph but Webb was one of several names inadvertently omitted by the committee. In 1968, William Budgen's name was given to a street in Moil;<sup>43</sup> more recently Litchfield Council named 'Powell Street' and 'Webb Road' in Lambell's Lagoon in honour of John Powell and Frederick 'Long' Webb.<sup>44</sup>



*Fig.3: The Darwin Soldiers' Monument was erected in 1921 in 'Liberty Square' outside Government House Darwin to honour those from the Northern Territory who died on war service, seen here in 1937. (Photograph in author's collection)*

On the other hand, of the five Territorians who served with the 26<sup>th</sup> Battalion AIF, Bert Borella and James Dymock, and Filipinos Elias Conanan and Glamor Garr, survived the war. Notably, Borella was wounded, commissioned, awarded the MM, mentioned-in-despatches and awarded the Victoria Cross for conspicuous bravery at Villers-Bretonneux – the only VC won by a Territorian. He was commemorated in Darwin by having 'Borella Circuit' and 'Borella Park' in the suburb of Jingili named in his honour.<sup>45</sup> A bronze plaque bearing his citation in Borella Park was unveiled by the Administrator Mr John England CMG ED on 30

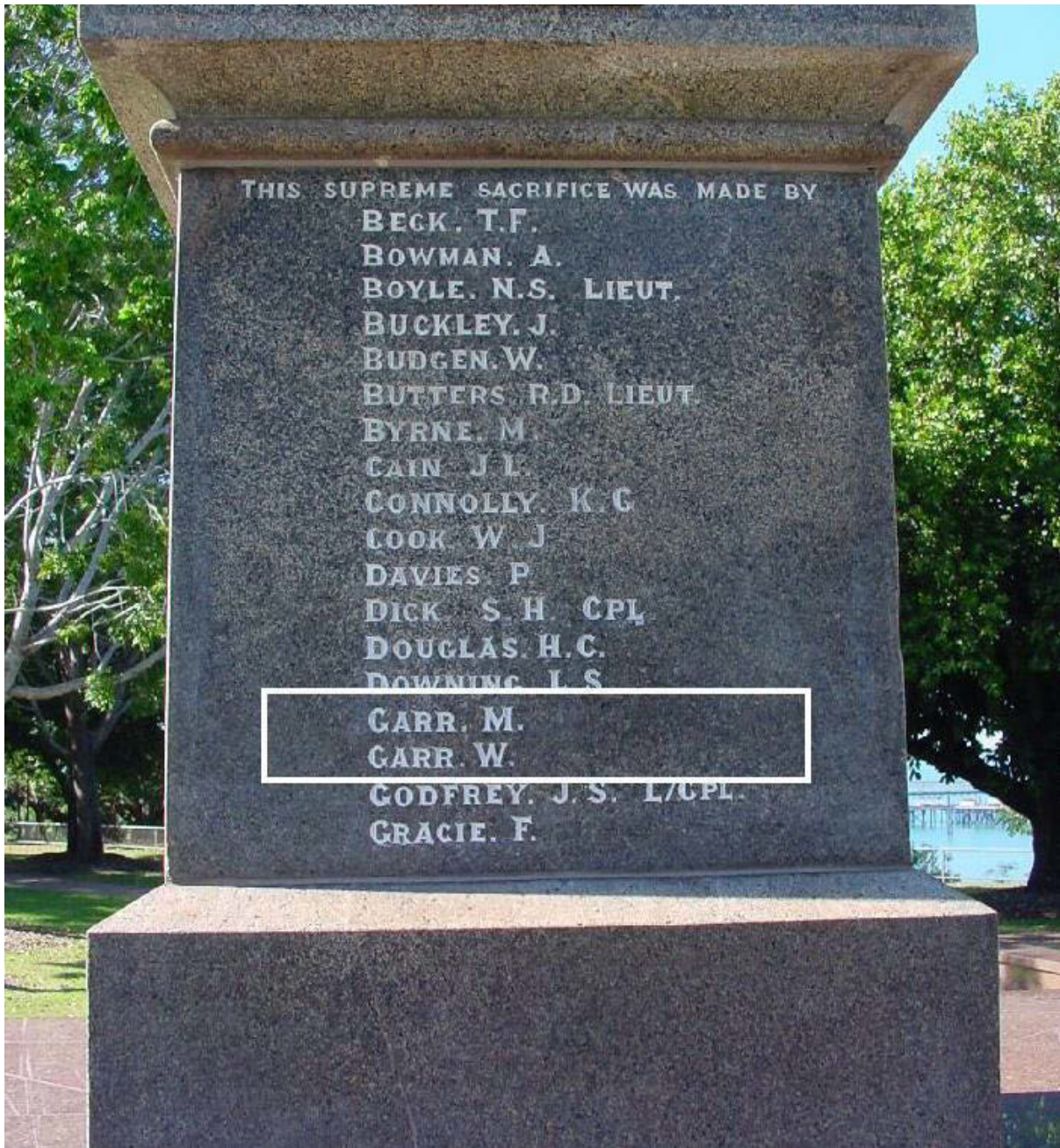
<sup>42</sup> NTG 42, dated 25 September 1968.

<sup>43</sup> NTG 42, dated 25 September 1968.

<sup>44</sup> NTG 46, dated 13 November 1996; NTG 20, dated 21 May 1997.

<sup>45</sup> NTG 12, dated 13 March 1968.

September 1980. Neil Boyle is one of just five Northern Territory officers listed on the Darwin Cenotaph; he was also honoured by having a street in Moil named in his honour.<sup>46</sup>



*Fig.4: The names of 428 Private Matthew Garr and 3051 Private William Gar are commemorated on the Darwin Soldiers' Monument (Darwin Cenotaph). (Author's photo)*

The brothers Matthew and William Garr have been commemorated through the naming of 'Garr Street' in Moil on 25 September 1968.<sup>47</sup> The register incorrectly states, however, that their father was a 'Thursday Islander' – he had indeed come from Thursday Island, but was Filipino by birth. Carlos Ga was a regular attender at commemoration ceremonies at the Darwin cenotaph each year until his death:

<sup>46</sup> NTG 42, dated 25 September 1968.

<sup>47</sup> NTG 42, dated 25 September 1968.

We believe that three of his sons enlisted during the Great War and the names of two of them are engraven on the Soldiers' Monument at Liberty Square as of men who gave their lives in the cause of freedom. The old man was a familiar figure at Anzac and Armistice Day celebrations for he never failed to deposit his wreath in memory of his lost ones.<sup>48</sup>

Carlos died in Darwin on 16 February 1931:<sup>49</sup>

Carlos Garr [sic] passed away after a short illness at the age of 77 years. The deceased was a widower, his wife having predeceased him . . . Two boys were killed in the great war. Mr. Glamor [sic] Garr is the only son resident in Darwin.<sup>50</sup>

'Carlos Road' at East Arm was registered by Darwin City Council on 20 September 2000 in honour of the old Manilaman Carlos Ga (1854-1931).<sup>51</sup>

Meanwhile on Thursday Island in Far North Queensland, the name of Glamor Garr MM is listed on a WW1 Honour Board in the foyer of the Torres Shire Council building, which now lists the names of 62 citizens from the Torres Strait area who served during the war.<sup>52</sup> The original Honour Roll containing 57 names was unveiled on Anzac Day in 1917<sup>53</sup> – although Glamor had been born in Darwin and enlisted in Darwin, he settled on Thursday Island immediately after the war and his name was one of those later added to the memorial.

**National commemoration.** At the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, the names of William and Matthew Garr are honoured in the Commemorative Area of the Roll of Honour – panels 174 and 143 respectively. William and Matthew Garr are numbered among the more than 60,000 Australians who died during the Great War, but are believed to be the only Filipinos to have sacrificed their lives in the service of their adopted homeland.

**Commemoration overseas.** Private William Garr's grave and headstone are in the Longueval Road Cemetery in the village of Longueval, within the Department of the Somme in France. Private Matthew Garr's makeshift grave near Zonnebeke in Belgium was never found at war's end, and his remains still rest under 'the sad sod of Flanders'. Matthew's name is commemorated in the northern wing of the Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial in the Province of West Flanders, Belgium, as also is the name of 'Long' Webb from Darwin.

\* \* \*

These Filipino-Australians, of mixed blood yet identifying themselves as natural born British subjects, were undeniably patriotic. They had not been educated in the classics, but they all spoke at least three languages fluently. They were seafarers and divers – of that roving nature that sought adventure, whether it be on a pearling lugger in the Arafura Sea, in the ancient sands of Tel-el-Kebir, or amid the wanton destruction of the farmlands of France and Flanders. William and Matthew Garr could be seen as emulating the great Filipino nationalist José Rizal in having their years cut unreasonably short, finding a form of 'martyrdom in a glorious cause' as soldiers in the AIF. Glamor Garr fell at Pozières but was offered a second

<sup>48</sup> NTTG 17 February 1931, p.4.

<sup>49</sup> *Northern Territory Times* (Darwin) 17 February 1931, p.4; Garden Road Cemetery, unmarked grave in row 724.

<sup>50</sup> *Northern Standard* (Darwin) 17 February 1931, p.2.

<sup>51</sup> NTG 37, dated 20 September 2000.

<sup>52</sup> 'World War I veterans from Far North Queensland', Vanessa See Kee: Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council News Letter, issue 25 (April-May 2011).

<sup>53</sup> *The Brisbane Courier*, 28 April 1917, p.7.

chance, and in his redemption was honoured for his conspicuous bravery. These ‘Fil-Anzacs’ – Top End Filipino-Australians who served under the ‘Rising Sun’ – should not be forgotten.

\* \* \*

### Acknowledgments

I am very grateful for the assistance and encouragement of Mr Januario John Rivas, Philippine Consul General *ad honorem* in Darwin, and former President of the Filipino-Australia Association of the NT. I would also like to acknowledge the assistance with research provided in the 1980s by the late Mr Frank Geddes OAM of the Darwin RSL.

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### Glossary of Abbreviations

AWM = Australian War Memorial  
NAA = National Archives of Australia  
NTG = *Northern Territory Gazette*  
NTTG = *Northern Territory Times and Gazette*

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### Share your discoveries ...

Have you come across a book, magazine, DVD or website which you think may be of interest to readers of *Sabretache*? Why don’t you write a brief description of it – include illustrations if you think they help – and email your contribution ([editor@mhsa.org.au](mailto:editor@mhsa.org.au)) with the subject line ‘Page and Screen’, or contact the editor with your idea.

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**COLLECTORS' CORNER**  
**THE DUTCH 6<sup>TH</sup> INFANTRY BATTALION,**  
**REGIMENT ORANJE GELDERLAND TROPICAL HAT**

**Graham Wilson**



*Above: An actual example of the tropical hat. The body is olive green; the patch is 'ponceau' red; the badge is all brass and bears the inscription 'Oranje Gelderland' on the scroll.  
(Author's photo)*

When Dutch sovereignty over the Netherlands East Indies was transferred to Indonesia in 1949, the remnants of the colonial administration were transferred to the resident of West New Guinea, which now became known as Dutch New Guinea. From the very first days, the new republic of Indonesia was adamant that West New Guinea was an integral part of the new nation and embarked on a combined process of diplomatic pressure and covert military action to force the Dutch to give up the territory. For its part, the Netherlands was not prepared to hand the people of West New Guinea, who they considered ethnically, socially and geographically entirely separate, to Indonesia.

To maintain the security of the territory, the Netherlands maintained a small army garrison of a reinforced infantry battalion (7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion, *Garderegiment Fuselier Prinses Irene*). However, in 1955, in line with a decision to hand responsibility for security of the territory over to the navy, the army garrison was withdrawn and replaced by marines. By the late

1950s, however, with Indonesian incursions becoming more common and more blatant (although by no means more successful), the decision was made to reinforce the marine garrison with an army brigade of three infantry battalions, a commando detachment, a security platoon, three anti-aircraft artillery batteries, a field medical unit and a supply and transport company. The first elements of the *Brigade Nederlands Nieuw-Guinea* (BNNG) began to arrive at Hollandia in late 1959 and by mid-1960 had built up to full strength.

One of the three infantry battalions of BNNG was the 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion, *Regiment Infanterie Oranje Gelderland* (RIOG). As with the other units of BNNG, the members of RIOG were issued with Royal Netherlands Marine Corps tropical pattern uniforms, with all marine emblems removed. Unique among the regular army units in Dutch New Guinea, however, RIOG adopted as its tropical dress uniform head gear a type of 'slouch hat', which was worn with the left side of the brim pinned up. The hat, which was actually an ex-Belgian Army bush hat, issued to Belgian paratroopers for service in the Congo, is of heavily stitched, double thickness olive drab twill. The brim is approximately 8cm wide, which includes a 1cm wide edge band. An integral, non-removable hat band, 2.2cm wide, is stitched to the base of the hat. Two metal mesh circular air vents are fitted on each side of the hat, just below the crown.

The right hand side (as made for Belgian Army wear) of the hat is fitted with a button clip between the two air vents and 1cm below them; a matching clip on the hat brim is used to clip the brim up. The inside of the hat is fully lined with red cloth; a cloth sweatband, made of the same cloth as the hat and 3cm high is fitted to the inside of the hat. Inside the sweatband is a strip of thin, clear plastic, 6cm high, running entirely around the circumference; this may have been a form of 'water proofing'. Finally, the hat is fitted with a brown leather chin strap. This strap is wider and thicker than the chin strap found on Australian Army slouch hats; it is attached to the hat via two cloth loops and is fitted with a brass box-frame buckle to allow the strap to be adjusted.

While the hat was designed to be worn with the right side turned up, in Dutch service the hat was worn back to front to allow for a left side upturned brim. The regimental cap badge of the RIOG, known colloquially in the regiment as the 'Brown Willy', was worn on the upturned brim, with the standard badge backing of rectangle of infantry corps colour (ponceau red). It was found that brass badges worn at home in the Netherlands did not stand up well to the tropical environment in Dutch New Guinea and they were replaced by a version manufactured in anodised aluminium. The slouch hat was specifically issued for dress wear only, with green cloth utility caps or green cloth berets issued for field wear. Photographic evidence, however, shows that the slouch hat was occasionally worn in the field.

In addition to the RIOG, the ex-Belgian Army hat was also worn by all members (European and native) of the *Papoea Vrijwilligers Korps* (PVC) or Papuan Volunteer Corps, a local unit recruited from Papuan natives with Dutch officers and senior NCO. As with RIOG, the PVC only wore the slouch hat as a ceremonial or dress item. The PVC version of the hat was fitted with a scarlet pugaree; the unit badge, backed by a square of scarlet cloth, was worn on the left hand turned up brim, and a hackle of black cassowary feathers was fitted behind the turned up brim. No photographic evidence of the slouch being worn in the field by the PVC has been located.

## PAGE AND SCREEN

### Resources for the Researcher and Collector

#### Norfolk Island War Memorial

During a recent visit to Norfolk Island I came across the plaque in the Anglican Church at Kingston (*photo below*) which commemorates three members of the Metcalfe family, all doctors, a father and his two sons. Naturally I was drawn to the tragedy of the two boys dying of wounds in the First World War and determined to look into it. My task was made easier by the links of the Norfolk Island war memorial website

<http://www.niwarmemorial.nlk.nf/SalutingtheirService/Welcome.html>



All members of the Norfolk Island community who served in the First World War have their military service outlined in dedicated links and you may be interested to peruse some of these. You will no doubt be struck by the number of descendants of the Bounty mutineers who are listed.

Here is the link for **Major James Metcalfe**

[http://www.niwarmemorial.nlk.nf/SalutingtheirService/Metcalfe\\_James\\_Beverley.html](http://www.niwarmemorial.nlk.nf/SalutingtheirService/Metcalfe_James_Beverley.html)

and for his younger brother **Captain Francis Metcalfe**

[http://www.niwarmemorial.nlk.nf/SalutingtheirService/Metcalfe\\_Francis\\_Bramall.html](http://www.niwarmemorial.nlk.nf/SalutingtheirService/Metcalfe_Francis_Bramall.html)

While all deaths in war are tragic, I was especially drawn to the circumstances of the death of Captain Francis Metcalfe. Both Metcalfe boys are descendants of Bounty mutineers through their mother, Janet Lucy Nobbs who was a descendant of both Fletcher Christian and Matthew Quintal. I have also attached a photo of the grave of the boys' father Peter Herbert Metcalfe (*right*). I commend the Norfolk Island war memorial website to you.



Terry Doherty

#### State Library of New South Wales – New Website

<http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/about/projects/wwi/index.html>

This is an intermediate site, basically to alert people to our content and to try to flesh out more about the history of the soldiers in our collections. A much fuller website with each diary fully digitised and transcribed will be launched in June 2014.

Richard Neville  
Mitchell Librarian, State Library of NSW