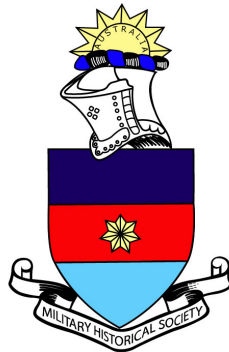


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*Sabretache*



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## EDITORIAL

The appearance of this first number of the journal for 2014 marks the Society's entry into the much anticipated centenary commemorations of the First World War. Not that our readers need reminding about this; anyone even remotely interested in history generally, let alone military history, doubtless already has been subjected to a deluge of information about various events and dates associated with key anniversaries, along with invitations to attend and participate. At the risk of adding to the onslaught, I strongly encourage you to submit articles and items arising out of any aspect of the centenary celebrations between now and 2018. Obviously the focal date for Australia and New Zealand is April 2015, and you have already been notified of the Society's intention to produce a special Gallipoli edition of the journal in addition to the four regular issues next year. But that's only one opportunity to get into print out of many others. This year marks a hundred years since the expedition to take German New Guinea; 2016 the centenary of the arrival of the Anzacs on the Western Front and of battles such as Pozieres; 2017 the centenary of Bullecourt and Beersheba; 2018 of Villers-Bretonneux, Hamel, and the final Armistice. And so it goes.

However, the more I thought about these next few years, the more it occurred to me how many more potential anniversaries they represent, which in turn might inspire a whole range of other writing and research. Off the top of my head I offer the following possibilities:

- 2014: 200 years since the Treaty of Fontainebleau and the end of the main phase of the Napoleonic Wars; 160 years since the beginning of the Crimean War, and that infamous battle of Balaclava; 60 years since the outbreak of the Algerian War (your humble editor being born the following day!).
- 2015: 800 years since the signing of Magna Carta and the conflicts associated with that event; 600 years since the Battle of Agincourt; 200 years since the Battle of New Orleans and the end of the War of 1812; 200 years since the Battle of Waterloo and the other encounters of the Hundred Days campaign; 150 years since the conclusion of the American Civil War; 50 years since the major Australian military deployment to Vietnam.
- 2016: 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Shakespeare (OK, not strictly military, but one I couldn't ignore – and there are so many dealings with war in his works!); 150 years since the Seven Weeks War between Austria and Prussia; 100 years since the Mexican Punitive Expedition; 60 years since that fateful year of 1956, with the Suez Crisis, the Hungarian Uprising, and so on; 50 years since the Battle of Long Tan.
- 2017: 160 years since the outbreak of the Indian Mutiny (or the various other names it now goes by); the centenary of the Russian Revolution, and of the entry of the USA into WW1; 50 years since the Six Day War between Israel and the Arab states.
- 2018: 400 years since the outbreak of the Thirty Years War; 170 years since the 'year of revolutions', 1848, and of the conflicts engendered by it in Europe and elsewhere; 70 years since the establishment of Israel and the first of many Arab-Israeli conflicts; 50 years since the Tet Offensive and of the 'Prague Spring' uprising; 80 years since the Munich Agreement, which ushered in a whole new period of potential anniversaries!

I'm sure there are many other events that might be added to this list; hopefully it will inspire you to put fingers to keyboard and to submit something of interest to the journal's readers over the next four to five years. I very much look forward to receiving whatever you have to offer, regardless of which conflict it deals with.

**Paul Skrebels**

## A MAGNIFICANT ANZAC: THE ENIGMA OF MAURICE WILDER NELIGAN

Peter Holmes<sup>1</sup>



On an isolated section of the coastline near Talasea, overlooking the tranquil waters of the South Pacific on the island of New Britain in Papua New Guinea, lies a lonely grave. The grave, now neglected, is located near the old long-gone Australian Administrative Headquarters of Talasea. Apart from local inhabitants, few outsiders would know anything about the grave, and the person who is buried there has largely been forgotten.

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*Fig.1: A portrait of Maurice Wilder Neligan taken in 1919 (Courtesy of Lt Col Miles Farmer (Retd) OAM)*

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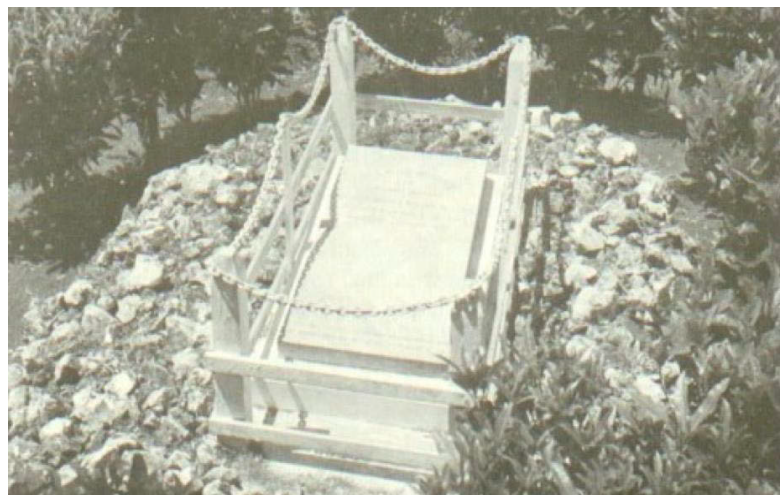
The grave belongs to Lt Col Maurice Wilder Neligan, and it would surprise many to know that he was one of the most highly decorated and esteemed Australian soldiers of the First World War. Indeed he has been described by some as one of the most (if not the most) outstanding Australian battalion commanders of that war. During the war, he was not only respected but worshipped by the men under his command, the Queensland 9<sup>th</sup> and South Australian 10<sup>th</sup> Battalions. Many prominent senior soldiers such as Gen Birdwood, Commander of the Australian forces during much of World War 1, Gen Walker, Commander of the Australian 1<sup>st</sup> Division and Gen Gordon Bennett, Neligan's Brigade Commander, also shared that view, as did the Official War Historian C.E.W. Bean.

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*Fig.2: Neligan's lonely grave at Talasea as it was in the 1970s. It is neglected today (Courtesy of 9<sup>th</sup> Battalions Associations)*

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Even more unusual is the fact that Neligan had originally joined the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) in August 1914 as a private and had lied about his name, age and place of birth. He was born and raised in England and only came to Australia in 1911. He had a dramatic rise through the ranks and by late 1916 he was in temporary command of the 9<sup>th</sup> Bn and later commanded the 10<sup>th</sup> Bn from July




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<sup>1</sup> Peter Holmes is a Queensland member of the MHSA. He has recently published a book-length biography on Wilder Neligan, *A magnificent Anzac: The untold story of Lieutenant Colonel Maurice Wilder Neligan, CMG, DSO and bar, DCM, Croix de Guerre, MID (5)*. See the Book Reviews section in this issue.

1917 until the end of the war. He was awarded the Companion of the Order of St. Michael and St. George (CMG), the Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM), the Distinguished Service Order (DSO), and Bar, and Croix de Guerre. He was also Mentioned in Despatches (MID) on five occasions.

To the men under his command he was complete mystery, an enigma, and until now, little was known about his life, apart from the war years. Stories abounded about him and it might be added that Neligan himself did little to dispel or clarify many of these myths and rumours – indeed he fostered them.

Such stories included rumours that he had one brother who was the Bishop of Auckland and another was a well-known Harley Street surgeon; he had been a Captain in the Royal Horse Artillery and had served in the Boer War; he had attended school with Gen H.B. Walker KCB, KCMG, DSO, commander of the 1st Australian Div, at one of the most exclusive schools in England; his blood relations included senior members of the English clergy; he had been brought up in King Edward's household and had been a page boy to Queen Victoria; he had a son who was a submarine commander; he had worked for the Egyptian Government and had been associated with the Fijian Constabulary, and that he owned a house in Mayfair. These were just the tip of the iceberg that surrounded a man who was loved by his men, but who was a complete enigma to them.<sup>2</sup> A question that needs to be addressed is how such an eccentric Englishman, coming from nowhere, was able to command such respect from Australian soldiers, many of whom had shown little respect for the British army hierarchy and its entrenched class differences.

Maurice Wilder Neligan was born in Tavistock, Devon on 4 October 1882. His father, John West Neligan was Chaplain at Kelly College in Tavistock, which had been founded by Admiral Benedictus Marwood Kelly for the sons of Naval Officers and other gentlemen. The Neligan family was a very prominent family of clerics and other professionals from Ireland. Indeed, Neligan's grandfather, Dr Maurice Hodson Neligan, was a very well-known cleric in Dublin and his uncle, Moore Richard Neligan, was later to become the Bishop of Auckland. The family could trace its roots back many centuries and his forbears included the prominent Irish writer, Oliver Goldsmith, and the eminent Wilder family from Castle Wilder in Longford (from where Neligan's middle name had come). Another relative, Theaker Wilder, had been Oliver Goldsmith's tutor at Trinity College, Dublin.

Neligan's mother, Charlotte Mabel Putland, was also descended from a very prominent Irish family whose forebears included John Putland, a naval lieutenant, very close to Governor William Bligh whom Bligh had insisted accompany him when he took up his appointment in Australia; he was also married Bligh's daughter Mary. Unfortunately Putland died from tuberculosis only 16 months after arriving in Australia. He was originally buried in the 'Old Burial Ground' in Sydney (now the site of Town Hall) and his headstone was moved to the Camperdown Cemetery in Sydney, the oldest memorial in that cemetery.

Neligan's mother died shortly after giving birth to twin boys in 1887 when Neligan was only 5. The family later moved to Wimbledon and in 1893 he was sent to the Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School in Ipswich, which was then one of the most progressive schools in England. It also happened that his aunt, Anna Browne, was married to the headmaster of the school,

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<sup>2</sup> See C.B. Lock, *The Fighting Tenth: Souvenir of the 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion*, 1936, reprinted by Naval & Military Press, Sussex, p.242

Frederick Herbert Browne. Following a scandal involving Frederick Browne's suicide in July 1894, Neligan and his brothers were sent to the Bedford School in Bedford, where he remained from mid-1894 until the summer of 1895. During this period his father was declared bankrupt, left the country and lived in Southern Africa. The remaining boys were taken care of by relatives.

Although information is sketchy following his stay at Bedford College, it would appear that Neligan spent several years at sea serving with the British merchant fleet before accompanying his uncle, Moore Richard Neligan, and his family, who was taking up his new appointment as Bishop of Auckland in 1902. He returned to England in 1904 and later married a divorcee, Frances Jane Wyatt, in February 1905 (she was 42 and he 22 at the time). They had a daughter Gwendoline born in November 1905 (who was later to become a world fencing champion in the 1930s).

At this time Neligan was living the high life on a small amount left to him by his mother and an allowance given to him by his wife. They lived in the exclusive suburb of Mayfair in London. When his wife cut off his allowance in 1907 Neligan was declared bankrupt, proceedings for which were not finalised until 1911.<sup>3</sup> Neligan had no profession, unlike his five other brothers, two of whom were doctors (one a Harley Street specialist), one a naval officer, another a colonial officer in Africa, and the other a planter in Ceylon. He joined the Royal Horse Artillery under the name of Maurice Wilder in September 1910 and said he was born in Auckland in 1886, obviously attempting to escape his past. He never rose above the rank of Gunner and purchased his discharge in February 1911 before sailing to Australia in June 1911. He thus served for only four months in the regiment.<sup>4</sup>

After arriving in Australia he initially worked as a clerk at the Kalamia Sugar Mill near Ayr in North Queensland, living at Kelly's Hotel in Brandon, during which time he became very close to the Kelly family, who owned the hotel. He continued to use the name of Maurice Wilder, and joined the Queensland Police Force in November 1911, under this name and again providing a false date and place of birth.<sup>5</sup> Neligan's service with the Queensland Police did not end on a happy note and he had a number of disagreements with his senior officers, who accused him of stealing a very small amount of money and of drunkenness. Although Neligan was able to address these allegations, he resigned in disgust in June 1914 and stated that he was completely out of sympathy with the current Queensland Police methods and policies at that time. He clearly did not fit into the Queensland 'police culture'.

When war was declared in early August 1914, Neligan joined the AIF in Townville on 20 August using the name Maurice Wilder and again providing a false date and place of birth. He was transferred to the Enoggera army base in Brisbane and sailed with the first Australian contingent to Egypt in September 1914. By this time he had been promoted to lance corporal and in early 1915 he was promoted to orderly room sergeant.

He landed with the 9<sup>th</sup> Bn on the first day of landing at Gallipoli on 25 April, and on the second day he distinguished himself by carrying a wounded man to safety and had also been instrumental in rallying members of the 9<sup>th</sup> Bn who had become completely disorganised following the landings. He so impressed his superior officers that he was commissioned in

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<sup>3</sup> UK National Archives, Records of the Board of Trade and of Successor Related Bodies, Neligan, Maurice Wilder, BT 226/2184

<sup>4</sup> UK National Archives, British Army Service Records 1760-1915, WO97 Chelsea

<sup>5</sup> Queensland State Archives, Item 565328, Police Staff File, Maurice Wilder

the field as a 2<sup>nd</sup> lieutenant on 28 April 1915. Neligan's military career had begun in earnest and he was beginning to make a name for himself.

On 28 May he planned and led a highly successful raid on Turkish trenches, without losing a man, for which he received a Mention in Despatches and for which he should have been more highly decorated. He was wounded when a shell burst prematurely several days later and was evacuated to a hospital in Egypt. He returned to the lines in August and shortly after was made Acting Adjutant. Then in October, he declared his name to be Maurice Wilder Neligan, but did not correct the false date and place of birth provided by him on enlistment.<sup>6</sup> The name change was gazetted in November and he was then known as Maurice Wilder Neligan (with Wilder Neligan being his surname). One of many stories that surrounded Neligan was that he had prematurely discharged himself from hospital in Egypt to return to his unit, and when he was asked, as Acting Adjutant, whether a Maurice Wilder had returned to the unit he could truthfully say that no one by the name was serving with the 9<sup>th</sup> Bn.

Following the evacuation from Gallipoli, the 9<sup>th</sup> Bn was sent to the Western Front in France. Neligan was keen for action and shortly after the battalion arrived at the front in April 1916 he pleaded to be allowed to lead a raid on German trenches. Permission was finally granted for the raid, which took place in early July 1916. This was a brilliantly planned and led operation, which resulted in over 50 Germans being killed or wounded and 25 captured. Neligan himself entered a German trench at the height of the action and made some loud noise moving along the trench in the hope that the Germans would think it was one of their own officers coming to see them. He effected a complete surprise and killed several German soldiers with a knobkerrie, which was a primitive wooden stick with a cog or nails attached to the end.

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*Fig.3: Neligan had a soldierly bearing and was always immaculately dressed (Courtesy of Lt Col Miles Farmer (Retd) OAM)*

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For an officer who had no officer training, his orders and execution of the raid were brilliant and became a model for similar raids; he was later awarded the DSO for this operation. Everybody in the raid knew their role, what weapons to take, and the exact timings of different stages of the raid. Neligan had displayed an innate understanding of fighting on the Western Front; but this was only a foretaste of what was to come.

Unfortunately Neligan was badly wounded in the head during the raid and was sent to the Empire Hospital in London, where he underwent several operations and was paralysed for several months. He did not return to his unit until October 1916 and was almost immediately promoted to major and made second in command of the Battalion. Neligan began to impose himself in the 9<sup>th</sup> Bn and organised a comprehensive training regime to prepare it for the forthcoming battles. His attention to detail and care for his men became legendary and no stone was left unturned to ensure the professionalism of his soldiers. During this period was acting in command of the battalion for several extended periods.



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<sup>6</sup> Wilder-Neligan, Maurice. Military Officer's Record of Service, National Archives of Australia, J1795 c/n1034

The battalion's next major action came in April 1917 during the battle of Bullecourt. Neligan was in command of the battalion when it attacked German lines during the Second Battle of Bullecourt in May 1917. It was highly successful, particularly given the short notice for the attack, and many prisoners were taken and much equipment captured. Following the action, Neligan prepared a paper on lessons learnt from the action, again demonstrating his professionalism and attention to detail. For the troops under his command he could do no wrong and he had their full confidence and support<sup>7</sup>.

Neligan was then promoted to command the South Australian 10<sup>th</sup> Bn and it was with great sadness that he left the 9<sup>th</sup> on 10 July 1917. When he arrived at the 10th Bn Headquarters he could not have received a worse reception. There was great resentment that he had been promoted above the acting commanding officer, who was a popular member of the battalion from South Australia, and who had refused to relinquish his command and serve under Neligan (he was subsequently removed to another position outside the battalion). His frosty reception at the officers' mess was legendary. He was not only not from South Australia, but an Englishman with eccentric behaviour, and promoted over the heads of many other officers more senior to him, particularly their respected acting commanding officer.

Neligan immediately launched a thorough training program for the battalion and it was not long before the men realised he was someone quite unique and different. He acquired new uniforms for the men; food, particularly in the front line, improved markedly; and the band was re-introduced to give concerts. His attention to detail, even down to route marching, was something to behold. He was a great networker and used these connections to improve the conditions for his men. He would not hesitate to berate officers and senior non-commissioned officers in front of their men, and could be difficult, argumentative and demanding. Slowly but surely, however, despite his eccentricities, he began to win the confidence of the troops under his command.

As had happened in the 9<sup>th</sup> Bn, rumours (mostly wrong), started to abound about him and his background. To add to the mystery, word soon spread that he when he was entertaining a French countess during this period; he suddenly spoke to her in fluent French when no one knew he could speak French; he also astounded some by suddenly playing the piano like a concert pianist.

Training and conditions were one thing, but it was vital that Neligan also be able to demonstrate success in battle and be seen to be caring about the lives of his men. His opportunity came in September 1917 during the Battle of Polygon Wood. An offensive was timed to begin on 20 September and Neligan had reorganised his attacking force into storm and carrier companies, which was a significant innovation. Similar to his planning for previous actions, each man knew his exact role and his orders were remarkable for their detail, clarity and thoroughness.

The attack was highly successful and one episode before the final assault on the third objective was to make Neligan famous among the troops. The storm troop companies were resting before the attack, sitting in shell holes eating sandwiches and smoking German cigars. Neligan sent runners to fetch the latest copies of London newspapers and distributed copies

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<sup>7</sup> See War Diaries of the 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion held at the Australian War Memorial:  
<http://www.awm.gov.au/collection/AWM4/23/26/>

of the *Daily Mirror* and *Daily Mail* to the troops before they attacked. It was a gesture that only he could have conceived. By this time he had gained the full confidence of his men; any doubts about him and his abilities were dispelled.

In October 1917, Neligan's battalion was involved in one of the most controversial battles of the war – the raid on Celtic Wood, of which in the official history C.E.W. Bean later wrote that a considerable number of men were missing and remained unaccounted for after the war. Neligan had just returned from leave prior to this action and was not in control of events until the last minute. There has been considerable speculation as to what happened to these men, but recently, research undertaken by Robert Kearney has accounted for most of the missing men. He has argued that this action was no different from many other actions where men had become missing and unaccounted for, and where there was some uncertainty as to what precisely had happened.<sup>8</sup>

From October 1917 until June 1918 the 10<sup>th</sup> Bn spent time training and moved in and out of the line. Neligan was again injured on 31 March 1918 when he was involved in an accident and spent some time in a hospital in England. He returned to his battalion at the end of May and immediately organised a highly successful attack upon the German lines. This time he improvised by utilising as back-up troops, soldiers who were cooks, runners, batman and other headquarters staff. He was congratulated by senior officers for the success of the operation.

In June 1918 Neligan was awarded the CMG and in July he organised what was to become one of his crowning achievements, the capture of the village of Merris. In a model of planning and timing, he had two groups surround the village and meet up on the eastern side before organising his headquarters platoon to clear the village itself within a one-hour period. The troops in the village later withdrew and the artillery again bombarded the village to convince the Germans that it was still being held by them. The operation was a complete success and Neligan was awarded a Bar to his DSO for the action. The attack was brilliantly planned and carried out, and the operation required precise timing and coordination. A senior British officer described the Merris action as the best show ever done by a battalion in France.

The 10<sup>th</sup> Bn was then involved in a number of battles following the August 8 offensive. In one action on 9 August, Neligan placed himself in front of the attacking troops with two lamps on his back. One was red to halt, and the other yellow to mean follow on. Later, Neligan was given command of several battalions for the attack on Crepey Wood and in a fast moving and difficult operation he had a resounding success. He considered this battle his best of the war. He had proved himself not only an outstanding battalion commander, but very capable at controlling larger operations. The 10th Bn saw its last action on 21 September and on 10 October Neligan was awarded the French Croix De Guerre for his achievements. In 1919 he was given a composite command of the remaining members of the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Bns and returned to Australia on board the *Takada* in September 1919.

Neligan was welcomed back in Brisbane a hero and was specifically praised by General Birdwood during his visit to Brisbane in May 1920. He became actively involved in the welfare of ex-soldiers and believed that officers had a duty of care to ensure that returning

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<sup>8</sup> Robert Kearney, *Silent Voices. The Story of the 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion, AIF in Australia, Egypt, France and Belgium During the Great War 1914-1918*, New Holland, Adelaide, 2005



soldiers fitted into society as easily as possible. He recognised that many had great difficulty in finding a place in society when they returned. He also became involved in the New Party, which was a conservative movement and which primarily represented ex-service personnel. He gave many speeches and opened a number of war memorials around the State. The closest thing he had to family in Australia were the Kellys in Brandon, and he made an emotional visit there; sadly several of the Kelly brothers had been killed during the war.

Neligan never really found a place for himself in in post-war Australia. He was a restless and adventurous soul and in May 1920 he was taken on strength at the Rabaul Garrison in New Guinea as part of the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force. He later transferred to the Civil Administration when military rule was ended in 1921 and became the District Officer in Talasea on the Island of New Britain. From all reports Neligan was a popular administrator and highly respected by local people, despite an unorthodox approach to his duties. One remaining patrol report written by him was described by the Administrator as the best report he had ever seen.<sup>9</sup>

Clouds began to darken for Neligan, however, when in 1922 he was accused by a German planter of taking almost 900 pounds in an attempt to smuggle money out New Guinea back to Europe, on behalf of the planter, which was illegal. This was a time when German property was being appropriated by Australian authorities. Neligan also owed money to a number of other people in Australia and he was becoming known for displaying peculiar behaviour. One friend, who had been a medical doctor in the 10<sup>th</sup> Bn and had lent money to Neligan, said his behaviour was probably as a result of the serious head injuries he had sustained during the war.

When confronted with the allegations Neligan resigned his position in the Administration and headed back toward Rabaul. He took time to rest at the village of Ekerapi, about half way to Rabaul, and was found dead by one of his assistants on the morning of 10 January 1923. His body was taken back to the Government station at Garua, examined by a medical assistant (who not a doctor) and he was buried, according with his wishes, at a location on the Garua Station at Talasea overlooking the sea in eight feet of clay on 12 January 1923. A memorial was later placed over his grave, paid for by his wife in England, although it can be assumed that they had separated, but not divorced, many years ago.

The Coroner's report said there were no suspicious circumstances surrounding his death but there was a strong assumption by many that he had poisoned himself. He was a well-known and highly respected figure and it was probably thought it would serve no purpose by finding he had committed suicide. Many had assumed that Neligan had been a wealthy man, but this was never the case, and nothing was able to be left to his family in his estate following his death.

When news broke about his death, many obituaries were written in newspapers in Australia, particularly in Queensland and South Australia. The men from his old battalions were shocked at this news and the many subsequent articles and unit histories gave testament to the high regard, almost adoration, in which he was held by his men. This mercurial, eccentric and unusual Englishman had captured the hearts of Australian soldiers in a manner which was accorded to few other battalion commanders during the war. He was also long remembered at

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<sup>9</sup> German New Guinea Administration Native Affairs, *Reports on Native Villages by Lieut. Colonel Wilder-Neligan*, National Archives of Australia 1920/2980

the Talasea post and while the Australian Administration remained, a service would be held alongside Neligan's grave each Anzac Day. This has long since passed, following the end of Australian Administration, however, and the grave is now forgotten.

For many years after the war, whenever reunions of the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Bns were held, the conversation would inevitably turn to Neligan, and the mystery surrounding his life, who he really was, and his battlefield achievements. So who was Maurice Wilder Neligan – 'Mad Neligan' as many called him?

He came from a cultured and high achieving family and was educated in some of the best private schools in England, albeit for a short period. Apart from his period at sea and brief time in the British army, at the lowest rank, he had not held a regular job in England; but for a man who had no profession, and almost no prior military training, he shone like a beacon during the war. From being bankrupt in England to living under an assumed name both in England and Australia, he found in war a place which suited his personality and drive, and he thrived in this environment. He was able to master the battlefield as few others had done and in doing so had become a hero to the soldiers who served both below and above him.

Neligan had something to prove to his family following his bankruptcy and disgrace in England, and his upbringing, natural intelligence and cunning allowed him to achieve so much in such a short period of time. His instincts were remarkable, as was his understanding of the Australian soldier and what drove him. If it had not been for the war Neligan would probably not have achieved much in life. Whatever happened in New Guinea following the war, there can be no taking back Neligan's achievements during the war and this should not be forgotten. Many men returning from that war never found a place for themselves in post-war Australia and Neligan was one of them. He was very lucky to have survived the war and probably never fully recovered from the serious wounds and psychological trauma he had suffered, like so many others.

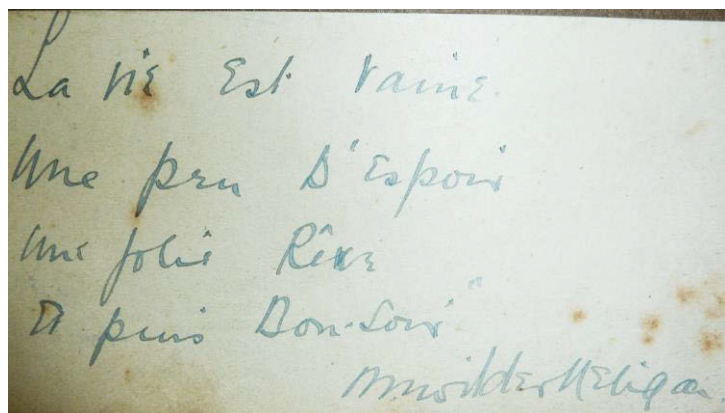
Despite what is now known about him, there will always be some mystery surrounding this enigmatic and mercurial man. He might have been known as Mad Neligan by some, but he was much more than that. He was a brilliant commander with an original approach to warfare. He cared about his men and they cared about him; a soldier could not ask for much more than that. When he was returning to Australia aboard the *Takada* in 1919, Neligan was asked to write a few thoughts for the homecoming. He wrote in French a poignant poem which might well sum up his life:

*Life is vain.  
A little hope  
A mad dream  
And then goodnight.*

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*The original text of Neligan's poem  
(Courtesy of the 9<sup>th</sup> Bn Museum,  
Enoggera Barracks, Brisbane)*

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## **‘HAD A SPOT OF BAD LUCK TO GET INTO THIS BUT I AM NOT ALONE’: GUNNER JACK SHOVELLER**

**Katrina Kittel**

At prisoner-of-war camp PG57 Grupignano, in north-eastern Italy, Gunner Jack Shoveller received unexpected news. Puzzled authorities informed Jack that, according to records, he had died of wounds in battle at Ruin Ridge, Alamein, months earlier, on 27 July 1942. Jack certainly had survived, but had not forgotten his fellow soldiers of 2/3 Anti-Tank Regiment who were killed in action that night. From that perspective, he was lucky to be biding time as a prisoner of war. Jack's thoughts, however, were to shift to his family in Sutherland, a southern suburb of Sydney. What official communications had arrived to their door? Would the Shoveller family have received a dreaded telegram to advise that he had been killed in action?

Indeed, Jack's mother may have worried deeply that her son, approaching his 25<sup>th</sup> birthday in late 1942, had been lost to her. It had been two years since she had farewelled him from Sydney's shores. As 1942 rolled into 1943 she would hear, unofficially, that Jack's transition out of battle and into captivity had been a safe one. Thankfully, the networks of 2/3 Anti-Tank Regiment prisoners and their families were keen to share information, and to support each other. Compiling information from its sources, the Commonwealth's Prisoners of War Information Bureau, Melbourne, heard, in February 1943, that another 2/3 Anti-Tank gunner, Bill Upston, had written to his wife from Italy, and made passing mention that 'Jack was well and in camp with him'. The Bureau had also received a letter from the Australian Prisoner of War Relatives Association, to advise that the mother of Sgt Jack Withycombe, captured with Jack Shoveller, had received a radio message from her son through the Apostolic Delegation in late August 1942. Among the regimental mates with him in his transit camp, was 'unwounded' Jack Shoveller.<sup>1</sup>

Communications within officialdom sought some clarity regarding Jack. On 17 July 1943, a year after Jack and fellow troops of the regiment's 12th Battery were taken prisoner, a letter was sent from Australia House, London, to the Department of Army, Melbourne. It was investigating the reports that Jack had been killed in action, and was attempting to ascertain its basis. Official reports were questioned, in the light of the receipt of a card from Italy. Confirmation was however considered prudent.

Meanwhile, a card has been received here from Gnr. Shoveller from Camp 57, but before advising his next of kin, it was thought desirable to confirm beyond any reasonable doubt that there was no possibility of impersonation, and that Shoveller was in fact alive. Geneva confirmed that Shoveller was alive and at 57, and a cable to this effect was sent to PrisWar Melbourne, 17 June.<sup>2</sup>

Following on from that letter card, Jack continued to write to home. He was keen to reassure his family that he was alive. In October 1943, The Australian Red Cross received an airgraph letter from their London arm, which carried an extract of a letter from Jack. They promptly forwarded the message from Jack to his mother Mrs P. Shoveller, at 'Greendale', Sutherland. The Red Cross Director annotated the letter with a positive note, that 'we are sure you will be glad to have this information'. No doubt Jack's family would welcome this message, but like

<sup>1</sup> NAA B883, NX33471. Service File for Jack Shoveller, p.79. Memorandum from Prisoners of War Information Bureau Melbourne to LHQ Records, 3/2/1943.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p.60: Memorandum from Australia House London to Department of the Army Melbourne, 17/7/1943.

so many messages coming home, it was out of date by the time they read it. Jack was in German captivity by the time his letter reached Sutherland, but he must have wondered if the mix-up had been resolved.

I am a Prisoner of War in Italy, having been captured at El Alamein 27 July 1942; six months of the time I have been captured was spent in Libya from where I could not write home and only today I learned from the Italian authorities of this camp that I was posted as having died in a German field hospital the day I was captured, this information having been sent home to my people.

I was slightly wounded but am feeling quite well now and I would be very grateful if you could convey this new to my people in Australia – the address being Mrs T. (Thomas) Shoveller, Sutherland, Sydney.

The mistake made by the Germans about me having died and being buried at El Daba is hard to understand but it could have been my sergeant who was badly wounded and who may have been carrying my paybook, you may look him up and see what actually happened to him, Sgt. Bruce Templeman, 3 Anti Tank Regiment. I would ever be grateful if you could look into this.<sup>3</sup>

Both Bruce Templeman, and his driver Jack Shoveller, were to be ‘lost in action’ during the night of 26/27 July 1942 at Ruin Ridge. At midnight, under full moonlight, troops of their regiment’s 12<sup>th</sup> Battery were in anxious readiness to move forward into battle. Gnr Doug Frame was alongside Gnr Jack Shoveller, and Sgt Bruce Templeman. Frame overheard Templeman say to Jack that he was carrying a new paybook for Jack, and that he would give it to him when they reached the ridge. At 3am, Templeman asked Frame if they could swap trenches. The digging in the desert soil was wearing them out. They swapped respective positions, and at 7am a mortar shell exploded beside Bruce. Templeman was badly wounded in the back by a large shell fragment and was given first aid by Gnr Ben Lester, who held the wounds together for over two hours until Templeman was taken away by German stretcher bearers. Jack Shoveller’s greatcoat was handed over to comfort Templeman as he was transported to field hospital. Identity discs had been removed from Templeman, therefore the identification of his body came to the documents on his person, which comprised the new paybook of Jack Shoveller.<sup>4</sup>

As morning advanced on 27 July 1942, John Pope, another sergeant of 12<sup>th</sup> Battery, witnessed the wounds that had been inflicted on Sgt Templeman. At about 9am, the troops of 12<sup>th</sup> Battery knew that the situation was increasingly grim. Enemy forces and equipment had proved to be superior, and in defeat, they were ordered to surrender. For the fatally wounded soldiers, like Bruce, this battle would be their last.

He was severely wounded by shrapnel, the location of the wound being below the left shoulder, a large portion of the shoulder blade being displaced, a large area of the lung being exposed. At the time of my departure at 10am, he was still conscious but in my opinion he was in a dying condition.<sup>56</sup>

The survivors were moved through transit camps in North Africa, and then transported to Italy. Jack scribbled a letter card to his parents, on 9 October 1942, from a transit camp in

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p.49: Correspondence from Red Cross Bureau for Wounded Missing and Prisoners of War to Mrs P.M. Shoveller, 7/10/43.

<sup>4</sup> Doug Frame, ex-66334, correspondence with Katrina Kittel, December 2013. Service File for Jack Shoveller, p.47: Letter from A.B. Towler to Records, 16/1/1944; and p. 50. Letter from Jack Argent to Records, 17/12/1963.

<sup>5</sup> Service File for Jack Shoveller, p.43: Extract from Statement by John Pope, as quoted in letter from Australian Military Liaison Office M.E.F., to Second Echelon L.H.Q. Melbourne, 6/1/1944.

Italy, nearly three months after being taken prisoner. It had to be brief to comply with censorship, but he did his best to reassure those at home:

Dear Mother and Dad,

I am all well and safe, so please do not worry about me. Had a spot of bad luck to get into this but I am not alone for I have several mates with me so all is OK.

Love to all at home, also Amy. Good luck, best wishes, lots of love, Jack.<sup>67</sup>

This brief but welcome message arrived in Sydney late in April 1943. By then, Jack was in the camp at Grupignano. About a year after he had sent that letter card home, his prisoner location was to change again. The mop-up of the camp at Grupignano by German forces in September 1943 following the Italian Armistice was swift. Jack and large numbers of the Australian prisoner cohort were carted away to German captivity. Not only the receipt of letters to his family, but the updated entries on Jack's service file were similarly slow to catch up with his movements. Jack was in German custody before clerical hands updated his file in December 1943 to say 'Now reported POW in Italy'. The service file for Bruce Templeman was also updated with an entry penned in late January 1944, to read 'Died of Wounds whilst POW 28/7/1942'.<sup>7</sup>

On that same day, Jack 'Silver John' Argent, commander of 12<sup>th</sup> Battery, and of the wider 2/3 Anti-Tank Regiment, put pen to paper. Jack Argent was keen to set the record straight regarding the apparent mix-up of two members of his regiment, Sgt Templeman and Gnr Shoveller, at the Ruin Ridge battle. Argent had little doubt that the body lying in Grave H 10 at El Daba cemetery was that of Bruce Templeman:

Templeman's next-of-kin also presume this to be so, although they have not been officially informed of the fact. Several letters have been received from Shoveller since, by his mother and others from his unit.<sup>8</sup>

1944 rolled into 1945. The end of the war was creeping closer, but in early 1945, Jack Shoveller is yet again, unaccounted for. Cipher messages and cables fire back and forth, as the authorities in London and Australia endeavour to verify this new report. The Red Cross Society received word from London on 30 July 1945: 'NX33471 Gunner J.S. Shoveller officially believed deceased. No details known, Army investigating'.<sup>9</sup> The following day, the Australian Red Cross Society acted on behalf of Jack Shoveller's family, to send an inquiry to the Second Echelon. What has happened to Jack? The frustration of Second Echelon personnel is evident in their advice of 21 August 1945 to the Melbourne Red Cross: 'The investigations made through Australian Army staff, London, have so far failed to obtain confirmation of death'.<sup>10</sup>

By this time, correspondence had settled regarding the incorrect reports that Jack died of wounds at Ruin Ridge. A new round of correspondence was to commence. By the third week of August 1945, witness reports had been solicited to check the veracity of the new reports that Jack died as a prisoner of war in Europe. Statements of witnesses were solicited, including Pte Donnington Bruton. A labourer from Swan Hill, Bruton was taken prisoner after being wounded in action at Greece in mid-1941, and he ended up in the same hospital as

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p.76: Letter card sent from Italy by Jack Shoveller, 9/10/1942.

<sup>7</sup> NAA B883, NX58486. Service File for Bruce Templeman.

<sup>8</sup> Service File for Jack Shoveller, p.50.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p.39: Message from Australian Red Cross Bureau Inquiry Service to Second Echelon, 31/7/1945.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p.35: Letter from Second Echelon to Central Red Cross Bureau, Melbourne, 21/8/45.

Jack at Hospital 3B in Graz. They had been in the same camp together for sixteen months, and were both aged 27. Concerned that Jack had not received thorough treatment in the hospital, and that more was afoot, Bruton put forward a statement to the Victorian Echelon and Records on 3 March 1946. He was by this time, back home in Swan Hill.

Gunner Shoveller was admitted to 3B Graz on or about the 10 April 1945. I was a patient there myself and able to identify Shoveller as we had been in a working camp together for 16 months at 182 G.W. Graz.

When Shoveller was admitted to 3B, he was unable to speak. I tried very hard to get him to speak but he appeared to have something wrong with his mouth. The French and German doctors examined him and said he had typhus. Shoveller remained there until 15-4-45, he was then transferred to hospital 4B Graz. The Doctor there removed a signet ring from his throat. However Shoveller was dying then and he did die on 18/4/45. We buried him on the 22/4/45 Graz. I should like to state that Shoveller never received thorough medical treatment at the time.<sup>11</sup>

Bruton added a poignant postscript to his statement: ‘The cause of Gunner Shoveller’s death is unknown’. Another Medical Orderly at Hospital 3B, Pte Joseph O’Halloran, whom Bruton had assisted in the burial of Jack, completed a statutory declaration, ‘conscientiously believing the statements therein to be true in every particular’:

Shoveller, Jack Stephen, was brought in by ambulance at approximately the 22/4/45, in a poor physical condition, suspected of having contracted typhus fever, and suffering from loss of memory. His condition could not be diagnosed. About the 25/4/45, Shoveller was transferred to 4B, where I continued to visit him. His illness remained undiagnosed. Approximately on the 28/4/45, I was told by a British patient that Gnr. Shoveller had died that day.<sup>12</sup>

O’Halloran immediately arranged for burial and provided his identification of the deceased prisoner as Jack Shoveller. Joseph’s recollection of precise dates was a bit hazy, hence the citation of approximate dates within his declaration. When O’Halloran was repatriated via Sydney in August 1945, he was however clear that he needed to make a visit to Sutherland: ‘I had removed the photograph of the deceased from the personal effects prior to the burial and have since handed it to Miss A. Hewes, Auburn Street, Sutherland, whose name and address appeared thereon.’<sup>13</sup> Amy, presumably a friend or girlfriend of Jack, was able to confirm for Joseph that the photograph was of Jack.

Capt Percy Abbott was another who knew Jack Shoveller, and was prepared to provide a testimony. Capt Abbott was also with 12<sup>th</sup> Battery at the Ruin Ridge battle. Although he was not a direct witness to the events surrounding Jack’s death, Abbott relayed details as provided to him by Pte H. Poulter, a medical orderly at 3B Graz:

After the Italian capitulation (he) was moved to Germany to near Silesia where he was in various working *kommandos*. On approx. 24 April 1945, Shoveller arrived at P.O.W. hospital 3B Graz (Surgical), was unable to walk and was in a coma. He was identified at the hospital by Pte Donald (sic) Bruton. Shoveller was treated at 3B by a French medical student who considered the illness to be meningitis. After about 10 days Shoveller was moved to Hospital 4B Graz (Physical) where he was treated by a German doctor. Death occurred on about 8 May. The German doctor is said to have told an English O.R. that death was due to poison. Buried at Pontogame Cemetery, POW Section. Pte Bruton being present. He apparently remained in a coma and felt no pain and was unable to eat or do anything for himself. There was no post-mortem.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p.16: Letter from Donnington Bruton to Victoria Echelon and Records, Melbourne, 3/3/1946.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p.32: Statutory Declaration by Joseph O’Halloran, 20/8/1945.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p.29: Statement from Percy Abbott, undated.

There was further information communicated to Capt Abbott by Poulter. Jack had been living with a German couple, perhaps at a work camp location, but the relevance to Jack's death is not stated. In addition, a brief report by a New Zealand private, E. Manley, said that Jack died about the 17 April 1945 in 4B Graz, but included no extra clue regarding the cause Jack Shoveller's death.<sup>15</sup>

An entry on Jack's Service and Casualty form of March 1946 records the update that Jack was 'Now reported died of disease typhus whilst POW hospital'. The statement by Pte Donnington Bruton is the accepted version of events. A handwritten summation by an assessing officer is scrawled at the bottom of Bruton's statement. It noted that typhus was a prevalent disease of the time. It speculated that the 'ring may have been swallowed during illness and possibly may have been a contributing factor to death. Removal of ring from throat should have caused recovery in the absence of any other complaints'.<sup>16</sup>

An Internal Message of 21 March 1946 summarises that 'after months of search for evidence death, information was received by recovered PW who states that he was with Shoveller when he died', and that 'notification to next-of-kin' was 'that Shoveller died of typhus on 18 April 1945'.<sup>17</sup> This official determination would generate not only a death certificate for Jack Shoveller, but also the dispatch of another letter to the Shoveller household in Sutherland.

Regardless of the various causal factors, contributors and conclusions, Jack was to die only a matter of weeks before his fellow prisoners were released. Had he survived, he would have probably been with them, as they were liberated from German captivity. Donnington Bruton was on his own slow journey home to Australia, via the UK, within weeks of Jack's death. Bruton was only days from Australia when the prisoner that he had assisted in burying was exhumed and relocated by British occupying forces to the Commonwealth War Cemetery at Klagenfurt. Bruton disembarked in Sydney on 29 November 1945.<sup>18</sup> That day would have been Jack Shoveller's 28<sup>th</sup> birthday.

The precise details of dates and events vary across the testimonies that refer to the period leading to the death of Jack. Nevertheless, the general gist is clear. Gnr Jack Shoveller, former brickcarter's assistant from Sutherland Shire, blue-eyed son to Mr and Mrs Thomas Shoveller, friend or lover to Amy, had suffered far more than a spot of bad luck during the four years since he had farewelled them all.

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#### Editor's note

**Details in WW2 Nominal Roll:** Name: SHOVELLER, JACK STEPHEN; Service no: NX33471; DoB: 28 Nov 1917; Place of birth: SUTHERLAND NSW; Date of enlistment: 21 Jun 1940; Date of death: 18 Apr 1945; Rank: GUNNER; Posting on death: 3 ANTI TANK REGIMENT; PoW: YES; Roll of Honour: SUTHERLAND NSW

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p.21: Statement by E.B. Manley, undated.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p.16: Annotation by assessing officer on Donnington Bruton's letter of 3/3/46.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p.10: Internal Message, Second Echelon, 21/3/1946.

<sup>18</sup> NAA B883, VX6842. Service file for Donnington Bruton, p.17.

## VOICES FROM GALLIPOLI AND THE WESTERN FRONT: THE FORGOTTEN 26<sup>TH</sup>

**Joseph Morgan**

Of the 60 infantry battalions of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) that fought during the First World War, most have had their service histories faithfully recorded, usually published at the behest of the various battalion associations. The 26<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion, though, is one of the few that have not. With the passing of the battalion's last surviving veterans, unfortunately it seems that the full story of this unit might never be told.

But the threads of this narrative can be found. To be sure, they are short threads but the story is there for us to find if we want to look. It is in the unit's war diary, the official histories, newspapers, and has even been displayed at the Queensland Museum. The voices of the 26<sup>th</sup> call to us from Gallipoli and the Western Front, growing ever weaker as time passes, but as beneficiaries of their sacrifice we owe it to those that risked, and in many cases, lost all to remember so that history does not forget them. While this article is by no means comprehensive, it is hoped that it might offer a starting point.

### **Formation and training**

At the outbreak of the First World War, the Australian government offered the British the services of an expeditionary force of 20,000 men, organised into one light horse brigade and a four-brigade infantry division.<sup>1</sup> In early 1915, this commitment was increased by a further two infantry brigades – the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> – and then a third: the 7<sup>th</sup>.<sup>2</sup> Together, these three brigades later combined to form the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division.<sup>3</sup> As an 'outer states' battalion, the 26<sup>th</sup>, under the command of Lt Col George Ferguson,<sup>4</sup> was formed from the less-populous states of Queensland and Tasmania, with its first war diary entry being made on 12 April.<sup>5</sup> Concentrating at Enoggera in Brisbane, the battalion was assigned to Col James Burston's 7<sup>th</sup> Brigade, which eventually consisted of the 25<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalions as well as a section from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Signal Company, the 7<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance, a headquarters element and a brigade train based on the 17<sup>th</sup> AASC Company.<sup>6</sup>

Queensland-based recruits, who marched-in first, completed attestation at Victoria Barracks in Brisbane before entraining at Central Station to complete the short journey to Enoggera, where they found the 26<sup>th</sup> camped under canvas in Fraser's Paddock. Rudimentary training followed including weapon handling, shooting, bayonet drills and field defence construction.<sup>7</sup> The Queenslanders were predominately drawn from rural areas,<sup>8</sup> and although the battalion's demographics would have largely conformed to that of the rest of the AIF – its recruits mainly coming from Anglo-Celtic origins, with a sizeable British-born element – there was also a significant number of Russian-born personnel in the battalion.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Grey 2008, p.85

<sup>2</sup> Bean 1941a, p.420

<sup>3</sup> Belham & Denham 2009, p.1

<sup>4</sup> Lieutenant Colonel George Andrew Ferguson, DSO, VD, retrieved 8 November 2013 from [https://www.awm.gov.au/units/people\\_1076320.asp](https://www.awm.gov.au/units/people_1076320.asp)

<sup>5</sup> Belham & Denham 2009, p.1; AWM4, 23/43/1: April – July 1915

<sup>6</sup> Belham & Denham 2009, pp.2-4

<sup>7</sup> Belham & Denham 2009, p.2

<sup>8</sup> Bean 1941b, pp. 602-3

<sup>9</sup> Scanlon, Mike. 'Not all Aussie battlers', *Newcastle Herald*, 29 April 2006, p.12



With an authorised strength of 32 officers and 994 other ranks,<sup>10</sup> the battalion consisted of four rifle companies, designated A to D, and a headquarters company, as the Australians had adopted the British battalion model in early 1915 following the 1<sup>st</sup> Division's arrival in Egypt. As the Queenslanders completed their training the battalion began departing for Egypt. The first element, consisting of 453 personnel from A and B Companies sailed from Pinkenba on the *Ascanius* on 24 May,<sup>11</sup> arriving in Egypt on 30 June.<sup>12</sup> As men began arriving from Tasmania for training, the second element, making up the remainder of the battalion – C and D Companies and headquarters personnel – with 552 officers and men, left on the *Aeneas* on 28 or 29 June 1915. After a brief stopover in Sydney, where they were accommodated at the Agricultural Showgrounds, on 7 July 1915 the battalion re-embarked on the *Aeneas* and put to sea.<sup>13</sup> On sailing, the battalion's war diary records that they were 12 men short, and that they suffered their first loss on active service later that month when Pte John Horsley of C Company died at sea from cerebrospinal meningitis.<sup>14</sup>

### **Egypt and Gallipoli**

The process of embarking for war separately must have galled some members of the 26<sup>th</sup>, not least its commanding officer, and it was not until early August that the battalion concentrated together at Abbassia, near Helipolis, with the rest of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Div, under Maj Gen James Legge.<sup>15</sup> The men were still largely untrained, but in mid-August, the first elements of the division – two battalions from the 5<sup>th</sup> Bde<sup>16</sup> – were sent to Gallipoli where attempts to break the deadly stalemate that had developed since the original landing in April had met with failure earlier in the month. For those units of the division that remained in Egypt, including the 26<sup>th</sup>, a period of training began as they were hurriedly prepared for battle.<sup>17</sup>

The failure of the August Offensive was the harbinger of ultimate failure. By early September, amidst concerns about the effects of the coming winter on weakened troops, the prevailing mood in London shifted towards terminating the campaign. Nevertheless, no concrete steps were taken to end the campaign until mid-November when Lord Kitchener inspected the position, and so the 2<sup>nd</sup> Div, despite having not completed its training or formation, was thrown into the maelstrom of trench warfare on the Gallipoli peninsula in September.<sup>18</sup>

Boarding the transport *Minnewaska* at Alexandria on 4 September,<sup>19</sup> the 26<sup>th</sup> Bn sailed with the rest of the 7<sup>th</sup> Bde, firstly to Lemnos Island. From there, on the evening of 11/12 September, they transferred to the *Abbassieh* for the final journey to the peninsula. The Allied troops at Gallipoli were tired and in a poor state of health, and almost immediately the 2<sup>nd</sup> Div took over positions to the north of Anzac Cove so that other units could be rested. For

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<sup>10</sup> Kuring 2004, p.47 provides the number of 1,023 men all ranks as the authorised strength of an Australian infantry battalion during the First World War, but the unit war diary entries for August-September provide a total of 32 officers and 994 other ranks as required for a full-strength parade state.

<sup>11</sup> AWM4, 23/43/1: April-July 1915

<sup>12</sup> Bean 1941a, p.806

<sup>13</sup> Belham & Denham 2009, p.3

<sup>14</sup> AWM4, 23/43/1: April-July 1915; Item barcode 5821801, B2455 (service record) Horsley J.T 825, National Archives of Australia

<sup>15</sup> Belham & Denham 2009, p.4; Bean 1941a, pp.422 & 806

<sup>16</sup> Cameron 2011, p.17

<sup>17</sup> Belham & Denham 2009, p.4

<sup>18</sup> Bean 1941a, p.803; Belham & Denham 2009, pp.4-5; Broadbent 2005, pp.242-45 & 253; Cameron 2005, p.133; Grey 2008, p.98

<sup>19</sup> AWM4, 23/43/2: August-September 1915

the remainder of the campaign, which would last another three months, there would be no further Allied offensives, and the 26<sup>th</sup> Bn's involvement would be defensive in nature.<sup>20</sup>

Upon arrival, the 26<sup>th</sup> was initially placed in reserve, headquartered at 'Taylor's Hollow', and undertook various support duties including providing work parties for unloading stores at the beach, and mounting fatigues under engineer officers. The work was not glamorous, but it was dangerous and almost immediately they suffered casualties from sniping and shelling, with the battalion's war diary recording the first casualty on 14 September.<sup>21</sup> In October, a small detachment was sent back to Imbros to serve as a guard force, and at the end of the month, following the arrival of two drafts of reinforcements – the second and third since formation – A Coy was detached to relieve the New Zealanders, occupying a position at the front around 'Cheshire Ridge'.<sup>22</sup>

In the months that followed, the battalion detached other companies to relieve forces holding positions at 'Courtney's Post', 'Steele's Post' and 'Russell's Top'.<sup>23</sup> The stalemate continued, although it was briefly punctuated by small-scale localised fighting, which continued until the end of the campaign. Indeed, in mid-November, a detachment from the 26<sup>th</sup> fought a sharp skirmish with Ottoman troops around Russell's Top as part of a series of mining and counter-mining operations.<sup>24</sup> The battalion was withdrawn from the peninsula on 12 December as part of the gradual Allied evacuation; on departure, the battalion's strength was 24 officers and 654 men.<sup>25</sup> The battalion war diary for December 1915 records 26 killed and 96 wounded throughout the campaign; sickness took an even greater toll, resulting in 552 officers and men being evacuated. Of these, 233 returned to the battalion before it was withdrawn, as did five of the wounded.<sup>26</sup>

Following their evacuation, the 26<sup>th</sup> was withdrawn to Lemnos. They remained on the island until early January 1916, before sailing to Egypt on the *Horarata*.<sup>27</sup> After concentrating at Tel-el-Kebir,<sup>28</sup> the battalion received reinforcements and began a period of training before being committed to the defence of the Suez Canal in February and March, following an enemy raid. Crossing the canal near Ismailia, the 26<sup>th</sup> established itself at a staging camp on the eastern side of the canal, but by the time they arrived the fighting was over and the 26<sup>th</sup>'s involvement was limited to constructing defences and manning positions.<sup>29</sup> Meanwhile, preparations were made to redeploy the Australian infantry divisions to Europe to join the fighting along the Western Front, and the AIF was rapidly expanded and reorganised. The experienced troops of the 1<sup>st</sup> Div were broken up and utilised to raise the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Divs, while another division – the 3<sup>rd</sup> – was raised in Australia. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Div escaped being broken up, and it was able to concentrate on finalising its formation and training, which had been interrupted by its deployment to Gallipoli.<sup>30</sup> Thus, in early March, the 26<sup>th</sup> moved to Moascar where, along with the rest of the 7<sup>th</sup> Bde, they began preparations to move to France. A short

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<sup>20</sup> '26th Battalion', Australian War Memorial, retrieved 8 November 2013 from [https://www.awm.gov.au/units/unit\\_11213.asp](https://www.awm.gov.au/units/unit_11213.asp)

<sup>21</sup> AWM4, 23/43/2: August – September 1915

<sup>22</sup> AWM4, 23/43/3: October 1915; Belham & Denham 2009, p. 5; Cameron 2005, p. 133; Bean 1941a, p. 809

<sup>23</sup> AWM4, 23/43/4: November 1915; AWM4 23/43/5: December 1915

<sup>24</sup> Cameron 2011, p. 182

<sup>25</sup> Belham & Denham 2009, p. 8

<sup>26</sup> AWM4, 23/43/5: December 1915

<sup>27</sup> AWM4, 23/43/5: December 1915

<sup>28</sup> AWM4, 23/43/6: January 1916

<sup>29</sup> Belham & Denham 2009, pp. 9–10; AWM4, 23/43/7: February 1916

<sup>30</sup> Grey 2008, pp. 99–100; Bean 1941b, pp. 36–42

time later they embarked on the *Northland* at Alexandria and crossed the Mediterranean, landing in Marseilles on 21 March 1916.<sup>31</sup>

### Western Front

Among the first Australian troops to arrive in France, the 26<sup>th</sup> was transported by rail north to Flanders.<sup>32</sup> Awestruck by the heavy snow of their first European winter, the troops were initially billeted with French families at Morbecque, near Hazebrouck.<sup>33</sup> They remained there until early April, when the 7<sup>th</sup> Bde moved towards the front around Armentieres. Marching with full equipment along hard cobbled roads, the move through Oultersteene and Steenwerck proved a painful experience for troops with soft feet. Arriving at Rue Marle on 9 April,<sup>34</sup> the battalion was billeted there until they entered the trenches for the first time on the evening of 12/13 April 1916.<sup>35</sup> Although the sector was a nursery for inexperienced units,<sup>36</sup> and no offensive actions were undertaken initially, the experience was not without danger. The trenches in the sector were very close together, and the battalion suffered casualties soon after entering the line, mainly from shelling.<sup>37</sup>

Throughout May the battalion rotated between the trenches and billets, and by the start of June it was positioned around Bois Grenier.<sup>38</sup> Their first offensive action came on 6 June, when a detachment of two officers and 25 other ranks took part in the first trench raid conducted by the AIF on the Western Front, attacking with a similar detachment from the 28<sup>th</sup> Bn.<sup>39</sup> It was a small-scale affair, resulting in three Germans being captured and a small number killed,<sup>40</sup> but for the 26<sup>th</sup> it proved significant, as they became the first Australian unit to take a German prisoner.<sup>41</sup>

For the next two and a half years, the battalion would continue to rotate through the trenches of the Western Front, taking part in many of the major battles fought by the Australians during this time. The first of these came in July 1916, around Pozieres, during the wider Somme offensive. After a brief period billeted around Fort Rompu, a further tour of the trenches had been undertaken around 'Red Lodge', before the battalion moved to Belgium, occupying trenches around Kortepyp and then Messines and Wytshaete in early July, where training was undertaken to prepare for the attack on Pozieres.<sup>42</sup> The 1<sup>st</sup> Div had been committed to capturing Pozieres earlier in the month, but had become bogged down, so the 2<sup>nd</sup> Div was thrown in to take the heights.<sup>43</sup> The 7<sup>th</sup> Bde was initially kept back in reserve around 'Tara Hill' when the division entered the line, but it was committed to the fighting on the night of 28/29 July, launching an attack on the 'O.G. Line'. Concentrating on the tramway, the 26<sup>th</sup> Bn formed the left of the brigade attack with each of its four companies constituting a wave. Coming up against uncut wire and advanced German posts which engaged with heavy machine-gun fire, the attack became confused and ultimately failed, with

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<sup>31</sup> Belham & Denham 2009, p.10; AWM4, 23/43/8: March 1916

<sup>32</sup> Belham & Denham 2009, p.10

<sup>33</sup> Bean 1941b, pp.77-78

<sup>34</sup> Bean 1941b, pp.111-112

<sup>35</sup> AWM4, 23/43/9: April 1916

<sup>36</sup> Bean 1941b, pp.93-94

<sup>37</sup> AWM4, 23/43/9: April 1916; Belham & Denham 2009, p.11

<sup>38</sup> AWM4, 23/43/10: May 1916; AWM4, 23/43/11: June 1916

<sup>39</sup> Bean 1941b, pp.243-252

<sup>40</sup> AWM4, 23/43/11: June 1916

<sup>41</sup> '26<sup>th</sup> Battalion', *The Brisbane Courier*, 15 August 1929, p.27

<sup>42</sup> AWM4, 23/43/11: June 1916; AWM4, 23/43/12: July 1916

<sup>43</sup> Coulthard-Clark 1998, pp.117-118

the 26<sup>th</sup> Bn suffering 297 casualties.<sup>44</sup>

It was a harsh introduction to fighting on the Western Front. After the attack, the battalion was withdrawn back to Tara Hill where they conducted fatigue parties for a short period, before being committed to a second attack on the heights on 4 August.<sup>45</sup> Although difficulties were experienced at the start with overcrowding in the jumping off trench, this attack proved more successful and the battalion remained in the line, enduring a heavy German bombardment, to hold the eventual German counterattacks that began the following morning, until 7 August when the 2<sup>nd</sup> Div's infantry was withdrawn from the line. During the period it was committed to the fighting around Pozieres, the battalion had suffered heavy casualties: 21 officers and 632 other ranks killed or wounded.<sup>46</sup>

A period of relative quiet followed and the battalion returned to the Ypres salient in Belgium for a rest.<sup>47</sup> In November 1916, after the 2<sup>nd</sup> Div had moved south to the Somme again, the battalion was committed to two attacks around Flers, against a salient known as 'The Maze', near Guedecourt. Put in across a battlefield that was heavy with mud, both attacks failed. The first attack on 5 November was defeated soundly and resulted in 29 killed and 108 wounded, while a second attack – which briefly secured the position – went in on 14/15 November, with the gains being held against counterattacks until 16 November, and resulted in a further 178 casualties.<sup>48</sup> During late 1916, command of the battalion changed a couple of times. Maj (later Lt Col) Francis O'Donnell had temporarily assumed command from Ferguson in August, remaining in charge until handing over to Reginald (John) Travers in late November. Early the following month, Travers was temporarily seconded to the divisional school, leaving Maj James Robinson in temporary command until early February 1917.<sup>49</sup>

The harsh winter months of late 1916 and early 1917 – anecdotally described as the worst Europe had seen in 40 years<sup>50</sup> – saw the battalion man the front on rotation in a defensive posture, punctuated by brief periods in billets, training and undertaking work parties. Although no major attacks were mounted, the troops experienced considerable hardship from the conditions. Sickness was high – 86 members were hospitalised in December, 123 in January and 120 in February – but reinforcements also arrived and the battalion was slowly brought back up to about two-thirds strength by February 1917.<sup>51</sup> Casualties still occurred, albeit in relatively small numbers, mainly from artillery, but also from occasional skirmishes when work parties got lost and stumbled into the German forward areas.<sup>52</sup>

While the last half of 1916 had been characterised by failures as the tactics and techniques of the Allied armies had been found inadequate, the start of 1917 brought several improvements, specifically in staff work, and the development of new weapons systems, as the Allies sought a decision on the Western Front.<sup>53</sup> But in late February 1917, before the Allies could seize the initiative, the Germans withdrew to prepared positions along the heavily fortified

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<sup>44</sup> Bean 1941b, pp.600-2; 623-643; AWM4, 23/43/12: July 1916

<sup>45</sup> AWM4, 23/43/13: August 1916

<sup>46</sup> Bean 1941b, pp.678-80; 695, 717, 724; Bean; AWM4, 23/43/13: August 1916

<sup>47</sup> AWM4, 23/43/14: September 1916; AWM4, 23/43/15: October 1916; Bean 1941b, p.877

<sup>48</sup> Bean 1941b, pp.911-12, 928-29 and 937; AWM4, 23/43/16: November 1916

<sup>49</sup> AWM4, 23/43/13: August 1916; AWM4, 23/43/16: November 1916; AWM4, 23/43/19: February 1917

<sup>50</sup> Stevenson 2007, p.191

<sup>51</sup> AWM4, 23/43/17: December 1916; AWM4, 23/43/18: January 1917; AWM4, 23/43/19: February 1917; Coulthard-Clark 1998, pp.120-22

<sup>52</sup> Bean 1941b, pp.950-51

<sup>53</sup> Grey 2008, pp.102-4; Stevenson 2007, p.191; Baldwin 1962, pp.98-99

‘Hindenburg Line’, shortening their lines and freeing up large numbers of reserves. The Allies cautiously advanced in pursuit, coming up against strong German outposts and rearguard forces.<sup>54</sup> By this time, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Div was holding the Le Sars sector of the line, and the 7<sup>th</sup> Bde, which had initially been on the left around Mametz in January, relieved the 6<sup>th</sup> Bde around Warlencourt opposite the ‘R.I. Line’.<sup>55</sup> Early on 2 March, the 26<sup>th</sup> Bn undertook its first attack of 1917, committing three companies when the brigade attacked and captured the ‘Malt Trench’ north of Warlencourt.<sup>56</sup> Later, on 26 March, the battalion spearheaded the attack on Lagnicourt, which was eventually taken and held against two German counterattacks. For his actions, C Coy commander, Capt Percy Cherry, who had received a Military Cross for his actions in the earlier attack on the Malt Trench, was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross, having been instrumental in securing the objective before being killed by a German shell. The two attacks proved costly, with the 26<sup>th</sup> losing 40 killed and 180 wounded.<sup>57</sup>

In April, attacks against the Hindenburg Line began in earnest and the Australians were assigned the task of capturing Bullecourt. Initially, the responsibility fell on the 4<sup>th</sup> Div, but after their attack failed, in early May the 2<sup>nd</sup> Div, which had been withdrawn for rest after Lagnicourt, put in a follow-up attempt that ultimately proved to be a remarkable, but costly victory.<sup>58</sup> The 26<sup>th</sup> Bn played a supporting role, forming part of the divisional reserve and when the attack came on 3 May, it was initially responsible for securing the line-of-departure. After the 5<sup>th</sup> Bde’s attack faltered, the 26<sup>th</sup> sent a company to assist, while others were employed to carry stores or conduct grenade attacks.<sup>59</sup> Later, after the objective was taken, they were employed to protect the 6<sup>th</sup> Bde’s left flank during the counterattack that followed. Throughout the night the battalion constructed defences before handing over to the 12<sup>th</sup> Bn and being withdrawn for a few days. They returned to the line on the night of 7/8 May, relieving part of the 25<sup>th</sup> Bn and holding a sunken road north-east of Noreuil until the following day when the 7<sup>th</sup> Bde was relieved by the 14<sup>th</sup>. Withdrawn for rest, the battalion eventually moved back to the Senlis area where they spent the remainder of the month undertaking training and conducting sporting events.<sup>60</sup>

In the later part of 1917, after a series of rotations through the line, the Australians were moved to the Ypres salient to support a British offensive – the Third Battle of Ypres<sup>61</sup> – that had begun in June and eventually extended to November. Throughout this time, the 26<sup>th</sup> Bn took part in a series of battles, firstly around Menin Road in September and then Broodseinde Ridge in October as the front line was advanced towards Passchendaele.<sup>62</sup> Casualties during the fighting around Ypres drained the battalion heavily. Seven officers and 127 other ranks were killed or wounded during the Menin Road fighting, where the battalion was assigned a support role, backing up the 28<sup>th</sup> Bn.<sup>63</sup> A further nine officers and 311 other ranks were killed or wounded around Broodseinde, where the battalion spearheaded the follow-up effort on the

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<sup>54</sup> Bean 1941c, pp.60, 68-69; Baldwin 1962, p.99

<sup>55</sup> Belham & Denham 2009, p.20; Bean 1941c, p.96

<sup>56</sup> Bean 1941c, pp.97-105; Belham & Denham 2009, pp.20-21

<sup>57</sup> AWM4, 23/43/20: March 1917; Hamilton, John. ‘Percy Cherry: The Bravest of Them All’, *Herald Sun*, 1 July 2006, p 30

<sup>58</sup> Coulthard-Clark 1998, pp.125-28

<sup>59</sup> Bean 1941c, pp.447 & 455

<sup>60</sup> AWM4, 23/43/22: May 1917; Belham & Denham 2009, p.27

<sup>61</sup> Hanson 1962, p.103

<sup>62</sup> AWM4, 23/43/26: September 1917; AWM4, 23/43/27: October 1917; Grey 2008, Map p.106;

<sup>63</sup> Bean 1941c, p.789; Belham & Denham 2009, pp.28-29

second line of German trenches, after the 25<sup>th</sup> Bn had captured the first line.<sup>64</sup>

As winter came, in November the 2<sup>nd</sup> Div moved to Flanders, taking over the quieter Messines sector, where they joined the other four Australian divisions and were grouped together as part of the Australian Corps under Birdwood and then later Monash.<sup>65</sup> After this, the battalion rotated through the line and the rear areas around Ploegsteert several times throughout November and December, continuing to man the line into the New Year,<sup>66</sup> by which time they were located in the Romarin area along with the rest of the 7<sup>th</sup> Bde.<sup>67</sup> Throughout 1917, command of the battalion had remained with Travers, although he was briefly seconded to divisional headquarters in September and October, during which Robinson took over again. Travers returned in November and subsequently commanded the battalion throughout the first half of 1918, except for a brief period in January, when he took leave in England.<sup>68</sup>

1918 finally brought victory for the Allies, bolstered by the newly arrived American Expeditionary Force. Nevertheless, the year did not begin auspiciously: the conclusion of fighting on the Eastern Front in late 1917 allowed the Germans to move large amounts of artillery and manpower to the west, enabling them to subsequently launch a major offensive in March 1918.<sup>69</sup> Although the Allies had predicted German intentions, they underestimated the size of the offensive and by early April, the British Fifth Army had been pushed back towards the vital rail head at Amiens. At this point, the Australian divisions, having missed the start of the offensive, were transferred south to the Somme valley and thrown into the line to help halt the German advance.<sup>70</sup>

Over the winter period, the 26<sup>th</sup> Bn had been brought back up to strength, reaching a parade state of 46 officers and 1,068 other ranks by the end of February 1918. The previous month, they had moved back from the front into new positions around Henneveux for training, before moving to Steenwerck in early March, remaining there until the start of the German Spring Offensive.<sup>71</sup> Through the initial part of the offensive, the battalion was not directly engaged, although they occupied a position directly opposite the River Lys, from where they maintained strong fighting patrols. Casualties remained light, with only two killed and seven wounded for the month, the majority coming from artillery or harassing fire from German machine-guns.<sup>72</sup> In April, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Div was replaced around Messines by two British divisions – the 19<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> – which had suffered heavily earlier during the offensive, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> relieved the Australian 4<sup>th</sup> Div around Dernancourt. By that time there was a lull in that sector as the focus of the German offensive shifted north,<sup>73</sup> but the 26<sup>th</sup> Bn moved into the front line in the Baizieux area on the evening of 7/8 April, initially relieving the 47<sup>th</sup> Bn in the reserve position and then the 51<sup>st</sup> Bn in the support position. For the remainder of the month, the battalion rotated with other 7<sup>th</sup> Bde units holding a two-company front and resting around the St Lawrence Farm area when not manning the line. They maintained a defensive posture, but casualties were greater than the month before, with 16 killed and 42 wounded, as

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<sup>64</sup> Bean 1941c, p.876; Belham & Denham 2009, pp.29-30

<sup>65</sup> Coulthard-Clark 1998, p.138; Grey 2008, p.107

<sup>66</sup> Bean 1941d, p.34

<sup>67</sup> Belham & Denham 2009, pp.28-33; AWM4, 23/43/30: January 1918

<sup>68</sup> AWM4, 23/43/26: September 1917 through to AWM4, 23/43/35: June 1918

<sup>69</sup> Hanson 1962, pp.126, 140 & 146; Neillands 2004, pp.441-47

<sup>70</sup> Hanson 1962, pp.140-41; Grey 2008, p.108

<sup>71</sup> Belham & Denham 2009, p.34; AWM4, 23/43/30: January 1918; AWM4, 23/43/32: March 1918

<sup>72</sup> AWM4, 23/43/32: March 1918

<sup>73</sup> Coulthard-Clark 1998, p.142; Bean 1941d, p.419

the battalion was attacked by enemy aircraft, artillery and machine-guns on several occasions.<sup>74</sup>

As Amiens came under bombardment from long-range German artillery, and the 7<sup>th</sup> Bde was moved to the Camon–Rivery area at the end of April.<sup>75</sup> The 26<sup>th</sup> Bn, with a parade state of 26 officers and 684 other ranks – 237 personnel having been detached on other duties – marched to Behencourt through the night, arriving before dawn on 1 May and then continuing on to Camon, where they were placed into billets the following day.<sup>76</sup> While there, the battalion established defences and awaited further orders as the situation clarified itself, before moving to Franvillers on 10 May, where further construction work and defensive duties were undertaken. They remained there until mid-May, when the 7<sup>th</sup> Bde relieved the 6<sup>th</sup> Bde, which had conducted an attack on Ville-sur-Ancre;<sup>77</sup> the 26<sup>th</sup> Bn moved to new positions around Ribemont, once again constructing defences before moving back Franvillers in reserve late in the month. Casualties for the month amounted to eight killed and 45 wounded, the majority of which were suffered when the battalion's position on the Ancre was heavily shelled with gas.<sup>78</sup>

By the end of April, the German offensive had largely run out of steam and although a final convulsive effort was made against the French on the Marne in July, the Allies began preparations to launch a counter-offensive that would ultimately break the stalemate, turning the tide in their favour, and for the first time since 1914, see manoeuvre return to the battlefield.<sup>79</sup> The final offensive did not start until August, but before then, as the Allies sought to regain the initiative, between May and July, the Australians undertook a series of small-scale attacks and minor offensive operations, dubbed 'peaceful penetrations'.<sup>80</sup> On 10 June, the 7<sup>th</sup> Bde successfully attacked the southern part of the Morlancourt spur, during which the 26<sup>th</sup> Bn played a supporting role, with two platoons acting as carrying parties; later in the month they moved to a new position on the left of the French near Villers-Bretonneux; casualties for the month totalled seven killed and 53 wounded.<sup>81</sup>

In early July, command of the battalion transferred to Robinson, who was promoted to lieutenant colonel. On 14 July, the battalion undertook a penetration around Monument Wood that gained 250–500 yards of ground across a 1,200-yard front, capturing two Germans and killing five others for the loss of two 26<sup>th</sup> Bn men wounded. They also captured a derelict German A7V tank – the first German tank taken by the Allies during the war – which had been abandoned on the battlefield after being knocked out in earlier fighting;<sup>82</sup> under the cover of artillery and low-flying aircraft, the battalion later dragged the tank back to Allied lines.<sup>83</sup> The 7<sup>th</sup> Bde was rotated out of the line on 19/20 July, but before this the 26<sup>th</sup> Bn launched another attack on the night of 17/18 July, in concert with the 25<sup>th</sup> Bn, capturing 150 prisoners and a portion of the German line, which was subsequently held against determined German counterattacks. During the action, Lt Albert Borella led one of the assaulting platoons in the first wave, and for his actions in attacking a German machine-gun position

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<sup>74</sup> AWM4, 23/43/33: April 1918

<sup>75</sup> Belham & Denham 2009, p.36; Bomford 2012, pp.1-2

<sup>76</sup> AWM4, 23/43/33: April 1918; AWM4, 23/43/34: May 1918

<sup>77</sup> Belham & Denham 2009, p.37

<sup>78</sup> AWM4, 23/43/34: May 1918

<sup>79</sup> Bomford 2012, pp.vi & 1-2

<sup>80</sup> Grey 2008, p.108

<sup>81</sup> Belham & Denham 2009, pp.37-39; Bean 1942, pp.226, 235 & 240; Coulthard-Clark 1998, p.148;

<sup>82</sup> AWM4, 23/43/36: July 1918

<sup>83</sup> Connolly, Steve. 'The Great Tank Robbery', *The Sunday Mail*, 7 November 2004, p.60

and trench, he was later awarded the battalion's second Victoria Cross.<sup>84</sup>

The final offensive of the war – the Allied Hundred Days – was launched around Amiens on 8 August 1918. A series of advances followed that ultimately brought about an end to the war. But success came at a heavy cost for the 26<sup>th</sup> Bn, as it did for many other Australian units: at the end of July the battalion's strength was 47 officers and 860 other ranks,<sup>85</sup> but by the end of September, after the battalion's involvement in the fighting around Mont St Quentin, its strength was just 34 officers and 562 other ranks.<sup>86</sup> During the early stages of the offensive, the 26<sup>th</sup> formed part of the 7<sup>th</sup> Bde's spearhead attacking west of Villers-Bretonneux in concert with British tanks, and then, after the initial success was exploited by other units, three days later they put in a further attack before the 7<sup>th</sup> Bde was moved back into reserve.<sup>87</sup> In late August, the 26<sup>th</sup> formed the brigade's left flank around Biaches as it joined the advance to the Somme River.<sup>88</sup> In early September, the 7<sup>th</sup> Bde consolidated the initial gains made by the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Bdes around Mont St Quentin and Feuillaucourt, during which the 26<sup>th</sup>, with an assault force of just 300 men and positioned on the brigade's right, worked to provide flank protection for the 14<sup>th</sup> Bde. Coming up against heavy machine-gun fire – the worst they had experienced since Pozieres – the battalion suffered heavily, but eventually managed to advance 1,500 yards, establishing their headquarters around the Koros Alley on 3 September.<sup>89</sup>

In the days that followed, the Somme was crossed and Peronne taken by neighbouring units. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Div was then withdrawn and rested around Cappy.<sup>90</sup> Having lost 21 killed and 99 wounded during September,<sup>91</sup> the depleted battalion was committed to an attack against the 'Beaurevoir Line' – the Hindenburg's third line of defence – around Grandcourt on 2/3 October.<sup>92</sup> Unbeknown to the men of the 26<sup>th</sup> at the time, it would be their final attack. During the last half of September, Maj Hubert Ford had commanded the battalion while Robinson was on leave, but Robinson returned just prior to the battle and resumed command; he was wounded before the attack began, after which Capt Vivian Cooper temporarily took command.<sup>93</sup> A two Bde attack, the 26<sup>th</sup> Bn had a follow-up role within the 7<sup>th</sup> Bde's sector, passing through the 25<sup>th</sup> Bn after the initial assault, and continuing the attack to the secondary line.<sup>94</sup>

After the battalion was withdrawn on the night of 3/4 October, command of the battalion passed to Ford.<sup>95</sup> A couple of days later, the entire Australian Corps was withdrawn from the line on Prime Minister Billy Hughes' request, to reorganise ahead of future planned operations. The fighting throughout 1918 had taken a heavy toll, and the dwindling flow of reinforcements from Australia had not made good all losses.<sup>96</sup> Beginning in May, a number of battalions were disbanded or amalgamated with others to bring depleted units up to

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<sup>84</sup> Belham & Deham 2009, pp.41-43

<sup>85</sup> AWM4, 23/43/36: July 1918

<sup>86</sup> Belham & Denham 2009, p.62

<sup>87</sup> Belham & Denham 2009, pp.46-52

<sup>88</sup> Belham & Denham 2009, pp.53-54

<sup>89</sup> Bomford 2012, pp.137-39; Belham & Denham 2009, pp.56-59

<sup>90</sup> Belham & Denham 2009, p.59

<sup>91</sup> AWM4, 23/43/38: September 1918

<sup>92</sup> Bean 1968, p.493; Belham & Denham 2009, pp.62-64; Coulthard-Clark 1998, pp.164-65

<sup>93</sup> AWM4, 23/43/38: September 1918; AWM4, 23/43/39: October 1918

<sup>94</sup> Belham & Denham 2009, p.63

<sup>95</sup> AWM4, 23/43/39: October 1918

<sup>96</sup> Grey 2008, pp.109-12



strength.<sup>97</sup> On 12 October, the 26<sup>th</sup> Bn, which had lost a further 21 killed and 102 wounded earlier in the month, was reconstituted with over 500 men from the 25<sup>th</sup> Bn.<sup>98</sup> After this, Lt Col William Davis assumed command, remaining in the position until April 1919, after which the battalion had several temporary commanders until it was disbanded.<sup>99</sup> After being withdrawn from the line in October, the battalion conducted training around Berteaucourt throughout October and into early November. They were preparing to return to the line when the armistice was signed on 11 November.<sup>100</sup>

### Disbandment and legacy

Following the conclusion of hostilities, the battalion's personnel were slowly repatriated to Australia for demobilisation. The process was slow, and while the men waited, many took leave in the United Kingdom or undertook education or training courses to prepare them for transition back to civilian life.<sup>101</sup> As its strength fell, the 26<sup>th</sup> was eventually amalgamated with other 7<sup>th</sup> Bde battalions to form a composite Brigade battalion, before finally being disbanded in Belgium. Its final war diary entry was made in May 1919.<sup>102</sup>

The Australian War Memorial records that over the course of the war, the 26<sup>th</sup> Bn lost 840 men killed and 2,052 wounded.<sup>103</sup> For its service, the battalion received a total of 17 battle honours.<sup>104</sup> Two members – Cherry and Borella – received the Victoria Cross, while numerous other decorations were bestowed upon battalion members: three Distinguished Service Orders and one bar, 25 Distinguished Conduct Medals, 23 Military Crosses and three bars, and 92 Military Medals and four bars.<sup>105</sup>

In the inter-war years, the 26<sup>th</sup> Bn was re-formed in Queensland as part of the Militia, later fighting against the Japanese on Bougainville during the Second World War. At one point during the war, it had the distinction of having two VC recipients posted to it: Harry Murray as its commander, and Edgar Towner as his second-in-command.<sup>106</sup> This part of its history is well documented in Norman Turrell's book *Never Unprepared*. The battalion's story ended, though, upon its disbandment in September 1946. After that, its narrative has slowly slipped into the recesses of Australia's collective memory. Small reminders exist. In Brisbane's Anzac Square, a memorial to the 26<sup>th</sup> was unveiled during the inter-war years and remains to this day;<sup>107</sup> and at Gallipoli Barracks, in Brisbane, there is a street named after Percy Cherry, as there is for Borella in both Canberra and Albury. The tank that the battalion captured, *Mephisto*, was taken to Australia as a war souvenir and for many years placed on display

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<sup>97</sup> Bean 1968, p.435

<sup>98</sup> AWM4, 23/43/39: October 1918

<sup>99</sup> AWM4, 23/43/35: June 1918 through to AWM4, 23/43/46: May 1919

<sup>100</sup> AWM4, 23/43/39: October 1918; AWM4, 23/43/40: November 1918; Bean 1968, p.514

<sup>101</sup> AWM4, 23/43/40: November 1918

<sup>102</sup> AWM4, 23/43/46: May 1919

<sup>103</sup> '26th Battalion', Australian War Memorial, retrieved 8 November 2013 from

[https://www.awm.gov.au/units/unit\\_11213.asp](https://www.awm.gov.au/units/unit_11213.asp)

<sup>104</sup> Festberg 1972, p. 86 provides: Somme 1916–18, Pozieres, Bullecourt, Ypres 1917, Menin Road, Polygon Wood, Broodseinde, Poelcappelle, Passchendaele, Amiens, Albert 1918, Mont St. Quentin, Hindenburg Line, Bearevior, France and Flanders 1916–18, Gallipoli 1915 and Egypt, 1915-16.

<sup>105</sup> '26th Battalion', Australian War Memorial, retrieved 8 November 2013 from

[https://www.awm.gov.au/units/unit\\_11213.asp](https://www.awm.gov.au/units/unit_11213.asp)

<sup>106</sup> Turrell 1992, p.119

<sup>107</sup> '26<sup>th</sup> Battalion', *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, 29 August 1939, p.7; '26th and 2/26th Australian Infantry Battalion Memorial', Queensland War Memorial Register, retrieved 5 December 2013 from

<http://www.qldwarmemorials.com.au>

outside the Queensland Museum,<sup>108</sup> before moving to the Queensland Railway Museum.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Connolly, Steve. ‘The Great Tank Robbery’, *The Sunday Mail*, 7 November 2004, p.60

<sup>109</sup> Ten Dolle, Kiri. ‘Police Unlock Secrets of German Battle Tank: World’s Only Surviving First World War German Tank on Display at Rail Museum’, *The Queensland Times*, 16 March 2013, p.8

## HMAS *GRANTALA* – AUSTRALIA’S FIRST HOSPITAL SHIP

**Rohan Goyne**

This is the centenary year of the commissioning of HMAS *Grantala* as the Royal Australian Navy’s (RAN) first hospital ship, commissioned into the fledgling RAN on 7 August 1914. The ship’s conversion and service during the early months of World War One is another example of the ad-hoc demands generated during active operations to which the Australian industrial establishment responded very effectively.

HMAS *Grantala* was requisitioned by the RAN to fulfil the requirement for a hospital ship to accompany the Australian squadron to seize the German Pacific colonies in New Guinea and Nauru. Prior to her naval service, *Grantala* was built by Armstrong Whitworth Company at Newcastle in Britain for the Adelaide Steamship Company. She was launched in 1903 and was used by the company as a passenger ship along the Australian coastal routes. She was hired from the company for £1,450 per month exclusive of wages for her crew and stores.<sup>1</sup>

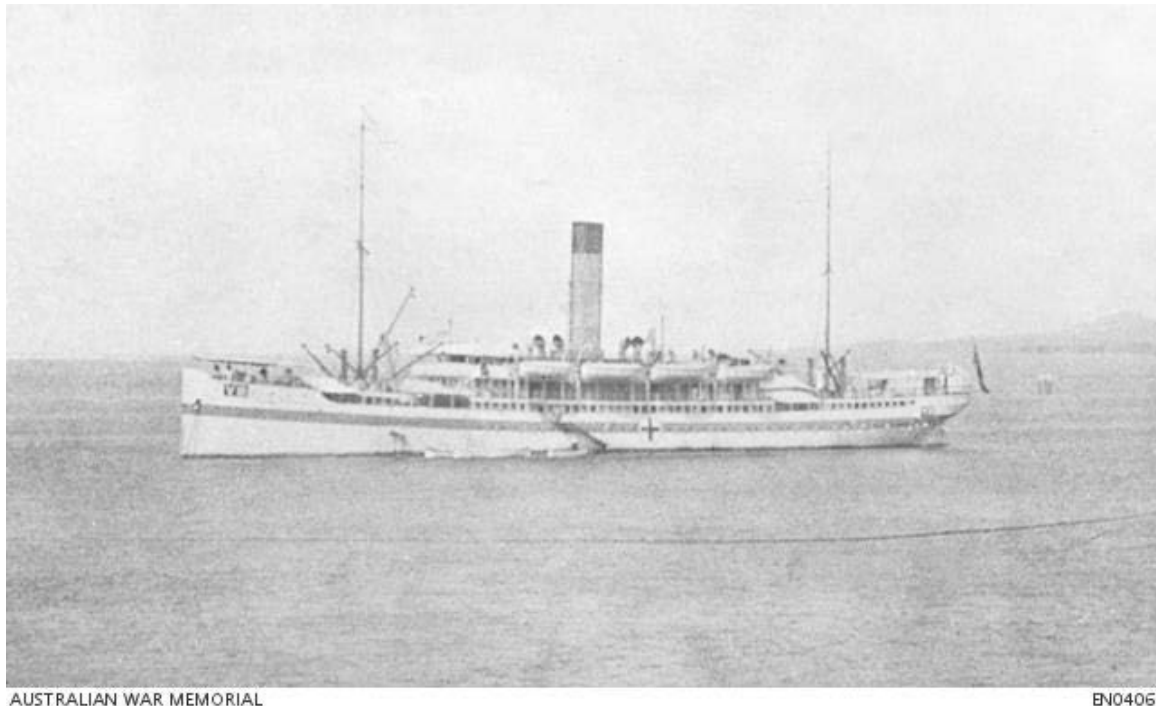
The story of HMAS *Grantala* was omitted from Peter Plowman’s recent book, *Gallipoli Voyage*’ which also covered the fleet in the capture of the German colonies in 1914. This work makes reference to the fleet stores ship and collier, thus the omission of HMAS *Grantala* is puzzling. The service of nurses on HMAS *Grantala* is also omitted from the National Nurses Memorial on Anzac Parade, hence the reason for this article.



*Fig.1: The Australian squadron (including HMAS Grantala) in Suva Harbour, Fiji after the capture of the German colony at Rabaul (Australian War Memorial photo J03240A)*

<sup>1</sup> Letter from the Naval Secretary to the then Minister for the Navy, August 1914, supplied by the Navy Sea Power Centre, Department of Defence, April 2013.

As stated by Michael Dowsett in an article in 2007: ‘The Australian Service Nurses National Memorial was dedicated in Canberra 1999. On its walls are recorded all the places around the world where Australian Service nurses served in over a century. German New Guinea in 1914 is not one of them’.<sup>2</sup> At the time of writing (January 2014) this oversight has still not been rectified, but should be corrected during the current centenary of the Great War as a priority in 2014. In contrast, HMAS *Grantala* was awarded a battle honour ‘Rabaul 1914’ by the RAN for service in German New Guinea.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

ENO406

Fig.2: HMAS *Grantala* off Suva in Fiji 1914 (Australian War Memorial photo ENO406)

As shown in the black and white photograph above, HMAS *Grantala* was painted in the livery of a hospital ship to comply with the Hague Convention of 1907. She was painted white with a green horizontal line on her hull with distinct large red crosses prominent on her sides.

She was converted from a passenger vessel to a hospital ship at Garden Island naval base in around 17 days. Dr L. Doyle, who served on the ship, described the conversion thus:

In place of the dining and music saloons there were wards, and in place of the spacious promenade decks there were more wards, open air ones ... When finished the ‘Grantala’ was a hospital in every sense of the word. She had medical, observation, and infectious wards ... She could without overcrowding, carry from 250 to 300 patients ... The only startling thing about it was the short time it took to build and its perfectly efficient simplicity. There was also on board an X-ray apparatus and a dark room for developing negatives.<sup>3</sup>

W.N. Horsfall was appointed as the Principal Medical Officer for the forthcoming expedition. He had served in the Royal Navy from 1904 and held posts on the British hospital ship *Solace* and the United States Navy hospital ship *Maine*. He was authorised to select the staff

<sup>2</sup> M. Dowsett, ‘M Hospital Ship No.VIII’, *ADF Health* vol.8, April 2007, p.35.

<sup>3</sup> L. Doyle, ‘The Australian hospital ship *Grantala* and her cruise’, *Speculum*, May 1915, pp.61-62.

except for the Consulting Surgeon whose appointment would be approved by the Minister.

The staff of 59, which were in place by 21 August 1914, included six surgeons, four nursing sisters, an anaesthetist, a pathologist and a radiographer.<sup>4</sup> The appointment of the consulting surgeon was imminent with a recommendation having been forwarded to the Minister for approval, with W.A. James being suggested. James was a surgeon in the RAN Reserve with considerable experience. A pay rate of £150 to £180 per month for the position was suggested by the Admiralty, which the Minister fixed at £150 per month.

### **Deployment of HMAS *Grantala***

Two days after the Britain's declaration of war, the British government requested the Australian government to seize the German wireless stations at Yap, Nauru and New Guinea. The Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force sailed from Sydney on 19 August 1914 to undertake this task.

HMAS *Grantala* sailed from Townsville on the 8 September 1914 to fulfil the requirement for a hospital ship to accompany the fleet to New Guinea. She arrived on 13 September 1914 and entered Simpsonhaven or Blanche Bay, in New Britain. HMAS *Yarra* challenged her with a shot across her bow and her identity was established.

Horsfall reported to Admiral Patey on HMAS *Australia* and he became aware that *Grantala* had been signalled to arrive on the afternoon of the previous day but due to the signal being in code and no one on board *Grantala* being able to decipher the signal, it went uncommunicated. Luckily the expeditionary force did not sustain heavy casualties the previous day when *Grantala* had been signalled to arrive in theatre.

However, *Grantala* received her first patients – about ten or twelve – mainly suffering from gunshot wounds. She received a further twenty patients from the French cruiser *Montcalm* on 17 September 1914, suffering from gastroenteritis. She remained on station for a further three weeks, receiving a further twelve patients from the other ships in the fleet.

With the capture of the German colony of New Guinea, HMAS *Grantala* accompanied the fleet to Suva in Fiji, the exact whereabouts of the German Pacific Fleet being unknown at that stage (see Fig.2). She remained there for a further nine weeks and received 13 patients from HMAS *Australia* with influenza and a further ten patients from the auxiliary colliers. These patients suffered injuries consistent with working with heavy loads of coal and primitive work health and safety standards of the period.

After the Battle of Coronel established the position of the German Pacific Fleet off South America, HMAS *Grantala* was ordered to return to Sydney, arriving on 22 December 1914. The naval personnel, surgeons, etc were paid off, thus ending the short career of Australia's first hospital ship. In a short footnote demonstrating the fog of war, the Admiralty had not realised that the RAN had assumed responsibility for staffing *Grantala* and instead dispatched 30 Royal Navy Sick Berth staff and four nursing officers who arrived in Sydney after *Grantala* had sailed for New Guinea.

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<sup>4</sup> Letter from the Naval Secretary to the then Minister for the Navy, August 1914, provided by the Navy Sea Power Centre, Department of Defence, April 2013.

### **Conclusion**

HMAS *Grantala* is an example of the vigour of Australian industry to convert and fit out a functioning hospital ship within three weeks to accompany the RAN on its first test on operations during the Great War. It is also a sad reflection on the ignorance of Australia's own military history that the service of Australian nurses at Rabaul is not recognised on the national Nurses Memorial on Anzac Parade in Canberra. With the centenary of the Great War it is about time we got the story right, if only for the benefit of future generations.

### **Acknowledgement**

I must thank Maree Whittaker-Jones of the Department of Defence, Naval Sea Power Centre for her assistance with research material for this article.

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## **SOCIETY NOTICES**

### **Special Gallipoli Issue of *Sabretache* – Update**

As mentioned in several issues of *Sabretache*, the Federal Council of the Society has secured an ANZAC Centenary Grant from the Commonwealth Government to cover the production of a special Gallipoli Edition of *Sabretache* to mark the Centenary of the Great War to be released in January 2015. The grant covers the production of 1,000 copies of the Gallipoli Edition of *Sabretache* which will be in addition to the usual four editions for that year. Federal Council through the Editor of *Sabretache* now welcomes articles with a Gallipoli theme from members. Please forward any articles for consideration marked Gallipoli Edition to the Editor.

**Rohan Goyne, Federal President**

### **Award of the Order of Australia Medal**

In the 2014 Australia Day Honours and Awards Kev Erwin, a Queensland member of the MHSA, was awarded an OAM. The citation reads: 'For service to social welfare through the provision of humanitarian aid in Vietnam.' Kev served in Vietnam with the RAAF in the late 1960s as a groundcrew member. For many years he has been the driving force behind the Australia Vietnam Volunteers Resource Group. The AVVRG organises for doctors, dentists and nursing staff to visit Vietnam and give their free services towards health improvement for the local children. It is a great organisation and worthy of support. The Society congratulates Kev on the award and for his good work.

**John Meyers**

### **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**

## AS YOU WERE ...

### Feedback from Readers and Contributors

Tim Lyon offers the following amendment to Rohan Goyne's article 'The Sea Mine Story', in the December 2013 issue:

- I have to confess that I am a Naval Architect. So, when I read 'The ship had a displacement of 3,043 tonnes gross' in Rohan Goyne's otherwise excellent article, the hairs on the back of my neck stood up. Displacement and gross tonnage are not equivalent, let alone equal. I must admit I am surprised that this got past my colleague Mori Flapan (a naval architect who assisted Rohan in his research) but perhaps he didn't see the completed article. It may be useful for readers to understand the difference between displacement and gross tonnage, as in books and articles on the two World Wars, warship size is stated in terms of displacement while merchant ship size is generally stated in terms of gross tonnage. For example, the Washington Naval Treaty imposed a limit on the size of battleships of 35,000 tons (standard) displacement while the tonnage of shipping sunk in the Battle of the Atlantic is almost invariably stated as gross tonnage.

Displacement (as a weight) is, of course, the weight of the water displaced by the ship and is, not surprisingly, equal to the weight of the ship (thank you Archimedes). Less obviously, gross tonnage is a volume not a weight (the 'ton' being a unit of volume containing 100ft<sup>3</sup> (2.83m<sup>3</sup>), originally from the tun, a wine cask with a capacity of 252 gallons). Gross tonnage is a measure of the under-deck tonnage (volume) with the addition of 'tween-deck spaces and enclosed spaces above the upper deck. Certain spaces are exempted from measurement. The size of most ordinary merchant ships is quoted in terms of gross tonnage (although deadweight, that is cargo weight, is now very common for oil tankers and bulk carriers). Generalising a bit, full load displacement is usually a little more than twice gross tonnage (depending on how clever the naval architect is!).

I suspect that Rohan has been deceived by the History Page of the Royal Australian Navy's website which states that the displacement of HMAS *Bungaree* was 3,043 tonnes (although not 'tonnes gross' as stated by Rohan). This figure is not correct and is most probably the result of someone thinking that displacement and gross tonnage are the same thing and metricating the vessel's gross tonnage (which cannot be done). To be fair to Rohan, Ross Gillett in his (otherwise reliable) book *Warships of Australia* has made the same mistake. Do we need more naval architects (or should we, at least, consult them more)? The best figure that I can find for the full load displacement of HMAS *Bungaree* is 7,494 tons (which sounds about right). The ship would have been lighter when operating as a mine layer because 467 mines is quite a light load (although the ship would have undoubtedly been ballasted down for stability reasons).

Colin Simpson sends the following in response to Brenton Brooks' article on unpunished Japanese war crimes published in the December 2013 issue:

- By coincidence when the December *Sabretache* arrived containing Brenton Brooks' very well researched article 'The Carnival of Blood in Australia Mandated Territory' I was reading a book I recently acquired entitled *Betrayal in High Places* by James Mackay (ISBN 9781897666418) published by Tasman Books, New Zealand. This book is based on the diaries of James Gowing Godwin who was a member of the New Zealand Air Force in WW2 and became a Japanese POW and experienced first-hand the brutality of the Japanese military. After the war Godwin was appointed an investigator with the Second Australian War Crimes Section, based in Tokyo, which had the task of finding information

to bring Japanese who committed War Crimes, in the Japanese killing fields of the SE Asia and South Pacific area, to trial.

People who found Brenton Brooks' article of interest to them would also find this book quite relevant. The title is derived from the fact that in March 1948, part-way through the War Crimes investigations, an order had been despatched from the British Headquarters in Singapore to Tokyo advising that Britain's Asian and Pacific war crimes investigations and prosecutions were to be wound down. In February 1950 a similar order was sent from General MacArthur's headquarters in Tokyo stating that all such investigations were cancelled, meaning that no further criminals would be investigated or tried. Godwin was understandably upset with these orders and on his departure from Japan he secretly carried to New Zealand the cases of confidential files he had been working on in Japan (these included authenticated war crimes documentation, and the names of the Japanese executioners, and often the names of the Allied soldiers who died). These files were subsequently brought to Australia and are deposited here. (From Mackay's book the current location of those files is not clear but will be of significant interest to those people making investigations about such material – so keep making enquiries while you are researching!).

[Editor's note: Mackay's *Betrayal in High Places* is actually a very controversial work, and many of its claims have since been refuted by researchers. Readers might be interested in following up the subject in an article by Hadley and Oglethorpe in *The Journal of Military History*, vol.71, no.2, April 2007, which can also be accessed here: [http://muse.jhu.edu/login?auth=0&type=summary&url=/journals/journal\\_of\\_military\\_history/v071/71.2hadley.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/login?auth=0&type=summary&url=/journals/journal_of_military_history/v071/71.2hadley.html)]

Tony Walker writes in response to the photo in the December 2013 issue of 'a group of young men dressed as AIF soldiers of the Great War ... posed with a Furphy water tank, believing I assume that the Furphy water tanks went with the soldiers wherever they went'. It compelled him to submit an article called 'The Greatest Furphy of All', which originally appeared in Royal Automobile Club of Victoria's magazine *Royal Auto*, July 2006 issue. It has this information on the subject:

- Adam Furphy, great great-grandson of the creator of the water cart ... says that recent research shows the Furphy water cart missed out on a valuable military contract at the outset of World War One, probably beaten by competitor H.V. McKay of Sunshine. 'So that's the biggest Furphy of them all ... Not one of our water carts ever went with the ANZACs. Similar tanks – possibly copies of ours – were there and were probably known as Furphy carts, just like vacuum cleaners are generally called Hoovers. That's because long before the war the most common way of moving water around farms was by our carts, and the Furphy tank was certainly known at the Broadmeadows Army camp in 1914.'

Sounds like yet another myth well and truly busted!

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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.



## FILIPINO AIF VOLUNTEERS FROM THE NORTHERN TERRITORY PART 2: THE CONANAN FAMILY

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

There is no doubt now that the Australian Imperial Force comprised quite a ‘mixed lot’ of racial and ethnic types. Of particular note, current research has identified eight Filipino-Australians from the Northern Territory who volunteered for service with the AIF during the Great War. Part 1 considered the four sons of Carlos and Mary Anne Ga who offered their services in 1915. This second paper reviews the service of Tolentino and Emelia Conanan’s two sons, and the extension of that contribution into World War 2. Part 3 will detail the contribution of the Spain family.

### Tolentino and Emelia Conanan

The origins of the Filipino diaspora in northern Australia were discussed in Part 1 (see *Sabretache* 54.4, December 2013).<sup>2</sup> One of the original ‘Manilamen’ of old Darwin, part of that first wave of Filipino migration to Australia in the third quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was Tolentino Garcia Conanan (1858-1921) who had come to Thursday Island to be a diver for pearlshell and *bêche-de-mer* (sea cucumber, or *trepang*).

Tolentino’s great-grandparents were Justo Conanan and Dominga Magallanes, both born in about 1797 in the village of Ybajay, in Aklan province in the north of Panay Island. Tourists who fly into Kalibo airport in Aklan and then commute to the passenger ferry terminal to go to popular Boracay Island will drive through Ibajay municipality (when the Americans came to Aklan in 1902, the town’s name was anglicised to ‘Ibajay’). Family history relates that the surname was originally spelt as ‘Cunanan’: there have long been Cunanan families in Pampanga on the main island of Luzon, and reputedly one of Tolentino’s forebears changed the spelling of their name to ‘Conanan’ to distinguish themselves from these northerners.

Tolentino’s grandfather Juan Conanan was the *Gobernadorcillo* (‘Provincial Governor’) of Ybajay in the 1850s. The Philippines was ruled by the Spanish using a system of government called *encomienda*: under a Royal Grant, an *Encomiendero* was appointed as the overseer, with a hierarchy of subordinates comprising a *Governadorcillo* in each province, *Cabezas Mayores* (‘Mayors’) in every town, and numerous *Cabezas de Barangay* (‘Barangay Captains’ or ‘Village Heads’). Juan and his wife Eugenia Gelito had six children: one of their sons, Don Valintin Conanan, served as a *Cabeza de Barangay* in Ybajay for more than thirty years and was the First Municipal President of Ibajay under American rule in 1902-03. Another of Juan and Eugenia’s sons was Antonio Gelito Conanan, Tolentino’s father. He married Gregoria Dalisay Garcia of another large notable family from Ybajay, and they had eight children between 1855 and 1884. In Philippine tradition, the mother’s surname is given to a child as what westerners would recognise as a ‘middle name’ – Antonio and Gregoria’s second child was therefore christened ‘Tolentino Garcia Conanan’.

In about 1881, aged 23, Tolentino relocated to Thursday Island where he worked as a diver. He would have spoken his local dialects Aklanon and Ybajaynon, as well as Spanish and gradually a little English. In 1890, he sailed to Hong Kong and there on 16 May he married

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

Emelia Constantina Da Souza (1864-1902), the daughter of Portuguese nationals Felipe Da Souza and Annie (nee Da Silva), who were probably from Macau. Emilia went to Thursday Island with Tolentino, where they had five children – all christened in the Filipino manner (drawn from the Spanish tradition, but also reflecting the Portuguese custom) with Emelia's surname as an additional 'middle name': Gertrude Maria Da Souza Conanan (born in 1891), Emelia Da Souza Conanan (1893), Ricardo Warivin Da Souza Conanan (1894-1942), Elias Joseph Da Souza Conanan (1896-1945) and Salvador Modeste Da Souza Conanan (died in infancy in 1901). Meanwhile, Tolentino was naturalised as a British subject in 1892.

After his wife Emilia died in 1902, Tolentino took his children to Palmerston where he was again a diver. Palmerston (as Darwin was then known) was a 'mestizo town' where the few European public servants and labourers were significantly outnumbered by Japanese and Torres Strait Island pearl divers, Chinese traders, indigenous Larrakia people and 'Manilamen' (Filipinos): 'the boilings over of the great cauldron of Oriental humanity'.<sup>3</sup>

The Filipinos in particular were noted as excellent divers. One of the first to come to Port Darwin was a Manilaman named Tassatio in 1878 (noting that the first white settlement in Palmerston had been established on 5 February 1869, the first poles for the Overland Telegraph were erected there in 1870, and by 1875 the European population numbered 300). Tassatio lived in the camp outside town known as the 'Police Paddock', and died in 1929 after having lived in Darwin for 51 years. Others who became long-term residents were Catumba who died in 1938 (his Filipino wife Procupia Catumba died in 1939) and Juan Rodella who lived in Darwin from 1899 until his death in 1939. Others were Carlos Ga (see Part 1), Tolentino Conanan, Elias Ceasar, Antonio Spain, Ambrosio Pasquell, and another named 'Charlie Hadji' living at the 10 mile Railway Camp, who was better known as 'Shoal Bay Charlie'. Many of the older residents, all naturalised as British subjects, were evacuated when Darwin came under threat in 1942 including Alfonso Albolero and Antonio Peris (born in 1879), Pontallion Asor and Bennazio Bargas (1882), and Estiphan Cigobia (1884).

Tolentino Conanan's first daughter Gertrude married Catalino Puerte Spain (1887-1942) on 9 February 1909, the son of fellow Manilaman Antonio Spain and his English wife Elizabeth. Catalino did not serve in uniform during either war but lost his life in 1942, killed on Darwin wharf during the first Japanese air raid. His brothers Felix and Prudencio served in the Great War (see Part 3), and Catalino's only son Dan Spain served in the RAAF in World War 2. Tolentino and Emelia's second daughter Emelia married Mr Henry Lee of Darwin, but they had no children. From 1928, Gertrude Conanan (Mrs Catalino Spain) and her sister Emelia (Mrs Henry Lee) were managing the 'Canberra Café' in Cavenagh Street.<sup>4</sup>

When the Commonwealth assumed responsibility for the Northern Territory on 1 January 1911 (and the town of Palmerston was renamed 'Darwin'), there were 31 pearling boats operating from Port Darwin employing 138 men.<sup>5</sup> At this time, the Commonwealth also took control of the various camps on the fringes of Darwin town:<sup>6</sup> those old camps are now the suburbs ranging out to Nightcliff. Tolentino's family lived in the camp near town which was known as the 'Police Paddock' – this is today the suburb of Stuart Park. Camp life was communal living, with open drains and incinerator latrines. Conditions were tough but they

<sup>3</sup> Patterson, A B (1898) 'The cycloon, Paddy Cahill and the G.R'. *The Bulletin*, 31 December 1898.

<sup>4</sup> *Northern Territory Times* (Darwin) 3 April 1928, p.2.

<sup>5</sup> Powell (1982) pp.113-17.

<sup>6</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.

were shared equally by all families, enhancing the community spirit the older Filipinos recalled from their youth. 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.

When Tolentino Conanan could no longer dive he became a pearlshell processor. He then worked in the Darwin railway yards, and in later life he enjoyed fishing with hand-lines from the wharf. In his obituary in 1921 it was noted that, ‘He was well respected and a good-living man’.<sup>7</sup> Another recorded: ‘He was a friendly and obliging man and was a scholar both in Spanish and English.’<sup>8</sup>

By 1914 the Northern Territory’s population (excluding Chinese and Aboriginals) numbered about 2,400, including some 52 Filipinos recorded as living in Darwin.<sup>9</sup> Some 319 men from the Northern Territory volunteered for service in the Great War, including eight Filipino-Australians: both of Tolentino Conanan’s sons were volunteers in 1915.

### **Ricardo Warivin Da Souza Conanan (1894-1942)**

*Served as:* Private Ricardo Conanan

Ricardo Conanan had been born on Thursday Island on 14 August 1894, Tolentino and Emelia’s third child and first son. In Darwin as a young teenager Ricardo began working as a pearlshell diver. He attended that same AIF recruiting meeting with fellow Filipinos Matthew and Palencio Garr and Prudencio Spain on 20 September 1915, and volunteered immediately. ‘Cardo’ Conanan was enlisted at Mr Stanley Bailey’s office on 6 October 1915, having recently turned 21.<sup>10</sup> The next evening, a farewell smoke social was held for this contingent, and the names of the four Filipino lads were recorded on a unique commemorative silk program.<sup>11</sup>

When this Fourth Northern Territory Contingent arrived at Enoggera on 20 October it was broken up and the men were allocated to various training units: Ricardo Conanan and Palencio Garr were attached to A Company, 8<sup>th</sup> Depot Battalion. Ricardo gave his next-of-kin as his wife Lucy – Lucy Conanan was part-Aboriginal, and they had no children. In 1926 Lucy was recorded as being aged 30 and working in Darwin as a laundress; she was evacuated from Darwin during World War 2, and died in Adelaide on 13 April 1944.<sup>12</sup>

While undergoing training at Fraser’s Hill Camp, Ricardo was discharged on 17 December 1915 as permanently medically unfit.<sup>13</sup> He suffered from sciatica and diver’s palsy as a result of being a pearlshell diver for at least the past six years, a common disability found among former divers in the Philippines even today. There was some dissatisfaction that the medical officer in Darwin had passed him as fit and the Camp Adjutant initially declined him a steamer ticket to return to Darwin, but this was overruled by the Deputy Assistant Adjutant-General. The doctor surmised: ‘Possibly lying on the ground & marching has reawakened the condition’. Ricardo would have been entitled to receive the ‘Volunteer, Medically Unfit’ badge, but this was not created until 1916 so he may never have known to claim it. Ricardo Conanan did not get to serve overseas in this war, and he lost his life in the next one.

<sup>7</sup> *Northern Standard* (Darwin) 12 April 1921, p.3.

<sup>8</sup> NTTG 12 April 1921, p.3.

<sup>9</sup> NAA: A1/15 11/16191 – Census figures for Darwin, 5 mile radius.

<sup>10</sup> NTTG 7 October 1915, pp.6, 15; 23 September 1915, p.18; 7 October 1915, p.18; 14 October 1915, p.18.

<sup>11</sup> NTTG 14 October 1915, p.18; Northern Territory Library, 243112: Manuscript 37.

<sup>12</sup> NAA: Series E659 File 1945/2493 – ‘Northern Territory to Racecourse at Balaklava, South Australia’.

<sup>13</sup> NAA: B2455, ‘CONANAN R’, item barcode 3275491.

His medical condition did not suppress his adventurous nature however. In July 1924, Ricardo volunteered to join a police expedition to Arnhem Land to search for supposed survivors of the SS *Douglas Mawson*, a ketch-rigged wooden steamer which had been wrecked by a cyclone in the Gulf of Carpentaria on 29 March 1923, lost without a trace.<sup>14</sup> Twelve crewmen had perished plus about twelve passengers including a woman with six children. A trader later found some wreckage, and unconfirmed rumours arose of two female survivors with a baby. Ricardo Conanán was one of twelve Special Constables who sailed from Darwin on 5 August 1924 aboard the auxiliary schooner *Huddersfield*, heavily laden with horses, fodder and equipment. The expedition was commanded by Mounted Constable Jack Lovegrove,<sup>15</sup> accompanied by Mounted Constables Bridgeland (from Roper River Police Station), White (from Maranboy) and Hoffman; of note, the Special Constables included four returned soldiers.

Ricardo Conanán was described thus: ‘coloured fisherman and bushman, who has been twice in the district to be visited, and speaks the language of the aborigines’.<sup>16</sup> A total of 329 miles were patrolled by horse and foot during August and September, along the eastern coast of the Gulf of Carpentaria, and a number of Aboriginal camps were searched. No trace of any white men or women could be found, nor was there any evidence of material that might have come from the steamer. It was subsequently determined that the rumour of survivors was based on a misunderstanding: the women referred to were actually two ladies who had arrived at Groote Island Mission Station some time earlier – the wife of the missionary priest there, who had with her a baby girl, and another missionary named Miss Dove. The vague stories of a massacre and capture were discredited.<sup>17</sup>

Together with his brother Elias, ‘Cardo’ Conanán was a noted billiards and snooker player in Darwin, as well as a footballer and an accomplished accordion player – he would support the Cubillo Brothers rondalla orchestra and the Manila String Band, together with Dick Butler on the mouth organ: Butler was the husband of Antonio and Elizabeth Spain’s granddaughter Louisa Fanny Spain.<sup>18</sup>

The Cubillo family were descended from another Filipino pearl-diver Antonio Pedro Cubillo, who had married a part-Aboriginal (Larrakia) woman in Darwin. One son, christened ‘Juan Roque Cubillo’ but popularly known as ‘Johnny’ or ‘Rocky’, was also among those killed on Darwin wharf on 19 February 1942; another son, Delphin Cubillo, served during World War 2 as a dental mechanic in the Army. One of Antonio Cubillo’s lasting legacies was to bring the rondalla music tradition to Australia: ‘rondalla’ is an old Spanish form of guitar orchestra (*ronda* meaning ‘to serenade’), and Antonio Cubillo’s sons were all proficient with the 14-string mandolin and the 8-stringed Spanish guitar.

Ricardo was employed as a wharf labourer by the mercantile trading firm Burns, Philp & Co

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<sup>14</sup> NTTG 1 August 1924, p.5; *The Brisbane Courier* 5 September 1924, p.7; *Northern Standard* 14 October 1924, p.2.

<sup>15</sup> Lovegrove, T C (1993) ‘John Creed Lovegrove (1885-1954), The Profile of an early Territory policeman’. *Journal of Northern Territory History*, no.4: pp.47-52.

<sup>16</sup> *The Register* (Adelaide) 1 August 1924, p.13.

<sup>17</sup> *Sunday Times* (Perth, WA) 7 September 1924, p.1; *Northern Star* (Lismore, NSW) 6 December 1924, p.3; *The Advertiser* (Adelaide) 9 December 1924, p.13; *The Register* (Adelaide) 9 December 1924 p.10.

<sup>18</sup> Louisa Fanny Spain (1911-1974), daughter of Antonio and Elizabeth Spain’s first child Anastasio Puerte Spain and Fanny Louisa (nee Chapman).

Ltd, together with fellow Filipinos John Cubillo and Dominic Domingo.<sup>19</sup> By February 1942, Port Darwin had become a vitally important staging point for ship convoys, and since the start of the year there had been eighteen registered gangs working on the wharf, of fourteen members each. By February there were usually three shifts of six gangs working around the clock. At this time, Ricardo was about 47 years old and was living in Cavanagh Street. On the morning of 19 February 1942, Ricardo was with a gang unloading the cargo ship *SS Barossa* of the Adelaide Steamship Company Ltd, moored on the inner berth of the wharf, which at that time was known simply as ‘Darwin wharf’ or ‘town wharf’. Conanán was killed during Commander Mitsuo Fuchida’s first air raid on Darwin, in a direct hit from a stick of three bombs from an Aichi Type 99 carrier bomber in the first high level attack:

He had just knocked off for smoko at the recreation hut when he saw the Japanese planes and heard the bombs falling. ‘Good-bye boys,’ he shouted. ‘I’ll see you in the next world.’ Seconds later he was dead.<sup>20</sup>



*Fig.1: 4699 Private Elias Conanán in 1915 (photo provided by the family).*

This was a double tragedy for the family: Gertrude Spain (Conanán) lost her brother Ricardo that day, as well as her husband Catalino who was killed while working on the *MV Neptuna*, full of depth charges and ammunition.<sup>21</sup> After the *Neptuna* was struck, Catalino Spain was machine-gunned on the wharf by a Mitsubishi *Zero-sen* carrier fighter, and his body was hurled into the harbour by a bomb blast.

### **Elias Joseph Da Souza Conanán (1896-1945)**

*Served as:* 4699 Private Elias Joseph Conanán

Elias Conanán was Tolentino and Emelia’s fourth child and second son, born on Thursday Island on 8 August 1896, and also a diver in Darwin during his teen years.

Family history says that he lied about his age in order to enlist, and a photograph of Elias from late 1915 certainly depicts him as very youthful in appearance (see Fig.1). Elias enlisted on 8 November 1915, but clearly stated that he was 19 years of age, so presumably he had his father’s permission although this is not noted on his documents.<sup>22</sup> He swore his oath of allegiance in Brisbane on 22 November.

Pte Elias Conanán trained at Enoggera with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Depot Battalion, and embarked in Sydney on 12 April 1916 with the 12<sup>th</sup> Reinforcements for the 26<sup>th</sup> Bn AIF on RMS *Mooltan* (Pte Guillermo ‘Glamor’ Garr, a fellow Filipino from Darwin, had sailed just a fortnight earlier with the 11<sup>th</sup> Reinforcements). A photograph held by the Australian War Memorial shows men from the London Command Convalescent Depot in Sussex: one soldier, named only as

<sup>19</sup> NTL – <http://www.ntlexhibit.nt.gov.au/exhibits/show/bod/roh/conanan>; AWM: AWM127\_16; Griffiths (1947) p.79; Lockwood (1984) p.72; Lockwood (2005) p.66.

<sup>20</sup> Lockwood (1984) p.72.

<sup>21</sup> NTL: <http://www.ntlexhibit.nt.gov.au/exhibits/show/bod/roh/spain>; Griffiths (1947) p.79; Hall (1980) p.48; Lockwood (1984) p.71.

<sup>22</sup> NAA: B2455, ‘CONANAN E J’, item barcode 3275490; AWM: AWM4–23/43 – War Diary, 26<sup>th</sup> Battalion AIF; *Northern Standard* 3 April 1925, p.2.

‘CONANA(?)’, has a dark complexion.<sup>23</sup> However, Elias was the only person by the name of ‘Conanan’ to serve abroad in the AIF; family members confirm that this image does not depict Elias, and it clearly bears no similarity to the known image of Elias. In addition, Elias Conanan’s records do not support his presence in the convalescent depot at the time the photograph was taken.

Elias joined the 26<sup>th</sup> Bn on 28 September while it was undertaking advanced training at Steenvoorde in the north of France; then in the early part of October the battalion occupied dugouts at the Zillebeke Bund in West Flanders near the Ypres Salient. Four other Territorians are known to have served with this battalion: Glamor Garr (see Part 1), Neil Boyle (an engineer before the war), Albert Borella (a farmer) and James Dymock (a joiner with the Public Works Department). In the earlier attack on Pozières, Garr and Boyle had been wounded and evacuated. Borella was wounded near Fleurbaix, was promoted to sergeant, and was awarded the MM. Later, in the same action at Villers-Bretonneux, Borella won the VC and Garr the MM.

But Elias Conanan’s health did not stand up to the conditions in the trenches, probably because of his earlier diving career. He almost immediately suffered bouts of influenza, and was treated at various times at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division Rest Station and the 5<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance. As his illness progressed into bronchitis he was sent to the 23<sup>rd</sup> General Hospital at Étaples; he soon returned to his battalion but his condition worsened, forcing his evacuation to England in November. He was admitted to Chatham Military Hospital suffering from severe pulmonary tuberculosis and haemophthisis (coughing up blood). Elias was downgraded to Class 3 on 16 January 1917, and spent the next four months at the 2<sup>nd</sup> AIF Command Depot at Weymouth in Dorset. He was invalided back to Australia on A32 HMAT *Themistocles* in May 1917 suffering from pulmonary tuberculosis and anaemia, and was discharged in Brisbane on 30 July 1917 as permanently medically unfit.

Elias Conanan’s entitlement was the British War Medal and Victory Medal pair, and the ‘Discharged Returned Soldier Badge’. His father Tolentino died in Darwin Hospital on 10 April 1921 at the age of about 69: he had lived in Australia for forty years and in Darwin for almost two decades. Ricardo and Elias buried their father in the Garden Road Cemetery near Darwin’s Botanic Gardens – this was Darwin’s main cemetery from 1919 until 1970, replacing Palmerston’s original ‘Pioneer Cemetery’. Many of the early Filipinos who came to Darwin were buried here, as also were many of those killed in the air raids of 1942-43, but only about one third of the graves are today identified by inscriptions. As Emelia Conanan had died in 1902, one of her daughters would have been entitled to claim the Department of Defence Female Relatives’ Badge in recognition of Elias Conanan – but issue of these badges ceased on 31 March 1922 and the badge may never have been claimed.

In Darwin on 27 April 1922, Elias married Lorenza Agnes Ceasar (1905-1977). She was the daughter of Elias Ceasar (1872-1938), a Filipino seaman who had come to Palmerston via Singapore in 1896 under the Indentured Labour Scheme to be a pearl diver (Lorenza always believed that the original spelling of the family surname was ‘Cesar’). Lorenza’s mother was Elena Dos Anjos (1875-1941) who reputedly came from an orphanage in Hong Kong run by Portuguese Nuns, whom Elias had married in Palmerston on 22 November 1902. Elias and Elena also lived in the Police Paddock, where they raised seven sons and three daughters (three boys died in infancy, and one died in 1931 aged 27) – all three sons alive at the time of

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<sup>23</sup> AWM: ID number P00276.004.

World War 2 served in uniform. Elias Ceasar died at his home on 24 May 1938 from a heart condition, and was buried in the ‘Pioneer Cemetery’ on Goyder Road:

After a lengthy illness, Elias Ceasar, one of the oldest residents of Darwin, died at his home at the Police Paddock on Tuesday night. He was 66 years old. Born in the Philippine Islands, the deceased came to Australia 42 years ago.<sup>24</sup>

Lorenza and Elias Conanan had ten children, born between 1922 and 1938: Priscilla Isabell, Pauline Veronica,<sup>25</sup> Joseph Louis, Matthew Elias, Vincent Tolentino, Agnes Helena, Cyril Francis, Margaret Mary, Lawrence Aloysius and Daniel David. Elias Conanan played tennis and was also noted as a billiards and snooker player. During a fleet visit headed by HMAS *Sydney* in 1925 Elias, representing Darwin, won a high profile match of billiards against the champion of the fleet. Elias was employed by the Commonwealth Railways as a waterside worker, together with his brother Ricardo and other such Filipinos as Catalino and Hignio (‘Harry’) Spain, Antonio and Juan (‘Johnny’) Cubillo, and Francisco (‘Chico’) Chavez. In the depression years there was limited housing available to the workers of Darwin; Elias Conanan was quoted as an example:

Elias Conanan lives in a humpy built of bush timber, in the Police Paddock, a place set apart for indigents, because he cannot afford to live in town.<sup>26</sup>

Professor Alan Powell recounts that in the 1933 census there were 69 Filipinos recorded as living in Darwin.<sup>27</sup> Most of the old Manilamen had died by this time so this figure represents their children and grandchildren, Filipino-Australians who had become Territorians. The Conanan, Chavez, Cubillo and Spain families were all connected through their Filipino ancestry, and also through the men being footballers and members of the North Australia Workers’ Union. By way of example, at the funeral of Ernie Lee in 1932, a notable supporter of Wanderers Football Club, the pall-bearers included Elias Conanan, Catalino and Felix Spain, Antonio and Johnny Cubillo, and Francisco Chavez – Filipinos standing shoulder-to-shoulder with fellow Aboriginal sportsmen and waterside workers in a Chinese funeral.<sup>28</sup> At this time there was no ‘colour-barrier’ and football was open to all – as the journalist Ernestine Hill described, there were ‘barrackers in 25 languages’ at every game: ‘in Darwin it is more an Oriental ballet than a football match’.<sup>29</sup> At public events such as the King’s Jubilee Celebrations held in Darwin in June 1935, the children of the Conanan, Chavez, Perez and Spain families were all active participants. One great-grandson of Antonio Cubillo recalled that the Filipino traditions remained strong in their family: they grew up eating Filipino dishes like adobo, the families held novenas when people died, and even into the 1960s his aunts wore mantillas and elaborate Filipino dresses.<sup>30</sup>

On 16 December 1941, the Administrator ordered the evacuation of all women and children, and in the ensuing eight weeks over 1,000 women and some 900 children left Darwin by ship, aircraft, road and train. Lorenza took her family to Brisbane, and they lived in the inner north-eastern suburb of Albion for the duration of the war and after. They occupied a

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<sup>24</sup> *Northern Standard* 27 May 1938, p.4.

<sup>25</sup> Pauline married an Australian, Harold ‘Bluey’ Carroll, who served in WW2. They were survived by two sons and two daughters and their families.

<sup>26</sup> *Northern Standard* 10 December 1926, p.3.

<sup>27</sup> Powell (1982) p.175.

<sup>28</sup> *Northern Standard* 28 October 1932, p.2; 1 November 1932, p.8.

<sup>29</sup> Quoted in: Ministerial Statement Mr Vatskalis, Debates - Ninth Assembly, First Session - 08/02/2005 - Parliamentary Record No. 24, 10 February 2005.

<sup>30</sup> Distor & Hunt (2006).

traditional old elevated ‘Queenslander’, quite crowded with all the children. The house was not far from ‘Crosby Park’, the American Chemical Warfare Center and warehouse site of the 62<sup>nd</sup> Chemical Depot Company (where the ‘Allan Border Field’ cricket ground is today); the family stayed in this house until forced to relocate by the 1974 Brisbane floods.

Like the other waterside workers whose families had been evacuated, at the beginning of 1942 Elias and Ricardo were among those who continued to work on the wharf. On the morning of 19 February 1942, Elias had swapped his shift with a fellow worker and fortuitously escaped the air raid unscathed. He later joined his family in Brisbane, although he died on 5 April 1945 of a lung disorder, probably related to his wartime service. Elias and Lorenza’s many descendants, as well as the descendants of his sister Gertrude Spain, still live in Queensland and beyond today – numbered among them a great-granddaughter, and granddaughter of Priscilla, serving as a senior officer in the RAAF.

## World War 2



The tradition of military service continued in World War 2 when at least sixteen Filipino-Australians with a Northern Territory connection donned a uniform in the Australian forces. Among them were two grandchildren of Tolentino and Emelia Conanan, both deceased by that time – the son and daughter of Elias and Lorenza.

**QF269602 Private Priscilla Silva.**<sup>31</sup> Priscilla Isabell Ceasar Conanan was born in Darwin on 31 August 1922, Elias and Lorenza’s first child. She grew up in the ‘Police Paddock’ and attended the Darwin Convent School (St Joseph’s). She and her brother Joey were prize-winners at the King’s Jubilee Celebrations held in June 1935; Priscilla was also a prize-winner for pianoforte in 1936 and 1938, and gained very good results in the commercial examination run by Stott’s Business College in 1940. After evacuating with the family to Brisbane, Priscilla enlisted in the Australian Women’s Auxiliary Service on 3 March 1943 at the age of 20, and worked in the Queensland District Accounts Office until 1 February 1944 (see Fig.2). She bore a very strong resemblance to her father in uniform at the same age almost three decades earlier.

*Fig.2: QF269602 Private Priscilla Conanan in 1943 (photo provided by the family).*

It was in Brisbane that Priscilla met First Lieutenant Saturnino (‘Tony’) Ramos Silva, a US Army officer of Filipino descent. He was undertaking commando and reconnaissance training with the Allied Intelligence Bureau (Philippine Section) at Camp ‘X’ (Camp ‘Tabragalba’, the former Tabragalba Homestead) in Beaudesert, and at Canungra. Despite the rigorous training regime, as an officer Silva was allowed weekend furloughs to Brisbane. The son of Tony Silva later recalled:

It was in a Chinese restaurant that Lt. Tony Silva first met Private Priscilla Conanan of the Australian Women’s Auxiliary Service (A.W.A.S.) and fell in love. From photos of that period, Priscilla was a very beautiful Filipino-Australian.

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.ww2roll.gov.au/Veteran.aspx?ServiceId=A&VeteranId=99039>; NAA: B884, ‘QF269602’, item barcode 4656365; *Northern Standard* 10 December 1926, p.3.



This relationship caused concerns because he was fifteen years her senior, their courtship was very brief, and fraternisation between a soldier and an officer was not considered appropriate. Nevertheless, they were married on 8 January 1944 at the Canungra army camp. The family narrative recorded:

The marriage was brief. Three days into their honeymoon, Lt. Silva was called and ordered to proceed with his mission ... He left Priscilla in Australia pregnant with Isabel. She didn't know where he was going and would not hear from him until three years later.<sup>32</sup>



*Fig.3: Major Saturnino Silva US Army and Private Priscilla Silva AWAS (photo Mr John Silva)*

Silva was despatched on a secret 'guerrilla submarine' mission to Mindanao in the southern Philippines: he departed Port Darwin on 14 February 1944 with four Filipino soldiers in the USS *Narwhal* (SS-167), on her tenth wartime patrol.<sup>33</sup> Within a year Silva had met a young nurse in Davao: they were married by a guerrilla priest, and lived together on Mindanao. Silva acquitted himself well by all accounts in training a local guerrilla force, earning the Bronze Star and Purple Heart, but he was wounded in the Battle of Ising in May 1945 and was evacuated, unwittingly leaving his second wife Ester pregnant. Tony Silva raised a post-war family in America and died in Fresno, California in 1987. Meanwhile in Australia, Priscilla obtained a divorce and remarried; the letters Tony had sent her from the Philippines were delayed by Army censors because of the secrecy of these missions and Priscilla did not receive them until well after the war's end.

<sup>32</sup> Silva (2008a).

<sup>33</sup> Dissette & Adamson (1972) pp.96-100; Powell (1997); Glenn (2011).

From these relationships there arose three separate families, in America, the Philippines and Australia, each completely oblivious of each other's existence – until a series of posts on a genealogy website triggered recognition of common threads of history. The early tentative contacts led to an emotional reunion in the Philippines in 2008, as John Silva recalled:

Isabel told us that for many years, two colored photo portraits hung side by side in their dining room: Priscilla in her AWAS uniform, Tony in his US Army uniform. It was love in a time of war and the portraits were Priscilla's proof while she waited.<sup>34</sup> [see Fig.3]

**QX61563 Sapper Joseph Conan.**<sup>35</sup> Joseph Louis Ceasar Conan was born in Darwin on 21 July 1926, Elias and Lorenza's third child and first son. Priscilla and Elias both had an additional middle name derived from the surname of Lorenza's father Elias Ceasar, who had come to Australia in 1896. Joey was also evacuated with the family, and enlisted in Queensland on 1 September 1944 soon after he turned 18. He served with the 12<sup>th</sup> Water Transport Operating Company, RAE in the South West Pacific Area during the war. The unit continued on operational taskings after the cessation of hostilities, with war graves duty and ammunition dumping. Joseph suffered a ruptured appendix while at sea and died of septicaemia on 1 March 1946, aged 19 and unmarried.



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*Fig. 4: QX61563 Sapper Joey Conan (photo Mrs Isabel Lagas).*

#### **Commemoration**

After his death in 1945, Great War veteran Elias Conan was buried in Toowong Cemetery (Brisbane General Cemetery), as also was his widow Lorenza after her death in 1977. Although his grave was marked with a fine military headstone, it was not sited among those of other military personnel but instead is in the section allocated to 'coloured' deceased persons. A marble

headstone also bearing an engraved Rising Sun badge marks the grave of Sapper Joseph Conan in the Cairns War Cemetery.<sup>36</sup> Although he died in 1946, his death was regarded as war-related and so his grave was registered by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, and his sacrifice was commemorated on the Roll of Honour at the Australian War Memorial (panel 85).<sup>37</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Silva (2008b).

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.ww2roll.gov.au/Veteran.aspx?ServiceId=A&VeteranId=59164>; NAA: B883, 'QX61563', item barcode 4467196; NAA: A8234, CAIRNS BA15, item barcode 4663450.

<sup>36</sup> Martyn Street Cemetery, Cairns – Division SR, Section WG, Row MES: Plot number 39712, Site 5067 (previously Plot R, Row A, Grave 15).

<sup>37</sup> His death on 1 March 1946 was within the specified period for WW2 designated by the War Memorial, which was 3 September 1939 to 30 June 1947.

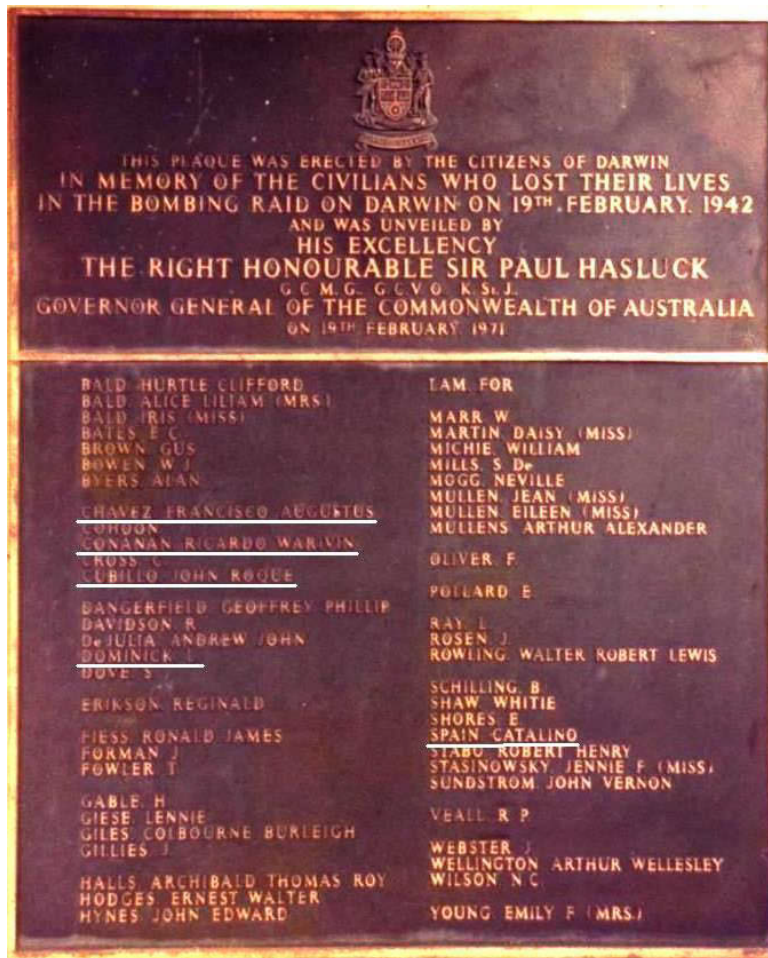


Fig.5: The names of Ricardo Conanan and Catalino Spain are commemorated on the Darwin City Council 'Bombing of Darwin' Roll of Honour plaque, which was unveiled on 19 February 1971 (author's photo).

In the years following World War 2, in addition to the regular Anzac Day service in Darwin the Soldiers' Memorial was the focus for commemorative services held annually on 19 February for those killed in the bombing of Darwin. While the cenotaph was always the venue for the main service, a small private service was held beforehand at the wharf where families would cast wreaths onto the water in memory of the waterside workers killed during that first air raid. Ultimately, on 7 December 2011, 19 February in each year was

declared to be a national day of observance known as 'Bombing of Darwin Day'.

The first form of official public recognition however was a large plaque erected by Darwin City Council, unveiled on 19 February 1971 by the Governor-General the Right Honourable Sir Paul Hasluck GCMG GCVO KStJ, to honour all of the civilians killed during the raids (see Fig.5). More recently, on 19 February 2012 two special memorials were installed on Stokes Hill Wharf to mark the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the raid: the Mariners' Mural was erected by the Darwin Port Authority, while the Wharf Memorial was established to specifically honour the civilians from the Commonwealth Railways and Burns, Philp & Co Ltd known to have been killed – among them the Filipino-Australians Francisco Chavez, Johnny Cubillo and Domingo Dominic, together with Great War volunteer Ricardo Conanan and his brother-in-law Catalino Spain whose bodies were never found.

## Kinship

Priscilla Conanan, who recently celebrated her 92<sup>nd</sup> birthday, provides a living link back to Tolentino Conanan and through him to the governorship of Ybajay in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The kinship of the old Manilamen of Darwin reflected their common Filipino heritage and was expressed through language, music and food, and also through their descendants who were all connected through many of the men being waterside workers and sportsmen, as well as through the shared focal points of two world wars and the Bombing of Darwin in particular. While their collective memories held their fathers' and grandfathers' stories of the Philippines, the Darwin Soldiers Monument became a common place for grieving and reflection on their families' service and sacrifice in two global wars and on the home front.

The Conanan family's contribution is as poignant as that of any 'European' family – with four members wearing the Rising Sun badge in two wars. Tolentino and Emelia's only sons volunteered for the AIF but just Elias was accepted for overseas service. Ricardo later saw a brief adventure in Arnhem Land as a sworn Special Constable but lost his life to enemy action in 1942 as a non-military casualty, and his brother-in-law Catalino Spain shared the same fate, both denied a proper burial, grave and headstone. And Elias, who had faced both the Germans in 1916 and the Japanese in 1942, saw two of his children don the khaki uniform as a second generation of Filipino-Australians took up military service: sadly though, Lorenza first lost Elias himself in 1945 and then her son Joey the following year: father and son both laid to rest under the Rising Sun. And meanwhile she saw her daughter Priscilla also serve in uniform but suffer the anguish of losing a war-husband who did not return from his secret mission.

The undeniable kinship of the Filipino-Australians who volunteered for service in the Great War can be clearly seen in their stature and physical descriptions: their service records and portraits show that they all had black hair, dark brown or 'black' eyes and a 'dark' complexion; Ricardo stood 5' 3½" in height, and Elias was just 5' 2¼". While some have claimed the Conanan brothers were of Torres Strait Islander ethnicity simply because they were born on Thursday Island, it is more accurate to say they were of Filipino-Portuguese parentage – they were natural-born Australians with European mothers.

Meanwhile in the succeeding generations, new kinship bonds remained dormant and unknown for some five decades after the end of World War 2. Priscilla raised her daughter Isabel in Brisbane, while at the same time in Davao Ester raised her son whom she named Saturnino Silva Jr. After the war Tony Silva did make contact with Priscilla, but his hospitalisation in America and separation by time and geography worked against them and Tony eventually filed for divorce. He married a Filipina who had come to the US, and among their children were John and Marie. Chance discoveries of letters and photographs by Marie ultimately enabled her and another sister to meet with their half-brother Saturnino ('Tony') in the Philippines in the 1990s. By the late 1990s John Silva had moved to live in the Philippines, and he too met up with Saturnino.

Considerably more effort was required to locate Priscilla's family because of name changes through marriage. But by 2006-7 internet genealogy sites had provided the platform for making a connection between John and his sister Marie (by then also living in the Philippines) with Saturnino Jr in Davao and Isabel and her daughters in Brisbane, which ultimately led to an emotional reunion – as John Silva reported:

Six months later, there we were at a hotel entrance in Manila tearfully embracing each other, noting the undeniable proof that we all looked so alike. Our rounded dark eyes, the skin tone, the prominent front teeth and that smile were all Dad's. The resemblances were not faint and as we hugged each other in disbelief Isabel looked at us intently and declaimed softly, 'Now I have a sister and a brother!'<sup>38</sup>

### Acknowledgments

I am very grateful for the assistance and encouragement of Mr Januario John Rivas, Philippine Consul General *ad honorem* in Darwin. I would also like to thank Mrs Isabel Conanan Silva Lagas, Mrs Leanne Wood and Mr John Silva for kindly providing photographs and information.

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<sup>38</sup> Silva (2008a); Silva (2008b).

## Glossary

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

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## A WORLD WAR TWO NOMINAL ROLL OF THE 27<sup>TH</sup> AUSTRALIAN INFANTRY BATTALION (AIF) – PART 1

**Pablo Muslera, Claire Woods and Paul Skrebels**

In 2011 Claire Woods and Paul Skrebels embarked on a project to create as comprehensive a nominal roll as possible of a South Australian unit which, as far as they could ascertain, had not had one compiled before.<sup>1</sup> This was the 27<sup>th</sup> Australian Infantry Battalion (AIF), a unit which had arisen out of the pre-war 27<sup>th</sup> South Australian Scottish Regiment, and which, after various duties in Darwin, New Guinea and the Solomons, saw action on Bougainville.

The stimulus for the project came from two sources. One was that Woods and Skrebels had just completed the task of creating an online resource for the 27th Bn AIF of WW1 based around its existing unit history,<sup>2</sup> and consisting of a range of supportive material – photos, diaries and other memorabilia – which were volunteered by the community for inclusion in digital form. The second was that, in presenting this initial project to a conference in Queensland, Woods and Skrebels met fellow presenter William (Bill) Park, who at around eighty years of age had just completed a Master's thesis dealing with gaps in the Commonwealth Government's online *WW2 Nominal Roll* (<http://www.ww2roll.gov.au/>) he had discovered while researching a particular cohort of the 15<sup>th</sup> Aust Inf Bn (AIF), of which he had been a member.<sup>3</sup>

Park drew the attention of Woods and Skrebels to these gaps, particularly in relation to former members of 'Militia' units. He suggested that as a follow-up to their WW1 project, they should undertake the compilation of a nominal roll for the 27<sup>th</sup> Bn in WW2. Woods and Skrebels agreed that this would be a useful and interesting task, but with limited resources at their disposal, not least of which was time, the idea had to be shelved temporarily. Then in 2011 they applied for and received a small research grant aimed at providing potential research students with work over the summer vacation. They therefore set a recently graduated Honours student soon to undertake postgraduate study, Pablo Muslera, on to creating as much of a nominal roll as he could with the time and funds available. He was pointed to the unit war diaries, now freely available on the Australian War Memorial website, plus other relevant resources, and with Bill Park very kindly acting as a long-distance mentor, away he went.

The result is an impressive list of 1232 names which Muslera found in the 27<sup>th</sup> Bn diaries, the *WW2 Nominal Roll* and elsewhere, with as much cross-checking having been carried out as possible. Obviously it isn't intended to be a complete roll of everyone who ever served in the unit between 1939 and 1945, but it represents a very significant start. It goes without saying that the compilers would be delighted to receive any additions, amendments or comments

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<sup>1</sup> The 27<sup>th</sup> has had a brief unit history published, *The Chocolate and Blue Soldier: A Pictorial History of the 27<sup>th</sup> Australian Infantry Battalion (AIF) in the Second World War 1939-1945*, 27<sup>th</sup> SA Scottish Regiment (AIF) Ex-Servicemen's Club, Adelaide, 1969. It contains lists of casualties and of awards and decorations (pp.80-81) but not a nominal roll.

<sup>2</sup> W. Dollman and H.M. Skinner, *The Blue and Brown Diamond: A History of the 27<sup>th</sup> Battalion Australian Imperial Force 1915-1919*, Lonnen and Cope, Adelaide, 1921.

<sup>3</sup> Bill Park's research into the 15<sup>th</sup> Bn resulted in the publication of a book, *Beyond Adversity: 'U' Company, 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion 1941-1942*, Big Sky Publishing, Newport NSW, 2010. His thesis is 'World War II Nominal Roll Database: Accurate Record or True Record?', School of Journalism and Communication, University of Queensland, 2009.

from readers to assist in making the roll as comprehensive as possible. As one of those compilers, the editor can deal directly with readers' contributions.

Here, then, is the first instalment, which will be added to in subsequent issues of the journal whenever space is available. In addition to names, ranks are provided as they appear in the sources in which they were found, together with service numbers – often both AIF and original enlistment numbers. Certain discrepancies in service numbers are also noted. The final column provides extra information such as the diary entry date in which the name was found, and casualty details. These are mostly self-explanatory, although 'BI' stands for Bougainville Island, 'in u.d.' for 'in the 27<sup>th</sup> Bn unit diary' and 'in n.d.' for 'in the WW2 *Nominal Roll*'. An asterisk (\*) is a general alert to an anomaly or annotation.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Service number</b>	<b>Status/ Unit diary date</b>
Abbott, Thomas Findlay	Corporal	NX118016 (N160887)	20-Feb-1945
Adams, Arthur Lionel	Private	SX29001*same no. as Scott, A.A.*	
Adams, Ronald Arthur	Private	S20968	
Aesche, Robert Ian	Sergeant	SX27878 (S21102)	
Ahola, John Graham	Sergeant	SX28868 (S58539)	20-Mar-1943
Aitchison, Douglas Clifford	Lance Sergeant	S21288	
Aitchison, John Frederick William	Lieutenant	SX25125 (S19724)	
Alchin, Harold John	Private	NX104177 (N4455)	22-Jan-1945
Aldridge, Harold Thomas	Private	SX28527 (S19871)	15-Jan-1943
Alexander, Archibald Graham	Captain	SX21788 (S19685)	21-Jun-1943
Alexander, Lewis	Private	S20579	
Almond, Percy Meade	Captain	S19680	
Amey, Leonard Arthur	Sapper	SX27667 (S45699)	23-Nov-1942
Amor, John Alfred	Sergeant	SX25242 (S20145)	
Anderson, Alexander James	Lance Corporal	SX39169 (S21501)	
Andrews, Edwin	Private	QX54822 (Q269157)	17-Jun-1944
Angove, Frank	Corporal	SX28579 (S21289)	23-Nov-1942
Anstey, John Frederick	Sergeant	SX23980 (S19809)	
Arnold, Thomas George	Private	SX28236 (S19894)	
Ash, George Francis	Corporal	SX39621 (S20333)	16-Sep-1943
Ashby, Anton Roy	Private	SX38216 (S20873)	5-Feb-1943
Ashton, George Thomas	Lance Corporal	NX124175	2-Jul-1945
Atkins, Ronald George	Private	SX31556 (S45815)	5-Oct-1943
Atkinson, Charles Raymond	Private	SX39909 (S21061)	23-Feb-1943
Atkinson, Neville Rupert	Private	SX28577 (S21238)	
Aubusson, James Ernest Roche	Private	NX195239 (N450409)	20-Feb-1945
Baddock, Colin Coutney	Private	SX26865 (S21088)	
Baines, Douglas Keith	Private	SX26858 (S21197)	
Baker, Frederick William	Corporal	SX26879 (S20897)	16-Dec-1942

Baker, Malcolm Roydon	Private	S20159	
Baker, Ronald Waldron	Private	NX109974 (N165976)	26-Oct-1944
Baker, Stanley Douglas Joffre	Corporal	SX39617 (S20130)*S18073 in u.d	
Baker, William Lancelot Hillier	Lieutenant	S110642	21-Jun-1943
Barber, Eric Malcolm	Private	S21203	
Baring, Stanley William	Private	SX23954 (S25883)	
Barker, Percival Peter	Private	SX29253 (S21263)	
Barnes, Donald Peter	Sergeant	S21172	
Barnes, Glen Wilson	Corporal	SX23949 (S22713)	
Barns, Albert Edward	Private	SX25253 (S21294)	
Barrett, Kenneth	Private	TX16215 (T102781)	20-Feb-1945
Barrett, Stephen Joseph	Private	SX27417 (S21471)	4-Dec-1942
Barry, Francis Michael	Private	S21469	
Batchelor, Robert William	Corporal	SX23942 (S26037)	
Bates, William Thomas	Private	Q105130	20-Feb-1945
Baulderstone, Alan James	Captain	SX25135 (S19678)	
Bayly, Ronald Elwin	Private	S21528	
Beaglehole, Ernest Leonard George	Private	SX39313 (S26282)	
Beall, Raymond Frederick	Sergeant	SX39789 (S21347)	23-Nov-1942
Beard, Samual George	Lance Corporal	NX109896 (N165655)	22-Jan-1945
Beasley, Raymond Edmund	Private	S44072	28-Oct-1943
Beauchamp, Ralph Malcolm	Sergeant	SX23968 (S21419)	
Beer, Kevin Alfred	Craftsman	SX25254 (S21173)	
Beerworth, Joseph Patrick	Lieutenant	SX32494	
Belfer, Jacob	Corporal	S26510	
Bell, Henry Kitchener	Private	S20104	
Belton, Murray James	Private	SX17926	
Benjamin, Leslie Norman	Signalman	SX28398 (S21290)	
Bennet, Albert	Lieutenant	S19706	
Bennetts, Charlie	Private	S20938	
Benton, Leslie James	Private	SX28928 (S21417)	
Benton, Ronald Arthur	Lance Corporal	SX38808	KIA, BI 30.06.1945
Berry, Malcolm Keith	Private	S50173	14-Apr-1945
Berry, Robert Barclay	Lance Corporal	SX26876 (S20139)	
Best, Albert	Corporal	S20798	
Best, Frederick William	Private	SX39980 (S43441)	20-Nov-1942
Beswick, Lees Joseph	Private	SX38727 (S19930)	11-Mar-1943
Betterman, Roy James	Corporal	SX39131 (S20531)	
Bevear, Harold Robert	Lance Corporal	NX118125 (N33389)	22-Dec-1944
Bichard, Ralph Le Page	Corporal	SX32466 (S17726)	
Billett, Clarence Henry	Private	S21292	



Bilsborow, Eric Roy	Private	SX29149 (S43442)	13-May-1943
Birch, Ronald Harold	Private	SX20525/S19938* in u.d.	
Birch, Sidney Edward	Private	QX60721 (Q272051)	23-Mar-1944
Bischoff, Kevern Maxwell	Private	SX27925 (S21399)	
Bishop, Stanley George	Private	SX28264 (S50109)	18-Feb-1943
Bittner, Eric Roy	Sergeant	SX39641 (S21056)	
Blair, Douglas Vaughan	Driver	S21362	
Blieschke, Herman Keith	Sergeant	SX39760/S21404* in u.d.	KIA, BI 13.07.1945
Blight, Arthur Douglas	Private	SX31389 (S20658)	
Bloomfield, Charles Leslie	Private	SX39755 (S17795)	
Bobridge, Raymond Alexander John	Private	SX29002 (S21174)	13-May-1943
Bonham, Cyril	Lance Corporal	SX29316 (S29083)	
Bonning, Reuben George	Private	VX92196	14-Apr-1945
Boorer, Leonard Frank	Lieutenant	VX17083	25-Feb-1944
Booth, Bertram John	Corporal	NX109783 (N22713)	26-Oct-1944
Borowicki, Victor John	Private	SX28804 (S43444)	20-Nov-1942
Bott, Irving Francis	Private	SX28996 (S21566)	
Bourke, Michael Nicholas	Private	SX39922 (S17427)	15-Jan-1943
Bourke, Thomas William James	Private	SX39744 (S20787)	28-Apr-1944
Bowden, George Joseph	Corporal	S21025	
Bowden, Lawrence Collins	Corporal	SX38110 (S21291)	
Bowman, Edmond Percival	Private	SX39143 (S58488)	25-May-1943
Bowman, Mervyn Banks	Corporal	SX26859 (S20017)	
Bradbury, Raymond George	Driver/*Pte in diary	S21475	7-Nov-1942
Bradley, Robert Edward	Private	SX31422 (S21568)	
Branson, Gilbert Alex	Lieutenant	SX5711	23-Aug-1944
Brewer, Maxwell Edward	Private	S21416	
Brewin, William Francis	Private	S26445	7-Jun-1943
Brideson, Clarence Arthur	Corporal	SX23981 (S20854)	
Bridgman, Ronald Walter	Private	SX25288 (S21418)	
Brinkley, James Frederick Kitchener	Craftsman	SX39623 (S20642)	
Britain, Sidney William	Private	S20146	28-Oct-1943
Brittain, Leslie George Murdock	Corporal	SX27595 (S20834)	
Broadhurst, Ronald Edward* R.A. in diary	Private	S20109	
Brodie, Gordon Marcus	Captain	NX77249	2-Sep-1944
Brookhouse, Reginald Sydney	Private	NX175060 (N255835)	17-Jun-1944
Brooks, Arthur William	Private	S19916	
Brooks, Colin Sydney	Sergeant	SX26880 (S20090)	
Brooks, Harold Edward	Private	S21348	

Brown, Clarence William Roger	Private	SX39958 (S20494)	
Brown, Claude Robert	Corporal	NX111623 (N38877)	14-Jul-1944
Brown, Ernest Walter	Private	SX12025	7-Jun-1943
Brown, Herbert Frederick Charles	Private	VX75029 (V310100)	23-Feb-1943
Brown, Jack	Lieutenant	S19735	
Brown, James Noah	Private	SX32529 (S17793)	
Brown, John Edgar	Private	SX39118 (S31180)	7-Jun-1943
Brown, Leslie George Napier	Sergeant	SX23957 (S114784, S21474)	
Brown, Ronald Darrell	Sergeant	SX23997 (S20599)	
Brown, Travers Mehrrens Bruggemann, Ronald Edward	Private Sergeant	S21175 QX16220	
Bryans, Leslie George Thomas	Lance Corporal	SX39119 (S29062)	20-Jan-1943
Bubner, Eric Howard	Corporal	SX28025 (S20748)	26-Jan-1943
Bubner, R.H.*	Lance Corporal	*not in n.r.*	10-Feb-1945
Buckley, Harold William	Private	QX56035	9-Dec-1944
Bugg, Jack	Private	SX28023 (S37319)	26-Jan-1943
Bullock, Leonard Hynam	Sergeant	S21168	
Burford, Leslie Arthur	Private	SX28824 (S20602)	
Burford, Richard Darcy	Sergeant	S26449	26-Oct-1944
Burford, Robert Albert	Corporal	SX28582 (S20628)	
Burges, George Herbert	Private	NX141819 (N156174)	14-Apr-1945
Burke, John Clement	Private	S21039	
Burke, Raymonde	Private	NX21064	2-Dec-1944
Burner, Ernest Michael	Private	SX26884*/S42967 in u.d.	7-Nov-1942
Burnett, George William	Private	SX19616	27-Jul-1944
Burns, George Kevin	Private	SX31413 (S21297)	20-Nov-1942
Burns, Robert Bruce	Private	S26171	
Burrowes, George Stanley	Private	SX39728 (S18049)	
Burr, Leonard Ross	Private	S20756	
Buss, Horace Alfred	Sergeant	SX39745 (S21008)	
Butler, Frank	Private	SX39122 (S61314)	23-Feb-1943
Butler, Ross	Lieutenant/*Sgt	SX39605 (S14606)	
Byers, Robert William	Sapper	SX29755 (S18051)	
Byrne, Andrew Douglas	Corporal	SX31865 (S19891)	
Byrnes, Thomas Bernard	Private	NX85569 (NX981)	17-Jun-1944
Cahill, Arthur James	Private	SX39981 (S27272)	11-Mar-1943
Cahill, Clive	Sapper	SX29756 (S21004)	
Callaghan, Albert Thomas	Private	SX39366 (S21217)	8-Sep-1943
Callander, Jack Warwick	Captain	337571 (VX62689)	25-Feb-1944
Cameron, Hugh Allan	Private	S21026	
Campbell, John Duncan	Private	SX25255 (S21613)	
Campbell, Patrick	Private	41330 (S50543, SX38632)	27-Jun-1943

## Costello

Campbell, Ross Colin	Sergeant	NX9258	
Canavan, Malachi Vincent	Private	SX23985 (S20687)	
Canavan, William James	Lieutenant	VX41464	17-Jan-1944
Canham, Donald Frederick	Private	S21478	20-Jan-1944
Cannan, Laurie Clive	Private	S20842	
Capurso, Victor James* (*J.V. in diary)	Private	SX27927 (S21425)	
Cardwell, Richard William	Private	S18058	
Carey, Hubert	Sergeant	SX23456 (S20344)	
Carey, Ronald Clarence	Private	SX28997 (S43452)	13-May-1943
Carmichael, Maxwell George	Lieutenant	SX25124*S19776 in u.d.	KIA, BI 02.07.1945
Carmichael, Robert James Oliver	Private	SX27832 (S21420)	
Carnell, George William	Private	NX169996 (N455041)	16-Aug-1944
Carroll, George Francis	Private	SX31399 (S21177)	12-Feb-1943
Carroll, William John	Private	VX134224	14-Apr-1945
Carson, Alexander Barron	Lieutenant	NX14764	16-Feb-1944
Carter, Donald Edwards	Driver/*Pte in diary	SX32911 (S21375)	
Carter, Gerald Gordon	Private	SX26864 (S19883)	
Carter, Lionel Hugh	Private*vol.reversion	SX39741 (S20988)	
Carters, James Ronald	Corporal	NX168389 (N450996)	28-Apr-1944
Casey, Lawrence Joseph	Private	S21571	
Casey, Roy Allen	Lance Corporal	SX25256 (S21239)	
Casey, Thomas William	Private	SX25251 (S17806)	
Castle, Ivan Johoe* (*F.L. in u.d.)	Private	SX26875 (S21422)	
Cattell, Earl George	Private	NX53582	17-Jun-1944
Cattermole, Albert John	Private	33717(SX2907, SX31790)S21168*	
Cearns, John Dennis	Private	S29647	5-Oct-1943 died (acc.) 18-5-44
Cederblad, John Richard	Private	SX23956 (S20969)	
Chancellor, Claude Edward	Private	S20532	
Chant, Walter	Private	S17946	
Chapman, Angus Wilfred	Private/Craftsman*	SX38686 (S26922)	
Chedzey, Thomas	Private	N284038	11-Apr-1945
Chesson, Eric Leslie	Private	S21477	
Chigwidden, Arthur Raymond	Private	SX27636 (S21610)	
Chinca, Lelio	Private	SX23929 (S21481)	
Christie, George Swanson*Attached*	Private/*Cap. in diary	V57032 (VX134814)	3-Mar-1945
Christopher, Douglas Keith	Private	SX38666 (S9102)	23-Feb-1943
Chynoweth, Percival Charles James	Corporal	SX39121 (S23499)*S23496 in u.d.	

Clark, Henry Albert	Private	SX28812 (S36444)	20-Mar-1943
Clark, Maurice Andrew	Private	SX28641 (S21603)	27-Jun-1943
Clark, M.R.*	Private	S21394 *doesn't match n.r.	DFI, NG 27.07.1944
Clark, Noel	Private	VX126401	27.07.1944
Clarke, Kenneth Frederick	Private	SX39799 (S21532)	25-May-1943
Clarke, Patrick Joseph	Private	S29916	5-Jan-1945
Clarke, William Alex	Private	S21480	
Clarkson, Sydney Thomas	Private	SX28816 (S21064)	20-Mar-1943
Cliff, Lindsay Arthur	Staff Sergeant	SX26877 (S20147)	
Clifton, Charles Mervyn	Lieutenant	WX2893	KIA, BI 26.07.1945
Clisby, Colin Horace	Private	S21660	
Clothier, William Allen	Private	SX27597 (S17965)	9-Jan-1943
Cochrane, Eric Henry	Private	S19942	8-Apr-1944
Cocker, Colin Stanley	Private	SX38734 (S51715)	3-May-1945
Cockrum, Leonard Vivian	Private	S21615	11-Jul-1943
Colebatch, Hector Gordon	Lance Corporal	S20883	
Collins, Archibald Arthur	Private	SX25283 (S21424)	
Collins, Harold Victor	Private	SX39835 (S19959)	
Collins, Lenard William	Private	SX27592 (S20465)	17-Nov-1942
Conlon, Thomas	Private	N90958	5-Oct-1943
Connor, Thomas Anthony	Major	SX24899 (S19664)	21-Jun-1943
Constable, Eric Victor*Attchd*	Captain*	SX27741 (S41646)*	
Conway, Eric Alexander	Private	SX39767 (S20795)	
Cook, William Eric	Corporal*(Pvt:diary)	SX27884 (S20981)	
Cookes, Sydney Leslie	Private/Corporal*(dry)	S20441	
Cooper, Arthur William	Corporal	SX39216 (S30174)	
Cooper, Frank Albert	Private	NX175764 (N461396)	5-Sep-1944
Cooper, George Lewis Robert	Private	VX90408	KIA, BI 03.05.1945
Cooper, Ivan Hamilton	Private	SX27600 (S20597)	
Cooper, Kenneth Francis	Major	SX26405 (S40560)	
Cooper, K.R.*	Captain	(*same man as above?)	
Copeland, Colin George	Private	S31715	
Cordes, Edward John	Private	SX38883 (S20073)	27-Jun-1943
Cornell, Albert Sydney	Private	SX31217 (S15085)	10-Dec-1942
Cornelius, Marnis Petersen	Private	VX148379	KIA, BI 03.07.1945
Correll, Thomas Purnell	Corporal	SX25257 (S21299)	
Corrie, Gordon Edward	Private	QX61028	KIA, BI 01.08.1945
Costello, Vincent Paul	Craftsman	SX25285 (S21423)	9-Jan-1943
Cotton, Frederick Roderick Arthur	Private	SX23941 (S20933)*S21269 in u.d.	27-Jun-1943
Cottrell, Lawrence Bernard	Private	SX38822 (S45733)	7-Nov-1942

Cousins, Harry	Corporal	SX25241 (S18060)	
Cowle, Maxwell Pressland	Lieutenant/*Chaplain	S3110	
Cowled, John	Lance Corporal	S21086	
Cowley, Jack Alfred Arthur	Private	SX26862 (S20710)	
Cox, Clement Nicholas	Private	SX39806 (S20863)	12-Feb-1943
Cox, Verdun Howard	Staff Sergeant	S19805	
Crafter, Norman Eric	Private	SX27603 (S111603, S21476)	9-Jan-1943
Craig, Anthony Edward	Private	NX201968	22-Jan-1945
Craigie, Glen Edward	Lieutenant	VX22370	25-Feb-1944
Crawford, Douglas Kenneth	Private	SX25258 (S21602)	
Crew, Joseph Edwin	Private	S21625	
Crick, Henry George	Private	NX170937 (N249606)	6-Sep-1945
Crocker, Harry	Private	S21270	
Cross, Samuel Robert	Lance Corporal	NX177218 (N297255)	17-Jun-1944
Crowe, Charles Patrick	Private	S19932	
Crowe, John William	Private	SX28642 (S19908)	
Crowhurst, Frederick Albert	Signalman	SX23978 (S20386)	
Cullen, John Albert	Craftsman	SX31408	11-Jul-1943
Culpin, John Henry	Private	S17807	
Cummins, Peter Augustine	Private	SX31380 (S20489)	29-Jul-1943
Curlis, James Anderson	Sergeant	SX23936 (S21139)	
Curtis, Glen Ray	Private	S21298	
Cunningham, Charles William	Lance Corporal	SX25248 (S17178)	
Cunningham, Frederick Albert	Private	N234780	11-Dec-1945
Curyer, Harold Mervyn	Private	SX31414 (S20966)	
Cussion, Arnold Edward	Corporal	SX31555 (S45829)	25-May-1943
Cutting, George Albert	Private	SX39111 (S5125)	5-Feb-1943
Dabinett, David John	Private	SX31423 (S21386)	27-Jun-1943
Daley, Martin Francis	Private	S18062	
Daly, Harold Charles	Corporal	SX23924 (S20991)	
Dart, Ronald	Private	SX39793 (S20912)	
Dauncey, John Francis	Private	S20779	7-Jun-1943
Davidson, Frank Malcolm	Private	S43459	20-Jan-1943
Davies, Eric Angus	Private	SX25259 (S17538)	
Davis, George	Sergeant	SX23922 (S19874)	
Davis, Horace Edward William	Corporal	S31200	
Davis, Ted	Corporal	VX76892	1-Dec-1942
Dawson, Colin Arthur	Sergeant	SX28823 (S20931)	
Dawson, Francis William	Private	NX200544	DOW, BI 30.06.1945
Day, Anthony Richard	Corporal	SX29156 (S21301)	13-May-1943

Day, Colin Maxwell	Major	SX25121 (S19660)	
Day, Eric Thomas	Lieutenant	437319 (SX1000)	
Day, George James Thomas	Sergeant	S20986	DOW, BI 30.06.1945
De-abel, Patrick	Private	NX168377	
Dean, Cyril John	Private	S17841	
Dearling, Henry Stanley	Lance Corporal	NX127627 (N212564)	5-Sep-1944
Dearlove, Hedley Milton	Corporal	S20670	
Dearlove, Leslie Arthur Vivian	Lance Corporal	SX23955 (S21411)	
Degenaro, Orlando	Private	SX28238 (S14760)	18-Feb-1943
Denny, John William	Private	S21575* (S21570 in u.d.)	
Dew, Geoffrey Douglas	Corporal	NX166424 (N162405)	30-Dec-1944
Dew, Malcolm	Sergeant	SX23931 (S20557)	
Diamond, Broughton Carey	Lance Sergeant	SX23994 (S20587)	
Dickson, Albert John	Sergeant	SX39110 (S21063)	
Dillon, Phillip Keith	Private	SX27587 (S30261)	17-Nov-1942
Dinham, Horace Henry	Sergeant	SX25247 (S20680)	
Ditter, Gordon Kurt	Corporal	SX25279 (S21302)	
Dixon, Maurice William	Lance Corporal	SX38675 (S20653)	
Dodd, Albert Edward	Private	NX192843 (N452789)	28-Apr-1944
Doddridge, Hugh Francis Sheridan	Private	SX25260 (S21427)	
Doherty, Kevin Mannix Redmond	Private	SX27418 (S26059)	4-Dec-1942
Donaldson, Rexford Hugh	Private	S20437	
Donnelly, Stanley Keith	Lance Corporal	SX29797 (S111597, S21557)	
Douglas, James Archibald	Major	QX6097	21-Jun-1943
Dow, John Roderick	Corporal	SX39369 (S26057)	
Dowling, Donald Keith	Sergeant	SX27640 (S20075)	
Down, Ian Barry	Private	S19748	
Drage, Leonard Francis	Private	S40078	9-Jan-1943
Dreschler, Vernon John	Corporal	SX37148 (S21353)	
Drennan, John Edward	Private	SX28825 (S23020)	
Driscoll, Ellis William	Private	NX116607	DOW, BI 01.07.1945
Driver, Sidney	Private	SX39580 (S21628)	16-Dec-1942
Droder, Philip George	Private	NX120845 (N352730)	28-Apr-1944
Dudley Henry William	Private	SX28548 (S21576)	6-Mar-1943
Drummond, Cornelius Alexander	Private	SX23999 (S20040)	
Dundon, John Francis	Private	NX18467 (N71138)	17-Jun-1944
Dunn, Verdun Lloyd	Lance Corporal	SX31385 (S17653)	
Dunstan, D.B.*Donald Beaumont*Attchd*	Lieutenant*Major(in n.r.)	2289 (NX160013)*NP10124 in u.d.	