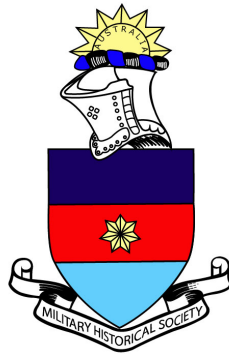


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Sabretache



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EDITORIAL

Readers may be aware of the project by the Australian War Memorial to display on the façade of the Hall of Memory – one-by-one in lights at night – every name of the 62,000 service personnel who gave their lives during WW1. The commemoration period coincides with the formal duration of the war, lasting from 4 August 2014 to 11 November 2018, and every name will appear 30 times over that period. Details of the project and a list of the approximate times of display can be found here: <http://www.awm.gov.au/1914-1918/roll-honour-name-projections/>. Society stalwart Paul Rosenzweig was telling me how during an upcoming trip to Canberra he planned to stand outside the Hall and photograph certain names of significance to his family and friends. I wondered why the AWM didn't have some sort of web cam set up by which the names could be streamed onto its website. Paul was quite taken with this idea and contacted the AWM accordingly:

I have a concern about the Roll of Honour name projections. This is a great initiative, and will create a memorable photograph to honour these service personnel for generations. However, it will be very difficult for families to attend personally to witness their ancestor's name displayed, particularly so when families have more than one they wish to honour. And given that the name only appears for 30 seconds, and there's no published schedule to refer to, to give notice so they can prepare their camera. I also have concerns about vulnerable people (aged, children, etc) being in the precinct at all hours of the night – will there be lighting, will there be a security presence? Could I suggest a camera be set up like the fixed traffic and weather cameras, to provide live-streaming onto the internet every night, so that families can see their ancestor's name displayed from the safety and comfort of their home. Thanks for your consideration.

The AWM replied that 'At this stage there is no capability or capacity to display the name projections online or to take photographs of each name projection. If at some stage online viewing of the name projections or photographs is introduced during the Centenary period the Memorial will update the relevant web page to advise the general public of this capability.' So no joy on the technology front, but who knows, things may develop in that regard. The AWM protested that there is a 'published schedule', but Paul was thinking more of a list on contiguous names, allowing viewers some sort of a lead-up to the eventual appearance of the names they might be waiting for. On the issue of night-time security the AWM added: 'The Memorial has been upgrading site lighting over the past few years and this work is nearing completion. Additionally, the Memorial also maintains a security presence after hours with regular patrols of the entire Memorial precinct and is also in the process of upgrading its CCTV capability.'

Commemoration is something of an overt theme of this issue's articles, although given the nature of our field, when is it not in one form or another? And speaking of articles, it's encouraging to be on the receiving end of an increasing number of submissions and expressions of interest from potential contributors. Many of them are quite sizeable, too, as is evident in this issue, with space being at a bit of a premium. As a result, please note the placing of the Society Notices right towards the end of the issue. Given the increasing backlog of articles, I would ask contributors to be patient regarding the publication of their items. Usually if you don't hear anything further from me apart from an acknowledgement of receipt, your article will see print. However, don't let any of this put you off if you're still planning to submit something: keep on researching, writing and contributing, and I look forward to a productive and enjoyable 2015!

Paul Skrebels

COMMEMORATING THE FILIPINOS KILLED IN AUSTRALIA ON 19 FEBRUARY 1942

Major Paul A. Rosenzweig (retd)¹

In February this year, the Philippine Honorary Consul-General in Darwin hosted a significant ceremony to honour fourteen Filipino mariners killed north of Darwin during World War 2. These men were killed when the cargo ships *SS Florence D* and *SS Don Isidro* were repeatedly attacked by Japanese aircraft on 18 and 19 February 1942. A commemorative plaque (see fig.1) was jointly unveiled by Her Excellency Mrs Belen F Anota, Ambassador of the Philippines to Australia, and the Honourable Peter Styles MLA, Northern Territory Minister of Multicultural Affairs – a long overdue commemoration of this wartime sacrifice by Filipino civilians. But how did this sacrifice well north of Darwin come to be included in what has been dubbed the ‘Battle for Australia’? These merchant mariners were Filipino nationals serving on commercial vessels which had been contracted to run the Japanese air-sea blockade of the Philippines – but there are some particular points of relevance for northern Australia.



Fig.1: This plaque was unveiled in Darwin on 18 February 2014 to honour the Filipino civilian mariners killed on 19 February 1942 while serving as crew of the blockade runners SS Florence D and SS Don Isidro.

The Filipino connection with Port Darwin dates back to the ‘Manilamen’ of the late 19th century, pearl and shell divers who became patriarchs of some notable Territorian families with a significant

contribution to the two world wars. From three of these families eight sons volunteered for the AIF, with six seeing active service overseas: two were killed, two were wounded and one was decorated for bravery.² And then some seventeen Filipino-Australians with a Northern Territory connection volunteered for military service during World War 2, among them one of the Great War veterans. In addition, there were several Filipino-Australians working on Darwin wharf in 1941-42, five of them being killed during the first Japanese air-raid, including one of the 1915 volunteers.

The casualty roll for the Bombing of Darwin is now known to also include one Filipino sailor from the *USS Peary*. However the fourteen Filipino mariners also killed on 19 February 1942,

AANT = Australian Archives Northern Territory

AWM = Australian War Memorial

NAA = National Archives of Australia

NTLS = Northern Territory Library Service

NTTG = Northern Territory Times & Gazette

¹ 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).

² See *Sabretache LIV(4)*, December 2013; *Sabretache LV(1)*, March 2014; and *Sabretache LV(2)*, June 2014.

and another two who later died of their wounds, had no specific connection with Darwin – in fact the *Florence D* and *Don Isidro* had never berthed in Darwin harbour. But these men became inextricably linked with the Bombing of Darwin when their deaths were included in the Royal Commission tally.

ARAFURA SEA, 18-19 FEBRUARY 1942

On 19 January 1942, Col John A Robenson (US Army) flew from Darwin to the Netherlands East Indies to urgently secure ships, crews and cargo for single missions as blockade runners: to resupply the besieged troops on Bataan Peninsula and Corregidor Island in the Philippine Islands. These civilian cargo ships, contracted by the US Army, carried a total cargo of 500,000 rations, 10,000 rounds of 3-inch ammunition, 250,000 rounds of .50-inch calibre ammunition and three million .30-inch calibre rounds. In a series of air attacks off Bathurst Island on 18 and 19 February 1942 Catalina flying boat PBY 2306 was downed, *Florence D* was sunk and *Don Isidro* was beached. Eighteen deaths were attributable to these actions, including sixteen mariners from the 105 Filipinos crewing the two ships. They were civilians, serving under Articles of Agreement with the Master, but were drawn into the body count for the Bombing of Darwin even though they were never there.

SS *Don Isidro*

The *Don Isidro* had been built in 1939 for the De La Rama Steamship Company in the Philippines for inter-island services. The Master, Capt Rafael J Cisneros, assured Robenson that he and his men, ‘would do their best to deliver food and ammunition to the Philippine Islands’.³ She departed Batavia (Jakarta) on 12 February 1942 carrying flour, dry rations and ammunition, with a total complement of 84: Capt Cisneros and his crew of 67 fellow Filipinos, plus a 16-man armed guard from the 453d Ordnance (Aviation) Bombardment Company commanded by Second Lieutenant Joseph Kane, US Army. The intention was to head through the Arafura and Banda Seas, and then make a run direct to Mindanao. By noon on 18 February the *Don Isidro* was about 80 miles north of Wessel Island off eastern Arnhem Land when a Japanese bomber attacked her twice, but without causing damage. Cisneros changed course, ironically to seek shelter in Darwin Harbour.

She was 25 miles north of Bathurst Island on 19 February when seven fighter planes returning from the strike on Darwin suddenly strafed her. Despite the guard’s defensive fire, several crew were wounded and all life-boats were destroyed. Later a Japanese float plane dropped two bombs which missed, but several dive bombers and fighter planes then set the *Don Isidro* on fire. Captain Cisneros attempted to beach her but the engines failed about three miles offshore; the crew abandoned ship and reached the beach around 2 or 3am the following morning. The survivors initially found that four crew were dead and many were missing.

HMAS *Warrnambool* rescued the survivors at about 10.30 am on 20 February, herself under air attack. Capt Cisneros found there were seven missing besides the four known to be dead:

Before we were brought in to the port of Darwin, we went and approached the ill-fated ‘Don Isidro’ in search of the Chief Engineer and the Chief Electrician, as we were told they were still on board very badly burnt and wounded. Once in there, we saw the deck was already under water and no trace of them whatsoever.⁴

³ Underbrink (1971) p.67.

⁴ Master USAT ‘Don Isidro’ to Colonel Johnson, 3rd Base USAFIA, Brisbane, dated 21 February 1942, ‘Report of bombing and sinking of U.S.A.T. “Don Isidro”.’

Douglas Lockwood stated in 1984 that ‘Eleven died and were buried there’ (on Bathurst Island).⁵ His source was most likely Lieut Owen Griffiths RAN from HMAS *Platypus*, who also recorded the fate of SS *Don Isidro*:

Eleven survivors died on the beach at Bathurst Island. Some had been in the water for ten hours. There were two parties of survivors, one on the beach and the second up a creek. Seventy-three were brought back to Darwin by Warrnambool, where two more died.⁶

However, based on the report by Cisneros it is clear that all eleven Filipinos died on the ship and their bodies were never recovered. Of the 73 survivors brought in by *Warrnambool*, one American and two Filipinos later died of their wounds. Three weeks after the attack, the US Naval Liaison Officer Capt Marshall Collins USN listed ‘Dead: 11’ and then ‘US Army dead: 1’.⁷ In 1943, Collins reported to the Administrator of the Northern Territory, ‘It will be noted that one US Army killed is listed from the SS DON ISIDRO’.⁸ The Royal Commission report quoted the figure of 11 killed, mistakenly believing that it *included* the sole Army casualty, whereas in fact there were 11 Filipinos killed (see Table 1) *plus* the American (who actually died of wounds), plus a further two Filipinos who died of their wounds (these were not recorded in the Royal Commission tally, and their names remain unknown).

Eight soldiers from the defence detachment were wounded, and Second Lieut Kane was seriously wounded in the leg and foot – he died of gangrene in hospital in Darwin on 26 February 1942 and was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart. Purple Hearts (at that time still awarded for meritorious service) were also bestowed upon all fifteen enlisted men of the detachment. Kane was buried at Adelaide River, but was later reburied in the US in 1949.⁹

The US Merchant Marine website correctly lists the casualties as 13 crew and one US Army; some other sites incorrectly list ten dead.¹⁰ Many of the Filipino names in various records suffer from having their spelling anglicised: in most Filipino dialects (and modern Tagalog) ‘f’ is pronounced as ‘p’ and ‘v’ as ‘b’, and ‘o’ is often pronounced as ‘u’. So ‘Jaruvilla’ might variously be written as ‘Jarubilla’ or ‘Jarobilla’. The ‘g’ is often silent, so ‘Masangkay’ might be written as ‘Masankay’. Other names have been transcribed by English speakers not familiar with Filipino pronunciation, so ‘Jaime’ (with the Spanish-style soft ‘j’) has incorrectly been interpreted to be the English/American ‘Jamie’. Table 1 was created to support the preparation of the commemorative plaque in Darwin, and this gives the most likely spelling of the names of the seamen who were killed.

Each crew member served under a contract with the US Army which covered compensation and other matters, and which included generous salary provisions plus insurance through the US Army Chief Finance Officer for each man to the sum of \$US 500 for the period required to accomplish their mission. In the case of those who were killed, this was paid to the nominated beneficiary.¹¹ In return for his service Capt Cisneros, his wife and their children (all born in the Philippines) were granted US citizenship. Ironically, after surviving five enemy attacks in February 1942, Cisneros died in 1958 of a heart attack while he and his wife were on a cruise.

⁵ Lockwood (1984) p.63.

⁶ Griffiths (1947) p.74.

⁷ AANT: CRS F1 1942/364 – Captain M Collins USN, Summary dated 9 March 1942.

⁸ AANT: CRS F1 1942/364 – Captain M Collins USN, Letter to the Administrator dated 8 January 1943.

⁹ NTLS – <http://www.ntlexhibit.nt.gov.au/exhibits/show/bod/roh/kanej>

¹⁰ For example: <http://warmemorial.us>

¹¹ <http://www.gao.gov/products/B-132259#mt=e-report> – B-132259, 16 August 1957.

SS *Florence D*

The SS *Florence D* was originally the steamship SS *Lake Farmingdale* built by the Superior Shipbuilding Company of West Superior in Wisconsin, USA and launched in 1919. One of Col Robenson's team identified this small, fast cargo ship in Surabaya, owned by Madrigal and Company of Manila but procured under charter by the US Navy: after some considerable struggle, she was released to the Army on 2 February 1942. She too was to be a blockade runner, under Capt Carmelo Lopez Manzano, on a secret mission to deliver primarily 3-inch artillery shells and .30 and .50-inch calibre ammunition to the Corregidor garrison. Manzano was a former Philippine Army Major who graduated in 1924 from the Philippine Nautical School and had 14 years of seagoing experience behind him. On 9 February 1942, Col Robenson drew up a contract with Manzano covering compensation and insurance: Manzano was to receive 20,000 guilders, the Chief Engineer 10,000 guilders and each of the remaining officers 5,000 guilders each (four times their normal salaries).¹²

On the morning of 19 February 1942, the *Florence D* rescued the crew of a Catalina flying boat which had been attacked by Japanese fighters from the carrier-borne group heading to Darwin. She responded to the SOS call from *Don Isidro*, and survived an attack by a Japanese float plane 60 nautical miles northwest of Bathurst Island. She was attacked again at 3.30pm by nine dive-bombers from the aircraft carrier group's *Hiryu* squadron, returning after attacking Darwin. The *Florence D* suffered five direct hits, including one to the forward cargo hold full of ammunition: after a dramatic explosion she sank immediately in the Timor Sea west of Bathurst Island. Capt Manzano was injured and three crew members were killed as also was Joe Shuler of the Catalina crew.

The survivors landed on Bathurst Island in scattered groups around midnight; a couple of shrewd Aboriginal boys identified them as Filipinos and brought them food.¹³ A patrol aircraft spotted one party on 21 February, and the next morning HMAS *Warrnambool* rescued them and carried them to Darwin. Capt Manzano and ten other Filipinos, four badly burnt, were rescued by Brother Smith from Bathurst Island Mission Station in the lugger 'St Francis'. Two days later Brother Smith returned and recovered a further 18 survivors who had made their way to the mission from the northwest coast, while an additional two wounded men were flown to Darwin by the 'Flying Doctor' Clyde Fenton.

The US Merchant Marine website confirms the deaths as three Filipino crew and one American aviator. In December 1942, Carmelo Lopez Manzano received a commission as a Lieutenant-Commander in the Philippine Coast Guard Reserve after completing the US Navy's Submarine Chaser School. He was certified as being qualified to command patrol vessels, and went on to have a distinguished Coast Guard career.

DARWIN HARBOUR, 19 FEBRUARY 1942

While these fourteen civilian mariners were wrongly drawn into the Bombing of Darwin casualty statistics, it is worth noting that there was in fact one Filipino sailor killed in Darwin harbour that day – not previously identified as a Filipino simply because he was recorded as 'US Navy'. Cook Second Class Joseph Tapia¹⁴ was an officer's cook on the warship DD226 USS *Peary*, who had enlisted in the US Navy on 8 October 1937 in Cavite in the Philippines. He survived the Japanese bombing attacks on the Cavite Navy Yard on 10 December 1941, in

¹² Underbrink (1971) p.67.

¹³ Griffiths (1947) p.75.

¹⁴ NTLS – <http://www.ntlexhibit.nt.gov.au/exhibits/show/bod/roh/tapia>

which the *Peary* sustained damage and lost some men; she was attacked again off Corregidor Island on 26 December and off Negros Island on 28 December. She escaped, camouflaged with Army green paint, and during daylight hours took refuge close to the islands covered with palm fronds to elude Japanese patrol bombers. She arrived in Darwin on 3 January 1942, and then started conducting convoy and escort missions and anti-submarine patrols.

On 19 February 1942, the USS *Peary* was bombed five times where she was moored south of Darwin wharf: the ship was rocked by a massive explosion, and sank stern first within about 40 minutes. A witness to the *Peary*'s final moments, Sir Zelman Cowen, recalled:

I have a vivid memory of the old 'star-crossed' American destroyer *Peary*, ablaze from stem to stern, going down with a gun still firing, and with appalling loss of life.¹⁵

From a total of approximately 130 crew, the US Naval Liaison Officer Capt Collins reported an estimated 40 accounted for, four in hospital and ten on the hospital ship *Manunda*. He estimated 80 dead for the *Peary* (including the captain, Lieut-Cdr John Birmingham USN), and this approximation was quoted as a firm figure in the Royal Commission. The following year Collins reported to the Administrator: 'The estimate for the USS PEARY is the best I could make at the time'.¹⁶

Fig.2: 04979679 Cook 2nd Class Joseph Tapia, US Navy from Cavite in the Philippines was killed when the warship USS *Peary* was attacked and sunk in Darwin Harbour on 19 February 1942.

In 1989, *Peary* survivors Dallas Widick and John Patterson installed a plaque on the low wall near the Darwin Cenotaph in honour of 91 ship-mates who lost their lives (see fig.2). However, this roll was later found to contain several inaccuracies.¹⁷ For example: two men had been reported as 'missing-in-action' in Darwin but their names were not included on the casualty roll nor on this plaque. Some of those named on the plaque were never in Darwin harbour – two had been wounded at Cavite and taken prisoner, eight had died of malaria during the escape, two continued serving until war's end, and one listed among the dead was actually rescued by an Australian motor boat that day and remained AWOL for 18 months! It is now known that the USS *Peary* lost 88 officers and men in Darwin, including the Filipino Cook Second Class Joseph Tapia.



¹⁵ The Rt Hon Sir Zelman Cowen AK GCMG GCVO QC DCL, address for the 50th anniversary commemoration service, 19 February 1992.

¹⁶ AANT: CRS F1 1942/364 – Captain M Collins USN, Letter to the Administrator dated 8 January 1943.

¹⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:USS_Peary_DD226_-_Roll_of_Honour.jpg

DARWIN WHARF, 19 FEBRUARY 1942

By 1942, Port Darwin had become a vitally important staging point for ship convoys, with eighteen registered gangs of fourteen members each, all members of the waterside section of the North Australia Workers' Union. By February three shifts of six gangs were working around the clock. On 19 February 1942 though, through an administrative error, just five gangs were rostered to work instead of the usual six (70 men in total). These waterside workers had just commenced their shift and were starting to unload the cargo ships MV *Neptuna* and SS *Barossa* on the right-angled extension of the long pier. Reporting on a commemorative service at the wharf in 1951, the *Northern Standard* in Darwin reported:

It is a tragic fact that the first to die were the waterside workers for they had been the first Australians to protest and fight the sending of war materials to Japan.¹⁸

The circumstances of the Bombing of Darwin have been considered, dissected and analysed in considerable detail, from the tonnage of ships sunk in the harbour to their later recovery by a Japanese salvage firm, and the conversion to Christianity of the attack force commander Mitsuo Fuchida. A significant point of contention has always related to the number of casualties and the alleged 'cover-up'. For a number of reasons, casualty figures were not well documented at the time. In the report of the Royal Commission, Mr Justice Lowe gave a total of 243 which he believed to represent the number of known deaths at that time.¹⁹ Subsequent analysis however has shown that many deaths were double-counted or mis-counted, and many were never counted at all. When all of the various known errors and omissions are taken into account, the amended casualty roll lists 252 known deaths.²⁰

On the wharf in particular, the Royal Commission quoted 39 civilians killed, which has been perpetuated by subsequent authors.²¹ This figure came from a 'Merchant Service Roll' made available to Justice Lowe, but there were many errors in this list.²² Mariners on ships were counted including the two mentioned above which were not even in Darwin harbour; Lowe did not count two railway employees who later died of their wounds, and neither did he count eleven waterside workers on MV *Neptuna* or the merchant seamen from *Manunda*, SS *Mauna Loa* or two others from the *Zealandia*. The figure of 39 is anomalous because those killed whilst physically on board a ship were listed separately with that ship's casualty roll – and were also double-counted as 'civilian losses on the wharf'.

A more accurate number of civilians killed on the wharf is 22, comprising 20 men from the mercantile trading firm Burns, Philp & Co Ltd and the Commonwealth Railways, plus two railway employees who died of their wounds a week later on the hospital ship *Manunda*. Among them were five Filipino-Australians.

¹⁸ *Northern Standard* (Darwin) 23 February 1951, p.7.

¹⁹ Lowe (1942a), (1942b).

²⁰ Rosenzweig, P A, Darwin (1994) '50 years on: a reassessment of the first raid casualties'. *Journal of Northern Territory History*, 5: 1-19. This casualty roll was published as an appendix in Lewis, T (1999) *A War at Home* – Appendix 1: 'Casualty Roll, by Service', pp.63-67.

²¹ For example: Abbott (1950) p 84; Lockwood (1984) p66.

²² NAA: CRS F1 1942/364 – 'Merchant Service Casualties resulting from enemy action at Darwin, 19th February, 1942' (author unknown).

Francisco Augustus Chavez²³

Francisco Chavez was widely known in Darwin as ‘Francis’, although within the Filipino community he was known affectionately as ‘Chico’. After his father’s death, Francisco and his sister Beatrice became the step-children of Manilaman Mr Rafael Ponce, and they grew up with his children Pantaleona Mary (later Mrs Perez) and Eusebio Joseph (‘Sibio’).²⁴ On 19 February 1942, Francisco was employed by the Commonwealth Railways and was working as a winchman at the railway turntable at the right-angle of the wharf. He was killed immediately when one of the first sticks of bombs hit the turntable, throwing a locomotive and six railway trucks into the water.

Ricardo Warivin Da Souza Conanán (1894-1942)²⁵

Ricardo Conanán was the son of a Filipino diver, naturalised as a British subject in 1892, and a Portuguese mother who had died in 1902. He had volunteered for active service in 1915, and served as a sworn Special Constable for a rescue expedition to Arnhem Land in 1924. On 19 February 1942, Ricardo was a hatchman employed by Burns, Philp & Co beginning to unload the cargo ship SS *Barossa*, moored on the inner berth. The second stick of bombs from the first high level attack were direct hits on the wharf. Ricardo’s last words were reputedly, ‘Good-bye boys, I’ll see you in the next world’.²⁶ – his body was never found. His wife Lucy was part-Aboriginal and they had no children; Lucy had been evacuated from Darwin before the raids, and died in Adelaide in 1944. Ricardo’s sister Gertrude lost her husband Catalino Spain in the same raid.

Catalino Puerte Spain (1887-1942)²⁷

Catalino Spain was also the son of a diver, and an English mother who earned the title ‘Queen of Darwin’ for her charitable work; he had married Gertrude Conanán on 9 February 1909. Catalino Spain was employed by the Commonwealth Railways, and on 19 February 1942 was a labourer with No 3 Gang unloading cargo from the MV *Neptuna*.

Domingo Dominic²⁸

It is likely that Domingo Dominic was a recent arrival in Darwin, or perhaps even one of the 160 relief workers especially flown in by the federal Minister for Labour to supplement the gangs and increase their capacity. He was employed by Burns, Philp & Co and on 19 February 1942 was also working with No.3 Gang.

Juan Roque Cubillo (1906-1942)²⁹

Many of Darwin’s old Manilamen such as Tolentino Conanán and Carlos Ga had made their

²³ NTTG 4 February 1915, p.18; 20 July 1919, p.5; 24 June 1922, p.7; *Northern Standard* (Darwin) 2 June 1936, p.2; 23 February 1951, p.11; 24 February 1950, p.12; Lockwood (1984) p.74.

²⁴ NTTG 20 July 1919, p.5; 24 June 1922, p.7; *Northern Standard* (Darwin) 13 April 1928, p.4.

²⁵ See ‘Filipino AIF volunteers from the Northern Territory: Part 2 – The Conanán family’. *Sabretache LV-1* (January-March 2014): 35-47.

²⁶ Lockwood (1984), p. 72; see also Griffiths (1947) p. 79; Lockwood (2005), p.66.

²⁷ See ‘Filipino AIF volunteers from the Northern Territory, Part 3 : The Spain family’. *Sabretache LV-2* (April-June 2014): 17-29.

²⁸ NTLs – <http://www.ntlexhibit.nt.gov.au/exhibits/show/bod/roh/dominic>; Hall (1980), p.48; Lockwood (1984) pp.69-70, 71-72; AWM: AWM127_16.

²⁹ NTTG 25 January 1895, p.2; *Northern Standard* (Darwin) 28 October 1932, p.2; 1 November 1932, p.8; 25 April 1933, p.2; 25 September 1934, p.4; NAA: A1/1 File 26/5350 – ‘Half-castes and Quadroons in the Northern Territory, 1926’; Cubillo-Carter (2000); Distor, E & D Hunt (2006); Lee (2007).

own way from the Philippines to Thursday Island in the 1870s and 1880s, working there as divers, and becoming naturalised as British subjects. By comparison, the Cubillo family of Darwin is descended from the Filipino pearl-diver Antonio Pedro Cubillo (1875-1945)³⁰ who was part of the second phase of this wave of migration, the divers who came to Darwin as indentured labourers from 1895 onwards. They did not have the time to achieve naturalisation before the coming of federation, and then took some considerable time to achieve it due to the restrictions imposed by the Commonwealth *Immigration Restriction Act*.

Antonio was the son of a Filipino-Spanish sail-maker Innocencio Cubillo from Calape on Bohol Island in the Visayas group, who gave his date of birth as 30 June 1875 and his nationality as 'Spanish'. Family history records that Antonio left home in 1890 as a 15-year-old and travelled to Europe as a cabin boy on a Spanish ship, learning to dive for clam shell. In Singapore during his return voyage in late 1894, aged 19, Antonio met fellow Filipinos who told him about the opportunities diving for pearls, pearl shell and trepang. He signed on under the Indentured Labour Scheme and came to Palmerston on the SS *Darwin* which arrived in Port Darwin on 19 January 1895.

Antonio was indentured to a Scottish pearl lugger owner George McKeddie, who was married to Minnie ('Annie') Duwun (1878-1934), an Aboriginal woman of the Larrakia people. George and Annie lived with their two children Jack and Magdalena (known as 'Lily') in a house near the intersection of Mitchell and Peel Streets in Darwin. In 1897 Antonio Cubillo met Lily, and from 1899 they produced five children during their long courtship. Antonio and Lily married at Saint Mary's 'Star of the Sea' Catholic Church in Darwin on 8 September 1910, and had several more children – a total of ten, all essentially Larrakia but with typically Filipino names such as Christina, Alberta, Ponciano, Juan, Lorenzo, Martina, Eduardo and Delfin, Anna and Felipe. The family lived in the camp outside Darwin town known as the 'Police Paddock' overlooking Frances Bay (this is now the suburb of Stuart Park).

While the origins of the Filipino divers in Palmerston were quite disparate, they maintained their customs and traditions with a common bond established through food, music and sport. Members of the family today still recall family meals of dinaguan and pork adobo. One descendant recalled of Antonio:

He hosted visiting Filipino and Spanish ship's crews at his house and taught his sons to play the 14-string mandolin, octavina, the 8-stringed Spanish guitar, the ukulele, concertina and the bass. Before long the Cubillo Brothers 'orchestra' was entertaining official guests and visiting dignitaries at Government House and at numerous other social functions.³¹

Antonio made a return visit to Bohol in 1921-25. He went again in 1929, again intending to stay for three years – because he was not yet naturalised he required a certificate under the *Immigration Act 1901-1925* (Commonwealth) to allow his return entry into Australia.³² On this occasion however he deferred his return. Lily was well looked after by her children in Darwin until her death in 1934; Antonio was ultimately unable to return to Darwin due to the Japanese occupation of the Philippines and he died in Bohol in 1945. During the war, one son of Antonio and Lily served in an Australian uniform and another in an American uniform, while John was killed on Darwin wharf in 1942.

³⁰ NAA: E752, 1928/2A, 'Certificate of Exemption from Dictation Test - Antonio Cubillo', item barcode 7172128; NAA: A1, 1920/5541, 'Antonio Cubillo - Naturalization Certificate', item barcode 38548; NTTG 25 January 1895, p.2; South Australian Marriages Index 244/739 (1910); Distor & Hunt (2006).

³¹ Lee (2007).

³² <http://www.naa.gov.au/about-us/media/images/family-journeys/p71.aspx>

Juan Roque Cubillo, Antonio and Lily's fourth child and second son, was known variously as 'Johnny' or 'Rocky' (see fig.3). He married Louisa Agatha Lee who was the daughter of a Wadaman woman from Brock's Creek and a Chinese man Ah Lee. On 19 February 1942, Louisa and the children had just evacuated from Darwin, and they were camped in Katherine when they heard the news that John had been killed. They ultimately went to Balaklava in South Australia where they lived until the end of the war.



Fig.3: Juan 'Johnny' Cubillo was killed on Darwin wharf on 19 February 1942: he was the son of Antonio Pedro Cubillo (1875-1945) who came to Darwin in January 1895 as a 19-year-old diver.

The MV *Neptuna* was moored on the outer berth directly opposite the *Barossa*, crippled with a damaged piston in the port engine and heavily laden with defence stores, depth charges and anti-aircraft ammunition. No.3 Gang had just opened the No.1 hatch to unload the cargo when the first bombs fell. Catalino Spain and the other labourers were on the wharf, a shunter was pushing the railway truck up to the ship, John Cubillo was the mid-ship winchman, and Domingo Dominic was inside the hold. One bomb from the first

high level attack landed directly on the hold and Domingo Dominic was killed instantly. Another bomb came directly through the bridge and into the saloon, while another struck the engine room causing the depth charges and ammunition to start exploding. John Cubillo was last seen running on the wharf before he was lost in a bomb blast.³³

The fighters then came in: Catalino Spain was machine-gunned on the wharf and then hurled into the water by a bomb blast.³⁴ His body later washed up and was buried in a collective grave on the beach; these bodies were reinterred at East Point the following day, and on 1 July they were exhumed and taken to Adelaide River War Cemetery for burial. Moments later the *Neptuna* exploded and sank beside the wharf, with Domingo Dominic trapped inside.

COMMEMORATION

Merchant ships. The *Don Isidro* drifted and came ashore north of Cape Fourcroy on the west coast of Bathurst Island, still burning, on 20 February 1942.³⁵ The exact location of the wreck of the SS *Florence D* however was unknown until 2008: she is now known to have sunk

³³ Lockwood (1984) pp.69-70.

³⁴ Griffiths (1947) p.79; Hall (1980) p.48; Lockwood (1984) p.71; *The Sydney Morning Herald* (NSW) 4 March 1942, p.11; *The Courier-Mail* (Brisbane) 19 February 1945, p.6.

³⁵ <https://apps5a.ris.environment.gov.au/shipwreck/public/wreck/wreck.do?key=3424>

approximately 85 nautical miles northwest of Darwin.³⁶ Both vessels are today protected historic shipwrecks under the *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976* (Commonwealth).

On 18 February 2013 the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory the Honourable Terry Mills MLA and Brian Winspear AM (a WW2 Air Force veteran) officially opened a ‘Memorial Wall to the Allied Fallen’ at the Darwin Military Museum at East Point. This wall was intended to be a focal point for all allied personnel and civilians who died as a result of combat action in northern Australia in World War 2. On 18 February 2014, this memorial wall was the venue for the ceremony to honour the Filipino civilian mariners who had lost their lives. The SS *Don Isidro* had actually been first attacked by Japanese aircraft the day *before* the raids on Darwin, although she suffered no damage. For this reason it was considered appropriate to hold the commemoration and plaque unveiling on 18 February – marking the day these Filipinos first came under enemy attack. The Philippine Embassy in Canberra reported:

The solemn and meaningful commemoration truly served as a testament to the significant contribution of the Filipino community to the military history of Australia.³⁷

USS *Peary*. Joseph Tapia was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart. In Darwin, his name is recorded on the plaque honouring those from DD226 who lost their lives. In addition, his name is inscribed on the Tablets of the Missing – large rectangular limestone piers in the Manila American Cemetery and Memorial in Fort Bonifacio, Manila. This cemetery lies within the boundaries of the wartime Fort William McKinley. Although it is known that Joseph Tapia died when the *Peary* was bombed and sank in Darwin Harbour, his body was never recovered. His name therefore remains on a roll maintained by the Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO), which was established in 1993 after the US Senate called on the Department of Defense to form a single office to oversee and manage POW/MIA issues.³⁸

Ironically, the USS *Peary* and some other ships sunk in Darwin Harbour in the same raid were salvaged by a Japanese firm in 1959 – the company accepted no payment apart from the value of the metals recovered, as their contribution to ‘war reparations’. Local Darwin diver Carl Atkinson salvaged one of the *Peary*’s 4-inch guns and installed it at Doctors Gully. In November 1991, the gun was taken to Darwin Naval Base for restoration, and in 1992 was installed in Bicentennial Park overlooking the harbour – its barrel pointing towards the *Peary*’s resting place in the harbour (see fig.4). During his first visit to Australia in November 2011, American President Obama visited Darwin and laid a wreath at this USS *Peary* Memorial and addressed Australian and American troops on the enduring ties between Australia and the United States and their long-standing cooperation.

Darwin. In the postwar years, in addition to the regular Anzac Day service, commemorative services were also held at the Soldiers’ Memorial on 19 February for those killed in the bombing of Darwin. The attitude of the Administrator Mr ‘Mick’ Driver was recorded after the 1948 service:

the newspapers in southern states were inclined to deprecate the holding of the ceremony of February 19 in Darwin and tended to forget the sacrifices made by those who died on that day ... He deplored the lack of recognition of the significance of the date by the Government of the country for whom the dead had lost their lives.³⁹

³⁶ <https://apps5a.ris.environment.gov.au/shipwreck/public/wreck/wreck.do?key=3445>

³⁷ Philippine Embassy, Canberra – <http://www.philembassy.org.au/>

³⁸ DPMO – http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo/wwii/reports/all_m_t.htm

³⁹ *Northern Standard* (Darwin) 25 February 1949, p.8.

This fault was finally rectified on 7 December 2011, when the Governor-General declared the date 19 February in each year to be a national day of observance known as ‘Bombing of Darwin Day’.

Fig.4: DD226 USS Peary was bombed five times during the attack on Darwin, and sank within about 40 minutes. This 4-inch gun was salvaged in 1959 and in 1992 was installed in Bicentennial Park overlooking the harbour, aimed towards the submerged wreck of the Peary.



Immediately preceding the annual Bombing of Darwin commemorative service, a small private service was

always held at the wharf, where families would cast wreaths onto the water in memory of the waterside workers, civilians from Burns, Philp & Co and the Commonwealth Railways: among them five Filipino-Australians. A report on the 1952 wharf-side service observed:

As the floral tributes drifted away on the waves, those present stood silent and bare-headed in memory of their fallen comrades.⁴⁰

The son of Johnny Cubillo later recalled:

The Cubillo families and other Darwin families keep the tradition of commemorating the Bombing of Darwin Ceremony on the 19th of February every year. Our family has attended every Bombing of Darwin Ceremony since 1946 down at the Wharf and at the Cenotaph in memory of all civilians and service personnel killed. Lest we forget.⁴¹

In 1962, St Mary’s Star of the Sea Cathedral was opened on Smith Street, as the seat of the Bishop of the Diocese of Darwin, designed and built as a War Memorial Cathedral. The original timber and iron church which dated back to the 1880s, built by the Jesuit Fathers using Chinese labour, had been a focal point for Darwin’s Filipino community in particular. The father of Francisco Chavez served here at Mass around the turn of the century. Antonio Cubillo married Lily McKeddie here in 1910 and their children were all christened here. In 1919, Francisco Chavez’s step-sister Mary Ponce married Rafael Perez in this church. A funeral service was held here for Carlos Ga when he died in 1931. The funeral of a Mrs Rodellas in April 1935 gives some indication of the extent of the Filipino community in Darwin at that time: those who paid their respects included the Alfonso, Angeles, Cardona, Cesar, Cigobia, Conanan, Cubillo and Perez families, as well as Beatrice and Francisco Chavez.⁴² On 19 February 1942, Japanese aircraft had repeatedly strafed the church with machine-gun fire.

The new cathedral was designed to be a War Memorial and Shrine of Thanksgiving, erected to commemorate those Australian and Allied Service personnel who lost their lives in Darwin as well as those Darwin residents killed during the air raids. At Mass on and around 19 February

⁴⁰ *Northern Standard* (Darwin) 22 February 1952, p.1.

⁴¹ Stephen Cubillo, pers comm dated 2 February 2014.

⁴² *Northern Standard* (Darwin) 26 April 1935, p.8

each year special prayers are given for those who fell or suffered bereavement in the air raids. In 2012, for the 70th anniversary of the bombing, among those remembered were:

The 22 workers killed on Darwin Wharf, and we offer a prayer of thanks for the constancy of their work comrades and families, who have kept their memories alive over the past 70 years.⁴³

To specifically honour the civilians killed during the first raids, the Darwin City Council erected a large plaque beside the doorway to the council offices. This plaque was unveiled on 19 February 1971 by the Governor-General Sir Paul Hasluck. Today, based on the comprehensive roll of all people who were killed or died afterwards of wounds, an online Roll of Honour has been provided by the Northern Territory Library Service⁴⁴ which includes the names of the five Filipino-Australians killed on the wharf during that first raid on Darwin.

A large 'Bombing of Darwin' descriptive plaque was installed on the Esplanade near Government House in Darwin on 19 February 2001, correctly stating that 22 men were killed on the wharf.⁴⁵ On Stokes Hill Wharf on 19 February 2012, two special memorials were installed to mark the 70th anniversary of the raid. The Mariners' Mural was erected by the Darwin Port Authority, and the Wharf Memorial commemorates the civilians from Burns, Philp & Co Ltd and the Commonwealth Railways known to have been killed on the wharf.

* * *

Military anniversaries have been commemorated in Australia on particular days of significance each year, and specific regional events have been locally commemorated. Heroes both decorated and unknown have been honoured. The Bombing of Darwin attracted only local commemoration until finally in 2011 it gained national recognition. Among Darwin's casualties were civilian wharf labourers, the news of their deaths being received by their families after they had been safely evacuated to Katherine, Brisbane and Sydney. Included in their number were five Filipino-Australians with a connection back to the first Manilamen who had settled in Port Darwin in the late 19th century. But until February 2014, too easily overlooked were the Filipino merchant sailors who died as a result of that first Japanese air attack on Darwin on 19 February 1942. They were not decorated, and were barely written into any official history – in fact, any reference to the two ships casually implies they were *in* Darwin Harbour when in fact they were well to the north, in the Arafura Sea.

These civilians, without a known grave, are of the nature of the Unknown Soldier, humble men doing their duty but whose noble service was cut unreasonably short by enemy action.

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 all of the Conanan, Spain and Cubillo family descendants for kindly providing photographs and information.

Table 1 (*following page*): The names of the fourteen Filipino merchant sailors who were killed in the Arafura Sea north of Darwin on 19 February 1942, giving the most likely spelling of their names:

⁴³ <http://www.catholiccathedraldarwin.org/bombingofdarwin1942.htm>

⁴⁴ NTLS – <http://www.ntlexhibit.nt.gov.au/exhibits/show/bod/roh/bibliography>

⁴⁵ Refer: <https://www.facebook.com/Thanks.Digger>

SS Don Isidro	SS Florence D
Antonio Cordova (Oiler) Raul Delgado (Machinist) Loreto Jaime (2 nd Engineer) Melchor Jaruvilla (3 rd Engineer) Alberto Jimenea (Oiler) Amado Logno (Cook/Waiter) Maximo Mangan (Chief Engineer) Agapito Masangkay (Pantryman/Steward) Frederico Montalegra (Chief Electrician) Antonio Reynes (Extra Engineer) Quirino Sabando (Oiler) <i>A further two of the crew (unidentified) later died of wounds in Darwin.</i>	Francisco Beltran (Sailor) Librado Briones (Carpenter) Mariano Reyes (Messboy)

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FIRE SUPPORT PATROL BASE (FSPB) CORAL REMEMBERED

Mark Jamieson

Introduction

This article is a selection from a larger thesis titled ‘Our guys were very good. We were a very capable battery; in fact we were an arrogant bunch. We were good’, submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts (Honours), University of Wollongong 2014. The thesis’s purpose is to provide an account of the role played by seven veterans who fought in the Battle for Fire Support Patrol Base (FSPB) Coral, 12 May to 6 June 1968 in South Vietnam. Concentrating on 12 and 13 May, the veterans’ memories challenge the account given in *On the Offensive: The Australian Army in the Vietnam War 1967-1968*,¹ the Official History series devoted to the Vietnam War. The thesis allows seven veterans the chance to tell the story of FSPB Coral in their own words, to set the record straight as they see it. The veterans are: Capt Donald Tait, Lieut Ian Ahearn, Bombardier Laurence D’Arcy, Gunners Thomas Carmody, Robert Costello and David Thomas from 102 Field Battery Royal Australian Artillery, and Lieut Anthony Jensen, second-in-command Mortar Platoon, 1RAR.

This article provides the soldiers a voice and offers an insight into what the gunners and mortar men remember about FSPB Coral. It examines four key points of the battle: intelligence provided to the units, the positioning of the gun batteries, two Final Preventative Fire tasks, and the use of splintex. The soldiers’ memories are at odds with the version put forward in the Official History.

Operation Toan Thang

The Battle for FSPB Coral, occurring between 12 May and 6 June 1968, was part of the largest operation undertaken by the Australian Task Force in Vietnam, Operation *Toan Thang*, (Complete Victory), yet it remains virtually unknown to most Australians. The establishment of FSPB Coral began with a combined allied military operation in the III Corp area beginning on 8 April 1968. American, South Vietnamese, Australian, New Zealand and Thai troops were involved. Totalling 70,000 service personnel, it was the biggest allied operation of the war to date.²

The First Australian Task Force Progression

Australian Maj Gen A.L. MacDonald was approached by American Lieut Gen Weyand, Commander of II Field Force Vietnam, requesting the use of the Australian Task Force to block enemy infiltration routes into Saigon. The area that needed securing was the Bien Hoa/Long Binh complex, situated well north of the relatively secure province of Phuoc Tuy.³ On 21 April, the move into AO Giles (Fig.1) marked the beginning of the Task Force engagement in *Toan Thang*.⁴

With only minor contacts occurring during this phase, the Task Force proceeded north into the Bien Hoa province. From 23 to 25 April, they commenced a multi-battalion reconnaissance-in-force operation.⁵ On 5 May, Australian units comprising the First Battalion, Royal

¹ McNeill and Ekins, *On the Offensive*, pp.347-381.

² *ibid*, p.347.

³ *ibid*, pp.349-350.

⁴ *ibid*, pp.348-349.

⁵ *ibid*, p.349.

Australian Regiment (1RAR) and the Second Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (2RAR) were airlifted into AO Columbus relieving the United States Army's 199th Brigade. The Australian Task Force had now established a protective belt east of the Bien Hoa/Long Binh complex. Since 5 May, enemy contact had been minimal, and the second offensive on Saigon faltering, the remaining enemy were considered weak, uncoordinated and to be generally in small disorganised groups.⁶

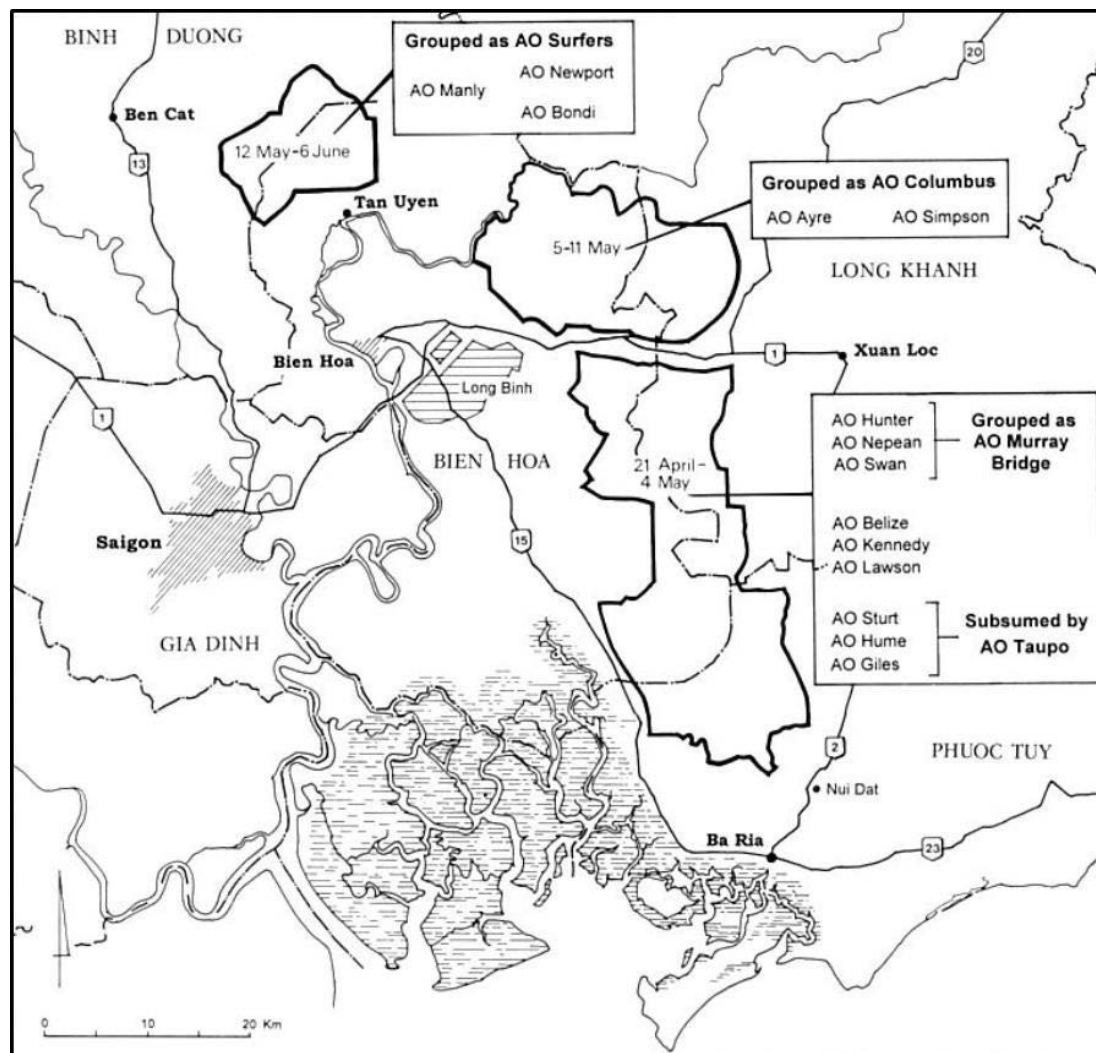


Fig.1: The progressive movement of AOs taken and occupied by the First Australian Task Force during operation Toan Thang, 21 April to 7 June 1968 (McNeill and Ekins p.351)

On 10 May, Weyand held a Commanders' conference at II Field Force Vietnam Headquarters located at Long Binh, attended by Brig Hughes, First Australian Task Force commander. Hughes was informed about moving the Task Force further north into an area known to the Americans as 'The Catcher's Mitt'.⁷ On 10 May, 3RAR flew into AO Simpson to relieve 2RAR; 3RAR sighted no enemies on 11 May. For the 21 days of operations, the Task Force had very little to show.⁸ By the time Weyand called his meeting, a second report had been prepared. It stated that the village of Binh My (Fig.2), located in AO Surfers, was accessible to

⁶ *ibid*, p.353.

⁷ *ibid*, p.354.

⁸ *ibid*, p.353.

enemy troops moving either north or south. The village was well known as an important staging and resupply area for the NVA and Viet Cong units.⁹ Although both reports also showed that the enemy forces outnumbered the Australian forces being deployed to the sector, only the first report suggested that this represented a threat to FSPB Coral.

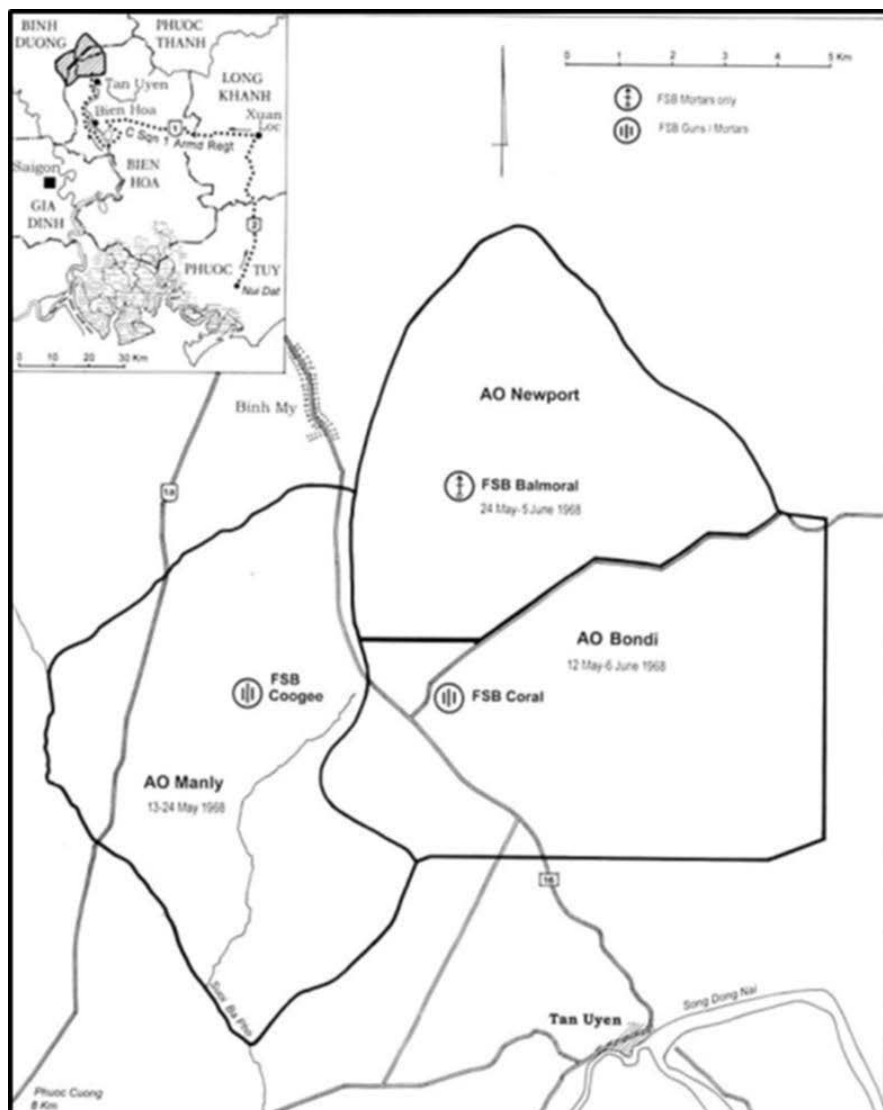


Fig.2: AO Surfers included subsidiary AOs Bondi (FSPB Coral) established 12 May. AO Manly established 13 May and AO Newport established 24 May (McNeill and Ekins p.355). AO Newport did not exist in the original orders. It was created when FSPB Balmoral was initiated on 24 May.

Hughes, however, did not pass this information down to the next level in the chain of command, the unit command level. When Lt Col Bennett and other unit commanders met at the Task Force Commanders' 'orders group' meeting at the American base, Bearcat, on 10 May, there was no suggestion that there would be a large

enemy presence in AO Surfers. The operations would be as they had been over the last three weeks. Contact with the enemy had been limited to small groups of approximately 10 to 20 men, moving to a proposed rendezvous point, avoiding any confrontation.¹⁰ The decision at Bearcat, then, was to establish the base at Coral. With the commanders' air reconnaissance complete by 5.00pm, Brigadier Hughes initiated the move to AO Surfers for 12 May.¹¹ With the AOs established, 3RAR flew into FSPB Coral on 12 May to secure the landing zone, designated K Pad, followed by the remaining elements of 3RAR and 1RAR.¹²

⁹ *ibid*, p.356.

¹⁰ *ibid*, p.363.

¹¹ *ibid*, p.354.

¹² *ibid*, pp.354-56.

THE SOLDIERS RESPOND

Intelligence Reports

The Official History states that through intelligence reports, captured documents and prisoners questioned, contact with enemy regiments had occurred in AO Surfers. It states that the Task Force was to interdict enemy withdrawing from the south and southwest. The Commanders' conference referred to the presence of 7 NVA Division (to which 141 and 165 Regiments belonged) to be somewhere within AO Surfers. The intelligence reports went on to state that 'this was not considered a significant threat to FSPB Coral'. The Operational Orders noted that the enemy units expecting to pass through AO Surfers would contain a substantial enemy main force and local force units. They would be deployed tactically, be well-coordinated, and possess high morale.¹³

The veterans interviewed state that the intelligence reports and Operational Orders were not passed down to them. Capt Don Tait remembers the men were expecting an entirely different scenario:

First of all I need to dwell on the intelligence. There is no doubt, absolutely no doubt that we were told from an intelligence point of view that we were going in against a rifle battalion that had been reinforced and we expected to operate against groups of up to 10.¹⁴

Lt Ian Ahearn is just as emphatic:

This information was not passed on to us, the intelligence provided to all deployed components only indicated enemy withdrawing from Saigon, not reinforcing Saigon. It seems strange, but I never saw the actual orders until about 10 years after the event.¹⁵

Battery and Mortar Positioning

The Official History states that the air landing at FSPB Coral was delayed due to enemy contact in the area.¹⁶ It states that 161 Field Battery was landed at an improvised landing zone, and with 102 Field Battery located 1500 metres away from 161 Field Battery, left Major Brian Murtagh with a difficult task of how to defend the base.¹⁷ It also states that Murtagh was not at K Pad to meet the following parties but offers no explanation for his absence.

Flying into FSPB Coral, Lt Ian Ahearn, who was the Gun Position Officer for 102 Field Battery and part of the Battery Reconnaissance Party, is adamant that his battery's flight into FSPB Coral had not been delayed by enemy fire as stated in the Official History. According to Ahearn,

The airstrikes did not delay the insertion of the 12 Field Regiment, 102 Field Battery, 161 Field Battery and 1RAR Reconnaissance Parties. They arrived on time at the landing zone designated in the orders. No indication was given to the reconnaissance parties that the fly in had been changed.¹⁸

Upon arriving at K Pad, Ahearn did not see Bravo Company 3RAR who were supposed to have secured K Pad, any Australian infantry or Major Murtagh.¹⁹ The Americans securing the area reported to the arriving reconnaissance parties that a group of Australians had moved out of

¹³ Australian War Memorial, AWM 95 <http://www.awm.gov.au/collection/AWM95/7/1/>.

¹⁴ Don Tait interview.

¹⁵ Ian Ahearn interview.

¹⁶ McNeill and Ekins, *On the Offensive*, p.358.

¹⁷ *ibid*, p.360.

¹⁸ Ahearn interview.

¹⁹ *ibid*.

the area into what the Americans called ‘Tiger Country’.²⁰ This group of Australians contained Major Brian Murtagh who was the FSPB defence commander. His absence created the problem for 161 Field Battery and 102 Field Battery as now there was no area allocated for the two gun batteries.

The Official History states that 161 Field Battery landed 1000 metres to the southwest of K Pad.²¹ This is incorrect as the Duty Officers’ logs clearly indicate the grid reference where 161 Field Battery landed was 100 to 200 metres from K Pad (See Figs.3 and 4), and not 1000 metres from K Pad as stated in the Official History. The Duty Officers’ logs match more closely with the veterans’ version of events and they question why the Official History has neglected this evidence drawn from a primary source.



Fig.3: 1RAR Duty Officers Log indicating 161 Field Battery at K Pad, XT926284.²² Note: This log shows a discrepancy of 100 metres from their landing zone.



Fig.4: Headquarters, 1 Australian Task Force Duty Officer’s Log indicating 161 Field Battery at K Pad, XT927284.²³ Note: This log shows a discrepancy of 200 metres from their designated landing zone.

The confusion for 161 Field Battery and 102 Field Battery resulted as no area was allocated for the artillery guns and Murtagh was absent from the area.²⁴ The area that 161 Field Battery Reconnaissance Party landed at was understood as being the grid reference for the FSPB. With the positioning of 161 Field Battery at the correct location, the remaining elements of the arriving Task Force were to be built around the 161 Field Battery location.²⁵ When the artillery guns of 161 Field Battery arrived overhead by Chinook helicopters, approximately two hours before they were expected, the 161 Field Battery Reconnaissance Party accepted the guns and set them into position.²⁶

The Official History accurately states that 102 Field Battery was located 1500 metres away from 161 Field Battery, leaving Murtagh with a difficult task when it came to defending the base.²⁷ What the Official History has failed to understand or has failed to correctly acknowledge is why Murtagh chose to have 102 Field Battery 1500 metres away from 161 Field Battery. It was his decision that put the lives of approximately 100 men in jeopardy when 102 Field Battery and the 1RAR Mortar Platoon were attacked on 13 May 1968.

²⁰ *ibid.* McAulay, *The Battle of Coral*, p.34.

²¹ McNeill and Ekins, *On the Offensive*, pp.359-360.

²² Australian War Memorial, AWM 95-7-1-78 Part 2, <http://www.awm.gov.au/collection/record>.

²³ Australian War Memorial, AWM 95-1-4-97, <http://www.awm.gov.au/collection/records/awm95/1/4/97>.

²⁴ Bradley, ‘Battles of Coral and Balmoral Part 2’, <http://www.vietnamwar.govt.nz/memory/battles-coral-and-balmoral-part-2/>.

²⁵ *ibid.*

²⁶ Ahearn interview.

²⁷ McNeill and Ekins, *On the Offensive*, p.360.

At K Pad, Ahearn needed to locate Murtagh to be able to establish the gun layout for 102 Field Battery. Ahearn eventually established radio contact with Murtagh who advised Ahearn that 'he was up the track'. Ahearn requested Murtagh to throw a smoke grenade to indicate his position, which he did. Ahearn and the 102 Field Battery Reconnaissance Party then headed in Murtagh's direction.²⁸ At Murtagh's location, Ahearn along with the Section Commander and a Battery Surveyor established their exact position, which was 1500 metres away from K Pad and 161 Field Battery.²⁹ At this, Ahearn recalls he commented to Murtagh: "'That's a hell of a long way away for when we [102 Field Battery] get on the ground,'" to which he [Murtagh] replied "there is a lot of people to fit in here".³⁰

When Bravo Company 1RAR flew into FSPB Coral, they did not fly into K Pad, but flew into 102 Field Battery's new location. Ahearn was asked by the Forward Observers where they were.³¹ Tait was the Forward Observer for 1RAR and recalls:

When we touched down at Coral, I had no idea where we were [sic]. I knew it was not the grid reference that we were supposed to be at, and the first thing I did, obviously as a gunner is that I went around and spoke to Scrubber [Ahearn] and said 'where the hell are we' and he said 'we are here' and I said 'are you sure of that'. I walked up to the main route and confirmed the track junction and yes we were where Scrubber [Ahearn] said, so that turned out to be right. When I overflew the thing my view was that we should have been further south, but anyway we turned up where we were.³²

1RAR Mortar Platoon arrived at FSPB Coral at 5.00pm, around one hour short of last light. The late arrival of the 1RAR Mortar Platoon severely reduced the amount of time they had to prepare their weapons pits and establish their defensive fire positions before last light.³³ Lt Tony Jensen was met by Capt Hugh McNally and was taken to the Mortar position. McNally apologised that the 1RAR Mortars were situated on the perimeter of the 102 Field Battery gun position and told Jensen 'it will get sorted tomorrow.'³⁴ The 1RAR Mortars were positioned 50 to 70 metres out, slightly in front of and located between No.5 and No.6 guns.³⁵ Jensen approached Murtagh and asked where everybody was and what was going on.

Murtagh informed me that 3RAR was about somewhere providing protection and waved his arms in the general direction of the rubber plantation. I asked about manning machine guns and was told by Murtagh it was not necessary. I stated that my men were only just in country,³⁶ and we should man a machine gun sentry, yet Murtagh was not interested.³⁷

With 102 Field Battery and 1RAR Mortars being further north than planned, the discovery of enemy weapons pits, and Murtagh's dismissive attitude of the situation regarding defences, added responsibility was placed upon Ahearn and Jensen. The two lieutenants now had to establish defensive fire positions for the machine guns, a task that was the responsibility of Murtagh, who failed to conduct more than one of his roles as the FSPB defence commander.

²⁸ Ahearn interview.

²⁹ *ibid.*

³⁰ *ibid.*

³¹ Tait interview. 'Huey' is the unofficial term used to describe the Bell UH-1 Iroquois helicopter.

³² *ibid.*

³³ Jensen interview.

³⁴ *ibid.*

³⁵ *ibid.*

³⁶ *ibid.* 'In country' means that the soldiers had only recently arrived in Vietnam.

³⁷ *ibid.*

Two Final Preventative Fire Tasks

The Official history states that, at 6.09pm, 3RAR viewed multiple enemies moving across their front. Shortly after, 1RAR engaged ten enemy soldiers. As a result of the enemy contacts, 102 Field Battery was called to provide a fire mission.³⁸ An omission in the Official History is the conversation between Battery Commander Maj Gavin Andrews and Lt Ahearn that centred on two Final Preventative Fire tasks. The result had a significant impact on the battle that was to occur at FSPB Coral.

In the early hours on 13 May, 102 Field Battery was called to provide supporting artillery for the infantry. The six guns that were originally pointing east were manoeuvred by their crews and pointed north. The guns then delivered their 105mm projectiles with deadly accuracy. The fire mission lasted 20 minutes before the six guns were advised that the mission had ended.³⁹ With all six guns now pointing north, Andrews asked Ahearn if the gun battery could handle two Final Preventative Fire tasks.⁴⁰ A Final Preventative Fire task is one battery (six guns), loaded with information on a target, normally selected as the most probable area of enemy activity. The gunners only need to pull the lanyard to fire the gun and the projectile will land where assigned. Andrews wanted one section (three guns) laid north and one section returned to its original eastern bearing. Ahearn selected guns Nos.4, 5 and 6 to stay pointing north and the other three (Nos. 1, 2 and 3) to be laid on the original east bearing.⁴¹ Ahearn provides his reasoning for selecting the guns:

Now a bit of serendipity went on here for no reason at all as I picked the three guns to the north as they were already banded, before we had to stop work as last light was approaching and we had to stand to.⁴²

The use of Splintex

The Official History states that Jensen, in desperation, called for direct fire from the Anti-tank Platoon's 90mm Recoilless Rifles. Splintex was fired across the front of the mortar position, providing some relief for the 1RAR Mortars.⁴³ The veterans interviewed reject the action as being an inaccurate account of what happened.

At around 2.30am, the mortar position was under fire from small arms and RPGs. Jensen and his men were being overrun. 3RAR Mortars and 161 Field Battery were called to fire on Jensen's position as the enemy was swarming through them. The Operations Officer, Kim Patterson, asked Jensen three times for the fire order to be repeated. Each time Jensen did just that. Finally, Jensen held his radio hand piece up so Patterson could hear the contact, hoping this would convince Patterson of the severity of the situation. Jensen's only option was to call in a fire mission.⁴⁴ Jensen recalls: 'We had to hold our ground and do what we could and the only way we could do that was to call in a fire mission on our position which is what I organised.'⁴⁵

After some discussion between the Mortar Command Post and the Battalion Headquarters, the

³⁸ McNeill and Ekins, *On the Offensive*, p. 364.

³⁹ Ahearn, 'South Vietnam: First Battle of Coral 12th-13th May 1968 The Real Story', p.13.

⁴⁰ *ibid*, p.17.

⁴¹ Ahearn interview.

⁴² *ibid*.

⁴³ McNeill and Ekins, *On the Offensive*, pp.367-68.

⁴⁴ Jensen interview.

⁴⁵ *ibid*.

Commanding Officer (Bennett), agreed to have splintex fired over the mortar position.⁴⁶ With Murtagh in effect absent throughout the battle, Bennett, although not in command of FSPB Coral (along with his Battery Commander and Headquarters staff) authorised Jensen to have 102 Field Battery fire across their position.⁴⁷ As Jensen recalls:

I told the men to stay in their pits, engage the enemy, but do not get above ground level as anything above ground was considered enemy. I repeated to Command that we have a contact, we are overrun and we need fire over our position, it is the only way to clear them.⁴⁸

Since dawn, Ahearn had been trying to contact Jensen to ascertain if he and his men were indeed alive. He eventually managed to get him to answer by voice. This created another problem as each time Ahearn, positioned near No.5 gun, called Jensen, who was positioned between No.5 and No.6 guns, both were met with a volley of enemy machine gun fire.⁴⁹ Ahearn returned to the Command Post to hear Jensen on the Battalion radio asking for splintex to fire across his position. Jensen, bluntly stated, ‘if you don’t do it then we are all dead’.⁵⁰

Ahearn recalls:

Jensen was trying to convince his CO [Commanding Officer] that they were in real deep shit and the CO sort of said are you sure? Christ I don’t know what he thought was going on because I was told later that it looked like Luna Park with all the RPGs and machine gun fire coming in.⁵¹

To comply with Jensen’s call, Ahearn returned to No.5 gun and informed the gunners to aim the gun across the mortar position.⁵² Ahearn continues:

I yelled out to Tony [Jensen], asked if he was ready, he yelled at his guys to stay down and he said let it rip. We fired five rounds of splintex across the top of the mortar section and all enemy activity ceased. The mortars were only 50 metres off the guns and all activity just stopped and we thought, Holy Christ I wonder if we had just killed them.⁵³

Jensen adds:

Scrubber [Ahearn] yelled out to me that they were going to fire splintex, so I said right and told the platoon what was going on and basically get underground as splintex was coming in. I gave two warnings and the third time I said right fire and Scrubber fired and everything went sort of quiet.⁵⁴

Lance Corporal Alan James (Jack) Parr was Jensen’s signaller and looked after two radio sets. One was connected to the Battalion command network, the other used for commanding mortar fire missions. With FSPB Coral overrun, Parr called in direct fire support from 3RAR Mortars, a Light Fire Team of two helicopter gunships and a ‘Spooky’ gunship. Parr deliberately called fire onto his very own position in an attempt to kill the enemy and save his mates. One metre way in the other fighting pit, Jensen called in direct fire from 102 Field Battery.⁵⁵ As Jack Parr recalls:

The guns fired HE [High Explosive] and splintex rounds making an awesome sound coming

⁴⁶ *ibid.*

⁴⁷ Lowry, *The Last Knight*, p.95.

⁴⁸ Jensen interview.

⁴⁹ Ahearn interview.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

⁵¹ *ibid.*

⁵² *ibid.*

⁵³ *ibid.*

⁵⁴ Jensen interview.

⁵⁵ Australian War Memorial, Splintex Dart, Battle of Coral: Lance Corporal A J Parr, 1 Battalion Royal Australian Regiment, <http://www.awm.gov.au/collection/REL35838>.

through one's own position. These [splintex darts] were lodged everywhere in equipment and weapons...millions were fired into and across our positions in an attempt to clear the enemy.⁵⁶

Other evidence corroborates the men's version of the event, showing that, despite the Official History's claim, it was not the Anti-tank Platoon's 90mm Recoilless Rifles that fired splintex across the front of the 1RAR Mortar Platoon.⁵⁷ Fig.6 indicates the position of all three units involved, and clearly shows that the 1RAR Mortar Platoon was partially protected by the 102 Field Battery guns. If the 90mm Recoilless Rifles *did* fire across the front of the Mortars, then 102 Field Battery would have been hit with splintex. This would have resulted in serious injury or death to the gunners. The strongest evidence, however, that corroborates the veterans' version is in the After Action Report, a source readily available to the Official Historians. It clearly states that the gunners from 102 Field Battery engaged the enemy with splintex rounds by firing over the 1RAR Mortar Platoon's position. It also recorded the time, which matches the recollections of the men (see Fig.5).⁵⁸

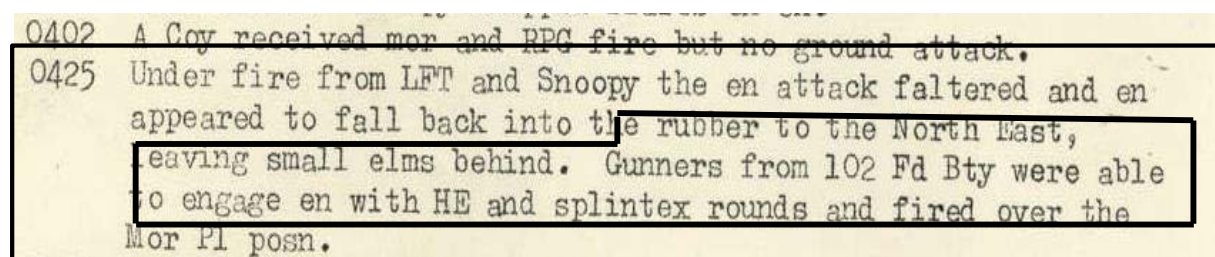


Fig.5: The After Action Report clearly indicates that, Gunners from 102 Field Battery 'were able to engage en [enemy] with HE [High Explosive] and splintex rounds and fired over the Mor Pl posn [Mortar Platoon position].' The time indicated in the top left corner is 0425 hours.

Close-Quarter Fighting

Despite the fact that the enemy launched an effective surprise attack on FSPB Coral, and failed to overrun it, and that the fighting over 12 and 13 May was intense, the men from 102 Field Battery and 1RAR Mortar Platoon feel that the Official History obscures, or overlooks, their role and actions during those eventful days at FSPB Coral. This has disappointed the Coral veterans interviewed, and they question just how 'official' the Official History is. This section of the article provides the soldiers' voice and offers an insight into what the gunners and mortarmen remember about FSPB Coral.

With the 102 Field Battery guns arriving at Ahearn's position, he immediately informed the gunners that something was amiss, but was unsure as to what it was. He therefore directed the soldiers to dig to stage one weapons pits.⁵⁹ This made Ahearn very unpopular, as he remembers.

Some will say that they only had shell scrapes, and they might well have, but we as Officers had to go around and kick ass to make sure that people were digging. I think that shows in the results as you don't get a number of RPGs and things in without having excessive casualties.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ *ibid.*

⁵⁷ McNeill and Ekins, *On the Offensive*, pp.367-68.

⁵⁸ Australian War Memorial, AWM 95-7-1-79, <http://www.awm.gov.au/collection/records/awm95/7/1>, p.48.

⁵⁹ Ahearn interview.

⁶⁰ *ibid.*

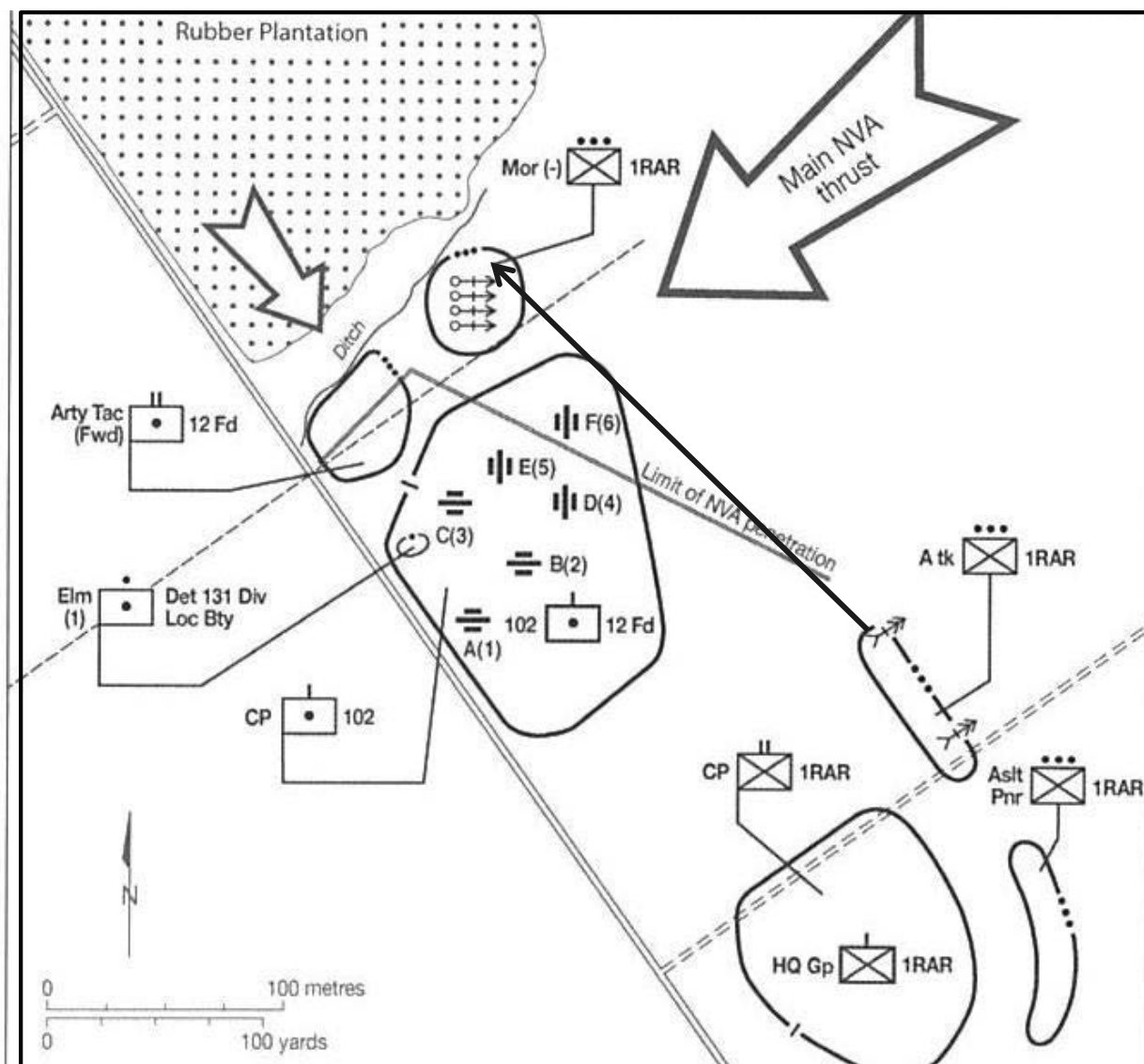


Fig.5: The positioning of 1RAR Mortars, 102 Field Battery, and the 90mm Recoilless Rifles on the night of 12-13 May 1968 (Lowry, *The Last Knight*, p.94). Note: The heavier black line indicates the firing direction of the splintex round as mentioned in the *Official History*.

On 12 May, no defence stores had been delivered to FSPB Coral. With no barbed wire, claymore mines or trip flares set up, the area lacked adequate protection. When the attack came, Ahearn was lying in his weapon pit. There was no sound, but he was awoken by a green glow over his hootchie (personal tent), a result of enemy tracer coming into FSPB Coral: ‘Literally there was no sound; I didn’t hear anything until it came in like a ‘whomp’, it was the sound of RPGs, mortars and machine guns.’⁶¹

At this early stage of the battle, No.6 gun was out of action as it had been overrun by the enemy. Gun Sergeant Max Franklin, however, had had the presence of mind to remove the No.6 gun firing pin before withdrawing. This is a difficult task that requires a series of moves, and made all the more difficult by being under attack and with wounded men under his command. Sgt Franklin’s actions made the 105mm howitzer inoperable in enemy hands. Ahearn quickly made his way to the Command Post to find out what was happening.⁶² At this stage, No.4 gun opened

⁶¹ *ibid.*

⁶² *ibid.*

fire with small arms (rifles) and shortly after, the Gun Sergeant, John Stephens reported to the Command Post that they had expended small arms ammunition and requested an ammunition resupply. Stephens also reported that there was a considerable amount of activity happening at No.4 gun and requested permission to fire the 105mm howitzer over open sights.⁶³

As a result of the close-quarter fighting, 102 Field Battery had suffered casualties. Supporting fire was called for and was delivered by 161 Field Battery, 3RAR Mortars and an American battery located in and around Bien Hoa. The Battery Commander also arranged for Cobra gunships and a 'Spooky' gunship to assist in the fight and they began to pound the perimeter of FSPB Coral.⁶⁴

At FSPB Coral, Jensen sighted the mortar tubes and told the section commanders to dig in and get organised before he and Signaller Parr started digging the command post and sleeping bay.⁶⁵ The mortars had approximately 75 rounds each and were supported by two machine guns. By last light the mortar pits and the command post had been prepared.⁶⁶ At midnight, NVA soldiers engaged the 1RAR Mortar machine guns. The machine gunners fired back. There were moans and groans from the enemy and then they fell silent. The mortars remained alert for another half an hour and at 12.30am they returned to their positions. At around 2.30am, the enemy came through the mortar position 'in no time flat'.⁶⁷ Everything was happening very fast, with enemy and small arms fire all through the mortars, as Jensen recalls:

There were 18 men in the Mortar Platoon and we were like a pimple on the side of the gunners and when they (NVA) came through, we basically surprised them and that created a bit of a problem as they didn't expect us to be there. On top of that, we held our ground and fought hard.⁶⁸

Bombardier Larry D'Arcy of 102 Field Battery No.3 gun, had not been concerned where the next FSPB was to be located; his role began when the guns and men landed on the ground. At approximately 2.25am, 102 Field Battery was called on to provide supporting artillery fire for Delta Company 1RAR and all six guns were involved. At the completion of the fire mission, D'Arcy was busy reorganising the gun ammunition bay when small arms fire started. He assumed it was 1RAR firing their weapons. This had happened previously at FSPB Harrison when an Australian armoured personnel carrier had fired its guns without notifying the battery in the vicinity.⁶⁹ D'Arcy comments:

When the first few rounds came into Coral I wasn't really alarmed, just thought it was another balls up. As soon as I heard the 'crump' of the mortars being fired and the RPGs coming into our position, I soon realised it was no mistake.⁷⁰

D'Arcy made a quick return to his weapons pit to find out what was happening. It was at this point that he was ordered to get his M60, move onto the gun bund of No.5 gun, and told in no uncertain terms to 'give everything a spray' as the advancing NVA were attempting to flank the Australians.⁷¹ He still remembers the incredible noise and the intensity of the battle:

The sky was pitch black and the incoming tracer rounds were very clear to see. The noise of the

⁶³ *ibid.*

⁶⁴ *ibid.*

⁶⁵ Jensen interview.

⁶⁶ *ibid.*

⁶⁷ *ibid.*

⁶⁸ *ibid.*

⁶⁹ D'Arcy interview.

⁷⁰ *ibid.*

⁷¹ *ibid.*

enemy mortars being fired was probably one of the worst feelings. Once you heard the primer go, indicating the mortar had been dropped into the tube, you just waited to hear it coming and hoped it did not land near you or your mates.⁷²

The enemy had moved close enough to start throwing grenades at the Australians. One landed a few feet from D'Arcy's position, rolled away and then exploded. The dirt spoil from his shell scrape protected him, but the shrapnel from the exploding grenade damaged the M60 link belt ammunition causing the machine gun to jam.⁷³ Unable to clear the stoppage, D'Arcy called to Gunner Costello to pass his rifle. Without hesitation Costello did so, and D'Arcy emptied the magazines into the enemy area. Now, having two guns not working, the M60 jammed and the rifle out of bullets, D'Arcy decided on clearing the M60 as it fired the most bullets.

Gunner Tom Carmody of 102 Field Battery's No.3 gun, did not know what was planned for FSPB Coral; the gunners were not privy to such information.⁷⁴ Carmody was standing to, awaiting fire orders as the infantry reported a contact when the enemy attacked.

I recall a green glow in front of me and thought that the fireflies were bright tonight and next minute, whoosh whoosh a series of RPG's flew overhead, then the mortars started coming in. All hell broke loose. I thought this couldn't be happening to me.⁷⁵

A fire mission was called which No.3 gun conducted with a limited crew, and then the gunners ran ammunition up to No.4 gun. Carmody was sent to the helipad to break open an ammunition crate. Approaching the helipad, fellow gunner Ross Prowse, in the light of the flares, was attempting to open the ammunition crate with an axe. As Carmody emerged out of the dark, Prowse whipped around and was about to put the axe through Carmody's head: 'I swore at him and said "don't do that" – words to that effect'.⁷⁶

Gunner David Thomas of 102 Field Battery's No.3 gun recalls that it was sometime through the night when all the whiz bangs started. Thomas was under his hootchie when the bombardment came. 'I thought it was just a few rounds, I didn't think it was going to turn out like it did'.⁷⁷ Thomas recalls that a fire mission was called to support 3RAR as they were in a contact with the enemy. No.3 gun executed the fire mission with only three men available on the gun: Gun Sergeant Elgar, Gunner Costello and himself. Bombardier D'Arcy was firing the M60 on one of the gun bunds and Gunner Carmody was in another area. The fire mission went on while rockets and bullets were going through the gun position; this was all in the dark of night.⁷⁸ It was at this moment of the interview that Gunner Thomas recalled a poignant moment that has remained with him since it occurred on 13 May 1968.

I will never forget carrying splintex over to No.4 gun, Stevo's gun, and I tripped and fell down and had a poncho wrapped around my ankles. You know, I looked down and there was Bluey Sawtell, he was dead, he had been shot in the head and was under the poncho near our gun bay. I covered him back up and kept going.⁷⁹

Gunner Costello of No.3 gun had been waiting with the other gunners at FSPB Harrison since daybreak to be flown into FSPB Coral. Landing at FSPB Coral late in the afternoon, the gunners

⁷² *ibid.*

⁷³ *ibid.*

⁷⁴ Carmody interview.

⁷⁵ *ibid.*

⁷⁶ *ibid.*

⁷⁷ Thomas, interview.

⁷⁸ *ibid.*

⁷⁹ *ibid.* Gunner Sawtell was killed instantly when the attacking NVA fired point blank into his pit.

established the gun positions, but were unable to prepare defences due to inadequate stores being delivered. Weapons pits were not completed and at this stage Costello had only half prepared his weapons pit by the time 'Stand To' was called.⁸⁰

Very early in the morning all hell broke loose as rockets were going above the heads of the gunners about six to eight feet and mortars were exploding around them. The artillery was firing over the protective dirt bund at the enemy running across their front.⁸¹ The interview with Costello reveals more than just his memory of the battle; he reflected on the importance of mateship and the camaraderie that is built with the men he served alongside:

I may be biased in my thoughts here, but our group, not only as a unit, but you could call Charlie Gun (No.3), the immediate family if you like. I'm very biased towards Charlie gun as I have always thought that our mateship and comradeship is something that could never be broken. In my eyes, it's a true relation to what mateship really is. I'm sure every gunner feels the same way about their guns.⁸²



Fig.7: No.3 (Charlie Gun) crew. Left to right, 'Pommy' Fisher, Costello, D'Arcy, Thomas (obscured) and 'Stoney' Bourke sitting under their shelter on 13 May after a tough night of fighting. Note the holes in the tent from exploding shrapnel, rockets and bullets (photo courtesy of Robert Costello).

As morning approached, incoming rounds were still falling around FSPB Coral, and the NVA fired sporadically at the Australian positions. Ahearn instructed 2nd Lt Lowry to take a clearing patrol and head out through No.6 gun. At the same time Ahearn would take the medical officer and others and head through the 1RAR Mortar Platoon. This was to do two things: clear the

⁸⁰ Costello interview.

⁸¹ *ibid.*

⁸² *ibid.*

area of any enemy and to check the situation of 1RAR Mortars.⁸³ Ahearn recalls:

The first one we came across was a wounded NVA and I distinctly remember that he had been hit with a burst on F1 9mm (sub machine gun ammunition) and you could see the rounds in his chest as it was just getting light. It was 1944 ammunition so it had only just gone in, he wasn't feeling great, but he wasn't anywhere near dead. He was the first we came across.⁸⁴

Ordered to take a clearing patrol out through the gun position, Bombardier D'Arcy gathered Bombardier Burns (Burnsie), Gunner Floyd and a few others before cautiously moving out to begin a clearing search. The gunners had not moved far from the gun position when Gunner Ayson opened fire and shot an NVA in the grass. On instinct, the men went to ground. D'Arcy was now looking at an NVA soldier and the muzzle of his AK47. D'Arcy pulled the trigger of his M60; the sound was a resonating thud as his M60 jammed.⁸⁵

All I remember was Ayson firing; I hit the ground as trained to do and seeing the barrel of an enemy gun I pulled the trigger and nothing happened. I was yelling at Burnsie to bloody shoot him, just bloody shoot him. I did this more than once. Burnsie assured me that he was already dead and I can get up and stop shouting.⁸⁶

As a result of that first night's contact, the Australians suffered nine soldiers killed and 28 wounded. The biggest loss was with 1RAR Mortar Platoon. With 18 men flying into FSPB Coral, they suffered five men killed and eight wounded. Of the men in 1RAR Mortar Platoon who were in the battle, only Lt Jensen and signaller Private Parr remained at FSPB Coral. All the other men were injured or suffered from battle shock and were returned to Nui Dat. The enemy dead numbered 52 on the battlefield around FSPB Coral.⁸⁷

The attack on 12 and 13 May demonstrated the attacking capabilities of the enemy. The idea now was to strengthen the defences at FSPB Coral, providing the enemy with some big targets. FSPB Coral would be heavily defended at night and aggressive daytime patrols would ensure that the fight was taken to the enemy. Maj John Keldie, commanding the armoured personnel carriers, now became the local defence Commander.⁸⁸ He was to coordinate the defence of FSPB Coral, a role previously held so inadequately by Murtagh. The second attack on FSPB Coral occurred on 16 May at approximately 2.30am. Once again the enemy hit under the cover of darkness, launching a sustained barrage of rockets, mortars and small arms.⁸⁹ The fight for FSPB Coral went on until 6 June and involved a large number of clashes with NVA and heavy rocketing and mortaring of Coral.⁹⁰

In early June, the First Australian Task Force was informed that operations in the 'Catchers Mitt' area were terminated. On 6 June FSPB Coral was abandoned and remaining units returned to Nui Dat via air or road.⁹¹ By the time the Australians withdrew, over 270 NVA had been killed, 20 captured and an untold number wounded. The Australians suffered 25 killed and 109 wounded.⁹² Lt Ian Ahearn from 102 Field Battery wrote 13 citations for actions at FSPB Coral. Of those, two gunners were decorated for their part in the battle: Sgt Leslie John Stephens

⁸³ Ahearn interview.

⁸⁴ *ibid.*

⁸⁵ D'Arcy interview.

⁸⁶ *ibid.*

⁸⁷ McNeill and Ekins, *On the Offensive*, p.370.

⁸⁸ *ibid.*, p.374.

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, p.375.

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p.379.

⁹¹ *ibid.*, p.395.

⁹² *ibid.*, p.396.

received the Military Medal (MM) and Sgt Lindsay Arthur Elgar was Mention in Despatches (MiD).⁹³ Events that occurred over 45 years ago still resonate in the minds of the veterans and recognition of their action in the battle of FSPB Coral are still being sought. Yet the veterans wonder how, or even if, the Battle for FSPB Coral will be remembered.

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⁹³ 12 Field Regiment (Vietnam) Association, Awards <http://12fieldregiment.com/awards.htm>.

COLLECTORS' CORNER

LINKING THE ARTEFACT: LIEUT HALCOMBE FERRIER BROCK, 3RD LIGHT HORSE REGT, AIF

Anthony F. Harris¹

This article has its genesis back in early 1983 when, the day after pay-day, with cash in my pocket, I drove across Adelaide to an antique shop that specialised in arms, medals, badges and other militaria. At the time I was more interested in military longarms but I could occasionally be tempted into other fields. The shop was a regular meeting place for collectors and enthusiasts, so even if there was nothing to tempt me on the shelves there were usually a few like-minded individuals to chat with, to brag to, or to discuss the relative merits or otherwise of the goods on offer.

A friend pointed out a sword – not an area that I was particularly attracted to at the time – but we took it down for closer inspection. A standard pattern 1897 infantry officer's sword; not in bad condition, nickel plating on the hilt was lifting in small patches, the blade and scabbard were fairly good, but ... what was this inscription on the handguard?

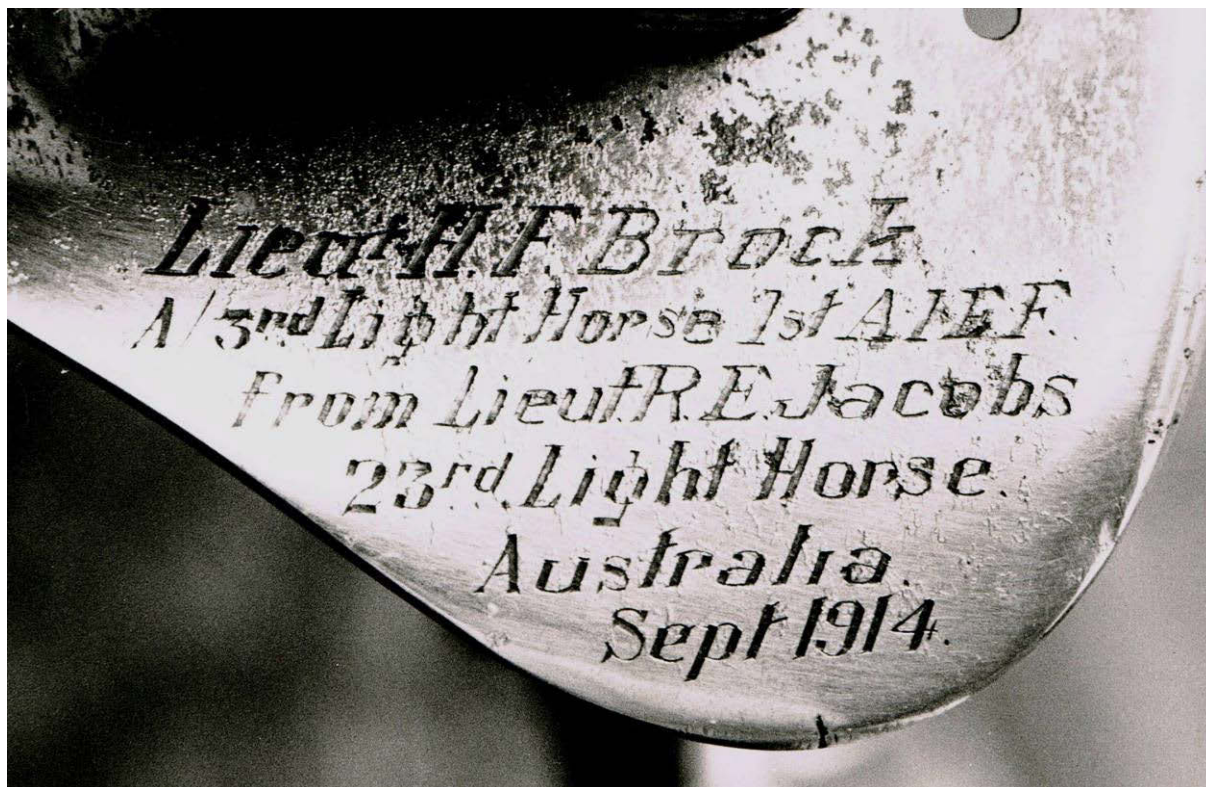


Fig.1: Inner handguard: Lieut. H.F. Brock, A [Squadron] 3rd Light Horse 1st A.I.E.F. From Lieut. R.E. Jacobs 23rd. Light Horse Australia Sept.1914

The dealer advised that he had done a little research after the sword came into the shop, and could tell us that the owner of the sword named on the handguard was killed at Gallipoli and was the only 3rd Light Horse officer to die on the peninsula. After mulling it over for a while, complaining that it was too expensive but recognising its local provenance, I finally 'bit the bullet' and became the owner of an officer's sword with links to Gallipoli and the Australian

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Light Horse. A little bit outside my expertise at the time, but perhaps my pay-packet was burning a hole in my wallet?

Halcombe Ferrier Brock, eldest of seven children to Thomas Alsop and Hannah Brock, was born at Semaphore, SA, on 28 May 1887² and was educated at Pulteney Street School, later known as Pulteney Grammar. On leaving school he worked for the Bank of Adelaide until about 1910 when he left the bank and took up employment with the Port Adelaide Dock Company, becoming Accountant and Assistant Manager. He was still working for the company at the time of his enlistment into the A.I.F.³

We do not know why or exactly when he joined the militia. Pulteney Street School did have a cadet company of sorts, but it appears to have been more of a drill company (possibly not uniformed) under the instruction of a retired ex-British Army Drill Instructor, Sgt William Thomas. It is not clear whether all students participated in this drill or whether it was optional. The school history records that wooden dummy rifles were bought for the use of the drill company and perhaps this soldierly activity of the young Brock (if indeed he participated) may have whetted his appetite for further military involvement.⁴ Alternatively, after he left school maybe he was encouraged to view the militia as a source of experience that he could translate into values that would assist him in his civilian career. Nevertheless, he attested as a part-time soldier and was appointed 2nd lieutenant (provisional) on 30 August 1909, being a supernumery to the establishment pending absorption into a regiment. After two months of familiarisation he was appointed Area Officer, No.77A Training Area (Port Adelaide) on 1 November 1910. About six weeks later, on 19 December 1910, he was brought onto the authorised establishment of the 16th Australian Light Horse Regiment, South Australian Mounted Rifles. His provisional appointment was confirmed in July 1911 and then twelve months later he resigned his appointment of Area Officer, which was accepted on 31 July 1912.⁵



*Fig.2: Lt H.F. Brock, Area Officer 77A, 1910
(Adelaide Observer newspaper, cropped from group photo)*

On 1 July 1912 the militia forces of the Commonwealth were re-organised and the 16th SA Mounted Rifles became the 23rd (Barossa) Light Horse. With this re-organisation Brock became 2nd lieutenant in A Squadron of the regiment. Eighteen months later on 16 February 1914 he was made up to full lieutenant of A Squadron 23rd Light Horse. Within a few months of his promotion, as we all know, Australia was at war, and Lt Brock wasted little time in enlisting into the 1st Australian Imperial Expeditionary Force (this title is taken from the engraved handguard of his sword) and Brock's service

² South Australian Genealogy & Heraldry Society Inc. (SAGHS), BDM Indexes.

³ Obituary, State Library South Australia, Adelaide *Advertiser*, Wed. 16 June 1915, 38th Casualty List, 10.00am, 14 June 1915.

⁴ W.R. Wray, *Pulteney Grammar School 1847-1997*, Wakefield Press (Sesquicentenary Edition), 1997.

⁵ *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette* (CAG) various refs.

record gives the date of his appointment as lieutenant in the 3rd Light Horse, AIF as 11 September 1914.⁶

As we have seen, the sword was a gift from a fellow officer of his old militia unit, the 23rd Light Horse. Roland Ellis Jacobs was 3½ years younger than Brock. He was born at North Adelaide on 28 February 1891 to Samuel and Caroline Jacobs and his second name, Ellis, was actually the maiden name of his mother.⁷ His father was a mercantile broker, a profession that Roland was to follow in later life. At present it has not been determined if Jacobs' relationship with Brock was simply as a colleague in the militia or perhaps an old school friend. Maybe he shared Brock's sporting interests in either yachting or lacrosse,⁸ but theirs was obviously a friendship of some years standing. Details of Lt Jacobs' attestation and postings in the militia are a little unclear, primarily because the references in the *Commonwealth Gazette* appear to have some inconsistencies in naming. The clearest reference states that R.E. Jacobs gained his provisional appointment as 2nd lieutenant in the 16th ALH in the *Gazette* of 15 January 1912 which was confirmed in early February of that year.⁹

The gift of the sword was clearly made within a couple of weeks of Brock's acceptance into the AIF. It is also interesting that the Force was referred to as an *Expeditionary* force. Was this title utilised because in 1914 the expectation was of a short war – something along the lines of 'give the Hun a smack and we'll all be home by Christmas'? I comment on it more as a point of interest rather than an essential part of this story, but we rarely see the AIF referred to as an 'Expeditionary' force. Lt Jacobs apparently did not enlist in the AIF. He does not appear on the AWM's Nominal Roll and any continuation of his further career in the militia has not been pursued. But he certainly appears in the local almanacs and directories in relation to his commercial business as a broker. No marriage or death has been noted, but he disappears from the local directories in the mid-1960s, by which time he would have been in his mid-70s.



Fig.3: Brock's Pattern 1897 Infantry Officer's sword presented by Lt R.E. Jacobs

As previously mentioned, the sword is a standard pattern 1897 infantry officer's sword fitted with a brown leather scabbard with steel chape and locket to be carried in regulation-pattern 'Sam Browne' equipment.¹⁰ The identity of the manufacturer or retailer cannot be determined as they are not shown and the proof mark on the blade is generic rather than specific; but it was almost certainly made in England and probably retailed in Australia by a local tailor or military outfitter. The hilt carries the standard cypher of Edward VII so at least it can be confirmed as

⁶ CAG No.74/1914.

⁷ SAGHS BDM Indexes.

⁸ Brock obituary (see above, note 3).

⁹ CAG.

¹⁰ Brian Robson, *Swords of the British Army* (revised), Nat. Army Museum, London 2011.

of post-1901 and pre-1910 manufacture. These points suggest that in itself it is not unusual or of high quality and as such is not particularly valuable, but its provenance puts it into a different category all together.

One more question arises with the sword. Why was the sword an Infantry officer's pattern, not a sword designed for Cavalry or other mounted troops? It was relatively common for Australian units of Mounted Rifles or Mounted Infantry on either side of the turn of the century to be issued with cavalry style swords, and I am not aware of any suggestion by the military authorities that the Light Horse troops, either militia or AIF, would operate as infantry (i.e. un-horsed) until after the AIF arrived in Egypt. It does strike me as being something of an anomaly that a light horseman would be given an infantry pattern sword by a fellow mounted officer. Similarly, I suspect that junior officers of the AIF were probably instructed not to carry their personal swords in their overseas baggage and that the sword survives simply because it did not go to war.

Brock embarked on His Majesty's Australian Transport A17 *Port Lincoln* on 20 October 1914. After mustering at King George's Sound, the convoy of ships steamed out of Albany on 25-26 October 1914, arriving in Alexandria via the Suez Canal. Transport A17 disembarked its troops on 9 December. The regiment initially went into camp at Maadi, then to Heliopolis at the end of January 1915. On 9 May 1915 the regiment entrained for Alexandria and embarked the transport *Grantully Castle* for Cape Helles, Turkey. On 13 May 1915 the 3rd ALH regiment disembarked at Anzac.¹¹ They advanced up Shrapnel Valley and eventually became ensconced in the region of Pope's Hill and Quinn's, Courtney's and Steele's Posts.¹² Now, enough has been said of the Gallipoli landings by far better and more knowledgeable observers than I; but in this instance, Lt Brock survived for barely a month. The Official War Diary of the 1st Australian Light Horse Brigade states:

3 June 1915. Intermittent bombing in Quinn's Post, otherwise quiet throughout the section. 10.00 p.m. Another attempt was made to draw the enemy's fire; partially successful. Casualties 1st. A.L.H. Bde., Lieut. Brock killed, 2 wounded, 3 sick. N.Z. Infantry Bde., 3 killed, 9 wounded.¹³

Fig 4: Brock's headstone, Shrapnel Valley Cemetery, Gallipoli (author's photo)

Brock was subsequently interred in the Shrapnel Valley cemetery just above Anzac Cove, and I am pleased to say that we have visited his grave and paid our respects.¹⁴ As is the normal course of events in these circumstances, a small bundle of Lt Brock's personal effects was returned to his father, and later his parents received his trio of medals, memorial plaque and scroll. The location (or even



¹¹ C.E.W. Bean *Official History...*, vol.2, pp.116-7.

¹² F.M. Blackwell, *The Story of the 3rd. Light Horse Regiment*, Adelaide (?) c.1945.

¹³ War Diary, 1st Australian Light Brigade, p.8. Australian War Memorial (AWM) ACT.

¹⁴ Shrapnel Valley Cemetery, Gallipoli Peninsula, Ref: IV.A.25.

the existence) of his medals is not known, but it is hoped that they survive in the hands of the family's descendants or with a responsible and respectful collector.¹⁵

But another small memento of Lt Brock survives. As a member of another organisation in Adelaide, I had taken the Brock sword to a meeting as an item for discussion and display. After the meeting I was approached by another member and learned that, in going through a local secondhand bookshop, he had previously acquired an example of the family's 'In Memoriam' card to Lt Brock, together with a copy of John Masefield's book *Gallipoli*. He subsequently passed both items to me as he felt that 'they all belong together'¹⁶ – a very generous and greatly appreciated act made in the interests of re-uniting and safeguarding items of historical relevance.

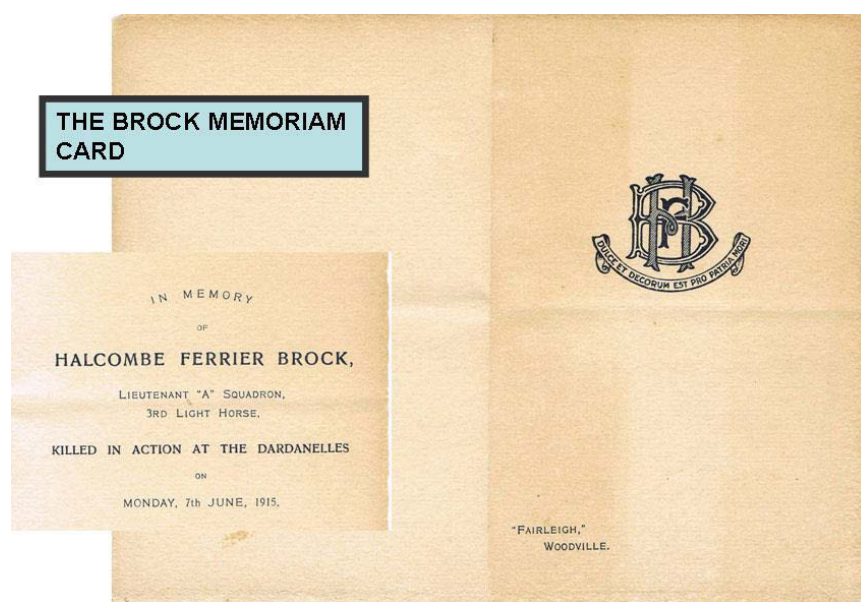


Fig.5: *The Brock In Memoriam card, acquired 30 years after the sword. Combined image to show outer and inner.*

In preparing this article I recently found that Halcombe Ferrier Brock was not the only family member who answered the call of the Great War. A younger brother, George Lindsay Brock, an unmarried 30 year old farmer, enlisted in June 1916 into the Field

Artillery. While serving in France with the 13th Field Artillery Brigade, 50th Battery, on 11 June 1918 he was severely gassed and subsequently died at the 12th Casualty Clearing Station on 21 June 1918. He was initially buried at Riviere British Cemetery then later re-interred at Crouy British Cemetery,¹⁷ about 16km north-west of Amiens on the Amiens-Abbeville road.¹⁸

The final part of this story shows the link between Halcombe Ferrier Brock, his sword, its donor and, completing the chain, with an important Australian explorer. Lt Brock's grandfather, Daniel George Brock, migrated to South Australia in 1838 on the ship *Royal Admiral*; he was one of South Australia's earliest wave of settlers. He was born at Honiton, Devon on 1 November 1811. Among his various talents he is listed as a warehouseman, customs agent, stock inspector and gunsmith. He married a migrant girl from Halifax, Yorkshire in 1842 in Adelaide and raised five children, the second of which was Thomas Alsop Brock, later to become father to Halcombe Ferrier.¹⁹

¹⁵ Prior to the commencement, and throughout the 2014 MHSA Conference in Maryborough, Qld, attendees had the opportunity to peruse the Maryborough Military Museum. There, on full view, correctly labelled and suitably displayed, was Lt Halcombe Ferrier Brock's 1914-15 Star! The location of his remaining medals, (BWM and Victory medal) and his memorial plaque are still not known. A visit to the Museum is highly recommended to all readers.

¹⁶ Courtesy of Mr. J. Rutherford.

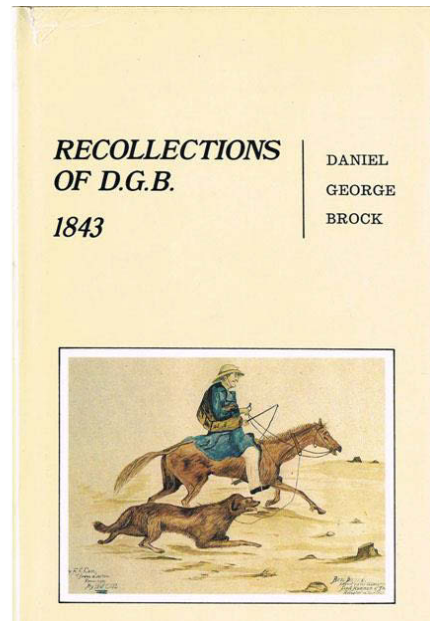
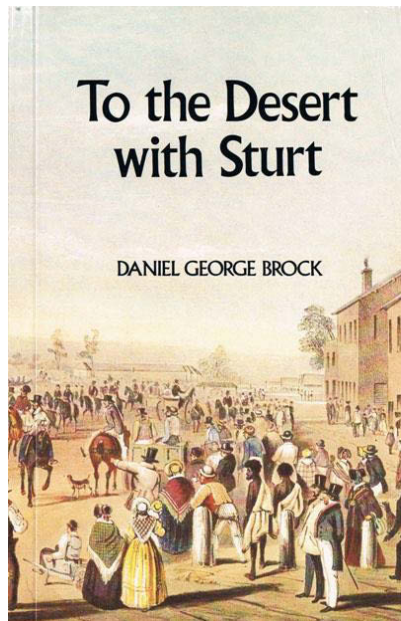
¹⁷ Plot 4, Grave 2.

¹⁸ Service Record, National Archives Australia B2455, 36092 Gnr George Lindsay Brock.

¹⁹ *Biographical Index of South Australians 1836-1885 SAGHS*, vol.1, p.3, Brock, Daniel George.

Fig.6: The two diaries of Daniel George Brock.

Daniel George Brock was clearly literate and a fine observer of his surroundings. Fortunately he left for posterity two diaries descriptive not only of what he saw and experienced, but which also give ‘a measure of the man’. His later diary was the first to be published, and here I introduce our explorer – Captain Charles Sturt,



often referred to as ‘Sturt of the Murray’. The diary, titled *To the Desert with Sturt*, was first published in 1975 by the South Australian Branch of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia. Brock’s earlier diary, published by the same Society as *Recollections of D.G.B. 1843*, appeared in 1981.

Recollections recounts Brock’s experiences when travelling through the settled areas of South Australia by pony, accompanied by his dog Sergeant, collecting statistics for the *South Australian Almanac*. Brock was engaged by Sturt to accompany him on his 1844 expedition to the northern interior of South Australia. On applying to Sturt to join his expedition he must have impressed the explorer as he was selected from around 300 applicants. Sturt describes Brock as: ‘a gunsmith by trade ... a skilled wood carver and general handyman; he could make walking sticks, gunstocks, ramrods, pipes and razor handles’.²⁰ Sturt took him on; in Brock’s words, ‘out of more than 300 I was chosen one of the fourteen men as a spare hand, to look after the firearms, skin birds &c.’²¹ The expedition left Adelaide on 10 August 1844 and Brock returned on 23 January 1846.

So here we have an example of what can be gleaned from a few words attached to an item that, although not a contemporary artefact of a nineteenth century expedition of exploration, from being a relatively unexceptional piece of outmoded military dress becomes a direct link to some important incidents and personalities in Australia’s history.

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Share your discoveries ...

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

²⁰ Brock, Daniel George, *To the Desert with Sturt*, p.xiii, RGSA (SA Branch) Adelaide, 1988.

²¹ *ibid*, p.2.

FROM STAMPS TO u235: THE ROLE OF THE POST OFFICE IN THE GERMAN QUEST FOR THE ATOMIC BOMB DURING WW2

Rohan Goyne

While researching the role of Australia as a potential source for u235 for the Manhattan Project through the Mt Painter mine in South Australia during 1944-45 (see *Sabretache* vol.53, no.2 (June 2012), pp.46-48), I became aware of the rather curious role played by the German Post Office in German quest for an atomic bomb. With this article I have returned to that research thread to complete this vignette of military history.

The Reichspost Minister Wilhelm Ohnesorge (1872-1962) was responsible for the running the German Post Office during the Second World War until the collapse of the German state in May 1945. Minister Ohnesorge was the key figure in the post office being involved as a central entity in the German quest for an atomic bomb. Ohnesorge had an amateur interest in science and he was also a friend of Nazi physicist, Philipp Lenard. He attended his lectures in physics held in the city of Kiel.

Fig.1: Reichspost Minister Wilhelm Ohnesorge, 1937, in the centre of the photograph in civilian clothing holding the hat (Bundesarchiv Bild 183-C08786)



Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-C08786
Foto: Zoll | 1937

The Reichspost also had responsibility for broadcasting and other technical means of communication in Nazi Germany. The Reichspost had several advantages as an organisation to sponsor the search for the atomic bomb. Firstly, it was awash with cash with which to fund research. Secondly, it was the perfect front from which to disguise the true intent of the research and finally, Ohnesorge, its Chief Executive, had a personal interest in science so there was a coalescence of reasons for the Reichspost to be involved.

However, the Reichspost was one of three individual efforts to develop a German atomic bomb, the most notable effort being led by the physicist, Werner Heisenberg. These were operating independently and concurrently in the Reich during the war, which ultimately would hamstring the attainment of the final goal. This example graphically illustrates the feudal-like nature of the Nazi regime with fiefdoms gathered around key members of the ruling elite. The central figure in the Reichspost effort was Manfred von Ardenne. Ardenne was initially employed by the Reichspost to undertake research into television. He met Hitler at a demonstration of television in 1933 which was under the auspices of the Reichspost.



Fig.2: Manfred Von Ardenne, (1907-1997) c.1930
(Bundesarchiv Bild 183-K0917-500)

Ardenne embarked upon fission research in 1939 with experiments involving the electromagnetic separators for isotopes. These experiments had the potential to separate small amounts of the element $u235$. Germany had no pure samples of $u235$ so any small amounts generated from Ardenne's experiments could be used to estimate cross-sections, the first step in estimating the amount required for a critical mass which is at the heart of a functioning atomic bomb.¹

Ardenne also sought to develop a cyclotron which could also be used to separate quantities of pure $u235$. He engaged a physicist named Fritz Houtermans in his research project which led to extremely promising results. Houtermans wrote a paper for the Reich Research Council in 1941 which showed the plutonium could be weaponised to produce a weapon of extreme power. This work mirrored an earlier paper by Weizsacker produced in 1940.² The only conclusion that can be drawn is that the German military powers were unable to grasp the significance of the work. In contrast, the discover of plutonium in the United States led to the Manhattan Project to produce the element from reactors which were ultimately used in the bomb which was dropped on Nagasaki in Japan in 1945.

The two central figures in the Reichspost involvement in the search for the atomic bomb, Ohnesorge and Ardenne, had different career trajectories after the end of the war. Ohnesorge was initially indicted, but the charges against him were eventually dropped and he died in obscurity in 1962. Von Ardenne, however, actively cooperated with the Soviets in their atomic bomb program which culminated with him being awarded the Stalin prize, (the Soviet equivalent of the Noble prize) in 1955.

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

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

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¹ Powers, T. *Heisenberg's War*, Alfred A. Knoff, New York, 1993, pp.96-97.

² Powers, pp.100-01.

THE CAMEL CORPS: NEW SOUTH WALES SUDAN CONTINGENT, 1885

Trevor Turner

*He said sometimes they served in ships,
And sometimes served on shore,
But never said I should wear spurs,
And be in the Camel Corps.*

Sgt Henry Eagle, Royal Marines, Nile Flotilla

While a good deal has been written about the history of the NSW Contingent to the Sudan of 1885 where 'Australian' troops were first despatched on active service by the colony of New South Wales, a little known aspect of this service was the inclusion from the contingent of an Australian half-company of a newly formed local Camel Corps. Lieut General Sir Gerald Graham, VC, KCB, commander of the Suakin Field Force, was responsible for the formation of this Camel Corps, for use as a Flying Column on the same pattern as Lord Wolseley had found so useful elsewhere in the Sudan. Sir Gerald had ordered 500 camels from India for this purpose before he left England but they did not arrive at Suakin until the beginning of April 1885; 195 being landed on 6 April and a further 290 on the 17th. On 16 April orders were issued for the immediate formation of the Camel Corps and the corps was quickly established on 18 April 1885 at Suakin.¹

This new corps comprised men drawn from the various British regiments then in the field, including the New South Wales Infantry. Upon its formation the New South Wales Infantry contributed one officer, one sergeant, two corporals, one bugler and 50 private soldiers. In all, the Camel Corps formed a body of more than 400 men, of which the Australians completed the greater part of No.3 Company. The 55 Australians, selected from men of the NSW Infantry then camped at Handoub and Otao, were quickly detached to this new corps for training at Suakin. Unfortunately, the tenure for the Australians with this new venture was to be brief, only several weeks, and their activities severely limited before they were disbanded for their return to Australia.

When it had been first announced that there was to be an Australian element detached to the Camel Corps one of the several Australian newspaper correspondents attached to the NSW Contingent wrote:

So the Camel Corps is about to rob us of fifty five of our smartest men. It is difficult to say whether the selections have excited much envy or not, because nobody knows whether there will be more chance of fighting on camels than there appears to be on foot, and, granted that the chances are equally remote, it is open to question who will have the 'best time' in a less serious sense. A characteristic of campaigning is this, that as soon as it becomes obvious that there is no more fighting to do hardships lose their romance, and nobody sees any reason why he should not look out for the most comfortable billet a comfortless life can afford.²

After being selected the Australian element of the new Corps returned to the sandbag redoubt in the Headquarters camp, near Suakin on 23 April. Here the officer in command of the Australians, 34-year-old Lieut Henry Sparrow, of D Company, NSW Infantry, reported to

¹ NAA, Series number A1194, *Summary of Royal Australian Artillery in British Campaigns* compiled by R.K. Peacock, Defence Librarian, 1944. Supplement to *The London Gazette*, 25 August 1885, p.4046.

² *South Australian Weekly Chronicle*, 6 June 1885, p.6.

Major W.C. James, the officer commanding the new Camel Corps. Maj William Christopher James, 2nd Dragoons, (Royal Scots Greys), was a veteran of the Zulu War of 1879 and Egypt 1882. He had served with the expedition to the Sudan of 1885 initially as Deputy Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster General from 16 March to 18 April; from which time he was tasked by Gen Graham to raise and command the new Camel Corps. He soon became a great favourite with the Australians.

Camel Corps Formed

The Australians were quickly formed into a company with 30 of the Berkshire Regiment and several other men attached to the company, bringing the strength to 98. The full strength of the Camel Corps was 430, including men from the Guards, Marines, Shropshires, Sikhs, Australians, and Berkshires. It was divided into five companies, of which Lieut Sparrow's was No.3. No.1 Company consisted of men from the Brigade of Guards; No.2 of Royal Marines, Royal Engineers, and a few from the East Surrey Regiment; No.3 of 30 Berkshires, 55 Australians and several others; No.4 the Shropshire Light Infantry; and No.5 of 90 Indian soldiers. In addition there were 200 Indian camel-drivers and a number of baggage camels. Each company also had a distinctive uniform pattern of saddle-covering. An Imperial officer, Lieut Edward Feetham, 1st Battalion, Berkshires, had initially been given charge of No.3 Company but fell ill and his command devolved to Lieut Sparrow.³

On the morning of 24 April, the men of the new corps took charge of their camels. These animals, having only just been landed from India, had no previous training and many proved very difficult. The distribution was three camels to five men and a native driver. The New South Welshmen, having fallen in and been numbered as an infantry company, then marched to their camels, saddled up, and went to the parade-ground outside the railway line. Here they were 'told off' as a Camel Troop of mounted infantry.⁴ As could be expected, there was a great deal of amusement caused by the attempts of some men attempting to mount their camels. However, in a short time most had gained sufficient skill in guiding their camels, and soon mastered the mounting and dismounting.

This new corps quickly became known as the 'Camelry Corps', a name given at first by way of a joke and as a play upon the words 'Cavalry Corps,' but 'Camelry Corps' soon become the accepted term in the Sudan and later.⁵ Private Thomas Chalk, an Englishman and former lieutenant with the East Kent Artillery Militia,⁶ had enlisted into B Company of the NSW Infantry. Now a member of Sparrow's camel company, he wrote to his father, Reverend Thomas Chalk, of Barnstaple, England:

Handub, April 21st, 1885.

I have opened this just to say that Volunteers were called for the Camel Corps. I have volunteered and got in. Our duties are very arduous, but we get great credit, as the Camel Corps is considered 'the thing'. They only took twelve men out of each Company, so that I was very lucky to be one of them. The idea is this, we are really mounted (infantry) only we have two men on each camel, and every fifth man has a native behind him, who, when we dismount, takes charge of his five camels and makes them lie down, and we form square round them and fight like Infantry; we are also used as scouts and vedettes. We go through cavalry drills on the camels, and it is great fun to see these huge animals forming fours and wheeling into line. One's first idea when mounted

³ *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 May 1885, pp.7-8.

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ *Clarence and Richmond Examiner and New England Advertiser* [NSW], 21 April 1885, p.2.

⁶ *The London Gazette*, no.24941, 22 Feb 1881, p.797.

on top of a camel is that you have a great way to fall. One's second idea when the brute moves on is that you are on board ship with a swell on, and you feel inclined to call out 'Steward, fetch this basin' but I have got over that, and my camel is a very good one. There in one other joke connected with this camel-riding, and that is, the second man has to get on very quickly, or else the moment the camel feels the weight of No.1 on his back he starts to get up, consequently No.2 gets a very nasty fall. There's the post bugle, etc, etc.⁷

The fledgling corps was drilled twice daily, in the early morning and evening. After parade in the mornings the girths were loosened and their distinctive red saddle covering taken off. Then half an hour after breakfast the saddles were removed and the camels were groomed, the saddle back of the camel being combed out. This was repeated after every drill or field march. A letter from an anonymous member of the contingent described the difficulties encountered by the new members of the Camel Corps:

The last order is rouse out at 4.30, parade for camel riding under Major James, and then comes the sport. If you were here you would die laughing. The camels are laid down and two men are 'told off' to each, their rifles slung. The saddle has two seats – like two saddles joined, and a cushioned seat. As soon as the men touch the camels, the brutes get up, and the unlucky soldier finds himself hanging by one leg, or lying flat on his back on the sand. Sometimes the saddle slips, and to see the men struggling to balance themselves is the fun of the world. The brutes cannot be got to lie down again unless a grinning native comes. Yesterday two men were pitched off three times, and at last had to give it up. The chaffing the poor fellows got was cruel, and more than one wishes the camels to the devil.⁸

The drills practiced by the Camel Corps combined movements of both cavalry and infantry. On the march the corps moved either in file or sections of four, which then wheel into line for action. The formation of fours was by wheeling, as in cavalry drill, but there was no rear rank. Wheel movements and forming company on any alignment were done in the same manner as in infantry drill of the day. When the riflemen come into action the camels are halted and made to lie down; the men are to then dismount, leaving the native attendants in charge of the camels, and move forward on foot, where they would halt and form a line, which they could extend for skirmishing or retain for volley-firing.⁹

First Patrol

Reviewed by Gen Graham, who complimented the Australians on their drill, the corps rode out as a unit on their first patrol to Tambuk on Monday, 27 April 1885. On arrival at Handoub they stopped briefly for water and then went on to Otao where they spent the Tuesday. On Wednesday morning reveille was sounded at 4am; the men breakfasted at 4.30; fell in at 5, and were on the march at 5.30. The corps advanced in eight troops, or as far as the width of the road would permit, in sections of fours for about two miles along narrow, stony desert tracks. They eventually reached Tambuk and halted. Here they were joined by parties of the Scots Guards and Royal Engineers, as the object of the march was in part a reconnaissance and partly to find water, a party of the Royal Engineers having brought a tube-well and pump for that purpose.

The Scots Guards, also mounted on camels, and the corps proceeded further on, almost eight miles beyond Tambuk. Here the engineers unsuccessfully sank a well to 15 feet. The corps then returned to camp reaching Otao at 7.30pm. It was discovered that, when not hindered with baggage and other impedimenta, the camels could travel seven miles an hour. At Otao the corps

⁷ *The Bucks Herald* [UK], 16 May 1885, p.3.

⁸ *Evening News* [Sydney], 10 June 1885, p.5.

⁹ *South Australian Register*, 8 June 1885, p.6.

occupied a separate zareba of their own on the Tambuk side of camp, constructed for them by the NSW Infantry.¹⁰ On 3 May Corporal R.A. Hepworth, B Company, NSW Infantry, was detached and joined No.3 Company of the camels.

Operation to T'Hakul

On 5 May 1885, a force of 900 men, under the command of Col A.P. Palmer, 9th Bengal Cavalry, was directed to proceed towards T'Hakul, a village eighteen miles west from Suakin via Hasheen. This force comprised the Bengal Cavalry, a large body of mounted infantry, and 11 officers, 461 NCOs and men, 2 horses, 484 camels of the Camel Corps, including the fifty-five members of the New South Wales Infantry under Lieut Sparrow.¹¹ At midnight the troops were again inspected by Gen Graham and marched out at 1am. As the troops moved off in column of companies, the first shower of rain since the arrival of the Australians fell. The column pushed into the darkness, following the old river beds, in silence. After a while the rain clouds shifted and the moon appeared. As one correspondent wrote,

The mysterious black mass of column moved quietly along through sand and scrub and shingle on hard gravel, The hoofs of our horses made a strange sound, and could be heard for some distance, but the motion of the camels was almost noiseless, the soft-cushioned feet of the animals pressing the ground so gently that the march of the whole 200 could scarcely be heard. It was like a faint rustling of trees in the wind. For work of this kind the camel is admirably adapted by this quality of silent movement, and as long as he is kept on his feet his value in surprises is considerable. On we went, mile after mile, waiting now and then for a rest. It was a dreary march, with nothing visible beyond our line of scouts, and everything dim in overhanging darkness. As we rode through the small hours the desire to fall asleep in the saddle was almost over-powering. The only relief to the monotony of the journey was the rounding of occasional hills standing across Hasheen Valley. Beyond these hills the country opened out into a long wide valley, at the other end of which lay the point we were aiming at; it is called Takdul, and is about 18 or 20 miles from Suakim [*sic*].¹²

On reaching their destination at daybreak the corps halted and dismounted, leaving the camels under guard formed into a square. On foot they advanced up a gully on a ridge extending on the left of the gully. Between 5 and 6am the mounted infantry moved off towards the right front and within a few minutes had opened fire on a small village of a dozen huts, built at the foot of a spur. Warned of the impending attack the enemy had quickly retired up a valley behind the spur. The dismounted Camel Corps entered the village just as the enemy had left it, when they were fired upon from the hills. The mounted infantry, firing at the enemy, moved across a large hill directly in front, with a valley passing around to the left. They then advanced to another hill, while other parties skirmished over the other heights on the right of the valley. There was no determined resistance and the enemy had now retreated into scrub at the head of the valley, where a large flock of sheep and goats could be seen.

The Bengal Cavalry then continued up the valley, with the newly arrived Sikhs from Otao, while the men of the Camel Corps had taken to the hills on foot. As the enemy progressively abandoned their positions moving further and further from the village, the corps became engaged in clearing the ravines running into the valley. The main body of enemy was driven behind the hills for about three miles by some of the corps, and while some were killed, most escaped. No.3 Company of the Camel Corps, including the Australians, then moved forward and occupied the crest of the hill lying across the valley. Sight of the enemy was soon lost, as

¹⁰ *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 May 1885, pp.7-8.

¹¹ *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 January 1886, p.5.

¹² *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 June 1885, p.7.

they scrambled safely away further inland. At 7am it was all over. The village was searched and what debris was left was thrown into pile and burned along with the huts. Before returning, the men had breakfast, the horses were watered and the well destroyed.

There were only three casualties among the British; Lieut A. Austin, Camel Corps (Shropshire Light Infantry); Sgt Major W. Birch, Mounted Infantry (Coldstream Guards),¹³ and Lance Cpl H.W. Locke, Mounted Infantry (Grenadier Guards). All three were severely wounded.¹⁴ During the return march to Suakin the corps was forced to halt and form square on three occasions when harassed by random fire from a concealed enemy. After seven hours they reached camp at 5pm.

The Australians of No.3 Company, prominent in the action, were complimented for having done some 'admirable work with their rifles at the early morning combat'. Fortunately, none were injured, although Mr W. F. Lambie, the correspondent for the *Sydney Morning Herald*, received a bullet wound in the leg, but this was not serious.¹⁵ It was estimated that there had been about 1000 enemy in the field at the time, with over 100 killed. The successful patrol had demonstrated the value of mounted infantry, whether on horse- or camel-back. This reconnaissance was to be the last operation against the enemy in which any of the Australians were actually engaged, as the entire contingent left the seat of war ten days later.

On 10 May Lance Cpl Harry Onslow returned to his company of the NSW Infantry and was replaced by Pte Henry Bayliss, from B Company, on 11 May. At some time Pte Chalk, also of B Company, had rejoined the camels. Both Onslow, a surveyor's assistant, and Bayliss, a draftsman, also assisted Capt Parrot, Engineer officer of the NSW Contingent, to conduct a geological survey west of Suakin.¹⁶

Last activity

The last activity for the Australians of No.3 Company occurred on 15 May 1885. It was a much sadder and more harrowing task than anything they had yet undertaken. A mounted party consisting of Lieut Sparrow, his company of the Camel Corps, thirty men of the Berkshire Regiment with camels, ten Sikhs and a troop of Mounted Infantry, all under the command of Major James, set out before daybreak on the morning of 15 May to complete the burial of the dead at McNeil's zareba. This had been the scene of a fierce and bloody action which had taken place almost two months previously, almost five miles from Suakin.

As day broke the burial party neared the Right Water Fort, a grim, medieval-looking tower surrounded by a deep moat almost two miles from Suakin. Here they were joined by the Mounted Infantry, who accompanied the party for a short distance, and were then sent on as advance scouts. Leaving the Fort the party took a south-westerly course along the cleared ground. Passing the rotting carcass of a dead camel they were reminded of the unpleasant task awaiting them. A short time later they achieved their destination. There before them the dead lay strewn – soldiers and enemy. Initially faint and nauseated, the patrol quickly commenced their grisly task. They buried sixty-three fallen British soldiers. The enemy dead were left where they lay. The burial service was read alternately by Maj James and Lieut Sparrow.

¹³ Also reported as Sgt Smith, Scots Guards and Mounted Infantry, slightly wounded (R.H. Vetch, *Life, Letters and Diaries of Lieut. General Sir Gerald Graham, VC, GCB, RE*: Blackwood, London, 1901, p.305).

¹⁴ *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 January 1886, p.5.

¹⁵ *Launceston Examiner*, 13 May 1885, p.3.

¹⁶ K.I. Inglis, *The Rehearsal: Australians in the Sudan 1885*, Weldon, 1985, p.115.

After eight hours their task was complete. Having no desire to linger a moment longer the return journey was made in the hottest part of the day, without breakfast or the midday meal. However, the watchful enemy did not allow the Australians to bury the dead in peace. Two shots were heard in the distance and two scouts were unhorsed. One, with his shoulder broken, reported that the enemy, mounted on camels, were attempting to intercept the party's return. The men were ordered to stand to arms and with their camels formed a square. With bayonets fixed they waited ready to receive the expected charge. Now only hearing occasional shots, followed by a prolonged silence, they cautiously remounted and returned to camp – their final role in the Sudan completed.¹⁷

Return to Australia

Orders had been issued to evacuate the Sudan and as a consequence No.3 Company was quickly disbanded. Upon return from burying the bodies at McNeil's Zareba on 15 May, Lieut Sparrow and his men were immediately returned to their original companies of the NSW Contingent in preparation for their return to Australia, although not before 47 of No.3 Company had volunteered to remain, if required. The entire NSW Contingent embarked aboard the *Arab* two days later on 17 May 1885 and sailed for Sydney on the 18th. In fact, so impressed by the Australians was the officer commanding the Camel Corps, Maj James, that he wrote to the Australian commander, Col J.S. Richardson, complimenting the men as a whole and certain individuals:

Suakim [sic], May 15, 1885.

Sir - Having this afternoon received orders to send back the Detachment of the New South Wales Infantry that has been doing duty with the Camel Corps, to rejoin their battalion for early embarkation, I wish to take the opportunity of expressing to you my keen appreciation of the cordial support I have experienced from all ranks while serving under my command. The excellent conduct of the men is proved by the fact that only one man has been brought before me during nearly a month and that for a comparatively trivial neglect of duty. The whole Detachment has shown an excellent soldierlike spirit, and a keen sense of duty, both in camp and on the march.

On the only occasion on which we came into contact with the enemy their conduct and discipline were excellent. I can only regret not having had more opportunities of commanding them in action. This morning, the last occasion on which they will have marched under my command, they showed great patience and willingness in performing the monotonous and somewhat distasteful duty of burying the much decomposed bodies of the dead near M'Neill's zareba.

Lieutenant Sparrow, who has been in immediate command of the Detachment has rendered me every assistance, and has shown himself to be a highly intelligent and efficient officer, and a genial, pleasant companion. Sergeant Shying has done his duty efficiently, and with Corporals Reddie and Stanton [Stourton], and Private Chalk, have especially earned the notice of the officer commanding their company by their zeal and activity. It is with the greatest regret that I find myself obliged to part with the Australian Contingent of the Camel Corps, and with the most pleasant recollections of the very brief period during which we have marched and camped together, I beg to be allowed through you to wish them all good-bye. I have the honour to be sir, your obedient servant,

W.C. JAMES, Major Commanding Camel Corps¹⁸

Later, in a lengthy Order of the Day, published in the *London Gazette*, Gen Graham also paid tribute to the officers and men of the New South Wales Contingent as a whole, in which genuine

¹⁷ *South Australian Weekly Chronicle*, 4 July 1885, p.9.

¹⁸ *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 July 1885, p.10.

praise was given to both officers and rank and file alike. Again Lieut Sparrow and Sgt Reddie receive special mention:

Sir Gerald Graham makes particular reference to the constant good-fellowship and friendly feeling which existed between the Imperial British and colonial troops; and he refers in terms of high praise to the following officers and men of the New South Wales Contingent for the praiseworthy manner in which they discharged their respective duties:— Major General Richardson, Lieutenant-Colonel Spalding, Majors McKenzie, Norris, and Paul; Captain Bartlett; Lieutenants Burnside, Nathan, and Sparrow: Color-Sergeant J. P. Liggins, Sergeant Major Tuite, Color-Sergeant Shipway, Color-Sergeant R. Burns, Sergeant Conybeare, and Lance-Sergt. Reddie.¹⁹

It was not just the senior commanders who felt some pride in these Australian cameleers. Upon his return to Australia, Sgt J.C.S. Schulstad, late of B Company, stated in a speech at his hometown of Singleton in August that:

after our arrival a camel corps was formed, into which fifty-five Australians, under Lieutenant Sparrow, were drafted, forming with the detachment from the Berkshires, what was known as No.3 troop. It was ever a matter of intense satisfaction to us to hear the reports which constantly came to hand of the good work they were accomplishing. In the Fight at Takdul and the two or three subsequent skirmishes that day on the return home, they bore themselves well, and won high praise from their commander, Major James of the Scots Greys. One or two of them, I believe, were honorably mentioned in despatches for gallant conduct ...²⁰

The men Identified

While the establishment of a Camel Corps is almost always mentioned in most writings on the NSW Sudan Contingent; and that the Australians involved were commanded by their own officer, Lieut Henry Sparrow, the other Australians – except for Sergeant Shying,²¹ Lance-Sergeant Reddie, Corporal Stourton and Private Chalk, as far as I am aware, have not been named or commented on as a unit. However, the 'Special War Correspondent', whose despatch from the Sudan of 13 April, detailing the happenings of the NSW Contingent, and reported in *The South Australian Advertiser* of 25 May 1885, identified those initial 55 individuals. It was also stated that the criteria for selection was simply 'as being good shots and smart men'.

The names of these 55 men of the Australian component of No.3 Company of the Camel Corps are reproduced as printed. Clearly there are some spelling errors and it seems the journalist has taken them phonetically and reproduced them thus. He has also identified the companies they were drawn from and this has assisted identification. In his lengthy article the 'Special War Correspondent' states:

A camel corps has been formed, to which New South Wales contributes Lieut. Sparrow, Sergeant Shying, Corporals Reday [378 Reddie] and Stourton, Bugler Berkley, and the following privates:

A Company – Douglas, Whitbey [453 Withey], Walsh, Paterson [246 Paterson], Compton, Gates [145 Cates], Earle, Miles, McGee [431 McKee], Taylor, McCae, Edwards;

B Company – Glynne, Lloyd, Smith, Healey, Renwick, Grant, Harrison, Harding, Hedges, Wells, Wells, Cunniff, Duce [410 Dowse], Barnett

C Company – Stephens, [448 W. Stephens] Cook, Ritchie, Brain, Bulwer [458 Bulmer], Smith, Myers, Gay, Parker, Stephens [382 T. Stevens or 479 D. Stevens], Compton, Currie;

¹⁹ Supplement to *The London Gazette*, 25 August, 1885, pp.4039-4050

²⁰ *Singleton Argus*, 22 August 1885, p.1.

²¹ See A. Kennedy, 'Chinese-Australians in the Australian Defence Forces before 1914', *Sabretache* 53.2 (June 2012), p.5.

D Company – Burrows, J. Goglan [157 Coghlan], Vindon [106 Vindin], Jackson, P. Knott [48 W. Knott], Thompson, W. Daley [161 T. Daley, B Coy], Pett, Kelly, Campbell, Crow [460 Crow], Anderson.²²

Still later, in Sydney, after the return of the contingent a Testimonial Committee of former Camel Corps members was formed, with Henry Onslow [late Lance Corporal, B Company] now of the NSW Mines Department, as honorary treasurer. In June the following advertisement appeared in the Sydney Evening News and other papers:

CAMEL CORPS - The late Members of the SOUDAN CAMEL CORPS now in Sydney are requested to muster, in uniform, at the Victoria Barracks, at 10 a.m., on Wednesday morning, whence they will proceed to the Photographer's studio. Forage caps may be worn. The men are requested to bring their subscriptions to the 'James Presentation Fund.' Those members in the country can forward the same to Arthur Stourton, Post-office, Sydney, when they will be duly acknowledged: By Order of the Committee.²³

As a result those former members of the Camel corps, as were available, came together to have their photograph taken as a group, including the special correspondent of the *Sydney Morning Herald* who had reported their activities in the Sudan. They also discussed the proposal for a suitable gift as a memento of their service to their former officer commanding, Major James. The *Sydney Morning Herald* of Wednesday, 8 July 1885, later advised:

A very fine picture is on view at Messrs. Tuttle and Co.'s, in George-street, consisting of a group including the majority of the members of the New South Wales Contingent who served in the Camel Corps under Major James. There are about 40 figures in the group, the men all wearing their khakee suite. In the centre is the company officer, Lieutenant Sparrow, and below him the special correspondent of the Sydney Morning Herald, who the corps had asked to join in the group. Every face is splendidly brought out, and the whole picture is an admirable specimen of photography. Several sizes have been prepared, and a copy of the largest, suitably framed, will be sent to Major James along with the testimonial which the members of the detachment are preparing to present to him.

Whilst no extant copy of this photograph can be found, a wood block engraving of it appeared in the London newspaper *The Graphic* in October 1885, and provided a remarkable reproduction of some clarity. There are 40 uniformed figures in the picture – the front two ranks sitting or casually reclining before the camera. Sitting centre right is Lance Cpl Onslow and behind him Cpl Stourton, two of the committee members. On the far left, standing, appears to be Sgt Shying, while reclining third from the left in front is Bugler Berkeley.²⁴

This same article of 8 July then published another list of 51 men as being members of the Australian company of the Camel Corps. It is clear that more than the original 55 men initially listed in the original Sudan despatch served, as certain individuals were clearly replaced at intervals during the very brief existence of the corps. The following are the names published in *The Sydney Morning Herald* on 8 July 1885:

Lieutenant Sparrow, Sergeant J. Shying, Corporal A.J. Stourton, Corporal R.A. Hepworth, Bugler F. [J] Berkeley, Privates T. Compton, W. Knott, J. Vinden, F.B. Renwick, H. Dick, M. Cunniff, J. Withey, H.H. Onslow, A. Myers, W. Stephens, A.E. Courtis, C.S. Reddie, H.R. Campbell, R. Borrows, W. Dowse, J. Walsh, J.L. Edwards, J. Jackson, T. M'Kee, E.J. Taylor, R. Grant, W. Miles, W. Earle, G. M'Crae, F.W. Bulmer, A.H. Parker, B. Cooke, T. Stevens, P. Ritchie, J. Coghlan, A. Currie, J. Healy, T. A. Chalk, D. Stevens, J.D. Smith, W.J. Burrows, A.

²² *The South Australian Advertiser*, 25 May 1885, p.7; reprinted *South Australian Chronicle*, 30 May 1885, p.7.

²³ *Evening News* [Sydney], 30 June 1885, p.1.

²⁴ *The London Graphic*, 24 October 1885, pp 447-48.

Pickering, R. Barnes, E.C. Hedges, Thos. Daly, F. Glynn, H.G. Bayliss, Geo. Smith, F. Wells, G. Harrison, F. Cates.

As with any informally published lists there are always inconsistencies. These two lists prove no exception. From the second list of men published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 8 July 1885 the following names are missing from those previously published in *The South Australian Advertiser* of 25 May 1885. Those men are:

Douglas, Paterson, Lloyd, Harding, Barnett, Brain, Gay, Thompson, Pett, Kelly, Craw, R. Borrows [Burrows]

Those who appear in the second list published in *Sydney Morning Herald* in July, but do not appear the original List from the Sudan in May, are

Corporal R.A. Hepworth [transferred to Camel Corp 3 May 1885], H. Dick, H.H. Onslow [returned from Camel Corp 10 May 1885], A.E. Courtis, T.A. Chalk [mentioned in despatches], A. Pickering, R. Barnes, H.G. Bayliss [transferred to Camel Corps 11 May 1885]

In the first list the name Compton is listed in both A and C Company and in the second list only T. Compton of D company is listed. There were three Comptons serving in the contingent.

It should be noted that Pte George Harrison, of B Company in the first list, was transferred back to the contingent from Camel Corp on 3 May 1885, the same day Cpl Hepworth was posted to the Camels. Harrison was then an old imperial soldier (43rd Light Infantry) whose correct age was 52 years! As is indicated by the previous comments on inter-unit transfers for Hepworth, Bayliss, Onslow and Harrison, there appears to have been a regular turnover of men from the original 55 soldiers named. This is not surprising considering the climatic and physical conditions these men worked and laboured under. Most of the contingent had received training in the use of camels (tie and ride method) and transfers or exchanges would not have been difficult nor unusual. Other transfers, however brief, may not have been recorded at all.

In August 1885, at Sydney, Pte Louis Marks, late of B Company, made a claim on the NSW Contingent Patriotic Fund as he was 'suffering from rupture received while in the camelry corps'.²⁵ His application was to enable him to start again in business as a watchmaker and jeweller. He was granted £10 and was eligible to apply again in one month if unable to work. Louis Marks is not mentioned in either of the published lists above.²⁶ A detailed search of extant reference material provides more complete details of these men and identifies the individuals. From those rolls it does appear that the men listed from the individual companies in the original list are actually from those companies stated. As usual, when only surnames are used and there are several men of that name it has been difficult to discern who is who – but if we apply the premise that those listed are in fact from those companies originally listed we can then determine, with some confidence, which man belongs to which company.

Some Members of the Corps

Harry Onslow, surveyor's assistant, duly qualified and was appointed a licensed surveyor in January 1886. In 1889 he was appointed mining-surveyor on the temporary staff of the Department of Mines. On 16 October 1889 he was seriously injured in a fall from the balcony of his residence in Darlinghurst. He never fully recovered from his injuries. In November 1898,

²⁵ Not to be confused with 430 William Mark of A Company who had claimed previous service in the Sudan from 1881-83, including at Tel-el-Kebir, prior to coming to Australia in 1884. He died at Dapto, Wollongong in 1943.

²⁶ *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 March 1886, p.7.

he simply vanished and was listed as a 'missing person'.²⁷ He was declared deceased in 1899, aged 35.²⁸

Others of the Camel corps went on to have substantial careers, many in the police force:

- Lance Cpl Benjamin Cooke had been born in Brighton, Victoria. Upon return to Australia he joined the NSW police force, [No. 4989] on 23 July 1885. A Detective 3rd Class, he resigned in April 1892.²⁹ In 1900 he was elected Mayor of the Cabramatta and Canley Vale Council.³⁰ He died at North Sydney, in 1928, aged 79 years.³¹
- On 26 June 1893 Pte Joseph Thomas Vindin joined the NSW Police Force [No. 6568]. Sergeant 3rd Class Vindin died at his home at Kurraba Road, Neutral Bay on 21 September, 1915 at the early age of 49 years.³²

Some men simply returned to their homes and carried on in the jobs they had left, as did Pte Thomas Frederick Douglass of Windsor, near Sydney, who for more than fifty years was employed at the tannery on the bank of South Creek, Windsor, until his death in 1935, aged 71 years.³³

Some others had varied and adventurous lives. Pte Alfred Frederick Pickering, born at Peakhurst NSW, had the distinction of having served in three wars. For his Sudan service he received the Queen's Medal with clasp 'Suakin 1885' and Khedive's Star. He then served in South Africa with D Squadron, 1st New South Wales Mounted Rifles.³⁴ Invalided to Australia in December 1900, he received the Queen's South Africa medal and 2 clasps 'Driefontein' and 'Cape Colony'.³⁵ After his return from South Africa he joined the Metropolitan Fire Brigade and served for three years. He was also at some time a prize fighter.³⁶ In 1915 Alfred lied about his age and enlisted into the Remount Service of the AIF, stating his previous South Africa service only. After two years in Palestine and Egypt he was invalided home and discharged in 1918. For this service he received the 1914-15 Star, Victory Medal and British War Medal.³⁷ He died in Sydney in February, 1924, aged 68. Pte James William Burrows became the Elephant Keeper at the Sydney Zoological Gardens in 1892. He later became a celebrated 'Elephant and Lion Tamer' with Wirth Brothers Circus and assumed the title of 'Captain'.³⁸ He died at Merrylands, Sydney in 1934 aged 70.

Others had a less than inspiring career post Sudan. One such young man John Arthur Ernest Wells, (then known as Ernest John Arthur Wells). In 1889 he was charged, along with two other men, with having conspired to falsely charge and accuse an individual of forging a promissory note for the sum of £500 on the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney.³⁹ He was sentenced to eight years' gaol. Wells had previously been a mounted policeman at June

²⁷ *NSW Police Gazette*, 7 Dec 1898.

²⁸ NSW Archives, Deceased estates, 19/10207-1899 & *Evening News* [Sydney], 5 January 1899, p.5.

²⁹ *NSW Police Gazette*, 14 Oct 1885, p.304; 17 Aug 1892, p.273.

³⁰ *The Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate* [Parramatta, NSW], 17 March 1900.

³¹ NSW Death Index 12931/1928.

³² *NSW Police Gazette*, 20 Sept 1893, p.325; 15 Dec 1915, p.605.

³³ *Windsor and Richmond Gazette* [NSW], 1 March 1935, p.3.

³⁴ P.L. Murray, *Official Records of the Australian Military Contingents to the War in South Africa*, Melbourne, 1911, p.69.

³⁵ The National Archives [UK], WO 100/288, QSA Medal Roll

³⁶ *Sunday Times* [Sydney] 7 March 1920, p.3.

³⁷ NAA, B2455 series, AIF Personal Dossier.

³⁸ *The Biz* [NSW], 18 August 1933, p.7.

³⁹ *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 April 1889, p.11.

[No. 5304], but was dismissed on 5 April 1888.⁴⁰ John Wells has often been mistaken as a brother to fellow contingent member, F.B.S. Wells who was the son of Lieut Col Frederick Wells, the NSW Contingent Infantry commander, due to their similar naming conventions and consecutive regimental numbers – 290 and 291. However, John Wells was in fact born in Sydney in 1865 to Lucy and John Wells.⁴¹ John Arthur Ernest Wells was later a landscape gardener at Bowral, NSW. He died at Parramatta, in 1943, aged 79 years.

For others life upon return to Australia was tragic. After his return from the Sudan 26 year old Thomas Compton, of Macdonald Town in Sydney, became quite ill and was unable to support his family. By September 1885 he had received two grants of £10 from the NSW Sudan Contingent Patriotic Committee. On 24 September he was again granted £2 per week for four weeks. In March 1886, now quite ill, he applied for further relief. The Patriotic Committee considered his case and it recommended he take a sea voyage, which they arranged. During his absence it was decided that his wife would be allowed 30 shillings a week until his return. With fellow Sudan veteran William Knott, also ill and late of the Camel Corps, Thomas sailed for Tonga aboard the brig *John Wesley* for a ‘healthy sea voyage’ hoping to benefit his health. Unfortunately the voyage proved fruitless and he died at Tonga on 14 August 1886 from tuberculosis. The Patriotic Committee awarded Mrs Compton and her two children a final payment of £750.⁴²

Frederick Bulmer, an Englishman, had served in Cape Mounted Police in South Africa and later the Frontier Light Horse in December 1878 against the Zulus. He was discharged in August 1879 and received the medal for this service.⁴³ He joined the NSW Police Force [No. 4313] in March 1882.⁴⁴ Upon return from the Sudan he recommenced his police career, married and had a family. After 23 years with the police, the last eleven years as senior constable at the remote country town of Daysdale, he fell into a dark depression. On 7 March, 1906 Bulmer tragically took his own life. He was 50 years of age.⁴⁵

Special mention should be made of the commander of the Australian No.3 company of the Camel Corps. Lieut Henry Glendower Bodycham Sparrow would later become prominent in the mounted infantry of the NSW Military Forces. Born at Beaumaris, Anglesea, England in 1851, Henry Sparrow was first commissioned into the Royal Anglesea Light Infantry Militia as lieutenant in 1871, and served with that corps for three years.⁴⁶ After his return to Australia, Sparrow was appointed to the permanent New South Wales Military Forces as first-lieutenant on 18 July 1885 and captain on 26 October 1887. After serving as an adjutant of infantry for some time, Capt Sparrow was appointed to the command of the New South Wales permanent Mounted Infantry on the formation of that corps in September 1888. He continued in command until its disbandment. In September 1889 he was also appointed to be adjutant of the NSW Regiment of Volunteer Mounted Infantry. In August 1890 he travelled to England for military training at Aldershot, returning to Australia in February 1891.⁴⁷ Sparrow retired from the NSW Forces in 1894 and was granted the rank of major. He returned to England with his wife in August 1895. He died at Marylebone, London in June, 1924, aged 73.⁴⁸

⁴⁰ *NSW Police Gazette*, 25 July 1888, p.231.

⁴¹ NSW Birth Index 347/1865.

⁴² *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 November 1886, p.7.

⁴³ South Africa Medal Roll WO 100/48, p.239.

⁴⁴ *NSW Police Gazette* 31 Jan 1883, p.48.

⁴⁵ *The Corowa Chronicle*, 10 March 1906, p.5.

⁴⁶ *The London Gazette*, 29 Dec 1871, p.5877 & 16 Dec 1873, p.5933.

⁴⁷ *Illustrated Sydney News*, 20 August 1892, p.6.

⁴⁸ UK Death Index, London, 1924, vol.1b, p.579.

Hopefully now, in some small way, the Camel Corp element of the NSW Sudan Contingent and its members have emerged a little from the shadows of our military history. The table below presents the names of the NSW Sudan Contingent who served with No.3 Company, the Camel Corps, from two lists as they were published: in *The South Australian Advertiser* of 25 May 1885 and *The Sydney Morning Herald* of 8 July 1885. (*Denotes identified to that company in the Sudan in the *Advertiser*). However, they are no guarantee of accuracy. Those with an interest will know where to cross-check details to better confirm individuals.

Surname	First Names	No.	Rank	Coy	Remarks
Anderson	George	312	Private	D*	1st NSWMR Boer War; attended reunion dinner of the Soudan Contingent, 1918
Barnes	R (William)	117	Private	C	Only Barnes listed is William
Barnett	Joshua	313	Private	B*	RN & NSW China Cont., 1900; Mayor of Sydney silver Soudan medallion stolen from house Jan, 1886
Bayliss	Henry George	131	Private	B	Transferred to Camel Corp 11 May 1885; Assisted Capt. Parrott with geological survey
Berkeley	John Autridge	492	Bugler	A	Court Martialled, IBERIAS aged 17 years; late NSW Engineers; application to Patriotic Fund Oct 1885; Mayor of Sydney silver Soudan medallion stolen from house May 1903; Received belated Naval Vol. LS&GC Medal in 1913; Died Sydney 1927
Brain	Thomas Spencer	122	Private	C*	Late Pte, 3rd Regt. Vol; Station Master NSW Railways, Western Districts. Died Sydney 1930
Bulmer	Frederick William	458	Private	C*	NSW Police; late Cape Mounted Police & Frontier Light Horse against Zulus, 1879 & received medal; died Daysdale, NSW 1906 aged 50
Burrows	Robert	457	Private	D*	Born NSW
Burrow(e)s	W. J (James William)	402	Private	D*	James William Burrows, referred to as James or Jimmy; Elephant Keeper at Sydney Zoo 1892-98; later Elephant & Lion tamer with Wirths Circus; assumed title of 'Captain'; claimed previous service in Indian Commissary Department; Died Sydney, 1934 aged 70
Campbell	Hugh Reid	461	Private	D*	Died Sydney, 1948; Medals extant
Cates	Frederick	145	Private	A*	Late Pte, Torpedo Corps; at 1910 Silver Jubilee dinner
Chalk	Thomas Arthur	147	Private	B	Late A.B., NSW Naval Art. Vol; Lieut., East Kent Artillery Militia 1881-83; Lieut., Victoria's column Matabeleland, 1893. BSA Medal & clasps Bembsei, Shangani; South Africa, 1902 Lieut., 26th Imperial Yeomanry & Young husbands Horse. QSA & two clasps CC & SA 1902; Major, Territorial Force Reserve, 1914-18; Died 1931 aged 70; medals extant
Coughlan	Joseph	157	Private	D*	Claimed to be 'native' of New Zealand; a carpenter of Cork, Ireland
Compton	Edward	23	Private	C*	Late Pte, 3 Coy, 1st Regt. Vols
Compton	George Christie	318	Private	A*	Born NSW; Bricklayer
Compton	Thomas	26	Private	D	Late Pte, 2 Coy, 2nd Regt Vols; Identified in July List only; application to Patriotic Fund for

					assistance, Oct 1885; Died at Tonga, August 1886
Cooke	Benjamin	20	L-Corp	C*	Late Vic. Perm. Arty; NSW Police Detective, Mayor Cabramatta 1892; Died North Sydney, 1928, aged 68
Courtis	Arthur Cecil	317	Private	C	A E Courtis in Roll of 8 July 1885
Craw	John	460	Private	D*	Late 71st Highlanders; made application to Patriotic Fund for assistance to return to Scotland, Oct 1885
Cuniff	Michael	155	Private	B*	Late Cape Field Arty; Medals extant
Currie	Alexander	156	Private	C*	Left in hospital at Colombo
Daley	Thomas	161	Private	D*	Late R.N. & A.B., Naval Arty.Vols; application to Patriotic Fund for assistance, Sept.1885; Medal extant
Dick	Hamilton St. Clair	162	Private	B	Late captain of the East Sydney Football Club; Received Khedives Star in Adelaide, 1889; born Swan Hill, Victoria; Died WA, 1911; Medals extant
Douglas(s)	[Thomas) Frederick	158	Private	A*	Late 3rd Regt. Vols.; Died Windsor, NSW, 1935 aged 71
Dowse	William	410	Private	B*	Late R.N. - also Douse
Earle	William	167	Private	A*	Late Cape Mtd Rifles
Edwards	John L.	329	Private	A*	A.L. on Medal Roll
Gay	Frederick	36	Private	C*	Late 1st Regt. Vols.
Glynn(e)	Frederick	176	Private	B*	Late A.B., Naval Arty.Vols.; Soudan reunion 1923 & 1930 reunion; Sgt, 1904 awarded CAFLSM
Grant	Angus Cameron	181	Private	B*	Late A.B., Naval Art.Vols.
Harding	Richard	193	Private	B*	Application to Patriotic Fund for assistance, Sept 1885; medal extant
Harrison	George	334	Private	B*	Late 43rd Light Infantry, 1st Waikato Regt & NZ Armed Constabulary; from Camel Corp 3 May 1885; received several grants from Patriotic Fund.; Previous service Kaffir War 1851-53; Indian Mutiny & New Zealand
Healey	John	342	Private	B*	Late Royal Scots Fusiliers; application to Patriotic Fund for assistance, Sept.1885; medal extant
Hedges	Edwin Charles	336	Private	B*	3 years R.N.; Soudan Silver Jubilee 1910 & 1924, 29 & 1930 reunion
Hepworth	Reginald	192	Corp.	B	Late A.B., Naval Art.Vols.; to Camel Corp 3 May 1885; Private on Medal Roll
Jackson	J		Private	D*	343 Joseph, A or D and 418 James, D or A
Kelly	James	348	Private	D*	Late NSW Police
Knott	William	48	Private	D*	Late 4 Coy, 2nd Regt. Vols; made claim on Patriotic Fund for relief; travelled to Tonga with Thomas Compton
Lloyd	Edgar	352	Private	B*	Late 21st Hussars & Cape Vol. Rifles
Marks	Louis	218	Private	B	Not in either list but made claim on Patriotic Fund Aug. 1885 for a 'rupture' suffered whilst with 'camelry corps'; late A.B., Naval Art. Vols
McCrae	George	359	Private	A*	Late Royal Engineers
McKee	Thomas	431	Private	A*	Late militia
Miles	William	354	Private	A*	Aged 28; late NZ Vols; Medal extant
Myers	Arthur	470	Private	C*	China War Medal 1900; medals extant
Onslow	Harry Hamilton	474	L-Corp	B	Returned from Camel Corp 10 May 1885; Assisted Capt. Parrott with geological survey; Treasurer, James Testimonial Committee; Born

					London 1858, arrived Sydney 15 Jan 1877; reported as a 'missing person' Nov 1898; declared deceased 1899
Parker	Alfred Henry	249	Private	C*	Late 47th Regt. Foot
Paterson	J		Private	A*	Two to choose from - 246 Joseph or 437 James; but believed to be 246 Joseph Paterson
Pett	Henry	438	Private	D*	Also recorded as Pitt; Died NSW, 1909
Pickering	Alfred	245	Private	A	Also D Company; 1st NSWMR Boer War & AIF WW1, Remount service; Also NSW Fire Brigade; died Sydney, 1924
Reddie	Colin Spittal	378	L-Sergt	C	Aged 34; late 93rd Highlanders; Sergt on Medal Roll
Renwick	Frederick Bertram M.	446	Private	B*	Born Apr 1861, Windsor, Berkshire; Secured £50 from Patriotic Committee in August 1885 for passage to England, but disembarked in Melbourne
Ritchie	Philip	253	Private	C* & D	Late 59th or 34th Regt. Foot & NSW Police; a carpenter; application to Patriotic Fund for assistance, Sept. 1885; killed by train, Eveleigh Tunnel, Sydney, June 1889, aged 40
Shying	John Joseph	85	Sergeant	C	Late Sergt, 1 Coy, 1st Regt Vols.
Smith	James Davidson	269	Private	C*	Secured £25 from Patriotic Committee in May 1886 for 'general debility'
Smith	George	272	Private	B*	late 42nd Highlanders; medal extant
Sparrow	Henry Glendower Bodycham		Lieut.	D	Died London, 1924 aged 73
Stephens	William	448	Private	C*	late 16th Lancers
Stevens	Daniel	479	Private	C	Late NSW Police; Made claims on Patriotic Fund;
Stevens	Thomas	382	Private	C*	late Surrey Militia
Stourton	Arthur	508	Corporal	B	Late Lieut. 78th Highlanders; Capt., Landrey's Horse, Batsuto War, 1881-82; Speech at return Banquet & James Testimonial Committee member; Died England 1908, aged 67
Taylor	George James	389	Private	A*	Born NSW; Tailor
Thompson	William John	102	Private	D*	Late 2nd Regt. Vols.
Vindin	Joseph Thomas	106	Private	D*	Late No.4 Coy, 2nd Regt. Vols.; Enteric fever aboard ARAB; NSW Police 1893, Sergeant 3rd Class, died 1915, aged 49
Walsh	John	484	Private	A*	NSW Contingent to China 1900-1901; LSGCM 1898
Wells	Frederick Binning Seymour	290	Private	B*	A.B., Naval Art. Vols; son of Lieut. Col. Wells, NSW Contingent; Died Perth, 1921
Wells	John Arthur Ernest	291	Private	B*	Late A.B., Naval Art. Vols; Born 1865, Sydney, NSW to John & Lucy Wells. Late Post Office & Mounted Police at Junee; sentenced to 8 years gaol for conspiracy to defraud in 1889 as Ernest Wells. Died Parramatta, 1943, aged 79
Whithey	John	453	Private	A*	Late 80th, 90th & 35th Regts of Foot; attended 40th Anniversary dinner, March 1925; also recorded as Withey; medal extant

Johnston, Reginald Arthur	Sergeant	S15844	
Johnston, Gordon William	Lieutenant	SX25129 (S19738)*S19730 in diary	
Johnstone, E.M. or E.R.*	Private	S17587* doesn't match nr	
Jolly, William Hay	Private	SX38647 (S21358)	10-Dec-1942
Jonas, Kenneth Ansell	Corporal	SX28813 (S21183)	
Jones, Colin William	Private	SX27609 (S20511)	4-Dec-1942
Jones, Eric Rothwell	Private	S21502	27-Jun-1943
Jones, John Joseph	Private	S41615	1-Sep-1943
Jones, Murray Morgan	Corporal	S20708	
Jones, Raymond	Private	SX19143	3-May-1945
Jones, Raymond Liscombe	Private	SX25250 (S21582)	
Jones, Walter Clarke	Private	S20286	
Jorgensen, George Andes Leonard	Private	S19884	
Joslin, Colin Henry	Private	SX31390 (S21583)	22-Dec-1942
Juncken, Edward Charles	Sergeant	SX39609 (S21498)*S21948 in diary	
Keane, Desmond	Private	SX29003 (S26818)	
Kedwell, James	Lance Corporal	NX105201 (N155629)	30-Dec-1944
Keeley, Desmond	Sergeant	SX23950 (S19752)	
Keher, William Patrick	Private	S21011	
Kelman, John	Private	S20588	
Kelly, Kenneth O'Connell	Private	NX141691 (N49570)	28-Apr-1944
Kelly, Norman Flinders	Sergeant	SX26860 (S20475)	
Kelly, Robert Francis	Private	Q31514	20-Feb-1945
Kelsey, Alfred William	Major	478 (SX25699)	21-Jun-1943
Kemp, Bernard Francis	Private	NX194994 (N413862)	3-May-1945
Kemp, Gordon Robert	Trooper	NX137928 (N223466)	11-Dec-1945
Kendall, E.A. *	Private	S31912* doesn't match nr	
Kenefick, William Lawrence	Private	S44076	22-Dec-1942
Kenney, Charles Mostyn	Sergeant	SX27601 (S19876)	
Kennedy, Donald Herbert	Sergeant	VX137504	2-Dec-1944
Kennedy, George William	Private	NX128154 (N265302)	26-Oct-1944
Kennedy, Ronald Owen Clifford	Private	V43312	11-Dec-1945
Kernick, Jack Arthur	Private	SX28083 (S33828)	5-Feb-1943
Kernot, Owen Howard	Driver	SX39229 (S47058)	20-Jan-1943
Kerrison, Percy	Sergeant	SX39585 (S26126)	7-Dec-1942
Kiley, Kevin Eugene	Private	SX26328 (S21437)	20-Nov-1942
King, Edward Thomas	Private	SX28188 (S21585)	
King, Stephen John	Private	S21020	
Kirby, Garnet Percival	Private	QX60950 (Q271747)	9-Nov-1945
Kirby, Roger Kingston	Private	S21545*20545 in diary	
Klobe, Kevin John	Private	SX31874 (S112301)	10-Feb-1945
Klooger, Keith	Private	VX149518	17-Oct-1944
Klopper, R.J.*doesn't match n.r.	Private*	S20476*doesn't match n.r.	
Kluske, Percy Allwine	Private	SX39729 (S18087)	7-Jun-1943
Kneller, Horace Stanley	Signalman	NX69070	7-Jul-1944

Knevitt, Henry Hay	Private	SX23926 (S17861)	
Kraft, Leonard Oswald	Private	S9812	28-Oct-1943
Kubank, Edward Arthur	Corporal	S9318	ill., Aus 25 Aug 1942
Kuhnd, William	Private	S26399	25-Feb-1944
Lacey, John Albert	Corporal	VX148676 350216	22-Jan-1945
Lamacraft, Desmond Brian	Private	(SX25126)S21169*	
Lampre, George Clifford Robert	Private	S21439	
Lamshed, Stanley Max	Lieutenant	SX1065	27-Nov-1942
Lang, Keith Geoffrey	Private	4183 (S21221, SX23928)	
Langton, Hubert Charles	Private	SX28241 (S19968)	
Larter, Keith	Trooper	VX122423	20-Dec-1945
Lattin, Gordon	Private	S61401 (S5287)	5-Oct-1943
Lawrence, Reginald John	Private	S17866	
Lawson, John Ernest Harold	Private	SX39240 (S21390)	27-Jun-1943
Leary, Owen Robert	Corporal	NX192419 (N351787)	15-Apr-1944
Leitch, William Orr	Private	TX16062	ill., Aus 22 July 1944
Leonard, Arthur John Asplin	Private	SX29155 (S43498)	27-Feb-1943
Leske, Vernon Stanley	Private	S20256	
Lettman, Ashley Gilford	Sergeant	SX26634 (S21185)	
Lewis, William John	Private	SX28819	KIA, BI 11.08.1945
Lines, Charles Stewart	Private	S21505	
Lipp, Harry	Sergeant	SX28237 (S21401)	
Litherland, William Charles	Private	NX177000 (N366899)	8-Apr-1944
Littlefield, Albert Arthur	Private	S21506	
Lloyd, Noel Joseph Russell	Private	NX155155 (N237940)	7-Jan-1943
Lloyd, Robert Adolph* (T.R.A. in diary)	Private/Craftsman*	SX23925 (S18152)	
Loan, Douglas Edward	Private	S20175	
Lockyer, Leonard Andrew	Private	S26403	2-Jun-1943
Loveday, Ernest Leonard	Sergeant	SX25300 (S36205)	
Low, George Mackie	Private	W75091	14-Apr-1945
Lukyn, Archibald Frederick*AE/FP in diary	Lieutenant	48000 (SX2931)*/S1463 in diary	10-Nov-1942
Lynch, Kevin Edward	Craftsman	SX28243 (S21508)	10-Dec-1942
MacDonald, John Garth	Private	VX146036	17-Jun-1944
Mackay, Neil	Lieutenant	SX25133 (S19741)	
Mackay, Paul Perrins	Corporal	S18207	
MacLucas, Norman	Private	SX28266 (S50145)	22-Jan-1943
Macrae, Keith Kevin	Corporal	NX129285 (N166823)	23-Mar-1944
Magarey, Brian Attiwill	Captain	SX4840	
Mahoney, Howard Malcolm	Private	S20877	
Main, Samuel	Corporal	SX26630 (S21222)	
Major, Kenneth Frederick	Private	SX39196 (S21323)	20-Mar-1943
Male, Frank Davidson	Sergeant	SX23967 (S20946)	
Maloney, Raymond Hurtle	Staff Sergeant	SX27885 (S17038)	
Mann, Alfred John	Private	S21489	

Mansfield, William Herbert	Private	TX16086 (T102557)	9-Dec-1944
Mapey, Herbert Henry	Private	SX39791 (S25926)	
Marchant, G.A. *doesn't match n.r.*	Private	*	10-Feb-1945
Marchant, John Lennox	Private	NX107997 (N195896)	1-Jul-1945
Mark, Harold William Alexander	Private	S21278	
Markin, A.E.*	Private	S17895*doesn't match nr	
Marklew, Denis John	Sergeant	SX1991	
Marks, Clarence Ronald	Private	S21223	
Marles, John James	Private	S20521	16-Sep-1943
Marsh, Frank David	Gunner	QX52906 (Q119761)	5-May-1944
Marshall, Clyde Frederick	Lance Sergeant	SX23977 (S20323) SX23037	
Marshall, Lenard John	Private	(S17586)*S17856 in diary	15-Jan-1943
Marshall, Maxwell Albert	Lance Corporal	SX28213 (S21442)	
Marshall, Ross Milton	Private	S50138	7-Nov-1942
Marshall, Thomas Owen	Private	S21053	
Mart, Frederick Ross	Private	SX24000 (S20443)	
Martin, Albert Ernest	Private	S17875	
Martin, Allan Mervyn	Private	S1690	30-Jan-1943
Martin, Charles Baxter	Captain	S19663	
Martin, Clifford Robert	Private	SX39583 (S42816)	13-Nov-1943
Martin, James Roy	Private	SX38840 (S29350)	
Martin, Leonard William	Private	S112138	17-Jun-1944
Mather, James John	Private	S21540	
Mattei, Leonard Ryle	Sergeant	SX25244 (S20300)	
Matthews, John Edward	Private	Q113109	20-Feb-1945
Matthews, Lionel Edward	Private	SX39777 (S21509)	
Matthew*/s *in u.d., Reginald Edwin	Private	SX39762 (S26726)	
Matulick, Douglas Raymond	Private	SX39711 (S111256)	26-Oct-1944
Maulitz, Stanley William Walter	Private	SX38665 (S21360)	
McAllister, William Joseph	Private	SX24001 (S21279)	
McBeath, Donald John	Private	S21589 (SX7484)	
McBride, Lindsay Gordon	Lieutenant	S20180	
McCann, Francis Matthew	Private	NX193851 (N461346)	17-Jun-1944
McCarron, William	Private	SX39410 (S17996)	
McCarthy, James Patrick	Private	NX155154 (N235702)	7-Jun-1943
McCarthy, Robert George	Private	SX31548 (S41621)	23-Feb-1943
McCormack, Jack Philip	Private	S26408	
McCreight, Thomas	Private	SX29223 (S45728)	13-May-1943
McEvoy, Kevin Lawrence Terry	Private	SX39352 (S21446)	
McFarlane, Thomas Leslie Harry	Private	S21511	
McFarlane, William Hector	Private	S20911	
McGahey, John Henry Millard	Private	S26347	