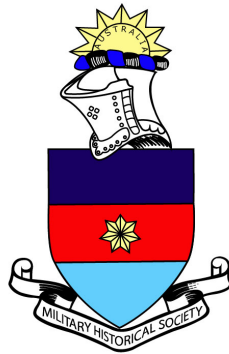


Military Historical Society of Australia
Sabretache



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EDITORIAL

As you will read in the Society Notices column of this issue, February saw the launch of the *Gallipoli Centenary 1915-2015 Special Issue* of *Sabretache*. This collection of past and new articles involved a print run of 1,000 copies, half of which have been mailed to the current Society membership free of charge in addition to the regular quarterly issues, the rest made available for promotional and other purposes. Federal Council very kindly allowed me to attend the launch at the Royal Military College, Duntroon, and it was edifying to reconnect with the centre of things in terms of both the Society and the repositories of Australia's military history.

The *Special Issue* is significant also in that it introduces colour printing to the journal. As with that edition, you will find a central colour spread in this and subsequent issues, primarily to reproduce the maps accompanying the series of articles translating the German official account of the Australian involvement in the Battle of Amiens. The spin-off is that other illustrations where colour is a key feature may also be included, enhancing the journal's status as an outlet for contributors and a resource for researchers. Whether this aspect can be maintained ad infinitum depends upon a number of factors, but temporary or not, it marks yet another stage in the journal's evolution.

As, of course, does the inclusion of the Amiens series itself. The opportunity to publish something as ground-breaking as this translation of the German official history comes along only rarely, and the Society feels justifiably privileged to be in a position to do so. The translators have done a splendid job not only of rendering the original German into very readable English, but of cross-referencing the text with C.E.W. Bean's work and other sources. I have no doubt that readers will find the series a fascinating and revealing view of 'the other side of the hill', as the expression goes. At the same time it demonstrates a rather different approach to the writing of official military history to the usual 'Anglo' versions most of us are used to, and so the series offers as much in the way of cultural insights as it does historical ones.

While in Canberra I naturally had to visit the new First World War galleries at the Australian War Memorial. To be honest I hadn't really had the time to follow the developments taking place in their planning and construction, so my introduction was eye-opening to say the least. What a marvellous overview of the Great War they present. Obviously the emphasis is on Australia's participation, but very effective efforts have been made to contextualise that involvement as well. The combination of choice and layout of artefacts with the technology to understand exactly what one is viewing by means of touch screens works wonderfully well, and is a credit to all those involved. Among the many joys I experienced was seeing the paintings up close and at eye-level, and the dioramas, some I believe on display for the first time in decades, freshened up and even more powerful than ever in their depictions of combat. The galleries are an example of world-standard museology without the overt trendiness one often finds in institutions which have tried to reinvent themselves – in fact, this is not reinvention so much as reinforcement of the best that the AWM has to offer. Needless to say I thoroughly recommend a visit if you haven't already been, or a longer and more considered one even if you have. I'm certainly hoping for a chance to return at some stage soon.

Paul Skrebels

THE AUSTRALIAN ATTACK IN THE BATTLE OF AMIENS, 8 AUGUST 1918: A TRANSLATION OF THE OFFICIAL GERMAN VERSION – PART 1

David Pearson and Paul Thost¹

The following article is the first of a four-part series involving a translation from relevant pages of the German Official History pertaining to the Australian attack at Amiens. The original work is titled *Die Katastrophe des 8. August 1918 (Schlachten des Weltkrieges, Band 36)* [The Catastrophe of 8 August 1918 (Battles of the World War, Volume 36)] by Thilo von Bose, published by Gerhard Stalling: Oldenburg i.O./Berlin, 1930. The translated pages are from Chapter V(b) 'Between the Somme and the rail line Amiens – Chaulnes' and Chapter V(e) 'Conclusion'.

This is a literal translation. The authors have tried to keep as true to the original text as possible, although some effort has been made to make it more readable by the application (in places) of plain English techniques. The original pagination is indicated within the translated text in square brackets, while footnotes as they appear in the original are marked with asterisks. Footnotes added by the authors are numbered and formatted as standard footnotes. Any additional text by the authors appears also in square brackets. For ease of reference portions of Map 2 from von Bose showing the Australian attack are included in the colour section located in the middle of this issue, and are referred to as (*Fig.1.1*) and so on.

The authors would like to thank Eva Wagner for additional translation work, Peter Burness, Graham Connah, Mark Johnston, Andrew Long, Colin Simpson and the MHSA Federal Council for their support for this project. The copyrights in the original rested with Gerhard Stalling Publishing House, which according to our inquiries closed down in 1983. The authors/editors have made significant efforts to trace any subsequent copyright owner(s) of the original material but have not been able to identify any. The authors/editors would appreciate contact with anyone which may have an interest in the original text. The copyright in the translation rests with David Pearson and Paul Thost.

*

At 4:20am on Thursday 8 August 1918, approximately 2000 guns attached to the British Fourth Army, made up of British III Corps, Australian and Canadian Corps, commenced a barrage on German positions along a front of between 19,000 and 22,000 yards (17.4-20.1 km).² This bombardment began as the infantry advance commenced and together they were part of a larger offensive that included the French First Army to the south. Shortly before the bombardment commenced, a thick fog settled over the battlefield and combined with smoke from the artillery

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Paul O Thost, AFAIM, Dip ANU was born in Germany in 1929 and came to Australia in 1953. He studied at the Sydney Technical College and at the Australian National University. Paul wrote numerous articles for Australian and S.E. Asian aviation magazines and translated Pilots notes of German aircraft now in the Australian War Memorial; he also translated many other documents for the AWM for over 15 years. He did volunteer work for the Australian Federal Police and is the bearer of the Australian National Medal with two clasps.

² RAM MD/1186; Livesay, 1919: 34; Montgomery, n.d. [1920]: 12-13, 21-22; Bean, 1942: 499, 529; Kriegsgeschichtlichen Forschungsanstalt des Heeres, 1944: 555; Edmonds, 1947: 22-23.

bombardment resulted in the attacking infantry of the Fourth Army being able to advance undetected by the Germans until close to their objectives. Plans for the bombardment and attack had been kept a closely guarded secret by the Allied forces, unlike most earlier offensive operations, and as a result almost total surprise was attained. In addition, active enemy battery positions had been carefully identified and plotted by advances in locating techniques such as sound-ranging and flash-spotting, supported by aerial observation.³ By these methods most of the German guns that had fired had been located, and as a result two thirds of the heavy artillery was employed in silencing these known enemy positions (the other heavy guns were used to bombard tactical targets).⁴ The results of the counter-battery and fog was that the German retaliatory fire was much less effective, although there were some instances (at a unit level) of German artillery fire on tanks and infantry.⁵ The attack south of the Somme River overran the German line, under pressure from the advancing infantry supported by tanks, and a creeping barrage during the first phase.⁶

By the end of the day, after attacking with four Divisions (2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th), the Australian part of the line, which at the start of the battle had a frontage of 7000-7500 yards (6401-6858m) extending from the Somme River south to the Amiens-Chaulnes railway, had penetrated to a depth of 8000-10,000 yards (7315-9144m).⁷ The success of the Australian Corps in their sector resulted in the capture of 183 German officers, 7742 other ranks, and '173 guns capable of being hauled away, not counting those which had been blown to pieces'.⁸ [*See Fig.1.1, p.31.*]

*

(page 79) **Between the Somme and the rail line Amiens-Chaulnes**

1) 43rd Reserve Division

South of the Somme the left section of the Regimental defence sector (Res. Infantry Regt. 202) of the 43rd Res. Div., the entire front of the 13th Inf. Div. as well as 2/3rds of the 41st [Inf. Div.] were under attack by the Australians. Here, too, the enemy commenced his assault right at the start of the drum fire. Here, too, an advance section by section had been planned, but – in accordance with the ultimate target – not in two but in three stages. (Map 2 depicts the three target lines) As soon as the 3rd Australian Division in the north and the 2nd [Australian Division] in the south had reached the first target (7.20am) there was to be an interval of two hours, at the end of which the divisions of the second strike force (4th in the northern sector, 5th in the southern sector) were to leap over the first [strike force] and then to attack the second and third target.

The two divisions of the first wave each attacked with two brigades in the leading line. Each brigade was reinforced by 12 heavy tanks, thus 48 tanks on the 6km wide front cleared the way for the leading infantry.

³ Monash, 1920: 111-13; Innes, 1935: 14-18, 25, 30, 158-59; Chasseaud, 1999: 444-52; Smith, 2011: 127-30.

⁴ AWM4 13/4/16, August 1918; AWM4 13/7/29 Part 1, August 1918; AWM4 13/7/29 Part 2, August 1918; AWM26 494/2; RAM MD/1186; Monash, 1920: 110-11).

⁵ RAM MD/1186; Bridger, 1919: 129-130; Monash, 1920: 121-122; Montgomery, n.d. [1920]: 41-42; Bean, 1942: 543-544, 547, 550, 571-574, 595-96; Edmonds, 1947: 64-65. For the German account see von Bose 1930 [translation in this paper]: 80, 100, 102-106, 113-115. Stern (1919: 227-228) says that out of the 435 tanks that had assembled that day, '100 had been temporarily put out of action'.

⁶ AWM4 23/5/38 Part 1, August 1918, Appendices 1-45a; AWM4 23/7/36, August 1918; AWM4 23/10/22 Part 1, August 1918, Appendices; RAM MD/1186; Montgomery, n.d. [1920]: 32; Bean, 1942: 543-44.

⁷ RAM MD/1186; Monash, 1920: 73, 81, 84; Montgomery, n.d. [1920]: 22; Bean, 1942: 490; Edmonds, 1947: 61.

⁸ Monash, 1920: 129.

This is what Montgomery says about the progress of the first stage of the attack (*ibid*, page 40-41):

In spite of the heavy fog which – combined with the smoke shells and the smoke from the fire barrage – made direction keeping difficult, the attack was pressed on with great energy. The defence was generally weak; the only difficulties were presented by Machine Gun nests and strongpoints. Some bold Germans put up a spirited fight near Warfusée but by envelopment and with the support from tanks they were soon taken prisoner, as was a 15cm battery (incl. its officers). It was feared that it would be a difficult task to overrun the forest of Accroche [*page 80*] (that is, the *Schweriner, Kapellen* and *Nachtigall* forest).⁹ But the surprise was a complete success and the fog was so dense that the substantial troops were overpowered and forced by the barrage into their shelters, from which they could usually only reappear to surrender. In several places where the territory was more difficult, the advance was slower than expected and the infantry was unable to keep up with the creeping barrage. However, the good work of the tanks removed the danger so caused.¹⁰

In its own view the enemy owed its success to the fog, the surprise, the tanks and the effect of the artillery fire. One can only agree with this. However, the numerical inferiority of the defenders, the absolutely inadequacy of their defences and the almost complete elimination of the German artillery must also be considered.

Just south of the Somme, the III./97 had relieved the exhausted sections of the Res. Regt. 202 in the night of 7 August and discovered with disappointment that there were not even moderately fixed positions; the reason for this was that the positions at Hamel, held until the 4 July, had been lost in that battle and that it had not been possible to relieve the Res. Regt. 202 depleted in this battle [*see Fig.1.2, p.32*]. The latter had therefore had so little work force available that it had only set up the most essential facilities). The Commander of the Res. Regt. 202 was still in command of this sector.

Lieutenant Grosse, leader of the 11./97, deployed as the troops in charge of the forefield of the entire sector, writes:

The extent of the forefield amounted to approximately 1700m in width; the Company had been reduced to 64 men. In the night of 8 August a light machine gun team on standby was made available at my request. The position – on an incline – consisted of fox holes for two or three men; there were neither connecting trenches nor the simplest obstacles. In the heavy fog early on 8 August the men in the individual fox holes could not see one another. When suddenly heavy artillery fire commenced we could not see the impacts, however, we were soon able to determine that they were located in the depression 300-400m in front of our sector. At the same time heavy enemy machine gun fire swept over us. Our observation position had obviously not been detected. After about 10-15 minutes the barrage moved on beyond us. The noise from the tanks which we had previously heard became louder now. I ordered to open fire, although we could not see the enemy because of the fog. When I jumped into my fox hole for just a moment [*page 81*] to send a runner with a message to the K.T.K.¹¹ one of my men called out: ‘Tommy is here!’ I ordered immediately ‘Hand grenades’, drew my pistol and wanted to leave my fox hole when 15-20 Australians already stood in front of my fox hole with their hands raised ready to throw grenades.

⁹ German cover names, the authors presume.

¹⁰ Montgomery, A. n.d. [1920]: 40-41. However, it should be noted that due to translation into German and back to English this is not a direction quotation.

¹¹ K.T.K. Stand = *Kampf-Truppen-Kommandeur* [- Stand] (Commander of the Front Line Troops [General Staff, 1918: 194] – Stand [position]).

On the right side of the H.W.L.¹² was the 10th Company (two officers, one vice-sergeant and about 56 men, five light Machine Guns) reinforced by a platoon of the 3. M.G.K.¹³, from the valley of the Somme to the road C erisy-Hamel inclusively and adjacent in the south the 12th Company. This Mainline of Resistance consisted only of scattered but well-constructed Machine Gun nests.

Res. Lieutenant Knaps, leader of the right Company (10th), has recorded in his notes:

My predecessor had told me during the briefing of the sector that they had recently heard sounds of tanks. That's why I had the pioneers dig in two anti-tank mines into the path on the pasture, some 50m in front of the Machine Gun platoon (also used on the path south of the farm Gailly). In order to establish a connection with the Company north of the Somme, we advanced a group with a light Machine Gun under the command of Lieutenant B urgers on the Treidel-path alongside the Somme channel (at about the confluence of the Somme to the channel), from where they were also to give flanking fire in front of the Company sector. Early on 8 August I prepared myself to guide the K.T.K. through the position. However, we only progressed as far as the Machine Gun platoon when a terrific drum fire commenced. I immediately returned to the farmhouse (Gailly) and had the reserve Machine Gun standby and climbed onto the roof of the house so as to get a better view. But the fog had risen higher, so that we could not see three paces away. I could now hear the sounds of engines and gave orders to open fire immediately.

In the uproar we suddenly heard shouts from halfway behind us, English sounds, on the other side of the Somme. As the English attempted to take us from the rear over the partially destroyed bridge, I ordered the reserve Machine Gun to fire at the Somme bridge.

The drum fire leapt further to the east and immediately we came under fire from Machine Guns and small tank cannons from approaching tanks which were, however, invisible to us. But the fire did not bother us much, as it was aimed too high. The Company continued to fire steadfastly. A big tank drove past the Machine Gun platoon; it came from the meadow path but unfortunately had missed the antitank mines.

Our Machine Gun fire directed at the bridge at Sailly had alerted the enemy who had advanced from the right toward us. The English now approached us from the rear and new Australian troops and tanks attacked us from the front. We cursed the fog that let us not see a thing, we defended ourselves as much as we could. Yet we were powerless against these masses. Why did our artillery not fire? Had the enemy eliminated it completely? That is very likely, because as we were led away after being taken prisoner, we saw behind the enemy positions a terrific number of guns from lightest to heaviest calibre in position with little space between them, [page 82] so many it gave us the creeps. Any individual bravery was useless against such material superiority. Yet we also saw that a significant number of badly wounded Australians were carried to the rear. That gave us some satisfaction; our fire into the fog had not been in vain.

The leader of the 12th Company, Res. Lieutenant Herbst, had also been on the left wing of his position, awaiting the K.T.K., when the enemy artillery fire started, whilst his reserve, consisting of a rifle-detachment, was at the road crossing 800m south of Sailly. He relates:

We could not hear anything from the forefield at first. Yet we were worried about the engine sounds; we were convinced that they were caused by tanks, that were advancing on the road Hamel-C erisy and that their sounds were to be drowned out by aircraft. When the artillery fire rolled further back, I hurried with Vice-Sergeant Kade and my runner to the road crossing, to bring the reserve group with concentrated explosive charges onto the road. The requested S.m.K.¹⁴ had not yet arrived. As we arrived at the road crossing we were speechless for just a

¹² H.W.L. = *Haupt-Widerstands-Linie* (Mainline of Resistance) (General Staff, 1918: 188).

¹³ M.G.K. = *Maschinen-Gewehr-Kompanie* (Machine Gun Company) (General Staff, 1918: 197). Hereafter, Machine Gun Company is used instead of M.G.K.

¹⁴ S.m.K. Munition = *Spitz-Munition mit Kern* (armour-piercing ammunition [rifle and machine gun]) (General

moment. Dense smoke rose from the fox holes in which the group had been covering. My people and the artillery observation that was also positioned here had already gone to the devil. My orderly appeared from the smoke and reported that Australians had come from the right and thrown incendiary grenades; other men from the fox holes were already prisoners, the horde had advanced further towards the K.T.K. My first thought now was about the K.T.K. In this moment some groups of Australians, who also advanced in a tight skirmish line from the right, called out: Hands up! I grabbed my pistol but Vice-Sergeant Kade held my arm and said: Lieutenant, that is pointless, we would be finished in a flash, [and] I have got a wife and children! So, hang it, with this advice I was convinced not to offer any resistance. They pointed us towards the West ... from the German side there was no more artillery fire, but the field-artillery must have been firing at first, for at several small craters lay dead or wounded Australians.

It was not difficult for the enemy to overwhelm in an instant the 11th Company that was stretched at least over 1600m width. This is because its positions were nowhere closer to one another than 60m which provided gaps through which tanks and assault groups could advance unseen. Wherever Australians arrived a few paces in front of forefield positions there can hardly have occurred any fighting worth a mention as it took a few seconds only to overcome them. Not one man from the forefield posts came back to alert the companies of the H.W.L. The 10th and 12th Company could not hear at all the few shots that may have been fired by the 11th Company in the heavy crash of the fire barrage.

[page 83] Thus we can explain why there was no serious fighting at the H.W.L. While the 10th Company was defeated after a short firefight in the fog by a concurrent attack from front and the right flank, the 12th Company found no time at all for a noticeable defence, so that the 9th [Company] immediately behind it was also completely surprised. Their leader, Res. Lieutenant Terberger, who was located, as ordered, with a small reserve in the K.T.K. dugout, reports:

After some time the barrage moved through our hollow. Thanks to sentries within calling distance I had contact with my Company that was located about 75m in front of us. But the sentry located a few meters above us on the ridge of the hollow reported over and over: No news. In fact, there was stillness in our forefield, those were uncanny minutes; but within seconds battle noises were audible to our right. We could not see anything in the artificially reinforced fog, but soon we heard sounds of engines and we assumed that they were caused by enemy aircraft.”

Res. Lieutenant Balles, the leader of the 3rd Machine Gun Company in the K.T.K. dugout, recounts:

Everyone rushed into the hollows, where Captain Schöning¹⁵, the battalion commander, issued orders for the defence. Telephone and field telephone lines failed, no reports from the front. All attempts to establish contacts were unsuccessful. Runners we sent out did not come back. The insecurity and uncertainty during those minutes was cruel. The fire barrage advanced as planned. There, several direct hits in the hollows, then rifle fire, yet we could not tell where the enemy was located, where he came from. Our small troop melted away; we were only about 15 men left in a skirmish line in the hollow. Captain Schöning stood on my left, the pistol in his hand, pale in the face yet completely calm and in control. Suddenly we could hear a hollow sound from the left like that of propellers, very close; everyone looked out for battle planes; nothing to see; lethal shots from very close. Now behind us the rattle of machine guns; in front of us some vaulting shadows, a few at first, then in rows behind one another. Flat helmets, Tommies! Now: ‘Stand fast, hold out, fire, do not retreat, hold your ground whatever!’ Soon there is firing on the right and on the left, an enemy Machine Gun behind us barks out. We fire in all directions. Suddenly

Staff, 1918: 204).

¹⁵ Captain Schöning (III./97 I.R.) is mentioned in Bean, 1942: 539-540 in connection with the attack by the 41st Bn. (11th Bde.).

Captain Schöning collapses, shot in the abdomen from behind! Now we were just five people left, the others dead or wounded. The Tommy had obviously orders to advance further and to leave the nests for the reserves. Therefore we had some silence.

Agitatedly on the look-out, we hoped that our counter-attack would be coming soon from behind. Thus we stood there for about half an hour without knowing what was to happen, where the enemy had penetrated our line. For the fact that the enemy had penetrated our line was evidenced by the fire behind us and the advancing lines which we could see in the fog to our right. It goes without saying that the few remaining people of us shot down as many enemies as possible. Suddenly about 40m to our right, [page 84] a skirmish line appeared, we clearly saw that each third or fourth man had a Lewis gun on his shoulder. 'Lieutenant, there they are,' called our runners Koenig and Braun as the first shots were fired. Some Tommies fell over, others ran toward us. We used our hand grenades until they were very close; as the storm commenced and we four fought an entire Company, I shouted: 'Into the dugout!'

So that finished this unit, too. Captain Schöning died soon after from his bad wound. Res. Lieutenant Terberger had been taken prisoner earlier in the far right of this hollow and had escaped from his guard with another wounded fellow. He was then caught for the second time 'by a bunch of drunken Australians' and plundered. Once again the enemy did not bother with him, so that he tried again to get to his Company.

'There we were challenged,' he writes, 'from 30-40m distance by German voices, recognise half to the left of us a group with our steel helmets with a Machine Gun ready to fire. With a short shout we try to join them as quickly as we can with the wounded man, as to our right a group of Australians with a Lewis gun – quick as a flash – run toward us. Impossible to reach the nest, but the enemy had obviously not noticed it yet. We were once again frisked and then released to the West. Then our Machine Gun fire started and we were pleased to observe the Tommies tumbling over.'

But this action happened in the midst of the advancing enemy reserves which now stormed from all sides towards the fire of the Machine Gun nest and covered it.

What could the stand-by battalion have done now and what did it do? It had only arrived in the night of the 8 August, did not know the sector, [and] had not even seen it in daylight at all. Besides, the B.T.K.¹⁶ only had control over the 2nd and 1st Company; the other sections were with the reserve of the regiment. They had no reports from the K.T.K. either. While he was still considering what to do in this fog, whether the attack had already commenced, if, when and in what direction he should deploy the two companies, 'the first tanks already appeared in his immediate vicinity. Lieutenant Lyding, the Ord. Officer of the B.T.K., has noted in his diary:

When I called the staff of the Regiment: Alarm, enemy attack, there is a tank outside our dugout, someone answered: 'Man, you are dreaming!' Then the line was shot away!

The tank then drove away, very noisy, firing to all sides with Machine Gun and light cannon and disappeared in the natural and artificial fog. [page 85] We occupied the ridge into which our shelter was built with our runners and telephone operators. As well as several rifles we also had a Machine Gun and its operator with us. Now runners from the K.T.K and from the front companies arrived: Enemy has penetrated our line, Captain Schöning is dying.

First Lieutenant Spengler¹⁷, leader of I./97 and B.T.K. now acknowledged that we could not defend the ridge and ordered the Machine Gun to take up a position in the next Machine Gun

¹⁶ B.T.K. = *Bereitschafts-Truppen-Kommandeur* (Commander of the Supports) (General Staff, 1918: 176).

¹⁷ First Lieutenant Spengler (I./97 I.R.) is mentioned in Bean, 1942: 564, 567 in connection with the attack by the 14th Bn. (4th Bde.).

nest in the *Sandgrube*.^{*} The adjutant Lieutenant Bergerhoff went back into the dugout to burn maps, orders etc. But he did not reappear, for the Tommies had already entered it through the other way in.

In addition to Spengler, the gunner with his Machine Gun and me, another runner also arrived at the *Sandgrube*. The others had fallen in the Machine Gun fire that the approaching enemy directed at us. Soon after a Captain from the neighbour regiment on our left arrived with a Machine Gun and a few people. ^{*}He assumed the command. The 3 Machine Guns were now put into position each to cover a different approach, each with an officer in command. At first we fired at numerous tanks that drove around us at a distance of about 10-20m. As we could not do anything against the sinister steel tanks we left them alone – they just went on their way – and we fired at the Tommies behind them, shooting some of them down and forcing others to retreat. Some time passed during which we had thoughts calming us down: there will be and there must be support turning up soon.

As my Machine Gun ran out of ammunition yet another tanked hissed toward us from the right flank. Dense squads of Australians followed behind. I call on Spengler on the middle Machine Gun and point to the right. At that moment he breaks down. ^{***}The enemy rushes him and his Machine Gun now. Our third Machine Gun, too, operated by our Captain, is suddenly silent.

^{*} Apparently southwest of Cérisy (see Map 2).

^{**} See page 95.

^{***} First Lieutenant Spengler had lost an eye in a previous operation – now he lost the second eye as well!

Lieutenant Lyding uses this moment, during which the enemy is busy with the Machine Gun of First Lieutenant Spengler, to try and find the 3rd and 4th Company in the fog and join them.

There is no report at all from the 2./97, but much battle noises are heard from their sector. The 1./97 had received notice of the ongoing attack before tanks or enemy infantry appeared.

The Company deploys immediately but we cannot open fire yet as our own people are still coming back from the front. They are kept with us to reinforce our position. At last I recognise at a distance of about 30m English steel helmets. 'Fire!' How our brave people fire, especially the machine gunners! The enemy replies [to] the fire instantly. At such short distance there are heavy casualties on both sides.

[page 86] Suddenly there is a tank on the left flank. Machine Gun open fire at it, it is not bothered by it but calmly drives on and takes the left platoon from the rear, with his Machine Gun he covers the entire Company.

(Report by Res. Lieutenant Heymer, leader of 1./97)

What was left of this Company retreated to the B.T.K. or to the 3rd and 4th Company, on the way they continuously evaded individual tanks that had already penetrated behind their former position.

As can be taken from all of these reports, a strong force of tanks had, early and without noticeably being held in check, come down on both sides of the road Hamel-Cérisy and arrived across the original fighting sector of the unit Spengler, where they separated to proceed through Cérisy towards Morcourt as well as into the *Lazarett* Gorge. Other tanks that had proceeded over the *Dewitz* Height must have succeeded not much later in entering the *Buchheim* Gully, so that the units on the *Dewitz* Height and on the ridge to the north were surrounded by the tanks and the infantry following immediately behind them. So they kept the frontal assault

going continuously. Strong points that they passed by were left to be dealt with by the rearward waves. At 7.20am the enemy had reached its first objective in the sector of the Regt. 97. Taking advantage of their rapid progress it is even probable that tanks and also infantry had at this time already entered C erisy and had secured the eastern ridge of the *Lazarett Gorge*. Because, if the enemy had stopped as ordered for two hours at the first objective, he would have been visible prior to capturing the batteries that had been installed in the *Buchheim Gully* (7th and 2./Res. *Felda*. 43¹⁸). Yet those had been captured earlier. Now that not only the fights of the IIIrd Battalion but also those of the 2nd and 1./97 had finished, there was a break in the battle that was advantageous for the 3rd and 4./97 on the steep ridge close to the west of the road Morcourt-C erisy. Here everyone coming from the front was caught up, unless they had been forced away through C erisy to the northern bank of the Somme. A major factor in this battle was the presence of the staff of the Res. Regt. 202, that had not yet been relieved, as well as our own artillery support that was gradually commencing from the northern bank of the Somme.

Major Kuhlwein von Rathenow¹⁹, Commander of the Res. Infantry Regt. 202 reports:

[page 87] At about 7.00 am we started to receive the first messages from the front, that the enemy had penetrated the H.W.L. on our front and at the neighbour divisions on our left and that he was located not far from the Regimental Battle H.Q. with numerous tanks and following infantry. The initial dismay was soon overcome by having to organise the defence. The two energetic orderly officers of the staff, Lieutenant Flach and Lieutenant Otto, were allocated their positions. A Machine Gun Company/Res. 201 that had just been relieved at the front line came like an answer to my prayers and was immediately reassigned, [where] it did sterling service for me then.

Just as the companies (3rd and 4./97) and this Machine Gun Company had occupied the ridge, the first tanks arrived in close proximity on our front and on the right flank. At first, there was a certain tank panic about to arise, but encouraging words and the effect of the Machine Gun helped to cope with it soon. And when at almost the same time at first two, and later on another two tanks were set on fire and made unusable by our Machine Gun and concentrated hand grenades, the danger was temporarily eliminated.

But then we were unfortunately caught in our free left flank, where the neighbour division had been forced back faster than we. Tanks positioned themselves there, where there were no longer any people, on the edge of the steep ridge and fired with cannon and Machine Gun from the side into my lines. I soon realised that continued resistance was pointless, especially as we were without artillery support. I had taken it until then as my duty to hold out as long as possible in what had now turned into the front line, in the hope that with the deployment of additional reserves this might bring the enemy attack to a halt. However, as there were no more reserves available it was pointless to sacrifice another 100 men. They had defended themselves for hours and could not have been more courageous.

In the first place I sent the Machine Gun Company/Res. 201 back to the Somme-Canal to cover the retirement. Then, at 10.20 am I gave the order to retreat. It was very difficult to retreat across the 500m wide meadow that had no cover. Many a brave man had to bite the dust there. But all told the retreat went better than I had dared to expect. The enemy arrived with his infantry so late onto the heights, that he could not cause much more harm.

These appreciative words of Major von Kuhlwein [Rathenow] about the bearing of the troops that were unfamiliar to him indicate that the attitude and fighting spirit of the Machine Gun teams (Res. 201) and the men of the 97th were still at a remarkable level. Res. Lieutenant R.

¹⁸ *Felda* = *Feld Artillerie* (Field Artillery) (General Staff, 1918; 181). Hereafter, Field Artillery is used.

¹⁹ Major Kuhlwein Rathenow (202 R.I.R.) is mentioned in Bean, 1942: 566-567 in connection with the attack by the 13th & 14th Bn. (4th Bde.).

Imig,²⁰ leader of the 3./97 that participated here, comments and gives details about the fight at this steep ridge:

The mood of the people was good, the spirit of old. Unsuitable men from replacement units were soon enough sent away again. It was simply said: 'Lieutenant, that fellow does not fit in here.' All leaders and men had always only eaten what the field kitchen supplied. I think this fact is noteworthy for every member of the Company who has visited me after the war [page 88] referred to it during the first half-hour of the reunion as something he'll never forget. In the silence until 7 August we suffered a lot from the weather. Scorching heat, thunderstorms with cloudbursts and subsequent persistent rain took their turns, while the wet forced its way everywhere through the flat plasterboard roofs into the shacks. Enemy aircraft 'bombed' us with leaflets. 'The brave musketeer reads the slips of paper with amusement and laughs about the nonsense,' I wrote in a letter on 31 July.

In the afternoon of 7 August we advanced to the front. Nobody knew what was happening at the front, where the enemies and our own positions were located. The next day was to clarify everything. We were blissfully ignorant; we had the feeling of total calm and security.

Reassured we crawled to our shelters (dugouts and bunkers at the foot of the steep ridge). During my sleep I was convinced several times in the morning to have heard the drumming of gunfire but didn't wake up until Vice-Sergeant Dietrich stormed in shouting: 'The English penetrated our front and must be here in an instant!' I got up, put on boots and tunic, helmet on the head, grabbed belt and pistol, alerted the shelters and occupied the upper edge of the ridge. We could not see anything beyond 20 paces in the thick obviously artificially reinforced fog and could not understand our own words in the thunder of the guns and in the howling and bursting of the shells. Then we heard a tank rattle behind us from Cérisy on the road at the bottom of the steep ridge. We changed our front and lay down on the upper edge of the ridge. Our eyes tried unsuccessfully to see through the thick wall of fog. Down below on the road our two heavy Machine Guns rattled like mad, the tank fired continuously with his revolver-cannon and Machine Gun but retreated to Cérisy. The last sleepers had been roused by this hellish din and came up to us on all fours, only a few remained in hiding. We changed our front yet again and watched ahead intensely. The enemy covered us with shell-fire without being able to harm us much in our excellent position. The splinters of the near misses howled away over us and the shells hissing close above our heads landed below in the Somme depressions, throwing up house-high mud or waterspouts. Battle planes flew as low as 20m and let their Machine Guns rattle away at us – an infernal racket. Suddenly a tank appeared in front of us, huge in the fog, slowly it pushed closer, incessantly thundered its revolver cannons, rattled its Machine Guns. We fired at him as much as our barrels could, but it rebounded without effect, nothing could stop it. The tank was immediately in front of us now, we withdrew our weapons and pressed close to the upper edge of the slope; the tank was now right there and stopped right above the heads of our people, another metre and he would tumble down the slope. But the driver had obviously recognised the situation, the engine started with a hiss, slowly the monster [page 89] reversed and disappeared in the smoke and fog. Quickly we made ready again to fire but the expected infantry did not appear, no target became visible to our eyes.

We received the order from the Regimental Commander of the Res. Regt. 202²¹ to send a reconnaissance patrol to Cérisy. Vice-Sergeant Dietrich, the corporals Anton and Müller volunteered.²² First Lieutenant Spengler who fought in a gravel pit somewhere in front of us asked for reinforcement. I sent him two light Machine Gun teams, who disappeared in the fog in front of us. The patrol Dietrich came back. They had found Cérisy still unoccupied by enemy infantry, had run into two enemy tanks on the opposite end of the village and followed by the fire from those two, had returned safe and sound from the heavy shellfire in the village. Then yet

²⁰ Res. Lieutenant Imig (3./97 I.R.) is mentioned in Bean, 1942: 567, 594 in connection with the attack by the 14th Bn. (4th Bde.).

²¹ Major von Kuhlwein Rathenow (202 R.I.R.). See Bean, 1942: 566-567.

²² See Bean, 1942: 567, note 31.

another tank appeared in front of us and stopped about 50m away. Corporal Anton called out to me: 'He cannot go on, his engine has failed!' Anton's skilled ear, he was an engine driver from *Ludweiler* near *Saarbrücken*, in spite of the infernal noise, had heard the tank driver's unsuccessful attempts to start the engine again. We belaboured the fire spitting side facing us with Machine Gun fire and the desired reaction occurred; one of our bullets hit the Machine Gun barrel of the tank and burst its muzzle. Other bullets probably entered the barrel of the revolver cannon, for it too ceased firing. Now up and at him! Anton had grabbed a few hand grenades and bound them together; we stood in front of the armoured monster, feverishly looking for a vulnerable spot. Anton climbed on top,* saw in an open hatch the distorted faces of the crew. However, before he was able to drop his grenade the hatch was closed again. We dropped to the ground, Anton pulled the primer of his concentrated charge and threw it onto the roof of the tank; unfortunately it was a dud. Fortunately we had a few more grenades; the third or fourth exploded and presumably caused the others to explode as well. There was a terrific explosion, flames shot about inside the tank and on his side a hatch was torn open. The crew rushed out with clothes on fire and rolled on the ground, screaming with pain. In the front another hatch was torn open, from which the tank driver appeared screaming in pain. Strong fists pulled him out and smothered the flames. I had to restrain a few very agitated and bitter people, who had already raised their rifles. 'Officer, Officer,' one of them screamed fervently. The prisoners were taken down the slope into the dugout and bandaged. In the tank the ammunition exploded continuously, an enormous cloud of smoke arose. There was still no enemy infantry to be seen, but a fair amount of fire covered us from the fogbank and caused more and more noticeable casualties. A new tank appeared, stopped alongside the upper slope and fired like mad. We answered the fire but unfortunately without visible success. Musketeer Prinz left his destroyed light Machine Gun and flung himself behind a heavy (Machine Gun) the crew of which was dead or wounded. Corporal Anton guided the ammo belt and a new hail of bullets hit upon the armour plates. Suddenly the crew left the tank and attempted to take up position behind the tank [page 90] but was immediately overpowered by those of us standing nearby. This tank, too, burst into flames. Yet in spite of these successes that encouraged the bravery and fighting spirit of the troops to the utmost, the position became untenable.

*Lieutenant Jacobi (Paul), Adjutant III./97, was involved in this, he was the only officer of the fighting battalion who had returned.

So these were exclusively engagements with tanks and enemy aircraft. Were these four destroyed tanks the same that the batteries on the northern bank of the Somme claimed as their prize? Unlikely! For the men of the 97th would certainly have noticed the explosions of the shells and have avoided the close proximity to the tanks, if they had been under artillery fire. Was it possible that so many tanks were at this one place? That is certainly probable. While in the first phase of the attack every Australian regiment had been allocated only 12 tanks, this number was increased significantly in the second attack period – and this period had now commenced. For every one of the two newly deployed Australian divisions had been allocated another 30 heavy tanks. Those tanks put out of action by the artillery would therefore have been closer to Cérisy and further west, where the unit Kuhlwein only had a restricted view even after the fog had cleared, as the *Lazarett Gorge* was in a blind spot. But the fact that enemy infantry was unable to close up and that the unit Kuhlwein was actually still able to retreat across the Somme ground in the direction of Méricourt they owed to the artillery – even though they did not know it.

The support of the IIIrd and half I./97 by the artillery emplaced in their own sector can only have been weak. Because apart from the uncertainty of fire direction caused by the fog, there were only located three field batteries and 13 heavy guns of the 43rd Res. Division. Their

positions were known to the enemy and were under heavy fire. So the 8./Res. Fußa. 4²³ had to cease fire early on, as all guns had been made unserviceable. The 7./Res. Field Artillery 43 was temporarily neutralised by tank fire. Likewise, the 2./Res. Field Artillery 43 appears to have been badly affected. Nowhere could a gun be recovered. At 10.20am the fight in the sector of Res. Regt. 202 was over, the entire artillery silent and in the hand of the enemy.

The series resumes with Part 2 in the next issue.

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AS YOU WERE ...

Feedback from Readers and Contributors

Tim Lyon writes:

I am no expert on First World War aircraft (by any means) but when I read Neil Dearberg's excellent article 'Canvas, Wood, Wires and Tyres: The Story of No.1 Sqn, AFC in Palestine 1916-1918 – Part Two' in the September 2014 *Sabretache*, alarm bells went off for me. Neil refers to 'The Martinsyde, a single-seat aircraft but with a bigger engine and 150mph speed rather than the BE2c's 115mph, gave some advantage.' The alarm bells went off because a speed of 150mph would have done more than give 'some advantage', it would have made the Martinsyde the First World War equivalent of the famous P-51 Mustang, a true war winner. The Martinsyde would have dominated every other aircraft in the air at that time. I am pretty sure that the '150mph' Martinsyde that Neil is referring to is the Martinsyde F.4 Buzzard, but this aircraft first flew in June 1918 and deliveries to the RAF had just started when the Armistice between the Allies and Germany was signed. I believe that the aircraft used by No.1 Sqn, AFC was the Martinsyde G.100 'Elephant', with a top speed of only 96mph and indeed armed with two Lewis guns, one of which faced rearwards. Its nickname 'Elephant' apparently resulted from its poor flying characteristics, so No.1 Sqn probably didn't gain 'some advantage' from this new aircraft, although it is reputed to have been quite successful as a fighter bomber. This seems to be confirmed by the photographs in the Australian War Memorial's Collection but unfortunately with no mention in the Official History. I wonder if there is anyone out there who knows more about this stuff than I do?

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THE ARMY'S GROCERS AND TRUCKIES: UNDERSTANDING THE AUSTRALIAN ARMY SERVICE CORPS IN WW2

Graham McKenzie-Smith

Introduction

The Aust Army Service Corps (AASC) in the Second World War was one of the Corps which supplied the Army with the materials it needed to live, move and fight. The Aust Army Ordnance Corps (AAOC) supplied the non-consumable items for which the receiver was accountable, while the Aust Army Medical Corps (AAMC), Royal Aust Engineers (RAE) and Corps of Signals maintained supply branches to distribute the specialist medical, engineer and signals stores and equipment. The AASC were the Army's grocers, who procured, stored and distributed the consumable stores such as food and petrol, as well as being the Army's truckies, who carried troops, AASC stores and ordnance stores wherever required. AASC units also underwent more changes in name, role and structure than any other corps during the war, making the understanding of AASC organisation difficult to follow. This article aims to demystify the changes to the organisation of the AASC during this period to assist historians and the descendants of the men and women who served in the corps during the war.

'Field' Supply Units

This section covers the AASC units which were attached to the divisions and field troops and the way that their organisation evolved through three phases during the war.

Phase 1 – Commodity Company System

In 1940 the supply role was undertaken for each division in the field by three integrated units which had both supply and transport functions for specified groups of commodities. The **Supply Column** had sixteen officers and 638 men (16/638) who handled all supplies for the division, except petrol and ammunition. ColHQ generally remained with DivHQ and the field work was done by I Echelon and II Echelon. Each had a small EchHQ, a supply section (A Sec and E Sec), which received supplies from depots in bulk and broke them down into unit loads, as well as three transport sections (B, C and D Sec for I Ech, F, G and H Sec for II Ech), which transported the supplies to the units. J Sec was the workshop section, which had the main workshop working with ColHQ, as well as sub sections that could work with the echelons if needed. The two echelons could service different parts of a static line, or could leapfrog each other, servicing the division in advance or withdrawal.

The **Ammunition Company**, with 11/494, specifically handled ammunition, mainly for the division's artillery. They generally concentrated on ammunition transport between the ammunition depots (operated by AAOC staff) and the gun lines, where RAA staff took over responsibility. CoyHQ included some ammunition technicians and could operate a forward depot if necessary. A, B and C Sec were large transport sections while D Sec was a workshop section. The **Petrol Company**, with 9/353, had a similar structure, but with CoyHQ and three sections (A, B and C Sec), each able to operate a petrol issue point and to transport the fuel to keep the division operational. These sections could leapfrog during advance or withdrawal, or could service part of the division's front.

As well as this set of units being part of each AIF division, a similar set was allocated to service the corps troops. For the militia, a set was part of each division and sets for the corps troops were established in NSW and Victoria, while in the smaller states, a division set (often on a reduced scale) was formed to support the field troops in the state. This commodity based system

had evolved from the First World War experience and was suited to the type of static warfare on the Western Front. In the Middle East it was found that it was less suitable for the more fluid desert warfare. Out of the line the ammunition and petrol companies were underworked and when the brigades operated away from each other, each company had to send detachments away from a suitable AASC HQ. After a number of periods where each company was transformed into a brigade company on an ad-hoc basis during specific operation (eg Greece and Syria) the organisation evolved to Phase 2.

Phase 2 – Brigade Company System

The AIF divisions in the Middle East formally adopted the brigade company system in January 1942. The supply column, ammunition company and petrol company exchanged sections and each formed a new **AASC Company** which included CoyHQ (3/45) and three transport platoons (1/61) which were numbered 1, 2 & 3 Tpt Pl. A composite platoon (Comp Pl, 2/37) could operate a Detail Issue Depot (DID) and fuel point while the Wksp Pl (2/67) serviced all the vehicles. At least one Relief Driver Increment (RDI) (0/31) was attached, which provided the extra manpower that may be needed in the operating platoons from time to time. The militia division AASC units were reorganised on the brigade company system in August 1942 and the corps troops AASC units in April 1943. In most cases the Coy AASC became closely aligned with a brigade, while DivHQ and the divisional units had to be serviced by sub-units ‘borrowed’ from the brigades. The Papuan campaign demonstrated the need for extra flexibility as the sub-units from the Coy AASCs needed to operate independently in different combinations and this led to the introduction of the ‘Jungle’ reorganisation.

Phase 3 – Jungle Reorganisation

After the Papuan campaign the first line divisions (AIF and Militia) were reorganised on a ‘Tropical Scale’ and designated as ‘Jungle Divisions’. For the AASC units this meant their evolution into separate supply or transport companies. The composite platoons were formed into **Supply Depot Platoons** which were grouped under a **Supply Depot Company** HQ which was formed out of one of the AASC companies. Two supply depot platoons were nominally available for each brigade, but all under CoyHQ (3/15) which could move the six platoons around to suit the operational requirement. Initially the DivHQ and HQ units were serviced by sections ‘borrowed’ from the brigades, but for the final campaigns, two extra platoons were added to each company to service these HQ units.

Other AASC company HQs took over the transport platoons to become a **General Transport Company** which included CoyHQ (3/43), three transport platoons (A, B and C) with 1/61, a workshop platoon with 2/67 and at least one RDI (0/31). The ‘jungle divisions’ initially had a single transport company permanently attached, with additional platoons made available from their base areas if required. For the later campaigns two general transport companies were generally attached to each division, one with jeeps and trailers while the second had larger 6x6 trucks. For the ‘militia’ divisions in New Guinea, each brigade arrived with a transport platoon which joined the CoyHQ attached to the division.

This reorganisation took place in early 1943 for those divisions proceeding to New Guinea, and more generally in July 1943. The divisions on garrison duty in southern Australia and NT retained the Brigade Company structure until they were disbanded, or the brigades individually converted to ‘Tropical Scale’, when they formed two supply depot platoons and a transport platoon to join the CoyHQs at their new location. In structure the new supply depot companies were the same as those derived from the ‘Base’ AASC units in Section 3 while the general transport companies were the same as those derived from the transport units in Section 5.

‘Base’ Supply Units

The ‘field’ supply units in Section 2 drew their supplies from a range of ‘Base’ supply units which are covered in this section. In Australia the supply depot system developed early in the Second World War, with **District Supply Depots** (DSD) in each state, usually in the capital, and at troop concentration areas. The capital city depots generally received supplies in bulk from manufacturers, stored reserve stocks and distributed these to the depots in concentration areas. In early 1942, **Base Supply Depots** (BSD) were formed at Cabarlah (Qld), Parkes (NSW) and Tottenham (Vic), while a **Supply Reserve Depot** (SRD) was opened at Bandiana (Vic). Further DSDs were opened and **Advanced Supply Depots** (ASD) were established as required. Each supply depot carried rations and supplies sufficient for the number of troops being supplied, with a reserve, and could have a number of remote storehouses under control. For example ASD Rockhampton was formed in July 1942 to take over the storehouses at Rockhampton (Qld) and at Emerald, Jericho and Winton. They were required to carry rations for 20,000 men for 21 days, as well as a reserve of 300,000 rations.

To man these depots AASC used a similar system to AAOC, where the depot unit itself only had a small HQ staff and were manned by detachments from a **Supply Personnel Company** which would have detachments at a number of depots around the state. These depots ranged from the large Base Supply Depots to the smaller District Supply Depots and to the many **Detail Issue Depots** (DID), which serviced particular groups of units. In the Middle East, Australian units could draw on RASC sources so the only ‘Base’ supply units sent initially were **Supply Personnel Sections** to work in the British depots. While in the Middle East, some of the supply personnel sections were redesignated as named DIDs before they returned to Australia but generally the DIDs were not units in their own right.

By May 1943 each of the supply personnel companies had many detachments away from CoyHQ, and many of the supply depots had detachments from a number of personnel companies. This led to the reorganisation that saw the detachments formed into **Supply Depot Platoons** (with a standard organisation of two officers and 32 men), while the CoyHQ or depot HQ was reorganised to form a HQ for **Supply Depot Company** to control the platoons attached to them. These supply depot companies and platoons were similar in organisation, but different in role, to those formed from the ‘field’ supply units. The number of platoons per company varied with the depot size and depots could be reduced or expanded by moving platoons as troop numbers being serviced varied over time.

Transport Units

By late 1943 most AASC transport units had evolved into **General Transport Companies** with CoyHQ, three transport platoons (A, B and C), a Relief Driver Increment (RDI) and a workshop platoon with two sections. However, these general transport companies reached this stage from a variety of earlier organisations.

The procurement and storage of ammunition is an AAOC responsibility, but AASC is responsible for its transport. The positional warfare of the First World War involved heavy expenditure of artillery ammunition, and a supply system evolved that saw **Corps Ammunition Parks** formed which had an **Ammunition Sub Park** nominally allocated to each division, but under ParkHQ control so that the sub parks could be concentrated where they were needed to support an offensive. Their main role was to transport ammunition from AAOC-manned ammunition depots to forward dumps, from where it would be distributed by

the division's ammunition company. When the Second AIF was formed, a single ammunition sub park was initially formed to be added to the ammunition park of the British corps that 6 Inf Div would be allocated to. This was later expanded to a full Australian ammunition park with multiple sub parks which served in the Middle East. Without the positional warfare of the Western Front, the need for a specialist ammunition park was reduced, and the sub parks were mostly used on general transport tasks, until they were reorganised in early 1942 as general transport companies, and ParkHQ became HQ for all the general transport units allocated to the corps.

With the mechanisation of the Army, petrol became a major supply item and the **Corps Petrol Park** was formed using the ammunition park as the model. As petrol was an AASC responsibility, the petrol park (and its **Petrol Sub Parks**) also had responsibility for manning the petrol dumps between the base petrol depots and the forward dumps that were manned by the divisional petrol companies. Again the sub parks were mainly used for general transport and were reorganised as general transport companies in early 1942 with the ParkHQ becoming HQ for the general transport units allocated for troop transport. The men manning the petrol dumps, then formed separate **Petrol Depots**.

In Australia, the Mobilisation Plans called for corps ammunition and petrol parks to be formed in NSW and Victoria with sub parks in the other states, but in the light of Middle East experience, few of these units developed beyond a nucleus stage. While ammunition and petrol parks were formed to transport those commodities in the rear areas, **Reserve Motor Transport Companies** were formed as general transport units for all other cargo types. The twelve officers and 470 men were organised with CoyHQ, A, B, C and D transport sections and E workshop section and one was formed to join 1 Aust Corps in the Middle East. Three other AIF units were formed for Malaya and by December 1941, some twenty companies had been formed in Australia. In mid-1942 they were reorganised as general transport companies.

With the need to increase transport capacity along the convoy routes from Alice Springs (NT) and Mt Isa (Qld) towards Darwin, several general transport companies were formed in early 1942. When the reserve motor transport companies were converted to general transport companies in mid-1942, these were generally smaller than the previous units, so several new general transport companies were formed. From early 1943 the composite brigade AASC companies in the divisions were also reorganised, with their transport platoons being concentrated under the AASC company HQs which became general transport company HQs. Although most companies had the standard three platoon structure, some were larger with up to six platoons, three RDIs and a four-section workshop.

From mid-1944, the general transport companies which were to be attached to the 'jungle divisions' were reorganised to form CoyHQ, three potentially independent **Transport Platoons** (each with a small workshop section) and a **Workshop Platoon** to undertake 2nd line maintenance. The transport platoons usually had one officer and 61 men. Most platoons remained within their original companies, but some transferred or operated independently.

As 1 Armd Div was forming, several **Tank Transporter Companies** were formed in early 1942 with the heavy vehicles to give them strategic mobility. Each had CoyHQ, three platoons which could each carry the tanks of an armoured squadron, a smaller one to carry the tanks of RegtHQ and a workshop. When the armoured force was reduced to a single armoured brigade and individual armoured regiments were being used in New Guinea, several **Tank Transporter Platoons** were formed and the companies were converted to general transport

companies or disbanded.

The field army was supported by a range of base and training units under command of the L of C HQs, usually located in the state capitals. To provide these offices with transport, a series of **Car Companies** were established. These often had a high proportion of AWAS drivers and mechanics and were equipped with a range of staff cars, vans, utilities, trucks and buses.

The Army had only started to mechanise its transport in the late 1930s and horse transport continued in use well into the war period. In each state an **Auxiliary Horse Transport Company** provided detachments to work within depots and camps for short haul transport, saving on rubber and fuel. To support the fighting in New Guinea, several **Pack Transport Companies** were formed. When certain transport companies were issued with amphibious trucks (DUKWs) from late 1944, an **Amphibious Vehicle Increment** was added to the unit to provide the extra signallers, navigators and mechanics needed to operate and maintain these vehicles.

Specialist Supply Units

As well as the general 'field' supply, 'base' supply and transport units in previous sections, AASC had a range of specialist supply and distribution units. Following the experience of the Kokoda campaign, the first dedicated **Air Supply Platoon** was formed at Port Moresby (NG) in December 1942, followed by another in March 1943. The fighting towards Salamaua from Wau, as well as the advance on Lae by 7 Inf Div, were reliant on air supply and these platoons were expanded into three **Air Maintenance Companies**, each with aircrew, air packing and transport platoons, while a supply depot platoon was attached. As Lae developed as the base for future operations, the air supply task was reduced and all companies left New Guinea by August 1944. In early 1945 the companies were reduced to **Air Maintenance Platoons**, organised into sections that could be used for small scale air supply tasks in New Guinea and Borneo. One company HQ was used as the AASC HQ for the brigade group which landed at Tarakan, while a second was retained in LHQ Reserve for a similar role, if necessary.

In 1940 the oil companies had a network of fuel depots around Australia which supplied private service stations where civilian motorists could buy their petrol, oil and lubricants (POL). Farmers and industry sourced their requirements either directly from the company's depots, or from agents who ran sub-depots in regional areas. In peacetime the army and air force dealt with these service stations, sub-depots or depots. In the Middle East these facilities were provided by the British, with the divisional petrol companies distributing POL from the depots to units, while carrying relatively small reserves.

With the potential for hostilities closer to Australia, plans were developed in 1941 for army units to be formed in each state to take over the running of at least some of the fuel company's depots to ensure the adequate flow of POL to meet the needs of the army and air force. Initially these **Bulk Issue Petrol & Oil Depots** (BIPODs) were part-time units which were mobilised in December 1941 and brought up to strength with the staff from the depots taken over. All fuel was imported, so the oil companies in Australia retained the ocean terminals and the bulk distribution role to major depots (mainly by rail), with the BIPOD units controlling some strategic bulk storage facilities, as well as large dispersed stocks of fuel in drums. In NT and New Guinea they also manned some bulk storage facilities alongside similar US units.

Each of the state BIPODs varied in size and organisation but adopted a section structure during 1942. In mid-1943 the BIPODs in the southern states formed a number of independent **BIPOD**

Platoons (1/28) for service in New Guinea. During 1944 the BIPODS in NT and New Guinea, along with those required to support the future operations of 1 Aust Corps, were reorganised into separate BIPOD platoons with several of BIPOD HQs. Also in 1943, **Bulk Petroleum Storage Companies** were formed to take over the ocean terminals in forward areas and to fill 44 gallon drums for storage and distribution by the BIPODs.

Fresh bread was a staple of the Australian ration scale and an army **Field Bakery** was included in the AIF Order of Battle as a corps unit, with multiple sections, that could service up to 100,000 men. Except for one section that was sent to Malaya with 8 Inf Div, this bakery was not raised, as bread was supplied in the Middle East through British sources. When 1 Aust Corps was ordered to the Pacific, their destination was unknown so a reduced field bakery was formed which arrived in Adelaide in March 1942. In 1940 two small bakery sections had been formed for Darwin (NT) and Alice Springs. With the start of the Pacific War, 12 small field bakeries were proposed, with sections to be raised as equipment became available. These sections were raised progressively in 1942 and 1943 and posted to most areas of troop concentration in Australia and New Guinea. The bakery units were reorganised in March 1944 to form forty six **Field Baking Platoons** (1/40) which were self-contained, along with fourteen HQs for **Field Baking Companies** (2/12) which could supervise up to five platoons.

In the Middle East, Australian troops were supplied with meat from British or local sources, although some butchers worked within the supply depots. **Field Butcheries** were authorised in January 1942 for NSW, Victoria and NT with detached sections in Queensland, SA, WA and Tasmania and these were partly mobilised as equipment became available and the need arose. In November 1942 these were reorganised with separate (usually undersized) units in each state. These were again reorganised in March 1943 as **Field Butchering Companies** with variable numbers of platoons.

By this time the army's butchering requirements were evolving, with large abattoirs being manned by full companies in North Queensland and NT while partial companies and single platoons serviced the meat preparation and inspection needs in other areas, with some small scale abattoirs operating with imported animals in New Guinea. In March 1944 these operational distributions were recognised by the formation of separate **Field Butchering Platoons** which could operate with the larger companies or independently.

The expansion of garrisons in isolated areas, away from established supply sources for fresh produce, led to the development of formal and informal army farming and fishing projects. In NT the first farming section in 1940 expanded to a group with two **Farm Companies** and eleven platoons which retained their company structure, while in New Guinea the two companies evolved into eight **Independent Farm Platoons**. There was some variation in the establishment of each platoon depending on the area under cultivation, the crop type and local factors. Many other units also conducted smaller scale farming projects for their own consumption where this did not interfere with their prime role. In New Guinea and Torres Strait **Marine Food Supply Platoons** were formed to provide fish, particularly to hospitals.

Other AASC Units

In 1939 the Army was just starting a program of mechanisation and the early compulsory training camps for the militia used hired vehicles, while the early truck purchases were used to equip 6 Inf Div. In September 1940 it was decided to impress civilian vehicles for the militia and this program was ramped up in March 1941. In each command (or military district) one or more **Vehicle Collection Centres** (VCCs) was used to locate suitable vehicles and 'negotiate'

their purchase. They were then overhauled, if necessary, and painted before being sent to the **Vehicle Reception Depot** (VRD) for distribution. The VRD also accepted new vehicles direct from manufacturers. In October 1942, AAOC took over the vehicle distribution role and the various VCCs and VRDs were disbanded.

Refrigeration plant in NT had been operated previously by various engineer or AASC units and in March 1945, separate **Refrigeration Plant Operating Platoons** were formed to take over the function. **Port Detachments** were formed in June 1945 to supervise the flow of AASC stores through the ports for the Borneo landings, and similar units were later formed in New Guinea. **Base Clerical Increments** were formed in mid-1944 and attached to the mainland Base Supply Depots to give them additional manpower to cover peak loads in various parts of the depot as required. The supply of horses to army units was a pre-war responsibility of the AASC which continued throughout the war, with a **Remount Depot** operating in each L of C Area.

AASC training was layered, with a number of ad-hoc AASC training units developed to train the initial recruits for AIF units (which are poorly documented), then **AASC Training Depots** were established in each state (command or military district). Then these were standardised in November 1942 and centralised at Bonegilla in April 1943 to form the **AASC Trng Centre**. They were reorganised there in June 1943 and reduced to a single training battalion in June 1944. Officer and more technical training was done at various AASC schools which evolved into **LHQ AASC School** doing higher training and setting standards for other AASC schools run by Army and Corps HQs. Training in driving and maintenance of vehicles was carried out by AASC on behalf of all corps and this was mainly done by mobile training teams from **LHQ Sch of Mech**.

Conclusion

A short article like this cannot hope to adequately describe the complexity of an organisation like the Aust Army Service Corps in the Second World War. Some 638 separate AASC units have been recorded during this period and they had some 1350 unit titles. Over 50,000 men and women served in the corps in every area that Australian soldiers served. The excellent corps histories by Hugh Fairclough and Neville Lindsay¹ will allow those who are interested to explore further, but it is hoped that the reader will be able to use the framework provided by this article to better understand the workings of the corps which kept the army fed and mobile.

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

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

The '**As You Were ...**' column is there for you!

Email the editor at editor@mhsa.org.au and have your comments included in the next issue.

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¹ H. Fairclough, *Equal to the Task: The History of the Royal Aust Army Service Corps*, Cheshire, Sydney, 1962.
N. Lindsay, *Equal to The Task: The Royal Aust Army Service Corps*, Kenmore, Historia Publications, 1992

‘GAVMAN BILONG JERMAN I PINIS! TAIM BILONG OL OSTRELYA EM KAMAP NA’: THE AUSTRALIAN MILITARY ADMINISTRATION OF GERMAN NEW GUINEA, 1914-1921

John Steel

Well before Australian soldiers experienced the turmoil and frustration of the Gallipoli campaign, the horror of trench warfare in France and the sweeping cavalry campaign in Palestine in 1918, members of the Australian Naval and Military Expedition Force (ANMEF), ‘the coconut lancers’, defeated German forces outside of Rabaul on the island of New Britain, German New Guinea. The ANMEF’s commanding officer, Colonel W. Holmes, DSO and the acting Governor of German New Guinea, Dr E. Haber, agreed to a capitulation, rather than a surrender, on 17 September, 1914. Haber successfully argued as he was in an acting capacity, he had no authority to surrender.

The capitulation agreement stated:

- no military resistance by the Germans
- local laws and customs to remain (these were German statutes and practices)
- certain German officials should stay in an advisory role
- planters and businessmen who took an oath of neutrality would be allowed to remain and continue in their occupation.¹

This was a sensible compromise, although some Germans did not agree. Four Germans at the Morobe Patrol Post, 140km south east of modern Lae, vanished into the jungle. Later in 1915 three surrendered, the fourth, army surveyor Herman Detzner, roamed the interior until the Armistice in 1918.²

Australia now acquired an imperial prize. It controlled 53% of the mainland covering the coastal strip, from the Dutch border to the Sepik, Madang and Morobe Districts, known as Kaiser Wilhelmsland. Also included were the island groups of New Britain, New Ireland and Bougainville. Throughout this territory were dozens of valuable copra plantations, seven large companies, the largest of which was the New Guinea Company. Populating the area were hundreds of German government officials, soldiers, planters and businessmen and their families, small traders and the missionaries. Also among the settlers were a group of Hong Kong Chinese who lived mainly in Rabaul and were employed as skilled artisans, cooks and laundry men. Throughout the Territory also lived the indigenous people, numbering many thousands, living distinctly differing life styles from the Australians, Germans and Chinese.

Holmes saw as his immediate tasks were to restore the economy by keeping business running and controlling the natives. He was not helped in this difficult task by the poor behaviour of unruly members of the ANMEF occupying force. Soldiers caroused and looted without constraint, bored with the duties of a garrison force. Following the German Labour ordinance and advice from German officials, Holmes set forth a vigorous campaign to recruit workers for the plantations. A labour force was essential to maintain and increase the profits of the colony which relied on the coconut by-product, copra.

Holmes’ brief tenure of office received a setback in November, 1914. Three Germans and a

¹ C.D. Rowley, *The Australians in German New Guinea 1914-1921*, Melbourne UP, Melbourne, 1958, p.57.

² G. Souther, *New Guinea: The Last Unknown*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1965, p.120.

Belgian had beaten an Australian missionary at Namatanai. Holmes saw this as a deliberate affront to Australian authority. Ignoring the advice of a German judge, Holmes ordered the offenders be publicly flogged. This brought immediate repercussions from the German officials. All the Germans resigned, depriving Holmes of experienced advisors on native affairs. In January 1915 Holmes and his force was replaced.

Holmes' efforts were sincere and energetic; he tried to keep things going and control the natives but he lacked guidance and support from the Commonwealth government.³ Whether by design or expediency the task of governing this former German possession fell to four Australian Army Officers over the period January 1915 to March 1921. They were: Col Samuel Augustus Pethebridge DSO (January 1915 to October 1915); Lt Col S.S. MacKenzie (acting vice to Pethebridge) (October 1915 to April 1918); Brig Gen G.T. Johnstone CB, CMG (April 1918 to May 1920); Brig Gen T. Griffiths DSO (May 1920 to March 1921).

Col S.A. Pethebridge, Holmes' successor, arrived with a second expeditionary force, the Tropical Force numbering 600. He was really a public servant but served in the Naval Reserve. This appointment dashed the hopes of the long-serving and experienced Lieutenant Governor of Papua, J.H.P. Murray. Murray was appalled at Holmes' efforts and had hoped for a single administration over New Guinea and Papua under his control. Murray was in a similar situation to Pethebridge, however he only had a staff of 40, being unable to replace the men from his Administration because they had enlisted in the army.

Pethebridge divided his force. Half he kept in Rabaul as a reserve strike force, the rest being scattered in small garrisons throughout the seven administrative districts. Australian soldiers now found themselves in isolated outposts without knowledge or experience. Using German trained 'police-soldiers', they followed German methods to deal with the local people. The garrison commander became the District Officer (DO) or *Kiap* (a Pidgin English term derived from the German *Kapitan*). He was assisted by an Australian NCO, the *plis masta* (police master) with a party of German-trained police-soldiers, now called *plis bois*, armed with the .303 Lee Enfield rifle instead of the Mauser 88.

Pidgin English⁴ became the unofficial language of the territory and the use of German appointed village officials, the Luluai and the Tultul, were retained by the Australian District officers. The Luluai was a tribal chief or influential village person given government status by his appointment. The Tultul was a government appointed position assistant to the Luluai. He served as a messenger for the Luluai and as an interpreter. Many Tultuls were ex-German police-soldiers who were fluent in Pidgin.

'Justice' followed German law and was administered harshly, by punitive patrols. Patrols functioned to find murderers, stop internecine/tribal fighting, or to collect head tax. No patrol policy existed to collect census, survey health or provide agricultural advice. In many cases the Australian DO considered his sole role was to patrol and collect head tax. Head tax was imposed by the Germans in an attempt to force the fit males into employment. Tax defaulters were required to pay for their deficit by labour on constructing roads for government works. The Australians regarded the tax as an important source of revenue. The Germans followed a system of taxation areas graded from five to ten marks per annum according to local opportunities to grow cash crops. In May 1915, Pethebridge set the figure of 10 shillings as a

³ P. Ryan (ed), *Encyclopedia of Papua New Guinea vols. I and II*, Melbourne UP, Melbourne, 1972, pp. 528-29.

⁴ [Hereafter referred to simply as 'Pidgin' – Editor.]

minimum rate for all areas.⁵

Curiously, the harsh methods – *mekim save*, Pidgin for ‘punish severely’ or ‘behave strictly’ – employed by the Australian Kiaps, gave rise to a lasting reactionary factor in dealing with the native people in New Guinea. Such a phenomenon was still recognised in the Territory well into the 1960s. This was in contrast to the ‘easier’ methods of dealing with the Papuans which had its genesis in the policies of Murray, who advocated peaceful penetration when contacting primitive tribal groups and a fostering of respect for native culture and authority.⁶

Indeed no attempts by the Administrator were made to investigate this policies of German Dr Albert Hahl, Haber’s predecessor. Hahl served as Governor for German New Guinea from 1901 to 1914. He drew on his previous experience in East Africa and instituted a system of village officials (Luluais and Tultuls) through which German administration could operate. Hahl developed with the missions an education policy for German New Guinea with plans to develop medical and agricultural expansion services for the village people. Although there were few qualified German doctors, Hahl made considerable use of German medical assistants and native *dokta bois* (*heil tultuls*) to work in aid posts at the village level.⁷

Pethebridge’s administration kept order in the occupied areas, particularly Rabaul, where he encouraged the Commonwealth Bank to commence business. After his initial visits to the outstations he rarely visited them again, and he became less interested in military affairs. He had no knowledge of German or British Colonial policy, nor did he interest himself in Murray’s work in Papua. Pethebridge saw the economic potential of the colonies in the plantation industry and sought to have German planters increase their production. He regarded the native people as an economic asset for plantation labour. Labour recruiters were given a free hand under the German system. Corporal punishment for labour offences was retained as was the use of punitive expeditions in uncontrolled areas. Pethebridge stopped the alienation of native land, not in the interest of the natives, but to resist those Germans he regarded as the enemy. For most of his term he sat in his office in Rabaul more interested in the affairs of the business community than development in the districts. After suffering from an attack of malaria, he left Rabaul a sick man in October 1915.⁸

Lt Col Seaforth MacKenzie replaced Pethebridge. Because of his knowledge of German, MacKenzie was able to perform the valuable service of translating the German ordinances. While serving under Pethebridge he was able to gain considerable trust from the German community. He attempted to grant freehold title to all occupied German land; he also attempted to transfer freehold land title to Australian settlers. Pethebridge would not agree in either instance. Mackenzie was prepared to allow the administrative process as established by Pethebridge to continue. He significantly established the Department of Agriculture and encouraged a scheme designed to establish a copra cooperative among the natives. His period of Acting Administrator ended on 21 April 1918 when he was replaced by Brig Gen G.T. Johnstone. Despite his lack of experience, MacKenzie proved an adequate Acting Administrator.⁹

⁵ J. Griffin, H. Nelson, S. Frith, *Papua and New Guinea: A Political History*, Heinemann, Victoria, 1979, pp.47-8.

⁶ *ibid*, p.49.

⁷ Ryan (ed), pp.516-17.

⁸ *ibid*, pp.895-96.

⁹ *ibid*, pp.665-66.

Johnstone, like Holmes, had seen active service in the Boer war as well as at Gallipoli and France in 1917. It is not surprising that, given these experiences, he immediately directed his attention to boosting military defenses which had been allowed to lapse. Johnstone appeared to be keen to accomplish something. He was energetic and visited outstations where he called for more active patrolling. New stations were established at Buka Passage and Vanimo and a new district headquarters set up at Gasmata. A curious mixture of paternalist and martinet, he regarded the indigenous people as a little more than economic assets to provide a labour force. He actively attempted to control recruiters in their clashes with villagers.

When the Australian Government abolished capital punishment in 1919, he introduced Field Punishment No.1 as a suitable substitute. Having been previously bent over a box and thrashed, a troublesome New Guinean was now strung up by his wrists and left as a deterrent to others. This practice evoked criticism from the Australian public and when a newspaper wrote of his high living and parties at Government House, his replacement was brought about. Again, Johnstone received little advice from the Australian Government and he was required to rely on his own military experience with little training to fulfil the position.¹⁰

Brig Gen T. Griffiths succeeded Johnstone in May 1920. Griffiths was an experienced soldier who had seen service on General Bridges' staff. He had a high reputation as a staff officer implementing decisions quickly without question. By 1919 the war had ended and it was known that Australia would administer New Guinea under a Mandate from the League of Nations. For Hughes, the Australian Prime Minister, two issues had to be resolved: how to expropriate the German plantation owners' property; and how the Mandated Territory was to be governed.¹¹

These problems were not to be settled by Griffiths, but by a Royal Commission. Its members were W.H. Lucas, Islands Manager for Burns Philp; Atlee Hunt, Secretary of the Department of Home and Territories and its Chairman; and the experienced Administrator of Papua, Hubert Murray. It was claimed that Lucas and Hunt represented the interests of Australian business in New Guinea, Murray the interests and development of the native people. The Commission visited the Territory in August 1919.

Murray's minority report recommended a better deal for the New Guinea labourer, the Australian Government to nationalise the German companies and the establishment of an Australian shipping line. This was ignored by Hughes and the majority report accepted. Lucas and Hunt advocated a New Guinea Administration, separate from Papua. New Guineans were to be kept in their place, Burns Philp was to hold a subsidised shipping monopoly and German plantations were to be sold to Australian ex-servicemen. This was a scandalous result. Lucas was appointed chairman of the Expropriation Board with direct access to the Prime Minister, thus making him more powerful than the Administrator, Griffiths, who answered to the Minister for Defence.¹²

The Expropriation Board was cynically dubbed the 'First Eleven', relegating Griffiths' administration to the 'Second Eleven'. Being now largely overshadowed by the Board, Griffiths was content to limit his duties to army matters, illegal migration, abuse of labour regulations and the activities of over-zealous missionaries. Indeed, he referred many matters to Lucas and seemed uninterested in native development throughout the districts. Griffiths was unsuccessful in his application to head the new civil government and handed over to his

¹⁰ *ibid*, pp.879-50.

¹¹ *ibid*, pp.505-06.

¹² Griffin et al, pp.49-50.

successor Brig Gen E. Wisdom in March 1921.

The New Guinea Act in May 1921 set up the new civil government. Under its tenure the Commonwealth Government continued to promote economic development in New Guinea for white settlers while simultaneously promoting a different policy in Papua based on pacification and respect for native culture, albeit being severely limited by lack of resources in men and money. For all of this period from September 1914 to Griffiths' service no policy directives were supplied to these soldier Administrators by the Australian Government. The only methods of operation available to them were those set up by the Germans statutes of the day, particularly those of labour recruiting and management and land acquisition. When the war ended PM Hughes secured a 'C' class Mandate over the Territory of New Guinea from the League of Nations. The majority report from the Royal Commission provided the only policy for the Territory.¹³

Later in the 1930s, when Australia was required to supply its first reports to the Permanent Mandates Commission, the Australian Government blamed the Germans and the Chinese for its administrative failures to provide for native welfare and economic progress, and referred to Papua as an example authentic Australian Colonial rule.¹⁴ Reviewing the effects of Australian Military rule over the period, it can be seen that the most significant areas of development at the expense of the indigenous population was in land development, labour recruitment and copra production.

In 1914 there were 17,500 indentured labourers in German New Guinea plus 2,500 casuals. This increased to over 28,000 by 1921. Methods of recruitment by licensed recruiters followed German regulation. Where supervision by Australian officials was lax or non-existent, recruiters roamed unchecked in the densely populated areas of the Sepik and the Markham. The impressive labour ordinance in Rabaul did not stop such practices as forced kidnapping and bribery of fit males to serve as labourers. The military administration valued labour above anything else.¹⁵

As the war progressed, copra prices increased. The need to produce more copra depended on the availability of more land on which to grow coconuts. During the Australian occupation 702,000 acres were sold or leased to Europeans. Half the land leased was owned by the New Guinea Company; 178,000 acres were held by individuals, half of those holdings being cultivated for coconut production. Profits from the sale of copra were reinvested in the colony. Copra exports increased from 11,000 tons in 1915-1916 to 22,000 tons in 1920-1921.

Land was acquired from the native subsistence economy. German law allowed land to be purchased before issuing a lease. This meant that the land, after purchase was lost to the subsistence economy. Native need for land, especially in the fertile, therefore heavily populated, area such as the Gazelle and Madang was not a question that bothered the military administrators. The operation of the Expropriation policy, commencing in 1920, followed Article 297 of the Treaty of Versailles, 'to retain and liquidate the property rights and interest' of German nationals and companies. In practice it was a shoddy piece of opportunism.

District Officer G.W.L. Townsend witnessed Article 297 being administered by the Expropriation Board in Kavieng. At the time of expropriation the German plantation owner

¹³ *ibid*, p.49

¹⁴ Rowley, pp.282-83

¹⁵ Ryan (ed), p.843.

and his wife, plus their two children, were living in a shed behind a Chinese store. This shed had formerly been occupied by the store keeper's native servants, as a *boi haus*. The Chinese family, the native servants, the planter and his wife and children all washed under a tank tap and all used the single latrine. Townsend observed that this situation was not uncommon for planters undergoing the expropriation process.

On the day of the plantation auction by the Expropriation Board, Townsend saw the husband standing in front of the auctioneer with three one pound notes in his hand. The wife sat on a box to the side against a wall. Townsend asked them what they wished to buy. She replied, 'Just my silver brush and comb, they were a wedding present and I have nothing else except my wedding ring.' The disgusted Townsend viewed the process not as expropriation but as looting. The plantation was valued by the Board in worthless German marks and at the end of the auction the couple received the German equivalent of 21 Australian pounds. The value of the plantation in Australian currency, at the time, amounted to 17,000 Australian pounds.¹⁶

Conclusion

After accepting the British government's request to capture and govern the German colony of New Guinea, the Australian government failed to develop any policies by which the country could be administered. It was assumed by the Australian government that the task would last until the war ended, when the future of German colonies in Africa and the Pacific would be decided.

The Australian government made no attempt to provide any guidance or advice to its soldier-administrators appointed from 1914 to 1920. Instead it was content to allow them to administer as they saw fit. To this end these soldiers lacked the required colonial experience. They relied on German policies and practices and on the advice from German nationals operating under the terms of capitulation agreement. These soldiers were also limited by their inability to speak German as well as to the brevity of their periods of service, resulting in frequent changes of administrators.

It was enough to rely on the existing practices of labour recruitment and production of copra to keep the colony functioning. No consideration of native welfare was attempted. Further, the military administrators failed to make themselves aware of the more humane policies and practices successfully being undertaken in Papua by Lieut Governor H.P.J Murray or even those of the German Governor Hahl. Regretfully the only tangible policy for the former German colony that was undertaken was provided by the controversial Expropriation Board. This policy was mainly concerned with the expansion of European commercial activity and not with the needs of the indigenous community.

Aftermath

Between 1921 and 1941, the Territory of New Guinea was administered by three former military men: Brig Gen W.E. Wisdom (1921-1931); Brig Gen T. Griffith (1932-1934); and Brig Gen W. McNicol (1934-1941).

Little had changed. Exploration slowly crept inland up the Markham Valley, along the Sepik River and into the Asaro Valley, the Chimbu and Waghi Valleys in the Highlands. Punitive patrols still brutally operated. In 1926 twenty-three Nakanai lost their lives when contacted by

¹⁶ G.W.L. Townsend, *District Officer*, Pacific Publications, Sydney, 1961, pp.27-28.

a patrol investigating the murder of four white miners, prospecting for gold¹⁷. Copra prices were high when the Expropriation Board sold the plantations to ex-soldiers in 1926-27. However, the Depression soon ended any prosperity and prices fell. In 1928 copra exports totaled 63,500 tons, worth 1,176,000 pounds. By 1934, copra value had fallen to 283,329 pounds resulting in many ex-servicemen being in debt to the Island companies of Burns Philp and W.R. Carpenter.¹⁸ Australia wanted the colony to be self-sufficient and relied on private enterprise to achieve this. Gold replaced copra as an attractive proposition.

The first gold strike was reported at Edie Creek in 1926. By this year's end, 200 white prospectors had set up camp in the area. Gold mining required large numbers of New Guineans as labourers. Recruiters for much needed labour received as much as 30 pounds per man. Villages were visited by recruiters seeking to enlist labour by any means. Within two years 3200 New Guineans were working on the goldfields.¹⁹ In 1933 Assistant District Officer Jim Taylor began to explore the Waghi Valley in the Highlands. He was accompanied by Mick and Dan Leahy, employees of the New Guinea Goldfields Company who sought to discover any gold deposits.

The Administration was sensitive to the views of businessmen. Planters were always ready to complain about government policies particularly those involving 'molly-coddling' natives via health or education. Education of the natives was viewed by the white business community as revolutionary.²⁰ The individual labourer rarely protested about his working conditions except on one occasion. Termed the Rabaul Strike of 1929, approximately 3000 New Guineans from wash boys to police all were absent from work. They had gathered away from Rabaul at the Methodist and Catholic Missions and were asking for an increase in wages to 12 pounds per month.²¹ The strike failed and the perpetrators punished, but its secrecy in planning and execution frightened the Australians living in Rabaul.

In 1941 the Mandate and the Administration came to an abrupt end with the invasion of Japanese forces. Elements of the Australian Army were sent to battle the Japanese on Australia's doorstep. Papua and New Guinea were designated as Australia's 8th Military District in 1940.²² Throughout the war the Australian Army disregarded the differences between the two territories and their Administration, the Territories being combined under one Administration with Port Moresby as the 'capital'.²³

Ironically the Australian soldier of 1942 with his interaction with Papuans and New Guineans was the antithesis of his counterpart in 1914-1921. Anthropologist Read, working in the Markham Valley in 1944, presents evidence of natives discriminating between the Australian troops who were 'sorry' for them and the pre-war Australians, termed 'English', who 'treated them like dogs and beat them'.²⁴ During the conflict Papuans and New Guineans served in their thousands alongside Australian troops as police, soldiers, tradesmen, clerks, medical orderlies, labourers, gardeners and carriers. Their efforts were highly publicised in the press and through newsreel footage and so earned the awareness and gratitude of the Australian public.

¹⁷ Griffin et al, p.50.

¹⁸ *ibid*, p.53

¹⁹ *ibid*, p.53.

²⁰ *ibid*, p.55.

²¹ *ibid*, p.56.

²² M. Roe, 'Papua New Guinea at War' in W. Hudson (ed), *Australia and New Guinea*, Sydney UP, Sydney, 1971, p.139.

²³ Griffin et al, p.87.

²⁴ R.P. Read, *Oceania*, December 1947, pp.95-116.

In 1946 after peace had been won, Australian Minister for External Affairs Evatt secured a United Nations Trusteeship agreement for Papua and New Guinea. Australia now would show the world that it had placed PNG on the path which would lead to political independence.²⁵ E.J. Ward, Australian Minister responsible for the postwar administration of the Territory of Papua New Guinea, believed that Australia had a debt of gratitude to be paid to the people of PNG and sought to provide policies which would provide better health, education, economic development and self-government. Independence for Papua New Guinea was achieved in 1976, some sixty-five years after Australia's inept attempts to secure and govern its imperial prize of Kaiser Wilhelmsland.

Further Reading

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S.S. Mackenzie, *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918, vol.10: The Australians at Rabaul*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1927-1939.

L.P. Mair, *Australia in New Guinea*, Melbourne UP, Melbourne, 1970.

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Right: Members of the Australian Great War Association who attended the launch of the Gallipoli Centenary 1915-2015 Special Issue of Sabretache at the Royal Military College, Duntroon (see Society Notices, p.49).

Units represented here are (left to right): Private, 4th Australian Infantry Battalion; Trooper, 7th Australian Light Horse Regiment; Staff officer, 4th Australian Infantry Brigade.

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²⁵ W.P. Stanner, *The South Seas in Transition*, Australian Publishing Co, Sydney, 1952, p.94.

THE AUSTRALIAN ATTACK IN THE BATTLE OF AMIENS, 8 AUGUST 1918: A TRANSLATION OF THE OFFICIAL GERMAN VERSION – PART 1 (MAPS)

David Pearson and Paul Thost

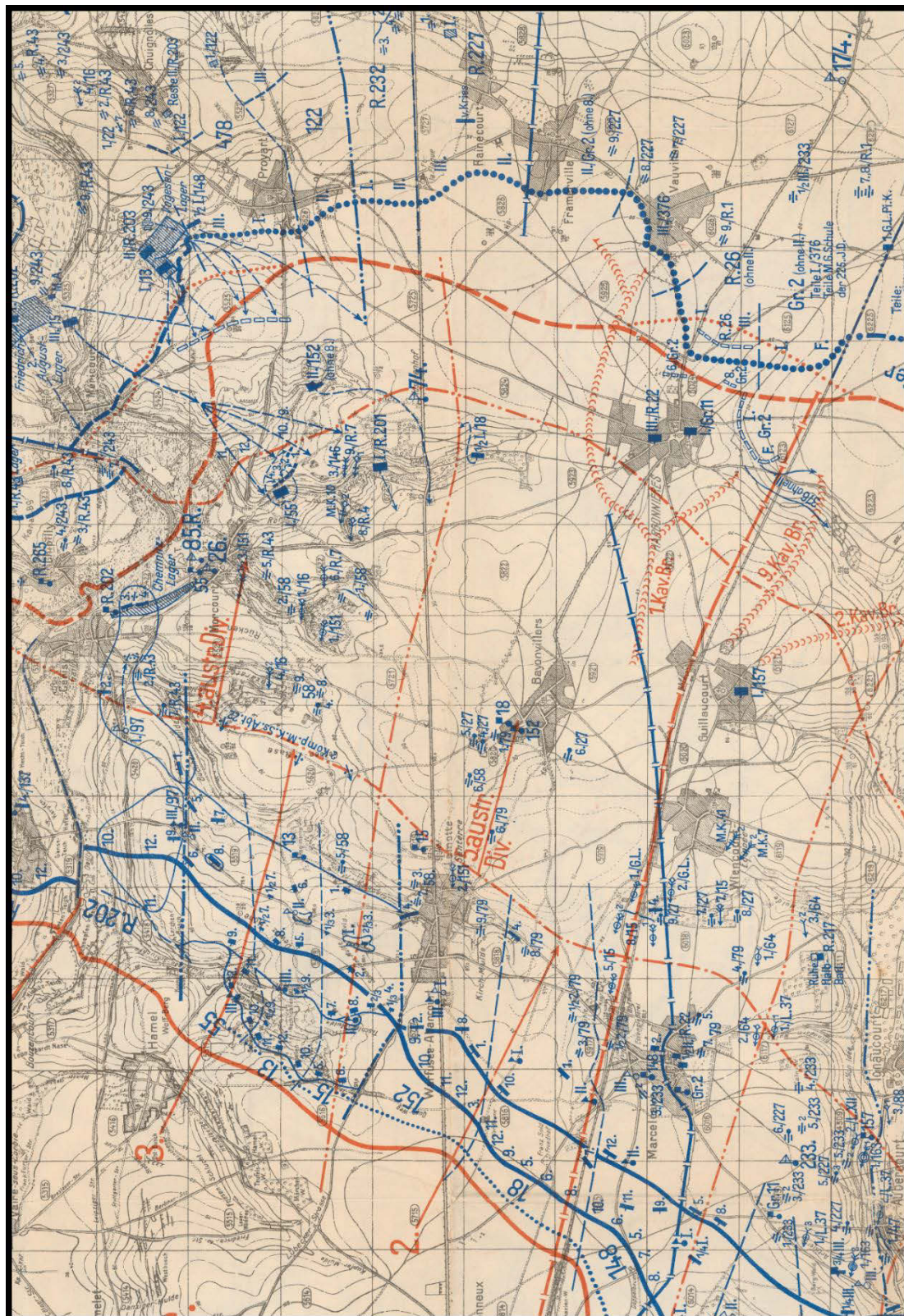


Fig.1.1: A portion of the German map of the Amiens battlefield from von Bose (1930: Map 2) showing the Australian attack on 8 August 1918. Due to the size and complexity of this section of the map, many of the unit details may not be clear. Scale: each grid square = 1000m².

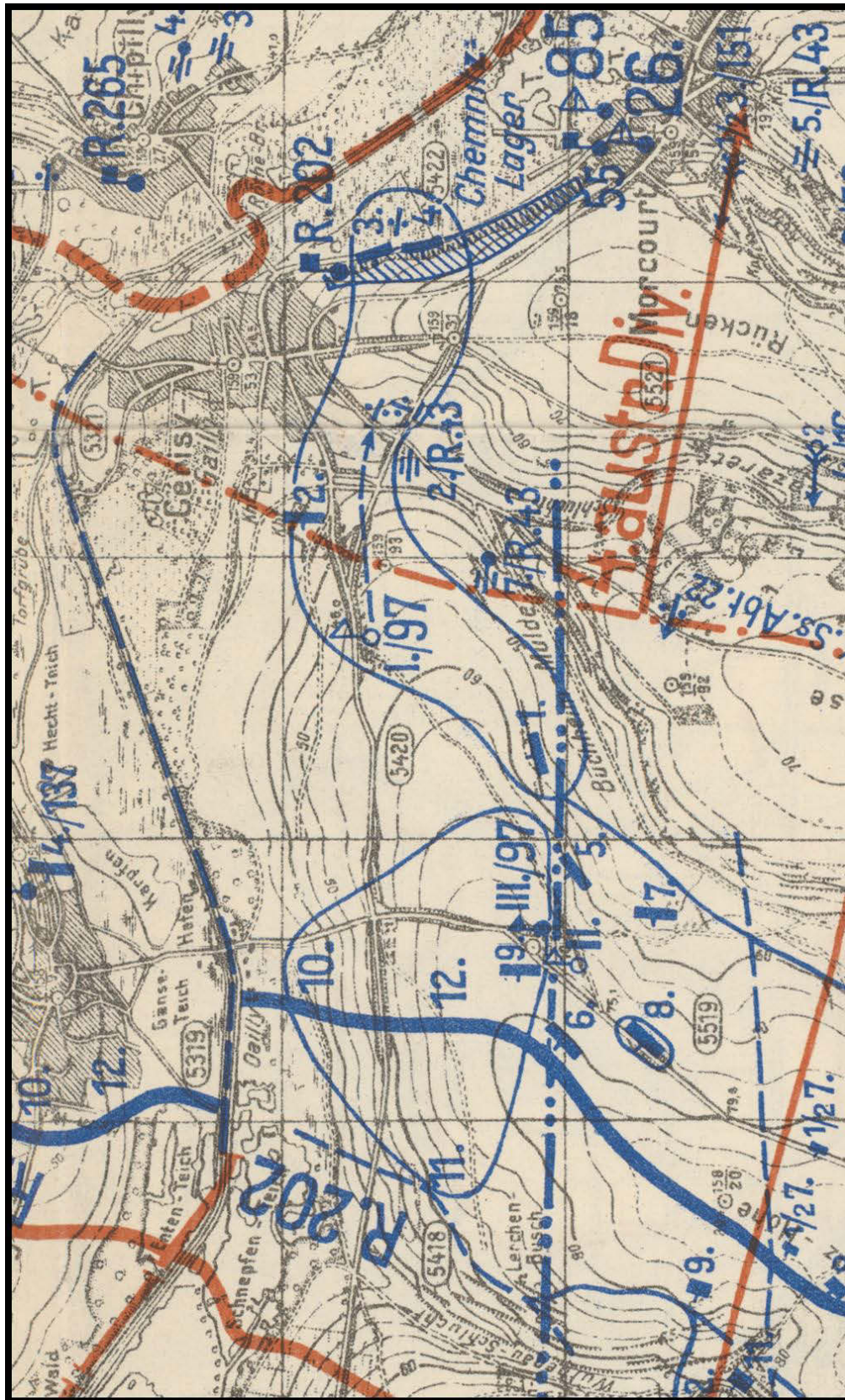


Fig.1.2: A portion of the German map of the Amiens battlefield from von Bose (1930: Map 2) showing the positions of the I./97 Infantry Regiment (1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Companies); III./97 Infantry Regiment (9th, 10th, 11th and 12th Companies); HQ Res. 202 Infantry Regiment (R.202); 2nd and 7./Res. Field Artillery 43 (7./R.43) and other units between Hamel and C erisy. Scale: each grid square = 1000m².

REALITY vs THE MYTH: AN ANALYSIS OF DEATH RATES AT GALLIPOLI (GRAPHS) – Clem Davis

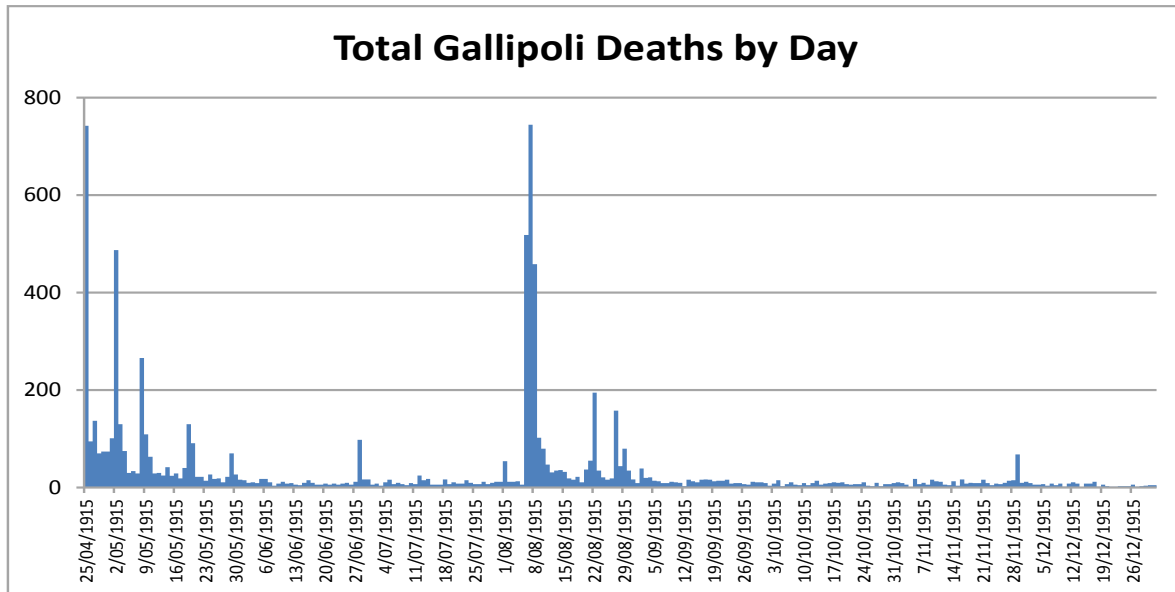


Fig.1: Daily death rates at Gallipoli

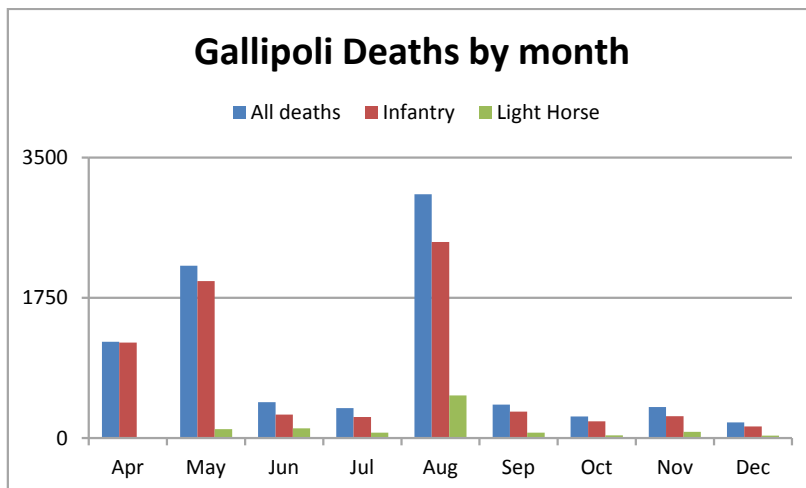


Fig.2: Monthly death rates at Gallipoli

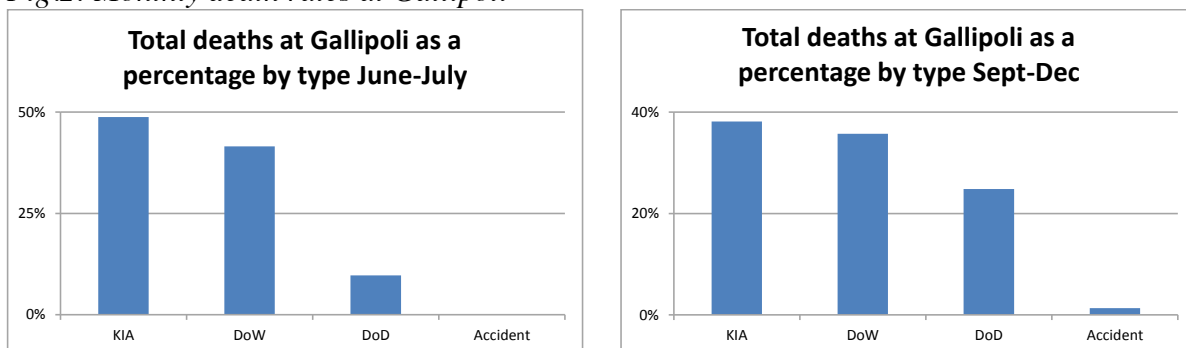


Fig.3: Comparison of deaths by type for the periods June-July and September-December by percentage

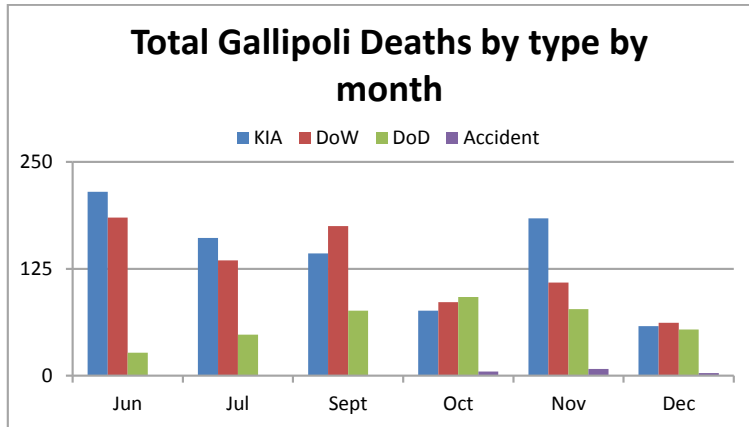


Fig.4: Actual numbers of death type per month with the percentage by type for each month for the periods June-July and September-December.

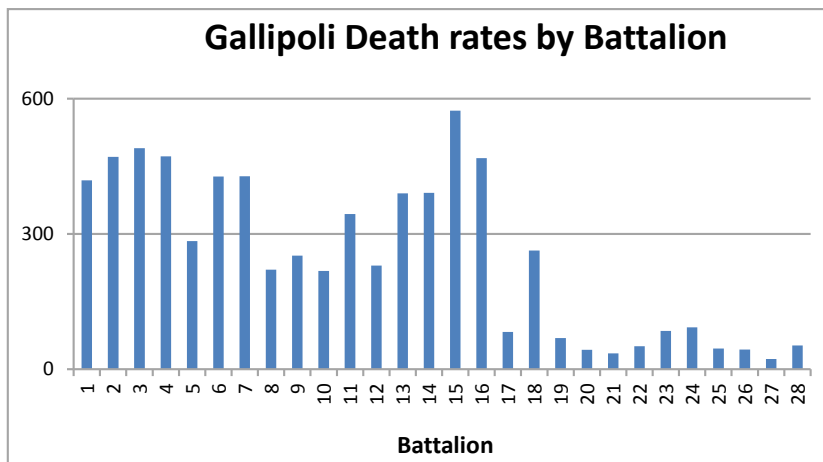
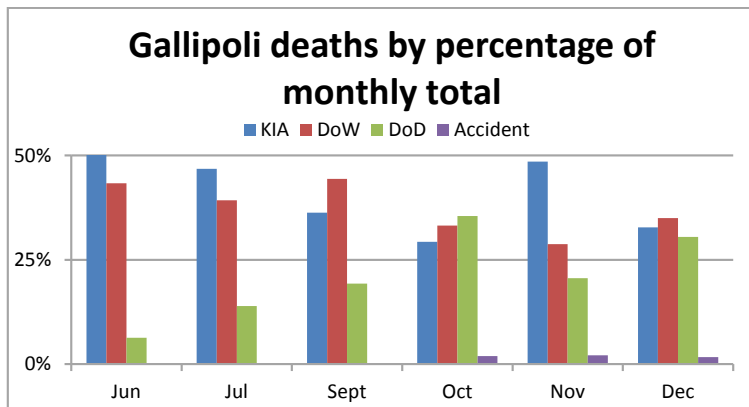


Fig.5: Death rates for individual battalions at Gallipoli

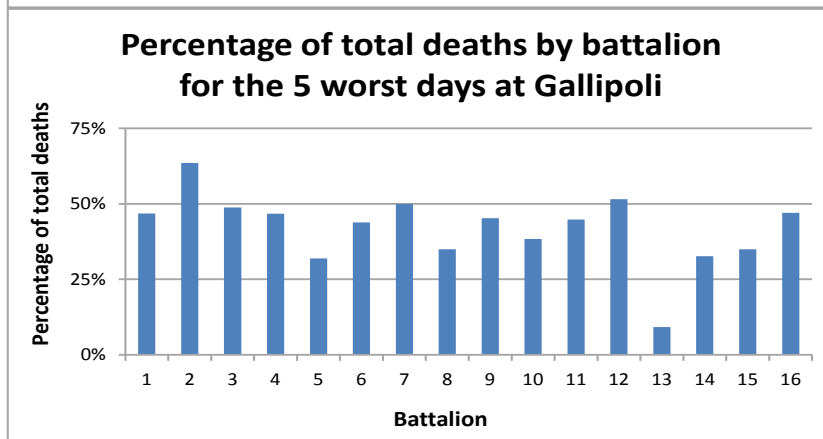


Table 2: Comparison of deaths at Gallipoli compared to overall deaths by section

25 Apr-31 Dec Deaths	Gallipoli	All deaths
Infantry	6966	7116
Light Horse**	1047	1091
Artillery	116	121
Engineers	76	80
Service Corps	42	46
Ambulance	60	62
HQ	1	1
Signals	13	16
Miscellaneous units#	16	
AAMC	15	18
Other Non G deaths		276
S/T	8352	8827
Jan/Mar*	108	297
Total	8460	9124

** Includes Light Horse Field Ambulance deaths.

Units consisted mainly of Naval Bridging Trains, Ammunition Column and Division sections

* Estimated values for the Jan/Mar 1916 period directly related to Gallipoli. If it is assumed that another 250 deaths could be attributable to Gallipoli after March 1916, these figures would tend to agree quite well with the official AWM deaths at Gallipoli of just over 8700.

The non-Gallipoli deaths are those that occurred in Australia or outside the Gallipoli area that have been identified as being due to accidents, illness and those that occurred in New Guinea or not otherwise attributable to Gallipoli.

The daily death rate for the whole campaign is given in Fig.1.¹ This graph indicates that in fact the majority of the deaths occurred on only a very few days, while for most of the days there was only a small underlying attrition rate. Many of these deaths may have either resulted from dying of wounds or dying of disease, especially during the period September-November when more men were evacuated due to illness than from the results of fighting.

The five worst days consisted of days where over 400 deaths were recorded. While the first day had the highest single day death rate (750) the battles of Lone Pine (6-8 August) and the Nek (7 August) were the worst prolonged period of fighting during the campaign. Over this three-day period the AIF recorded the deaths of 1742 soldiers. The fifth day on which over 400 deaths occurred was 2 May where there were 489 deaths.

Table 3 provides a breakdown of the percentage losses at Gallipoli based on the death rate to the end of December (8352 deaths) for particular periods and loss rates. This table is quite illuminating and shows that around 35% of all deaths at Gallipoli occurred on only 2% of the

¹ [Figs.1-5 are located in the colour plates section on pp.33-34 – Editor.]

days, 53% occurred on 6% days and 65% on 12% of the days. On the other hand, only 9% of the deaths occurred on 42% of the total days of the campaign.

Table 3: Numbers and percentages of days vs deaths for Gallipoli

No./Day	No. days	No. deaths	% days	%deaths
>399/day	5	2981	2	35
>99/day	15	4440	6	53
>49/day	29	5478	12	65
<11/day	105	748	42	9

Another interesting aspect can be obtained from the analysis of the days where 50 or more men died. Of these 29 days, six occurred in April, ten in May and eleven in August, while there was only one day in June (28 June) and only one day during the whole four-month period September-December (29 November). There were also no deaths recorded as KIA over the last four days that the AIF was on Gallipoli (18-21 Dec).

In terms of monthly deaths, Fig.2 provides an analysis of the deaths by month for both the infantry and the Light Horse. April was dominated by the landing and the fighting to achieve a beachhead. May was dominated by the Turkish attack on 2 May and the 2nd Brigade fighting at Krithia on 8 May, while August was dominated by the battles of Lone Line and the Nek. The Light Horse suffered just over 50% of all its deaths at Gallipoli in one month (535 in August) with around 360 (including DoW) of these deaths attributable to one day (7 August) at the battle of the Nek.

If the worst three months are excluded from this record, then an analysis of those periods June-July and September-December provide an indication of the change in the impacts of the different types of death during these periods as shown in Fig.3. This figure in particular highlights the considerable increase in those deaths by disease for the September-December period compared to the June-July period. On the other hand there was a marked decrease in deaths due to KIA, indicating the change in the level of fighting that was taking place. The total deaths attributable to Gallipoli for these six months was 1985.

Fig.4 shows the actual numbers of death type per month with the percentage by type for each month for the periods June-July and September-December. From this figure it can be seen that there were more deaths through disease during October than for the other causes (36%) while the monthly percentage as a result of KIA was the lowest for the months September-December (29%). The large numbers of deaths during June and November were due to the deaths on two days: 28 June (89 KIA) and 29 November (64 KIA). Although the percentage of deaths due to disease during December was higher than for September and November, the actual number of deaths due to disease for December (51) was the lowest for the September-December period compared to September (76), October (92) and November (78).

While death through disease was around 10% during June and July, the impact on the overall health of the troops was immense and drained the fighting strength of the battalions considerably. Gastro-intestinal diseases were rife due to the poor hygienic conditions, flies and quality of food. The deterioration of the weather conditions with the onset of winter on the peninsula also raised the incidence of disease over the last four months of the campaign. The increased incidence of disease during this period was far in excess of expectations and placed great strains on the resources of the AIF, both in the need for reinforcements and on the

demands on Lines of Communication and bases in Egypt (Butler, vol.1, chap.16). While the change in weather conditions from summer to winter led to a reduction in gastro-intestinal illnesses as the flies were killed off, it did result in an increase in other diseases such as Jaundice, respiratory diseases, exposure and influenza. In some cases battalions were down to nearly 50% of their strength.

What of the impact on the individual battalions? Fig.5 provides an analysis of the impacts on the individual infantry battalions both over the whole campaign and over the five worst days of fighting. The effect on the battalions varied depending on the battles they were involved in fighting. The initial landing brigade, the 3rd Brigade consisting of the 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th Battalions, and the second wave (2nd Bde consisting of the 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th Bns) took the brunt of the fighting on the first day. The 1st Bde (1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Bns) along with the 3rd and 4th Bdes (13th, 14th, 15th and 16th Bns) took the brunt of the fighting on 2 May while the 1st and 4th Bdes took the brunt of the fighting at Lone Pine. The 2nd Bde suffered heavily on 8 May when it had been diverted to assist the British at Krithia.

Over the five worst days of fighting during the Gallipoli campaign, the first 16 battalions suffered around 42% of their total deaths suffered over the whole campaign. The 2nd Bn suffered 63% of its deaths while the 13th Bn, which was used as a reserve battalion at Lone Pine, only suffered 9% of its deaths on these days. Once battalions had suffered considerable casualties, they had to be moved to the reserve in order to regroup and be reinforced. If the men weren't manning the front-line trenches they were used to unload supplies, take food, water and ammunition to the front line, repair trenches, improve their own living conditions and stave off boredom.

So what does all this mean? The idea that Gallipoli was a bloodbath is just a myth. The reality is that the Gallipoli campaign, like most wars, consisted basically of boredom interspersed with a few days of sheer terror and confusion. The Western Front was far worse, where artillery played a far larger role and where casualties far outstripped those at Gallipoli, both as a result of battle and in the underlying attrition rates. For instance, in the first six weeks of fighting at the Western Front the AIF suffered just as many casualties as it did in the whole eight months at Gallipoli, including the worst ever 24-hour casualty rate suffered by Australia, at the battle of Fromelles.

However, there are two other interesting observations to be made from this analysis: first, the considerable impact of those five days of the fiercest fighting on the individual battalions where several of them lost over 50% of their deaths suffered during the whole campaign; and second, the significant increase in deaths from disease in the last four months of the campaign. This increase in the death rate through disease was also reflected in the deterioration of the overall health of the men and the subsequent impact on the fighting strength of the battalions.

References

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Chris Roberts, 'Turkish Machine Guns at the Landing', *Wartime* 50 (2010), pp.14-19

GENERAL SIR JOHN MONASH AND HIS BIGGEST BATTLE

Alan Smith

Lieutenant General Sir John Monash was a towering figure in the Australian Imperial Force and afterwards in post-World War 1 Victoria. He has had his share of biographers, wrote his autobiography and was a subject of numerous feature articles and interviews in the years until his final illness. These writings dwell on his prowess as a military commander, his intellect applied to engineering problems, his giving his name to a full life of numerous good causes, and more recently, being honoured posthumously by the name of then Victoria's second university. This article surveys the forces and circumstances of what was his greatest battle – against anti-Semitism – while in command of his 3rd Division and later, as I Australian and New Zealand Army Corps commander. While other references are cited, this analysis is primarily based on Geoffrey Serle's biography which won the 1982 National Book Council Award for Australian literature.¹ That is to say, it follows chronologically.

During the late 19th and early 20th Centuries there were socially negative connotations on being a Jew. The slight was easier borne by the working classes, but at the educated/professional level much depended on how one's reputation and business ethos were regarded by one's peers – and the media.² Beginning in the 1880s Monash was a gifted scholar who studied engineering at Melbourne University, routinely winning prizes and prophetically in military terms, enlisting in the Melbourne University Company (of infantry). He subsequently went into business on his own account, progressed in rank through the military, and changed corps to the artillery. He applied his intellect to understanding artillery, which gained him kudos in some quarters and envy in others. He was promoted major, commander of North Melbourne Battery in 1897. Seven years later came his biggest challenge, the Great War.³

This account begins by briefly mentioning his service on Gallipoli and the raising and training of the 3rd Infantry Division. Once he established its reputation as a first-class division from mid-1917 – one of the best on the Western Front – his doubters, influence peddlers and detractors began a whispering campaign. Monash recognised his vulnerabilities; first, the connotation/association of having the Germanic (Prussian) name of his forebears, and second, his Jewish faith.⁴

The principal personalities in this account in order of their appearance are:

- Major G. Drake-Brockman, OC Australian Engineers
- Matron Maud Kellett, 25th Australian General Hospital
- General William Birdwood, GOC I ANZAC Corps⁵
- Major General James W. McCay, GOC 5th Division
- Senator George Pearce, Minister for Defence
- Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, Commander-in-Chief, British Expeditionary Force
- Will Dyson, Official Australian War Artist
- Keith Murdoch, Australian journalist, newspaper proprietor and lobbyist

¹ G. Serle, *John Monash: A Biography*, Melbourne UP, Melbourne, 1982.

² *ibid.*, pp.23, 34.

³ *ibid.*, pp.66-67; 117-120; 124-125.

⁴ *ibid.*, pp.320-21. Serle records 18 citations regarding Monash's 'Germanic background' and 17 of his Jewishness. R. Perry, *Monash, The Outsider Who Won a War: A Biography of Australia's Greatest Military Commander*, Random House, Milson's Point and NY, 2004, records 18 of the former and 17 of the latter.

⁵ [Here and elsewhere 'Corps' is technically redundant, but is added for the sake of clarity – Editor.]

- Rt Hon David Lloyd George, Prime Minister of Great Britain
- Rt Hon William (Billy) Hughes, Prime Minister of Australia
- Major General Cyril Brudenell-White, Chief of Staff I ANZAC Corps
- Lord Alfred Milner, Secretary of State for War
- Major General Charles Rosenthal, GOC 2nd Division
- Major General John Gellibrand, GOC 3rd Division
- Sir Ronald Munro-Ferguson, Governor General of Australia
- Lieut Commander J.G. Latham, RAN
- Charles Edward Willoughby Bean, Australian Official War Correspondent
- General Sir Henry Rawlinson, GOC 4th Army
- Sir Andrew Fisher, London High Commissioner for Australia
- Major General J.J. Talbot Hobbs, Commander, ANZAC Corps Artillery
- General Henry Plumer, GOC 2nd Army
- Joseph Cook, Deputy Prime Minister of Australia

Monash, who led the 4th Brigade on Gallipoli, had returned to Australia after Gallipoli service with a reputation, first, of being both a leader and trainer of his battalions, and second, of being ‘battle shy’ – a snide reference to the extent of his exposure to the Turks in the front line.⁶ He returned to the Australian battlefields of France and Flanders as GOC 3rd Division, where it, and by extension Monash, gained a reputation for being the best on the Western Front. After the successful autumn offensives, principally around Messines, several Australian generals were knighted by King George V: Monash (Knight Commander of the Bath), McCay and Hobbs (Knights Commander St Michael and St George). Monash’s award rankled with a rump of former regular and citizen senior officers, both in France and Australia, notably McCay, and some sections of the home press.⁷

This exposition follows a timeline from autumn 1917 to August 1918 involving the headquarters of I ANZAC Corps under General Birdwood, who had operational and administrative command of the AIF overseas in both France and Palestine, and who reported directly to Field Marshal Haig. He was however, beholden to Prime Minister Hughes and *vice* Sir Andrew Fisher, High Commissioner in London for the extent of his authority where Australian interests were concerned – that is, generals could only be ‘administered’ (e.g. sacked, transferred, promoted) within their command by reference to the highest government level.⁸

The Battle Commences

The first shot of Monash’s ‘battle’ was fired in January 1918, although substantial ‘groundwork’ via the medium of the army rumour mill on Monash (and of his peers and subordinates) was seldom omitted in conversations. This was a ‘given’ of organisational life, then as now. Matron Kellett and Major Drake-Brockman had written to Monash ‘to tell him of a strong rumour doing the rounds that he was to be promoted to corps commander.’ Monash was surprised and stated that the rumour was not well-founded.⁹ This obviously stemmed from an exchange between McCay and Birdwood. The abrasive, unrespected McCay, whom Birdwood told to his face he had ‘wrecked his 5th Division’, asked Birdwood straight out to

⁶ Serle, p.251.

⁷ *ibid*, p.305. McCay and Monash were rivals from their Scotch College days, where McCay had pipped Monash for Dux. Monash’s higher ennoblement (as a KCB) gave him great satisfaction.

⁸ *ibid*, p.319.

⁹ L.F. Fitzhardinge, *William Morris Hughes: A Political Biography*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1964-79, pp.203, 277, 321-3.

resign and give him I ANZAC Corps command.¹⁰ On being refused, McCay then asked to be given Monash's 3rd Division and Monash put in charge of AIF Depots in the United Kingdom. Birdwood refused, and warned Senator Pearce that McCay was entirely unsuitable. A coterie of Australian generals thought similarly, and threatened resignation if McCay got command. Matters rested while the AIF was committed to the spring offensives – around Villers Bretonneux and so forth – which it carried out with its customary panache.

In May, after the earlier spring offensives, Birdwood recommended to the Government that Monash take the corps as Haig had told him he would be going to command 5th Army, and at length he assumed control of the administrative arrangements of the AIF. Concurrently, several senior AIF officers believed that Birdwood had not protected AIF interests well enough. This pervading mind-set at a senior level did not help matters, with the 'pros and cons' being freely vented on Monash's religion and Germanic ancestry, some of which were associated with his generalship.¹¹

On 18 May, Will Dyson, Official War Artist, left for London to conspire with Keith Murdoch, who then began 'to ruthlessly manipulate men and news'. At this time Prime Minister Hughes regularly used the newspaper proprietor Keith Murdoch as a 'confidential intermediary' with the British Prime Minister, Lloyd George. Murdoch was anti-Birdwood and preferred Brudenell White for corps command, and until Hughes arrived used his influence to urge Pearce and others in the anti-Monash clique to defer the decision and lobby for White. White, meanwhile, by his words and deeds, kept his own counsel and refused to be party to any intrigue, a position he adhered to stoutly over the next two months. On 18 May, while Hughes was en route to the UK and France from America, the government approved Birdwood's arrangements, who then advised Monash. Brudenell White was to go to 5th Army as Chief of Staff.¹²

When Hughes arrived the scheming began in earnest. Murdoch was now in London, and when Hughes returned from the front Murdoch went into overdrive – he wined and dined with Lord Milner, Secretary of State for War, General Sir Henry Wilson, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, and others including Prime Minister Lloyd George, trying to get the government's decision rescinded. It was with the latter at The Ritz that Lieut Commander J.G. Latham made notes on the back of his menu about the plot. Murdoch and Bean had strenuous arguments with senior AIF commanders on the issue. Rawlinson agreed with Birdwood that Murdoch was 'a mischievous and persistent villain'.¹³

The arrival of Hughes enlivened matters, with him giving Birdwood 'a cool reception' and Fisher speaking contemptuously of Monash's abilities to the General Staff. Birdwood told him 'he did not know what he was talking about', adding that he (Monash) could lead a corps 'much more ably than I'. The animus spread to Canberra, where the governor general weighed in with his negative aspersion.¹⁴

¹⁰ Serle, p.318.

¹¹ *ibid*, pp.319-25.

¹² Perry, p.450. Hughes thought Monash was a 'pushy Jew', and had reservations about his abilities. Canberra's view was that by putting Monash in charge of the post-war repatriation task (best man for the job), White could then take the corps command.

¹³ Serle, p.325.

¹⁴ *ibid*, p.321.

Bean, still chagrined, wrote to White ‘that everyone knows that our men are not as safe under Monash as they are under you’, and more of the same.¹⁵ Bean continued to bad-mouth Monash to anyone who would listen, and had the conceit to confront Monash himself, who commented that Bean ‘damned him with faint praise’ on his promotion. Bean set out the plotters’ case in a memorandum for Hughes, and the argument raged between the two camps, forcing senior officers to take sides. Hobbs as the senior Gunner wrote a memorandum which was later instrumental in giving a balanced perspective to Hughes, who was still heavily influenced by Murdoch by virtue of his usefulness in the political sphere. Monash had readily appreciated that he had powerful cards to play – the troops and key senior officers were behind him. Were he to be replaced he would request a return to Australia. Among the other Western Front generals (Haig, Rawlinson and Plumer) there was no disagreement about Monash’s abilities.¹⁶

On the eve of the Battle of Hamel Hughes and Joseph Cook (Hughes’ deputy) came to Monash’s Headquarters where Hughes asked to postpone the issue. Monash told them ‘removal I would regard as a degradation and humiliation’. Hughes gave him the politician’s answer (i.e. ‘Two bob each way’). In going the rounds of the divisional headquarters, Hughes sought their commanders’ opinions, and soon told Murdoch ‘he found no one who agreed with him (Murdoch)’ on his replacement. White was at pains to tell Monash and others that the conspirators were not acting at his suggestion or approval. Hughes dined with Monash on 2 July at his headquarters at Bertangles. The affair was over.¹⁷

Obviously aware of the political climate, Senator Pearce in Canberra waited a month before releasing the news of Monash’s promotion before Hughes returned from overseas. Bean, writing in 1938, opined, ‘So much for our high-intentioned but ill-judged intervention. That it resulted in no harm whatever was probably due to the magnanimity of both White and Monash. Launched as, and when, it was, it never could have succeeded.’¹⁸

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A WORLD WAR TWO NOMINAL ROLL OF THE 27TH AUSTRALIAN INFANTRY BATTALION (AIF) – PART 4

Pablo Muslera, Claire Woods and Paul Skrebels

Here is the next instalment in the project to publish as complete a nominal roll as possible of the 27th Australian Infantry Battalion (AIF). Part 1 appeared in vol.55 no.1 (March 2014), Part 2 in 55.2 (June 2014) and Part 3 in 55.4 (December 2014). In addition to names, ranks are provided as they appear in the sources in which they were found, together with service numbers – often both AIF and original enlistment numbers. Certain discrepancies in service numbers are also noted. The final column provides extra information such as the diary entry date in which the name was found, and casualty details. These are mostly self-explanatory, although ‘BI’ stands for Bougainville Island, ‘in u.d.’ for ‘in the 27th Bn unit diary’ and ‘in n.d.’ for ‘in the *WW2 Nominal Roll*’. An asterisk (*) is a general alert to an anomaly or annotation.

¹⁵ *ibid*, p.324.

¹⁶ *ibid*, p.327.

¹⁷ *ibid*, p.326.

¹⁸ C.E.W. Bean, *Two Men I Knew: William Bridges and Brudenell White, Founders of the AIF, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1957*, p.173.

McGee, Thomas Walter	Captain	NX113714 (N16088)	30-Dec-1944
McGilchrist, Errol James	Lieutenant	QX4371	25-Feb-1944
McGill, George Godfrey	Private	SX31391 (S20791)	
McGill, John Daniel* T.D. in diary	Private	QX60670 (Q269202)	17-Jun-1944
McGregor, Daniel Law	Sergeant	S20439	
McGregor, Kenneth Edward	Private	SX29619 (S25846)	1-Dec-1942
McGowan, Francis Daniel	Private	SX30032 (S21186)	
McGuinness, Francis John	Private	NX165804 (N40002)	20-Mar-1944
McGuire, Julian Thomas	Private	SX35228 (S26346)	
McHardy, Ronald	Private	VX141019	6-Sep-1945
McHugh, Colin Francis	Private	SX23939 (S16816)	
McInnes, Malcolm David	Private	S18093	
McIntosh, James Lancelot	Corporal	QX60570 (Q132023)	13-Jan-1945
McKenna, Terence Reginald Leslie	Private	S26580	
McKenny, Walter Francis	Corporal	SX20303 (S6669)	5-May-1944
McKenzie, Clarence Robert	Private	S20927	
McKenzie, Gerald Thomas	Private	SX27654 (S21393)	
McKenzie, Kenneth Ian	Sergeant/Sapper*	SX31768 (S19771)	
McKenzie, Stewart Maxwell	Corporal	SX31421 (S61357)	23-Feb-1943
McKinna, Andrew Agnew	Captain	443 (SX22496)*SP4541 in diary	21-Jun-1943
McKinnon, Alan Andrew	Private	S21387	7-Jun-1943
McLachlan, John James Duncan	Corporal	S21641	
McLeod, Eugene Geoffery	Private	S19887	
McLoughlin, Walter Lionel	Private	SX27537 (S15867)	9-Jan-1943
McMahon, Anthony Martin	Staff Sergeant	S21445	
McManus, Milton George	Private	SX32636 (S21642)	
McMillan, Leslie Lloyd	Private	NX192285 (N453642)	11-Apr-1945
McNamara, John Patrick	Gunner	SX23965 (308852, S16862)	
McNeil, Keith	Private	SX23964 (S20262)	
McRostie, Dudley Howard	Private	S22867	
Mead, Cecil Herbert	Lance Corporal	NX174432 (N160644)	11-Apr-1945
Meekins, Edward	Private	S21588 (SX6858)	
Meeth, Frederick Vincent	Private	NX161263	7-Jan-1943
Melmoth, Glenley Allan	Corporal	SX28581 (S52601)	15-Jan-1943
Menesdorff, Clive Thomas George	Private	S17465	
Menzel, George Clayton	Corporal	SX23916 (S20629)	
Merchant, Kenneth William	Lance Corporal	SX27606 (S21112)	9-Jan-1943
Metcalf, Roy Francis	Private	NX170738 (N450691)	8-Apr-1944
Mew, Alfred Thomas Clive	Private	SX38690 (S17872)*S17873 in diary	
Middleton, Harry	Sergeant	SX35249 (S30060)	
Middlewood, Robert Joseph	Lance Sergeant	S19783	
Mieglich, Percival Lindsay	Private	SX38600 (S17692)	26-Jan-1943
Miles, John Bryson	Sergeant	SX27628 (S21224)	
Mildren, Ray Douglas	Private	S21048	
Miller, William Reginald	Sergeant	SX25266 (S20433)*S20493 in diary	
Millikan, Colin David	Private	SX28578 (S50142)	6-Mar-1943

Millikan, John Herbert	Corporal	SX23920 (S21108)	
Millington, Alan Curtis	Private	SX23930 (S15878)	
Mills, Lindsay Clarence	Lieutenant	SX25131 (S19760)	
Milne, Trevor Shrewton	Captain	SX26416 (S19716)	
Milnes, Clement Vincent	Corporal	SX31754 (S20856)	
Mincham, Ernest Norman	Private	SX25117 (S20855)	
Mitchell, James Alexander	Lieutenant	SX23974 (S36264)	
Mitchell, Leonard Ernest	Corporal	SX39770 (S17466)	22-Jan-1943
Modra, John Martin	Private	SX39848 (S40986)	10-Mar-1943
Moffat, Arthur William George	Private	S20030	27-Mar-1943
Mohr, Ronald Joseph	Private	QX59730 (Q149281)	5-Sep-1944
Moldenhauer, Harold Raymond	Private	S21113	1-Dec-1942
Mooney, Roy William	Private	SX20144 (S21028)	
Moon, Albert Eric	Private	SX28020 (S44088)	26-Jan-1943
Moore, Darcy William	Private	4343 (SX26854)	16-Dec-1942
Moore, Douglas Gerald	Sergeant	SX23946 (S19970)	
Moore, Harold Roderick	Private	SX38190 (S19918)	
Moore, Robert Edward John	Private	S21527	
Morgan, Colin John	Private	SX31420/*S42957 in diary	29-Jul-1943
Morgan, Cyril David	Private	S20043	
Morgan, David George	Private	S21041	
Morgan, David Ross	Captain	NX166209 (N429385) *Attached*	12-May-1945
Morgan, Joseph Francis	Private	S21408	
Morgan, Lloyd Owen*Attached*	Captain	VX68700*Attached*	
Morgan, Rex Irwin	Private	SX28897 (S21606)	27-Jun-1943
Morris, Norman Alen	Corporal	SX31256 (S50195)	20-Jan-1943
Morrison, Frederick Greville	Corporal	NX200273	1-Aug-1944
Morrison, Garfield Wallace	Private	SX39867 (S21021)	
Morrow, Edward James	Private	SX14993 (S26612)	
Mort, William James	Sergeant	NX5238	8-Apr-1944
Morton, Gordon Lloyd	Corporal	SX31257 (S21321)	
Moseley, Norman Mervyn	Captain	SX25286 (S19714)	
Mountstephen, Raymond Clifford	Corporal	SX32465 (S17992)	
Moyle, Robert John	Private	DX701 (S21187)	
Moyse, Michel Joseph	Private	S18098/SX38150	
Mules, John Richard	Sergeant	S21328	
Muller, Walter	Private	SX27666 (S21535)	23-Nov-1942
Mullins, Ronald Roy	Private	SX39832 (S50192)	7-Jun-1943
Murdoch, Reginald Max	Private	SX27421 (S50144)	4-Dec-1942
Murray, Lindsay Gordon	Private	V23462	17-Jun-1944
Mustan, William Keith	Private	S77375	6-Mar-1943
Muster, David Rudolph* (D.O.F. in diary)	Private	SX29060 (S17689)	
Myers, Clement Frederick	Private	S20577	
Myers, Ernest Stanley*failed Rangetakers	Private	SX39625 (S20063)	
Nairn, Robert Douglas	Captain	SX25122 (S19668)	
Nancarrow, Albert John	Sergeant	SX23913 (S18103)	

Nancarrow, Kenneth Cecil	Warrant Officer Cl. 2	SX27594 (S20479)	
Nash, Keith Albert Colin	Sergeant	SX24002 (S17041)	
Neil, Malcolm Charles	Private	SX27605 (S21553)	9-Jan-1943
Neilson, David William	Sergeant	SX23987*S19825 in diary	
Nelson, Ronald	Private	24470 (N152140, NX129955)	1-Sep-1944
Neville, Thomas Edward	Warrant Officer Cl. 2	NX20017	30-Jan-1943
Newbold, Garth Denby	Craftsman	SX29004 (S21261)	
Newman, Charles William	Private	S21044	
Newman, Frederick John	Private	SX28240	DFI, BI 02.09.1945
Newman, Lawrence Edward	Private	SX23961 (S20033)	
Newman, Leonard Ross	Corporal	NX200702	1-Sep-1944
Nichols, Frederick Thomas	Private	SX28142 (S45709)	12-Feb-1943
Nicholson, Raymond Mannix	Private	VX120969	17-Jun-1944
Nicholson, Victor Stanislaus	Sergeant	NX128023	28-Jul-1945
Nicks, Francis Roy	Private	SX28817 (S20325)	20-Mar-1943
Nicolle, Colin Leslie	Private	SX26851 (S21188)	
Nielson, D.W.*	Private	S19825* doesn't match nr	
Noack, Walter Erwin	Private	S17588	5-Oct-1943
Norris, Hilton Albert	Private	SX31392 (S44047)	25-May-1943
Norrish, Albert William Thomas	Corporal	S17999	
Norsworthy, Clarence Clifford	Corporal	SX27633 (S21030, S21129)	
Nottle, Elwyn Hedley William	Private	S17887	
Noske, John Walter	Private	S17828	
Nutter, Ross William	Private	SX39860 (S21229)	
O'Brien, Cyril Quentis	Private	Q42006	22-Jul-1944
O'Brien, Eric John	Corporal	SX39902 (S19858)	
O'Brien, Hartley Eric	Lieutenant	SX27842 (S20227)	
O'Brien, John Martin	Private	S20951	25-May-1943
O'Brien, Peter John	Corporal	VX93694	14-Apr-1945
O'Connell, Phillip Daniel	Private	S19994	
O'Connor, Albert John	Private	S21405	
O'Donnell, James Richard	Sergeant	SX39977 (S23099)	
O'Donnell, Norman William George	Private	SX39582 (S33027)	25-May-1943
O'Donnell, Wilfred Anthony	Private	N464581	14-Apr-1945
O'Donoghue, Leslie Ronald	Sergeant	SX26852(S19789)S19689*	
Ogilvy, Douglas	Private	S20421	16-Sep-1943
Olds, Douglas Leslie	Private	SX29835 (S49930)	
Olds, Ronald Albert Richard	Sergeant	SX39780 (S20699)	21-Jun-1943
O'Leary, Joseph Arthur	Private	NX169388 (N168032)	30-Dec-1944
Olpin, Ian Samuel	Private	S17470	
O'Meara, Terence Joseph	Gunner	QX7721	28-Dec-1943
O'Neill, Michael Alfred	Private	S18110	
Onslow, Francis Charles	Private	NX176733 (N88454)	23-Mar-1944
O'Reilly, Lenard Peter	Private	S21450	
O'Reilly, William Arthur	Private	SX28821	KIA, BI 11.07.1945
Owen, Geoffrey Llewellyn	Private	SX32825 (S21230)	

Owen-Jones, Arthur	Private	QX60669 (Q39638)	20-Mar-1944
Page, Douglas Alwyn	Private	S20277	
Page, Kenneth Telford	Private	S18115	
Palmer, Henry Frederick Macco	Captain	SX25137 (S19727)	
Pannell, Kevin Rex	Private	SX25267 (S21281)	
Parker, Edward Dudley	Private	SX39070 (S21146)	
Parker, Lionel Warren	Private	SX23969 (S21242)	
Parkinson, Victor Hugh*Attchd*	Captain*	VX116499 (V56887)*	
Parmeter, Darrell Percival*D.R. in diary	Private	NX170993 (N151895)*NX170943	20-Feb-1945
Partington, Theo Arthur	Private	S50259	27-Jun-1943
Partridge, Frederick Debney	Corporal	SX31401 (S25947)	
Pasco, Ronald Percy	Private	SX26882 (S21333)	
Patterson, Robert Alexander	Corporal	NX129189 (N90331)	9-Dec-1944
Paturzo, Gaetano	Private	SX30113 (S20371)	
Pauletto*/Pauleto, Angelo	Private	S21564	
Pauling, Horace Raymond	Private	NX173010 (N31124)	27-Jul-1944
Pavlich, Francis Christian	Private	SX23914 (S21282)	
Payne, Hubert	Warrant Officer Cl. 2	SX23975 (S19802)	
Paynter, Alfred Verdun	Corporal	SX31829 (S20994)	
Pearce, Harry James	Private	S21383	
Pearce, John	Private	SX19155	3-May-1945
Pearce, Ross Lancelot	Signalman	SX25243 (S20298)	
Pearn, William Allan Roland	Private	S21336	ill, Aus 26.01.1943
Peate, Cecil George	Private	Q146122	1-Sep-1943
Pelvin, Harold James	Private	SX38622 (S21017)	
Penaluna, Charles James	Corporal	WX18294	26-Jul-1945
Pendlebury, Victor John	Private	SX29935 (S19950)	
Pennock, Robert Allan	Private	NX153703 (N240509)	27-Feb-1943
Perkins, Harry William	Private	S26349	
Perry, James Arthur	Private	SX23958 (S17159)	
Peters, Alexander	Private	S20879	23-Feb-1943
Peters, Hedley Harris	Private	SX38514 (S21040)	
Peters, Leslie Norman	Private	S55168	6-Mar-1943
Pfeffer, Harold Edmund*W.E. in diary	Private	SX27870 (S18196)	12-Feb-1943
Phelan, Thomas Reginald	Private	SX39207 (S20940)	13-Mar-1943
Phillips, Clement Arthur	Corporal	S20403	
Phillis, Robert Maxwell	Private	SX23917 (S20618)	
Pickering, Dudley Halley	Major	SX26814 (S19686)	21-Jun-1943
Pickering, Joseph Clyde	Corporal	SX23952 (S18005)	
Pickett, Herbert Audrey	Sergeant	S20350	27-Nov-1942
Pickup, Mervyn William	Private	NX192144 (N445151)	30-Jun-1945
Pierce, James	Sergeant	WX2860	
Pike, George Henry James	Private	SX29150 (S50150)	13-May-1943
Pile, Charles Leslie	Private	S20820	
Pinches, Allan	Private	SX31393 (S50301)	7-Jun-1943
Pink, Stanley Maxwell	Private	SX27599 (S21043)	

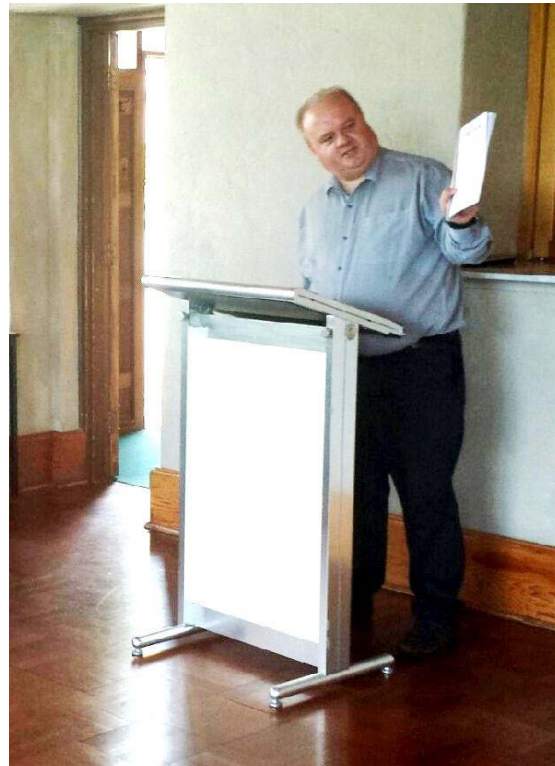
Pinnell, Philip John	Sergeant	SX23976 (S21280)	
Piper, Frederick Barnet	Lieutenant	SX39604 (S19709)*19708 in nr	
Pitkin, George	Private	S21515	
Pitt, Stephen Allan	Private	S26419	
Place, Francis Griffith John	Lieutenant Colonel	S20453*S19653 in diary	
Platten, Ronald Leah	Private	SX15819 *(no number in diary)	
Pollok, John Andrew*Military cross*	Major	420992 (SX8977)	
Pomeroy, Maurice Victor	Sergeant	SX23940 (S20177)	
Pomery-Lukyn*doesn't match n.r.	Captain*	none given*	10-Mar-1943
Poole, Ronald Charles Thomas	Private	SX25268 (S21072)	
Pope, Alexander	Lieutenant Colonel	SX2930	
Porter, Arthur Leslie	Sergeant	SX23951 (S19847)	
Possingham, James Alfred	Private	SX23963 (S26844)	
Potter, Bert	Private	S20848	
Powell, Bruce Raymond	Private	SX28028 (S21231)	
Powell, Nathaniel James	Corporal	NX93635	26-Oct-1944
Prevost, George John Charles	Private	SX27598 (S21536)	9-Jan-1943
Price, Thomas	Lance Corporal	SX39946 (S21516)	
Prideaux, Leonard Percival	Private	S21619	
Pringle, Edwin Charles	Private	N463721	27-Mar-1944
Pritchard, Douglas James	Warrant Officer Cl. 2	SX23979 (S19718)	
Proso, Norman Arthur	Private	SX31398 (S21514)	
Przibilla, Clarence Stanley	Private	SX38606 /*S55087 in diary	11-Aug-1943
Puckeridge, John	Private	NX160461 (N265811)	26-Jan-1943
Puddy, Albert Forwood	Major	435267 (SX21072)	21-Jun-1943
Purvey, Ercel Charles	Private	S20879	23-Feb-1943
Putland, Garnett Keith	Private	SX39208 (S21335)	22-Dec-1942
Rabbett, Edmund Herbert	Private	S20495	
Radford, Douglas Murray	Private	S21361	7-Jun-1943
Radford, Leonard Edward	Private	NX165812 (N273132)	16-Aug-1944
Radford, Herbert Paul	Corporal	SX28268 (S21620)	
Rae, Alan Thomas	Private	SX39983 (S77383)	25-Feb-1944
Raedel, Melville John	Private	S21644	
Ramm, Ivan Alfred	Private	SX20977 (S26021)	
Randall, Walter John	Sergeant	SX31402 (S19983)	
Rankin, Walter Ernest	Corporal	SX25269 (S20055)	
Ransom, Norman John	Private	S21607	
Raven, Clem	Private	SX28833 (S43039)	20-Mar-1943
Rawson, Harold Reginald	Private	S18122	
Rayner, Hartley Kenneth	Sergeant	SX27422	4-Dec-1942
Redding, Kevin	Sergeant	SX28745 (S21142)	
Reed, Maxwell Thomas	Lieutenant	SX23991 (S20777)	
Reilly, Bernard	Signalman	SX29005 (S18212)	
Reilly, James Stirling	Private	SX39771 (S20519)	
Renfrey, Vernon Redchenell	Sergeant	S17118	
Reynolds, Ronald Albert	Private	S21453	27-Feb-1943

Richards, Thomas Charles	Private	SX23984/21451/*S21481 in diary	ill, Aus 19.02.1946
Richardson, Jack	Driver	SX39261 (S21547)	
Ridley, Eric Roy	Sergeant	SX29601 (S17372)	
Riley, George Douglas	Private	SX26853 (S50078)	
Ritchie, Michael Ramsay	Lance Corporal	VX76849	27-Jun-1943
Rivers, Douglas William	Sergeant*GII Cook	SX39765 (S20278)	
Roberts, Arthur	Private	S32582	25-May-1943
Roberts, Ross Crossley* (P.C. in diary)	Private	SX39945 (S20095)	
Roberts, Thomas Henry	Private	S31240	
Robertson, Charles William Frederick*	Lance Sergeant	SX29957*S20733 in diary	
Robinson, Colin Blair	Private	S9213	
Robinson, Harold Bernard	Private	S20906	
Robinson, Leonard William	Lieutenant	SX25123	25-Mar-1944
Robinson, Reginald Leith	Corporal	SX23918 (S21201)	
Robinson, Roy Carter* Attached*	Lieutenant	SX25281 (S16807)* attached	
Rodgers, David	Private	SX25249 (S21283)	
Rodman, Maxwell Ellis	Gunner	TX10684 (T34186)	19-Nov-1943
Rogers, Ernest Arthur	Private	QX27976	5-Jan-1945
Rogers, Ronald Richard	Private	SX25277 (S26848)	
Rogers, William John	Private	SX38884 (S20811)	5-May-1944
Ronan, Frederick Michael	Private	S21530	
Rooney, Edwin Terence	Private	SX31846 (S20712)	
Rose, Thomas James	Captain	VX14041	22-Apr-1944
Rosenzweig, Edgar Walter	Private	S33248	19-Aug-1943
Rosser, Clifford Kent	Private	SX39998 (S20132)	7-Nov-1942
Rossiter, Cyril Victor	Lance Corporal	QX42029 (Q125612)	17-Jun-1944
Rossiter, William John	Corporal	S21191	12-Dec-1942
Rowe, John Francis	Lance Corporal	SX25270 (S21232)	
Rowett, G.J.*	Private	S21202* not in nr	
Rowett, Hugh Joseph Colin	Sergeant	SX26861 (S20400)	
Rowse, Jack*Rouse in diary	Sergeant	SX28998 (S36207)	
Royans, Ernest William	Private	SX23986 (S21376)	
Rubira, Robert Marcus	Private	VX151752	17-Oct-1944
Ruciak, Peter John	Private	SX29256 (S31401)	16-Dec-1942
Rumble, Noel	Sergeant	NX103410 (N202748)	5-May-1944
Russell, Ernest William	Sergeant	VX54293	5-May-1944
Russell, James Henry	Private	SX39705 (S21667)	
Russell, Patrick Ernest	Private	SX39774 (S21518)	
Ryan, Alan John	Sapper	S18123	
Ryan, Francis William Garrett	Lieutenant	SX23948 (S20766)	
Rynehart, Harold James	Private	VX148424/*V507460 in diary	15-Apr-1944
Sabey, Mervyn Joseph	Lance Corporal	SX23989 (S21285)	
Sambell, Lloyd Eric	Private	SX32352 (S111748)	17-Oct-1944
Sampson, Leonard Walter Benjamin	Private	S26294	
Sandercock, Claude Archibald	Lance Corporal	SX39795 (S20265)	

SOCIETY NOTICES

Gallipoli Centenary 1915-2015 Special Issue Launch

On Monday 9 February the special Gallipoli Centenary issue of *Sabretache* was launched at the Royal Military College, Duntroon. Federal President Rohan Goyne (*shown right*) presented the issue to a gathering of Society members and partners, including Federal Vice President Nigel Webster and Editor Paul Skrebels. The formal launch was carried out by Society Patron Air Marshal Barry Gration AO, AFC (retd). Also present were members of the Australian Great War Association (*see photo page 30*). Members received their copy of the special issue by post soon after the launch. The Editor extends his thanks Federal Council for the opportunity to attend.



Society Publication Exclusive

During the launch of the Gallipoli issue Federal President Rohan Goyne also announced that the Society had secured the translation of the German Official History of the battle of Hamel by David Pearson and Paul Thom as an exclusive for *Sabretache*, which will run as a series of four articles in the journal to mark the efforts of the ANZAC Corps on the Western Front.

Subsequently the Federal Council has welcomed David Pearson to fill a casual vacancy on the Council and as a member of the Society.

Society Conferences – Expressions of Interest

Federal Council invites expressions of interest from State Branches which may be interested in hosting the bi-annual conferences of the Society in 2016 and 2018. Please contact the Federal President directly if interested.

Membership Secretary Contact Details

Please note Membership Secretary Gail Gunn's new email address and mail contact details on page 1. All enquiries regarding membership details and receipt of *Sabretache* should be directed to Ms Gunn, and not to the editor.

Incorporation of the Queensland Branch (now Division) of the MHSA

Queensland President John Meyers and Secretary David Geck wish it noted that the branch has now been incorporated under the new title of the Military Historical Society of Australia (Queensland Division).